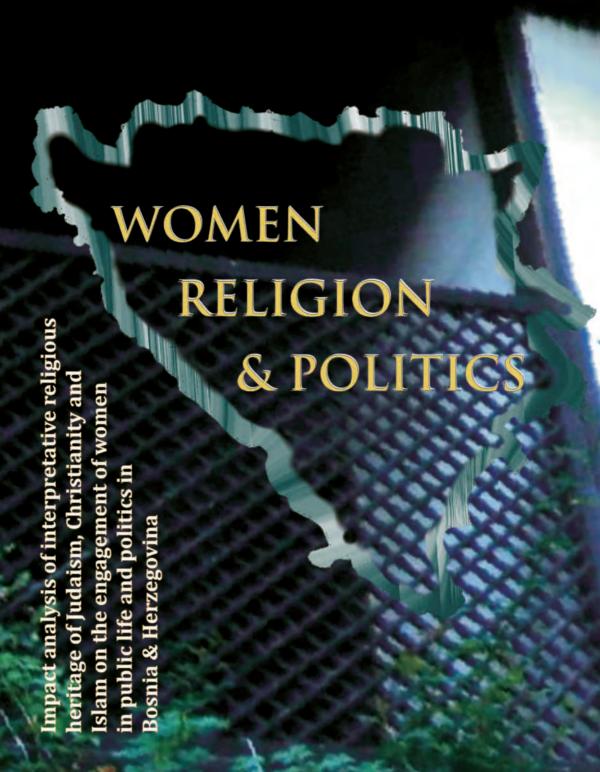
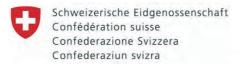
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Zilka Spahić-Šiljak

WOMEN, RELIGION AND POLITICS

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak

WOMEN, RELIGION AND POLITICS

Impact analysis of interpretative religious heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the engagement of women in public life and politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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PREFACE VII

PREFACE

This book *Women, Religion and Politics* is a modified version of the research for my doctoral thesis performed from 2004 to 2007 under the same title. The research in fact was more than a mere doctoral research. In my carrier of working with government and nongovernment sector, but also through my academic study of women's human rights, I concluded that it is tremendously important to illustrate what is the role of religious interpretative heritage of monotheistic traditions in relation to civil and political rights of women. Although religion was pushed aside during socialism, today it is very important and present in human lives. Therefore, it is indispensable to question its impact on the dynamics of gender relations, which is still deeply interwoven in and constrained with traditional, cultural and religious norms.

On one hand my wish was to open up a floor for debate and academic discussion about gender policy in religious discourse which has been absolutely neglected and suppressed by other more important issues; and on the other hand, to raise awareness about the importance of introducing the religious perspective in the creation of a more progressive gender policy and implementation of positive legal regulations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I intended to illustrate - through theological anthropology and exegesis of the sacred texts, as well as through empirical findings-the need for reconstruction of patriarchal religious heritage which for centuries was shaped by the masculine elite and excluded women from the process of creation of the theological and legal thought in religious traditions by defining them as secondary, and very often as pertaining to the second class.

I would like to use this opportunity and thank everyone who supported and encouraged me, professionally and privately, since without the support of many people, I would not have been capable of doing this research alone and in a relatively short time. Primarily, I would like to mention the support of my mentor, Prof. Zorica Kuburić, and co-mentors Prof. Svenka Savić and Prof. Milan Vukomanović, who led me through the entire process of preparation of my thesis.

I also owe my gratitude to Dr. Nada Ler-Sofronić, who helped me design the framework of my research work. As well, I would like to thank Prof. Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, Prof. Enes Karić, Prof. Jasminka Babić-Avdispahić, Dr. Rebeka Anić, Prof. Rachel Adler and Dr. Milica Bakić-Hayden for their support and review of the book and their wholehearted acceptance of this task. I would also like to thank my respected colleagues Dr. Rebeka Jadranka Anić, Rabbi Izak Asiel and Marcie Lee for their expertise offered for the parts of the book relating to Christian and Jewish tradition.

But, to be even able to perform this research in 20 cities and villages in BiH, I needed material support as well. This was ensured by the Norwegian government, through IMIC Centre Sarajevo.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Sarajevo provided funding for the English edition of the book and I would like to use this occasion to extend my gratitude for their generous support.

IMIC Centre and Mr. Marko Oršolić also placed at my disposal all other necessary resources and contacts so that I would be able to perform the research in the easiest possible way and therefore I owe them a very special thanks. Also, I want to thank all organizations and individuals in the field who organized interviews and meetings with the respondents and who contributed to this publication.

In the end, I thank dear God for health, strength, wisdom and gifts which I received in my colleagues, friends and family.

