

## Contested and Uncontested Religious Landscape Markers: The Dissemination of Crosses in Northern Albania (1990-2020)

---

*Ardian Muhaj and Mentor Beqa*

### Abstract

This paper analyses the relationship between the “politics of religious symbolism” and the physical landscape of post-communist Albania. It examines the proliferation of crosses on highly visible peaks, especially in Northern Albania where both Muslims and Catholics live. The paper combines qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the basis of this phenomenon, and conducts field interviews to reveal the *exclusivist nature* of Catholicism as its main driving factor. While most Catholics believe this exclusivity is their right, many Muslims feel provoked by attitudes they describe as offensive. Although the phenomenon has been marginalised from national public debate under the auspices of “religious tolerance”, the tension it has created is very much present.

**Key words:** Christianity, Crosses, Landscape, Mono-religiosity, Northern Albania, Religion

## I. Introduction

Albania is an ethnically homogeneous but multi-religious country, with a predominantly Muslim majority.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between society (especially the state) and religion has long been debated as a result of extreme historical developments. Although religion, and especially interreligious relations, are today seen as a source of national pride, only a few decades ago Albania was the only country in the world that criminalised religious belief by law. Marxism-Leninism was constitutionally enshrined as the country's only official ideology,<sup>2</sup> and all sacral buildings were closed or demolished.<sup>3</sup> Clerics were either forced to take on mundane work, or sentenced to death. Religious schools were closed, and religious books were banned and publicly ridiculed. In place of religious sites, urban and uninhabited areas were adorned with slogans and monuments that glorified the Marxist-Leninist ideology, the Communist Party of Albania, and its leader, Enver Hoxha. Many scholars have analysed the attitudes of communist countries toward religion within the wider process of secularisation, which kept religious beliefs and practices exclusively in the private realm. Communism in Albania attempted to replace traditional religion with a political one. It imitated all the constituent elements of the former, including a corpus of sacred symbols. As Harvey Cox asserts,<sup>4</sup> God did not flee voluntarily from Albanian cities, but was violently ousted. Part of this great indoctrination campaign was the "sanctification" of public space with slogans and monuments that carried their own performative meaning. These defining characteristics have attracted the attention of social researchers<sup>5</sup>, most of whom focus on a diachronic historical overview of the development of religions and inter-religious relations, and promote "religious tolerance" as uniquely Albanian.

- 1 The demographics of religious groups in Albania is difficult to determine, due to conflicting data and disputes from different religious communities. The latest census conducted by INSTAT in 2011 shows that 56.7 percent of the declared population identify as Muslim; 10 percent as Roman Catholic; 6.75 percent as Orthodox Christian; and 2 percent as Bektashi Muslims. Although these figures are particularly disputed by the Orthodox Church, a series of surveys (from before 1945 to more recently) indicate a steady distribution that reflects an absolute Muslim majority. The 2020 Security Barometer, a survey conducted by the CSDG with the support of the Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, shows that 61.7 percent identified as Sunni Muslim; 14.9 percent as Orthodox Christian; 10.1 percent as Roman Catholic; and 8 percent as Bektashi Muslim.
- 2 Ligt Nr.5506, datë 28.12.1976, Kushtetuta e Republikës Popullore Socialiste e Shqipërisë.
- 3 In total these numbered 2169, of which 740 were mosques; 608 Orthodox churches and monasteries; 157 Catholic churches; and were 530 tekkes and other sacral places.
- 4 Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- 5 See: Matthias M. Bickert, "Re-sanctification of Space in Albania-The case of Sunni Islam", in *Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe - Histories, Religions and Cultures II* (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, 2017); Nathalie Clayer, "God in the 'Land of Mercedes': The Religious Communities in Albania since 1990", in *Albanien: Geographie – Historische Anthropologie – Geschichte – Kultur – Postkommunistische Transformation*, P. Jordan et. al. (ed.) (Wien: Peter Lang, 2003); Robert Elsie, *The Albanian Bektashi: History and Culture of a Dervish Order in the Balkans* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2019); Cecelie Endresen, "The Nation and the Nun: Mother Teresa, Albania's Muslim Majority and the Secular State", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 26:1 (2015); Margaret Hasluk, "The Non-conformist Moslems of Albania", *The Moslem World*, 15 (1925); and Miranda Vickers, *Islam in Albania* (Shrivenham: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2008).

Another dimension of the revival of religious life in post-communist Albania is the marking of public spaces with religious symbols, which has created a phenomenon that this paper calls the “politics of religious symbolism”. This is a broad phenomenon, but one example is the erection of Christian crosses on the tops of hills and mountains, and in other highly visible locations. Their presence is widespread throughout Albania, but is most evident in the country’s north-west, an area where Catholics have historically been concentrated. The monumental crosses, which can be up to 20 metres tall, are located in public spaces that are not owned by any religious community, and in most cases the identity of those who erected them is unknown. The Catholic Church itself has openly spoken out against the placement of these symbols in areas outside its property, but has not taken any concrete action to remove them voluntarily.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, the number of crosses has increased to such an extent that telecommunication companies now have difficulty finding space for their transmission antennas. Although placed illegally and against the declared will of the Catholic Church, the removal of these crosses has proved problematic even for state authorities, who have been reluctant to address this religious marking of public spaces, which most Muslims see as visual proselytisation. This study interprets the factors on which the phenomenon of cross placement is based, and those that enable its development. To do this, it focuses on: the role of symbols in the lives of Albanians; the mono-religious nature of Catholicism; and the geopolitical context of post-communist Albania. John Searle’s concept of “background” is used to support the claim that although mono-religious dispositions might be manifested unintentionally, they can later develop into “politics of religious symbolism”, which aim to demonstrate superior legitimacy and claim territorial and historical exclusivity.

---

6 A particularly contentious incident was recorded in Bushat, Shkodra, in 2005, where a cross placed without permission was removed by unknown persons. This created tension between religious communities, and the Muslim community of Albania, through the Mufti of Shkodra, demanded that all such crosses be removed. The Ombudsman went a step further, and demanded the removal of all religious symbols placed without permission in public spaces. Church leaders said they did not support the placement of crosses in spaces outside religious sites, but did not take any action to remove them.

