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ISIM Newsletter

international institute for the study of islam in the modern world

Screening of *The Passion of the Christ*, Tehran, May 2004

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■ **"We should be wary whenever we see cultures … which invest so heavily in images of victimization. Such images—regardless of their veracity or applicability—are essential for legitimising violence…."**

■ Elliot Colla, *A Culture of Righteousness and Martyrdom*, p.6

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DICK DOUWES &
LINDA HERRERA

The popular reception and commercial success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion* brought to the fore just how forcefully Christian images and notions of martyrdom and victimization resonate with large segments of the American public. One might expect that at the height of US power and military prowess a 1980s era Rambo type character, rather than a submissive Aramaic speaking Jesus, would be more likely to capture the public imagination. However, as Elliott Colla elucidates (see p.4), *The Passion* represents a powerful example of the increasing presence of Christian evangelical themes in American popular culture; evangelical millennial literature is growing at staggering rates. Such images may be playing a role in perpetuating a culture of righteousness and, ultimately, a politics of domination and violence, particularly over the Muslim "other."

The paradoxical invoking of martyrdom as a justification for violence is by no means unique to the US. A similar logic has been developing in the Muslim East over the last decades, albeit as the result of markedly different power dynamics. The use of self-imposed martyrdom, i.e. suicide, has been one of the tactics used—even if intermittently—by groups involved in the struggle for Palestinian national liberation such as Hamas (Damir-Geilsdorf, p.10). The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 added another dimension to the phenomenon of suicide martyrdom; not only were those attacks unprecedented for the enormity of their scale, but they were not linked to a specific national liberation movement making their rationale—if one can call it that—far more nebulous. The use of suicide as a strategy in political struggle is neither indigenous to the Middle East, nor an inherent feature of Islam, but has its roots in radical secular modern movements, an example of which can be found in the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka (Hassan, p.8). Martyrdom has also been a central trope in Israeli national identity and politics where the historic victimization and suffering of the Jews often gets invoked as a justification for policies of subjugation and violence against Palestinians. The overlapping cultures of victimization and martyrdom in all cases have clearly yielded catastrophic results and done little to advance causes, whatever they may be.

Given the current political conditions in the Arab World, it comes as little surprise that *The Passion* was a hit there. In part, the movie was seen as exposing the cruelty of oppressors, evoking parallels, for example, with the oppression of Palestinians by the Jewish state. Very few governments in the region banned the film, and—in a departure from Islamic doctrine—the religious establishment, in many cases, received *The Passion* favourably while overlooking their standard fatwa against the graphic portrayal of the prophets, which, in Islam, includes Jesus. Moreover, few voices openly criticised the film's depiction of Jesus as being the Son of God and being crucified, both claims being considered null and void in Islamic teaching. Visions of martyrdom, even from such unlikely sources as a US produced evangelical themed film, can serve as potential instruments for political and cultural mobilization.[1]

The valorization of martyrdom, whether through Christian and Jewish images of victimization, or Islam inspired Hamas suicide attacks, promotes not only a politics of violence, but perpetuates separation and mistrust. In order to prevent "holy wars," peaceful alternatives to conflict, as Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi emphasizes (see p.30), must be realized through non-violent, non-sectarian, and more democratic strategies.

Note

1. See on the reception of *The Passion of the Christ* in the Arab World the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) report, "Reactions in the Arab Media to 'The Passion of the Christ'" by Aluma Dankowitz (21 April 2004, http://www.memri.de/uebersetzungen_analysen/themen/liberal_voices/ges_passion_christ_21_04_04.html).

ISIM

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) conducts and promotes interdisciplinary research on social, political, cultural, and intellectual trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies and communities. The ISIM was established in 1998 by the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, Utrecht University, and the University of Nijmegen in response to a need for further research on contemporary developments of great social, political, and cultural importance in the Muslim world from social sciences and humanities perspectives. The ISIM's research approaches are expressly interdisciplinary and comparative, covering a large geographic range which includes North Africa, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and South East Asia, and Muslim communities in the West. Broad in scope, the ISIM brings together all areas of disciplinary expertise in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, political science, and cultural studies.

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The Art of Presence

ASEF BAYAT

The Middle East is currently saturated with talk about "change." Yet, the resiliency of authoritarianism and patriarchy in the region coupled with the evident failure of "democratization"-by-conquest have plunged this part of the world into a depressing impasse. The region's Muslim majority is caught up between, on the one hand, authoritarian regimes or fundamentalist inspired opposition, both of which tend to impose severe social control in the name of nation and religion, and on the other, flagrant foreign intervention and occupation in the name of democratization. We witness, then, a clear abuse of faith, freedom, and the faithful. In the midst of this, however, one thing has become clearer. If a meaningful change is to occur in these societies it should come from within, through the self-assertion of societal forces in a democratic direction. But the monumental question is how?

What options do ordinary citizens have when faced, in political, economic or cultural domains, with constraining forces and institutions? Some might choose complicity or "loyalty" by joining the mainstream currents. Others, while not approving of the existing arrangements, may well disengage, surrendering their rights to voice concerns and thereby exiting the political stage altogether in the hope that things will somehow change someday. Then again, others may choose to express their contention loudly and clearly even if it means remaining on the margins of society: to be vocal but marginal, or, even worse, irrelevant. It is, however, extremely challenging to be heavily *present* at the heart of society, to struggle for liberation, and yet maintain one's integrity; to be effective but also principled. More precisely, I am referring to that delicate *art of presence* in harsh circumstance, the ability to create social space within which those individuals who refuse to exit, can advance the cause of human rights, equality and justice, and do so under formidable political conditions. It is this difficult strategy, demanding sharp vision, veracity, and above all endurance and energy, that holds the most promise. Meaningful change in the Muslim Middle East may well benefit from such a protracted strategy.

The public life and activism of the Iranian lawyer and Noble Peace Prize Laureate, Shirin Ebadi, symbolizes that art of persistent presence. She gives testimony to, and exemplifies, the profound desire of millions of women in Iran and elsewhere in the Muslim world for a meaningful social presence. She became the first Muslim woman judge in Iran and held the presidency of the city court of Tehran until the Islamic Revolution, when she was forced to resign on the grounds that women could not be judges in Islam. Yet she, along with a host of women activists (religious and non-religious) refused to remain silent; they waged a relentless campaign by writing, reasoning, reinterpreting the Islamic texts, engaging in public debate and lobbying to reverse that unjust ruling until women were once more able to serve as judges under the Islamic Republic. But such a struggle, this double strategy of no-silence and no-violence, could not have gone very far without the general societal support for change. The idea of Muslim female judges, only one instance of the struggles taking place for gender equality in Islam, had already gained a great deal of public legitimacy through grassroots campaigns of rights activists such as Ebadi, Mehranguiz Kar, Shahla Sherkat, and many other women and men. Its appeal was further rooted in the yearning of Iranian women, in general, to assert their public presence in society, not necessarily by undertaking extra-ordinary activities, but through practices of everyday life such as working outside the home, pursuing higher education, engaging in sports activities, performing art and music, travelling, or executing banking transactions in place of their husbands. And these very ordinary practices, once normalized among the general public, were to undermine gender hierarchy in their society while imposing their logic on the political, legal and economic institutions of the state.

Understandably, reform of authoritarian states would require distinct arduous strategies. Nevertheless, societal change remains indispensable if a meaningful democratic reform of the state is to be sustained. Change in a society's sensibilities is the precondition for far-reaching democratic transformation. While social change occurs, partly as the unintended outcome of structural processes such as migration, urbanization, demographic shifts, or the rise in literacy, it is also partly the result of global factors and flows, as well as the effect of the exchange of ideas, information, and models. But the most crucial element for democratic reform is an active citizenship, a sustained presence of individuals, groups and movements in every available social space, whether institutional or informal, in which it asserts its rights and fulfils its responsibilities. For it is precisely in such spaces that alternative discourses, practices and politics are produced.

I envision a strategy whereby every social group generates change in society through active citizenship in all immediate domains: children at home and schools, students in colleges, teachers in the classrooms, workers in shop floors, athletes in stadiums, artists through their mediums, intellectuals in media, and women at home and in public domains. This means that not only are they to voice their claims, broadcast violations done unto them, and make themselves heard, but also take the responsibility of excelling in what they do. An authoritarian regime should not be a reason for not producing excellent novels, brilliant handicrafts, math champions, world class athletes, dedicated teachers, or a global film industry. Excellence is power; it is identity. By art of presence, I imagine the way in which a society, through the practices of daily life, may regenerate itself by affirming the values that deject the authoritarian personality, get ahead of its elites, and become capable of enforcing its collective sensibilities on the state and its henchmen. And in this, the role of women in challenging gender hierarchy in and outside home is indispensible.

By art of presence, active citizenry, I do not necessarily mean pervasive social movements or collective mobilization for political transformation, although such imagined citizenry is likely to welcome large-scale collective action. For authoritarian rule not only impedes contentious actions, but it is unrealistic to expect society to be in a constant state of vigour, vitality, and collective struggles. Society, with its ordinary people, also gets tired, demoralized, and even repressed. Activism, the *extra-ordinary* practices to produce social change, is the stuff of activists, who may energize collective sentiments when the opportunity allows. The point is not to reiterate the political significance of contentious movements, nor to stress on the necessity of undercutting the coercive power of the states. The point rather is to stress how lay citizens, with their ordinary practices of everyday life, through the art of presence or active citizenry, may recondition the established political elites and refashion state institutions into their habitus.

There is of course a role for outsiders to play. Instead of interfering, they can offer courage and solidarity by recognizing those who persist in the need for change through their active presence. Recognition energizes contenders and diminishes their despair in harsh political circumstance. The acknowledgment of Shirin Ebadi serves as a fine example.

Asef Bayat is the Academic Director of ISIM and the ISIM Chair at Leiden University. *He wishes to thank Kaveh Ehsani for his critical comments on an earlier version of this piece.*
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A Culture of Righteousness and Martyrdom

ELLIOTT COLLA

It is hard to avoid the pious denunciations of Islam in contemporary American popular culture. This is not a new development, of course. Hollywood has long libelled the Arab world and Islam with stock characters like "the treacherous Arab thief," "the fanatical Muslim," or "the Palestinian terrorist." But such clichés, once confined largely to the realm of fiction and fantasy, are now crucial to mainstream political analysis. Corporate broadcasting and astute academic journals are flooded with commentaries that single out religion, specifically Islam, to describe what is wrong with Arab societies: Islam is said to explain everything from misogyny to poverty, from terrorism to fascism. More than anything else, Islam is now widely understood to be the reason why Arab society "lacks" indigenous democratic traditions, respect for human rights and religious tolerance. It does not matter whether the term "Islam" is ever defined, consistently deployed, or even whether it actually explains the things it purports to do. Regardless of the inconsistency or dubious simplicity of this analysis, its core message is clear: the problem with Arab society is the central role played by religion in its culture.

The mainstream American critique of the centrality of Islam in Arab culture often implies that religion is not important at home. Yet evangelical Christianity has been occupying an increasingly more prominent place in contemporary popular American culture. Just as Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of the Christ*, has towered over competitors at the box office, so too have millenarian Christian texts—fictional and otherwise—been appearing in, and dominating, American best-seller lists. The popularity of these texts suggests that many American audiences are viewing contemporary events in the Middle East through an extremist evangelical lens.

The above observations about mainstream US discourse on Islam are admittedly banal. But they become quite intriguing when we view them in the context of the prominent place of evangelical Christianity in contemporary popular American culture. Part of what makes the American critique of Islam's place in Arab culture so significant is that it often misleadingly implies that religion is not important at home. Perhaps because of the implicitly secular cultural bent of book and film critics, scant attention has been paid to the fact that since the mid-1990s millenarian Christian texts—fictional and otherwise—have been appearing on American best-seller lists. This spring, tellingly, such texts have dominated best-seller lists from *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* to *USA Today* and *Publishers Weekly*, just as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* has towered over competitors at the box office. Together the popularity of these texts suggests that many American audiences are viewing contemporary events in the Middle East through an extremist evangelical lens.

Left Behind

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins' twelve-part Left Behind series of evangelical novels fictionalises eschatological accounts of the Millennium, from Rapture to Armageddon to the restoration of Christ's rule on earth.[1] The recent publication of the final instalment of the series, *Glorious Appearing*, has been the most popular of all. With sales of over sixty million copies, the Left Behind series may become *the* most popular fictional series ever sold in the United States, outstripping novels, like the popular *DaVinci Code* (which, significantly, also treats core theological questions of modern Christianity), by a factor of almost 10 to 1. How to summarize the story told in these novels? The opening line of the third novel, *Nicolae*, puts it most succinctly: "It was the worst of times; it was the worst of times." The authors claim to be faithfully following the Biblical prophecies alluded to in the book of Daniel and Revelations. In reality, they tell the story of an underground, worldwide network of righteous believers waging holy war in the Middle East against a Great Satan.

In the process of telling their tale of the rise of the anti-Christ and his defeat by Jesus Christ, the authors recapitulate familiar pieties of the American evangelical right. Poverty, crime and disease are tribulations sent to the world by a wrathful God: only the foolish or the proud would try reform. Peace and disarmament are compelling signs of approaching Armageddon: only the naïve or the godless would promote them. Multilingualism and intellectualism are signs of cynicism and worldliness. Secular Europe is godless and decadent. The UN is a nefarious agency undermining the sovereignty of the USA. When the anti-Christ takes over as UN Secretary General and changes the balance of power in the Security Council, American militia forces lead the struggle against him.

If the novels' moral compass and foreign policy recommendations seem disconcerting, consider their portrayal of gender, sexuality and race. Female characters are insecure, overly-emotional girls in need of strong sensitive men-leaders with names like "Buck" and "Captain Steele." Unmarried women are a problem in the novels—one sexual temptress blossoms into the Harlot of Babylon. Abortion and homosexuality are recurring anxieties among the core group of Crusaders fighting Satan who are, not surprisingly, white Americans and Ashkenazi converts to Christianity. People of colour appear occasionally in the background and are caricatured in ways that recall minstrel shows. While the representation of Muslims as misguided fanatics is certainly troubling, the novels single out Jews for special treatment. It is not just that the series characterizes Jews as parsimonious businessmen or Pharisees more attuned to dead law than to God's living spirit. The novels assert that Jews might have been God's Chosen People, but that they failed to recognize the true messiah. Only righteous Jews, that is, Jews who become born-again Christians, are depicted as heroes.

It is difficult to imagine the series attracting readers from outside the evangelical fold, but the size of sales indicates otherwise. The series' publisher, Tyndale House, has also developed its own Armageddon industry which includes CD-ROM, graphic-novel editions, and slick live-action video and audio adaptations of Left Behind. *Left Behind: The Kids Series* has been designed for young readers. Most alarming of all, there is the *Left Behind: Military Series*, novels which tell the story of the Army Rangers and Marine Special Forces involved in the military aspects of Armageddon. Any resemblance to current US interventions in the Middle East are not accidental. As one blurb states: "Reading the Left Behind series has been a haunting experience, especially since September 11, with the war on terror, the struggles between the US and the United Nations, and the war in Iraq and its aftermath. Add to that the violence in Israel over the past two [sic] years with the current tensions over the 'roadmap to peace' and you get a sense that events described in the Left Behind series seem quite plausible."[2]

Suspension of disbelief?

The Left Behind novels are not presented as mere fantasy. While there is no mistaking the fictional stamp of the books—they are marketed as fiction and they pay homage to pop genres, from Harlequin bodice rippers to Tom Clancy military thrillers, from 1970s disaster movies to episodes of MacGyver—the authors claim to have faithfully rendered Biblical prophecy literally.

Questions of realism and literalism are crucial to any reading of the novels, for even though American evangelicals approach the Bible in English translation, and even though their theologians are largely untutored in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, they hold that the events described in such prophecy are not metaphorical, and that their interpretation never strays from the letter of God's word.

The novels explain the "Pre-millennial" theology currently popular in evangelical churches, which states that righteous (i.e., born-again) Christians will be "raptured" into Heaven before the Tribulations described in Biblical prophecy come to pass. Moreover, in this rendering, prophecies described in the book of Daniel and Revelations are said to refer to present times. Of particular interest to this interpretation is the establishment of the state of Israel, an event which, they assert, foretells the imminent arrival of the End Times. Evangelicals interpret other events and possibilities in Palestine/Israel—such as the Jewish state's ongoing hostilities with the Arab world or the destruction of the al-Aqsa Mosque for the purposes of rebuilding of the Temple—as fulfilled or looming events prophesized in the Bible. This explains part of the unyielding fervour that evangelical Christians have for Israel, and why they accept the possibility of escalated conflict in the Middle East with hope rather than trepidation. Like other evangelicals, the publishers of Left Behind hold that Israeli settlements are a "super-sign" of prophecy, and thus should be encouraged. Similarly, they assert that the US removal of Saddam Hussein from power also makes possible the "rebuilding of Babylon as a major economic centre for the Middle East" which, along with struggles within the European Union and a possible schism within the Episcopal Church, are welcome signs of the End Times.[3]

But are these novels fiction? When the theological-political basis of such fictions proceeds with the confidence of literalism, it is difficult to say what the standards for judging realism, let alone fictionality, would be. Like fiction, the Left Behind novels are designed to play with belief. But whereas fiction traditionally asks its readers to suspend disbelief in order that their imagination is broadened, these novels engage their readers' imagination only in order to confirm what they already believe.

Mobilizing righteousness: A new American culture of martyrdom?

As suggested by the awkward "realism" of its Aramaic and Latin dialogue, and its excruciating recreation of Jesus' torture and crucifixion, Mel Gibson addressed his *The Passion of the Christ* to this popular demand for "literalist" renditions of Biblical narrative. Gibson's *Passion* has caused a storm of debate, not just for its portrayal of Jews, but also for its extremely graphic violence. But for all its failures, the film succeeds in one thing: it conveys an indelible image of Jesus suffering at the hands of sadistic tormentors. In more than one interview, Gibson has confirmed that his film seeks to create a sense of pathos in his audiences.

But what kind of pathos? The discomfort effected by the film is startling: we watch long scenes of torture, fore-knowing their outcome, yet unable to stop them from happening. The structure of this experience—watching someone being brutalized without being able to prevent it—is arguably one of humiliation. The film engages a rhetoric of shame—that is to say, of shaming the viewer. As Gibson put it, the usefulness of such images is to make "you feel not only compassion, but also a debt. You want to repay him for the enormity of his sacrifice."[4]

Significantly, the moral debt to which Gibson's film aspires overlaps with the guiding moral sentiment offered by the Left Behind series: righteousness. *The Passion of the Christ* asks us not just to be ashamed by Christ's victimization but also outraged by it. It also asks us to accept the scorn of the world as proof of our debt to him. Likewise, the Left Behind novels present characters who know that they are right, and that God is on their side. In doing so, they encourage readers not to fear the scorn of a fallen world, but to invite it as confirmation of their righteousness. From this sense of shame-righteousness, it is perhaps only a small step to accepting martyrdom as a normal practice of faith. Gibson's film offers a super-heroic model of such martyrdom. The Left Behind series offers more home-grown examples of the same. The novels glorify in increasingly brutal detail the martyrdom of "tribulation saints."

It is indeed strange that, at the very height of American power, its popular culture would be so invested in narratives and images of Christian martyrdom and victimization. Such representations do not reflect an underlying reality of actual Christian suffering in the United States. Instead, they create an aura of spiritual righteousness around American power as it moves in the world. We might remember that whether in post-WWI Germany, or more recently in Serbia, Israel, and Rwanda, or in the US following 9-11, the deployment of military force has all too often been preceded by a popular discourse of national victimization. This history suggests that since it is no longer considered acceptable to engage in political violence except in the cause of defence, we should be wary whenever we see cultures, as in the US right now, which invest so heavily in images of victimization. Such images—regardless of their veracity or applicability—are essential for legitimising violence and military intervention.

