PREFACE

On the completion of any research project, one has the pleasure of remembering all those who, in one way or another, contributed to one’s work. In the process of writing this book, I have had the opportunity to exchange ideas with many colleagues both at home and abroad, to attend different seminars and workshops, and participate in several research projects. Below I will try to acknowledge all those who have helped me in various stages of my research, and if I inadvertently fail to mention somebody or other I apologise for doing so.

First and foremost, I thank those who generously gave me their time for interviews and/or otherwise provided me with material for my research. In Finland, my heartfelt thanks go to Duh Abdal Ali, Hasan Al-Mani, Kadriye Bedredtin, Khodr Chehab, Okan Daher, Dr. Hassan Gubara, Ilona Kuukka, Isra Lehtinen, Arja Sarsama, Marita Uittamo, and Mariam Varjonen. I also thank Mari Karikoski and Hennariikka Lempinen who conducted interviews in the Finnish Islamic communities and among teachers of Islam respectively, and thereby produced valuable data also for this research. Moreover, I also give my thanks to those teachers of Islam who attended a teacher training course organised by the University of Helsinki in 2001 and 2002. My participation in discussions between teachers on this course and attending their classes was a real eye-opener for me regarding the practical difficulties that these teacher have to deal with in their daily work. In observing their teaching, I also learned a lot about Islam and what it is like to live as a Muslim in Finland. In addition, I also want to mention four seminars organised by Pekka Iivonen on the National Board of Education, which dealt with the education of minority religions in Finnish schools. Listening to teachers of different religions in these seminars made me realise how many things are still taken for granted in the wider Finnish society, which very often ignores the minority point of view. These seminars also made me aware how much I, as a comparative religionist, still have to learn about different religions.

In Ireland, my heartfelt thanks go to the following key-figures, be they active in different mosques or working in Muslim national schools, namely Rabia’a Golden, Sheikh Hussein Halawa, Imam
Yahya Al-Hussain, Lalarukh Jovindah, Summayah Kenna, Dr. Saleem Khan, Colm McGlade, Sheikh Imam Mosai, Dr. Ali Qirbi, Dr. Syed Ali Al-Saleh, and Dr. Youssef. Even though I often appeared at very inopportune times with my questions, I was always met with the utmost courtesy and kindness. I will always be very grateful to them for their help with my research and hope that this study will justify the time they spent enlightening this particular foreign researcher. I also apologise for any misunderstandings, on my part, in respect of information they gave me.

With respect to my colleagues abroad, I first and foremost want to thank Professor Felice Dassetto, who has played a key role as an opener of new avenues for my research. His research group on Muslims in Contemporary Western Europe (European Science Foundation) offered me my first contacts with researchers from various countries studying this topic. After this initial stage, the international cooperation for producing a database on Islam in Europe (Eurislam) has given me a chance to exchange ideas not only with Professor Dassetto but also with many other colleagues, namely Stefano Allievi, Marc Bodenstein, Nadia Fadil, Franck Frégosi, Gerdien Jonker, Nico Landman, Brigitte Maréchal, Jordi Moreras and Anne-Laure Zwilling. Operating in a small group which shares a common academic interest—and which is directed by a kind but at the same time very firm chairman such as Professor Dassetto—is a most rewarding experience for any researcher. Therefore, I want to give my warmest thanks to Professor Dassetto for giving me the opportunity of participating in these groups.

