

Book Reviews

Abdulkader Tayob, *Islam: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 178 pp., ISBN 1-85168-192-2

On first reading *Islam: A Short Introduction*, I whispered in protest that the subtitle was an understatement. Before I could put pen on paper to point out why I felt this way, a review of this book appeared in a local Muslim tabloid (see *al-Qalam*, December 1999). To my dismay, even this review endorsed the work as falling within the genre of the introductory text.

Such a simple reading hides the richness and value of the work under review. I will not deal with all the issues tackled in this book. In fact, each item deserves a separate commentary of its own. Instead, I select a few points, and attempt to unpack what I deem to be the most salient themes.

Besides chapter 4, reading from the chapter titles, it is discernible that most of the central themes revolve around the mosque. As the previous reviewer has succinctly put it, the author of *Islam: A Short Introduction* assumes the role of a virtual-reality tour guide. I find the metaphor of a tour guide not only apt here, but equally powerful for capturing the unique style of the author. Whereas the official guide takes the audience to safe areas, the unofficial ventures to trouble-infested zones. I would like to classify the author as the latter, that is, the unofficial guide - the subversive guide, so to speak.

My first observation is that, unlike most Islamic works of this nature, the author has not only skilfully tackled issues that threaten the very survival of Islam, but has equally succeeded in bringing to the centre what I would call suppressed voices in Islamic historiography and scholarship.

To start with, the book opens by bringing Bilal to the centre and thus accords this Companion of the Prophet the honour he deserves (see pp. 1-5). I do not mean to suggest that Bilal has been wiped out from Muslim history. On the contrary, he is always present - but only as the insignificant other - a former slave. In such a context Bilal then represents the underclass and symbolizes the periphery in the power dynamics within Islam. There could therefore be no more appropriate way to launch the opening chapter than with Bilal. Arguably, at a theoretical and

methodological level, this signifies extending the frontiers of reference for a much more inclusive Islamic historiography and scholarship.

Seemingly, chapter 2 adopts a similarly (subversive) strategy. Around the theme of sacred space in the mosque, the complex issue of gender in Islam is introduced. The unsuspecting reader may be fascinated with only the (aesthetics) of the mosque. However, to really appreciate what is at play here, you must go to the subtext of the discourse on (sacred space) (pp. 72-84). Through skilful and cautious treatment of the problem of (gendered space), the author explores gender imbalances within normative Islam.

In chapter 4, the author uses the *miṣrāb* (prayer niche), notably to (introduce) the subject of Islamic devotion, and yet engages in serious theological issues. These issues, though familiar, are then brought forward to the readers with striking freshness and insight (p. 86). Now from what seems to be a simple discourse on the *miṣrāb*, an exposé of complex theological issues stemming from the different schools of thought is given. These schools, to cite a few, range from the more radical Khārijites to the rationalist Muṭazilites. Here the reader is presented with some of the divergent theological points of difference and also given a clue to the context underpinning the emergence of these schools. Of significance, though, is how the theme of difference is subtly highlighted. Arguably, this runs against the general tendency in Muslim scholarship which tends to emphasize the homogeneity of the *umma*. As a departure from this meta-narrative on the *umma*, the author stresses the diverse and multiple character of this *umma*. To illustrate this, the author contextualizes the *Ṣaḥīfā* [treaty] of Medina (as signifying a political act that guarantees that (individual tribes were not eliminated or denied their identities) (pp. 108-11), but were protected.

Again, moving to chapter 5, the subversive tenor in this text seems to resurface. Here the issue of (power and authority in Islam) is tackled. In particular, this section deals with the symbol of the *minbar* (pulpit). Here by way of an opening epigraph, (Is it not sufficient that you are standing whilst the people are sitting?), the power dynamics and (fragile) nature of leadership in Islam accentuated. Naturally, this runs against the popular inclination of presenting Islamic history in triumphant terms, as a (golden period) free from tensions.

If, in the author's own words, the previous chapters were an (exploration of symbols, values and images of Islam), the last chapter concludes differently. Here, the author grapples with the elusive theme of

globalization. In particular, the discussion centres around its impact on cultures, specifically religious traditions. In a reflexive fashion, the author argues that globalization has forced traditions to undergo change. For Tayob the question is to what extent has globalization compelled, for instance, Islam to undergo change (p. 140). Under normal circumstances, to charge that Islam is changing would be viewed as blasphemy of the worst kind. However, by picking up a familiar theme such as globalization, readers are gently channelled towards an appreciation that even a tenacious tradition such as Islam is not spared from change. For instance, this is well captured by the author when he writes, 'In spite of fiery rhetoric - there seems to be a transformation of religious practices almost imperceptible to those who belong to a particular tradition' (p. 144).

At the methodological level the book is equally satisfying. For a discipline like religious studies which is often accused of having a 'hybrid nature', and by implication a lack of methodological coherence, Tayob's stance becomes more appreciable. The worthiness of the methodological stance adopted by Tayob, as he has observed, is that of avoiding 'the tendency to oversimplify the complex questions concerning religion in the modern world'. It is precisely because of this point that Richard Martin comments at length elsewhere about the importance of paying sufficient attention to methodological frameworks in the study of religion (see Richard C. Martin, *Islamic Studies: A History of Religious Studies Approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1996, p. xii).

Finally, the mark of a good book is the ability to capture the attention of the reader. Here too this book does not fail. In particular, it is the subtle, not so provocative, yet strategic insertions that mark the complexity and brilliance in Tayob's narrative. These elements alone mark out Tayob's book as one of the seminal texts of Islam to have emerged recently.

However, notwithstanding the foregoing remarks, I still find the author guilty of 'complicity'. By playing to the gallery that applauds the book as an 'introduction', Tayob has minimized the value of his own work.

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William C. Chittick, *Sufism - A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), x, 180 pp., ISBN 1-85168-211-2

Following a series of similar books published in recent years, here is yet another work written by an American Islamicist with the intention of introducing the wider public to the world of Sufism from a scholarly perspective. Presumably aimed in the first place at providing the growing number of religious studies students in the western hemisphere with a comprehensible but comprehensive guide to the fascinating world of Islamic spirituality, it is the author's self-declared aim to find a middle way between academic obscurity and enthusiast advocacy. Chittick thereby wants to provide the reader with a genuine alternative to the infinite number of publications that have flooded the market ever since Sufism was 'discovered' by the promoters of neo-spiritualism in the wake of the New Age movement.

The ten chapters of the book consist of ten independent essays that try to delineate, each from a different angle, a series of unifying themes central to Sufism, such as the Sufi path (chapter 1), the remembrance of God (chapter 5) and the way of love (chapter 6). By integrating numerous, in some cases extensive, passages from the Qur'an, the *úadúth* and original Sufi works into the main text, the author intends to let these themes unfold themselves from within the tradition they belong to, trying to limit the superimposition of his own conceptual schemes to a minimum. Although the degree of success varies from chapter to chapter, the uninitiated reader is gradually familiarized with some of the most characteristic expressions of Islamic spirituality during the first millennium of this great world religion. But in spite of the earnest attempt not to overload the text with a technical terminology in Arabic or Persian, some preliminary knowledge of the topic makes many rather complex and abstract conceptions easier.

