

**“I can live my religion just as well at home”
Dimensions of religiosity of female Muslims—a qualitative analysis**

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1 Introduction

During the last decades the Austrian population has become ever more religiously pluralistic. This development can be attributed, among other reasons, to a growing share of Muslims among the population, which amounts, comparable to other European countries, to around 5 % (Westoff and Frejka 2007: 786). While, for instance, Muslims in Germany are mainly of Turkish origin and those in France mostly have Moroccan and Algerian roots, the Islam in Austria is characterised by a Turkish or Bosnian background.

This study addresses two questions. First, it studies which categories of Muslim religiosity exist and compares them to existing scales for measuring their religiosity. Second, it illustrates the content of these categories and identifies important influences on religiosity.. The analysis is based on 30 biographic interviews which were conducted in 2006 with first-generation female migrants from Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These data were collected within the project “Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies” (acronym: FEMAGE), which was funded by the European Commission in the 6th framework programme. Using Grounded Theory we developed categories that represent Muslim religiosity. In the following sections we first discuss available scales to measure Muslim religiosity. Subsequently, we present a description of Muslims in Austria followed by a succinct overview on religiosity in the source countries Turkey and Bosnia. The empirical part starts with an introduction to the FEMAGE project and a presentation of the method employed to analyse the data as well as a description of the sample. Next, we introduce our categories of Muslim religiosity and compare it to existing quantitative scales. We then discuss these categories in detail and also shed light on important factors influencing religiosity. A summary concludes this article.

2 Measuring Muslim religiosity

The scales of religiosity developed so far concentrate on measuring Christian religiosity (for an overview see Hill and Hood 1999). While there is a general consensus that religiosity is to be perceived as a multidimensional phenomenon, there was and is considerable debate on the number and content of these dimensions. Billiet, who sketched the discussions, concludes that some categories are part of most of the scales (Billiet n. d.: 350-352), namely (1) the ideological or belief dimension (content of belief, acceptance and importance of this content, personal devotion), (2) the ritualistic dimension (membership and practice), (3) the knowledge and (4) the community dimension, which refers to the participation in religious social networks and religion-based social capital.

Rather recently several scales to measure Muslim religiosity have been developed. The “Moslem Attitude towards Religiosity Scale” (MARS) designed by Wilde and Joseph (1997), the “Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory” (MRPI) by Krauss et al. (2006), Hassan’s scale on Muslim piety (2007) and the “Short Muslim Practice and Belief Scale” (S-MPBS) created by AlMarri, Oei and Al-Adawi (2009).

The “Muslim Attitude towards Religiosity Scale” consists of 14 items which include, for instance, questions on religious practice—praying and fasting—or several items investigating to which degree certain elements of Islam—Allah or saying prayers—help the respondent.

Krauss et al. (2006)’s model is composed of two constructs. First, “Islamic Worldview” which primarily measures the agreement with statements relating to Islamic beliefs on God, angels, messengers, books of revelation, the day of judgment and the divine decree. Second, “Religious Personality” which consists of “General Worship” comprising the testification of faith, prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage and “Special Worship” which stands for the relationship with human beings and the relationship with the rest of creation, i.e. animals or the natural environment.

While Krauss et al. are critical to basing the measurement of Muslim religiosity on Christian concepts, Hassan (2007) explicitly draws on the work of Stark and Glock (1968) and identifies, in accordance with the structure they had developed for measuring Christian religiosity, five dimensions of Muslim piety: (1) religious beliefs, e.g. belief in Allah, in the Qu’ranic miracles or in the existence of the devil, (2) rituals, namely prayers five times or more a day, recitation of the Qu’ran, fasting and alms, (3) devotion which is measured by consulting the Qu’ran to make daily decisions and private prayers, (4) experience, which is operationalised through five feelings such as the feeling of being in the presence of Allah and (5) consequences, namely if a person who says there is no Allah is likely to hold dangerous views and on the truth of the evolution theory.

The “Short Muslim Practice and Belief Scale” is made up of a section related to engagement in religious practices and one referring to religious belief. The former is measured with seven items such as following the pillars of Islam, praying five times a day or reading the Qur’an. To assess religious belief six measures are employed, for instance, if religion should govern all actions or if all Muslim countries should be governed by absolute Shariah law (AlMarri et al. 2009).

The authors of these scales remain by and large silent about the process behind the development of these instruments or justify them by referring to the constitution of Islam. Our approach, on the contrary, is to study “bottom up” which categories emerge from Muslim’s own reflections about their religiosity. The presented scales are then assessed in view of our model.

3 Muslims in Austria

3.1 Religious, socio-economic and demographic profile

In the 2001 census 338,988 respondents indicated to be Muslims (Statistik Austria 2009) which corresponds to 4.2 % of the Austrian population. Their share has been strongly increasing during the previous decades. For instance, in 1971 only 0.3 % of the population adhered to Islam. Religious projections assume that—in a medium scenario—in 2051 the share of Muslims among the Austrian population will amount to 14-15 % (Goujon et al. 2007: 261). The largest share of Muslims live in urban contexts as 36% of the Austrian Muslim population inhabit the capital Vienna. Austrian Islam is primarily of Turkish and Bosnian origin. In 2001 35 % of Muslims were born in Turkey, 28 % in Austria (mostly second

generation migrants) and 18 % in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Minnesota Population Center 2008¹; see also Biffl 2007: 274). The main reasons for moving to Austria were labour migration with later family reunification and seeking refuge from the war in former Yugoslavia (Münz et al. 2003). Besides referring to the source countries we can distinguish Muslims by their religious orientation. Sunnites constitute by far the majority with an estimated 85-90 % of the Muslims in Austria (Kroissenbrunner 2003a: 190; Schmied 2005: 194). Assessing the degree of religiosity of Muslims in Austria is not a straightforward task since they are underrepresented in all surveys that we are aware of. The scarce evidence, however, enables the conclusion that Muslims apparently, on average, rate their religiosity higher than Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox Christians. Muslim women seem to be more religious than men and Muslims born in Bosnia-Herzegovina are less religious than those born in Turkey (Sohler 2007: 381; Weiss and Wittmann-Roumi Rassouli 2007: 165; own computations based on the Austrian Generations and Gender Survey 2008/09 comprising 260 Muslim respondents).