The Author Zilka Spahić-Šiljak INTRODUCTION 1

INTRODUCTION

Sociological, politological and anthropological research and analyses during last years in the countries of former Yugoslavia have shown that traditional and cultural values represent significant obstacle for a complete political participation of women, i.e. that the separation into private (female) and public (male) sphere mirrors the (under)representation of women in government structures. 1 It is also being pointed out that religions are contributing to such separation, due to their clearly established models of male and female roles, and that in this way, indirectly, and sometimes also directly, they deny women the right to be politically engaged.² In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a specific multicultural context, coexist four traditional religious communities (Orthodox, Catholic, Islamic and Jewish), and therefore it is suitable to perform a comparative research within the Abrahamic heritage through the ethical principles of these religious traditions. Since "the religion reflects, but at the same time shapes, the cultures and civilizations in which it lives"³ its influence is visible in the display of gender relations and definitions of desired roles for women and men. Nevertheless, the data about it is scarce, and there are no empirical verifications that would support such argumentation. This was a reason enough to do a research about the way in which the religions form human attitudes and value systems, and the measure in which they influence the status of women in society and their engagement in public life using the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although religion was marginalized during communism, the status of women was not significantly different, "since the traditional values presented in a society were only added to the set of new socialist values" (Sklevicky, Lidia 1996). Therefore, at the beginning of 90's, national and ideological programs, largely intertwined with religious matrixes from Christianity and Islam, supported the reaffirmation of traditional cultural and religious values and suppression of women into the privacy of their homes and family. This policy also mirrored itself in conservative and rigid inter-

See Tomić-Koludrović, Inga and Kunac, Suzana. Rizici modernizacije: žene u Hrvatskoj devedesetih (Risks of Modernisation: Women in Croatia during nineties), NGO "Stope nade"/"Footprints of Hope", Split, 2000; Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. Political Representation of Women in Croatia: Analysis of the Socio-cultural, Socio-economic and Political Obstacles for Full Representation of Women in Politics, MA at the CIPS Sarajevo (International Master Program Sarajevo-Bologna), 2001/2002, and Helms, Elissa. Gendered Visions of the Bosnian Future: Women's Activism and Representation in Post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2003.

² See Anić, Rebeka Jadranka. Više od zadanoga: žena u Crkvi u Hrvatskoj u 20. stoljeću (More Than Given. Women in Church in Croatia in 20th century), Franjevački institut za kulturu mira/Franciscan Intitute for Peace Culture, Split, 2003.

³ Swidler, Leonard and Mojzes, Paul. *The Study of Religion in the Age of Global Dialogue*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2000, p. 1.

pretations of churches and religious communities, which during the war supported *pro-life* policy, glorified the role of a woman as mother and nurturer – the mother of the Nation; and minimized the significance of women's engagement in the public sphere of the society. The result of this was such that the representation of women in the political sphere was 2% at higher, and up to 5% on lower levels of government (Bakšić-Muftić, Jasna. 2001)

In the post-war period, women's movements in BiH managed to win the fight over introduction of a "female quota" at election lists of political parties in 1997, as well as the adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2003 (The Official Gazette of BiH, No. 16/2003). Nevertheless, women are still underrepresented in all segments of public life, especially at decision-making positions. The legal framework for systematization of gender issues has been adopted; still what is lacking is the alteration in cultural codes, which are inseparably linked to religion. Codes and behavioral patterns are conditioned by religious values, which are largely intertwined with culture and customary tradition so that sometimes it is very hard to recognize the religious in them. Since family as a primary socialization factor has one of the most important roles in formation of a personality (Kuburić, Zorica. 1996), and that the values transferred to children include religious and traditional norms, it was important to investigate in which way these values shape the attitudes of a believer, atheist and agnostic. Although atheists and agnostics verbally do not acknowledge God and religious values' system, still, their upbringing incorporates fundamentals that include ethical norms of religious traditions, so that their attitudes are for the most part indirectly conditioned by religious legacy.

The first chapter describes the notion of religion, its function and bases of religious teaching of monotheistic traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with fundamental sources of religion offering thus a broader, more comprehensive pursuit of the topic of this book.

The following three chapters of this book offer theological anthropology of the woman in monotheistic traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – which influences education, economic status, and participation in religious and political life from the perspective of traditional and feminist interpretations.

The fifth chapter speaks about the issues relating to pursuit of political rights of women in BiH – from the point when they got the right to vote in 1946 to first, multiparty elections in 1990 – including the participation of women in the post-war period from 1990 to 2006.

In the sixth chapter, I will present the frame of the empirical research: objectives, methods, the sample and statistical data processing for the research performed in 20 cities and villages, among the citizens declaring themselves as Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Jews or as atheists and agnostics.