The first chapter, concerned with the Sufi path (*arkqa*) at large, points out the genuinely Islamic context of Sufism, going against the stereotyped but still common image forged in the past among orientalists and Islamic fundamentalists alike of Sufism and its various expressions as alien to Islam. Starting from the famous *úadúth* of Gabrielú that outlines the *Dúin al-Islúem* as consisting of three basic dimensions, *islúem* (submission and correct action through the body), *imúen* (faith and correct understanding through the mind) and *úsúen* (the virtue of 'doing the beautiful' or correct seeing through the spirit), Chittick asserts the spiritual dimension of the Sufi teachings in all their regional variety that developed over the centuries as being firmly embedded in the religious domain of the Islamic law

(*sharʿa*). However, keeping in view the idea of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) constantly reaffirmed by all Muslims in the testimony of faith (*shahāda*), those doing the beautiful prefer to focus on God's attributes of mercy, love and beauty rather than on those of wrath and severity stressed by the legalists.

The following three chapters analyse the Sufi tradition in the light of its definition as the interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice (p. 18). Chapter 2 reiterates the concepts of *islām*, *imān* and *iḥsān* based on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ-i ʿUlūm al-Dīn* introducing a series of fundamental technical terms by inserting them into the framework that intimately links Sufi theory with Sufi practice.

Chapter 3, concerned with name and reality, introduces the concept of directly inspired knowledge (*maʿrifa* or *irfān*) attained through so-called unveilings as distinguished from knowledge attained through learning (*ʿilm*) based on rational thinking. Based on sayings of the Prophet and quoting early Sufis such as Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, the author shows that from the early age of Islam gnostics and theologians shared the view that the only real object of knowledge is God, but whereas the latter's analytical approach cannot but conclude the otherness and remoteness of God it is the Sufi's simultaneous acquisition of self-knowledge and God-knowledge that culminates in the experience of God's nearness (*qurbat*) as indicated by the famous Qur'anic verse: 'And We are nearer to him than the jugular vein' (Qur'an 50:16).

To achieve this goal the searcher of truth must purify his soul (*tazkiya-i nafs*), yet another Qur'anic term that frequently recurs in Sufi texts and said to lead ultimately to prosperity, which, translated into the language of the gnostic, leads to the annihilation of one's individual self (*fanā*) and its subsistence (*baqā*) in God. The theoretical background for this process is described in chapter 4 followed by chapter 5 which, under the title 'The remembrance of God', provides the reader with the Sufi's understanding of the practical means to reach this aim, the all-important *dhikr*, explaining its wider meaning as ranging from a general awareness of man's relationship with his creator to the highly sophisticated technique of invoking repeatedly a specific sacred syllable, elaborated by some orders and based essentially on the science of rhythm.

The last five chapters of Chittick's book certainly represent his most fascinating contribution. In Chapter 6 we are introduced to the way of love which, together with the emphasis on action laid by the *sharʿa* and that on knowledge stressed by the more sober-minded Sufi intellectuals,

shows an interesting parallel with the tripartition of the *yoga* discipline of self-realization into *karma*, *jnāna* and *bhakti*. Again it is from a Prophetic tradition, the famous *Wādih* of the Hidden Treasure, that Chittick traces the development of the fundamental concept of love for and from God in the teachings of the shaykhs. Carefully balancing the colourful poetic language of (mainly) Maulana Rāḥimī's *Mathnawī* and *Kulliyat*, and the intellectual acuteness of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Meccan revelations (*Futūḥ al-Makkiyya*), the reader is enraptured by the force of love's creativity that reiterates the cosmological process described by altering Rāḥimī's *ghazals* and the penetrating style of the prose of Shaikh al-Akbar which, in our opinion, will convince even the sceptical reader of the powerful dimension of love inherent in the intimate core of Islam.

Chapter 7, the longest and the most exciting of the book, entitled 'The never-ending dance', in a sense resumes the entire work as it sets out, through the metaphoric image of the dance, to describe the cosmological process of creating multiplicity from unity and its subsequent return to the original domain in 'God's storehouse'. Drawing consistently from his knowledge of Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysical doctrine known as *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Chittick recreates with great expertise the journey of the human creature from the moment of the 'Covenant of the Alast' to the stage of human perfection commonly described among ḥanafīs as *al-insān al-kāmil*.

Chapters 8 and 9 provide two innovative images of the ḥanafī doctrine based on the works of two lesser-known ḥanafī authorities. The first of these is Bahā' Walad (d. 1230), the father of Maulana Rāḥimī and author of a little-known work called *Maʿarīf* (a study on him has been published recently by the German scholar Fritz Meier) which contains a series of meditations on God's presence in the matters of daily life. Through a number of extensive quotations rendered through Chittick's own translations, the chapter introduces the non-specialist reader to the subtle beauty of Persian poetry.

Similarly, chapter 9 introduces the relatively unstudied prose work *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asma al-Malik* by the twelfth-century scholar from Marw Ahmad Samʿāni (d. 1140), the first detailed work on the names of Allāh in the Persian language. The chapter's theme, developing around the fall of Adam, retells the story of the 'father of all prophets' as related in the Qurʾān in its esoteric interpretation proposed by Samʿāni. The text thereby investigates once more, from a different perspective, the elevated position of mankind derived from the unique double nature that guarantees its participation in both the clay of Adam's body and the spirit infused to it

through God's vitalizing breath.

It is through the paradoxical image of the veil, in Sufi literature often described as a barrier between God and His creatures and the luminous ray itself, that those who possess the true knowledge attain a vision of God through the unveiled heart which has died to itself (cf. Qur'an 24:35). The book concludes by returning to its point of departure, Bushanji's affirmation that whereas once Sufism was a reality without a name it later came to be a name without a reality. As Niffari points out: "God said to me: You will not stand in vision until you see My veil as vision and My vision as veil."

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Goolam Muneer Fareed, *Legal Reform in the Muslim World: The Anatomy of a Scholarly Dispute in the Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries on the Usage of Ijtihād as a Legal Tool* (San Francisco: Austin and Winfield, 1996) vi, 171 pp., ISBN 1-57292-002-5 (paper); 1-57292-003-3 (cloth)

Legal reform has been a contentious issue in Islamic societies for over a hundred years, and Fareed's book helps to place the key positions in perspective. He achieves this by bringing into focus the varying definitions of and approaches to *ijtihād*. Focusing on a key concept in a vast area provides some useful insights. It is often said that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. The book under review may be used as a testimony against those who choose to deal with this topic and ignore the rich contemporary history of legal reform.

The book consists of seven chapters, and focuses on the key representatives of Islamic legal approaches to *ijtihād*. Most of the positions represented are from the Arab Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. It is implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, assumed that other Muslim positions could be accommodated among Ḥabībullah, Mawdoodi, Thanwi and the like. In this regard, the book may be thought to outline the broad paradigms of legal thinking on *ijtihād*.

Chapter 1 sets the terms and definitions of *ijtihād* and the variety of contemporary Islamic trends. Chapter 2 sets out the author's understanding of the use of *ijtihād* in Islamic history. In this regard, he accepts, with some reservations, the general outline of the development of law as presented by Schacht and Rahman. With particular reference to *ijtihād*, he posits the view that *ijtihād* was only employed by pre-Shāfiʿī scholars. There is an implicit assumption here that *ijtihād* is strictly speaking the juristic exercise not directly linked to a specific text or to the Prophet. In this sense, Shāfiʿī may be credited with the distinction of bringing to a close the practice of *ijtihād*.

