Multi-voiced-ness of Religious Identity
Contribution of Ömer Faruk Gürlesin to the Collaborative Session of REA 2018

Introduction
Over the past three decades Islam has become increasingly visible in the European public space. Despite Islam’s rapid growth in Europe and the Netherlands, many in the West know little about the religion. The reality of European Islam is very diverse. The differences are related to national, cultural, religious and linguistic elements and these elements. In the present study, we were explored the inner differences of Dutch-Turkish religiosity in relation to social, economic, and cultural aspects. By means of this exploration we examined the possible directions Islam is taking in Europe. We seek a middle ground between two types of essentialist argumentation: one is to theorize incompatibility between Islam and European culture, and the other is to theorize Compatibility between them. As many scholars who study Muslim society have noted, Islam, like any other religion, does not develop in a monolithic form, whether it is hostile to European values or assimilated, as the term ‘Euro-Islam’ suggests. It develops in a multiplicity of forms, such as political Islam, official Islam, popular Islam, spiritual Islam and radical fundamentalism, combining both radical and moderate religious voices.

One of the main objectives of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge about the characteristics of religiosity of Turkish-Dutch Muslims in plural Dutch society, in relation to socio-economic aspects of the Dutch plural society.

The main research questions are (1) ‘What forms and motivations characterize elite and popular religiosity, what are the patterns in the relationship between elite and popular religiosity, and how does this relate to the socio-economic status of Dutch-Turkish Muslims living in the Netherlands?’ (2) ‘What are the socio-psychological differences in behaviour and attitudes among Dutch-Turkish Muslims who experience elite and popular religiosity, respectively?’

In this presentation I give information about preliminary findings of a PhD project on religiosity among Dutch-Turkish muslims. My research question was ‘Which forms and motivations characterize elite and popular religiosity, what are the patterns of relationship between elite and popular religiosity and how is this related to the socio-economic status of Dutch-Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands?’ To answer this question I started with a literature review on the concepts of elite and popular religiosity. Next to that I interviewed key persons (instrument of qualitative
research). The literature review and the interviews gave information for the construction of the questionnaire, the main part of this research (instrument of quantitative research). In this presentation in section 1 I first discuss the general characteristics of elite and popular religiosity in Islam, and see in what way both concepts show similarity and differences. Then, in the second section, I give information about the survey. In the third section I present a summary of the major findings. In paragraph 3.1 I pay attention to a promising theoretical framework that might help to understand the complexity of religiosity of Dutch-Turkish muslims in the Netherlands. And last but not least, section 4 is the discussion-section, including recommendations for further research.

1. **General characteristics of elite and popular religiosity in Islam**

This study sheds light on the notion of elite and popular religion and its acquired meaning and content in the social scientific study of religion. We explain Weber’s status stratification and rational choice theories in order to clarify elite and popular religion from a sociological perspective. In this study it is then proposed adding a different definition of ‘elite’ based on a synthesis approach. It holds that: ‘Popular religion’ is constituted by specific types of religious praxis and belief exercised by generally socially and economically non-privileged strata. The definition of elite religion takes shape as follows: ‘Elite religion’ is constituted by specific types of religious praxis and belief exercised by strata that are generally socially and economically privileged. Thus, according to this definitions we assumed that certain objective positions within the social field generally ‘go hand in hand with’ certain forms of religiosity.

The literature and our sample suggests a number of demographic and socio-economic factors that might explain why Dutch-Turkish Muslims generally experience popular religiosity. The focus is on the dynamic interrelationship of elite and popular religiosity and its relation to the socio-economic situation in the Netherlands in the light of our findings. Several factors will be discussed that possibly are related to elite and popular religiosity, like ‘Immigration and religiosity’ and ‘Educational status and religiosity’, ‘Age’, ‘Gender and religiosity’ and ‘Economic status and religiosity’. Last but not least we discuss the issue of Imam education and Diyanet’s position of producing Islamic knowledge in relation to elite and popular religiosity.

2. **Methodology**
The design of the present study has been shaped by a ‘mixed-methods’ approach, in which quantitative and qualitative methods are merged into one research project. Within a four-year period (2010 - 2013), the project began with qualitative research to explore the various forms and motivations of elite and popular religiosity and the social location of these religiosities, focusing on Dutch-Turkish Muslims. One of the essential instruments we used was participant observation. The research design also included an extensive literature review, so that the results of the qualitative research and literature review could serve as a basis for aspects of the quantitative approach. The second method was a questionnaire survey that formed the main part of the project. Inspired by Allport’s definition of the two ideal types intrinsic/extrinsic (1967), our definition of elite/popular shows a clear development towards viewing the phenomena as types of motive, i.e., we zoom in on the motivations associated with religious beliefs and practices. We use the term ‘form’ to refer to the cognitive styles of religious beliefs and practices. In this study, then, the elite/popular distinction is operationalized as a measurement of two different kinds of motivations or cognitive styles in each of the dimensions (ideological, ritualistic, experiential and intellectual) which divide each of these dimensions in two sub dimensions, ‘elite’ and ‘popular’. For instance, within the ideological dimension of religiosity, what will be measured is not the belief-content itself, but elite/popular motivations or cognitive styles shaping the belief. These two different kinds of motivations or cognitive styles measured within each of the dimensions can be called ‘elite motivations and cognitive styles of religiosity’ and ‘popular motivations and cognitive styles of religiosity’.