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Left Behind graphic novel

Popular evangelical culture offers images of suffering and millenarianism that bring the confidence of literalist evangelicalism to bear on the prospect of long term American rule in the Middle East, a prospect that is as disorienting to most Americans as it is frightening to the region's inhabitants. Those who doubt whether Christian millenarianism is related to US foreign policy owe it to themselves to read the Left Behind novels, especially since there is much to suggest that American evangelicals are reading these works not as fictions, but as the faithful rendering of real-life prophecies in which Americans figure as righteous mujahideen. While it is unclear whether President Bush is a reader of the Left Behind series, he has often declared his appreciation for evangelism. And when he speaks of "evildoers," or warns that "you're either with us or against us," he is very consciously citing the same language that provides the vocabulary for the Left Behind novels.

Admittedly, for the US to attempt to pursue its imperial policies in the Middle East in the name of the millenarian ideology so widespread in its culture would be a disaster: it would not only generate more opposition in the region, it would alienate many in the mainstream US. Indeed, the current administration recognizes this problem each time it vociferously dissociates its policies from the millenarian dogmas its policy makers and military officers (and constituents) espouse so publicly elsewhere. Currently, the idea of Holy War against Islam would be abhorrent to most mainstream Christians and secular liberals, even those whose ideas about the use of geopolitical force against Islam are not radically divergent from those of the evangelicals. But if the Left Behind series is any indication, millions of Americans are reading about, and perhaps even praying for, just such a Holy War.

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Notes

1. Tim LaHaye has long been a prominent part of the radical right in California. A graduate of the evangelical Bob Jones University, LaHaye used his position as evangelical preacher in Southern California to help found "Californians for Biblical Morality," a key player in the rise of the US religious right during the 1980s. Before *Left Behind*, author Jerry B. Jenkins was best known for his biographies of evangelical athletes.
2. The official Left Behind series site is, http://leftbehind.com.
3. The Left Behind series: Interpreting the Signs, http://secure.agoramedia.com/leftbehind/index_leftbehind15.asp?
4. The Left Behind Series: Newsletter Archive, http://leftbehind.com/channelfree.asp?pageid=932.

Suicide Attacks
Life as a Weapon

RIAZ HASSAN

Suicide attacks have increased dramatically in the Middle East over the past year with the war in Iraq and the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This rise in suicide attacks is remarkable given that the total number of terrorist incidents worldwide fell from its peak of 665 in 1986 to 190 in 2003 alone, whereas the incidents of suicide attacks increased from 31 in the 1980s to 98 in 2003[1]. There is growing evidence that current American domestic and foreign policies may be further contributing to an acceleration of this trend.

Suicide attacks—the targeted use of self-destructing humans against a perceived enemy for political ends—are a modern method with ancient roots. From as early as the first century AD the Jewish sect of Zealots (sicari) in Roman occupied Judea used suicide as a tactic against their enemies. Suicide attacks in the Middle East can be traced to the early Christian Crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the Islamic Order of Assassins (also known as Ismailis-Nazari) was actively involved in similar activities. In the late nineteenth century Russian anarchists and nationalist groups used suicide attacks, their preferred method, to destroy and terrorise the enemy because they regarded it as a source of legitimacy for the cause and a rallying point for future recruits.

Suicide attacks were employed by the Japanese when they used kamikaze pilots to attack American forces in the Pacific during World War II. In April 1945 during the Battle of Okinawa, some 2000 kamikazes rammed their fully fuelled fighter planes into more than 300 ships, killing 5000 Americans in the most costly naval battle in the history of the United States[2]. In the mid-twentieth century with the development of better explosives and means of detonating targets, suicide attacks declined in popularity amongst terrorist groups and were replaced by remotely detonated explosives, hostage taking and attacks on airlines. As counter terrorism methods began to improve in the later half of the twentieth century methods of terrorist attacks began to evolve as well.

Suicide attacks in the Middle East

The advent of modern era suicide terrorism arguably began with the attacks on the Iraqi embassy in Beirut in December 1981. In October 1983 the Hezbollah or Party of God, a Lebanese Shiite militant group that has become a major force in Lebanese politics and society, carried out suicide attacks on a US Army base in Beirut, which killed nearly 300 American and French servicemen. This led to the withdrawal of the American and French multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon making suicide attacks an effective strategic political weapon. By 1985 the use of suicide attacks had succeeded in forcing Israel to abandon most of southern Lebanon.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, suicide attacks began with attacks by Hezbollah trained members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) aimed at derailing the Oslo Peace Accord. In 1988, PIJ founder Fathi Shiqaqi had formulated the guidelines for "exceptional" martyrdom operations involving suicide attacks. Suicide attacks are now plaguing the occupying forces in Iraq. They are becoming a weapon of choice among the Iraqi resistance groups because of their lethality and media impact. In general, suicide attacks constitute about three percent of all terrorist incidents but account for almost half of the deaths due to terrorism. When the US troops entered an abandoned factory shed in Fallujah, Iraq during their siege of the city on 11 April 2004, they found a large cache of leather belts stuffed with explosives along with bomb making instructions. This is the first time since the thirteenth century that suicide attacks are being employed as a weapon of coercion in Iraq.

The strategic logic of suicide attacks

Why are suicide attacks becoming so frequent and what motivates the perpetrators of such attacks? A groundbreaking study by University of Chicago political scientist Robert Papp has shown that there is little connection between religious fundamentalism (and for that matter religion) and suicide attacks. The leading instigator of suicide attacks between 1980 and 2001 were the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, a radical nationalist group whose members were from Hindu families but who were adamantly opposed to religion. Religion is used effectively by the Palestinian radical groups Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades to recruit suicide attackers and to raise operational funds. But the leadership of these organizations has a secular goal: to coerce the Israeli government to change its policies and to leave Palestinian territories. Even if some suicide attackers are irrational or fanatical, the leadership of the groups that recruit and direct them are not.[3]

Papp's study shows that suicide attacks follow a strategic logic specifically designed to coerce modern liberal democracies to make significant political and territorial concessions. According to Papp, the reason for the rise of suicide attacks over the past two decades is because "terrorists have learned that it pays." Suicide attacks by members of Hezbollah and Hamas were successful in compelling American and French troops to leave Lebanon in 1983, Israeli forces to leave Lebanon in 1985 and to quit the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in 1994 and 1995. The Tamil Tigers succeeded in winning major political and territorial concessions from the Sri Lankan government from 1990 onwards using this tactic. In the 1990's suicide attacks by the Kurdistan Peoples Party succeeded in winning partial cultural and political concessions from the Turkish government. The withdrawal of the American troops from Saudi Arabia in 1996, under pressure from terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda supporters, also fit in with this pattern.

Psycho-social factors

Some contemporary commentators have argued that suicide attackers are mentally deranged and crazed cowards who thrive in poverty and ignorance. Such explanations about the psychological profiles and motivations of suicide attackers unfortunately do not help us to either explain the phenomenon or to better understand it. Traditional studies regard suicide attacks as one of the many tactics that terrorists use and thus do not explain the recent rise of this phenomenon. The few studies, which have addressed suicide attacks explicitly, have tended to focus on the suicide attackers' individual motives such as religious indoctrination, especially Islamic fundamentalism, and on their psychopathologies, poverty and lack of education. These explanations have been found to be seriously flawed.

After reviewing psychological studies of suicide attackers, University of Michigan psychologist Scott Atran has concluded that suicide attackers have no appreciable psychological pathologies and are as educated and economically well-off as individuals from the surrounding population. To understand why non-pathological individuals volunteer to become suicide attackers depends on the situational factors which are largely sociological in nature. In the context of the Middle East these include a collective sense of historical injustice, political subservience, and a pervasive sense of social humiliations vis-à-vis global powers and their allies. While one may have some reservations about approaching the issue in the above way, ignoring the causes that contribute to the tactic of suicide bombings risks failing to identify solutions to deal with and overcome it.

Image not available online

Handout pictures of Hamas suicide bombers, Hebron, 18 May 2003

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Life as a weapon

If suicide attackers exhibit no psychologically and socially dysfunctional attributes or suicidal symptoms then why do individuals choose to participate in such attacks? Part of the answer to this question lies in what drives humans to suicide. In modern psychiatry and sociology suicide is regarded as an *end*, an exit from adverse social conditions in which the individual feels hopelessly powerless. In my own study of suicide over the past thirty years I have found that suicidal behaviour in a variety of settings may be a means to achieve multiple ends including self-empowerment in the face of powerlessness, redemption in the face of damnation, and honour in the face of humiliations.[4] The achievement of these multiple ends acts as powerful motivators in many suicides and, in my opinion, is central to a fuller and more meaningful understanding and explanation of contemporary suicide attacks in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Nasra Hassan, a United Nations relief worker in Gaza, interviewed 250 aspiring suicide bombers and their recruiters. She found that none were uneducated, desperately poor, simple-minded, suicidal or depressed. But their social contexts displayed the dynamics of their actions. The potential suicide bombers empowered themselves in the face of powerlessness. According to her respondents, "If our wives and children are not safe from Israeli tanks and rockets, theirs will not be safe from our human bombs." In an interview in his small house on an unpaved lane in a crowded quarter of Gaza the late spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Yassin, told her that martyrdom was a way of redemption: "Love of martyrdom is something deep inside the heart, but these rewards are not in themselves the goal of the martyr. The only aim is to win Allah's satisfaction. That can be done in the simplest and speediest manner by dying in the cause of Allah. And it is Allah who selects martyrs." Humiliation acted as a powerful magnet for recruiting suicide bombers. A senior recruiter told her, "After every massacre, every massive violation of our rights and defilement of our holy places, it is easy for us to sweep the streets for boys who want to do a martyrdom operation."[5]

Since Muslims professing religious motives have perpetrated most suicide attacks over the past two years, including those on 11 September 2001, it may be obvious to conclude that Islamic fundamentalism is the root cause of this phenomenon. This assumption has fuelled the belief that future 11 September type of attacks can only be prevented through liberalization and democratization of Muslim societies. This was a key rationale used by the United States government to mobilize public support for the war in Iraq. Policies based on such an assumption may be fostering the development of domestic and foreign policies in the United States which are likely to worsen the situation.

One indication that this may be happening is reflected in the results of the March 2004 Pew Global Attitudes Survey which showed that in several Muslim countries (Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan) a majority of respondents thought that the American government was overreacting to terrorism. The respondents also supported suicide bombings by Palestinians against Israel and against Americans and other Westerners in Iraq. The International Institute of Strategic Studies in London has also reported that the war in Iraq has led to an increase in global recruitment for anti-American jihad.

Stemming the tide

What strategies can be used to stem the tide of suicide attacks? The offensive military actions such as better border defences and homeland security and concessions to the groups sponsoring suicide attacks are not likely to succeed. According to sociologist Kathleen Carley of Carnegie Mellon University, eliminating the central actors with extensive networks and ties with the other cell members actually spurs terrorists to adapt more quickly and is less effective in the long run. Thus assassinations of leaders, a favourite Israeli tactic, may be counterproductive besides causing public revulsion.

> Even if some suicide attackers are irrational or fanatical, the leadership of the groups that recruit and direct them are not.

Suicide attacks are carried out by community based organizations. Strategies aimed at findings ways to induce communities to abandon such support may isolate terrorist organizations and curtail their activities. But ultimately those strategies addressing and lessening the grievances and humiliations of populations that give rise to suicide attacks are required for their elimination. Support for suicide attacks is unlikely to diminish without tangible progress in achieving at least some of the fundamental goals that suicide attackers and those supporting them share.

Notes

1. Department of State US, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* 2003 (Washington, DC, 2004).
2. A. Axell and H. Kase, *Kamikaze: Japan's Suicide Gods* (New York: Longman, 2002).
3. R. Papp, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003): 3.
4. R. Hassan, *A Way of Dying: Suicide in Singapore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); R. Hassan, *Suicide Explained: The Australian Experience* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995).
5. N. Hassan, "Letter from Gaza: An Arsenal of Believers," *The New Yorker* (November 2001): 36-41.

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Martyrdom & Resistance in the Middle East

SABINE DAMIR-GEILSDORF

Suicide attacks referred to as "martyrdom-operations" by their executors and sympathizers, have become a weapon of mainly Islamist groups in the Middle East. The first suicide attacks in the early 1980s in Lebanon met with criticism, in particular among the Sunni religious establishment. Though they were then regarded as violations of Islamic principles, today suicide attacks receive broader popular support and religious backing—and are understood—within the context of legitimate resistance and national struggle for liberation.

Suicide attacks in the Muslim World have intensified fears of Islam in the West. Increasingly, Islam is narrowed down to militant Islamism and understood as being rooted in a fanatical and violent tradition. Paradoxically, these notions of self-martyrdom within current Shia and Sunni discourse differ markedly from traditional sources,[1] and are, to a large extent, derived from modern secular ideologies such as nationalism and anti-imperialism.

Suicide attacks in the Middle East first emerged in the escalating conflicts of Lebanon and, later, Israel/Palestine. When Hizbullah carried out its first suicide attack in 1982, Sunni authorities condemned this act with reference to the prohibition of suicide in Islamic law, while Shia ulama mostly refrained from commenting. Hizbullah militants may have found some inspiration in Iran where the concept of martyrdom was used to mobilize the masses for war against the Iraqi invasion and overcome Iraqi minefields, however, the concrete example they followed was reputedly that of Tamil resistance in Sri Lanka. Hizbullah was not the only militia in Lebanon to adopt the method; secular militia aligned to the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) and the Communist Party were involved in various suicide attacks, including attacks carried out by women and Christians.[2] The attacks primarily targeted Israeli troops and their local allies in Southern Lebanon. The main reason why suicide attacks became accepted within a short span of time was their decisive "success," the greatest "victory" being the withdrawal of the US Marine Corps and French military from Lebanon after having been seriously hit by suicide bombers. It was only in the mid-1990s that suicide attacks were adopted by Palestinian organizations, in particular since the second Intifada. Over the last few years suicide bombing has become part of jihad—as defence of Muslim land and people—in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Saudi-Arabia, and most recently, Iraq. The attacks are not undisputed in public opinion and religious discourse, and not all bombers are perceived as martyrs. While the great majority condemns the attacks of 9/11 and Madrid, as being contrary to Islamic principles, "martyrdom operations" in the context of the struggle for national liberation have found a growing acceptance.

> . . . not all bombers are perceived as martyrs.

Martyrs of Palestine

In Palestine those who died in the struggle against British troops and Jewish militia, and later the Israeli army, have always been held in high regard. They were remembered as *shuhada*—whether combatants or civilians—regardless of their religious or political orientations. In the early idiom of resistance the status as victim shaped the self-image of Palestinians to a great extent. From the early 1960s onward secular nationalist organizations such as Fatah and PFLP undertook to overcome this passive image and to transform it into agency. In the course of ongoing and ever more violent conflict, national slogans and motifs mingled with religious ones—a process that is similarly discernible in Israeli nationalism. Islamist organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad revived the term *mujahid* that had been commonly used in the 1930s and 1940s, at the expense of *fida'i*, "freedom fighter". The word *fida'i* predates modern times and was not uncommon in the early decades of Palestinian resistance, but it that had been made fashionable by the secular groups such as Fatah. More recently, the term *istishhadi* acquired currency for those combatants who willingly martyr themselves in suicide operations.

The shift from a secular discourse of resistance to a more religiously inspired discourse dates from the 1980s. This shift in rhetoric reflects a more general trend in the region in which the ruling elites were increasingly discredited because of corruption and the apparent bankruptcy of their "grand" secular projects, such as pan-Arabism and socialism. Combined with the growing criticism of Western double standards in their policies towards the Middle East, secular movements lost some of their earlier appeal but also assumed less apparent secular stances. Religious argumentation gained increased popularity in the political domain, a process that can be understood as a withdrawal into the cultural "own" in contrast to the "other."

The first suicide bombing carried out by Hamas, occurred on 16 April 1993 when a car bomb exploded near the Jewish settlement of Mehola on the West bank, leaving two persons killed including the attacker.[3] On 6 April 1994, retaliating the Goldstein massacre in Hebron, eight persons were killed and 44 injured by a car bomb at a bus station in Afula; a week later a Hamas militant blew himself up in the Hadera central bus station, leaving five deaths and twenty injured. The adoption of suicide attacks as a means of resistance was to a degree the result of the deportation of hundreds of Hamas members in 1992 to Marj al-Zuhur in Southern Lebanon, where they intensified contacts with Hizbullah which trained Hamas militants in the art of suicide attacks in their camps in the Bekaa Valley. With the second Intifada suicide attacks became much more frequent; and albeit that the Islamist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad carried out most, more secular groups, in particular the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades that are affiliated with the Fatah movement, and the Marxist-Leninist oriented PFLP joined the mortal efforts.

Today, those suicide attacks are considered as "martyrdom operations." The legitimacy of these operations is not only acknowledged by Muslim clergy, but also finds support among a number of Christian Palestinian leaders, as well as among the Coptic clergy in Egypt. Attalla Hanna, former spokesman for the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, praised the "martyrdom operations," calling on Arab Christians to join hands in carrying out martyr operations.[4]

The broad support for suicide attacks against Israeli targets reflects the desperate state of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. In the 1990s the number of Israeli settlements on the West bank doubled. Further land grab took place by designing security zones, of lately including the so-called security-wall. Over the last three years the death toll among Palestinians due to Israeli attacks amounted to 3000, with over 40,000 injured and a larger number losing their homes and livelihood in collective punishments. Recurrent closures hamper travel and gravely limit public space. Ongoing repression caused and maintains a dramatic worsening of the local economy, figuring soaring unemployment rates. Given that diplomatic endeavours failed to deliver totally, radical options to reverse the desperate situation gain credibility.

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Terrorism in Europe

FARHAD KHOSROKHAVAR

The terrorist attack on passenger trains in Madrid on 11 March caused shock and anger. Alerted by the assault, political authorities all over Europe have intensified their efforts to suppress jihadist activities. The causes of militant Islamist activism in Europe are often considered to be external, emanating from conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, etc. But any policy based upon this externalization, i.e. denying the existence of internal roots, in particular the existence of alienated European Muslim youth, is doomed to failure.

In Europe there are distinct groups involved in terrorist activities: those related to European issues like ETA Basque terrorism and those which have non-territorial leftist centred ideologies (for example, the recent threat letters in Italy connected to leftist cells), and radical Islamic groups. Terrorist activities of the latter are often ascribed to al-Qaeda, but, in a way, al-Qaeda is a misnomer: a loosely connected, "franchised" ensemble of terrorist cells, largely autonomous towards each other and having a real capacity for self-financing without reference to the "mother" institution. Their relations are more in terms of knowing each other through the Afghan camps in the 1980s and 1990s (during the fight against the Soviet Union and the period of the Taliban regime) and in consequence of the same antagonistic attitudes towards the West.

Within these groups, one can see two types of actors: those who have roots in the Muslim countries (mainly North Africa and Pakistan), and those who are converts and have joined the organisations after their conversion. Up to now, we know of no member of these radical Islamist cells who had not converted or professed Islam as his religion. On the other hand, there is no known organic link between the al-Qaeda type terrorism and other activist or terrorist organizations. Such links might be established in Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya or in some other troubled spots in the world, but this is not the case, yet, in Europe. Among these terrorist cells, the Moroccan ones seem to have a wide influence. The Madrid train explosions in March 2004, according to the latest findings, were sponsored and carried out by these Moroccan cells, although one of their prominent members was from Tunisia.

