BULGARIA

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1 Muslim Populations

At the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans conquered the disintegrating medieval Bulgarian kingdom. Subsequently, Islam spread through the mass resettlement of Anatolian Turks, on the one hand, and through the conversion of the local Christian population, on the other. Ottoman rule lasted until 1878, when Bulgaria gained territorial autonomy. A mass exodus of Muslims followed. In 1881, an estimated 578,000 Muslims still lived in Bulgaria, comprising 28.8% of the total population. In 1900, the number of Muslims was 643,300, or 17.18% of the population, while in 1946 the number of Muslims had risen to 938,418, although in terms of percentage of the population, they were only 13.3%.

According to the 2001 census, there are 966,978 Muslims in Bulgaria, comprising 12.2% of the population. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis of the Hanafi school. An earlier census (1992), which also included data on the population by ethnic and sectarian affiliation,

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2 For the history of Islam in Bulgaria in general, see: Zhelyazkova, Antonina, Bozhidar Alexiev and Zhorzheta Nazarska (eds), Myusulmanskite obshtnosti na Balkaneite i v Bulgaria [Muslim Communities in the Balkans and in Bulgaria] (Sofia: International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR), 1997); Gradeva, Rossitsa (ed.), Istoriya na myusulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi (History of Muslim Culture in Bulgarian Lands) (Sofia: IMIR, 2007).


For studies on Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, see: Eminov, Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities; Neuburger, Mary, The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Ghodsee, Kristin, Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
indicated that 7.7% of Muslims were Alevi (also called Aliani or Kizilbashi).\textsuperscript{6} As far as ethnic groups are concerned, the Turks\textsuperscript{7} are concentrated in the south-east and north-east of Bulgaria and account for 75.3% of all Muslims in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (descendants of Slavic Bulgarians who converted to Islam under Ottoman rule), also known as Pomaks,\textsuperscript{8} are concentrated in the central and western Rhodope mountains in southern Bulgaria and make up 13.5%; the Roma (dispersed throughout the whole country), some 40% of whom are Muslims, amount to 10.5%. The tiny Tatar community has some 4,500 members living in north-eastern Bulgaria. The 2001 census indicated that Muslims are the majority population in Kardzhali district in south-east Bulgaria (69.9%) and in the Razgrad district in north-eastern Bulgaria (53.7%). Most Muslims live in rural areas, and have been seriously affected by the economic crisis following the collapse of communism. The results of the two censuses showed that between 1992 and 2001 the number of Muslims decreased by 143,317. This has been explained by the emigration of Muslims to more prosperous countries (Turkey and various Western countries are preferred destinations rather than the Arab world) and, to a much lesser degree, by the conversion of some Pomaks to Orthodox Christianity and to various Protestant denominations.\textsuperscript{9}