Adherents to Muslim faith differ from the total population with regard to several demographic and socio-economic respects. The share of women among Muslims is lower than that of men, in 2001 it amounted to 45 %. In 1971, only 16 % of the Muslims were women due to primarily male labour migration, but their proportion rose steeply in the decade afterwards. Muslims are considerably younger than the total population. Young adults tend to migrate more, for example for reasons of work or family formation, while older people are more likely to migrate back (Fassmann and Reeger 2007: 188). Muslims are characterised by a younger age at marriage, higher marriage rates and a higher number of children than the total population. While, for instance, in the age group 20-24 only 14 % of the women in the total population were married, 69 % of those born in Turkey and 44 % of those born in Bosnia were (Minnesota Population Center 2008). Muslim women born between 1955 and 1960 in Turkey had on average 3.2 children while those born in Bosnia had 2.2. This compared to 1.8 children in the total population (Prskawetz et al. 2008: 306). Muslims are markedly worse educated than the overall population, but an increase among the younger cohorts is discernible. In the total population 25 % of those aged 20-64 had compulsory education at most, this compares to 80 % among Turkish-born Muslims and 48 % among Bosnian-born Muslims (see also Fassmann and Reeger 2007: 191-192). Due to their low education a disproportionate share is employed for unskilled and semi-skilled work. The employment rate of Muslim men and women from Bosnia differs only marginally from that of the total population aged 15-64 and it is identical for Turkish men. But only 44 % of women born in Turkey participate in the labour market as compared to 61 % in the total female population in this age range (see also Biffl 2007: 274-277 and 282).

3.2 Muslim life in Austria

The acceptance of Islam by law dates back to the Islam law of 1912. In 1979 the Islamic Community of Austria (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich), which all Muslims living in Austria belong to, was founded as a public corporation (Schmied 2005: 194; Hafez 2006; Abdelkarim et al. 2008; Sticker 2008).² The acceptance of Islam as a religious community implies a number of rights, such as the independent order and administration of its inner affairs, the establishment of denominational private schools and the teaching of religious education in public schools (Bundespressedienst 2007: 6). What went along with the increasing numbers of Muslims was the establishment of accordant facilities. Around 200 mosques and prayer rooms are estimated to exist in Austria, 130 of them are located in Vienna

¹ Own computations using a 10 %-sample of the census provided by Minnesota Population Center (2008).

² However, especially Alevites and some Shiites do not consider themselves (sufficiently) represented (Schmidinger 2008: 243-244).

(Strobl 2005: 525; Abid 2006: 269).³ Separate areas for women are only present in the larger mosques (Schmied 2005: 527). Estimates on the share of Muslims that are active in such unions allude to 10-15 % (Kroissenbrunner 2003b: 385; Schmidinger 2008: 249). As a religious community recognised by the law, Islam is allowed to provide religious education at public schools, and they have done so since the academic year 1982/83. With regard to the headscarf, pupils and teachers as well as students and women working in other public places, e.g. certain hospitals, have the right to wear it (Berghahn 2008: 441). In sum, we can say that Muslims in Austria have comparatively far-reaching rights, representatives of the Islamic Community of Austria are in good relations with state officials exist and, particularly in Vienna, a good infrastructure has developed. On the other hand, right-wing parties take extreme positions against Islam which they proclaim in the public debate (Dolezal et al. 2008: 410). Parts of the Austrian population view Islam critically (e.g. Rohe 2006: 26). For example, Denz (2003) documented that in 2002 25 % indicated not to want to have Muslims as neighbours (Denz 2003: 329). Dolezal et al. confirm that since the 1990s the rejection of Muslims has increased in Austria (2008: 404).⁴

4 Islam in Turkey and Bosnia

One of the factors determining a person's religiosity is the religious intensity in the country of origin (see also Abid 2006: 269). Since the religious situation undergoes changes, the influence on the religiosity of our interviewees can be very specific, depending on the period and the region they were born in and the age they migrated to Austria.

In Turkey, the institutional divide between state and religion is enshrined in the constitution and Islam is not the state religion (Karakas 2007: 1). After the founding of the republic in 1923 a number of measures were taken that aimed at relegating Islam from the public to the private sphere, among them the prohibition to wear religious clothing in public (Karakas 2007: 9 and 33). Following the military putsch in 1980, decrees such as the initiation of religious education as a compulsory subject in schools were issued, which strengthened the religious forces. This development continued in the 1990s (Karakas 2007: 19 and 22). Even though Turkey is a secular state, its population is strongly characterised by Islam. Analyses of the European Social Survey 2004/05 showed that 99 % of the population adhere to the Muslim faith.⁵ Of these, 82 % of the women and 65 % of the men state to pray daily (outside of religious services). Going to the mosque is almost exclusively observed by men: while 64 % of them indicate to visit the mosque once a week and more often, the same is true for only 8 % of the women.

Compared to Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina is and was a religiously pluralistic country. For example, at the 1981 census around 40 % were Muslims, 32 % Serbian (Orthodox) and 18 % Croatian (Catholic) (Terzić 1996: 95). Bosnian Islam is usually described as moderate. For example, already in the years between the first and second World War there were tendencies to abandon the headscarf (Bremer 2007: 247). In Bosnia hybrid religious forms had evolved for a long time, especially Muslims were adopting Christian traditions (Bremer 2003: 63). In the Yugoslavian state, the religiosity of the Muslim population was subject to strong erosion: mosques were infrequently visited and very few people observed the fasting laws. Bosnia was arguably the most secularised republic in former Yugoslavia (Bremer 2003: 63-64). There is

³ Schmied estimates their number at 400 (2005: 199). Abid suggest that their number is higher than 200 if Islamic cultural organisations that partly have functions of mosques are also considered (2006: 269).

⁴ Further information is available from the report on "Muslims in the European Union. Discrimination and Islamophobia" published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2006 (http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Manifestations_EN.pdf).

⁵ All data are weighted.

evidence of an increase in religiosity in Bosnia after the Yugoslav Wars. New mosques were built, in some restaurants no alcohol was served anymore, more women with headscarf were seen in the streets and a radical stream of Islam developed which had not been present before (Bremer 2003: 105 and 108). Bremer describes these phenomena, however, as marginal.