Image not available online

PHOTO BY ANDREA COMAS, ©REUTERS, 2004

Anti-terrorism demonstration near Madrid, 5 April 2004

The cases of England and France

Another feature of European Islamist terrorism is its wide use of recruits whose parents or grandparents came from the former European colonies. Among them two countries have been the major centres for the development of this type of activity: France and the United Kingdom. Though Italy, Spain, and even countries like Holland, Belgium, Germany, and Greece have harboured these terrorist groups as well, but the role of France and England is distinct in so far as many members of these terrorist cells seem to have been English or French by birth or acquisition, their parents originating from the ex-colonies. In England, the Pakistanis or some "Arabs" (coming from North Africa mainly through France and having established themselves in the United Kingdom), and in France, people from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia have played a significant role in the jihadist activities. This fact seems to be noteworthy. In Germany, where the majority of the Muslim population is of Turkish (or Kurdish with Turkish citizenship) background, the Arab perpetrators of the 11 September 2001, who had spent many months in Germany, did not have any organic link with the Muslim populations of Germany. The ex-colonial citizens of France and England, or those from North Africa (in France), and Pakistan or North Africa in England (but not Bangladesh or India) play a major role in terrorist activities in these two countries in particular, and in Europe in general. The fact that Bangladesh does not play a major role is probably due to its non-involvement in the Kashmir problem which pushes Pakistan to radical islamism. Moreover, Pakistan played (and still plays) a major role in Taliban style activities.

Post-colonial heritage

The reasons for the distinct roles of France and England in the jihadist activities in Europe are manifold. First, the colonial memory has its own say in this matter: many of these young males feel despised or rejected in their new country in France or England. They feel deeply estranged, on the other hand, from the secular and "godless" Western societies in which they develop a counter-secular identity before getting involved in Islam as the major bearer of their hatred or rejection of societies which do not recognize them as such. Among these male youth (in which there is no female constituency up to now), many belong to the lower middle class while some are economically excluded. Some have the European citizenship (French, English, or even Spanish) but some have the North African or Pakistani one: they have been either denied the citizenship, or have simply not asked for it, or did not stay long enough to be entitled to it. In Spain, some have only settled there a few years ago or even more recently.

On the whole, these groups, which constitute a very small proportion of the immigrant population from North Africa or Pakistan, have developed a counter-Western or counter-European identity. This is mainly due to their ambiguous situation in Europe, as well as Western policies towards the Muslim world, in particular, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Chechnya (in Paris, one dismantled cell had endeavoured to blow up the Russian Embassy), and more recently, Iraq.

The problem of jihadist cells in Europe is, therefore, both internal (estranged people from the former colonies) and external (the spread of terrorist networks with anti-Western jihadist ideologies, favoured by hot issues like the Palestinian and Chechen problems). Any policy "externalizing" the causes, i.e. denying their internal roots, is doomed to failure. Accordingly, any policy aiming at exclusive repression of these youth groups can only be short term and will create new problems as well. A mixture of repressive and persuasive policies is necessary in order to promote an efficient counter-terrorist activity in the long term.

…Colonial memory has its own say in this matter: many of these young males feel despised or rejected in their new country in France or England.

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Iraq as Lebanon
Fears for the Future

CHARLES TRIPP

The US Vice-President Dick Cheney and some of those close to him in Washington have been very taken with the "Lebanese model" for Iraq. Presumably, this conjures up the vision of a pluralist republic, open to free enterprise and foreign capital, presided over by an elite of *zu'ama* (notables and local leaders), with sufficient common interest in the status quo to keep the whole thing going. This comes either from a selective reading of pre-1967 Lebanese political history, or from a heavily edited version of the post-Ta'if era.

In fact, as recent events have shown, a rather different but equally authentic version of "Iraq-as-Lebanon" has been emerging. The rise to prominence of sectarian and ethnic leaders, intra-communal struggles for power and influence, the emergence of communally-based militias, sectarian murders and acts of terror, the abduction of foreigners as bargaining tools, the involvement of outside powers in the country for their own strategic advantage—all of this looks horribly familiar to those who had watched Lebanon's torment in the 1970s and the 1980s.

The turmoil has presented the US and its coalition allies with their greatest challenge since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but these developments are a direct consequence of policies pursued by the US in Iraq. They come out of a reading of Iraqi political society which has emphasized the communal at the expense of the national, a reading reinforced by a range of Iraqis who either think this is indeed the way in which power should be handled, or who fear the reconstruction of the powerful central state apparatus which had ruled so brutally for so long.[1]

Initially, the coalition forces encouraged local forms of power to help restore order in the vacuum created by the collapse of central government. For many local elites long used to positioning themselves in order to serve the central authorities, it was natural to gravitate towards the source of patronage—and to present themselves for recognition as representatives of their communities. In the absence of electoral processes, there were few to gainsay them and they rapidly became the interlocutors of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

Under Bremer's direction, however, this also became the principle on which the emerging national Iraqi politics was based. The occupation authorities consistently treated sectarian, ethnic, and tribal features of Iraqi society as if they were the only framework for social and political order, as demonstrated by the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the Iraqi Council of Ministers.

Security vacuum

Equally importantly, and ominously for the future, the CPA's dismissal of the Iraqi security forces and the dispersal and disintegration of the Iraqi police, left a security vacuum which the over-stretched allied forces were unable to fill. In response, local militias, some better organised than others, emerged to restore some modicum of security in the lawlessness that followed the invasion. In doing so, of course, they became potential assets in a developing political game. Officially the militias were condemned by the CPA. In fact, many have been tolerated, even encouraged by the CPA as it seeks local allies to help keep order.

Most obviously, this has applied to the largest indigenous armed force in Iraq, the 40,000 or so Kurdish *peshmerga* (fighters) of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Popular Union of Kurdistan. It has also extended to the Badr Brigade of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and to units affiliated to the Shia al-Da'wa (The Call) party, one of the oldest Islamist movements in Iraq. Since all of these organizations had been recognized by the CPA and brought into the IGC, they were regarded as "forces for order." More surprisingly perhaps, until March 2004 US forces shied away from taking on the Jaish al-Mahdi (Army of the Rightly Guided One), the militia of the radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. They too had been able to organise as neighbourhood security units in Baghdad and in towns across southern Iraq—and given the license granted to other CPA-approved militias, saw no reason not to do so. Meanwhile, in many parts of the country, tribal sheikhs have been allowed to raise their own armed retinues. These developments inevitably led to the emergence of counter-militias in the so-called "Sunni triangle."

Inbuild tensions

At the same time, the CPA has been pursuing a potentially contradictory strategy, some of the problems of which became apparent in March and April 2004. With great speed, it rushed to reconstruct the national Iraqi police force; it accelerated the rebuilding of the Iraqi armed forces, essentially as an internal policing force; it established the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps, as well as the Border Force and the Facilities Protection Force. Faced by dissent and then insurgency, the CPA deployed the familiar tactics of forcible detention, collective punishment, and military repression. They found, however, that the Iraqi security forces fell apart when ordered into action and the US forces took on the task themselves. The consequence is that the US is desperately trying to stiffen the resolve of the Iraqi security forces by bringing back senior officers of the former army more familiar with this style of internal security work.[2]

These developments are not reassuring. It is not simply the inconsistency of the CPA's direction. It is also the probability that the future Iraqi government will preside over a state in which there is an inbuilt tension between the temptation to farm out security and economic resources to provincial, communal elites, and the impulse to assert the central government's monopoly of violence and of oil revenues. As things threaten to fall apart and economic reconstruction is stalled, there are many Iraqis who may find the reassertion of strong central state leadership the lesser of two evils.[3]

However, such a trend will be resisted by those Iraqis who have tasted a degree of autonomy during the past year—and, in the Kurdish case, during the past thirteen years. It will be a test for those who take charge in Iraq. Historically, Iraqi governing elites, when confronted by social unrest or provincial resentment, have all too often lost their nerve and responded forcefully, hoping that coercion will impose the order that has failed to emerge from consent. In the coming battleground of Iraqi politics, one can only hope that these very experiences will steer them away from a form of rule that has exacted such a terrible toll in Iraqi history.

Notes

1. C. Tripp, "Iraq: Political Recognition and Social Action," *SSRC – Items and Issues* 4, no.1 (Winter 2002-3): 9-15.
2. Reuters, "U.S. to reinstate some Baathists in Iraq," 22 April 2004, http://www.reuters.com/news.jhtml; BBC News, "Iraqi forces turn on coalition," 22 April 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/ 2/hi/middle_east/3648489.stm.
3. See Oxford Research International – National Survey of Iraq, February 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/ 2/hi/middle_east/3514504.stm.

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Memories of Havana in Desert Refugee Camps

NICOLIEN ZUIJDGEEST

Nasra is one of the thousands of second generation Sahrawi youngsters who have studied for more than ten years in Cuba before returning to the camps of the liberation movement Polisario, in the South Western Sahara in Algiers. There they wait in a state of limbo for a solution to the conflict that has lasted already three decades. What follows is an excerpt from the recently published travelogue Africa's last colony, travels in the Western Sahara (in Dutch).[1]

While 26 years old Nasra is making tea, her veil keeps slipping down; "I still have to learn how to wear this absurdity," she grins. "In Cuba I used to wear mini-dresses. Here people find it odd when I wear jeans under my veil. After my return, my mother asked why I undress before going to sleep. Here it is customary to keep on your clothes at night. There is a world of difference between Havana and the desert of Tindouf."

Nasra like thousands of Sahrawi youth has followed a secondary education in Cuba. In the camps there are only primary education and two lower-level boarding schools. For their future education, Sahrawis are dependent on training facilities in friendly, socialist orientated countries like Cuba, Algeria, Libya, Syria, Russia and the former East Germany. After more than ten years abroad they return to the camps and face difficulties adapting.

Where does Nasra feel more at home? She thinks profoundly about it, "Cuba is my second home. I do speak Arabic, but I can express myself better in Spanish." She smiles, but stares as soon as she hears Julio Iglesias' voice on the radio. "My friend used to put on this song when I stayed over for the night," she whispers.

"What do you miss most?" I ask.

"In Cuba we went out for dinner, we visited a café or the cinema and we used to dance in the open air. Wonderful! Everything that was so common there, I miss over here. Even if the means are available, the society disapproves. Some time ago we had a salsa party—salsa in the Sahara. We have to hold that somewhere back, in secret."

Nasra has studied psychology in Cuba but she can not do much with it here. She wants to work, but there are no jobs available. Staying at home drives her mad. She wants to marry, but thinks that in these circumstances it would be "criminal" to have children. "What kind of future do they have here? Waiting for a referendum that keeps being postponed time after time?"

Overhearing our conversation about Cuba, a corpulent young man in jeans and a sweater calls: "Havana, I long for you and your cigars." He introduces himself as Ali and says that Cuba used to be his home for seventeen years. He studied medical biology. He left the camp in 1985 when he was ten years old, together with hundreds of Sahrawi children. An old Russian cruise-boat carried them for 13 days from the Algerian port town of Oran to Cuba.

"Ten years is rather young. Didn't you miss your family terribly?" I ask.

"I was too young and impressed by events that I forgot about my family in a couple of weeks. Once per six months I received a letter or a tape from home. That was all."

"Did you see your family in these seventeen years?"

"Yes, twice. It is too expensive to fly in all pupils every summer. Usually only the best students would come home during holidays. They used to teach at the camp schools in order to participate in the Sahrawi society and culture."

"I have heard elders complain that you youngsters are forgetting your roots," I remark. Ali looks at me with desperation and nervously cracks his knuckles. "Imagine," he replies softly. "When you live for seventeen years with the Cubans, you adapt to their state of mind. The cultural evenings of the Youth Union of Polisario are no match for this. Have you seen the museum of Sahrawi history next to the women's school? There are pictures of prehistoric men. Do you believe in that theory?"

Without waiting for an answer he adds, "In Cuba I studied Darwin's theory of evolution. I do not believe in the origin of the universe as described in the Quran. To whom can I say these kinds of things? You get back to the camps and are confronted with many things you are not used to, or things you even disapprove of. If I say something, it is not accepted. We find ourselves in an intellectual straddle."

"We live in the desert, there is nothing here, we are dependent on aid. I cannot work nor earn any money. I am afraid I can't keep up with my field of studies."

What about the growing generation gap? "My father wants me to marry a girl from a well-off family. When I marry it will be with the woman I love. My father doesn't understand that. We quarrel regularly about it. I am used to expressing my feelings, to talking about girl friends and sex. That is not done here."

PHOTO BY NICOLIEN ZUIJDGEEST, 2003

Watching a soap opera, Sahara desert

Note

1. Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2004

Nicolien Zuijdgeest works as an independent journalist. She has lived for several months with Sahrawi families in the occupied Western Sahara and travelled extensively in Algeria, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Mauritania.
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Multiculturalism through Spirit Possession

KJERSTI LARSEN

Islam and Muslim societies often appear in the contemporary period, at least to the "Western" public, as if uncompromising, inflexible, and unwilling to adjust to modernity. Unfortunately this debate leaves significant aspects of Muslim ways of life and its inherent pluralistic dimensions in the shadow. Zanzibar—a Muslim and multicultural society off the East African coast, like other Swahili societies, has a diverse population, aesthetics and life-style. The multicultural dimension of the island of Zanzibar gets uniquely articulated through the popular belief in spirits called *masheitani ya kibuki* and the rituals performed on their behalf.

Masheitani ya kibuki are said to be Christian spirits from the Sakalava kingdom of Madagascar. Engagement with them can be understood as an elaborate way of handling sameness and difference within a basically multicultural, yet mono-religious, society. The narratives surrounding the spirits also recall the interactions of individuals and societies in the region of the Indian Ocean.

Recently, the ethnic distinctions between the inhabitants of Zanzibar have been highlighted. To belong to one or the other category has had dfferent socio-political implications reflecting the changing power structures. The term *kabila* is used to denote what one considers to be one's place of origin such as waNgazija (from the Comoro Islands), waShihiri (from Yemen), waManga (from Oman), waHadimu (from the east coast of Ungula), waShirazi (from Shiraz, Iran), waSwahili (from the coast or mainland), and waHindi (from India). The notion of *kabila* implies an understanding of origin beyond the place where one currently lives and contains an aesthetic dimension, which relates to habits and ways of life. Although Zanzibar is described as a multicultural society, it is important to consider that the great majority of its population is Sunni Muslim. In this society, Islam coexists with a belief in spirit possession. Interestingly, practices around spirit possession do not negate an Islamic mode of life, but reflect the society's experience of everyday life.

The spirits seen in Zanzibar

The terms *masheitani* and *majinni* both refer to the spirits. Like human beings, spirits are perceived as beings created and sent to earth (*dunia ardhini*) by God and do not indicate any link to the devil or to the concept of evil. Spirits are said to be both good and bad and just like humans are drawn between Allah and *Ibilis*. They have sensory and emotional experiences, soul (*roho*), breath or the vital principle, as well as gender. By inhabiting the bodies of humans—both male and female—spirits have a physical presence in the human world. The spirits exist in distinction from their human hosts. Humans are believed not to be responsible for the actions and behavior of spirits, but are only responsible for their relationship to spirits. In this sense, spirits take the role of social players. The rituals performed on behalf of *masheitani ya kibuki* illustrate the modes of interaction between humans and spirits.

Zanzibar coast

PHOTO BY KJERSTI LARSEN, 1997

Ritual and the acceptance of "other"

A ritual usually takes place just outside the main entrance door of a house. Two big wooden chairs are placed in the centre of the ground straw mats, one for the king and one for the queen. In one end of the room—the end facing Madagascar, which is the spirits' place of origin, there is a table with the spirit's main remedies: a bucket filled with water and herbs, incense jars, white plates with Maria Theresa coins, silver bracelets, lime-stone paste (*talmalandi*), honey, bottles of imported brandy, cups, tobacco, and betel-nut. The ritual starts when the members of the ritual group come out of the house carrying ebony spears or sceptres with silver ornamentation, incense jars, and white plates with silver coins and bracelets. While proceeding they are, together with the audience, singing the opening song,—a praise to the great ones among these spirits. Then, both humans and spirits present, sit down on the floor. The ritual leader offers a prayer to the *spirits* in their *ki-buki* language since each tribe of spirits has its own specific language associated with their place of origin. The ritual then resumes with a prayer to God in the native language of the spirit, an important act for both Muslim Zanzibaris and Christian spirits, and is performed in the "universal way of praying" by the Zanzibaris. In Zanzibari society language is seen as an important indicator of identity and belonging, but not as a constraint to communication (differences–not even scriptural religious differences—are approached as definite).

The spirit inhabiting the ritual leader (*fundi*) is the king (*mfalme*) called grandfather (*Babu*). As king, *Babu* wants his feet atop a stool (*kibao*), and the sceptre in his hand. Arriving guests, human and spirits alike, greet the ritual leader by kneeling in front of her and *Babu* when he inhabits her body. The spirits usually initiate the interaction with the audience. If the spirits are attracted to someone among the audience they will give them coins, and also ask for coins from the audience. The spirits offer brandy to those whom they like. If they are in a good mood they might even give brandy to those who ask for brandy. Humans who are offered brandy have to drink it. If they reject it the spirit will empty the cup on the head of that person. Both the drinking of brandy and the act of emptying a cup on the head of a person are disruptive acts, although anticipated and part of the ritualistic performance. During the ritual both spirits and humans consume alcohol. Since the spirits are Christians, not Muslims, Zanzabri Muslims

maintain that they have to drink in order to make the spirits feel welcome and their faith respected.

Such a communitarian philosophy and tolerant awareness of other religious faiths reveals the essential acceptance of difference inherent in Zanzibari society. This open everyday-life philosophy also illustrates that it is possible to share space with, and accommodate, humans and spirits of different modes of being and living styles whether they are your guests or your hosts. Difference becomes a highly valued expression of social behaviour. Yet, there seems to be a fragile balance between being with and being against "the other." In times of crises an identification of "the other" as the cause of everything problematic, has so far, also in this society, shown to be a successful political strategy.

PHOTO BY KJERSTI LARSEN, 1997

Objects used in spirit ritual, Zanzibar

The otherness of spirits and the otherness within

The experience of being inhabited by spirits should be analysed through the concept of "embodiment" which encompasses critical reflection. Through being embodied by spirits women and men can extend their understanding of themselves. Their self-awareness does not necessarily happen at the moment of spirit inhabitation, but can occur afterwards, in remembering, and discussing their experiences with the spirits. Moreover, by observing others being embodied by spirits women and men have the possibility of contextualising themselves in opposition to the spirits and recognising themselves in the spirits. Through observing the spirits acting and interacting with humans and other spirits in this world, Zanzabaris gain perspectives not only on their lives but also on their position in society and questions concerning identity, morality, and life-style. Important in this process of reflection are the dimensions of comedy and parody—dimensions evoked by the fact that the ways of spirits are characterised by excessiveness. Thus, laughter is associated with situations when the taken for granted modes of life and living (*ngoma ya kibuki*), are challenged and conflicting moral codes meet, such as the standardised forms of Islam and Christianity.

The spirits caricature human behaviour to the extent of parody, but they also present another viable way of life. The spirits represent, at one and the same time a duplication of and a contradiction to human beings; they are, simultaneously, the same as and different from them. In this world (*dunia*), spirits and humans can be seen to comment upon each other as well as upon the notion of difference and compatibility as such. In Zanzabari Muslim, multicultural society, notions and demarcations of difference form an inherent part of life and relationships. Both a distinct separation between self and other and their interconnectedness are expressed through the phenomenon of spirit possession. Hence, multiculturalism as reflected in relationships between humans and spirits should be understood in terms of interactions and identification, not as expressions of segregation and communalism.

Although a multi-cultural society, Zanzibari politics are not characterized by multiculturalism in the sense of flexibility and a motivation to accommodate difference. This is shown time and again, and especially in relation to the more recent introduction of multi-party rule and election procedures where precisely religious faith and places of origin were again turned into political issues of exclusion and inclusion. Still, within this political atmosphere the phenomenon of spirit possession allows people to live, reflect upon, and accommodate their experiences of difference and sameness with regard to the "other" both in their society as well as within themselves. By being embodied by spirits and thus, for a period of time becoming the other, individuals gain knowledge of what is for them, considered foreign. Observing relatives and friends going through a bodily transformation, becoming an other, Zanzabaris develop an awareness of identity which makes possible identification with the other, while at the same time, distinguishing between self and other, us-them. This sense of separatedness is maintained because of the distinction between humans and spirits that is never transgressed. Through the pluralistic presence of spirits of different origins and religious faiths and their ability to materialize in this world through the use of different human bodies, the other, otherness or difference become someone and something that is known and, at least, in ordinary daily life, livable. Zanzibar is a place constituted by migrating spirits and mobile people. And, the migratory ways of both humans and spirits within the Indian Ocean produces various forms of difference and sameness where inclusion characterizes daily life and exclusion is the main message of the dominant political ideologies.