## Conceptual framework

### *Religious Symbols*

Symbols are central features of organised human life, because they “facilitate understanding of the world” by reducing complex phenomena “to simplified images”.<sup>7</sup> They do so by attaching “a sense, a symbolic function, to an object that does not have that sense intrinsically”, which is a fundamental human capacity.<sup>8</sup> Religions, in a more specific way, are marked with such symbols, “characterized by religious meanings and messages”, which are different to their own “properties and contents”.<sup>9</sup> These symbols play a significant role in the lives of individuals, organised groups, and physical landscapes;<sup>10</sup> studies from a wide range of scientific disciplines demonstrate that objects that represent religious concepts exert considerable influence on many social and psychological processes.<sup>11</sup>

Behavioural psychology studies show that visual religious symbols evoke strong emotional responses.<sup>12</sup> Michal and Jaroslaw found that “religious symbols reduced negative affects among students who identif[ied] strongly with religion and those who frequently attend[ed] religious ceremonies”, but the effect on non-religious students was less pronounced.<sup>13</sup> Razpurker-Apfeld and Shamo-Nir found that for minority groups, “incidental exposure to religious concepts contributes to negative out-group stereotypes, and suggests the operation of implicit social cognition”.<sup>14</sup> Weisbuch-Remington et al. demonstrated that “culturally constructed religious symbols presented outside of conscious awareness can influence psychological and physiological states”, and consequently “the effects of symbols may have important practical significance.”<sup>15</sup> Although symbols play a key role in shaping our understanding of the world in

7 Graeme Gill & Luis F. Angosto-Ferrandez, “Introduction: Symbolism and Politics”, *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 19:4 (2018), pp. 429-433.

8 J. R. Searle, *The construction of social reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p.75.

9 S. Sharonova, N. Trubnikova, N. Sokolova, “Interpreting religious symbols as basic component of social value formation”, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 14:3 (2018), pp. 117-127.

10 Because the marking of landscapes has long-term implications, it demonstrates the concern of a particular group not only for the present, but also the past and future. See P. S. Tacon, “Socialising landscapes: The long-term implications of signs, symbols and marks on the land”, *Archaeology in Oceania*, 29 (1994), pp. 117-129.

11 See: C.G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (New York, Anchor Press, 1964); C. Geertz, *Religion as a Cultural System* (London: Tavistock, 1966); and R. Barthes, *Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

12 A. D. Renteln, “Visual Religious Symbols and the Law”, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47:12 (2004), 1573-1596.

13 B. Michal, K. Jaroslaw, “Psychological consequences of religious symbols in public space: Crucifix display at a public university”, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 35 (2013), pp. 10-17.

14 I. Razpurker-Apfeld, L. Shamo-Nir, “The Influence of Exposure to Religious Symbols on Out-Group Stereotypes”, *Psychology*, 6 (2015), pp. 650-663.

15 M. Weisbuch-Remington, W. B. Mendes, M. D Seery, J. Blascovich, “The Nonconscious Influence of Religious Symbols in Motivated Performance Situations”, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31:9 (2005), pp. 1203-1216.

which we live, they are not univocal, because interpreting them is a subjective interpersonal and intergroup experience, and “different groups and individuals will interpret symbols differently”.<sup>16</sup> This multivocality of symbols makes symbolic discourse and display an arena of conflict, as “individuals and groups struggle over political questions and seek to mobilize symbols in support of their cause.”<sup>17</sup>

### *The Mono- vs. Multi-Religious Worldview*

The way symbols are interpreted depends largely on the dominant worldview of the group toward other groups, or: how the religious faith of others is understood. Although all major religions generally manifest a universal and proselytising worldview – thereby believing in their calling to organise the worldly life and preserve the afterlife – they differ considerably in how they see the role of the Other in their scriptures and traditions.

Some religions hold a mono-religious worldview: the rejection of all other religions, and the belief that theirs is the only true religion. Others have a multi-religious worldview, and accept religious plurality as a religious fact, not just a cultural, political or social one. Because this study focusses on Muslims and Catholics, it examines only their worldviews. Catholicism has an exclusivist approach to other faiths. This does not mean it does not accept the existence of others: “the close proximity of people of many races, cultures, and religions in urban environments” has definitively shaped it as a faith.<sup>18</sup> But the Catholic tradition is exclusive in that it believes itself the true religion, and all others as false; Christian tradition accepts coexistence as a social and political fact, rather than a theological one. As Cracknell explains, the theological exclusiveness of the Church has a long history.<sup>19</sup> Some trace it back to the New Testament (“No one comes to the Father but through me” [John 14:6]), and it is fostered in statements from the Church itself. The decree of the Council of Florence (1438-1445) states:

The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and proclaims that none of those who are outside the Catholic church – not only pagans, but Jews also,

16 Graeme Gill & Luis F. Angosto-Ferrandez, “Introduction: Symbolism and Politics”, *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 19:4 (2018), pp. 429-433.

17 Graeme Gill & Luis F. Angosto-Ferrandez, “Introduction: Symbolism and Politics”, *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 19:4 (2018), p. 430.

18 D. L. Eck, “Is Our God Listening? Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism” in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 22.

19 Kenneth Cracknell, *Towards a New Relationship: Christians and People of Other Faith* (London: Epworth Press, 1986), p.9

heretics, and schismatics – can have part in eternal life, but will go into eternal fire, “which was prepared for the devil and his angels”, unless they are gathered into that Church before the end of life.<sup>20</sup>

The mainstream view is that Catholic scriptures and traditions do not support the acceptance of other religions as rightfully divine. Henzell states that the monochronic view in Christian scripture is embedded in the Biblical account of the Tower of Babel, where the fragmentation of “human speech into the various languages of the world – and the scattering of mankind over the face of the earth”, is seen as a punishment from God.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, Islamic scriptures and traditions are known for their multi-religious or plural worldview.<sup>22</sup> The Qur’an “divinely ordains unity in diversity, not only in terms of culture, language and race, but also in religion”:<sup>23</sup>

And among his wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours: for in this, behold, there are signs indeed for all who are endowed with knowledge! (Qur’an, 30:22); And never have We sent forth any apostle other than in his own people’s tongue, so that he might make the truth clear unto them (14:4); Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but He willed it otherwise in order to test you [...] Vic, then, with one another in doing good works! (5:48); We have made you into nations and tribes so that you may come to know one another (49:13).<sup>24</sup>

In Islam, plurality is assumed and accepted as a fact. Religious diversity “is a normal human situation. It is the consequence of the diversity of human cultures, langua-

- 
- 20 M. Braybrooke, “Christians and People of Other Faiths”, in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 22. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a growing number of Christians questioned the dominant view that only those who believed in Jesus, or were members of the Church, could be “saved and go to heaven”. They did so for a variety of reasons: i) the biblical material was ambiguous; ii) the Christian tradition was not static; iii) this belief was incompatible with the idea of a God of Love; iv) it questions the originality of Jesus’ teachings; and v) they felt a need to create more harmonious societies.
- 21 J. T. Henzell, “Towards a Language of Integration” in *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*, Z. Sardar, J. T. Henzell (ed.) (London and Washington: IIT, 2017).
- 22 For whether Islam holds a reductive or non-reductive worldview, see M. Legenhausen, “A Muslim’s Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism”, in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). Legenhausen defines reductive pluralism as the view that the good in any religion is what it has in common with other religions, while non-reductive pluralism holds that each religion has unique features through which God may guide.
- 23 J. T. Henzell, “Towards a Language of Integration” in *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*, Z. Sardar, J. T. Henzell (ed.) (London and Washington: IIT, 2017).
- 24 All Qur’an quotations are cited from M.M. Ayoub, “The Qur’an and Religious Pluralism”, in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

ges, races and different environments”.<sup>25</sup> Islamic tradition, with the exception of certain local cultures and their interpretations of Islam, reflects the maxim of Ibn Arabi: “God is greater and wider than to be confined to one particular creed to the exclusion of others”. This was confirmed in the 2019 Charter of Makkah, written by Muslim Scholars who convened in Makkah at the Muslim World League. The Charter states that “all people, regardless of their different ethnicities, races and nationalities, are equal under God”, and in its second article rejects “religious and ethnic claims of ‘preference’”. The third article decrees that “differences among people in their beliefs, cultures and natures are part of God’s will and wisdom”, and thereby confirms the Muslim tradition in its entirety, beginning with the Constitution of Medina.