5 Method and sampling

The project “Needs for Female Immigrants and Their Integration in Ageing Societies”, in short: FEMAGE, was funded by the EU 6th framework programme.⁶ Its aim was to describe the chances and expectations of female migrants as well as their way of life in today’s ageing societies. Nine countries⁷ participated in the project, which went between January 2006 and December 2007. Qualitative biographic interviews with female migrants of the first generation were conducted in each of the participating countries. In Austria, Turkish and Bosnian-born Muslims were chosen. Therefore, two of the largest migrant groups, both adhering to Muslim faith of the Sunnite orientation, but coming from very different cultural backgrounds could be compared. It would be desirable to conduct a similar study about the religiosity of Muslim men, but our data refer to women only (but see Ornig 2006: 212).⁸

Biographical interviews—following the Rosenthal approach—were used to collect the data (Rosenthal 2005). The interviews start with a narration, stimulated by a biographical question asking what happened since the women migrated to Austria. Afterwards immanent questions are asked to address parts that needed further information or clarification. This stage is followed by questions on specific topics that were not mentioned during the narration (e.g. Lamnek 1995; Mayring 1990; Flick 2007). Only in the interviews conducted in Austria did the interviewers address the role of religion in the respondents’ lives and its (possible) change over time. In this paper we focused only on those sections in the interviews dealing with religiosity, which we analysed using the coding principles of Grounded Theory. This entailed open, axial and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1996). As a first step, we split the text in small sequences to analyse them in detail. Categories were deduced and connected with each other in order to generate a system of categories. (Strauss and Corbin 1996).

Contact with our first interviewees was established through different migrant organisations in and around Vienna. From there on, more women could be contacted using the snowball method. In the choice of respondents we followed the principles of theoretical sampling.⁹ Next to other categories we made sure to obtain a religiously diverse sample, e.g. women wearing headscarves among the Turks and Bosnians as well as others who were not wearing one. We conducted 30 biographic interviews, 15 each with women from Turkey and Bosnia, ten of which were conducted in German and five in the respective mother tongue. The average interview duration was two hours.

Most of the Bosnian-born women in our sample came to Austria because of the wars in former Yugoslavia. They migrated between 1991 and 2001 but most of them arrived between 1991 and 1993. The main reasons for Turkish-born women to migrate to Austria, on the other hand, were marriage or their parents’ move. They arrived between 1974 and 2003. The Turkish women were between six and 40 years old at the time of migration, the Bosnians between twelve and 42. Women from Turkey were between 22 and 55 years at the time of the

⁶ See <http://www.bib-demographie.de/EN/Projects/FEMAGE/femage>.

⁷ These were Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.

⁸ Ornig (2006) conducted 33 problem-centered interviews with Muslim women and men of the second generation with different ethnic backgrounds.

⁹ Theoretical sampling was invented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is based on theoretical considerations which guide the sampling process during the whole research.

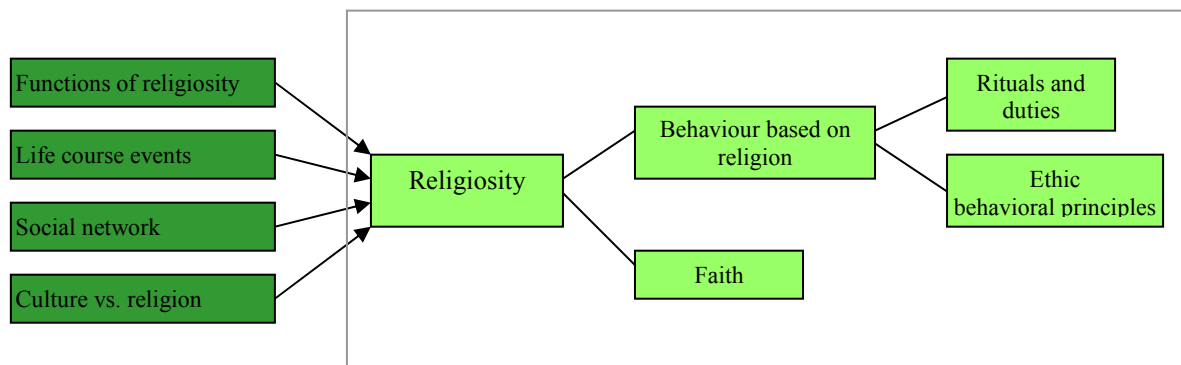
interview, those from Bosnia between 25 and 57 years. Eight Bosnian and twelve Turkish women had already obtained Austrian citizenship.¹⁰

In line with the approach taken by Grounded Theory, our theoretical model is developed from a very specific sample, namely Turkish and Bosnian first-generation female migrants in Austria. Its reach is nevertheless beyond this specific group in that it more generally reflects the components of Muslim religiosity. We caution, however, to generalize the content of these categories. For instance, Muslim women from Saudi-Arabia, Tansania or France would presumably take very different stands towards the headscarf.

6 Dimensions of Muslim religiosity

Based on our analysis we developed the system of categories shown in Figure 1. As discussed above, there is consensus among scholars that religion ought to be perceived as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Our findings are in line with this perception. ‘Religiosity’ consists of ‘faith’ and ‘behaviour based on religion’. The latter can be split in ‘rituals and duties’ and ‘ethic behavioural principles’. We found that religiosity is influenced by four factors: ‘functions of religiosity’, ‘life course events’, ‘social network’ and ‘culture versus religion’. These emerged very clearly from the interviews but do not form part of religiosity as such.

Figure 1: Categories of Muslim religiosity



Let us now evaluate the existing scales in light of our theoretical model. In line with our findings Krauss et al. (2006), Hassan (2007) and AlMarri et al. (2009) explicitly acknowledge the multidimensional structure of Muslim religiosity.

The partition between a faith and a behavioural component is present in all four scales. The “Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory” (MRPI, Krauss et al. 2006) divides between “Religious Personality” (practice related) and “Islamic Worldview” (belief related), Hassan’s scale on Muslim piety (2007) knows a belief and a rituals/consequences dimension and the “Short Muslim Practice and Belief Scale” (S-MPBS, AlMarri et al. 2009) consists of items measuring religious beliefs and such reflecting religious practice. The “Moslem Attitude towards Religiosity Scale” (MARS, Wilde and Joseph 1997) does not formally differentiate between multiple dimensions, but some questions operationalize belief, others practice. The distinction of the behavioural dimension into specific religious rituals and ethic principles is only realized by the MRPI, which refers to “Genral Worship” and “Special Worship”.