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American Muslims
Race, Religion and the Nation

KAREN ISAKSEN LEONARD

Muslims in the United States have attempted to carve out identities that challenge evolving national norms, identities that often are at odds with those imposed on them by other Americans. Through a review of three key areas of tension, the constructions of race, religion, and the nation, it can be argued that American Muslims may very well be making their greatest contributions to American pluralism.

In each of the three largest American Muslim communities, the African Americans, Arabs, and South Asians, race has been a major and controversial issue. Each of these groups encountered racism in America and tried to escape from it, but in different ways. The earliest movements of African Americans toward Islam in the early twentieth century, the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, both asserted "Asiatic" racial identities, explicitly rejecting slave, Negro, and/or African identities in many ways. Noble Drew Ali proclaimed his followers to be "Moorish Americans" and Asiatics, and Elijah Muhammad proclaimed his followers to be Asiatic-Blacks. Indicating that the Asiatic claim was not without its own confusion, not only whites (always), but "Brother Moslems from the East" (sometimes) were barred from Nation of Islam temples.

The early Arab immigrants, mostly Christians but some Muslims too, came from the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century and were often referred to as "Turks," while they called themselves Lebanese or Syrian Lebanese. As Turks, they too were designated as "Asiatics" (Turkey was then called Asia Minor) and were treated in a contradictory fashion in terms of eligibility for naturalized citizenship. People from the Middle East were "white" in successive census racial classifications, but in 1910 the Census Bureau classified them as "Asiatic." Since citizenship in the United States was until the mid-twentieth century restricted by racial designation to whites and blacks, the latter added in 1870 after the Civil War, this posed a problem. Just as the Chinese and Japanese had been denied citizenship as "Orientals", "Asians", and "Mongolians", Arabs were twice denied citizenship, declared not to be "free white persons" in 1909 and 1914 (the latter case involved a "Syrian of Asiatic birth"), although both decisions were reversed on appeal. South Asian immigrants, including Muslims from India or Hindustan, were similarly first called "Hindus", a geographic rather than religious marker in the early twentieth century. The South Asians were denied citizenship in 1923 by being termed "non-white" although they were admittedly Caucasian. In the census, South Asians have had varying separate designations. Among South Asians today, including Muslims, there are disagreements about whether to identify and affiliate as whites or non-whites, and the same is true for Arab Muslims.

A new kind of radicalisation based not on physical features but on religion is currently underway. This new identity that is being embraced by some academics invokes an Arab phenotype. In a U.S. Department of Transportation memo issued in October 2001 outlining guidelines for airport security personnel, for example, the guideline stated *not* to single out passengers who were "Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Muslim and Sikh" for questioning. Note that these are linguistic, national-origin, and religious, not racial categories in the traditional sense.

The notion that Muslims are being newly constructed as a racial group seems attractive for some as it provides a possible rallying point, since movements of resistance and empowerment in the United States have traditionally been organized along racial lines. But such movements have also been organized along religious lines, and in the case of Islam, its religious beliefs and, better yet, its practices often do challenge racism and counter racial divisiveness in America. While the established religions in America, like Islam, are multiracial and multicultural, some immigrant religious groups have been analyzed as becoming "white" by moving into the mainstream. But this is perhaps not the strategy American Muslims will want to adopt—the African American component of the community, some 30-40% of the U.S. Muslim population—is already racialized, but as black, not as Arab. Islam is strongly committed to racial equality, and since American Muslims can make a strong positive contribution to American society in this area, one needs to think carefully about the facile construction of Muslims as some new kind of racial category. Discrimination against religious groups also has a long history in America—why ignore the more obvious and accurate category of religion as the target of current prejudice?

Religion

Moving from race to religion, one needs a quick survey of American religious history and significant recent changes. Euro-American Protestantism, male-dominated, prevailed from the founding of the country. Relatively recently, Catholics and Jews have become part of the mainstream religious culture, the national civil religion. Some have written about this in terms of race: how the Irish became white, how the Jews became white; others have written about it in terms of economic and social strategies, of ways of using opportunities.[1] As the argument goes, the Catholics earned recognition and political power by building a separate sub-culture, while the Jews empowered themselves and achieved recognition and respect through their successful participation in mainstream educational institutions. (Arguably, African American Muslims and some immigrant Muslims are doing the former, while the most ambitious, highly educated new immigrant Muslims are doing the latter).

The ideological and organizational nature of the American religious landscape has changed significantly in the last few decades. First, denominations, so important in the mainline Anglo-Saxon Protestant world, have become less significant as people become more highly educated, intermarry, and move to new neighbourhoods with different local churches; Christians now change their denominational or church affiliations relatively easily. Second, despite male domination of religious structures and dialogues, it is argued that women in America constitute the majority of participants in Christian religious activities and institutions.[2] Third, as denominations decline, there has been a rise of special purpose groups organized along conservative and liberal lines, a polarization between conservative and liberal religious groups leading to passionate mobilization and new coalitions on public issues such as homosexuality and abortion. Fourth and finally, the public dimensions of religious culture in America, despite the separation of church and state, have grown in importance, as specialists in religious studies and American history testify.

Reviewing the history of American Muslims in the present national context of an expanding but increasingly politicised civic religion, we see that from early on the African American Muslim movements were separatist ones, in tension with religions well-anchored in America. African American Muslims tried to locate their religious roots abroad, in Morocco or the Middle East. But they were often denied recognition as part of world Islam, and, in some immigrant Muslim circles and for some African American Muslim groups, this denial continues.[3]

Arab Muslims, in particular, have more recently argued for the inclusion of Islam as part of Western civilization and the American mainstream religious scene. They argue this not only on the basis of numbers (Muslim leaders claim there are about as many Muslims as Jews in the U.S.), but, and more importantly, because Islam is one of the three religions of "the book," the historically connected Abrahamic religions, and is therefore an integral part of America's expanding national religious landscape. American Muslim discourse positions Islam as a partner with Judaism and Christianity, emphasizing the religious teachings and values shared by the three monotheistic religions. One needs to ask not only what this argument means for the many other religions in America now, the Buddhists, Hindus, and smaller groups (the Buddhists are arguably as numerous as Muslims and growing equally fast), but what it means for secular people who dislike the emphasis on religion in the civic arena and its intrusion into national political rhetoric. Whatever one's position, it is clear that religious diversity is being recognized as never before and is becoming part of the multicultural agenda at all levels of public life.

American Muslims share in most of the historical trends with regard to religions in the U.S. It is not clear whether Muslim denominations such as various Shias and Sufis are declining in importance, but certainly as the numbers within these smaller groups increase they seem to be establishing separate institutions in the U.S. rather than reducing the importance of boundaries. The key role played by women is being increasingly recognized by American Muslims. In the early decades among Arab Muslims, the energy and activity of women was key to the establishment of major mosques in Detroit and Toledo. The U.S. is the centre of the "gender jihad," one of the most exciting developments in American and international Islam, to my mind, and the feminists (my term) writing about Islamic law and jurisprudence include indigenous and immigrant Muslim women, African American, Arab, South Asian, and others. In another area, we see the relevance of the special purpose religious coalitions across denominational lines, as most of the national American Muslim political and religious coalitions try to link Sunnis, Shias, and others as they focus on pressing issues of the day. Previously, these coalitions were more conspicuous on the conservative end of the political spectrum as Muslim groups at both local and national levels talked about Muslim family values, American immorality, and issues like homosexuality, marriage and divorce. But now, after 9/11, the liberal end of the political spectrum is being embraced as American Muslims, along with others, emphasize civil rights, justice, and the freedom of speech and assembly.

The 14th annual Muslim Day Parade on Madison Avenue in New York, 29 September 2002

Image not available online

PHOTO BY MIKE SEGAR, ©REUTERS, 2002

The nation

Finally, looking at American Muslim constructions of the nation, a subject already implicit in much of the above, we turn again to history. African American Muslims, in the early Moorish Science Temple and Nation of Islam, explicitly opted out of the nation. They gave up their citizenship rights and obligations including voting and service in the military; separatist tendencies stemming from those formative years remain in some movements. While African American Muslims judged the US more harshly than other Muslims, they were also the most socially engaged group, in a mosque-based survey that was part of a major national survey involving forty denominations, with the Muslim component sponsored by four organizations, CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations), ISNA (Islamic Society of North America), ICNA (Islamic Circle of North America), and the Ministry of Imam W.D. Mohammed.[4] Even Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam clearly grounds itself in the U.S. and works to change the nation.

The Arab Muslim immigrants who came in the late nineteenth century and whose descendants became citizens engaged successfully in local and state politics in places where they had settled in large numbers. However, many of the post-1965 Muslim immigrants took several decades to decide whether or not to become American citizens. But once the decision to take citizenship and participate in American politics at all levels was made in the late 1980s by some national Muslim leaders, it was enthusiastically implemented. There is an exciting history of religious and political American Muslim groups building professionally-organized movements, sometimes in competition with each other and sometimes acting in concert for common goals. Critiques of American foreign policy and orientations to nations of origin dominated the early goals of many of these organizations, but a shift was underway well before 9/11, a shift towards the rights and responsibilities of Muslims in this country, towards the issues they judged crucial and the contributions they could make to the nation.

This shift to full citizenship and participation in the nation has brought some new tensions among American Muslims. For example, some American Muslims have greeted Bush's faith-based initiatives with enthusiasm, while others fear the dominance of Christians. More importantly, after 11 September 2002 the American media and mainstream politicians including the President have helped bring liberal Muslims into the public arena as new spokespeople for Muslims, spokespeople not based in the established American Muslim religious and political organizations.[5] But the nature of the national civic religion and its politicization are issues of greater significance than before. An insistence on the civil rights and freedoms possible in the United States is now a matter of urgency, a matter at the top of the agenda for many in this country, including and perhaps even especially Muslims.

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Notes

1. Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press,1998); Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
2. Women have increasingly exercised moral authority in both religious and civic institutions: see Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A Tweed, 87-107 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
3. W.D. Mohammed's American Society of Muslims is recognized as part of the Sunni or mainstream Islam: he has changed the group's earlier beliefs and practices.
4. This information was released through CAIR, the Committee on American Islamic Relations: Ihsan Bagby, Paul M. Perl, and Bryan T. Froehle, *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait. A Report from the Mosque Study Project* (Washington, D.C.: Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2001).
5. For further discussion of this important point see: Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: the State of the Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).

Integration and Islamic Education in South Africa

SAMADIA SADOUNI

The Muslims in South Africa make up less than 2% of the total population and consist primarily of Malays and Indians. The Indians originated largely from Gujarat, Bombay, and, to a lesser extent, Madras and Calcutta. They immigrated to the British colony of Natal in two migrant waves: the first were Indian indentured workers who arrived in South Africa from 1860 to work in the sugar plantations; and the second were "passenger" Indians who from 1871 paid their own way, some to expand their business in South Africa. Nearly eighty percent of these Indians were Muslims.

The Indian Muslim community experienced double minority status, first in India, then in South Africa, a factor that contributed to this group's later modes of mobilization in the early decades of the twentieth century. From the 1930's, as the education system modernized, the cultural heritage of Indian Islam began to play a role in the specific context of South Africa characterized by modes of integration of the Indian Muslim minority in South Africa.

The experience of Muslims in India had been marked by their loss of political power. It became imperative for them to know how Islam could be organized vis-à-vis non-Muslim authorities. In South Africa, however, the Indian Muslims confronted a situation even more discriminating. The anti–Indian laws were particularly oppressive and contributed to the reinforcement of community bonds. Their Islamic faith gave them purpose and even sanctuary.

The Indian Muslim community experienced double minority status, first in India, then in South Africa, a factor that contributed to this group's later modes of mobilization in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century, though, merchants and the ulama took on leadership of this Indian Muslim community. Their political position, most of the time, was indifferent and in a few instances they appeared to adopt a policy of co-operation with the government during the apartheid era. In the 1930's as the merchants took on a changing role in the modern organization of the Muslim community and the education system modernized, the cultural heritage of Indian Islam began to play a role in the specific context of South Africa characterized by modes of integration of the Indian Muslim minority in South Africa.

Whilst some may regard private Islamic education as isolationist, others see it as solution for the integration of Muslims in the new South Africa.

Merchants and modern organization of the Muslim community

In spite of the low level of education of the first wave of Muslim migrants, they always endeavoured to establish a mosque and a madrasa, two necessary means "to lay the true foundations of a Muslim Community, *jama'at*".[1] Moreover, the construction of places of worship made it possible for Muslims to consider their presence in South Africa as permanent. Muslim Indians in other diaspora communities in Eastern Africa followed this same process of integration.

The first mosque of Durban, located on Grey Street in the Indian business district, was established in 1884 by the first pioneers of Indian business in Natal, Abubakr Amod and Hadji Mahomed Hadji Dada.[2] Juma Masjid, which became the largest mosque in Southern Africa[3], played a symbolic role for Gujarati Muslim merchants in the absence of the ulama who were not authorized to enter the country until 1880. Through their initiatives to construct mosques and madrasas, the commercial elite legitimated their leadership status and later competed with the ulama. The wealth and connections of the first generation of merchants enabled them to become the principal agents and shapers of Islam in the provinces of Natal and Transvaal. The articulation between commercial and religious networks contributed to the integration of Indians not only in Southern Africa, but also the area of the Indian Ocean.

The madrasa up until the 1950s, however, did not constitute a truly educational system. Muslim children entered the madrasa at seven years and left it at ten, having accumulated a superficial reading of the Quran which they learned to recite by rote. They generally did not understand even the meaning of the Quranic verses recited during the five daily prayers. Anxious to prepare Muslims in South Africa for changes in the economic market, the merchants in the 1940s emulated aspects of the reformist movements in India, in particular that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), and initiated projects for educational and cultural development. They supported a secular and religious education which would preserve the Islamic minority identity.

Through a negotiation between the Muslim commercial elite and the government, the education system began to be changed in the 1940s by way of introducing Islam with secular instruction. The educational project was built around a policy of accommodation that in particular contributed to religious conservatism. However, a number of Indian Muslims and organizations fought against the policy of apartheid.

Giving to the community

The Indians successfully participated in the market economy where they competed with the whites. Their financing of educational institutions can be seen as an investment which facilitated their integration in the world of capitalism and preserved their proud Islamic identity. Economic integration and identity assertion, both of which depended strongly on Muslim merchants, represent the two pillars of the minority educational policy which characterized each period of South-African Islamic resurgence.

The mosque and the Islamic private school thus became the two institutions guaranteeing the social reproduction of the Islamic identity. Their administrative and financial control still remain nowadays largely in the hands of the middle-class elite with transnational mobility; their organization is not limited to the national borders of South Africa. Moreover, the arrival in the country of preachers and lecturers in the 1950s, contributed to their construction of the Islamic identity. It is again the merchants who employed Muslim scholars from India to organise and oversee their religious activities. The *da' wa* generally spread by foreign Muslim lecturers from India, later from the Arab countries, especially Egypt, the USA (mainly from the 1970s), and Europe, and reflected the need for the Indians to be amenable to the external environment crossed by various Islamic movements. In the context of decolonization, the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, and more recently the conflicts in Palestine, Chechnya and Bosnia contributed to the representation of Muslim life as an integral part of the

PHOTO BY RAJESH JANTILAL, ©AFP, 2001

Nelson Mandela at Durban's Grey Street Mosque, 13 December 2001

umma, or community of Muslims. Indeed, the contemporary Islamization of Muslim territories in South Africa has occurred with the assistance of international Muslim actors through the foundation of mosques and modern Islamic schools.

Opposition of the ulama

Certain forces have resisted modernizing changes within the Muslim community from the 1930s. There exist two theological bodies of Indian ulama in South Africa: Deoband and Barelwi. Beyond the theological polemics, which divided the believers, the conflicts of representation and leadership deeply took root in the recomposition of the Indian Muslim community. These theological schools have jointly diffused an apolitical discourse and have reinforced a religious conservatism. The Deobandis, for example, represented by the Jama'a ulama of Natal, seek to guarantee an orthodox practice and a literalistic reading of Islam. They remain much attached to a religious communitarianism which is built on the principle of political indifference, but which also rejects change of the religious institution associated with a westernization of values. The Deobandis, in other words, thought any form of westernization would threaten the moral basis of the Muslim community.

Since 1940 the ulama have been opposed to several aspects of the new education including the methods of teaching Arabic, the abandonment of Urdu for English in the teaching of the religious matters, and the transformation of the madrasa into a Muslim aided-school which can offer secular and religious teaching. The ulama in South Africa were especially threatened by the introduction of English as the principal medium of teaching because their religious education in India was based solely on Urdu, a symbol of the Muslim identity. Invaded by a feeling of insecurity, the traditionalist ulama could not consider adopting new methods which they associated with a westernization of the madrasa.

It took many years before the ulama decided to adopt English as the linguistic medium of religious instruction. The introduction of English marked the integration of Indian Islam in South Africa. They also succeeded in imposing their leadership within the Muslim community and consolidating it by an alliance with rich commercial families who had a conservative vision of religion. The merchants involved in changing the education system did not intend to upset the traditions of Indian Islam but simply to accompany an "Islamization of modernity." This alliance with rich merchants which included the creation of a network of madrasas and the development of a religious school syllabus represents until today, for both the Deoband and Barelwi ulama, the way to institutionalize their theological schools.

The merchants in post-apartheid South Africa maintain a powerful supervision in the religious field. They supported the creation of private Islamic schools which are organized by committees built on the same model as the madrasa and mosque. The businessmen who exercise control over these institutions sometimes interfere in the work of the professionals, such as teachers and school administrators, whom they employ. The creation of the private Islamic schools in the post-apartheid era is primarily motivated by the desire of Muslims to preserve their faith and identity. Education, through private schools, seems to remain the major ground of the conflicts for the direction of the Muslim community. Whilst some may regard private Islamic education as isolationist, others see it as solution for the integration of Muslims in the new South Africa.

Notes

1. Fatima Meer, *Portrait of Indian South Africans* (Durban: Avon House, 1969): 188.
2. E. M Mahida, *History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology* (Durban: Arabic Study Circle, 1993).
3. The Grey Street Mosque which can host 5000 believers remained until the end of the 1970's the largest mosque in the Southern hemisphere.

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Islamic Knowledge in Ukraine

ALEXANDER BOGOMOLOV

It is often believed that under the Soviet regime in Ukraine—in particular after the mass deportation of Crimea Tatars—Islam ceased to be a communal project. New research, however, reveals that the local reproduction of religious knowledge has continued to date. Moreover, it has shaped to a great extent the religious fabric after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Many younger Muslims consider this traditional knowledge too inadequate to address the challenges of today. They turn increasingly to alternative knowledge supplied by a variety of organizations and individuals from the Middle East and elsewhere.

In a recently published dissertation, the period following the deportation of the Crimea Tatars in 1944 until the collapse of the Soviet Union is described as follows, "…religious education was confined to the family bounds. This had not only affected the quality of education but also the level of knowledge, which remained low throughout the period. Religious rites were observed only by the older generations. Functions of religion were so limited that it could not significantly influence the world outlook of the rising generation."[1] This observation, reflecting the dominant opinion of Ukrainian Muslims, may serve as a point of departure for taking a closer look at changes that occurred in the reproduction of Islamic knowledge over the past decade in Ukraine. The implicit assumption underpinning it seems to be that the social role of religion depends on the quality of knowledge and the availability of formal institutions in the community. Even though this assumption merits some further scrutiny because it is not fully supported by actual practice it is true that younger generations of Ukrainian Muslims are not satisfied with the traditional religious knowledge. Moreover, they do not view this knowledge as a proper tool of reference for constructing their future.