### *Background*

This manifestation of worldviews and mobilisation of symbols can operate at a conscious or unconscious level (in intentional or unintentional states), through a “set of non-intentional or preintentional capacities that enable intentional states of function”.<sup>26</sup> American philosopher John Searle identifies these dispositions as “background”, a concept similar to that of *habitus*, coined by French philosopher and sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Although background can be excessively complex and polemic,<sup>27</sup> in this paper it describes a framework of pre-intentional dispositions that enable, shape and encourage a certain kind of behaviour. These take the form of rules that guide the behaviour of an actor, but are not in themselves intentional or subject to the actor’s rational scrutiny; they are “functionally equivalent to the system of rules, without actually containing any representations or internalizations of those rules”.<sup>28</sup> As Friedrich Hayek puts it, “men in their conduct” are not guided exclusively by their understanding of the “causal connections between particular known means and certain desired ends”, but are also subject to “rules of conduct of which they are rarely aware, which they certainly have not consciously invented”.<sup>29</sup> Such capacities, dispositions and rules become collective property, and develop into

25 M.M. Ayoub (2005), “The Qur’an and Religious Pluralism”, in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 273.

26 J. R. Searle, *The construction of social reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 129.

27 For a broader view of Searle’s ideas, see *Anthropological Theory, Searle on Institutions*: edited by Roy D’Andrade. For communalities and differences between Searle and Durkheim, see S. Lukes, “Searle versus Durkheim”, in *Intentional Acts and Institutional Facts*, S. L. Tsohatzidis (ed.) (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007); and J. R. Searle, “Searle versus Durkheim and the waves of thought: Reply to Gross”, *Anthropological Theory*, 6:1 (2006), pp. 57-69.

For communalities and differences between Searle’s *background* and Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus*, see I. Marcoulatos, “John Searle and Pierre Bourdieu: Divergent Perspectives on Intentionality and Social Ontology”, *Human Studies*, 26:1 (2003), pp. 67-96.

28 J. R. Searle, *The construction of social reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 142.

29 F. A. Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 7.

a “collective or common consciousness [...] completely different from individual consciousnesses, even though it is materialized only through individuals”.<sup>30</sup> All seemingly mechanical actions, attitudes and behaviours (whether individual or collective) that are not a product of a rationally elaborated process are instances of this. In this particular case, the monochronic religious worldview and multivocality of symbol interpretation manifest as background dispositions, in accordance with the religious and contextual state of the faith-based group, especially among Catholics in Northern Albania. These concepts helped give context to data obtained about the cross-placement phenomenon during field interviews with members of religious communities.

## Method

The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, and relied mainly on semi-structured interviews to measure public (local and other residents’) perceptions. We conducted 60 such interviews in three rounds, between December 2020 and April 2021. Respondents were randomly selected after the geographical distribution criteria were determined. Among them, 41 were male and 19 female; 36 identified as Muslim, 16 as Christian, and 8 did not identify with a particular religion. Half the interviewees (18 Muslims and 12 Roman Catholics) lived in the Lezha-Shkodra region, where the phenomenon was most evident, while the others (18 Muslims, 4 Christians and 8 who did not identify) lived in the Tirana-Durres region, which has no direct experience of the phenomenon. A combination of inductive and deductive coding practices was used during the interviews. Questions were formulated and coded to include the theoretical concepts previously quoted from the literature.

## II. Case description

The marking of inhabited spaces with monumental religious symbols is a relatively recent phenomenon. One of its manifestations is the deliberate placement of crosses on highly visible peaks in the landscape. This has taken place in an organised way since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were so many crosses that they were no longer notable:

---

30 E. Durkheim, “Readings from Emile Durkheim”, in *Readings from Emile Durkheim*, K. Thompson (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 17.

From the 16th century onwards, there was an expansion of sacred landscapes. Ever more and ever higher tracts of land had religious buildings and symbols built on them. The placement of crosses on the tops of mountains that began in the 18th century can be seen as a continuation of this expansion.<sup>31</sup>

Until recently scholars have not questioned the phenomenon, but with the increase of immigrants from diverse ethnic and religious traditions to traditionally Christian areas it has acquired a new meaning.<sup>32</sup> Even indigenous populations now view these symbols differently, because as recent studies show, “different constituents of populations at different times in the[ir] life cycles also experience religion differently”.<sup>33</sup> The erection of crosses in highly visible places has become a provocative and contentious topic throughout the Balkans. Politics of religious symbolism in the Western Balkans exist in a context of intense ethno-religious tensions, which goes beyond the scope of this study.<sup>34</sup> Albania is slightly different because the population is ethnically homogenous while religiously diverse, and the phenomenon is relatively recent. It is widely assumed, but not proven, that its earlier absence was the result of the “Turkish yoke”, and a ban on such activities by the Ottoman state.<sup>35</sup> The earliest recorded case of a cross placement in Albania is from the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the mountains of the Mbishkodra region.<sup>36</sup> How much the erection of such symbols in Austria and the Alps

31 J. Mathieu, “The Sacralization of Mountains in Europe during the Modern Age”, *Mountain Research and Development*, 26:4 (2006), pp. 343-349.

32 J. Chase, “Bavarian crosses subject of attacks and controversy”, <https://www.dw.com/en/bavarian-crosses-subject-of-attacks-and-controversy/a-19529653>, accessed 13 May 2021.

33 L. Kong, “Global shifts, theoretical shifts: Changing geographies of religion”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 34:6 (2010), p. 769.

34 The erection of large crosses in areas inhabited by people of different ethnicities and religions is becoming a major problem throughout the Balkans. At least three have been placed in Northern Macedonia’s capital Skopje, provoking tensions and harsh reactions from the (predominantly Muslim) Albanian population. It is also becoming an issue in Kosovo (especially in the country’s north, which is inhabited mainly by Serbs), most recently in Leposavic. Another controversial cross placement took place in 2014 in Zlatiste, an area on Mount Trebevic from which Serb forces shelled the Bosnian capital Sarajevo during the 1992-95 war. Zlatiste is now under the control of Bosnia’s Serb-led entity, Republika Srpska. The cross sparked furious reactions from Bosniak victims and politicians and representatives of the international community, who claimed its placement in that location was unacceptable. Cross placement has also recently caused problems between Turkey and Greece: a massive cross was erected in the village of Nea Vysa, a few hundred metres from the Greek-Turkish border. Many from the Turkish side see it as a provocation in light of existing political tensions between the two countries, but the Greek side denies that this was its intent.