Chapters 3 to 5 deal successively with views of the modernists, the *salafiyya* and the Islamists. The modernists include Afghānī, Ḥabībullah, Iqbal and to a certain extent Rashīd Riḍā. Fareed demonstrates that they are mainly concerned with trying to move into the future without destroying the past (p. 75). Their notion of *ijtihād*, in general, is driven by change and modernization. On the other hand, the *salafiyya*, the subject of the next chapter, are represented by Riḍā in his anti-Western mode, the Zaydī al-Shawkānī and Ahle ḥādīth of India. For them, *ijtihād* is a process of

returning to the original sources of Islamic law, the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. The two groups agree with each other on scholars opposed to *ijtihād*. Both regard the anti-*ijtihād* scholars as obstacles to progress and fidelity to true Islam, respectively. Chapter 5 deals with the views of the Islamists. Fareed shows how this group is closer to the *salafiyya* of chapter 4, but *ijtihād* for them is transformed into a legislative element of a modern state. Fareed, however, shows how the efforts of Mawdoodi in Pakistan fail hopelessly to overcome the sectarian nature of legal belonging and thinking.

Chapter 6 deals with the major opponents of *ijtihād* and suggests (and I emphasize suggests) how the legal question may have had political ramifications in the Middle East, and ḥukm connotations in India. In both cases, it is the ṭanafīs who oppose *ijtihād*. In the Middle East, the question is part of a larger attempt by the Ottomans to Islamize the administration. Proponents of *ijtihād* may be regarded in terms of their opposition to the Ottoman attempts to enforce ṭanafism. In India, on the other hand, Fareed's convincing analysis shows how the perception of the weakness of individual conscience drives the fears of the anti-*ijtihād* approach. The conclusion brings the various positions together, and argues that Muslim scholars present a whole range of approaches to *ijtihād*. The author concludes with a suggestion that Islamic thought may be connected with a whole range of factors, some of which he has briefly discussed.

The book sets out to document the various positions on a crucial concept. It has done so extremely well, and helps to contrast the diversity of views. Like many other concepts in modern Islam, *ijtihād* became a malleable symbol shaped in the religious and political history of modern Islam. The latter point is mentioned quite frequently by the author, but the implication thereof needs greater attention. Sometimes the author appears to be saying that *ijtihād* does not offer much scope for positive, substantial aspects of Islamic law. At other times he seems to be suggesting that a more systematic definition and process of *ijtihād* is required. If the first is suggested, then one may ask what drives and motivates modern Islamic legal thinking. If the second is true, then Fareed's book has demonstrated that legal reform must go beyond legal definitions. Social, political and other religious issues must be addressed, as *ijtihād* is not a sufficient analytical category. While Fareed provides some leads in this direction, he does not deal with these issues comprehensively enough.

As I said at the beginning, the book deserves the attention of scholars interested in promoting legal thought. The book, however, is also useful to understand pressures on Islamic societies to change, modernize, and now

globalize. *Ijtihad* becomes a prism through which broader changes, within and beyond law, may be understood and reconciled.

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John Cooper, Ronald Nettler and Mohamed Mahmoud (eds.),
Islam and Modernity: Muslim Intellectuals Repond (London:
 I. B. Taurus, 1998), xii, 228 pp., ISBN 186064-175-X

This is an excellent anthology of articles on how some well-known Muslim intellectuals have responded to modernity. In an introductory essay, Derek Hopwood clarifies to a limited extent what modernity and modernization have meant for people in the Middle East. This essay is theoretically weak and concentrates instead on the manner in which change has been perceived in Muslim society. Thus, for example, modernity is identified with rational choice and conformity with tradition, modernism with futuristic development, and tradition with commitment to the past (pp. 2-3). On the other hand, modernity was also associated with something coming from the outside, particularly the West. The complexity of 'being modern' is amplified by virtue of this second factor. Hopwood mentions this factor perfunctorily, but the results are clearly evident in the nine essays that follow.

In fact, this dimension of the 'other' in the experience of modernity deserves greater attention. Hopwood's cursory treatment of this issue may be contrasted with Javed Majeed's essay on Urdu literature. He traces the modernization of Urdu literature in the development of a more focused style, and in the valorization of science. The power and prestige of science in Urdu works comes out clearly. I might add that this is clearly evident in the apologetic works of Islamic religious thought throughout the twentieth century. Majeed's essay, however, also touches on the deeply ambivalent and ambiguous commitment to the new. According to Majeed, 'Hali and Sayyid Ahmad Khan were not just deeply intimate with the world they sought to reform, but that, in some way, they carried this world within themselves' (p. 33). This ambivalence, according to Majeed, was rooted in the political condition of colonialism itself: 'Their ambivalence to the values of modernity stemmed from their ambivalence to the British Indian state itself' (p. 33). This collection is a good example of the ambivalence and contradiction of being 'modern' in Islamic society.

Seven of the nine essays discuss how Muslims have responded to modernity, while Muhammed Arkoun and Nasr Abu Zayd speak for themselves. The selection includes literary figures (Majeed on Urdu literature), intellectuals (John Cooper on Soroush; Nadia Abu-Zahra on Husayn Ahmed Amin; Ronald Nettler on Mohamed Talbi; Abdou Filali-Ansari on Muhammad Jabiri), a religious leader (Andreas Christmann on

Saïd Ramadan al-Buti) and a politician (Mohamed Mahmoud on Mahmud Muhammad Taha).

Intellectuals have dealt with the question of modernity by using a two-pronged approach. In the first instance, most try to distinguish between the changing and the permanent in the Islamic tradition. Invariably, they use resources within the Islamic intellectual disciplines to argue that not all of the texts or institutions form part of its *essence*. This is most clear in the work of Taha (by Mahmoud) as well as Abu Zayd's own article which focuses on the meaning of *naṣṣ* (text) in classical discourse, and its contemporary aberration. To varying degrees, the other representatives of Islamic modernism also search for solutions in the vast and rich legacy of Islamic textual disciplines.

On the other hand, the intellectuals also draw on varying degrees of contemporary approaches. The contextual approach to reading historical texts is clear in Talbi (by Nettler) and Jabiri (by Filali-Ansari). Soroush also draws on modern metaphors of architecture (by Cooper), while al-Buti and Amin (by Christmann and Abu-Zahra) appear less consistent, and more eclectic. Arkoun's search for meaning/s without giving up the awareness of power most clearly exhibits this sensitive grappling with contemporary methods in the production of new approaches to Islam.

The collection of essays, however, betrays a lack of appreciation of the changing nature of Islam under the impact of contemporary change. Abu-Zahra, as an anthropologist, is critical of Amin's lack of insight into the lived experience of Islam. This criticism may be extended to the other intellectuals as well. Most of them work with texts, and with textual scholarship, and assume a priori that religion is the foundation of society and civilization. The change wrought on religion by modernity and globalization have not been addressed with sufficient clarity and rigour by these intellectuals. As an introduction to how Muslim intellectuals have confronted modernity, this collection of essays provides a helpful panoramic, if not penetrating, overview.