¹⁰ For reasons of readability we denote the women as Bosnians or Turks even if many of them were already Austrian citizens.

On the other hand, the structure of our model differs in certain respect from the available scales. The MARS includes several items which concern religious coping, e.g. three questions how praying helps the respondent. In our interviews, feeling content and stable come closest to this idea, but they are classified under “functions of religiosity”. Three other items address the perceptions of respondents if Allah helps and if he listens to prayers. This aspect was not strongly touched upon in our interviews.

Our categories differ from the MRPI insofar as the latter contains an element on the relationship with the rest of creation in the ethic domain. The category on “Islamic Worldview” encompasses the concepts of God, Angels, Messengers, Books of Revelation, Day of Judgement and the Divine Decree, which were—apart from God—not mentioned in the interviews.

The scale on Muslim piety comprises a devotional dimensions, which refers to more private, less ritualistic and often spontaneous expressions of faith such as private prayer. It also contains an experiential dimension concerning “feelings, knowledge and emotions arising from or related to some type of communication with, or experience of, ultimate divine reality” (Hassan 2007). Such two categories did not develop from our data.

So far, we only highlighted consistencies and distinctions in categories between our model and the available scales. However, more differences lie in the operationalization of these concepts. For example, the S-MPBS conceives beliefs not as personal faith but rather as attitudes on the country level, for instance if someone commits a crime they should be punished according to absolute Shariah law (e.g. stoning to death for adultery). Due to the large number of items, it would be too far reaching to disclose differences in this respect as well. We rather proceed as follows: after the presentation of each (sub-)category, compatible questions from the scales are cited and suggestions for further ones are added.

7 Religiosity

7.1 Faith

Many of our interviewees connected their faith with knowledge and learning. Rather than being strongly associated with their feelings, experience or a relationship to Allah, the women frequently referred to religious knowledge when talking about their faith. Reading is an important part of Islam and is repeatedly mentioned in the Qu’ran (sura 96, verse 1-5).

“And then I started reading more what my religion is about, what the duties are, what my position to it should be and what opinion I should have.” (T1¹¹)

For instance, learning to read the Qu’ran in Arabic, learning how to pray and knowing about rituals and duties were frequently mentioned. Some women professed to have experienced joy in learning. Resulting from the importance of knowledge, deficits of other Muslims in this respect were repeatedly criticised. To act based on wrong motives or ignorance was disapproved.

„Many don’t have a clue – well, they don’t know what’s wrong and what’s right either – because – there are many illiterate people among them – they don’t read – you know, and, er – because they cannot read they cannot understand what they are being told.” (T7)

In contrast to these aspects of knowing and learning, their own relationship to Allah, religious experiences or feelings were discussed very rarely. Allah was described as an all-embracing

¹¹ „T“ denotes that the quotation stems from a Turkish woman, „B“ that it comes from a Bosnian woman.

entity, he is always present and humans have to give him account and he will judge them. Several women were concerned to fulfil all duties correctly to satisfy Allah.

„And I'm doing this [Note: wear the headscarf] only because Allah the Creator demands us to do so.” (T4)

Some women pointed out that they have to give account to Allah and not to humans, when it comes to questions such as wearing the headscarf or fulfilling other religious duties. Only rarely, however, reference was made to a woman's relationship to Allah like in the following quotation.

“But for me, religion, the Islam, lies within the person – it something between God and us.” (T14)

Women of Turkish and Bosnian origin described the role of Allah in a very similar way. Apart from Allah no other holy figure was mentioned, such as the prophet Mohammed.

None of the Turkish women questioned the existence of Allah, not even those who described themselves as not religious. Only some Bosnian women expressed uncertainty if they believed in God at all.

„Only I personally – I have certain – difficulties when you are now asking the question that I believe in God – ahh ((laughs)).” (B4)

Certain items in the scales to measure Muslim religiosity refer to the aspect of knowledge and learning: the frequency of reading the Qur'an (Hassan 2007), finding it inspiring to read the Qur'an, liking to learn about Allah very much (Wilde and Joseph 1997), trying to understand the meaning of Qur'anic words/verses, understanding the demands of Qur'an, making effort to deepen understanding of Islamic law (Krauss et al. 2006).

The relationship with Allah is captured by the following items: believing in Allah with or without doubts, feeling to be in the presence of Allah, being afraid of Allah (Hassan 2007), believing that Allah listens to prayers (Wilde and Joseph 1997), believing that Allah does not tests a person who internalizes and practices religion, forgiveness of Allah, if all activities must be done for the sake of Allah, how knowledgeable Allah is, being far from Allah when committing sins, deeds will be accounted for (Krauss et al. 2006).

7.2 Behaviour based on religion

7.2.1 Rituals and duties

In terms of religious duties the women mention the daily prayers, performing Hajj to Mecca, the prohibitions of eating pork and drinking alcohol, reading the Qu'ran, observing fasting during the month of Ramadan, as well as dressing codes. Surprisingly for us one of the five pillars of Islam, paying the obligatory charity, was not referred to in the interviews. Celebrating “**Bayram**”, feasts, was also mentioned, yet nearly exclusively by Bosnian women, who presented themselves as not very religious. One possible explanation would be that even though the relevance of religion in daily life has faded, celebrations remain important.

“Well, I am not, I'm not religious, I do not practise, but we have a single celebration day in the year – when it's Ramadan and then it's Bayram, ah, and that has, that one we have always celebrated, yes – and this I like very much.” (B3)

Khorchide calls the Ramadan a “collective practice” in that Muslims eat together, recite night prayers and visit others more frequently (2007: 227). In our data, however, few women referred to these practices. **Praying**, the most important individual duty (Khorchide 2007: 227), was, on the other hand, discussed intensively. There are several types of prayers in

Islam, but respondents mainly mentioned the compulsory prayer five times a day. It is said at certain times on a clean place (e.g. carpet) in the direction of Mecca and is preceded by a ritual washing. Prescribed gestures accompany the text. This prayer is different from Christian prayers which are less ritualised and require little learning effort.

„Prayers I can't say, I keep resolving to learn that but somehow it never seems to work out.” (B8)

Only very rarely did women speak about individually practicing their faith like in the following quotation.