35 In a report to his superiors on 6 August 1864, the Russian consul in Bitola noted: “No religious fanaticism towards the Muslim religion appears in them. In the Albanian villages of Dibra Fushore and in Malësia there are desolate Catholic churches, which until now remain untouched ...”. AQSJ, fondi 143 (Koleksion dokumentesh), dosja 1216, f. 15; *Raport nr. 217, datë 6 gusht 1864 i konsullit të Rusisë në Rumeli e Shqipërinë e Mesme, A. Rostovski*.

36 This story is from the border between the Muslim and Catholic populations north of Shkodra, and is known to locals as “the case of the Lohja cross”. Two families, one Muslim and one Catholic, fell into a chain of blood feuds because of a border dispute. The spark of the conflict is thought to have been the placement of a cross by the former family, and its destruction at the hands of the latter.

influenced this is not easy to determine, but they preceded the Albanian examples chronologically, and the presence of Austrian clergy and diplomats in the country was thoroughly documented. Evidence of the phenomenon was, however, not encountered until Albania's post-communist years, and the practice appears to have been extinguished along with Austrian influence;<sup>37</sup> even during World War II there were no documented cases. The first case made public was not the Bus-hati object (see next section), and was not in Northern Albania: it took place in Central and Southern Albania, where crosses were placed by Orthodox communities.<sup>38</sup> The chronology of their dissemination is not easy to determine, but their geography includes almost the entire territory of Albania, with the exception of the north-eastern (exclusively Muslim) districts of Bulqiza, Has, Kukës and Peshkopi. Because these placements occurred under a cloak of legitimacy, a similar object erected in April 2005 by the Orthodox community was announced publicly.<sup>39</sup> In many cases, the placement of monumental crosses was preceded by the placement of purely symbolic crosses in landscapes with less visibility. This can be considered the pre-history of the phenomenon. It is almost impossible to assess quantitatively such crosses in the areas covered by this paper, because they vary considerably in number and size. The 2006 inventory of a daily newspaper shows the number of cross objects throughout Albania as eight,<sup>40</sup> but their number has since increased rapidly. The number of objects removed by state authorities, and because of reactions from local communities is negligible compared to the number that are sporadically but constantly being added. The period of isolation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly dynamic: the two largest objects in the Zadrëma area, between Shkodër and Lezhë, were located within the first few months. According to witnesses, the Vau Dejës-Castell object was placed

37 Another case in which the Austro-Hungarian administration sparked the protest of the local Muslim population in Shkodër was the 1916 construction of a church at the entrance to the city, on the site of a Bektashi waqf.

38 In 1997, a cross 10 m high and 6 m wide was erected in the village of Stan-Karbutarë in Lushnjë, near the Lushnjë-Berat main road. This was followed by a cross in the village of Dervican (Gjirokastrë region), which has a Greek minority. Albania's main Orthodox objects include: the cross on Morava mountain, which dominates the city of Korçë, and which, according to the Church, was erected near an early church building that was rebuilt in the 1990s; and a 13-metre cross in Butrint National Park. The latter was approved by the Municipality of Xara, but a few months later, on 28 September 2004, it was removed by decision of the State Construction Agency. *Gazeta Shqiptare*, 12 janar 2005, p. 3; Koha Jonë, 12 janar 2006, p. 8.

39 The Municipality of Bradashë decided to remove a 9 m cross placed by the Orthodox Church along the Tirana-Elbasan main road in August 2004, after the Muslim Community complained that it found the object offensive: "After several meetings between the representatives of the religious communities and the Municipality of Bradashë, it was decided by consensus that the cross be moved near the ruins of the church". Eventually, however, the Church changed its mind and sued the Municipality.

40 Rezarta Delisula, "Histori kryqesh të ngritura në hartën e Shqipërisë", *Gazeta Panorama*, 11 janar 2006, p. 4. ("History of crosses created on the map of Albania", *Panorama*, January 11, 2006, p. 4). Delisula discusses the distribution of crosses and the problems that accompany them, and explains that at that time eight crosses had been placed in highly visible places throughout Albania.

during the month of Ramadan in 2020, while the Shita-Hajmel object was erected in the last days of November the same year.<sup>41</sup> A race for the peaks is underway between the crosses and telecommunication and television antennas, and it is the latter – rather than authorities, other religions or the general public – that poses the biggest challenge to the placement of additional objects. In terms of importance and size, the antennas are ahead: they have occupied all three peaks (Akrolisi, Taraboshi and Zemjana) in the Shkodra-Bushat-Vau Dejes-Lezha area since before the reinstatement of religious rights, and their installation was within the state’s legal framework.

### *Bushati*

The Bushati cross was the first to be made public, and has received much attention: almost all religious and state institutions have made statements related to it, and most of its publicity is related to its contestation. Bushati represents not an isolated case, but rather a set of cases structured around an antagonistic narrative, where one side (the secular and Muslim) is defensive and reactive, and the other holds the initiative.

Since this early case, it has always been Muslims reacting to the placement of Christian symbols, and not the other way around: the Muslim side reacts rather than acts. On 23 December 2005, for example, the Mufti of Shkodra appeared at a press conference to request the removal of three crosses demonstratively placed in the area of Bushat, southwest of Shkodra.<sup>42</sup> There are no cases of Islamic symbols being placed without a religious or liturgical function, or in highly visible areas. The problematisation of these crosses therefore has a prehistory, in which the objects were known only to local communities. Bringing the phenomenon to light on a national level constitutes an plea for attention by the Muslim community, which feels discriminated against and disenfranchised at the local level. The need to make these cases public is related to a number of other cases, in which religious symbolism and the Catholic community’s bid for visibility is linked to its attempt to redefine social boundaries and the religious landscape. The Mufti of Shkodra’s public statement mentions both tendencies, the second in the context of the church-mosque in Shkodra’s Rozafa castle complex.<sup>43</sup> Albania’s president

41 Although images of the 15-metre tall Shita-Hajmel object have been published widely on social media (especially by local imams E. H and Y. D., according to testimonies collected from locals on 30 January 2021), the cross has not been covered by traditional media.

42 *Gazeta Panorama*, “Ngrihen kryqe në kodrat e Bushatit”, 23 Dhjetor 2005. (*Panorama*, “Crosses are erected in the hills of Bushat”, December 23, 2005, p.7). The Mufti of Shkodra stated to the press: “This action committed by malicious, irresponsible or ignorant persons is provocative, biased and malicious in the continuation of the efforts of some to provoke us, to create divisions and inter-religious conflicts.” The Municipality of Bushat stated that it had no knowledge of, and did not give permission for, the installation of these three crosses.