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Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* (edited by Ebrahim Moosa) (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 226 p., £16.99, ISBN 1-85168-204-X

The production of this work (or fragment of one, rather) is pregnant with poignant irony. In the late 1960s, Fazlur Rahman, a beleaguered Pakistani intellectual, hounded by conservatives at home and complaining that his reform message has been misunderstood, emigrated to the United States where he found refuge at the University of Chicago and continued to contribute voluminously to modern Islamic thought and the cause of Islamic reform. Three decades later, the editor of this volume, who was on a scholarly visit to the United States, discovers an unfinished manuscript about, of all issues, Islamic reform, by the late Fazlur Rahman, and decides to publish it. The irony is that, while the editor's apparent aim, in publishing the manuscript was to emphasize Fazlur Rahman's modernist and reforming credentials, the impression the reader gets is quite the reverse. One wonders why, if these were Fazlur Rahman's views, did the traditionalist ulama find any fault with his writings. The Fazlur Rahman who emerges from these pages is a thinker with whom even the strictest Islamic traditionalist would find no fault at all, although the critical thinker might. The use of the subtitle 'A Study in Islamic Fundamentalism' is misleading here; for it implies that this is a study of the type we have become familiar with in modern western (even Orientalist) scholarship, where 'fundamentalism' is a term of abuse. The fact is Fazlur Rahman appears to wear the badge of the 'fundamentalist' with pride and equates the term with genuine reformism.

The incomplete and provisional nature of this work makes it a hazardous task to guess at what the author wanted to do with it, a fact the editor admits readily. However, he then hastens to reason that Fazlur Rahman's aim was to advance his modernist agenda, based on a critique of traditionalism through his subversive theory of revelation (where he argues that revelation was a 'historical' fact in the sense that the Prophet did have an indirect input in it). This was of course the controversial idea that contributed to the outcry that finally drove Fazlur Rahman out of his homeland. However, a reading of Fazlur Rahman's text reveals no trace of such a subversive intent. On almost every point, he affirmed the strict traditionalist interpretation, to the extent that even the editor is puzzled by the way Fazlur Rahman supports Ibn-Taymiyya's critique of al-Ghazali.

The central notion in this work is a critique of what Fazlur Rahman

calls *irjāʿ*. The term (which literally means 'postponement') was used in traditional Islamic terminology to signify 'withholding of judgement'. This in turn referred to a school of thought that attempted to take a neutral position in the political and theological conflicts which tore the early Muslim political community apart. The early sects such as the *Shāʿa* (followers of the fourth Caliph Imām ʿAlī) and the *Khawārij* (rebels) who initially supported Ali but later broke with him and adopted a hard-line stance towards him and his opponents alike, all made harsh judgements on their political adversaries, going as far as branding them infidels. The *Muʿtazila*, a group known for its rationalism and activism, argued for the 'position in between', contending that Muslims who committed grave sins (the sin in this context was a political one, namely the usurpation of political power) was neither a believer nor a unbeliever. The *Murjiʿah*, to whom Fazlur Rahman refers, held that grave sinners remained within the fold of believers, and withheld judgement on their status (i.e. referred their case to God). Fazlur Rahman contends that this stance of *irjāʿ* in the end pervaded the whole fabric of the Muslim community and had the disastrous impact of ethically desensitizing Muslims. Mainstream Islamic theology, represented in the *Ashʿarī* and *Māturīdī* schools, propagated *irjāʿ* and made it the official doctrine. Sufism, especially the pantheistic variety propagated by Ibn al-ʿArabī, made an even more far reaching contribution to this moral blindness and decline. While *irjāʿ* taught in effect that no sin no matter how grave could put a person beyond the pale, Sufism destroyed the distinction between good and evil altogether.

This critique is music to the ears of modern salafi militants, who follow Ibn Taymiyya and his Wahhabi heirs in condemning both Sufis and Ashʿarīs for their 'unorthodox' teachings. And Fazlur Rahman makes no secret of his sympathy for these radical positions. According to the editor, he uses the epithet 'fundamentalism' as a slogan and a term of endearment. Like modern 'fundamentalists', he calls for a return to the Quran and pristine Islam and condemns all deviations from it. He praises Al-Ghazālī for leading both an intellectual and spiritual-ethical revival that attempted to bring Sufism back to the orthodox fold, and has even more praise for Ibn Taymiyya and Ahmed Sirhindi for their efforts to reaffirm orthodoxy. With such clear judgements, the editor's claim that it was not clear where Fazlur Rahman was driving cannot be sustained. It is more than abundantly clear what position he espoused.

There are several problems with Fazlur Rahman's arguments, though. The first problem is his broad use of the term *irjāʿ*, which he takes out of

context and even abuses. As mentioned above, the term referred to a certain attitude and a trend which distinguished itself from other tendencies (Shi'ism, etc). However, in his novel use of the term, Fazlur Rahman includes almost all Muslim schools, including the Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī, in this category. While his argument for this inclusion is sophisticated and cannot be dismissed off hand, his case would have been served better by coining a new term for this new sense of *irjāʿ* to avoid unnecessary confusion. The confusion is compounded by the way in which he uses *irjāʿ* to signify withholding of all moral judgement, which was never the case. The *Murji'ah* withheld judgement on only one point: the excommunication of serious offenders and moral deviants. As Fazlur Rahman rightly noted, this attitude was motivated by concern for safeguarding the unity of the community; it was also a reaction against the murderous and self-destructive extremism of the *Khawārij* and similar groups which excommunicated almost everybody. Otherwise, not even the most pacifist among the *Murji'ah* called for condoning no matter what behaviour; nor did they contest the right and the duty of the community to uphold its moral standards. It is one thing to say that injustice and wrongdoing should be resisted, and another to condemn deviants and tyrants as infidels. In fact, the latter conduct, as exemplified by *Khawārij* and others, has proved a distraction from the real issue of righting wrongs and upholding justice. Most of the successful revolutions in Islamic history (and many of the unsuccessful ones) were carried out by groups Fazlur Rahman would not hesitate to classify as *Murji'ah* according to his novel terminology.

There is no doubt that this work is valuable and important, and the editor is to be thanked for bringing it to light. Fazlur Rahman's critique remains profound, thought provoking and relevant to the cause of reform. His arguments about the causes and possible remedies of the moral decline of Muslim communities are worthy of serious consideration, even if his 'fundamentalist' exhortations for the return to the Qurʾān face the same problems of all radical reformers who seem to neglect that their predecessors also departed from the Qurʾān. Not only that, but the radicals (and even the Orientalists and other non-Muslim critics of the Islamic tradition) owe all they know about the Qurʾān and Islam to these earlier thinkers. Thus there is an inherent impossibility in the ambitious project of 'accessing the Qurʾān directly' without the mediation of the very tradition against which Fazlur Rahman and other would-be reformers rail endlessly. Fazlur Rahman's own proposed 'double movement' of situating the revelation in context and then reinterpreting it for our time has been performed endlessly by

prominent Muslim intellectuals and reformers, starting from giants like al-Sh fi. Any new reform project must start from where those great thinkers ended, and not reinvent the wheel. Not that Fazlur Rahman shows any inclination to reinvent anything at all in this fragment, the editor's desperate attempt to read something revolutionary and subversive in this highly orthodox work notwithstanding.

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Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000), x, 591 pp.

It is difficult to review a collective work such as *Islam in Africa* with its twenty-five contributors, twenty-four chapters and two editors. One usually has the compensation of remarking on the unevenness of such a work due to differences of purpose, style and method among the contributors. While collective works rarely cohere, this study is for the most part an exception because the contributors strive towards a common goal, that of identifying the 'creative and crucial role' that Islam and Muslims have played in the development of Africa. The editors have arranged the contributions in four parts. Part I, 'Gateways to Africa', places Islam in the context of the wider Muslim world; parts II and III consist of regional case studies, while part IV comprises thematic studies.