“I am a very believing person – I have my own prayers – my own things in which I believe – I pray at night for the day – but this is between God and me.” (T14)

Other than for Christians, for most of the Muslim women it was, regardless of their degree of religiosity, of little importance to gather with other believers, e.g. for the Friday's prayer in the mosque. They emphasise that women can perform all their religious duties at home as well.¹² Some of our interviewees argued that it was even better for a woman to pray at home.

„T1: Because for the women it's always good when they pray at home, for the men it's better to pray at a mosque.

I: Why is that?

T1: I don't know, maybe because women feel more comfortable at home probably – then in somewhere in another institution, well that's why.” (T1)

Our respondents discussed rather intensively that complying with all the religious duties was quite difficult in daily life, especially for reasons of work obligations. Some rituals such as celebrating feasts or the prohibition to eat pork were described as rather easy to fulfil.

„I have Islam as my religion – I do not eat pork – [...] where you go, in hospitals, in daycare, at school – where this majority is – there's always the question what they may give to eat – to the children – and what not – and this is, I find this really great.” (B7)

Other duties were described as more difficult to observe. The **headscarf** is mentioned by nearly all women—and sometimes discussed at length. Large differences between Turkish and Bosnian-born women were discernible. For women from Bosnia on average the headscarf was much less important and not all our respondents even referred to it. They commonly saw it as a private issue that was not connected with social pressure for them and did not necessarily reflect the strength of their faith. The headscarf was not perceived as a priority element in their faith but only one among others.

“But only because I'm not, when I don't, well when I'm not covered or something, this doesn't mean I am not a Muslim or something. I am for myself, I feel a Muslim – but I don't feel that I must wear the headscarf now.” (B2)

Bosnian women—unlike those from Turkey—speak only very rarely about role models who wear the headscarf, whether in Austria or in Bosnia. If they mention women with the headscarf, they frequently refer to old women or to the situation when praying.

“In Bosnia there were not so many women, er, veiled – with the headscarf and all of that, but now there are more women who do this – for us this was – a headscarf – this was only to be seen with old ladies – with old women who were really religious, they were – And my grandmother, she was religious – she didn't wear the headscarf, she didn't wear the headscarf.” (B4)

Many Turkish-born women, on the other hand, considered their headscarf as a crucial element in their religion. Nevertheless there were some who described themselves as religious without wearing a headscarf. Women with a headscarf usually pointed out that it was their own

¹² The Islamic Community of Austria states on its website that women might be indispensable for child care reasons which is why it is up to them to attend the weekly prayers on Fridays or alternatively to pray at home. However, they are welcome to participate.

decision to wear it. However, several respondents told about pressure from their social network, no matter if they wore a headscarf or not.

“Some say for instance, why don’t you wear – then I say, I don’t wear, I, er, I don’t want to either, I do not feel headscarf-religiously – I am – with me, religious comes from heart.” (T10)

Mothers, mothers-in-law or other women in their surroundings were described by these women as having repeatedly tried to push them into wearing one. Our interviewees, however, did not refer to this as social pressure. None of them mentioned any pressure by men. For the Turkish women we interviewed the headscarf was an issue that was only discussed with other women. Intervention by men is, however, described by Ornig (2006: 240). Most of the women said that the decision to wear the headscarf had been a long process for them. Some interview partners reported having postponed the final decision several times.

„They said when will you wear headscarf – my mo- my mother-in-law – Yes, I wanted – my own mother also wanted me to wear headscarf – I said, after when second child born, I will wear headscarf.” (T5)

For several women, sometimes after they had contemplated the subject for some time, a life course event turned the balance, for example the birth of a child or the death of their mother. Some emphasised that one had to understand why one wore the headscarf. Again knowledge is important in this respect. The reasons given for wearing the headscarf were manifold: Some explained that after they had gained more knowledge about their religion they started to see the headscarf as indispensable, others argued that Allah demanded it, yet others stated that it protected them against the sexual desires of men and that their marriage was protected when other men were not provoked by them, while for some others, particularly those who had already started to wear the headscarf in Turkey, it came just naturally at a certain age.

Women who had decided at one point in life to wear the headscarf said they were immediately recognised as Muslims in the streets and therefore subject to glances and some of them reported having had to suffer verbal abuse on occasion. Some of them also mentioned the difficulty of finding work with the headscarf.

Once a woman has taken the decision to wear the headscarf, it does not seem to be revised any more. None of our interview partners changed their opinion and abandoned the headscarf again, not those who experienced negative consequences. Ornig (2006: 237), however, describes the pattern of wearing the headscarf from time to time.

“I: Have you never even toyed with the idea of taking the headscarf off again?

T8: No, with this, I’ve never thought of this because I was actually convinced – now that was not an easy decision for me, er, this, er, all this – well, this, one can not just do this just like that – I really thought twice over this decision.” (T8)

Not only the headscarf, but other duties as well are described as being difficult to fulfil. It is in particular the required prayers five times a day, which are bound to fixed times, which is described as problematic, especially in relation with work. Not observing all duties does not necessarily imply that one does not regard oneself as a Muslim.

„I do believe, but I do not keep all the rules I should keep. This is because of the situation I’m in – my obligations on the job and in everyday life.” (B14)

Several times, the difficulties in fulfilling their religious duties were brought in relation with living in Austria as a non-Muslim country. However, some women also noted that regardless of which country one lived in, paid work was important and therefore a barrier to complying with all the rituals and duties. Less religious women, often of Bosnian origin, said that observing all rituals and duties would mean too much effort to them and which elements to follow or not was basically as a private matter.

“There are so many things I wouldn’t want to do without – so I don’t want to have to stop going – going on vacations – to the sea and that I somehow can go swimming there, or that I,

well, these things I don't want to forgo – I cannot imagine cloaking myself some day from head to toe and wear the headscarf.” (B8)

On the other hand, many women described fulfilling their duties as easy. They have become an essential and natural element in their daily lives. The women were convinced to do the right thing and their behaviour brought them satisfaction.

While some women made great efforts to live a correct Muslim life and follow all religious duties, others were rather pragmatic in this respect. In particular the very religious women criticised the attitude of going the easy way and following only those elements one considered easy; they said all the rules needed to be complied with to be a good Muslim.

