

# Kongress 2014

## Horizonte der Islamischen Theologie

### Abstract – Sektion 6, Panel 2

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**Referent**     *Đermata Šeta*  
**Thema**        *Gender-sensitive Islamic theology: Case study of the Islamic Community in B&H*

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Islam in B&H during 20th century has been lived predominantly as a major religious tradition strongly interlinked with other three existing religions (Catholicism, Serbian Orthodoxy and Judaism respectively). Political systems in place were (more or less) secular, with the second half of the century being marked by almost 50 years of Socialism/Communism (1943-1991) and a horrible war (1992-1995). All women in B&H got the right to vote and started receiving mass education since the Constitution of 1946. Ever since B&H stopped being a part of the Ottoman Empire, the umbrella-level Institution of the Islamic community (1882) was put in place to take care about the religious needs of Muslims. By today it developed into a huge religious institution administering the work of mosques, Islamic high-schools and faculties, managing issues relating to Hajj, qurban, zakat, etc. Islamic thought in B&H has throughout the century and onwards been characterised by modernist interpretations of Islam and some of the most prominent Islamic scholars advocated for “*Islamic emancipation of women*” like Mehmed Džemaluddin Čaušević (1870-1938) and Husein Đozo (1912-1982). Although mainstream interpretations of Islam traditional to B&H exclude women only from the functions of imams, Muslim women today are not in a major number represented within the IC. Be it as theologians (although all three Islamic faculties also teach women), be it as other professionals (lawyers, economists, etc.) or as believers on representative bodies in the Community (mosque boards, majlis-regional boards and the top-level Assembly) although they traditionally do attend mosques. Societal and communal place and position given/allowed to women is directly linked to theological and ontological understanding of the roles and positions that Muslim women (and men) are supposed to perform. Gender sensitive theology is still not present at official Islamic educational institutions, nor are there any courses or topics treating gender issues in a contextualised or sensitized manner.

This presentation is based on the research performed from June, 2012 to February, 2014 in B&H about the position and role of women in IC<sup>1</sup>. The research shows that legally and nominally there are no obstacles for women being more included in the work of the Community, and that “*no one is against it*” in this rather hierarchical and patriarchal institution, but that there is no systematic approach to engaging or respecting women’s capacities or applying any sort of *conscious* gender mainstreaming. This is so since in fact there is no engaged and contextualised gender sensitive theologising nor systematic focusing or understanding of gender dynamics within the community. Therefore gender issues are not seen as an important segment of social change and community development and community’s *informal gender policy* is directly derived from personal understandings of particular individuals. Often these ideas and attitudes do not develop enough to reach serious and elaborated points since (most) decision makers and leaders within the Community seem to be afraid by (for them) difficult and “*unislamic*” concepts of feminism and gender equality and there is no understanding (or courage) for a systematic development of a contextualised “*Islamicly legitimized feminism*” and “*gender-sensitive Islamic theology*” that would build on the already present Islamic though in Bosnia.

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<sup>1</sup> Desk research, field research: focus groups, questionnaires and interviews with 184 Muslim women and 28 religious officers/imams covering 15 mosques in B&H