The editors aim high by stating their intention to cover Islam on a continent-wide basis, even though the study of Islam in West Africa is far more advanced than in any other part of the continent (p. ix). The editors, Pouwels and Levtzion, as specialists on Islam in East and West Africa respectively, helped assure wider coverage. In addition, there is an international flavour to the contributors, who are drawn from Africa, Europe, the Middle East and North America. However, the book falls short of its stated goal. The editors are correct in claiming that they 'do not know of any other work on Islam in Africa in which Islam in East Africa achieves such prominence on a continental context' (p. ix). While coverage on East and West Africa is excellent, southern and northern Africa are inadequately dealt with. Given the absence of case studies on northern Africa in the volume one could argue that a more appropriate title might have been *The History of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa* or even *The History of Islam in East and West Africa*, such is the scarcity of material on southern Africa.

The editors' excellent introduction charts the arrival and progress of Islam in Africa and provides an overview of the major themes: Muslim brotherhoods, jihāds, Islam under colonial rule and Islamic reformism in the modern period. This succinct but broad outline sets the tone for the remainder of the book, the first part of which consists of two chapters on the avenues through which Islam reached Africa. These were across the desert through Egypt and the Maghreb in the north, and across the Indian Ocean in the east. Chapter 1 traces the formation of a broad Sunni orthodoxy from 750 to 1800 as the religion of the majority of the inhabitants of northern

Africa, as well as efforts since 1800 at political centralization and a narrowing of Sunnism. Together, these factors have led to the rise of contemporary Islamism. The second chapter examines the role of the Arabian Sea in the spread of Islam in eastern Africa. It charts external influences in the wider Muslim world, particularly Arabia, which had an effect on Islam in eastern Africa, and provides good background information for what happened when Islam reached there, which is taken up in part III. The conclusion is that while the Indian Ocean network spread Islam and influenced it on the coast, there was little outward flow from eastern Africa to the wider Muslim world.

Parts II and III consist of fourteen regional and chronological chapters that focus on West Africa and the Sudan, eastern and southern Africa. These chapters examine a number of themes pertinent to Muslims in Africa: the manner in which Islam spread into these regions, which was often as a result of contact with merchants; the role of Muslims in state building; their role in creating well-organized networks of trade that brought together large parts of the continent and resulted in the sharing and exchange of ideas; the introduction of literacy by Muslims; the importance of Muslim scribes to African rulers; the role of Muslims in inter-state diplomacy; jihāds by reformist Muslim rulers against both Muslims and non-Muslims during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and the destruction of long-nurtured institutions and the isolation of African Muslims from the wider Muslim world as a result of colonial rule. The colonial century (1860-1960) realigned African Muslim communities away from the Muslim world and linked them intimately with the Christianized world. This resulted in a mixture of Euro-American, Arabic and older African cultural elements being involved in creating a new cultural synthesis. This reflects a centuries-old pattern of ongoing cultural formation and reformation.

For the contemporary period, the two chapters on radicalism in East and West Africa examine the emergence of Islam as a force in national and international politics and the sense of urgency with which many African Muslims are attempting to restate Islamic values against what are perceived as subversive external influences. Reformers are innovative, and reach out to Muslims through a variety of organizations and networks. They are adaptable and use television, the press, radio, fax machines, books and cassette tapes to reach their audiences. They are also not averse to using English, French and African languages and dressing in Western clothes so that audiences can relate to them. The result is that Islam has been resilient in most African countries, and has defied predictions of its decline under

pressure from modernization and secularism. Islamic radicalism in the 1980s and 1990s, it is argued, must be appreciated within the general framework of competition for power. And with the fervor Islam has instilled in its followers, it has appeared as a living religion that believers can use according to their own needs. As a blend of theology and politics, Islamic radicalism has come to express the quest for Muslims' peaceful survival' (p. 204).

The weakest part of the book is the chapter entitled 'Islam in southern Africa, 1652-1998'. It is a misnomer to call this chapter 'Islam in southern Africa' or even 'Islam in South Africa', as it deals almost exclusively with Islam at the Cape, not surprising given that the special interest of its author, Robert C. H. Shell, is slavery at the Cape. There is very little for those seeking information on Muslims in other parts of southern Africa, or even South Africa. For example, there are just a few paragraphs, in a chapter spanning twenty-one pages, on Indian Muslims, who make up approximately half of South Africa's Muslim population. More serious, the little that has been written on Indian Muslims is problematic. A very conspicuous error is a reference to Shaykh Ahmad as 'Badsha Peer' instead of 'Badsha Peer' (p. 340). Further, Shaykh Ahmad arrived in Natal aboard the *Truro* in November 1860, not 'sometime in the 1860s'. It is not clear on what basis the author concludes authoritatively that Shaykh Ahmad died in 1886, as the sources vary. According to some reports he returned to India in 1876, while others state that he died a few months before the arrival of Soofie Saheb in 1895. Another problem is the failure to use inverted commas when mentioning that Soofie Saheb 'discovered' Shaykh Ahmad's grave in 1895, given that if Shaykh Ahmad had returned to India in 1876 his grave would not have been in Natal. There is a view that the promptness with which Soofie Saheb erected the shrine is consonant with the 'world-view that migrating devotees do not lose their bond to their local shrine, but build new shrines, inspired by the belief that each is an equally potent repository of *baraka*. Migration results in a widening and intensification of the original cult tradition, and certainly not a turning towards a more 'universal' or transcendent faith devoid of shrines, magical intercessory power and all other features of the *pir* cult. It was therefore necessary for Soofie Saheb to 'discover' the grave, even though it is questionable whether Shaykh Ahmad was buried there. Another serious omission is the failure to discuss Indian traders, who were pivotal in building mosques such as the Jumua Musjid, which is the largest mosque in the southern hemisphere, as well as in establishing institutional Islam. Indian

Muslim traders were also central to the establishment and funding of the Natal Indian Congress by Mahatma Gandhi.

The final part of the book, (General themes), contains very rich and exciting material. The eight chapters in this section deal with issues such as the history of Islamic law in Africa, Muslim women in African history, Islamic education,     brotherhoods, the use of prayer and amulets to address illnesses, Islamic art and culture, Islamic literature and the complex relationship between music and Islam. A major strength of these chapters is that they draw on case studies from parts II and III to develop their analytical and comparative studies. These chapters show that Islam was inherently dynamic and creative and a living religion for Africans. Its influence was not restricted to specific parts of the lives of its adherents, but influenced all aspects of their existence. The responses and practices of Muslims have not been monolithic. The struggle for hegemony has engendered discord and struggle over issues such as the role of the *q   * in relation to secular judges and lawyers, conflict over the role of Muslim women as teachers, spiritual leaders and in ceremonial organizations, the challenges posed to the state by educational organizations with links to countries like Libya, Sudan and Iran, contention over whether the role of     brotherhoods has been political and radical or conservative and pious, controversy over the medical application of amulets and disputes over the place of music in Islamic societies.