“Yes, but is written in the Qur'an, what are you supposed to do five times? [Note: praying] Yes, and why do you pray only twice? I see! So can we have a choice on this? Is it, like, you take what's good for you, what's easy and what you like, and the other stuff you leave out?” (T4)

Others had a more pragmatic approach regarding their religious duties.

“Well, with the prayers – well, not all of them [Note: five times a day], but I pray as much as I can, whenever the time allows it.” (T3)

The measures on religious practices considered in the four scales overlap to a large degree: frequency of praying five times a day, engaging in Dua'a (supplicatory prayer), making effort to increase frequency of non-obligatory prayers, fasting, giving Zakat, saving money for hadjj, following all the pillars of Islam (Wilde and Joseph 1997; Krauss et al. 2006; Hassan 2007; AlMarri et al. 2009).

Several further suggestions are made on the basis of our findings. Praying and fasting were frequently presented by our interviewees as two main expressions of their faith. They are supposedly the two most relevant indicators for religious practice. Since several women stated to try to increase the frequency of praying over time to reach five prayers a day, it would be desirable to use a finer answering category than “daily” which represents these differences.

Wilde and Joseph's (1997) suggestion to pose a question on observing the daily prayers in the Mosque would in most countries measure men's but not women's religiosity.¹³ Our interviewees stated to pray at home and saw no need for going to the mosque. In non-Muslim countries, frequently the supply of mosques is also rather scarce. In Austria most mosques are found in the capital Vienna. Apart from this, they are divided along ethnical lines and progressive versus conservative orientations, which is why not every Muslim can and will attend service in every mosque. Furthermore, Austrian working hours are not as compatible with the Friday prayer as in Muslim dominated countries. Finally, praying rooms might not have a women's section. Men are, on the other hand, required to attend the Friday prayer in the mosque, but the constraints in non-Muslim countries are also valid for them.

Finally, the analysis elucidated the issue of the headscarf. Its meaning is strongly determined by country of origin: while a part of Turkish women consider it as an important expression of their faith, this view was not shared by Bosnian women. In both groups there were cases who argued that they could be religious without wearing a headscarf. On the other hand, due to social pressure expressed by Turkish women it is not clear whether religious conviction is the primary motivation for wearing a headscarf. Altogether, it remains an ambiguous indicator for religiosity.

¹³ Billiet and Meuleman (2008) also come to this conclusion. They measure the latent variable 'religious involvement' with degree of religiosity, frequency of participation in religious practices and frequency of praying using ESS data. They show that only in Turkey, due to the gender-specific differences in religious practices, the participation in religious practices does not correlate strongly enough with 'religious involvement'. They refer to a suggestion to weight the variable in question in an index for Turkey lower than for other countries.

7.2.2 Ethic behavioural principles

Beside specific religious duties, several other behavioural principles were referred to like loving, not stealing, not lying, helping other people (no matter whom), being honest, not killing, not doing things does not like to be done to, and thinking positively about others. Moreover, hygiene was regarded as very important, in daily life and in connection with praying (Strobl 2005: 528). Further principles referred to the conjugal behaviour, e.g. not living together without being married.

“Well, I cannot leave home, or I cannot I must not move out from home, from my parents before I get married – that is also one of those things that have to do with religion – er, just like going on vacation together with my friend – and stuff like that.” (B8)

Men were said to have to follow the same rules as women. Often, the women pointed out that Islam was not different to any other religion when it came to ethic principles.

“Well, foreigners steal, and I don’t know whether many people stole in those times, but Turks in general, we do not steal, er, that’s also because of religion, well er, Christians do not steal either: believers do not steal.” (T3)

Only Krauss et al. (2006) consider a specific ethnic dimension which contains items such as respecting all opinions, liking to help the poor without anyone knowing, feeling worried when hurting parents. Wilde and Joseph (1997) include a question whether Islam helps the respondent lead a better life and AlMarri et al. (2009) ask whether the respondents agree that religion should govern all of their actions.

The subsequent part is engaged with presenting the factors that influence religiosity. They do not form part of religiosity as such and are thus not linked back to the existing quantitative scales. As they, nevertheless, emerged very clearly from the interviews, we discuss them to enable a more comprehensive understanding of Muslim religiosity.

8 Factors influencing religiosity

8.1 Functions of religiosity

One important function of religion the women named was to stabilise their **identity** by answering questions such as ‘who am I’ or ‘where do I belong’. Several women described the answers to these questions as not self-evident since they lived in Austria but came from another cultural background.

“In Turkey, my religion was not all that important to me because I have – around me, everyone was Muslim, and – when I came to Vienna, but, then I saw that I was the only one in my class who wore a headscarf.” (T1)

Living in an environment which is non-Muslim but considers ‘being Muslim’ as an important (sometimes negatively connoted) way of distinction prompts questions of identity. These questions seem to become prevalent especially during adolescence.

“This is a, er, question of identity – at fifteen, sixteen of course you ask yourself where do I belong, er, where is this going to go – they’re two cultures after all – so they have, er I have started to, er, ask myself – to which one am I closer – and ((laughs)) yes, me – I always felt closer to my roots, to be honest – and so I turned to my – religion – and started to in-inform myself more about it.” (T8)

Some women said that turning to Islam and understanding more about it helped them to better appreciate where they came from and who they were. It was interesting to observe that these

women saw religion as being important for answering questions on their cultural identity—and not, for instance, joining a cultural association. They described the time until they had found a solution for themselves as very difficult.

“And then – I always had these inner fights, fighting – where do I belong?” (T7)

Several Bosnian-born women mentioned the war in former Yugoslavia, where religion had emerged as a crucial category of distinction, as a reason why today they identified more with Islam than before. This did not necessarily imply increasing their observation of religious duties but they expressed having a stronger Muslim identity than before. This is a good example of how Muslim identity evolves for reasons of distinguishing from other categories when there is hostility against Muslims. Religions commonly provide answers to the existential question humans might have, e.g. about the meaning of life.

“In life you’ve got many questions – the meaning of life – from where, where to – yes – well, we also asked those questions and – looked for an answer.” (T4)

Religion can also offer answers to the question what happens after death.

“I somehow do have – fears about what will happen when I – when I’m dead – if there’s really another world – so a little bit there really is of course this awe.” (B8)

Another function of religion is to increase one’s feeling of **stability** in life. To cite the extreme example of the war in former Yugoslavia: some respondents mentioned that in these years religious people could hold on to Allah.