43 *Gazeta Standard*, “Tre kryqe fusin në sherr fetë në Shkodër”, 23 Dhjetor 2005. (*Standard*, “Three crosses put religion in strife in Shkodra”, December 23, 2005, p. 8

at the time, Alfred Moisiu, was himself embroiled in this tendency to redefine the religious balance, and made statements while on official business in London that were strongly contested by Albania's Muslim population.<sup>44</sup> In this attempt to remove responsibility, at least temporarily, the placement of these objects is cast as a spontaneous act, unsupported by religious institutions. In some cases, it is even claimed to be the work of foreign missionaries or believers.<sup>45</sup>

(i) The framework in context (the Shkodra castle mosque)

In Shkodra, the problem is more visible in the media, as the Muslim population resists what it feels constitutes an "occupation of the landscape". In October 2005, the Mufti of Shkodra commented on a project to restore a building in the Rozafa Castle complex, a major historical and cultural site protected by the state. The embassy of a foreign country financed the restoration of the object as a church. This infuriated the Mufti because the object in question used to be a church-mosque (St. Stephen's Church and the Fatih Mosque).<sup>46</sup>

The discussion surrounding the object continued, even after the withdrawal of the funds and the initial financier, and the Catholic Church has held religious ceremonies there in the last week of every year since 2005. The media's coverage of that discussion goes far beyond the scope of this paper, but the debate has been emotionally, politically and religiously charged.<sup>47</sup> The main problem is the rejection of all nationally and internationally recognised scientific criteria

44 This perspective is manifested in the speech that former President of the Republic of Albania, Alfred Moisiu, delivered at the Oxford Forum in London in 2005: "As a norm (Islam in Albania) is a superficial Islam. If you scratch slightly, in every Albanian you will discover their Christian core [...] inside every Albanian, regardless of how they define themselves today, exists a homogenizing factor and this factor is precisely the period of fifteen centuries of Christianity". Distinguished Albanian writer Ismail Kadare was convinced that Albanians would return to "the religion of the forefather": "I was convinced that Albania would lean towards the Christian religion, because it was linked with the culture, with the memory and with the nostalgia of the period before the Turks. Year after year, the Islamic faith, more belated, imported among the luggage of the Ottomans would be weakened (first in Albania, then in Kosovo). Whereas the Christian faith, or more exactly the Christian culture, would hold its own in the country. In that way, soon, from evil (the interdiction of religious practice in 1967) would rise good. The Albanian nation would proceed to this great historical rectification, which would hasten its union with the mother continent".

45 *Gazeta Korrieri*, "Të huajt vënë kryqe kristiane rrugëve të Shkodrës", 23 Dhjetor 2005. (*Korrieri*, "Foreigners put Christian crosses on the streets of Shkodra", December 23, 2005)

46 Arben Lagreta, "Kryqet e rrëzuara të tolerancës fetare" *Gazeta Tema*, 21-22 Maj, 2006. (Arben Lagreta, "Fallen Crosses of Religious Tolerance", *Tema*, May 21-22, 2006).

47 *Gazeta Standard*, "Acarohet situata, katolikët meshë në kishën-xhami", 27 Dhjetor 2005. (*Standard*, "The situation is aggravated, Catholics mass in the church-mosque", December 27, 2005) Despite the unresolved conflict over Rozafa castle's church-mosque, the archbishopric of Shkodra held a mass in the ruins of the castle. This was against the will of the city's Muslim population, which requested its mufti also perform religious rites at the site. At a press conference, the Mufti of Shkodra declined these requests, despite the fact that the building had been a mosque for over 500 years, thereby "showing, as always, Islamic tolerance with concrete deeds, in order to avoid any possible conflict with the Catholic believers".

for the restoration of monuments. The decision to restore the building without taking technical and scientific criteria into account was made by the Tirana-based General Directorate of Cultural Monuments, a state agency of the Ministry of Culture.<sup>48</sup> The building's intended restoration would have selected (and thereby excluded) certain periods of its life, in a case that is *sui generis* in the history of restorations in Albania and beyond. Contrary to the fundamental principles of restoration, the project intended to return the building to its 15<sup>th</sup>-century form as a church, and not its most recent one as a mosque, which immediately preceded its degradation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As previously explained, the manifestation of symbols is not an isolated phenomenon, and when viewed in the wider context it speaks of a deeper conflict. For this paper, semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Muslim and Catholic communities, in an effort to understand the phenomenon more thoroughly.

## Interviews

### *Procedure*

A total of 60 people took part in face-to-face interviews, half from areas where the phenomenon was prevalent, and the remainder from areas where it was less so. Each interview lasted between 10 and 20 minutes. Almost all interviewees were aware of the phenomenon (the vast majority had personal experience of it), and they generally expressed a consolidated opinion. Since the purpose of the study was not to obtain a representative measure of opinions, the sample did not have to reflect this. Approximately 60 percent of respondents were aged 31-40; 20 percent were aged 21-30; and 20 percent were aged 41-60. Most (about 70 percent) were male, and all had completed at least secondary education: 30 percent had a postgraduate education; 50 percent a university education; and 20 percent a secondary education. In total, 75 percent of respondents identified as Muslim, but the ratio was more balanced (approximately 60 percent Muslim and 40 percent Catholic) in the provinces where the phenomenon was present. As previously stated, the purpose of the interviews was to understand the experiences of respondents in relation to the raising of the crosses; the reasons they thought were behind it; and whether their attitudes were rationally elaborated thoughts, or background dispositions. Although the questions were largely influenced by concepts derived from academic theories, the input of respondents was also taken

---

48 *Gazeta Shqiptare*, March 26, 2006, p. 5.

into account, and their answers were grouped according to adductive conceptual coding. The questionnaire sorted the potential drivers of the phenomenon into 10 categories, and the questions were constructed on a Likert scale, with the answers: not important/somewhat important/important/very important. The questionnaire was accompanied by open-ended questions to better understand interviewees' motives. The results showed diametrically different perceptions within and outside religious groups in relation to this phenomenon: Muslims generally saw the crosses as a provocation and a threat to their identity, while Christians saw them as an assertion of their identity and a right that did not infringe on others.

Table 1. Geographical and religious distribution of the sample

Sex		Religion		Location	
Female	11	Muslim	36	Lezha-Shkodra	30
Male	49	Christian	16	Tirana-Durres	30

## Findings

First, we asked all respondents whether they thought the phenomenon was the manifestation of a particular belief, or a behaviour that was offensive toward other (religious and non-religious) communities. Their answers were intriguing, but tended to converge around the common perceptions of the community to which they belonged. Muslims generally saw cross placement as a provocative and offensive display against them and their religion, while Christians saw it as a normal manifestation of faith that followed a long period – during the communist regime – in which religious practices were banned. Table 1 shows that the vast majority of respondents believed to some degree that the placement of crosses constituted offensive or provocative behaviour. Muslims tended to believe that these acts were intentional and organised. Interviewee G. M in the Shkodra area said: “They are well-thought-out actions supported by state or non-state organisations”. A. K, a Muslim believer from Shkodra, was more specific: “I believe that the Church is involved with the support of the state, otherwise they would not have dared [...] If it were not for a supported venture, then removing them would be as easy as setting them up”. Almost all Muslim respondents in areas where the

phenomenon was prevalent thought in common terms. Pushed to comment on why the manifestation of a religious symbol should be seen as a provocation, many said that it was an imposition of one group on another, of one religion on another. A former official of the Shkodra Muftiate said: “Manifestations can occur on church premises. This is a well-planned invasion of public spaces”.