Taken together, these studies deconstruct some stereotypes about Islam. They show that Islam in Africa was not static and ahistorical, and simply the imposition of a foreign ideology and way of life. Trade, contact and conquest resulted in much flux in the interchange between Islam, African society and religion. Conversion to Islam and adherence to Islamic creed and practices did not follow an evolutionary, predetermined pattern, but varied from area to area, and has been subject to indeterminacy and flow, as a result of divergent historical experiences. The dynamic interaction between the canons of a universal, standardized and in theory unchangeable Islam and particular historical and cultural factors in Africa has produced localized Islamic beliefs and practices. The interaction between Islam and local, even individual, African moral and metaphysical perceptions resulted in African traditions influencing Islam as much as Islam shaping the religious practices and beliefs of African societies. This adaptive flexibility has also generated tension as a result of the efforts of some to maintain the identity of Islam as a specific command from God with clear and well-integrated rituals and beliefs.

Despite reservations about the paucity of material on northern Africa and the inadequate coverage of Islam in southern Africa, the volume is a welcome addition to scholarship on Islam in Africa. The contributors include Edward Alpers, Ivor Wilks and John Voll, who have been researching and writing on Africa for the past three to four decades. Their contributions reflect their expertise and experience in the field, and are a major strength of this collected work. On the whole the editors have done an excellent job on the technical aspects of the book. Good maps, excellent endnotes and chapter bibliographies, a comprehensive glossary and bibliographical details on the contributors enhance the value of the work. This volume will prove to be a particularly excellent tool for survey courses on Islam in Africa.

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Beverly Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad: Nana Asma'u, Scholar and Scribe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), ISBN 0253213983

This is a carefully researched book which benefits from the longstanding interest of both Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack in studying the poetry of women in a part of Africa better known for its high rate of female illiteracy than for women's scholarly production. For this reason it is essential reading for those who seek to see beyond the surface, beyond the simplified depictions of the development industry, and to travel into the legendary past and consider the complexities of faith and culture, and the particular dynamics of cultural production by women.

Nana Asma'u has long been an important figure in the lives of women all over the vast West African savannah lands. For intellectuals she has a particular importance: as neither a military leader nor a trader in guns and slaves but as a female scholar - a poet and scribe acclaimed across the nineteenth-century Islamic world. For girls pursuing Islamic education, or indeed any other form of literacy, this particular 'feminine' intellectual has long provided a powerful counterweight to the highly conservative brand of Islam propagated by the Saudi-oriented Muslim elite of northern Nigeria. The fact is that the patriarchs of contemporary Nigerian Islam still need to be reminded that their religion allows women as well as men to study and participate in religious and political affairs, because they have often unashamedly perverted laws and practices to suit themselves. Despite the best efforts of progressive political activists such as the late Mallam Aminu Kano, those who can afford to insist on keeping their wives in purdah, while ordinary men live in the hope of marrying off their daughters to moneyed elder men of the *umma*, often when very young. Many of the male elite practise polygamy in curiously modern forms that run quite contrary to the Qur'anic injunctions that enjoin men to marry more than one wife only when they can be certain of adhering to the stringent conditions spelt out by the Prophet.

In post-colonial Nigeria, religion is a complicated business. Within the Muslim half of the population (nobody knows the true proportions) there are those who resist the corruption of their faith by an affluent elite known to sponsor polo matches with the British royal family, and use their private jets to import women, from Rio as easily as from Delhi (depending on what is the flavour of the month). During the later years of the protracted military dictatorship the title *Alhaji* became a necessary accoutrement for

successful entry into the notoriously corrupt contractocracy.

The critics of this tendency include a plethora of Muslim women's groups, which invoke women such as Asma'u to call for a *Ujihad* of the heart, and teach women their rights within Islam. The Muslim women's movement calls for a cleansing of the nation, and argues for a return to the purity of early Islam. The seventh-century city-state of Medina which Asma'u takes as a central point of reference is often cited by contemporary Muslim women who believe that the 'true' Islam - even a *sharia* state - will afford women the status and respect that is so obviously absent from the contemporary social and political landscapes.

Religion has been politicized in the aftermath of military rule, deployed haplessly by opportunistic politicians playing populist tricks that jeopardize the integrity of the nation, not to speak of the legal and political structures of the federal state. It is a surreal climate in which even the most popular myths can be appropriated, in which written texts and interpretations of texts could assume an unprecedented importance in making sense of the chaos of life in contemporary Nigeria, if only books were available!

Mack and Boyd are not uninformed about this contemporary context, both having worked in northern Nigeria. Jean Boyd devoted many years of scholarly time to unearthing, organizing translations from Arabic, Fulfulde and Hausa, and then interpreting the huge body of work that she has bequeathed to the world (see her *The Caliph's Sister* and *Sultan Siddiq Abubakar III* (details not available in the text under review here)). Her 1982 master's thesis on Nana Asma'u is still available in the Arewa House archive in Kaduna. Her preface describes how she 'found' (quotes in original) Nana Asma'u in the 1960s, aided by the Waziri of Sokoto, Alhaji Dr Junaid, a direct descendant of Asma'u, also the owner of a goatskin satchel containing many of her original handwritten works. Thereafter Boyd interviewed scores of women descended from the students Asma'u taught between 1830 and 1863. The preface leaves many questions unanswered: one wonders why none of the contemporary Hausa women scholars and poets who alerted Mack to Asma'u's existence contributed to the project, given her importance in all their lives. I also found myself wondering how 'one microfiche found its way to Yale' (p. xii) after Boyd made her research notes and papers available to the British Museum and the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Mack, in her part of the preface, states that she was teaching at Yale in 1986 when she finally managed to procure a microfiche of Boyd's work, years after a fruitless attempt to access it in the 1970s.

How well does the work of these two Western scholars address the glorious past invoked by the legend of Nana Asma'u? It is, as it sets out to be, an accessible book that avoids alienating the uninitiated with a detailed historiography, although this may disappoint those more familiar with the region. It is a modest publication that devotes more than half of its pages to an appendix that is much more than a mere appendix: it contains a selection of Asma'u's translated poems, most of which might never have been seen by anyone but Alhaji Junaid and his intimates, had Boyd and Mack not undertaken their mammoth task. The full extent of this work is now available in their much lengthier volume *The Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, published by Michigan State University Press only three years ago. Prior to this, knowledge of Asma'u's life and works depended entirely on local oral tradition and her place in Muslim women's hearts and minds. What the two named authors do in this book is provide the reader with six short chapters devoted to providing a context to the appended poetry.

These introduce Nana Asma'u and the centuries-old scholarly tradition within which her work is located. This is first and foremost a QÉdiriyya É Muslim community that conforms to the broader Islamic tradition in valuing scholarship both as a means to and an expression of religious devotion. If literacy and education have been the hallmarks of progressive Islam since its inception, this was particularly so for the QÉdiriyya community led by Asma'u's father, Shehu Usman Dan Fodiyo. Theirs was a nineteenth-century community devoted to the sacred duty of emulating the seventh-century example of the Prophet MuÉammad and the community he established at Medina. When their teachings eventually obliged them to leave the kingdom of Gobir, they settled outside the kingdom, but continued to proselytize and gather a following, eventually waging a series of (ultimately victorious) military campaigns. The *jihad* was dedicated to eliminating the vestiges of idolatry: indecent dancing, the rituals of the indigenous *bori* cult practised mainly by women, and other syncretic manifestations of Islam in a multi-ethnic region that included several pre-colonial kingdoms. The Shehu and his daughter Asma'u viewed all these cultural forms as a perversion of the true path laid out by the Prophet. The *jihad* was waged to eliminate these allegedly corrupt leaders, and to convert their subjects to the wisdom of Dan Fodiyo's teachings, which dignified ordinary men and women, and condemned injustice. This mission was carried out by relays of religious teachers, his own favourite daughter, Nana Asma'u, being widely acclaimed as one of the most skilful advocates of all, not least because her networks reached out to win over women,

many of whom had been captured as spoils of war, but who were now raising the children of the new order. The success of the *jihād* resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate, which still exists today, albeit under the somewhat diminished rubric afforded to it by the federal republic.