In spite of the absence of any institutionalized forms of Islam, such as formal mosques or a professional clergy, during the post-WWII period, religious life, as well as informal religious instruction, persisted within communities of the Volga Tatars who were scattered mainly across the mining region of Donbass, and within the compact Crimea Tatar groups of the Zaporizhia and Kherson regions; as well as among the Crimea Tatars living in exile, from which the majority returned in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Fieldwork data indicate that not a single local community was without a small group of pious Muslims and a mullah. The mullah would, as a rule, have a couple of assistants and disciples helping him in ritual performances. The pious few often included relatives of the last generation of formally educated imams or graduates of *mektebs* and random seekers of religious inspiration. The senior mullah would either appoint a successor or the local community would nominate a new one from the assistants. Communal religious life was organized around the annual cycle of religious holidays and the critical moments of the cycle of life. The former included major Islamic holidays—*qurban bairamy (id al-adha)*, *uraza bairamy (id al-fitr)*, and the *mawlid*, and, in the case of Crimea Tatars, *Khidirles* and *Derviza* festivals celebrated at sacred places in Crimea.[2] The main life cycle events, which included such occasions as burials, obituary prayers, birth (name-giving), circumcision, and marriage rites, were marked with communal textual performances. A special social role was played by pious women, known as *abystai* in the Kazan Tatar tradition, who performed prayers on behalf of individuals, of which the most popular was the recitation of the whole Quran, usually in exchange for some remuneration.

In some localities, Friday prayers were held at private houses. Other ritual performances included religious chants (of presumably Sufi origin)—*ilahiye* in the case of CrimeaTatars and *munajat* in the case of Kazan Tatars—recited in native Turkic language mainly for the celebration of *mawlid* and *Khidirles*. The only formally acknowledged Islamic place in the public domain in that period was the cemetery—usually a section of common burial grounds, but sometimes having a separate location—such as the case of the Sverdlovsk Muslim cemetery (Luhansk region).

Beyond the cycle of these main ritual festivals and performances most Muslims gradually absorbed the behavioural codes of their non-Muslim environment. The mullahs and the pious were not able to insist on the full scope of religious observance; Muslim traditions were losing ground and were increasingly blended with common Soviet customs resulting in a rather unorthodox synthesis.

Continuous reproduction

How much knowledge did this type of religiosity require and how was it being reproduced? Some proficiency in Arabic was required at least for two important textual performances—reading the Quran and the writing of amulets.[3] The major performances involving Quranic texts—the public recitation at various collective prayers—implied learning *tajwid* (recitation), which could only be done at the hands of a teacher. Often, the Arabic script was conveniently substituted by a transliteration in Cyrillic. Consequently, many of second and third generation mullahs were no longer capable of actually reading Arabic and could only perform their prayers from memorization. The skill to compose prayer was also part of the expertise of a mullah or a pious woman. Proficiency in the sacred language, Arabic, was perceived as the ability to recite correctly and according to the rules of *tajwid*, while focusing on the ceremonial and symbolic value of particular fragments of the Quranic text and not on its literal meaning. The scope of knowledge transferred from one generation to another within the narrow circle of pious men and women was contingent on the abilities and dedication of the older generation of mullahs. In some localities the older generation managed to transfer nearly fully their scope of knowledge and skills like, for example, in the city of Kharkiv, where an elderly Bukhara-trained imam managed to prepare three disciples, two of whom act as imams until today. But some types of knowledge were limited in terms of reproduction by their very nature. The knowledge linked to the more magical aspects of religion—a valuable social asset for an individual who was believed to have mastered it—was never meant to be open to any lay Muslim.

Only male mullahs acted as teachers for those seeking religious knowledge. Pious women addressed familial and individual aspects of religiosity, while mullahs the more formal and communal ones. Women dealt with the spiritual, inner (and also native) religious traditions—such as the recitation of sacred chants. While the social context in the Soviet times precluded an open profession of religious duties, especially for younger age groups, the elderly pious females obtained an important role in expressing the commitment to Islam by individual lay members of the community.

During the Soviet period access to religious expertise had become more difficult while public space available for religious practices had been significantly reduced. Even within these constraints religious knowledge, as reproduced across two to three generations, remained adequate, in terms of its content, to the spiritual and social purposes it served; a condition that was not unlike that of many Muslims living elsewhere. Therefore, the transformation the Islamic knowledge in that area is best described as a functional reduction. The most important outcome of it was not so much the demise of religious practices or skills but the fact that Islam—just as Russian Orthodoxy—ceased to be a universal belief system explaining the world. Consequently, its role as a moral code was also curtailed.

Post-Soviet experiences

Today the local production of knowledge by and large follows the track typical of localized traditional Islam. With the re-establishment of Islamic institutions and hierarchies in the early 1990, those pious Muslims who had been trained in informal settings of Islamic learning came to the fore. They filled the vacancies in the newly emerging clergy which was now comprised of muftis, deputy muftis, and imams. Some of the older religious leaders, after being succeeded by younger clerics, continued to be vocal public speakers giving voice to the traditional local Islam. For instance, Nuri-efendi, a former Crimean mufti now runs a regular *Islam Nuru* page in the Crimea Tatar *Qirim* newspaper and appears on the radio show *Din ve Urf Adetler* (Religious and Local Customs). Riza Fazil produced a series of books—*Diniy urf-adetlerimiz* (Our Religious Customs)—in cooperation with the son of an imam who had been persecuted in late 1920s.[4]

The local Islamic tradition is held in esteem by Crimea Tatar politicians. Being nationalists they consider whatever is "our own" has greater value than any imported good. Thus they champion "our traditional Crimean Islam." They hardly understand the limitations caused by this notion of "traditional Islam" when addressing the challenges of modernity.

With the advent of religious freedom after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Muslim organizations and individuals from Turkey, the Arab Middle East and South Asia appeared on the Ukrainian scene. It began with the arrival of preachers of various schools of thought. By the late 1990s a network of NGOs, mosques and education facilities with links to the Muslim heartlands were established in those places with sizable Muslim minorities as well as the capital, Kiev. Much effort was put into opening education facilities (madrasas and universities), offering both introductory and formal advanced courses. Religious education and guidance is now being provided by a variety of international and national organizations, including the official Turkish Diyanet, Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Endowment, *cemaat*s of the Süleymaniya, followers of Fethullah Gülen, as well as the Ikhwan Muslimun, Hizb al-Tahrir, Salafis, the Tabligh, and even Habashis.[5] Many young Crimeans are eagerly studying Islam as imparted by these groups and often shifting from one to the other. In spite of this seemingly large and varied supply of knowledge the more educated of them feel that their thirst for knowledge remains unquenched. As yet, there is very little local production following the arrival of new ideas. A unique attempt to involve Ukrainian Muslims in this process is the establishment of an Islamic monthly by an Arab-sponsored NGO network with ties to the Qatar based Egyptian scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi. The group has also created an Internet resource page (http://www.islamua.net) and produces occasionally short radio programs.

It is difficult to judge to what extent new types of religious knowledge and organizations impinge on the Muslim communities of Ukraine. Is it possible to say that some of the Ukrainian Muslims are actually Ikhwani or Suleymanci? For instance, are the youth distributing flyers of Hizb al-Tahrir in April 2003 and rallying against the US invasion of Iraq, Tahriris in the sense that they have adopted the movement's ideology? Individual involvement and preferences continuously change. There is a high demand for religious knowledge and much is currently being absorbed, but as yet the productive incorporation into local Islam of new ideas and concepts seems to be lacking. However, the very idea that Islam involves more than ritual only is spreading and may lay out the foundation for a more comprehensive religious world outlook. What that would be remains to be seen: "We are trying to understand what is going on with our community in Islamic terms; we are looking for knowledge from all possible sources, but we do not want to be taught the one thing as being opposed to the other," as one young Crimean Muslim put it.

PHOTO BY VLADIMIR DOKIN, ©AFP, 2003

Praying during a rally devoted to the 59th anniversary of the deportation of more then 200,000 Tartars from Crimea during the Stalin era, Simferopol, 18 May 2003

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Notes

1. R. I. Khayali, *Krymskotatarskiy narod v usloviakh deportacii, 1944-1967* (Simferopol, 2000), 97.
2. Some Crimea Tatars used to come back from exile annually to their native villages and towns to celebrate *Khidirles* in 1970s (festivals in the honour of the saint Khidr). However, there is no such data for *Derviza* (celebrated on the day of autumnal equinox), which has apparently discontinued in exile but has been re-introduced after repatriation.
3. The tradition of writing a Quranic verse on piece of paper, folded in a triangular form and quilted in a water-proof material to be worn around the neck in a fashion similar to a cross in Christian tradition—is widespread among both Kazan and Crimea Tatars in Ukraine.
4. *Buyurynyz Duagha: Dualar Kitaby*, co-authored by Abdulwait Sakhtara (Simferopol, 2001); *101 Dua* (Simferopol, 2002).
5. For Habashis see A. Nizar Hamzeh and R. Hrair Dekmejian, "A Sufi response to political Islamism: al-Ahbash of Lebanon," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996): 217-229.

Religion in Post-Communist Albania

INA MERDJANOVA

Albania is the only communist country where religion was completely banned (in 1967) and which was proclaimed "atheistic" by the 1976 constitution. After the disintegration of the communist system and the abolishment of the old restrictions on religious freedom in 1990, the religious communities attempted to reconstruct their institutions and religious life. They have encountered serious resource problems, however, as the state has been too slow to pass new legislation which guarantees the restitution of property of the various religious communities previously confiscated by communists. Consequently, all the religious communities depend heavily on foreign aid.

Albania is the only European country with a majority Muslim population—about 70 % of a total of 3,2 million and a Christian minority—approximately 20% belong to the Orthodox Church and 10% to the Roman Catholic Church. The Muslim population is further divided into a Sunni community (comprising about 55% of the whole population), a Bektashi community (about 15%), in addition to a number of Sufi brotherhoods such as Rifa'iyya, Qadiriyya, Khalwatiyya, among others, most of which are considered to be within the Sunni realm.

The two Muslim communities

The Sunni community reconstituted itself in February 1991 under the leadership of Hafiz Sabri Koci (who had been persecuted by the Hoxha regime for his beliefs and spent 23 years in prison), and Sali Tivari.[1] They immediately established contacts with Islamic countries and organizations in order to receive the badly needed spiritual and material support. Important steps taken were the contract signed in 1991 for the country's membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference (which was however never ratified by Parliament because of a wave of strong criticism in the press, and the public debates about the geopolitical orientation of the country), as well as the establishment of the Islamic Development Bank in 1995. With foreign aid, Muslims built or rebuilt hundreds of mosques and opened ten religious schools. The support, coming mainly from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Libya, Turkey, and Malaysia, also provided religious literature, funds for the pilgrimage to Mecca, and scholarships for the study of Albanian students in Islamic Institutes abroad. The Sunni community started several newspapers and established various associations. In 1996 the Albanian Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation was created under the directorship of Ramiz Zekaj. The institute focuses mainly on academic research and publications and plays an important role for the promotion of a "moderate" type of Islam with strong nationalistic connotations. In this respect the organization fits into the trend towards an "Albanized" Islam that has been strong since the late nineteenth century. Zekaj does not see a contradiction in the relation between the universal umma and the ethnic identification "… because the idea of the umma is promoted ideologically and not in terms of a state. We have a more important task—to define our national identity … The national cause is above all."[2]

Yet the Sunni Muslim community in Albania is far from united. Generally, it is divided into the followers of more nationalistically oriented tendencies and partisans of the idea of a pan-Islamic unity. This dispute seems to be, to a certain extent, an intergenerational conflict as the latter trend is represented mainly by younger Muslims who have studied in Islamic educational centres abroad. One should, however, not ignore the strong secular mood in Albania, in particular among intellectuals. Some of them, among whom is the renowned novelist Ismail Kadare, highly critical of Islam, even argue that Albania's Muslims, should return to their "original faith," Christianity, as a condition for their country's democratic development and reintegration in Europe.[3]

The much smaller Bektashi community has also struggled to rebuild its religious life after the collapse of the communist regime, but in their case foreign support has been limited, coming mainly from Iran. Only a few of the old tekkes (community houses) have been reopened. Moreover, the issue of communal leadership and its reproduction seems to be unresolved as yet.

One of the main religious issues in Albania concerns the relations between the Sunni and Bektashi communities. The debate about the relationship dates to the time before World War II, and continues today in one form or another, for example, in the internal dispute between the official Bektashi leader Baba Reshat Bardhi and the head of the tekke of Fushë-Krujë, Baba Selim. Only a few define Bektashiyya as a dervish order within the Sunni Islam; the vast majority of Bektashis treasure their independence from the Sunni community.[4] People from both communities sometimes (but not always) perceive the distinction as more than intra-religious. Among representatives of the Sunni community the statement "We are Muslims and they are Bektashis" is not uncommon. Bektashiyya has often featured itself as "a different Islam" and even as a specifically "Albanian religion" and has played a considerable role in the nineteenth century construction of the national ideology.

Ethem Bey Mosque, Tirana

PHOTO BY INA MERDJANOVA, 2003

Islam, society and politics

After the collapse of communism the state opted to have no proclaimed official religion, following the traditional approach which considers Albania to be a "country of three religions" rather than a Muslim state. According to the Constitution of 1998, there is no official religion and all religions are equal, yet the four predominant religious communities—that is, including the Bektashis as a separate community—enjoy a de facto recognition and privileged social status because of their historical presence.

The relations between the various communities are generally relaxed. This tolerance is related to the long history of multi-confessionalism and the traditional pragmatic attitude of the Albanians to religion, on the one hand, and to the considerable extent of the secularisation of society as a result of communist repression, on the other. Most Albanians consider their national identity of greater importance than their religious identification. Religious differences have never prevented collaboration in the name of "national interests," and cases of interfaith unions for the defence of autonomy are abundant throughout Albanian history. Ethno-national identity in Albania has thus provided an overarching and almost sacred canopy, which has downplayed, or powerfully refocused, identifications along religious lines.

The role of religion in society, while not negligible, is not to be overstated. Sometimes Albanians refer to an alleged "pro-Muslim" orientation of the opposition Democratic Party (in power until 1997) and tend to see the politics of the ruling Socialist Party as "pro-Orthodox." These claims are obviously connected to the Orthodox affiliation of the present prime-minister Fatos Nano and that of the president Alfred Moisiu, as well as to the correct observation that the electorate of the Democratic Party comes predominantly from the Sunni Muslim community (but also from Albanians belonging to the Roman Catholic tradition), while that of the Socialist party—from the Orthodox and the Bektashi communities. In addition, the Socialist Party has pursued a nationalist orientation bringing the country closer to Greece and Macedonia, rather than to the Muslim states.

Islam has lost some of the influence and popularity it gained immediately after the fall of the communist regime. The numerous mosques are hardly crowded with worshippers and some surveys have even indicated that the percentage of atheists among Albanians of Muslim background is higher than that among those of Orthodox or Roman Catholic tradition.[5] The repression of what is defined as Islamic fundamentalism has intensified after 1997. A number of Arab Muslim activists and some NGOs have been banned from the country. The reasons behind the altering perceptions of Islam are connected to changes in the international situation after 9/11, on the one hand, and to the country's struggle to "move closer to Europe," "Europe" being identified as Christian, on the other hand.

The discourse of the European Union has become an essential part of the Albanian national discourse today. Despite the fact that Albania has not yet started negotiations for a future membership of the EU, the aspired membership is seen by and large as a panacea against the country's enormous problems connected to regional insecurity, mass poverty, widespread criminality, weak civic order, and the lack of democratic traditions. Moreover, this future union with the European mainland is often perceived as a solution to the unsettled "national question" as well, providing a "natural" and peaceful unification of all Albanians (major Albanian communities being in Albania proper, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro) in the framework of the EU. Also for this reason Muslims in Albania emphasize that they are actually "European Muslims."

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Notes

1. In January 2003 Sali Tivari was shot dead. To this day the murder has not been solved.
2. Ramiz Zekaj, interview with the author, December 2003.
3. See Tonin Gjuraj, "A Stable Ecumenical Model? How Religion Might Become a Political Issue in Albania," *East European Quarterly* 34, no.1 2000: 38.
4. About the internal struggles in the Bektashi community see Nathalie Clayer, *Religion et nation chez les albanais XIXe-XXe siecles* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2003), 416 –17.
5. Ibid., 321.

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History and Identity among the Hemshin

HOVANN H. SIMONIAN

The Hemshin or Hemshinli people live in the foothills and mountainous areas of the eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. The Hemshinli constitute a unique group, even within the context of the Eastern Black Sea region, which differs by its geography and ethnic and linguistic diversity from the rest of the country. One circumstance that sets the Hemshin apart from other groups of this region, such as the Lazi and the Georgians, is that they are divided into two communities almost oblivious to one another's existence, and separated by language, culture and territory. The districts of Camlıhemşin and Hemşin in the highlands of the province of Rize are the heartland of the western Hemshinli, or Bash-Hemshinli. This group is isolated by the exclusively Lazi district of Arhavi from the eastern Hemshinli, or Hopa-Hemshinli, who are mostly settled in the Hopa and Borçka districts of the Artvin province. Moreover, these two Hemshin groups are unaware of the existence of yet a third related community speaking a close if not identical dialect, the Christian Hamshen Armenians of Abkhazia and Krasnodar in Russia.

By continuing to speak Armenian, the small community of Hemshin in northeastern Turkey has become the only community of Armenian-speaking Muslims. Furthermore, by developing after their conversion to Islam a group identity distinct from that of its neighbours, they have constituted an exception to one of the more typical paradigms in the Ottoman Empire, whereby Armenian converts to Islam were assimilated completely into the surrounding Muslim environment. Yet, while maintaining Armenian components in their culture, a majority of Hemshin dissociate themselves from their Armenian ancestry. The rural exodus has emptied many of the villages, but among the younger generation, including those born in the cities, a growing number seeks to preserve Hemshinli traditions.

The Hemshinli constitute a truly fascinating phenomenon. They have preserved, centuries after their conversion to Islam, a sense of identity distinct from that of their neighbours, as well as, for part of them, their spoken Armenian dialect *Homshetsma*. By continuing to speak Armenian, they have reversed one of the more typical paradigms in the Ottoman Empire, whereby Armenian converts to Islam were assimilated completely into the surrounding Muslim environment, and Christian Armenians often became monolingual Turkish-speakers. The Armenian language did disappear around the middle of the nineteenth century among the Bash-Hemshinli, to be replaced by a local Turkish dialect containing a large number of Armenian loanwords, but it has survived to this day among the Hopa-Hemshinli. Furthermore, given the ongoing decline in the Diaspora of the use of the Armenian language, the ironic possibility that these Muslim villagers may well be the last speakers of Western Armenian cannot be excluded.

The Bash-Hemshinli approximately number between 15,000 and 23,000 individuals in the Rize province, while the Hopa-Hemshinli are estimated at around 25,000.[1] To these figures must be added the dozen or so villages in the northwestern provinces of Düzce and Sakarya, settled by the Hemshinli during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Large communities of Hemshinli can also be found in regional centres such as Trabzon and Erzurum and in the large cities of western Turkey. A total figure of approximately 100,000 individuals for all of Turkey appears to be a realistic estimate.

In *Nations and Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner, using language as a criterion, gives a figure of approximately 8000 minority groups on earth. Of these 8000 groups, he continues, barely one-tenth have developed "nationalisms," i.e. "the striving to make culture and polity congruent,"[2] or have elaborated any sort of ethnically based cultural and political agenda. The Hemshin, like their Lazi neighbours, clearly belong to the 90 percent of groups which have chosen not to mobilize on the basis of their ethnic identity.[3] However, they have maintained a sense of collective identity, the distinction of which is recognized by their neighbours.