Conversely, most Christians tended to believe that the placement of crosses was a spontaneous manifestation of the faith of individuals or groups of believers. M. D. from Lezha stated: “The cross is the symbol of the blood of Christ that was sacrificed for us. Its placement shouldn’t be a problem for anyone”. They did not think their “manifestations of faith” should be seen as offensive or provocative to others. “For 50 years we saw the slogans of Enver Hoxha. I don’t believe anyone should be bothered by the cross,” a Christian believer in Shkodra explained. This is an interesting claim, because during the communist regime all public spaces were ideologised to imprint the irreplaceability and exclusivity of the Party and its Leader. When asked to comment on whether a similar phenomenon (cross placement) should be permitted now, in a multi-religious society, SH. K. emphasised that he respected Muslims, but that “Christ is the truth, through whom we shall be saved”. Though spontaneous and unelaborated, the mono-religious nature of his worldview was evident, and other interviewees expressed similar sentiments. There were also Christians who believed that these symbols only made sense in areas with homogeneous populations: “Only in such a case do I not see placement as a problem, but if the population is heterogeneous, I do not agree with the placement of any religious symbol in public spaces”, said D. D. from the Shkodra area. This was a minority view among interviewees.

Table 2. The relationship between religious identification and offensiveness

Offensiveness Religion	Offensive	Non-offensive
Muslims	32	4
Christians	3	13
Others	6	2
Total	41	19

Perceptions of the phenomenon varied, to some degree, according to location: i.e., whether or not the respondent lived in an area in which the phenomenon was prevalent. As seen in Table 3, respondents who did not live in such areas were still familiar with the phenomenon, but had a more ambivalent attitude toward it. Many Catholics in the Tirana-Durres region thought that placing crosses in areas where members of other religions lived was provocative. They did not approach the issue from a religious point of view, but a socio-political one that was detrimental to inter-religious relations. Elda from Durres said: “This would pose a threat to religious coexistence in the area”. For her, Albania is a secular and multi-religious country, where “public spaces belong to everyone and not just to one group”.

Table 3. The relationship between geographical and religious affiliation and offensiveness

Offensiveness Religion/Area		Offensive	Non-offensive
		Muslims	In-area
	Out of area	14	4
Christians	In-area	0	12
	Out of area	3	1
Others	In-area	0	0
	Out of area	6	2

### *The Questionnaire*

The questionnaire’s main goal was to generate data related to the causes of the phenomenon. The data collected showed that Muslims attached great importance to causes related to Christianisation, demarcation, intimidation, and proselytisation. Conversely, Christians associated the phenomenon with causes that ranged from the manifestation of faith to the comprehensive nature of Christian symbols, the latter of which is in line with the previous theoretical description on the exclusivity of Catholicism. We asked all respondents to justify each of their choices, and their responses were highly elucidating.

Table 4. Causes by religious affiliation\*

Importance Category	Muslims				Christians			
	NI	LI	I	VI	NI	LI	I	VI
Proselytisation				X	x			
Christianisation			x			x		
Intimidation			x		x			
Legitimacy			x				x	
Fanaticism			x		x			
Manifestation		x						x
Geopolitics				x		x		
Demarcation				x	x			
Differentiation	X						x	
Exclusivity				x				x

\* This table shows the importance (not important [NI]; somewhat important [LI]; important [I]; very important [VI]) attached to each category by religious affiliation.

### *Proselytisation*

The majority of Muslims interviewed saw the placement of crosses as a form of visual proselytisation. For them, religious symbols have a significant impact on how people build relationships with the Other, the space, and the world around them. One respondent, who has studied proselytising practices extensively, said: “Although my claim may seem exaggerated, daily encounters with signs and symbols denoting religious affiliation have an impact on the conscious and unconscious levels, especially on those who do not have a strong affiliation with their religion”. Other interviewees did not elaborate on the phenomenon, but related it to Catholicism’s exclusive and missionary nature.

### *Christianisation*

Surprisingly, many interviewees did not associate the placement of crosses with a deliberate attempt to convert non-Christian populations, but rather with the creation of a narrative that these areas were originally, and would remain, Christian. One said: “There was an early attempt to paint Albania as a Christian country, and the placement of crosses is a continuation of this effort”. This image is related to Albania’s geopolitical context, which is elaborated in the following text.<sup>49</sup>

49 Many interviewees believed that segments of the intellectual elite belong to an Islamophobic movement that expresses these attitudes publicly (see footnote 43).

### *Intimidation*

Many Muslim respondents felt that the marking of territory with crosses was intended to intimidate them. One interviewee in Lezha said: “This is a form of visual violence to intimidate Muslim believers. I am not against the public manifestation of religion, but the violent imposition of religious symbols on believers of another religion is a violation of the secular nature of the state, and the state authorities are as responsible as those who place the crosses.” This opinion about the state’s inaction is shared by the majority of Muslim respondents. Although Albania’s population has a Muslim majority, many Muslims feel as though they have been marginalised from public discourse.

### *Legitimacy*

Many interviewees saw the phenomenon as a claim to historical legitimacy, a way of imposing Christianity as the original and authentic religion of Albanians. One interviewee in Lezha said: “I think they aim to identify a place as though it was and is a Catholic city or province. I have noticed that there is a general tendency among Catholics to emphasise that they were in these places before Muslims”. This perception is not limited to inhabitants of areas in which there is a proliferation of crosses, but is widespread throughout Albania. The sentiment is similar to former President Alfred Moisiu’s statement that Islam in Albania is superficial, and “if you scratch slightly, in every Albanian you will discover their Christian core”. In this sense, the historical precedence of Christianity in Albania is seen as a way to legitimise the “preferential claims” of the Catholic community.

### *Geopolitics*

Albania’s change in geopolitical direction after the fall of the communist regime is propagated and understood as a process that favours Christianity over Islam. The dominant public narrative places Christianity at the centre of Western civilisation, and in conflict with Islam. This anti-Muslim narrative is at least as old as the beginning of the communist regime in Albania, when the oppression of all religions made Islam invisible. Today, Albania’s integration to Euro-Atlantic political institutions is instrumentalised to keep the Muslim majority under pressure. All Muslim interviewees saw this as the main permissive context for

the placement of crosses, and for the Christianisation of public spaces and the discourse as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

### *Demarcation*

Many saw the placement of crosses as the demarcation of space between Muslims and Christians in historic, present and future contexts. One interviewee in Shkodra explained: “In the best case, this is done to say ‘this area belongs to us’, and in the worst case they want to say ‘do not dare approach’”. This was seen as a distorted historical reality that aimed to legitimise one religious community at the expense of others. The Christians interviewed, however, did not see this as territorial demarcation, but as a manifestation.