It is in the light of current developments that this history will now be viewed, and indeed reviewed, but the sketch provided offers an important backdrop to the would-be reader of Asma'u's poetry. There is, perhaps wisely, little analysis of a very complex period of political contestation, warfare and conquest carried out by the Shehu and later by his son Bello. The history, not surprisingly in view of the poor pre-colonial record all over the continent, also lacks detail on the gender relations of the time. What is clear is that Nana Asma'u was unusual: a highly gifted and privileged woman, a daughter destined from birth to serve as a dedicated advocate of her father's cause. Her marriage to her father's Waziri (chief executive), Alhaji Gidado, and most of her personal life, was arranged accordingly. For example, we are told that she performed the painstaking task of cataloguing her father's works while bearing full responsibility for managing, feeding and providing for a household of several hundred people, entertaining guests frequently and mediating in all manner of disputes arising in the community on a daily basis. Her writing was an integral part of her service, with multiple purposes: translation and interpretation of Islamic texts and for pedagogical ends, the celebration of great leaders and victories, and poems cautioning against lapses of faith, and calling on women to follow the examples of saintly women. Her original works were written to target her audiences, using one of the three major languages in which she was fully literate: Arabic, Fulfulde or Hausa. Scholars and the aristocracy used Arabic and Fulfulde, but Hausa was the lingua franca of the region in which the community had settled and sought to convert. Asma'u's particular brilliance is indisputable, but she herself points out that there were a great many scholarly women in those days, as many as a hundred within her own clan alone, suggesting that the title of this book belies what was actually a movement of intellectual women, and an integral, feminine component of the *jihād*.

Boyd and Mack also briefly outline the various genres within which Asma'u's poetry was written, an area that demands expertise beyond that of the present reviewer. These include the complex and culturally located genres of admonition, biographies, didactic verses, historical chronicling, panegyric, Qur'anic commentary and *é`f`* recitations. The authors point out that Asma'u wrote technically sophisticated poetry that displays not

only her linguistic capacities but also draws on a deep knowledge of classical texts. She is depicted as skilled at conveying important religious teachings in metaphors and other stylistics accessible to the communities among which they lived and worked. Even to the lay reader it is clear that her poetics are powerfully rendered, whether they depict profound grief over the loss of a kindred spirit (Lamentation for Aisha, I and II) or threaten hellfire and torment for those who deviate from the path (Fear this!).

Mack and Boyd have performed a valuable service in making Asma's life and works available to the so-called global village. One hopes that at least a few copies may make their way home to West Africa, to stimulate a vigorous intellectual debate in the conflicted communities that now variously invoke her name, her father's name and indeed the name of Islam for their own, at times violently repressive, ends.

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Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars. Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 359 pp., ISBN 019-565022-0

In this unique work Gail Minault describes the structural processes by which the discourse on Muslim women's education was shaped in colonial India after the 1857 war of independence, better known as the Mutiny. Minault discerns two groups that addressed the issue of women's education: a group of reformist *ulamā* and the reformers of the newly emerging Westernized urban Muslim middle class. The author describes the first, second and third generations of religious reformers, among whom we find Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and his wife Muhammadi Begam, Shaykh Abdullah Ali of Aligarh and his wife Wahid Jahan Begam, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi and Shah Jahan Begam of Bhopal. The author uses archival sources, unpublished biographical materials, life stories and personal interviews with descendants of some of those involved in the reform movement.

The discourse on women's education touches upon various issues. On the one hand these issues were universal, as they represented changes that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in numerous Muslim societies under colonial rule. Among these universal features are the emergence of print capitalism and its consequences for the advent of nationalism; an emerging public sphere; the issues of women's rights and veiling; and finally the awareness of religious and ethnic pluralism in colonized countries. On the other hand, the situation in the subcontinent was unique. There was the development of a Muslim identity, especially among the Muslim elite in the subcontinent, whose loss of political power and minority status came to be felt strongly in the post-1857 setback. Moreover, the local vernacular, Urdu, gained popularity among a broader Muslim readership as the language of reform in India.

Initially, the male reformers formulated the need for women's education. Those who gave voice to the call for reform perceived the customs associated with the women's quarters of the home (*zenana*) as un-Islamic and held those practices responsible for the decline of Islam in general and India's backwardness in particular. The reformers portrayed women in their ambiguous role as, on the one hand, the practitioners of un-Islamic custom and thus contributing to the deterioration of Islam, and on the other as repositories of moral values worth preserving. The role of women is viewed as having a deeper symbolic value, as women were

thought to reflect the morality of their society. Against the background of this link between moral depravity and women, the reformers attempted to counter what they interpreted as women's ignorance in religious and worldly matters. In a paradoxical way this diagnosis of women as depraved and uneducated generated new interpretations of women's status in Islam. The reformers pointed out the discrepancy between the egalitarian outlook of the Qur'an and customary practices; and for that reason they advocated the return to scriptural authority, reinterpreted in the colonial context, as the panacea for this impasse. The voices of women were heard in the public sphere when the educated 'Daughters of reform' (the title of chapter 6), who had renounced the segregated way of living (*purdah*), became visible and actively participated in the discourse.

The author identifies multiple links between social reform organizations, the emerging political consciousness of the Muslims in India and the importance of status and kinship in the shaping of political discourse. Women appear to play an essential, but mostly overlooked, part in the politics of the time. The very lively biographies, combined with the author's profound knowledge of Indian history and thorough choice of sources, make the book a wonderful read. *Secluded Scholars* is a contribution to the body of studies on Muslim reform movements in India, which includes such notable works as Barbara Daly Metcalf's *Islamic Revival in British India* (1982), Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi's *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (1963), *Moral Conduct and Authority* (1984), edited by Barbara Daly Metcalf, and her translation of Thanwi's *Bihishti Zewar* (1990).

A question that would be interesting for further research concerns the relations between the reformers, the 'daughters of reform', and mainstream Muslim authority represented by the local mosques and the majority of (non-reformist) *ulamā*. The voices of those taking a more conservative stance in reaction to reform, and the education of Muslim women in particular, remain unheard. The nature of the debate between these two factions would introduce more complexity regarding the socio-political structures under colonial rule, which entailed more than the networks of reform. The reformist movement emerged from within a wider social context, which included those who were at best ambivalent towards reformist thought. But as the popular opponents of reform are not the subject of this study, *Secluded Scholars* is an invaluable introduction to a most neglected aspect of the reformist movement in late nineteenth-century India.

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Dale F. Eickelmann and Jon W. Anderson (eds.), *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 213 pp., ISBN 0-253-21329-0

In its attention to the role of new media in generating Muslim publics this book impresses by its variety, sophistication and intellectual weight. Separate essays explore, among others, the Internet, popular romances in Bangladesh, film and cartoons in Egypt, television and radio in Turkey, and Islamic videos and literature in the United States. Overall the work is anchored by deftly argued approaches to media. This welcome collection goes beyond familiar critiques of stereotypical portrayals of Muslims in Western media to analyse the complexities of an evolving Muslim public sphere.

