

Title—The Daily Lives of Muslims: Islam and Public Confrontation in Contemporary Europe
Author—Nilüfer Göle
Year—2017

Categories: Islam, Migration, Europe, Politics

Place: Europe

Time: 20th-21st Century

Argument Synopsis:

Göle's sociological book is concerned with the lived reality of Muslim people in Europe. He reveals how the underlying question plaguing the Muslim communities across Europe—is Islam compatible with the West and Western values? The current anxieties surrounding this community revolve around terrorism, war, arbitrary violence and destruction. Göle underscores how jihadi terrorist acts target public places and places of passage, such as museums and train stations. In other words, these acts target all the places where links are created between members of a collectivity. Europe is currently confronted by the emergence of a new world and emblematic figures of Islam in the center of its public life. He is interested in the contradictory reality of religious migrant citizens and non-religious 'native' citizens sharing the same public space without having the impression of belonging to the same space and time. Göle attempts to represent the new European reality disturbed by the appearance of Islam and to understand how its presence in European public spaces produces a feeling of unease.

Göle is explicitly focused on the zones of encounter between Islam and Europe. This book is based on research conducted from 2009 to 2013 for the EuroPublicIslam project on a series of public controversies. The controversies emerged when Muslims demanded the possibility of following Islamic prescriptions in their daily life, an example could be the wearing of the headscarf in public. The research included the use of both group and individual interviews to highlight the individual ways each person interprets and lives their faith. This research aimed to highlight the voices of ordinary Muslims who are rarely included in media debates. Göle aims to reverse the unequal geometry of the media field while also including the viewpoints of non-Muslims, which often get pushed aside from the debates on the Muslim problem. He includes a gendered analysis, noting that the entry of Islam into Europe is occurring in the cultural domain where women are the central figures of its transformation; women are central in controversies surrounding Islam.

He begins with an examination of the violent context of media, political, or literary controversies stemming from the newer Muslim presence in Europe. He then turns to public manifestations of European Islam, or the media controversies around street prayers, the construction of mosques, the women's headscarf, sharia, and halal lifestyles. He argues that the visibility of Muslims and their practices is what garners public attention. He also posits that the courage to appear, or enter the public sphere, is the very proof of citizenship of the Muslim communities of Europe.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Islam has become a decisive factor around which the normative orientation of European societies has become a source of debate
- The lived experience of Muslims in Europe implies a process of interrogation and reflection on the part of Muslims who see their faith and their practices questioned through the prism of perceptions
- Despite national differences, the same recurrence of controversies and convergence in how the Muslim presence is treated, named, and framed is found across Europe