Perceptions of history

Historical sources agree that the Hemshinli are the descendants of Armenians who migrated to the Black Sea region or Pontos in the late eighth century. The district settled by these migrants came to be known as Hamamashen (i.e., built by Hamam), after Prince Hamam Amatuni, one of the leaders of the migration. With time, Hamamashen became Hamshen, and following Ottoman conquest in the late fifteenth century, Hemshin. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Armenians of Hemshin converted to Islam. Various reasons have been given for conversion, including fiscal oppression, rise of Muslim intolerance vis-à-vis Christians following a series of Ottoman defeats at the hands of Russia, the breakdown of central authority in the late seventeenth century and the ensuing climate of anarchy when the region was at the mercy of warlords known as *derebeys* (valley lords). Islam is believed to have progressed from the coast up, with highland villages remaining Christian for a longer period than lowland ones. The religious context during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, however, more complicated than that, as the boundary between Christians and Muslims in Hemshin was blurred by the existence of yet a third category composed of crypto-Christians known as *Keskes* (Armenian half-half). The crypto-Christians of Hemshin were reported until the late nineteenth century to attend church, secretly baptize their children, and continue to celebrate various Armenian religious feasts such as *Vartevar* (the Transfiguration of Christ) and *Verapokhum* (the Assumption).[4]

A majority of Hemshinli, however, reject any suggestion that they have Armenian ancestry, preferring the thesis presented to them by Turkish nationalist historians such as Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu. In its main lines, this revisionist version of Hemshin history argues that the Hemshinli are of pure Turkish stock and that they are the descendants of an authentic Turkish tribe. Historical and cultural links with Armenians are downplayed or simply denied, and the use of the Armenian language by the Hopa-Hemshinli is attributed to their coexistence with Armenians in a distant past. This narrative is basically an extension to the Hemshinli of historical and linguistic theories, such as the Turkish Historical Thesis and the extravagant "sun language theory" (*güneş-dil teorisi*), which have been created and supported by the Turkish Republic since the early 1930s as an integral part of the nation- and state-building process. While Kırzıoğlu has certainly been the chief and most famous proponent of the Turkish state version of Hemshin history, it was his predecessor M. Rıza, who stated in a 1933 book that the Hemshinli were "Hittite Turks'" and that after speaking Armenian for a while, "they now know no other language than Turkish."[5]

The popularity of Turkish nationalist theories is obviously linked to the Armenian-Turkish antagonism and to the fact that it is socially more acceptable to claim Turkic ancestors from Central Asia than Armenian ones in the modern Turkish Republic. Yet, the preference of the Hemshinli for this thesis also has deeper roots that go back to Ottoman times. In the pre-national context of the Ottoman Empire, people identified themselves in terms of their membership in a particular religious community, or *millet*. Thus, being "Armenian" prior to the import of the European idea of nation to the Ottoman Empire meant belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church and the millet it composed. Leaving the Armenian Church to join another Christian denomination

PHOTO BY HOVANN SIMONIAN, 1998

Hemshin family, Tirovit yayla

or Islam also meant that one stopped being part of the Armenian "nation." "Armenian" was used interchangeably with "Christian," and "Turk" with "Muslim"—and continues to be done so to this day by most of Turkey's rural population. That one could possibly be "Turk" and "Christian" or "Armenian" and "Muslim" was—and still is to most of Turkey's population—a concept that was simply beyond the grasp of most of the Ottoman Empire's inhabitants; an anomaly.

Identity issues

The estrangement between Hemshinli and Armenians is best shown in the fascinating anecdote reported by the famous French linguist Georges Dumézil, who studied the Armenian dialect of Hemshin and published a series of articles on the topic in the 1960s. The young Hemshinli with whom Dumézil worked had no idea whatsoever that he spoke Armenian. He had only noticed when going at the beach in Istanbul that there were people speaking a language he could understand (i.e., Istanbul Armenians), yet he had no idea why, as they were not from his village or region.[6]

Answers on ethnic origins among the Hemshinli may well vary according to gender, place of residence, age, or location of discussion. What often appears is a reverse correlation between wealth and influence on the one hand and admission to Armenian origins on the other. Thus, older women living in a village of Çamlıhemşin or Hopa will be more likely to admit to their Armenian ancestry than middle-aged businessmen residing in Ankara, who are more likely to staunchly reject any Armenian connection. Younger people, meanwhile, appear both confused and curious about their origins. In some cases, the Hemshinli who admit to some sort of Armenian ancestry will mention that the family founder was a migrant to the area, usually from Central Asia, who married within the Hemshinli community, and gradually assimilated. The same is visible among the Laz. It could be true, but it is a way of "saving" one's family past while admitting the painful "truth" for the rest of the group. In conversations with Hemshinli individuals who admitted to Armenian origins, there appeared to be two or three levels of perception of "Armenians": one's ancestors before conversion, the Hemshinli who remained Christians prior to WWI, and modern-day Armenians, from the Diaspora or the republic of Armenia.

While opinions on origins vary, there is a clear consciousness of group identity, including the notion of *Hemşinlilik*, i.e., to be Hemshin. This sense of community is expressed in the following statement from a Hemshinli periodical published in Ankara: "We, Hemshinli, are people who are spread out in all directions of Anatolia. But the longing for Hemşin inside us binds us strongly together."[7] The separation of Hemshinli into Bash-Hemshinli and Hopa-Hemshinli means there are actually two distinct group identities. The two groups do not mingle in the large cities of western Turkey and maintain separate associations. The traditional head-gear *(puşi)* used among Bash-Hemshinli is unknown among the Hopa-Hemshinli. The western, or Bash-Hemshinli, continue to celebrate *Vartevar* in their summer pastures (*yayla*)—even if the religious meaning of the feast appears to have long been lost on them—and have generally maintained more Armenian traditions than the Hopa-Hemshinli. However, it is more the continued use of *Homshetsma*, the Armenian dialect of Hamshen, by the Hopa-Hemshinli than the preservation of Armenian festivals by the Bash-Hemshinli that has attracted the attention of outsiders to the Hemshinli population. The continued use of *Homshetsma* by the Hopa-Hemshinli is also believed to be one of the reasons for the separation between the two groups, as the Bash-Hemshinli prefer not be associated with Armenian-speakers.

It is difficult to assert what the future holds for a small group like the Hemshinli. Assimilation represents a clear danger for the survival of the group. It is interesting to note in this context that the verb "assimilate" has been adopted into Turkish and that minority groups like the Lazi and the Hemshin are often described as having been assimilated (*assimiley olmuş*).[8] The rural exodus has emptied most Hemshinli villages—particularly in Bash-Hemshin—leaving only elderly people to live year-round in their native district. Some Hopa-Hemshinli families are not teaching their children *Homshetsma* anymore, and the Turkish dialect used in Bash-Hemshin, which contains numerous Armenian loan-words, is dying. However, many young Hemshinli, including those born in the large cities of western Turkey, show a strong interest in preserving the culture of their ancestors. The day of doom has not arrived yet for the Hemshinli. They have not "awakened" as a nation—and have certainly no desire to—but neither have they allowed their distinct cultural identity to disappear.

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Notes

1. Rüdiger Benninghaus, "Zur Herkunft und Identität der Hemşinli," in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, ed. Peter Alford Andrews (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1989), 477.
2. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 43-50.
3. Chris Hann, "Ethnicity, Language and Politics in North-east Turkey," in *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*, ed. Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen (London: Macmillan, 1997), 122.
4. For a detailed history of Hemshin, see the forthcoming volume, *The Hemshin*, ed. Hovann Simonian, to be published by Curzon-Routledge in 2004.
5. M. Rıza, *Benlik ve Dilbirliğimiz*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1982), 35-36. First published in 1933.
6. Georges Dumézil, "Notes sur le Parler d'un Arménien Musulman d'Ardala," *Revue des Études Arméniennes* n.s. 2 (1965), 135-42.
7. Benninghaus, 487 n 71.
8. Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Chris Hann, *Turkish Region: State, Market and Social Identities on the East Black Sea Coast* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 2001), 204.

The Leftists and Islamists in Egypt

MAHA ABDELRAHMAN

The political opposition in Egypt has recently been showing growing forms of cooperation, especially at the grass root level. The nationalist Nasserists, Leftists and Islamists are infamous for their internecine conflict and none are a homogeneous political group representing a monolithic political front.[1] Recent attempts to forge new types of collaborative political action, particularly between the latter two groups, should, therefore, not be understood as a coalition representing three discrete parties under their official leaderships, but as loose networks comprising members or sections of different political camps as well as unaffiliated sympathizers.

The political opposition in Egypt had, until recently, been characterised by bitter rivalry and mutually antagonistic ideological positions. Collaboration between Leftist and Nasserist elements took place sporadically in the second half of the 1990s. The turning point for joint political activism came in September 2000 with the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada which gave rise to a very strong spontaneous reaction on the Egyptian street. It created a general sense of anger among large sections of the general public, most of whom had never participated in organized politics before. The Egyptian Popular Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada (EPCSPI) established by some twenty Leftist civil society organizations and activists became a locus for a variety of political activism. It drew both Islamist activists and Nasserists who participated either as individuals or union representatives. The Committee organized campaigns for fund raising for medical convoys to the Palestinian areas stimulating unprecedented grass root participation. A first public demonstration organized on 10 September 2001 in Cairo was followed by a series of demonstrations in support of the intifada in squares of central Cairo, major mosques, and almost all Egyptian universities.

With the threat of war on Iraq, and later the outbreak of the war, more demonstrations and public rallies were organized by EPSCI all over Egypt at a level unknown in over two decades culminating in the massive demonstration of 20 March 2003 in Cairo. Almost all political groupings and opposition parties took part. It became a common sight in Cairo's main squares and universities to see banners from the banned Communist party next to, for example, Muslim Brotherhood controlled unions and professional syndicates, side by side with copies of the Quran and Nasser's photographs, all condemning the war on Iraq. Elements of different political groups intensely collaborated and negotiated to plan demonstrations, campaign to boycott US and British products, send relief convoys to the Palestinian territories and issue joint statements to prominent politicians worldwide.

While the main focus of political activism in the last three years has been the intifada and Iraq, this new mood of joint activism has led to the rise of initiatives, networks, and forums for political action around different, yet related issues. For example, the Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group (AGEG) founded in June 2002 by a group of Leftist activists brings together people from different, if not conflicting backgrounds such as, factory workers, leftist intellectuals, medium-size businessmen, underground socialist activists, and unaffiliated individuals. In an interesting development, the Muslim Brotherhood, for the first time since the re-emergence of political activism and street politics three years ago, participated as a group in a joint activity with the Left, the Nasserists, various trade unions, and some civil society organizations at the Second Cairo Conference held in December 2003 under three slogans: "No to Capitalist Globalization and US Hegemony," "No to the Occupation of Iraq and Zionism in Palestine," and "No to Authoritarianism in the Arab Region." Furthermore, there are recent signs of the rising potential of an "Islamic Left" such as Islamists who are starting to articulate their ideas more clearly along lines of class conflict and adopt a more pluralist emancipatory approach partly in reaction to an aging and rigid leadership.

Significantly, this new political activism is no longer organized within formal, bureaucratic, and hierarchical political or civil society organizations but within loosely-established horizontal networks with often fluid and interchangeable memberships and no hierarchical leadership structures. Moreover, activities are organized by individuals belonging to disparate political camps, though mostly from the Left, and not by organizations or political parties. Finally, the value of individuality and the possibility of retaining one's independent programme is one of the main principles upon which alliances between previously rival political groups have been taking place.

Principles of cooperation

Building an alliance between the traditional enemies of the political opposition has not been easy. The differences in the political programmes and ideologies of the two groups are deeply rooted and might often seem unbridgeable. It is interesting, therefore, to explore the foundations upon which representatives of both groups have based their negotiations for joint action in the last three years. Two basic principles have been employed in the process: consensus and independence. Consensus implies that no slogans or positions are adopted that are not supported by all participants. For example, in all demonstrations, organizers emphasize the need to avoid sectarian slogans and adopt only those which do not offend the sensibilities and ideas of participants. For example, the famous slogan of the Islamists: "Khaibar Khaibar Oh Jews, Muhammad's army will be back," which is often enthusiastically endorsed by the nationalist Nasserists, but deeply abhorred by elements on the Left, has been discarded by the organizers at every demonstration. Achieving a consensus, besides being time-consuming, is very limiting as certain contentious issues, such as Palestinian suicide bombers and how to react to 11 September, are simply dropped, causing considerable frustration to many participants who do not always want to compromise on their priorities. The second principle is to maintain independence. The objective of joint activism is not "programmatic co-operation" or achieving a "third way" but coordinated work for specific short-term goals. Each side retains its independent political character and its activities reflect its particularity.

Alliance as a necessary tactic

The rising cooperation between the Left and Islamists has also come about as the result of the Left's serious reconsideration of its overall strategic approach and, in particular, its relationship with opposition religious forces.

Based on the work of several Leftist authors,[2] many leftist activists, in Egypt have undertaken a self-critical analysis which has led them to regard political Islam as an ambivalent political force which could play either a radical and progressive role, or a conservative and reactionary one, depending upon the historical moment. The conclusion drawn by the Left is that it can neither unconditionally support the Islamists nor ally with the repressive state against them, which were the two dichotomous positions adopted by various Leftists in the past. It is acutely aware of the need to analyse Islamists' (and others') potential at each specific historical phase to devise a new formula for working with, or, opposing them. Furthermore, Leftist activists stress the pragmatic need to work alongside religious groups when they make up part of the opposition, particularly as religious activists have become much closer than the secular Left to the grassroots.

Another debate influencing recent forms of joint activism is the Left's reassessment of its role within non-class politics. Class-based move-

ments have been receding worldwide and replaced by more issue-oriented activism that cuts across class interests due to the changing structure of the global economy and the ensuing changing class configurations. The Left in Egypt, as elsewhere, has found itself forced to choose between concentrating on its "historic" class-based mission and expanding its scope to include non-class activism. Those who choose the latter are attempting to construct a language that will provide an element of universality in order to appeal to elements from contrasting political programmes.

The Muslim Brotherhood, a banned yet tolerated political organization which advocates the establishment of an Islamic state and society, was established in 1928. Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya is Egypt's largest militant group since the late 1970s. Its primary goal is to overthrow the Egyptian government and replace it with an Islamic state. It has carried out several armed attacks on various targets such as tourists, Copts, security and state officials, as well as opponents of Islamist extremism. It is equally important to locate reasons for growing political cooperation within political Islam. Both reformist and radical Islamist groups have altered some of their tactics in recent years. Al-Jama'a, for example, has renounced violence while the Muslim Brotherhood has been adopting a more general discourse of democracy and political freedom rather than its traditional emphasis on implementing its goal of shari'a. While both streams of Islamists might have ulterior motives for these recent redefinitions of objectives and tactics, there is little doubt that they have been instrumental in creating a potential for alliance with the Left.

Furthermore, internal crisis within the Muslim Brotherhood could also play a role in encouraging some of its members to seek new opportunities for political action. Growing dissatisfaction with the ageing leadership's rigid approaches and inflexible ideas, as well as the leadership's conciliatory approach to the government, is leading some younger members to seek new forms of activism which offer space for freer thinking and progressive ideas. The 76 years old leader elected in January 2004 Muhammad Mahdi Akif, replaced the late Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, who died as acting leader, at the age of 82.

Finally, the Islamists have taken the brunt of the regime's repression in the last decade, which has weakened them organizationally. Perhaps the Brotherhood feels the need to work more in the shadow of other groups that are not so persecuted.

A new challenge for the state

These new forms of opposition cooperation with their loosely organized political activities are presenting a novel challenge to the state which is somewhat confused by the absence of clearly-defined political organizations or leadership. The presence of various forums for political action, on the other hand, has offered activists the space to move their projects and activities easily from one network to another, and to have different events organized under different umbrellas without being easily identified by the authorities.

In its earlier stages, the ECPSPI had the implicit endorsement of the regime. Later, as the Committee rapidly gained popular support and its activities became the locus of mass rallies, the regime grew suspicious. Only a few arrests of the more active members were made in the months subsequent to the establishment of the Committee. The more violent and extensive crackdown did not come until the aftermath of the 20 March 2003 demonstration when about 1500 people including organizers and ordinary demonstrators were arrested. Interestingly, in contrast with usual practice under the infamous Emergency Law in effect for over twenty years which gives the authorities extensive powers, including detaining suspects for prolonged periods without trial, trial of civilians under military courts, and prohibiting demonstrations and public meetings, the majority of the detainees were released very shortly after their arrest. This could indicate the state's weakness and indecision regarding the best course of action against a widely-supported and difficult to identify opposition.

The future of a "coalition"

This new joint political activism is clearly not easy to realise. The time consuming nature of consensus building has already been mentioned. Even the simplest logistical steps can become battlegrounds. Arguments over the details of a demonstration or a conference can exhaust the time and energy of the organizers. Issues of who gets to talk first in a conference or a rally, choosing slogans acceptable to everybody, and male/female separation in demonstrations have been some of the most contentious and time consuming points of disagreement. This does not augur well for quick and flexible decision-making in a crisis. There is also no doubt that antagonism between Leftists and Islamists is very deeply rooted. Many Leftists still feel uncomfortable about the presence of the Islamists in any activity in which they participate. Areas of disagreement between the Islamists and the Left are numerous, not least of them being the fundamental differences on issues of class analysis, women, and the rights of minority groups. For their part, Islamists still cannot forgive the Left's siding with the regime against them in the early 1990s. This deeply-rooted antagonism poses the danger of deepening internal conflicts within each camp. On the Left, in particular, the old guard and certain factions are increasingly critical of those who seek the Islamists' cooperation and to dilute the working class struggle. Some observers and activists fear that the already divided Left might become even further polarized because of the new approach they are taking towards Islamists.

The still experimental nature of this new activism makes any projections about the future difficult. The phenomenon is still very fluid and how it develops depends on various factors. Hence, over-optimistic expectations about significant results being delivered in the immediate future are unjustified. On one hand, the nascent coalition holds the potential to become the precursor of a vibrant, broadly-based, and democratic grouping. But on the other, efforts at cooperation have been slow and beset with major obstacles. For the most part, collaboration has taken place at the initiative of individuals rather than organizations. The future of collaboration, therefore, remains fragile and vulnerable to party leadership withdrawal. Moreover, initiatives for cooperation have mostly come from the Left, which is objectively the weaker group in the coalition, rather than from the Muslim Brotherhood. Without the will on the part of the Brotherhood, the achievements of the last three years will be an isolated chapter. While there are signs that the Brotherhood is engaged in self-reassessment, political observers can only speculate on how the process will evolve.

PHOTO BY PAUL SCHEMM, CAIRO TIMES, 2003

Demonstration organized by different political opposition groups, Cairo, 20 March 2003

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Notes

1. The Left is a case in point: it consists of various factions and groups including the banned Communist Party, the Tagammu' Party, and the Revolutionary Socialists.
2. A widely read author in Egyptian Leftist circles is C. Harman, "The Prophet and the Proletariat," *International Socialism* 64 (Autumn 1994): 3-64, http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.

Female Religious Professionals in France

AMEL BOUBEKEUR

Islam in France has been experiencing a significant evolution of traditional gender roles as more Muslim women have access to schooling and employment. Increasingly, first and second-generation Maghrebi women, as well as new immigrants, seek out and benefit from religious training in institutions that have traditionally been male domains such as mosques, religious associations and Institutes for Islamic Studies. Could it be that new public female Muslim elite with religious skills and competencies is emerging? Do Muslim women occupy a new position within a religious education market?

In France, Islamic knowledge was formally transmitted and reproduced to Muslims through associations aimed at controlling the religious market. "Religious market" refers to the growing demand by Muslims for religious education and services such as the issuing of fatwa (religious legal advice), and the performance of rites such as prayer and marriage. Individuals from mosques, Muslim associations, or religious authorities supplied all these religious services.[1] These institutions catered mainly to male followers who were expected to transmit religious knowledge according to the in-house ideology; they did not usually promote the interests of youth and women who were on their margins.