In this Muslim public sphere new and old media coexist. A mixture of older media, such as newspapers, faxes, video and audio cassettes, pamphlets, booklets, comic books and graffiti, are used to innovative effect, and newer media, such as websites, newsgroups and satellite television, redefine the notion of a public sphere by giving broader access to debate. Such new public spaces are leading to new audiences, new publics and new people (p. 10). These audiences are engaged in defining a Muslim life in a world in which Muslim and non-Muslim are increasingly intertwined (p. 42).

While space for participation and debate is generated by technology, the media themselves become objects of study in these ten stimulating essays. Different regimes of knowledge jostle and expand allowing spaces for debate. As discussion moves from personal circles to a broader sphere, the definitions of private and public start to shift.

Media scholars will welcome the book's attention to concepts of power and knowledge, while its essays necessarily revisit the meanings of public sphere and civil society within the specific contexts addressed in the book. Ranging in locale from Indonesia to Turkey to the United States, the studies collected here pay due attention to history and local contexts. Markedly absent from the collection is a consideration of Muslim publics in Africa other than in Egypt. Sadly, aside from Walter Armbrust's chapter (discussed below), the continent receives only passing reference. A full discussion of its many points deserves a forum of similar impact.

Nonetheless, this is a work on media that actually pays attention to slavery, colonialism and immigration. Such an innovative approach pays

quick dividends. For instance, at a time when the relation of civil law to Muslim personal law is a matter of current debate in South Africa, John R. Bowen's discussion in 'Legal reasoning and public discourse in Indonesian Islam' will be of particular interest. While I would wish to give equal attention to all the essays collected here, I can mention but one or two in depth.

The collection is marked by deft analyses of popular culture. Writers such as Maimuna Haq on Islamically oriented popular romances in Bangladesh and Walter Armbrust writing on Egyptian cartoons and films about the beach do not dismiss commodified, popular pastimes, noting with Arjun Appadurai that 'things have social lives' (p. 135). Haq makes a critical point about the need for an expanded public sphere. She writes of the consequences in Bangladesh of the state's policy of secularization between 1970 and 1975. Bolstered by a consequent division of 'religious' from 'modern' education, religion became the realm of specialist traditional experts. This amounted to the 'privatization of Islam in a society where Islam is an integral part of everyday life' (p. 134). Importantly, Haq argues that the 'deliberate and sometimes scornful distancing of the secular intelligentsia from Islam-centered issues has only enhanced this process' (p. 134).

In 'Bourgeois leisure and Egyptian media fantasies' Walter Armbrust writes on images of leisure in Egypt. Analysing the meanings associated with the beach in Egyptian cartoons and films within contemporary contexts of a nationalized (1963) and subsequently 're-privatized' (1971) film industry, Armbrust points to the need to understand such representations 'through a historicized understanding of the local culture' (p. 127). In cartoons of the 1960s the author observes contemporary allusions to class and politics, and notes similarities with those about the *intifahi* class of the 1990s who profited by the imposition of a structural adjustment programme in Egypt. Refusing to be simplistic in its approach, Armbrust's fine essay testifies to 'the importance of the mass media as a vital creator of modernity' (p. 127), and fulfils the promise which lies in analysing popular culture.

This edited collection provides fascinating insights into the phenomenon of Muslim public spheres throughout the world. Jon Anderson points out in his article on 'The Internet and Islam's new interpreters' that media 'transforms the space in which "home" exists' (p. 52). As we ponder questions of national identity, culture and belonging in Africa this exemplary collection will no doubt inspire discussion and further research.

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An ambulance of the wrong colour - Health professionals, human rights and ethics in South Africa, *Edited by Laurel Baldwin-Ragaven, Jeanelle de Gruchy and Leslie London*
Published by UCT Press (1999, 246 pages)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) stands as a milestone in South Africa's political history for many reasons, let alone the integral role it played in facilitating the transition to a democratic social order. It serves as an inspiration to those who scrutinise and chronicle the human rights record of the country. In *An ambulance of the wrong colour*, Baldwin-Ragaven et al. focus on the ethical problems afflicting the health sector in South Africa. The book has its origins in the Health and Human Rights Project (HHRP) Submission to the TRC Institutional Hearings on the Health Sector, which were held in June 1997.

The written contributions received for the HHRP Submission form an integral part of the book. However, the editors were no doubt left with the difficult task of integrating these, along with other research work, into a coherent and accessible study that addressed a much wider audience. The editors have the necessary experience that enabled them to fulfil this task admirably. Laurel Baldwin-Ragaven and Jeanelle de Gruchy are both medical doctors and former research fellows of the HHRP, while Leslie London is Associate Professor in the University of Cape Town's Department of Community Health. The Swedish NGO, Foundation for Human Rights provided financial support.

The book itself is aesthetically pleasing, enriched with many black and white photos, as well as handy information tables. Chapter 1 contextualises South Africa's apartheid past and introduces themes of ethics and human rights within the health sector. In chapter 2, a socio-historical overview of the South African health system under apartheid is given where issues such as the provision of unequal (separate amenities) are explored. The book's title in fact highlights such practices, where ambulances were not allowed to carry a sick patient to a hospital if the designated (colour) of the ambulance and the patient did not match. Chapter 3 explores the collusion of civil health services with the apartheid security forces. In chapter 4, health care in custody is examined, while chapter 5 looks at health professionals in the South African military. An ominous picture of Dr Wouter Basson, former head of the South African Defence Force's chemical and biological warfare (CBW) programme appears on page 126. Also of interest is the fact that Basson served as the personal physician of

former state president P.W. Botha. Chapter 6 examines how scientists and researchers in the field of health and human biology influenced the political direction of the last 50 years of South African history. In chapter 7, health organisations, statutory councils, and training institutions are brought into focus, while chapter 8 addresses the mobilisation of health workers. Finally, chapter 9 explores health and human rights in South Africa today.

Although most of the book focuses on the negative, i.e. the collusion of the health sector with the apartheid regime, chapter 8 explores the positive stance adopted by health professionals in the struggle against apartheid and deserves special mention. The chapter explores - amongst other themes - the role of alternative organisations in reporting and documenting torture and abuse in detention and lobbying against detention without trial. It also salutes the efforts of brave activists martyred in the struggle; individuals like Dr Hoosen Mia Haffejee, Dr Abubaker Asvat and Dr Fabian Ribeiro are mentioned.

This work is largely documentary in nature and is therefore less susceptible to criticisms that could be levelled at analytical content. One is at times left feeling that some of the material is covered too briefly while other issues are given too much attention. This, moreover, is a rather subjective opinion and would vary from reader to reader. Suffice to say then that the book is very readable and flows very well. Although the target readership is professionals and students in the health sector, its relevance extends much further. The student of social history and politics would do well by reading such a work even though the final address is directed to the health worker.

In conclusion, the book lays down five core objectives for professional accountability in protecting human rights; this being in specific reference to the health sector. These are:

- 1) The enunciation and prioritisation of accountability to patients, health workers and society.
- 2) Developing the capacity to recognise human rights abuse when it happens or is about to happen.
- 3) Empowering vulnerable groups so that all patients are treated with dignity and respect.
- 4) For health workers to re-orient their practice toward the larger social and political context.
- 5) Developing awareness amongst health professionals of their own positioning in society and how their values and loyalties may put them in inconsistent or conflicting situations.

This in itself leaves the door open for further research in this important field that touches every member of society. To say the least, this particular work sets a strong foundation for such a mammoth task.

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