A survey was conducted among Turkish Muslims from all parts of the Netherlands. There were 649 male and 516 female Turkish Muslim participants, ranging in age from 18 to 68. Before the quantitative part of this study, observations and informal interviews took place with 60 parents whose children attended Qur’an weekend schools. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to establish further demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part was designed to obtain information regarding the ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual and consequential aspect of religion. The third part of the questionnaire consists of two scales: The Elite Religiosity Scale and the Popular Religiosity Scale, both developed especially for the Dutch-Turkish Muslim communities.

3. Major findings
Factor analyses and correlation analyses performed on the Elite Religiosity Scale and the Popular Religiosity Scale, showed that participants who experience elite religiosity tend to stress doubt and dynamism within the ideological aspect of religiosity. Within the ritualistic aspect, they tend to emphasize the intrinsic value of rituals (i.e., focus on quality). Within the intellectual aspect, they underline the importance of doubt about the validity of their current religious knowledge, and the dynamism of religious learning. Within the experiential aspect of religiosity, they consider miraculous religious experiences (special gifts from God in exchange for their religious effort) to be relatively unimportant: for them it is essential to keep these private. Participants who experience popular religiosity tend to stress the sureness and the stability of their current beliefs within the ideological aspect of religiosity. Within the ritualistic aspect, they emphasize the extrinsic value of rituals (i.e., focus on quantity) and they express material expectations. Within the intellectual aspect, they tend to be sure of their current religious knowledge and place intellectual stability at the centre. Within the experiential aspect of religiosity, they consider miraculous religious experiences to be an appropriate and necessary part of religious commitment, and they are eager to report such experiences to others.

Based on the analysis of the survey and the interviews, some structural characteristic of a new Muslim religiosity scale are suggested, which range from popular religiosity at one end to elite religiosity at the other. These two extremes reflect several components, which include belief (īmān), practice (ʿamal), knowledge (ʿilm/maʿrifah), experience (maʿnāt/ilhām) and consequence (nātijah). The present study identified several characteristics distinguishing elite religiosity from popular religiosity: Dynamism versus stability, critical versus uncritical, without material expectancy versus material expectancy, differentiated versus undifferentiated, experiential inessentiality and privacy versus experiential desirability and shareability, tolerant versus intolerant, unprejudiced versus prejudiced.

Factor analyses and correlation analyses within the two scales show that respondents in this research project who experience *elite religiosity* tend to emphasize doubting and dynamism within the ideological aspect of religiosity. They tend to emphasize the intrinsic value of the ritual (quality) within the ritualistic aspect of religiosity. They also highlight doubting about the validity of their current religious knowledge and dynamism of religious learning within the intellectual aspect of religiosity. They also see miraculous religious experiences (special divine gifts from the
God in exchange for their religious effort) as relatively unimportant and for them it is essential to keep these private within the experiential aspect of religiosity.

Respondents in this research project who experience popular religiosity tend to emphasize the sureness and stability of their current beliefs within the ideological aspect of religiosity. They emphasize the extrinsic value (quantity) of ritual and material expectations within the ritualistic aspect of religiosity. They also tend to be sure of their current religious knowledge and centralize intellectual stability within the intellectual aspect of religiosity. They see religious experiences as appropriate and necessary parts of religious commitment and they are eager to report such experiences within the experiential aspect of religiosity.

Interesting is the group of respondents that shows characteristics of both types of religiosity: popular and elite religiosity. The present study acknowledges the ‘muddleheadedness’ (Allport, 1967, p. 439) of some of the respondents’ religiosity and suggests that the DST offers an interesting theoretical framework for an explanation and further exploration of this phenomenon.

4. Discussion and recommendation
In this study we also explored ‘What are the patterns in the relationship between elite and popular religiosity with regard to Dutch-Turkish Muslims living in the Netherlands’. We hypothesized that ‘Elite and popular forms of religiosity are negatively correlated with each other’. We indeed found a negative correlation between elite religiosity and popular religiosity ($r = -0.72$), as expected. However, this does not mean that there is a clear differentiation between the two forms of religiosity, since we found that 66 (7.3%) respondents experienced aspects of both types simultaneously. Moreover, the respondents who are labelled as displaying ‘elite religiosity’ are not completely opposed to popular forms of religiosity, and vice versa. So there is an important aspect that needs to be stressed before the relationship between elite and popular religiosity can be discussed. This concerns the simultaneous experience of both types of religiosity that appears to be characteristic of a significant number of respondents, as described in the previous chapter. Allport, faced with comparable results in his studies, criticized the logic of these respondents and tried to resolve this puzzle by describing the endorsement of both ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ positions as “muddleheadedness” (Allport, 1967, p. 439). Pargament et al. reacted to this blunt statement by stating that scoring high on the two orientations is not necessarily logically
inconsistent, in the sense that people both “live” (intrinsic) and “use” (extrinsic) their religion (Pargament, 1997, pp. 65-66). Based on the findings of this study, we would rather speak of a contextualized domination of one type of religiosity over another type, or in Hermans’ conceptualization, of the dominant position of one ‘voice’ over others at a given time and under specific circumstances (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). The concepts of religious ‘voice’ and position, and the Dialogical Self Theory (DST), can shed new light on the way in which individuals orchestrate their various voiced religious positions in so-called I-positions in the ‘society of mind’ (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Hermans defines the dialogical self as a dynamic multiplicity of I-positions.