As is often the case, contacts easily lead to other contacts and so it happened with me. In addition to cooperating in Professor Dassetto’s group, I had the pleasure of working together closely with Gerdien Jonker, with whom I have shared many joint projects. First, we edited an issue on Muslim women for *Social Compass*, and for this issue gathered together a group of scholars working on this topic, namely Valérie Amiraux, Abdessamad Dialmy, Catharina Raudvere, Anne Sofie Roald, and Marja Tiilikainen. In addition, at Gerdien’s invitation, I had the pleasure of visiting Berlin on two occasions and meet with a small group of scholars enthusiastically working for a joint publication on the visibility of Islam, namely Valérie Amiraux, Stefano Allievi, Welmoet Boender, Nadja Fadil and Philip Lewis. Moreover, Gerdien also arranged for me to participate, as a discussant, in the final conference of the Network on Comparative
Research on Islam and Muslims in Europe, directed by Professor Jocelyne Cesari and held at the Sorbonne. In addition to many of the colleagues listed above, I had an opportunity in this conference to listen to the interesting papers by Jonas Otterbeck and Sean McLoughlin. Recently, Gerdien invited me to join a seminar in Braunschweig on a timely topic regarding Islam in school books, where I truly enjoyed learning about different European countries in this matter. She also put me in contact with Irka Mohr, who generously send me her articles on Islamic education in Germany and Austria. I wish to thank Gerdien, as well as those persons mentioned above, for these invaluable opportunities for the mutual exchange of ideas, which have greatly enriched my research.

Some years ago I had an opportunity to spend an academic year in Ireland as a visiting researcher in the Department of Irish Folklore and Ethnology in University College Cork. For this rewarding experience, I wish to thank Professor Gearóid Ó Crualaoich and Diarmuid Ó Giolláin who kindly invited me to work in their department. In particular, I want to thank Diarmuid who, as a friend and a colleague, has for years been an important base for me and my family on visits to Cork, and who is a frequent visitor to Finland. Perhaps this book can operate as a small token of gratitude for the hospitality shown me in the Department of Irish Folklore and Ethnology. Also on the staff of University College Cork I wish to extent my special thanks to Siobhán Mullally (Department of Law), Piaras Mac Êinrí and Breda Gray (Centre of Migration Studies), Desmond Clarke and Dolores Dooley (Department of Philosophy), and Paulina Chiwangu and Linda Connolly (Department of Sociology). It was Siobhán Mullally who introduced me to the immigrant life in Ireland, and her work on, and experience of, human rights in different countries has been a constant source of inspiration for me. In addition to colleagues in University College Cork, I am also indebted to certain members of the staff of University College Maynooth: Professor Lawrence Taylor and Séamas Ó Siocháin (Department of Anthropology), Etaín Ó Siocháin (John Paul II Library) and Jacinta Prunty (Department of History). I also wish to thank Geraldine Prunty and Derek Hanly for their warm hospitality during my visits to Dublin and for aiding my research in various ways.

My many visits to Ireland have been made more pleasant by the hospitality shown me by my large family there. First, I wish to give special thanks to my father-in-law, Thomas Briody, who has down
through the years received me with open arms. It has always been most entertaining to listen to his reminiscences, extending over ninety years, of the Ireland that used to be. In addition to his pleasant company, his allowing me to work in his beautiful garden on summer holidays has helped me to escape from the stresses of research. My other in-laws have not only facilitated my visits to Ireland but have also aided, in various ways, my research. The year me and my family spent in Ireland was the occasion of much sadness as my mother-in-law, Nora, died during the early part of our stay in Cork. This cast a shadow over the whole year in Ireland, but it also showed how important it is to have a caring family about one, with whom to share both the sorrows and joys of life.

International contacts notwithstanding, naturally those I am most indebted to are in Finland, where I have written up the bulk of my research. First, I thank my colleagues in the Department of Comparative Religion (University of Helsinki) for the most warm, relaxed, and encouraging environment one can hope for. The coffee-room, where news and gossip are exchanged, but where also many important discussions take place, is the heart of the department. At times, it takes a real effort not to join the talk and laughter there, but to stay in one’s room to write and toil. I wish to thank the Head of Department, Professor René Gothóni, for his constant support and encouragement, which he has given me ever since my undergraduate days. In respect of other colleagues in the department, who have helped me in my research, but also in certain positive ways distracted me from it, I thank Titus Hjelm, Elisa Heinämäki, Veronika Honkasalo, Riku Hämäläinen, Mira Karjalainen, Kimmo Ketola, Johanna Konttori, Sonja Pakarinen, Salla Peltonen, Vesa Matteo Piludu, Risto Pulkkinen, Mari Rahkala, Mia Rikala, Katja Ritari, Tom Sjöblom, Salome Tuomaala and Terhi Utriainen. In particular, I wish to thank my friend and colleague Heikki Pesonen, who for years now has shared his insights with me in numerous, ongoing discussions. Being able to discourse, teach, and publish together has been a great help to me in the course of my research.