### *Fanaticism*

Among those who interpreted this phenomenon as a manifestation of religious fanaticism were both Muslims and Christians who saw it as a demonstration of excessive religious zeal. As a teacher from Lezha explained: “Many people confuse religion with politics. This is not a manifestation of faith; it is the imposition of a worldview on others. Here we are in the realm of politics”. Like many others from both faiths, this interviewee was concerned that this narrow-mindedness, which has been increasing in recent decades, could affect the coexistence of religious communities. Other Christian believers, however, did not view religious zeal as a problem, but as the fulfilment of a religious duty to manifest their faith.

---

50 The Christianisation of public space and discourse is widely debated in Albania. Historic national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeg is viewed as a crusader and protector of Christianity, and Mother Teresa as a Catholic saint. Schools, squares, streets and universities carry the names of prominent Christians, or of people who are associated with Christianity. This reversal of historical truth in the context of current perceived political needs has taken place at the expense of the Muslim majority, and allowed a cultural inquisition of Islamic heritage to develop. Muslim personalities who have made outstanding national contributions (such as the Frashëri brothers) are either placed in a secular context, or seen as representatives of Bektashism. Special emphasis is placed on cultural heritage objects that are Christian or secular in character, while Islamic objects are left to decay. In many cases, attempts have been made to return objects with a dual religious character (whose final use was Islamic), to their original (Christian) states. As absurd as it may sound, the idea of a return to the “religion of the ancestors” is widespread. Ismail Kadare, Albania’s most decorated and celebrated writer, is a fervent critic of the Ottoman Empire and its legacy in Albania, including the process of Islamisation. In many of his works, he writes about the orientalisation of Albanians, who must rediscover their European identity. Driven by the idea that communism eradicated religion from the country, a particular group of people seek Albania’s return to Christianity: the country’s dominant religion before the Ottoman incursion. In this sense, Christianity is not just seen as a religion but as the overarching component of the “superior” Western civilisation, of which Albania was a part before its violent detachment at the hands of the Ottomans. This view holds that since Albanians did not voluntarily convert to Islam it would be natural for them to rediscover their Christian roots. These two basic premises (that faith was eradicated by communism, and that Albanians were forcefully converted to Islam) are, however, erroneous, and the desired return to Christianity has failed to materialise.

### *Manifestation*

The public manifestation of religious affiliation is a fundamental component of religious rights, and is protected by law. Although the boundaries of such manifestations are subject to wider debate, cross placement in general does not seem to fall within them, although most Christians interviewed thought it did, even when it occurred in spaces that did not belong to the Catholic community. One interviewee in Lezha stated: “I do not understand why it should be seen as a problem. It is a symbol that represents our religion”. When asked to comment on whether it would be acceptable for the Muslim community to place its symbols on peaks as a form of manifestation, many interviewees were reluctant to respond.

### *Differentiation*

Some interviewees saw cross placement as a way of differentiating communities. The Christians did not consider this a form of territorial demarcation, but rather an indication of the heritage, tradition and values of their community. An interviewee from Lezha explained: “With the placement of religious symbols, groups of people identify their religious traditions, values, customs and holidays. This is therefore not a provocation, but a value-based differentiation”. For many Muslims this “differentiation” was a form of demarcation, which isolated Catholics and proved the exclusivity of their religion.

### *Exclusivity*

One of the main findings of this study was that Christian respondents saw the placement of crosses as a normal process that should not be considered a provocation to other religious communities. For some, the crosses were “signs of appreciation and respect for other faiths”, and many of the Christians interviewed thought they were all-encompassing symbols, to which other communities should also show respect. To them, the cross is a symbol of true faith, of sacrifice and salvation. When asked to comment on the fact that other religious communities may not agree with this perspective, many respondents were hesitant to respond, and seemed unaware of the problem. This indicates that their understanding of the exclusivity of their worldview manifests at the unintentional “background” level.

## Conclusions

The dissemination of crosses in Albania, particularly in the north, is a new phenomenon that marks public space. It shares some features with the raising of crosses in other countries, but has its own idiosyncrasies. Although the phenomenon began immediately after the fall of the communist regime in the 1990s, the proliferation of crosses in highly visible areas has only become a widespread phenomenon in recent years. Except for the 2005 Bushat controversy, which brought the phenomenon into the public spotlight, the raising of crosses has generally been kept away from public attention and out of public debate, as though it didn't exist.

Field interviews revealed that these crosses caused tensions between religious communities. This is yet to manifest in open aggression, largely because of the restraint shown by individual Muslim believers and the institutions that represent them. The interviews showed, however, that the soft attitude of the Islamic religious institutions has led to a general sense of frustration among the Muslim population, which expects a stronger reaction to ensure the removal of the crosses. The data indicate that this subdued tension could turn into open conflict, if religious institutions and state authorities do not find a way to limit the phenomenon.

The real actors and motives behind the crosses remain unknown to the public, and no one has come out publicly to defend their placement. The field interviews showed, however that this phenomenon is inspired by Catholicism's exclusivity, which encourages a mono-religious worldview. This view can manifest explicitly in the belief that "Christ is the only way to salvation", or in the form of background dispositions, as Christians often do not consider what the crosses mean to members of other religious communities. In conclusion, we can say that as *cuius regio eius religio* (whose land, their religion) used to be the prevailing principle in Christian areas, in this case its application has been transformed into the more specific *cuius loco eius religio* (whose place, their religion).

Albania is widely known for its strong tradition of religious tolerance, and the coexistence of diverse religious groups. The overwhelming public narrative favours such a view, and there are those who speak highly of the country's tradition of religious tolerance and harmony between faiths.<sup>51</sup> From data obtained through field interviews, however, this study learned that such harmony is superficial, and largely maintained by the self-restraint of the Muslim majority and its religious institutions. Many Albanian Muslims see this tolerance as one-way, and increasingly feel as though they live in an intentionally Christianised and de-Islamised state.

51 "Nevertheless, some scholars argue that religious divides were minimized for nationalist purposes and that religious intolerance has always existed amongst Albanians, that Albanian culture is not one of peaceful religious co-existence, and that a tradition of tolerance has been invented and is constantly being reinforced today. Without a detailed and comprehensive study of multi-faith regions of Albania, it is difficult to assess whether this is the case or not." Miranda Vickers, *Islam in Albania* (Shrivenham: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2008), pp. 11-12.