“Well, I wasn’t brought up religiously – during the war, I really came to regret this – I sooo wanted to believe in God – because all the other things I had believed in, er, they lost their meaning.” (B1)

Also in other situations, such as the first time in a foreign country, faith was said to bring stability and safety. Not only in problematic situations but quite generally, being religious was described as helping to enhance a feeling of stability, for example, because daily, weekly and yearly rituals provide a structure to life.

One very important function of religion is **feeling content**. Women said that when they followed their duties they experienced inner satisfaction. More generally, following the views of Islam, e.g. being kind and accepting, satisfied them and evoked positive feelings.

“Well, sure, full of understanding ((laughs)) over other people – yes, of course, there are many – I feel within myself – very satisfied when I do that – I’m – when I don’t do it, then I am not – so – inside – not so satisfied – when I do it, I am very much – within myself – happy and so on.” (T5)

Some women mentioned that they had felt empty before or that they had searched for some kind of fulfilment which they found in their religion.

“Before I always had this – don’t know – this hole – this empty space inside me – in my soul – something what and why and wherefore – but after I had my headscarf – well, when I began wearing it – many questions got answered all by themselves.” (T4)

This function of feeling good and satisfied was described very often by rather religious persons, mainly by Turkish women.

Observing religious duties and obtaining religious knowledge can earn **appreciation** from others and increase one’s status inside a community or social network. Some women talked positively about religious women they know and aspired to be like them. A religious woman is honoured, which brings her achievement and social credit. Moreover, the women themselves said they felt proud about what they had achieved and as mentioned above, some reported that they experienced joy when studying their religion.

8.2 Life course events

Some women described the intensity of their religiosity to have remained unchanged over time whereas others pointed out that there were indeed such changes. These were often triggered by life course events. We provide an overview about those that were mentioned in the interviews.

Migration entails, as a consequence, living in another culture. We found evidence for its impact on religiosity in both directions. Some women report that they had become more religious because of their new life in another culture.

“Ah, it’s got better – when we still lived in Turkey we were not as believing as we are now, I must honestly confess.” (T3)

However, other women said that they did not become more religious in Austria, or that their religiosity even declined due to their change of environment. This change was stronger for the Turkish women since religion is on average more prevalent in Turkey than in Austria or Bosnia.

“But now after I, er, came to Vienna – it has, well – not all of a sudden but slowly, with time, it has stopped, yes – And now=now my fr-friends they are – quite – open – and they live, well, like we do, as they have nothing to do with religious stuff – they also do not want to have anything to do.” (T9)

Some women mentioned that **experiencing problems** sometimes prompts an increased orientation towards religion.

“And I never learned about it – about my religion – I never read and so on – and – but by the fact that I am getting older all the time, yes – and when with time, one goes through the problems – I think one becomes a little – one does become more mature.” (T7)

Several women said that the **war** in Bosnia has increased their Muslim identity, though only for some them this was accompanied by an increase in their religious beliefs or practices.

“This sense of belonging – that has grown stronger ever since that time – in me – [...] so I am not – properly dressed and – I – do not pray either=well, like quick prayers maybe but not really praying.” (B8)

Several women reported that in general, religion has become more prevalent and visible in Bosnia. This was sometimes seen rather in a rather critical perspective. In particular to show one’s religion found very little understanding.

“In Bosnia nowadays it’s like bidding a good day to ask people are you a Muslim are you a Serb and so on, or are you religious – this is nobody’s business, it is something rather personal and yes, one should keep this to oneself.” (B3)

Leaving the parental home and running a household of their own implies that a woman has to think about and conduct certain rituals herself. Some respondents in our sample pointed out that the **death** of relatives, especially that of their mother, or other close persons had had an impact on their own faith. For some this was the point when they decided to wear a headscarf or to observe their religious practices more frequently. One reason might be that their status in the succession of generation had changed through the death, or they might have been told what a disgrace for their mother they would be when not wearing the headscarf.

Having children is another important life course event that could trigger changes in the religiosity of some women. For instance, because they wanted to raise their children in a religious way and be good role models for them.

“Now for, for about four years I do it [pray] almost without stopping. And I also want to be a good example for my children.” (T3)

The women also aimed to answer their children’s questions correctly and regretted when they could not do so. Some took this as a starting point to learn more about their own religion. Another reason why religiosity was reported to have increased in connection with children is

that when the woman stays at home to look after the children she is out of the labour market, which eases things especially with regard to the headscarf and the daily prayers, and she has simply more time to deal with religious issues (see also Ornig 2006: 220).

“I am only=how shall I say – wearing headscarf – since I have stayed at home – after the third child – but before I only had to work all the time and I have not – did not have any thoughts – and I also was not so much religious.” (T7)

The fact that in our interviews many women reported an increase of religiosity to have been triggered by these life course events is not to say that, e.g., leaving the parental home could not also result in a decrease of a person’s religiosity though we did not find any such examples in our interviews. However, Bosnian and Turkish women showed no differences in finding that a life course event could affect one’s religiosity.

8.3 Social network

Having **children** cannot only be seen as a life course event, but children also form part of a women’s social environment. Being able to transmit one’s own religiosity to the next generation first requires that one has gained knowledge and understanding oneself, especially when living in a non-Islamic country where the main responsibility for children’s religious education lies with the nuclear family. This entails, e.g., to be able to answer the children’s faith-related questions so as to enable them to develop a relation to their religion. Turkish women in general saw the religious education of their children as their duty, and some even defined being a good mother to a great extent by the success they had in teaching religion to their children. They said if they were successful and their children became religious they could be proud.

“She is really a great Muslim – a great mother – she is really an example for Turkish people.” (T1)

Bosnian women on the other hand frequently talked about involving their partners, parents or parents-in-law in the religious education of their children. Some of them stated that since they were not very religious and their knowledge was limited, others had to take part in the religious education as well.

Even though many women said that they rejected any constraints when teaching religion to their children, some Turkish-born women talked about the rather tight schedules that their children are expected to observe. Bosnian women on the other hand stressed in many cases that no pressure was connected with religion.

“The children may pray but: I do not force anyone because nobody ever forced me either, I don’t want that.” (B10)

The decision to observe Islam in the future was seen as the child’s own choice.