With respect to this book, I have worked closely with several people. First, I thank my research assistants Mika Lassander, Jussi Niemelä ja Kati Nieminen, who in different periods of time helped me with many practical matters dealing with my research. In particular, I wish to thank Kati, who has always been ready to give a helping hand and has completed her work most efficiently and accurately.
I truly hope that our cooperation will continue in one form or another. Moreover, I thank Katja Ritari for her comments on the history of Ireland and Johanna Konttori for her help with French language texts. Johanna has also joined me in a project for producing a data base of European Islam, and has actually fed in all the information that can be found in this Eurislam-database on Finnish research. It is a most rewarding experience to work together with a young, enthusiastic woman who thoroughly knows her business. With respect to my research, I also had the pleasure of directing two research projects, in one of which, on Muslims in Finland, I worked with Anne Allitoppi-Niitamo, Tuomas Martikainen and Marja Tiilikainen, and in the other, on multicultural education, I worked with Tarja Ehnqvist, Antti Räsänen and Mirja Talib. Thank you all for such fruitful cooperation, which I know, for sure, will not end here. Every success to your current projects!

In addition to these research projects, in recent years, I have also participated as a director in a project, funded by the Ministry of Education, for planning university education for teachers of different religions in Finnish schools, such as Islam. In this project, Annukka Jamisto, who acted as the project secretary, undertook the bulk of the work. Presently, Annukka and I are in the process of editing a book on the education of minority religions in Finland, and this, no doubt, will keep us busy for a while yet. In addition to Annukka, I thank my colleagues in the Department of Applied Education, Professor Arto Kallioniemi and Eero Salmenkivi, who have been active in planning the pedagogical side of the above-mentioned teacher training. At an earlier stage, I also worked with Matti Meri, Markku Pyysäläinen and Viive Toomesaar, from the same department. There is yet a lot of work to be done in this field and I am most grateful for having such pleasant partners to work with. Thank you for this. I also thank Vesa Nikkilä and Tuula Jääskeläinen in the Faculty of Humanities, who have greatly helped me in planning and funding this project. Finally, I want to thank Armi Mikkola in the Ministry of Education and Pekka Ilvonen on the National Board of Education for being so understanding for our ‘cause’.

No research is possible without proper funding. Therefore, I thank the Academy of Finland for its generous funding for four consecutive years of my research, which made it possible for me to build international networks and spend a whole year in Ireland. Part of this research was conducted in the Academy’s Research Programme
on Marginalisation, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland (SYREENI). In addition to the Academy of Finland, I also wish to thank the Network of European Studies (University of Helsinki) and the Niilo Helander Foundation for providing funding for my research. Moreover, I thank Brill for accepting my book for publication, and, in this connection, extend my particular thanks to Trudy Kamperveen, who acted as a kind but very effective editor of this volume. I also thank the anonymous reader of my manuscript whose comments helped me to put this book in perspective both with respect to its merits and failings.

Finally, I thank my dear ones: Micheál, Katariina and Tuomas, not forgetting our family pet, Nasta. At the same time, I need to apologise my children, Katariina and Tuomas, for being a mother who ‘is always working’, and sincerely promise to mend my ways. Fortunately, there is more to life than work—however interesting it may be. Thank you for helping me to keep things in the right order. I also thank my mother and sisters for sharing with me, on a day-to-day basis, the ups and downs in the lives of our respective families. Last but not least, I dedicate this work to my husband Micheál, who has lived in ‘exile’ in Finland for over twenty years. Thank you for all these years and may many more be in store for us.

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