Young women, particularly, were not satisfied with their marginal roles in Islamic organizations. Especially since the events of 11 September 2001, they seem to have grown tired of hearing the Islamist militant speech of these associations and wanted to learn about their religion through more spiritual and academic channels. Thus, more and more young female students left the political and social militant associations in favour of the religious teaching of the institutes for Islamic Studies. They also took part in the activities associations of young Muslim students such as Etudiants Musulmans de France and Jeunes Musulmans de France who tried to move away from the strategies of the central organization Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (akin to the Muslim Brotherhood movement in France), especially concerning the headscarf controversy. Consequently, they were more liable to promote the principles of freedom of individual choice with regard to issues such as, whether to wear the headscarf in schools and workplaces, rather than to be a part of a collective Islamist utopia movement. Within these new organizations, the role of women was no longer that of the messenger of a preformulated normative and ideological message expressed by a religious militancy, but of a "source" capable of offering others an education in Islamic sciences.

In a highly diversified knowledge market, the obligation to promote a religious, pragmatic, and methodological learning rather than a political Islamic ideology made it thus possible for women to integrate into programs devoted to the propagation of the latter. Because these women could not be seen in the past as traditional active militants, male religious leaders did not conceive as viable the use of female activism in the religious market. For example, it is within a collective movement that is not exclusively Islamic (CEDITIM), which fights against the expulsion from school of young girls who wear the headscarf, that the very recent, and still discreetly visible Siham Andaloussi (the secretary of Tariq Ramadan), became a spokesperson. However, the potential risk of defection of the male audience in the process of immigration led them to re-consider women as a necessary reinforcement to a risk of weakening of a religious Islamic market uprooted from its national conditions of production.

> Within...new organizations, the role of women was no longer that of the messenger of a pre-formulated...message ..., but of a 'source' capable of offering others an education in Islamic sciences.

As far as women were concerned, they did not conceive of their participation as exceptional but rather as a way to introduce themselves into the power structures of the power-through-knowledge milieu. In this respect, the Muslim organizations and institutes show a turning point in their internal management of their marketing policy around the "Muslim woman." For instance, patterns of attitudes that had been imposed as the one and unique normative avenue (like, for instance, wearing the headscarf, or having to sit at the appointed place for women) are now presented as subject to a legitimate free and individual choice. Moreover, the religious education market is open to competition in the French context. No obligation of belief can now be imposed upon the young female students who have experienced a successful socialization out of the religious milieu. The place of female religious elites in France makes also sense, thanks to a greater presence of the feminine clientele, who do not only go to the Institutes, mosques, and religious lectures, but also buys books and Islamic cassettes. Seen as professional models with which women can identify, they strongly appeal to a clientele that represents "between 65 and 70% of the audience of the new lectures, that is about 33, 000 girls."[2]

The unofficial female market

The changes in the production pattern due to immigration should not hide the fact that, even if female students in the Institutes are as numerous as male students, their presence in the religious job market remains symbolic (less than 15%). The female religious elites, which include various types of profiles such as preachers, intellectuals, or even translators of Islamic works, appear as a very fragmented group. An open-to-women religious education training system does not necessarily imply that women will be recruited for prestigious professions. They are rather confined to a more classical niche, the women associations, while the dominant positions in the religious market being still occupied by men. Even though they do not fit in the formal religious economy, they cannot be totally excluded from it. Thus, these new feminine professional abilities represent a new contender for the traditional male roles.

Clearly though, the establishment finds itself well advised to educate and in the last instance equip women with adequate skills, even if it assigns them a lower position. Long excluded from the institutional structures of religious knowledge, women usually meet at homes for sharing religious information, making it easier for some of them to become unofficial religious authorities, and proving to be a real source for influencing other women. Women can now alone bring forward the religious standards, and their unofficial information can possibly meet head-on the interests of the male religious monopoly.

PHOTO BY MEHDI FEDOUACH/©AFP, 2001

Meeting of *Etudiants Musulman de France*, Bourget, 30 April 2001

In comparison to the far away traditional Maghrebi societies where religiously knowledgeable women can be easily discredited as healers or holy female marabouts, neither institutionalized nor accredited with real knowledge, the social mobility of Muslim female elites in France makes them first-rate competitors in the religious market. In fact, they are no longer playing the cultural community go-betweens relaying religious opinions to protect "the real image of the Muslim woman" from the influences of the non-Muslim world. As they move, they bring along their own clientele. In other words, the more prominent they appear, as visible actors, educated and upper middle-class citizens, the higher is the corresponding profile of their audience. They can therefore occupy the central position of producing religious meanings in society.[3]

The traditional dominant religious character is now being questioned, and new Islamic indigenous feminist battlefields are emerging against, for example, polygamy practices, and cultural and economic male domination. Even if the new standards are the expression of an unofficial market, they are nevertheless seriously competing in the religious market. Since those women hold positions in public circles and know how to use their religious abilities in a professional capacity, they are not confined to the former scheme of traditional relays of knowledge. Their roles are no longer restricted to raising children and contributing to the smooth running of an "Islamic society," but they execute their roles according to a well-planned scheme. They transform the old small-scale, family-minded corporate approach into a larger, rationalized production of their knowledge, making their abilities fit in with the logics of self-interest and profit, notably with children, youngsters, or women.

How feminine religious elites were born

The women-centred production of elites, either through written production (for example, the books on Muslim women in France by Dounia Bouzar or Malika Dif, both members of the French Board of Muslim Worship), fatwa, or *ijtihad* (interpretation of the Quran),[4] all signal strategies of professional redeployment. The shift of what used to be a professional stigma[5] (i.e. being a woman) into a highly researched quality on the religious market is a revealing phenomenon. Following their relative exclusion from the global religious market, the new women elites have become specialists who can both secure a female clientele and remain as a legitimate part of the religious market institution.

Subsequently, and as a sine qua non condition for their introduction to the religious market, they, on the one hand, comply with the norms and traditions that exclude them from the canonical authority like the sermon of the Friday prayer (which is still considered a male prerogative). On the other hand, they directly compete with the establishment, lecturing in front of mixed audiences or teaching religious courses. By doing so, they secure a balance between their "feminine" abilities and career-oriented strategies, while keeping in touch with the global religious market, now more competitive than ever.

Setting aside and belittling the achievements of women professionals created an unofficial religious market that competes with that of men. Women also inherit some benefits from the structural legitimacy of the official market allowing them to put forward their own production. These ambivalent market strategies and the extreme diversity of the feminine religious proficiencies produce great instability, but only because it is still relatively new. Will this market become an autonomous and exclusively feminine market (so limiting their field of activity and clientele) or will the recent feminine religious economy gain enough value to be fully integrated to the global religious market, thus providing religious women elites with new perspectives and positions, far from the traditional women "ghetto"?

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Notes

1. See Laurence R. Iannacone, "Introduction to the Economics of Religion," *Journal of Economic Literature* 36 (September 1998): 1465-1496.
2. Dounia Bouzar, *L'islam des banlieues* (Paris: Syros, 2001): 129.
3. See Valérie Amiraux, "Discours voilés sur les musulmanes en Europe: comment les musulmans sont-ils devenus des musulmanes ?" *Social* Compass 50, no.1 (2003).
4. See the work of the lecturer and Islamic lawyer Schaiyma al Sarraf, *Ahkâm al mar'a bayna al ijtihâd wa at-taqlîd (*Paris: Al Qalam, 2001).
5. Nilufer Gole, "The Voluntary Adoption of Islamic Stigma Symbols," *Social Research* 70, no. 3 (Fall 2003).

Human Rights, Women and Islam

SHIRIN EBADI

The ISIM invited 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi for her first formal visit to the Netherlands where she met with members of NGOs, government officials, scholars, students, and activists from 15-17 April 2004. On 16 April she gave a lecture at the Nieuwe of Littéraire Sociëteit de Witte in The Hague entitled, *Human Rights, Women and Islam* which is presented below in abridged form with some audience questions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Audience,

I am happy to have the opportunity to be present in your gathering. The country of the Netherlands brings the idea of democracy and justice to my mind. In the Netherlands, as in Europe as a whole, the role of religion in politics has decreased from the period of the Renaissance, while democracy and freedom have gradually expanded. This is a blessing of which many other countries are deprived. In much of the eastern world, and particularly in the Islamic countries, the relation between religion, democracy, human rights, and women's rights remains the source of many political disagreements. Religion and democracy have been the subjects of ongoing disputes among philosophers and scholars. Some believe that human beings are the creation of God and as such certain duties are imposed upon them. Accordingly, whatever rights humans may have, are granted by Divine commandments. Likewise, it is the Creator who dictates their obligations; majority opinion cannot be the legitimate source of any rights or obligations. This religiously oriented philosophy holds that when a society is overwhelmed by perversion and decadence, a prophet would be sent to earth to show the right path to the misled majority. Followers of this religious school of thought observe the world through the eyes of their ancestors and do not tolerate any belief except their own. They do not concede a larger role to the elected representatives of the people, civil law, and parliament in determining rights since the majority could be on the wrong path. Rather, all legislation, they believe, should be based on Divine rules.

Shirin Ebadi was Iran's first female judge and served as president of the Tehran city court from 1975 until the revolution of 1979. She was a founding member of the NGO, Association for Support of Children's Rights in Iran*, and was instrumental in the reform of Iran's Child Custody law. As a lawyer, writer, and advocate, Ebadi has defended the rights of intellectuals, women, children, and refugees. The international recognition bestowed on Ebadi as the first Muslim woman and Iranian to receive a Nobel Prize has re-invigorated the fight for human rights and democracy in Iran and far beyond.*

In most Islamic countries there is a misconception that Islam is incompatible with democracy and human rights. Moreover, their governments impose particular ideological meanings to Islam and reject alternative meanings. In such countries, religion becomes a governmental tool. Anyone opposed to these governments' interpretations of Islam risks being branded an "infidel" and "enemy of Islam"; a tactic used to silence political opposition and discourage and intimidate ordinary people from expressing disagreement and dissent. Critics of those autocratic regimes can find themselves lost in a whirlpool of various charges, and their fear of being labelled infidel may discourage them from any form of protest. This is the way that such autocratic governments hide behind the mask of Islam and continue their oppression and cruelty in defence of its name.

Islam and the rights of women and children

The situation of women in many Islamic countries is unacceptable. Islam values women, evidence of which we find in the words and acts of Prophet Muhammad himself, and in the Holy Quran. Why is it, then, that in many Islamic countries the blood money for a woman is half of that for a man? Why are men allowed to have several wives? Why are women not in charge of their own destinies, especially after their marriage when, under the excuse of obedience, their human identity weakens. In some of these societies women are even considered merely as a means to procreate, and the degree of respect accorded to them corresponds to the number of sons they produce. However, the status of women differs from one Islamic country to another; some enjoy more favourable conditions and some still live under the conditions of thirteen hundred years ago. The essential question is: which one represents the real Islam?

The legal position of children in many Islamic countries is also not acceptable. Children are mainly considered as objects, though valuable,

Audience questions

On the one hand you advocate a universal discourse of human rights that is not restricted by religion or culture. Yet, on the other hand, you also argue that in Muslim societies it is important to reinterpret Islam to support democracy and human rights. Is it necessary to ground human rights within religious discourse and law?

Why am I saying religion, religion, religion all the time? The necessity arises from the fact that one sixth of the population of the earth are Muslims. And these people have certain beliefs they do not want to abandon. Yet they do not want their beliefs to be abused and misused by others, such as by governments that do not apply the principles of democracy and justify it on religious grounds. Many people, whether we like it or not, like to preserve the religion of their parents; of their ancestors. We should not tell Muslims, as the leaders of many dictatorial regimes do, that they have to choose between democracy and Islam. We should tell Muslims, "you can hold onto your religion. It is very good. Nobody is going to bother you. But do not forget that the key to heaven is not within the reach of the government or the ruler. It is not with them. The relationship of everybody with their God is in their heart and God has never said that somebody has to oppress us. God has never said that our property has to be taken by from us by force." Therefore, we have to be mindful of the fact that since we are Muslim, we must not necessarily be cheated. Therefore, we must approach certain issues through religion. If you are confronted with a nonreligious population you would not have to talk about religion. But in Iran and many other places in the world the necessity to reason through religion is a necessity. It exists.

Some Muslims have responded to the many injustices committed against the third world, and Muslim societies in particular, with violence and a discourse of terrorism. How do you see this response?

First, I should say that I believe that terrorism and violence should be dealt with severely. But having said that, we must ask if arresting and punishing terrorists has decreased terrorism in the world? Or, is it the case that, unfortunately, terrorism increases on a daily basis? We must ask, "From where does terrorism originate?" Terrorism has two bases: fanaticism and ignorance, and injustice. When a person, a group, a nation is oppressed and has no one to come to its aid and, moreover, is also ignorant, then it starts a fire in the world. I would like to recite a poem here from Hafez to illustrate this point: "O wine bearer, please give wine in a cup of justice to the beggar so that there is no calamity

belonging to the father and the paternal family. Unjust laws guide the issue of children's rights. For example, if a father or grandfather kills his child, even wilfully, he can be exempted from punishment. The age of marriage, moreover, is unsuitably low, and in some countries fathers can marry their daughters off even without their consent. Everyone is aware of the damaging aspects of underage marriage.

Such laws need to be reinterpreted and reformed. Many informed Muslims believe that it is necessary to understand the essence and general spirit governing Islamic rulings, and on the basis of reason, which is one of the sources of legislation in (Islamic) Holy Law, provide for more suitable laws. The word of God should be understood with the help of the intellect. Religious interpretations from five hundred years ago cannot be applied to situations of today. Reinterpreting Divine law is not heretical; on the contrary, it is precisely the correct way of truly implementing God's religion.

Overcoming cultures of patriarchy and ignorance

Patriarchal culture, not religion, is the root cause of inequality between the sexes and the reason for the lack of freedom and democracy in much of the eastern world, particularly the Islamic countries. Both men and women preserve, defend, and perpetuate patriarchal culture. Women, who themselves are the victims of such a culture, also play an active role in reproducing it. The paternal culture is passed by mothers to their sons, the same way haemophilia is transferred by the mother to her male child. Islam, in its essence, is based on respect for human dignity. Yet Islamic governments are not inclined, for different reasons, to offer an interpretation of Islam that is compatible with human rights, individual and social freedoms, and the principle of democratic participation in government. Therefore, the general culture and the political culture in Islamic countries are in need of evolution and legislative change. Laws should correspond to the spirit of Islam and the requirements of the times.

Education is the most important step in cultural change. Muslims should be educated about the fundamentals of Islam in a correct and sensible manner. They should be made aware that it is possible to be Muslim, and to respect and put into action the principals of human rights and democracy. If such an education were widespread among Muslims, their governments would be forced to respect the rights of their people. Muslim intellectuals must, through all means possible, find access to the Muslim masses and participate in their education. It is imperative that the intellectuals reinterpret Islam, because if they criticize the policies of Islamic governments from outside a framework of Islam, they are not going to attract the masses of people. Therefore, we have to make Muslims aware that the key for paradise is through an Islamic movement based on pure motives and understanding of Islam, not through terrorist activities. The one billion Muslims who make up one sixth of the world's population of the planet earth value their religion and want to preserve it, and also have the merit to live in better conditions.

PHOTO BY WIM VREEBURG, 2004

Shirin Ebadi, The Hague, 2004

Paradoxically, those who want to wage war [in the name of Islam], do invoke incorrect interpretations of Islam. Such people try to argue that Oriental civilization and especially Islamic civilization is inherently unrelated with Western civilization and the conflict between the two is unavoidable. Islam is not a religion of terror and violence. You can be sure that if a person is killed in the name of Islam then the name of Islam has been abused. Islam should not take the blame for the incorrect actions perpetrated by individuals or groups, just as the wrongs committed by individuals in the war in Bosnia cannot be said to be the fault of all Christians. The Jewish religion should not be blamed for those Israelis who ignore the various resolutions of the United Nations [and commit injustices against the Palestinians]. We must separate the mistakes made by human beings from the faith and civilization to which they belong. Civilizations are not in conflict with each other, for they share many common denominators. Let us speak of those common denominators, not the discords. We should not try to justify war for no one will come out of such a calamity with pride.

in the world." Hafez wrote these words centuries ago because he understood that injustice causes people to start riots. Some politicians see their interests served in moments of ignorance and fanaticism without thinking about the future.

I will repeat again that my heart feels pain every time I remember 11 September. I sincerely sympathize with the victims of that tragedy. But you must bear in mind that the United States helped the Taliban come to power. When the Taliban took over Kabul, the first country to recognize them was America. Working with dictatorial governments brings about such tragedies. Unfortunately, we saw a few months ago innocent people killed in Spain. The world has become a global village. Any incident affects the others. We should not take a back seat. When a country is burning in the flames of war, if the people of a country need help, then we must not remain indifferent. It is possible that one day, the flames of injustice may affect you too. The day when that tragic incident took place in Madrid, it was a product of an injustice that the Taliban had committed against the Afghans and at that time no one came to the aid of the Afghans. We must look at the events in the world as joined together and not as separate.

How can we in the West help Muslims to promote the kind of positive Islam you advocate?

How can you help the Muslims? The most important assistance that we expect of you is not to blame religion for the wrongdoings of some of its people. After 11 September, an extremely tragic incident which hurt us very much, a [difficult] situation has come about for Muslims throughout the world. A very small group of people committed a horrible crime, and in their act abused the worldwide name of Islam. My most important request as a Muslim is that before looking at each other in anger we pause and think within ourselves; think what has really happened. Many Muslims are suffering from both their own governments as well as from the incorrect judgment the world has about them. The most important help you can give us is to love each other as we used to do twenty years `ago before this talk of the "clash of civilizations" which is not a good theory. We should not ignorantly adopt theories that bring about wars.

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Audience questions

PHOTO BY WIM VREEBURG, 2004

Piet de Klerk, Ambassador at Large for Human Rights, Shirin Ebadi and Asef Bayat, The Hague, 16 April 2004

Education is the most important step in cultural change. Muslims should be... made aware that it is possible to be Muslim and to respect and put into action the principals of human rights and democracy.

How do you view the future of Iran?

With reference to how I see the future of Iran, I have said on many occasions that I am neither a politician nor a leader of a political party and do not wish to enter the government or power structure. I am a human being like you and I only work in the field of human rights. I can speak to you on the situation of human rights in today's Iran. The Government of Iran, in the year 1975 (AH1354) joined the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic and Social Rights, and remain, until today, signatories of those Covenants. Therefore, we are committed to abide by those Covenants. Yet, unfortunately, we have laws against Iran's international commitments such as discrimination based on gender. In a country where 63% of students at universities are female, that is, the number of educated women exceeds that of educated men, according to its laws the legal testimony of two women is equal to the testimony of one man. This society does not remove these discriminatory laws.

We have discrimination on the basis of religion. According to the civil rights regulations, if a person who is non-Muslim, for example a Zoroastrian or a Christian, dies, and among his relatives, however distant, there be a Muslim, that Muslim will inherit everything thereby depriving others of inheritance. We have laws that harm freedom of speech. In our Press Law it has been stipulated that criticizing the constitution is prohibited. How can it be possible for a professor teaching constitutional law at the Faculty of Law to be prohibited from criticizing the law? We have a law that, unfortunately, allows the Guardian Council to vet the qualification of candidates before parliamentary and presidential elections. During the seventh parliamentary elections (in early 2004), many candidates were disqualified. These actions are against the international commitments of the Iranian Government. A country should either not accept an international protocol or, if it accepts it, should abide by it and implement it. We expect the Government of Iran to fulfill its international obligations.

Do you think there is a chance for democracy in Iran, an Islamic republic?

I believe in democracy. Democracy means that the government should represent and respect the will of the people. If the people demand a separation between religion and government, then we must respect their wishes. Respecting the will of the people is not against Islam and has many precedents in Islamic history. The problem is that some philosophers and some ruling government officials are not willing to acknowledge the rights of the people for democracy. The problem is not Islam. If all people want the same thing, separation of religion from government, then this should not be a problem.