## Bibliography

- Ayoub, Mahmoud M., "The Qur'an and Religious Pluralism", in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- Barbullushi, Odetta, "The Politics of 'Religious Tolerance' in Post-Communist Albania: Ideology, Security and Euro-Atlantic Integration", in *Europe, the USA and Political Islam*, M. Pace (ed.) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)
- Bartl, Peter, *Myslimanët shqiptarë në lëvizjen për pavarësi kombëtare (1878-1912)* (Tirana: Dituria, 2006)
- Beka, Rezart, "Islamophobia in the contemporary Albanian public discourse", in *Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies*, E. Bayraklı, F. Hafez (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2018)
- Bickert, Matthias M., "Re-sanctification of Space in Albania-The case of Sunni Islam", in *Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe - Histories, Religions and Cultures II* (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, 2017)
- Biezais, Haralds, *Religious Symbols and their Functions* (Stockholm: Almqvist&Wiksell, 1979)
- Bilewicz, Michal, Klebaniuk, Jaroslaw "Psychological consequences of religious symbols in public space: Crucifix display at a public university", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 35 (2013), pp. 10-17.
- Braybrooke, Marcus, "Christians and People of Other Faiths", in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- Chase, J., "Bavarian crosses subject of attacks and controversy", <https://www.dw.com/en/bavarian-crosses-subject-of-attacks-and-controversy/a-19529653>, accessed 13 May 2021.
- Clayer, Nathalie, "God in the 'Land of Mercedes': The Religious Communities in Albania since 1990", in *Albanien: Geographie – Historische Anthropologie – Geschichte – Kultur – Postkommunistische Transformation*, P. Jordan et. al. (ed.) (Wien: Peter Lang, 2003)
- Cracknell, Kenneth, *Towards a New Relationship: Christians and People of Other Faith* (London: Epworth Press, 1986)
- Dani, Doan, *Shpikja e Mesjetës: Vetja dhe Tjetri në Mediivistikën Shqiptare* (Tiranë: Pika pa Sipërfaqe, 2016)

- de Rapper, Gilles, "Religion in post-communist Albania: Muslims, Christians and the concept of 'culture' (Devoll, South Albania)", *Anthropological Notebooks*, Slovenian Anthropological Society, 14:2 (2008), pp. 31-45.
- Durkheim, Emile, "Readings from Emile Durkheim", in *Readings from Emile Durkheim*, K. Thompson (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1985)
- Eck, Diana L., "Is Our God Listening? Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism" in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- Elbasani, Arolda, "Religion and Democratization in Post-Communist Albania: Is it Possible to Be Islamic, Democratic and European at the Same Time?", *APSA 2011, Annual Meeting Paper* (2010)
- Elsie, Robert, *The Albanian Bektashi: History and Culture of a Dervish Order in the Balkans* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2019)
- Endresen, Cecilie, "The Nation and the Nun: Mother Teresa, Albania's Muslim Majority and the Secular State", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 26:1 (2015)
- Hasluk, Margaret, "The Non-conformist Moslems of Albania", *The Moslem World*, 15 (1925)
- Hayek, Friedrich August, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1990)
- Henzell-Thomas, Jeremy, "Towards a Language of Integration" in *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*, Z. Sardar, J. T. Henzell (ed.) (London and Washington: IIIT, 2017)
- Ivanišević, Alojz, *Re-Sakralisierung des öffentlichen Raums in Südosteuropa nach der Wende 1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012)
- Knott, Kim, *The location of religion: toward a spatial analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005)
- Kong, Lily, "Global shifts, theoretical shifts: Changing geographies of religion", *Progress in Human Geography*. 34:6 (2010), pp. 755-776.
- Lederer, Gyorgy, "Islam in Albania", *Central Asian Survey*, 13:3 (1994), pp. 331-359.
- Legenhausen, Muhammad, "A Muslim's Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism", in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- Lukes, Steven, "Searle versus Durkheim", in *Intentional Acts and Institutional Facts*, S. L. Tsohatzidis (ed.) (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007)

- Marcoulatos, Iordanis, “John Searle and Pierre Bourdieu: Divergent Perspectives on Intentionality and Social Ontology”, *Human Studies*, 26:1(2003), pp. 67–96.
- Mathieu, Jon, “The Sacralization of Mountains in Europe during the Modern Age”, *Mountain Research and Development*, 26:4 (2006), pp. 343-349.
- Norris, Harry T., *Popular Sufism in Eastern Europe – Sufi Brotherhoods and the dialogue with Christianity and Heterodoxy* (London: Routledge, 2006)
- Pollack, Detlef, Borowik, Irena, Jagodzinski, Wolfgang (eds.), *Religiöser Wandel in den postkommunistischen Ländern Ost- und Mitteleuropas* (Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 1998)
- Razpurker-Apfeld, Irene, Shamo-Nir, Lipaz, “The Influence of Exposure to Religious Symbols on Out-Group Stereotypes”, *Psychology*, 6 (2015), pp. 650-663.
- Renteln, Alison Dundes, “Visual Religious Symbols and the Law”, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47:12 (2004), pp. 1573-1596.
- Searle, John R., *The construction of social reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995)
- Searle, John R., “Searle versus Durkheim and the waves of thought: Reply to Gross”, *Anthropological Theory*, 6:1 (2006), pp. 57-69.
- Sharonova, Svetlana, Trubnikova, Nina V., Sokolova, Natalya, “Interpreting religious symbols as basic component of social value formation”, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 14:3 (2018), pp. 117-127.
- Sulstarova, Enis, *Islamizëm do të thotë lindje* (Tiranë: Pika pa Sipërfaqe, 2016)
- Tacon, Paul S., “Socialising landscapes: the long-term implications of signs, symbols and marks on the land”, *Archaeology in Oceania*, 29 (1994) pp. 117-129.
- Tweed, Thomas A., *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006)
- Velikonja, Mitja, “In Hoc Signo Vincas: Religious Symbolism in the Balkan Wars 1991–1995”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17 (2003), pp. 25-40.
- Vickers, Miranda, *Islam in Albania* (Shrivenham: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2008)
- Weisbuch-Remington, Max, Mendes, Wendy Berry, Seery, Mark D., Blascovich, Jim, “The Nonconscious Influence of Religious Symbols in Motivated Performance Situations”, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31:9 (2005), pp. 1203-1216.

# Sporna i nesporna obilježja vjerskog pejzaža: rasprostranjenost krstova u sjevernoj Albaniji (1990-2020)

## Sažetak

Ovaj rad utvrđuje, opisuje i analizira odnos između “politike religijskog simbolizma” i fizičkog pejzaža postkomunističke Albanije. On ispituje postavljanje velikog broja krstova na istaknutim i uočljivim vrhovima posebno u sjevernoj Albaniji gdje žive i muslimani i katolici. Rad kombinuje kvalitativne i kvantitativne metode kako bi se razumjela osnova ovog fenomena, te provodi terenske intervjuje kako bi pokazao *ekskluzivističku prirodu* katolicizma kao njegovog glavnog pokretačkog faktora. Dok većina katolika vjeruje da je ta ekskluzivnost njihovo pravo, mnogi muslimani stavove koje opisuju kao uvredljive doživljavaju kao provokaciju. Premda je navedena pojava potisnuta na samu marginu nacionalne javne rasprave pod okriljem “vjerske tolerancije”, napetost koju je stvorila itekako je prisutna.

**Ključne riječi:** kršćanstvo, krstovi, pejzaž, jednoreligioznost, sjeverna Albanija, religija