“So I simply want this for my son – so that he knows what he is – when some day he should decide that he wants to be Jewish or Catholic or whatever, I’ll respect that, it’s his decision – he lives his own religion and that’s the way it should be.” (B4)

In connection with religion the **partner** was exclusively mentioned by Bosnian-born women who talked about them rather often. For Turkish-born women the partner was, other than the children, almost absent in their narrations about religiosity. We had cases where the Bosnian women were not very religious, but their partner was. Through him they sometimes learned more about their faith or started observing some practices as well.

“My husband is very religious you know, well, so through him I somehow got a, another insight into religion [...] he then also explained it to me in a more gentle way, and so, well, it somehow impressed me positively, so many things which I didn’t know.” (B6)

Unlike with Christian churches, **the religious community** seems to be rather unimportant. Religiosity was mainly described as an individual and family issue. Only a few interviewees spoke about a mosque where they went regularly to learn more and to have social contacts. If at

all, visiting the mosque was more connected to certain events than described as regular meeting place.

“Well, there are different mosques in in Vienna, and we do not mind to which mosque we go=so when there is any kind of event in a particular mosque, we decide to go there.” (T1)

Especially Turkish-born women frequently mentioned female **relatives and friends** in connection with religion. As we already noted sometimes social pressure was exerted on them. Moreover, some women mentioned the prevalence of gossiping if their behaviour did not correspond to expectations. Bosnian women rarely mentioned any social pressure or gossiping, but they considered many family members as important for their own religion and the religious education of their children.

8.4 Culture vs. religion

During the last decades in Austria many institutions, such as mosques, were developed and some efforts were made to adjust to Muslim specificities, e.g. providing meals without pork in the hospitals or nursery schools. This was generally regarded as positive. The Austrian situation was also praised with respect to the headscarf.

“In Turkey it is now, er, the headscarf is a problem and Vienna it isn’t – that’s why – well, I feel much much better now in Austria.” (T6)

However, living in another culture was still described as rather difficult sometimes. Especially the Turkish women pointed out that the two cultures are rather different with respect to religion and finding their identity was described as often problematic. The Bosnian women did on average see less differences and reported less problems to adjust.

Some women expressed that they tried to combine both cultures, to integrate their Muslim religiosity and their Austrian life and did not see any conflict in that. Participating in the customs of the receiving country was regarded as something positive for themselves and their children. Actively participating in both cultures was not seen as a contradiction.

“In every holiday we take part just the same, for Christmas I also bake these, er, Christmas sweets for the class like the other mothers – so – but my child can do that very well=the children they just can – I also could do it – this is the culture now it is my culture – at home it is so, er, at school it is so – there the other is not bad – no reason to be afraid of it nothing is bad – because they’re all people – I am not afraid of other cultures.” (T8)

Others were sceptical about the integration of both cultures. For instance, parents were afraid that their children might be estranged from their culture of origin and their religion.

“And, but my parents were always afraid that I wouldn’t become more religious here=so – well, that I’d just forget the religion slowly and so on but then it was the other way round.” (T1)

Many of our interview partners expressed the wish that their children should stay close to their traditions, culture and religion. They preferred a partner for their children of the same religious background. Being Muslim was described as more difficult in Austria than in the country of origin, especially when it came to the intergenerational transmission of religion.

“In general, raising children in Vienna so they have a comparison with their Austrian, ah, friends, yes, because otherwise it’s difficult, more questions are coming, and when you cannot answer them, then it’s difficult to raise a child religiously. For then you lose the child!” (T1)

Another issue raised by the women was that of the **relation between culture and religion**. They often had difficulties in describing how culture and religion differed from each other. Especially the Turkish women saw Islam as an integral part of Turkish culture and had difficulties in distinguishing the two.

Many women also criticised other Muslims for acting according to their culture, but unreasonably justifying their behaviour with religion. For example, some Turkish women complained that Muslim men having more rights was always argued with religion but in fact grounded in cultural traditions only. Knowledge about one's religion can help to refute such claims. For both Muslim women and men are required to live a submissive life.

“From outside they put this pressure on marrying – forcing headscarves, all that – that doesn't belong to our religion – this is the culture – is what it belongs to.” (T5)

Frequently, also non-Muslims have an unclear picture about what is rooted in Islam and what in culture.

“Because for is, er, about our people so many wrong things are being shown – also about culture about religion – it, er, you think the Turkish people are many religious people.” (T7)

Other than with the other three factors mentioned above, the relationship between culture and religion concerns mainly Muslims who live in other countries and are thus faced with the challenge of integrating different cultures.

9 Summary

Differently from scales which had previously been developed to measure Muslim religiosity we used a “bottom up” approach in that we deduced the dimensions of Muslim religiosity from narrations of Muslims themselves. According to our theoretical model Muslim religiosity consists of a belief and a behavioural component which splits into ‘rituals and duties’ and ‘ethical behaviour’. We compared this concept to existing quantitative scales and found close links. All of the scales considered distinguish more or less explicitly between a belief and a practice dimension. Only Krauss et al.'s (2006) model considers ethic principles as a single dimension. Furthermore, selected items of these scales corresponded to the contents of our categories.

Moreover, we presented factors that influence religiosity, namely ‘functions of religiosity’, ‘life course events’, ‘social network’ and ‘culture versus religion’.

Our analysis suggests that Muslims cannot be regarded as a religiously homogeneous group but differ along several lines from each other. Next to ethnical belonging, they are marked by differences in the degree of religiosity, progressiveness versus conservativeness as well as religious orientation (Sunni, Shia, Alevi etc.).

Qualitative studies are suitable for elaborating these differences but they meet their limits when they want to evaluate them quantitatively. What part of the Muslims considers themselves as how religious? How are types developed from different combinations of level and kind of belief and practice distributed in the population? How do these types relate to other factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, education or attitudes? To date representative data on the Muslim population in European countries are widely unavailable, for reasons of underrepresentation and selectivity of participants. Moreover, large scale surveys which are not specifically designed for Muslim respondents contain typically (few) questions on religiosity mostly oriented towards Christianity. It remains to be studied in detail how suitable they are for Muslim respondents. As Muslims are an integral and growing part of European societies, future studies are essential to consider them in an adequate way.

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