INTRODUCTION 3

In the seventh chapter, I processed the results of the empirical research. In the first part of this chapter I analyze the results relating to attitudes of respondents toward women, their role in the family and society, education of female and male children, economic status of women, participation of women in religious life, their engagement on key positions in religious communities, and participation of women at decision-making positions. In the second part of this chapter I will offer analysis of the attitudes of religious communities which I performed by interviewing religious officials and analyzing the content of religious magazines (*Preporod*, *Pravoslavlje* and *Katolički tjednik*⁴).

In the eighth chapter, in an abridged version, I present conclusions of the entire research.

Through the insight into the religious-interpretative legacy of monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), the status of women in family and society, the results of the research performed among the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina by examining their attitudes toward these issues, as well as the analyses of religious magazines and interviews with religious officials — this book will offer a frame for understanding the interconnectedness between the religion and the status of woman in political life of BiH.

⁴ Transl. note: These magazines are "Preporod" (*Rebirth*) Muslim, "Pravoslavlje" (*Orthodoxy*) Orthodox and "Katolički tjednik" (*Catholic Weekly*) Catholic periodicals.

ABOUT AUTHOR 329

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak was born in Zenica, nearby Sarajevo. She studied at the Islamic Studies and Law School in Sarajevo. Her MA Thesis was about the Political Participation of Women in former Yugoslavia at the International Program of Human Rights and Democracy (University of Sarajevo-University of Bologna). She received PhD in 2007 from the University of Novi Sad for the thesis: Women, Religion and Politics.

Dr. Zilka Spahic-Siljak is a research scholar and public intellectual addressing cutting edge issues involving human rights, Islam, religion and gender, and peace-building with more than ten years experience in academic teaching, and work in governmental and non-governmental sectors. She published more than 20 articles in Balkan and international journals.

Her monographs and multi-authored volumes includes:

- Multi-authored book: Women Believers and Citizens, TPO Foundation, Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies – University of Sarajevo, 2009.
- Multi-authored book: Three Monotheistic Voices: Introduction to Judaism, Christianity and Islam [for public school use], RABIC, IMIC, CIPS of the University of Sarajevo, TPO, Sarajevo, 2009.
- Proceedings: ed., Religious Studies at Universities in BiH, TPO Foundation, the University of Zenica and the University of Banja Luka, 2008.
- Monograph: Zene, religija i politika, A Bosnian version (Women, Religion and Politics) (Sarajevo: IMIC, CIPS and TPO, 2007).
- Multi-authored book: Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo: HcA B. Luka, Žene Ženama, and Lara Bijeljina, 2006).
- Multi-authored book: Gender Equality and Judicial Practice in BiH, HcA, Banja Luka, 2007.

She also translated two books from English into Bosnian language:

- Islam and the Challenge of Democracy, (Islam i izazov Demokracije), by Khaled Abou El-Fadl, Publishing house, "Buybook," Sarajevo, 2006.
- The Forgotten Queens of Islam, (Zaboravljene vladarice u svijetu Islama), by Fatima Mernissi, Publishing House "Buybook," Sarajevo, April, 2005.

Dr. Zilka Spahic-Siljak was a fellow and guest lecturer at several international universities

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This nuanced and profound reading by Dr. Zilk Šiljak- entitled Women, religion and politics, stresses that "mono-functionality" of male and female believers' languages, which obviously cannot be reconciled with multifunctionality" of the language of male and female citizens, has its in up-to-date masculine interpretative strategy for publishing.

(Dr Jasminka Babić-Avidspahić, University of Sarajevo)

The author investigates the phenomenon of marginalized political participation of women that is visible in the public sphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially through the notions of co-existence of patriarchal and socialist value-models, re-traditionalization and impacts of religious traditions on attitudes about women's engagement in the public sphere.

(Dr. Jasna Baksić-Muftić, University of Sarajevo)

After having the opportunity to read through this book, my conclusion is that the position of our women is like that of traditional religions. The more traditional the religion is, the less it participates in the society. The more traditional the woman is, the less she participated in the society.

(Dr. Enes Karić, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Sarajevo)

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak's exhaustive study of a complex interplay between religion and gender, on the one hand, and religion and culture on the other, is relevant not just for Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the research was conducted, but for the whole region and beyond. The wider theoretical implications of her work are in that it shows that the shared patriarchal cultural matrix is often hidden by religious differences between the three Abrahamic faiths, but is ultimately revealed in the similarity of lives of the women in the region.

(Dr. Milica Bakic-Hayden, University of Pittsburgh

The uniqueness of this book is in its specific synoptic approach depicting all three monotheistic religions and their attitudes toward women... With such an approach the author is indicating exactly how much patriarchate undermined the exceptionality of all three monotheistic religions and has been as such presented as their inherent exclusiveness.

(Dr. Jadranka Rebeka Anić, Social Research Institute *Ivo Pilar*, Split, Croatia)