In the most succinct way, the dialogical self can be conceived of as a dynamic multiplicity of I-positions. In this view, the I emerges from its intrinsic contact with the (social) environment and is bound to particular positions in time and space. As such, the embodied I is able to move from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. In this process of positioning, repositioning and counterpositioning, the I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions (both within the self and between the self and perceived or imagined others), and these positions are involved in relationships of relative dominance and social power. As part of sign-mediated social relations, positions can be voiced so that dialogical exchanges among positions can develop. The voices behave like interacting characters in a story or movie, involved in processes of question and answer, agreement and disagreement, conflicts and struggles, negotiations and integrations. Each of them has a story to tell about their own experiences from their own perspective. As different voices, these characters exchange knowledge and information about their respective me’s, creating a complex, narratively structured self (Hermans, 2016, pp. 2-3).

A strong key metaphor in DST is that of ‘voice’. When people take different positions, they tell different stories about themselves originating from different so-called I-positions. All voices are coloured by the ideas, values, expectations and behavioural patterns of the different social and cultural groups of which an individual is a member. Other persons and cultural groups manifest themselves as voices speaking in the self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

For Hermans, ‘religion’ seems to have two meanings: ‘traditional religiosity’ and ‘individual spirituality’. Hermans connects the traditional religious view with the traditional model of the self, and individual spirituality with the modern and postmodern model of the self. These conceptualizations include characteristics and motivations which are similar to those included in
our conceptualizations of elite and popular religiosity, such as: reflective versus uncritical, openness to change versus closedness to change, associational versus communal, universal versus parochial, differentiated versus undifferentiated, personal versus institutional, and humility versus dogmatism. According to the traditional model of the self, “the self is not an autonomous entity but rather an integral part of a sacred whole” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 84). “The God of the traditional model is a sovereign who wishes humans to obey him, instead of getting involved in a mutual dialogue” (ibid., p. 85). Within this model “the hierarchical system suppresses individual autonomy and freedom” (ibid., p. 86), and “there is a strong belief in fate and destiny” (ibid., pp. 98-99). The modern model of the self questioned these characteristics and found its justification not in a sacred order, but in the self as a sovereign, reflexive self. In the postmodern model of the self, the sovereign self is deconstructed as a multiple, fragmented, and decentred self, under the influence of diverse and constantly changing cultural forces (Zock, 2013, p. 19).

Hermans does not see a strict distinction between these three models. He argues that a previous model of the self does not become completely obsolete in a subsequent stage, emphasizing that aspects of the traditional self are still present in the modern and postmodern self. He claims that traditional religion can easily go off the rails - reducing, contesting, and even replacing the reflexivity, autonomy, and openness that are dominant characteristics of the modern and postmodern self. Hermans draws attention to the ontological insecurity accompanying the complexity and diversity of the postmodern condition humaine. According to Hermans, religious fundamentalism is an emotional and defensive coping mechanism to deal with the insecurity caused by the plurality and the fragmentation of the postmodern world. The voice of “fundamentalism” can be strong or weak depending on the context. According to Hermans, traditional religion is an important source of defensive localization (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 114).

This study acknowledges the ‘muddleheadedness’ of the religiosity of some participants, and suggests that DST provides a promising theoretical framework for an elaboration and further explanation of this phenomenon. Our quantitative analysis focused mainly on participants who strongly experienced either elite or popular religiosity. In our research we mainly analyzed the data of those individuals who disagreed with or were in conflict with the other religious voice. But this does not mean that the other religious voice is completely absent and rejected in such individuals. On the contrary, certain circumstances led respondents to express themselves with certain religious voices and these expressions may change as circumstances change. If we look,
for example, at the participants who simultaneously expressed elite and popular religiosity, we can say that these different religious voices can, to a certain extent, be reconciled, even if they show very different and contradictory forms and motivations - just as postmodern relativism has drawn attention to the coexistence of disparate views and interpretations, even within one and the same person (Droogers, 2012, p. 72). More research is recommended for the phenomenon of what was called ‘muddleheadedness’ or in DST terminology ‘multi-voiced-ness’ to arrive at a better understanding, which is expected to help us in the prevention of radicalization of young muslims in the Netherlands.