When did you develop the desire to fight injustice and where has this tendency led you?

My dear friend, I think that everybody is born with certain characteristics. From my very early childhood I was fascinated by justice without understanding exactly what it was that I wanted. From as early as seven or eight years old I remember many occasions when walking down the street I would stop to intervene in other peoples' fights. If two children were fighting and one child was being beaten by the other, I would just get involved and help the one who was being beaten up without even understanding the story between them. Many times I was beaten up myself because of this intervention. This spirit made me choose to go to law school. It was this same spirit that drove me, after I finished my studies at law school, immediately to work for the Ministry of Justice and then I started working as a judge.

I believed that through the profession of being a judge I could realize my dreams for justice. I was a judge for many years, but after the 1979 revolution they said that women could not remain judges anymore. They made of me a secretary in the same court where I had been a judge. Well, of course, it was not tolerable for me and I left. I gradually began to protest in writing and speech. Due to all my activities, my license to practice law was suspended for seven years. When I finally got my license I opened my own law firm and was pulled in the direction of human rights. I have worked—and continue to work—for the defence of the politically accused and also those accused of media offences.

How has winning the Noble Prize changed your life?

The Noble Prize has given me a chance to be more vocal. The people of Iran and the people of the world can hear me more clearly and for this I am very grateful to this prize. After having been awarded the Noble Prize, I have been able to highlight pressing issues in Iran. Iran is a country which is contaminated with landmines. Three million hectares in the South-West and West of Iran are contaminated with landmines, a situation which has led to villages being abandoned, land becoming uncultivable, and people dying and suffering terrible injuries. After being awarded the Noble Peace prize I started an NGO for the purpose of training people how to deal with areas that are contaminated with mines. This NGO has been one of the impacts of the Noble prize in my personal life.

How do you deal with those who oppose you?

The way I deal with people who oppose me, such as those who disagree with my condemnation of the United States' policies to invade other countries, is through dialogue. I always have a discussion and dialogue with them. There is no other way. Freedom of expression is one of the issues that I care for. I am only one human being, I am independent, and I do not have a party or organized group. The only weapon that I have at my disposal is a pen and a tongue which is very long. It can talk a lot!

The original transcript of Shirin Ebadi's talk was translated into English by Zahra Navidi.

Women, Politics and Islam in Kuwait

HELEN RIZZO

Impediments to the global trend of democratization, particularly in Islamic nations, have been widely debated in the past fifteen years. Scholars disagree as to whether Islam is compatible with democracy; part of the controversy stems from questions pertaining to the extension of citizenship rights, particularly when it comes to women. Debates over the compatibility of women's empowerment and public participation with Islamic values have intensified, specifically in the Middle East.

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris have recently revised Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis[1] arguing that the core clash between the Islamic world and the West is not over whether or not democracy is the best political system, but over issues concerning gender equality and sexual liberalization. Using the World Values Survey, they found that citizens of Muslim societies are significantly less supportive of equal rights and opportunities for women than those living in Western democratic countries. In another study they found that "in virtually every authoritarian society, a majority of the public believes that men make better political leaders than women; in virtually every stable democracy a clear majority of the public rejects this belief…"[2] The implication is that until citizens, particularly women, of Muslim populations believe that women and men are equal in all aspects of life, this will be the main cultural barrier to democratization in the Muslim world.

Islam and women's rights

There is also growing evidence that Islamic values can be compatible with women's empowerment and participation in society. Women themselves (secular, religious, and Islamist) in Iran, Egypt, and Kuwait, for example, are using Islamic principles to justify women's equality, access to resources, and participation in the public sphere in order to increase democratization. My research on Kuwait builds upon this evidence and investigates the effect of women's organizations and their interpretations of Islam on the political participation and attitudes toward extending the citizenship rights of their members.

In general, there has been little research on Gulf women because of the difficulties in gaining access to that population. To address the lack of representation, my research examined women's voluntary associations, which are an important base for women's social participation and involvement. The research included a range of women's associations—ten in all. The leaders of the ten associations were interviewed extensively and a sample of 125 members was surveyed between January—March 1998. Leaders were identified through a snowball technique that began with colleagues and key informants at Kuwait University; these leaders distributed the surveys to their active members. The leaders provided information about the background, goals, structure, and activities of their organizations, especially on the topic of women's political rights. Both leaders and members were asked about their perceptions of women's problems, descriptions of their activism and routine political participation, and their attitudes toward including women more fully into Kuwaiti society and politics.

A divide between the more numerous service organizations and the professional women's groups prevails. The leaders of the professional associations support the notion that achieving women's formal political rights is an important goal. The leaders of the service organizations are more concerned with religious and social service activities than obtaining political rights for women. A few, especially among the Islamist service associations, are even opposed to granting such political rights based on religious interpretations that claim that Islam forbids women to govern or rule.

Secularization and women's rights

Despite certain points of contention between the service organizations and women's groups, the research indicated that Islam was not inherently incompatible with democratization or gender equality. Religious beliefs and practices did not serve as barriers for members of both types of groups in either their political participation or in their support for women's citizenship rights. Instead, holding strong Islamic beliefs (adhering to the theology; orthodoxy) was compatible with support for extending political rights to women even after controlling for other factors. Thus, my findings support the thesis that secularization at the individual level is not a necessary condition for the processes of modernization and democratization or for supporting women's rights, as the growth of religious feminism around the world attests.

Even though the leaders of the religious service organizations in Kuwait interpreted Islam in ways that were not supportive of some aspects of women's empowerment and public participation, most of the members of the service groups surveyed saw the necessity for women's education, wanted more rights for women in divorce, and recognized that women had problems balancing work and family responsibilities. Moreover, some members of the service organizations also agreed with the professional members that the lack of political rights for women was a problem, and that women needed at least the right to vote to be full citizens in order to tackle the problems women face. Given that most of these women are also very religious, this provides further evidence that secularization, at least at the individual level, is not necessary for supporting women's rights and the democratization process.

Activists, then, have an additional resource to help them in obtaining political rights—Islam. In a country where the overwhelming majority of the citizens are Muslim, activists working for women's rights need not only demonstrate that they identify strongly with Islamic tenets, but also need to justify to Kuwaiti society that women having a voice in political life is also Islamic.

Image not available online

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE MCGEHEE, ©REUTERS, 2003

Kuwaiti women hold mock elections for new parliament, 5 July 2003

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Notes

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Conceptualizing Islamic Activism

QUINTAN WIKTOROWICZ

For decades, the study of Islamic activism has languished at the margins of social science theory. With the exception of a small handful of scholars (particularly those focused on the Iranian revolution), research on Islamic activism has not fully engaged the broader theoretical and conceptual developments that have emerged from scholarship on social movements, revolutions, and contentious politics. Yet this large body of comparative research on non-Islamic forms of collective action provides myriad tools of analysis and theoretical leverage for many questions that interest students of Islamic activism, including issues of recruitment, tactics and strategies, mobilization patterns, and state-movement interactions.

Since the late 1990s, a number of Islamic movement specialists have begun to bridge the gap between the study of Islamic activism and social science theories of collective action. The underlying premise is that Islamic activism is not sui generis. Rather than emphasizing the specificity of Islam as a system of meaning, identity, and basis of collective action[1], these scholars point to movement commonalities rooted in process: how contention is organized, the way ideas are framed and propagated, how grievances are collectivized, and tactics and strategies in response to exogenous shifts in opportunities and constraints. By focusing on shared mechanisms of contention rather than the uniqueness of Islam, such an understanding avails itself of a broader array of concepts, theories, and comparative empirics. In this new approach, scholars primarily emphasize three sets of processes—resource mobilization, decision making, and framing—each of which is operative in both Islamic and non-Islamic activism.

Resource mobilization

Many studies of Islamic activism emphasize the underlying grievances that engender impetus for collective action, including blocked social mobility, a lack of political freedom, economic despair, a sense of cultural vulnerability, and humiliation. The central argument is that, as Ted Gurr once famously put it, "misery breeds revolt."

The problem with such arguments is that while misery is ubiquitous, mobilization is not. Social movement theorists have attacked grievance-based explanations as incomplete: grievances are not irrelevant, but there is a missing intermediary set of variables that is necessary to translate grievances into actualized mobilization. In particular, movements need resources and mobilizing structures to collectivize what would otherwise remain individualized grievances. Money, communications technology, meeting places, social networks, and other resources are needed to organize, direct, and mobilize contention. Without organizational capacity, individuals remain isolated from one another and unable effectively to launch collective endeavours. Differences in mobilization patterns are, in part, explained by the degree of resource availability, and the types of resources and mobilizing structures utilized by particular groups. For Islamic activism, important resources and mobilizing structures include mosques, study circles, dense social networks (friends and family), Islamic non-governmental organizations, political parties, the *dars* (religious lesson), the *khutba* (sermon), professional and student associations, and unions. All of these are utilized to effectively recruit, organize, and launch contention. To a large extent, the reason Islamic movements have emerged as a dominant opposition in the Muslim world is because they command more societal institutions and resources than other movements. In addition, the ability of activists to tap religious resources provides a modicum of protection from regime repression. Certainly, regimes in the Muslim world have severely hamstrung mobilization, but a full-blown crackdown on religious institutions and resources is a delicate and difficult endeavour, since it can engender societal backlashes.

Examples of resource mobilization abound. In the early 1990s, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) utilized the national network of mosques and community organizations in Algeria to organize for elections. The electoral success of the FIS in the face of regime repression and electoral manipulation was, at least in part, due to the party's access to enduring religious institutions. The Islamic Group (al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya) in Egypt enjoyed similar resources and institutional access during the 1980s. In the city of Dairut (Upper Egypt) alone, the movement controlled about 150 mosques. Access to the mosques was used to provide social welfare services, create community "reconciliation committees," hold meetings, and recruit support. The regime's difficulty in uprooting the Islamic Group in the 1990s reflected the organizational resilience of the movement. When the regime tried to repress the movement, it met dramatic resistance since "after a decade of organizing social and political networks in Upper Egypt, the Islamists had the capacity to fight back."[2] Moderate Islamic groups in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen have successfully utilized grassroots networks of non-governmental organizations to provide basic goods and services to communities, develop contact points with the public, recruit support, and organize.

Resource mobilization is a process that transcends the specificity of ideology. Though ideology can limit the range of resource options by excluding some as contrary to movement beliefs, movement fortunes frequently ebb and flow according to resource availability and institutional access. A focus on resource mobilization emphasizes *how* movements mobilize, rather than the ultimate goal of mobilization.

Decision making

Some earlier research on Islamic activism assumed the pre-eminence of belief in dictating behaviour. Although this assumption was never a universal norm, Orientalist influence often privileged the causal import of ideas and Islam as a belief system.

Largely, the new emphasis on process challenges some earlier ontological assertions about the Islamic activist. Rather than viewing activists as dogmatically guided by rigid adherence to ideology, a number of recent studies adopt a loose rational actor model. From this perspective, Islamic activists are driven by tactical and strategic assessments of costs and risks. Choices reflect conscious evaluations of whether decisions help achieve goals within a context of opportunities and constraints. Although such an approach tends to avoid the conceptual language of rational choice theory (preferences, utility maximization, etc.), it shares the emphasis on strategic decision-making.

> . . . in the new approach to Islamic activism ...the emphasis is on the process of constructing discourse and the resulting ideational packages.

This trend is most apparent in studies of violent groups in particular. Perhaps as a reaction against caricatures of the "irrational zealot," social scientists have highlighted the strategic logic of radicals. Hamas, for example, strategically responds to changes in the political context.[3] Prior to the al-Aqsa intifada in 2000, growing popularity for the Palestinian-Israeli peace process challenged the viability of Hamas. Strict intransigence toward peace was likely to erode support from a population that sought an end to the economic and social hardships of occupation, thereby threatening the organizational survival of the movement. In response, Hamas tactically adjusted its doctrine to accommodate the possibility of peace by framing it as a temporary pause in the jihad. After the al-Aqsa intifada in 2000, however, popular support for Hamas grew and the movement returned to its earlier pro-violence frames. Mohammed M. Hafez uses an implicit rational actor model to explain Muslim rebellions in Algeria and Egypt during the 1990s. He contends that violence erupted as a response to "an ill-fated combination of institutional exclusion, on the one hand, and on the other, reactive and indiscriminate repression that threaten[ed] the organizational resources and personal lives of Islamists."[4] To defend themselves against regime repression the Islamists went underground and formed exclusive organizations, leading to a process of encapsulation and radicalization. Stathis N. Kavylas views the Islamist-led massacres that plagued Algeria in the 1990s as strategic assaults intended to deter civilian defections "in the context of a particular strategic conjuncture characterized by (a) fragmented and unstable rule over the civilian population, (b) mass civilian defections toward incumbents and (c) escalation of violence."[5] Several scholars have argued that the tactic of suicide bombing is rational in that it helps Islamic (and other) terrorist groups achieve their group goals.[6] In addition, Michael Doran conceptualizes al-Qaeda as a rational actor, arguing that, "When it comes to matters related to politics and war, al-Qaeda manoeuvres around its dogmas with alacrity." In this understanding, "Al-Qaeda's long-term goals are set by its fervent devotion to a radical religious ideology, but in its short-term behaviour, it is a rational political actor operating according to the dictates of realpolitik."[7]

This is not to completely marginalize the role of Islamist ideology in decision-making. The universe of potential choices is circumscribed by the "imaginable options" within particular worldviews. However, the rationality of Islamist decision-making demonstrates that the process of choice is shared by a wide range of movement types.

> . . . the reason Islamic movements have emerged as a dominant opposition in the Muslim world is because they command more societal institutions and resources than other movements.

Framing

Although the new approach to Islamic activism de-emphasizes ideology and belief as causal variables, it does not reject the role of ideas altogether. Instead, the primary concern is how ideas are socially created, arranged, and disseminated. In other words, the emphasis is on the process of constructing discourse and the resulting ideational packages. In the parlance of social movement theory, movements must "frame" their arguments to persuade audiences and elicit support and participation.

Al-Qaeda, for example, is embroiled in a bitter "frame dispute" with the Saudi ulama (religious scholars) in which each asserts a particular interpretation and the right to sacred authority. Al-Qaeda emphasizes the knowledge, character, and logic of its scholars while attacking its detractors based upon the same criteria. Its supporters are framed as honourable, independent, and scientific in their approach to interpreting Islam. Opponents, in contrast, are framed as corrupt "sheikhs of authority" or "palace lackeys" inextricably linked to corrupt Muslim governments. The framing strategy is designed to insert al-Qaeda as the sole mediator between the sacred texts and religious practice.

To maximize access to these discontented populations, Islamists have in many cases generated frames that meld religious and non-religious themes to garner broad support among those who are merely seeking a change from the status quo rather than an Islamic transformation. Meriem Vergès, for example, shows how the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria strategically framed itself as the heir to the revolutionary mantel of the war of independence.[8] Using the language and symbols of the revolution, the FIS attempted to portray itself as a natural extension of the struggle while denouncing the regime as a usurper of Algeria's historic memory. Such examples demonstrate the strategic dimensions of framing: content is frequently selected according to its potential persuasive effects rather than solely on the basis of ideology.

An approach to the study of Islamic activism that draws from social science theory erodes essentialist assumptions about Islamic exceptionalism. It offers analytic tools for addressing key questions and draws from comparative research, thus adding broader empirics. Moreover, by emphasizing the dynamics of activism rather than the uniqueness of Islam as an organizing belief system, such an approach opens possibilities for dialogue with students of non-Islamic contention, potentially offering new insights.

Notes

An earlier version of this article has been published in the *IIAS Newsletter* 33 (2004), see also http://www.iias.nl.

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6. Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no.2 (2003): 343-362.
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8. Meriem Vergès, "Genesis of a Mobilization: The Young Activists of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front," in *Political Islam*, eds., Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 292-305.

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Art Education in Iran
Women's Voices

MEHRI HONARBIN-HOLLIDAY

Art education is thriving in Iran despite facing obstacles by some conservative Islamic elements. Women are especially active in making and exhibiting art in the contemporary period. Through an ethnographic enquiry into women's art education at the Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities, the ways in which women assert themselves as highly active members of a complex and changing society will be examined. Ethnographic research allows for long-held stereotypes to be corrected, truer versions of reality to come to the fore, and hopefully, the spaces and texts of "the other" to be better understood.[1]

University art education was first established in Iran on the Marvi school premises in Tehran in 1939 (AH 1319) and moved to its present location, at Tehran University campus, in 1949. The move was part of an evolutionary process of teaching art, as a specialized subject, at secondary schools (*honarestan*) founded by the late nineteenth-century Qajar court painter, Mohammad Ghaffari Kamál al-Mulk. These schools taught art history, and the science of painting (*elme naqashi*) and carving (*hajjari*) in the style of the Academy of Paris. Some classes also taught design elements within traditional Iranian art. Such new ways of teaching were in sharp contrast to the long-standing system of master-pupil apprenticeship.[2] Currently there are roughly ten institutions in Tehran where the arts, and in some cases crafts, are taught awarding B.A., M.A., and occasionally Ph.D. degrees.

Continuity and change in Iranian art education

Al-Zahra University is the only national women's university accommodating several faculties including the Faculty of Applied Arts where both male and female tutors teach the plastic arts. It was founded in 1964 during the Pahlavi regime as the Institute of Higher Education for Girls, re-named for a very brief period as Mahboobeh Motahedin Institute after the 1979 Revolution, and finally registered as Al-Zahra University in memory of the Prophet's daughter. It is built on the site of a small shrine and orchards in rural Vanak, donated by a nineteenth-century courtesan specifically for the education of women. It has made higher education available to a considerable number of female students whose family traditions are not in favour of co-education. A great number of the students at Al-Zahra wear the chador, a form of Islamic cover, and come from the traditionalist and neo-traditionalist religious classes.[3] Politically speaking, while some students and staff advocate the hard-line policies of the government, others oppose them. The students from the Applied Arts Faculty come from more varied social and political backgrounds and often show more daring in their work. Commenting on her female students, one tutor points out, "the female students cannot be ignored [for they are] highly autonomous in their conduct and in their ideas." Twenty-one year old Atoosa appears to break taboos when she expresses, "I like to paint images of my own body, sometimes without clothes. Well it is only a body and we all have one, don't we? My body, your body, it is a common language, that's all."

Nudity and erotic art are neither practiced nor publicly tolerated in the Islamic Republic. The hard-liners and most tutors frown upon the idea of "life class" modelling where models pose in a state of undress for close study of human anatomy and form. Nevertheless, artists widely push and negotiate boundaries in their depictions of the human figure. Figure drawing and painting exist at both Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities where form is studied through plaster casts and fully clothed models. Although partially-clothed figure paintings do not get exhibited at the finals' shows, tutors critically engage with their students' work. They do not invoke notions of "haram" (religiously forbidden) or "halal" (religiously permitted) in art classes; such words belong more appropriately to discussions amongst the clergy in sermons and mosques. The discourse in these art classes is primarily a universal art discourse.

PHOTO BY MEHRI HONARBIN-HOLLIDAY, 2002

Drawing atelier, Visual Arts Department, Tehran University, 2002

Nevertheless, there is widespread concern, both from the student body and most tutors, that the curriculum, with its excessive focus on Islamic subjects is not sympathetic to the teaching of art as a discipline. The curriculum places emphasis on the 1979 Revolution and religious ethics formulated according to the religious scholars of Qom. Yet, the curriculum also provides an expansive historical context for studying art. Students learn about art in Muslim civilizations, its interconnection with Spanish and Byzantine art, Persian antiquity with its systems of belief, architecture and motifs, and Islamic iconology and its impact on the arts and architecture of the Muslim world from India to Spain. The history of painting and sculpture, including the Western heritage, are taught according to their relevancy to these aforementioned subjects rather than as the arts of the "West." As one student pointed out, "When we studied the Renaissance, our tutor talked about every single painter in that period who had ap-

PHOTO BY MEHRI HONARBIN-HOLLIDAY, 2002

Self-portraits, Al-Zahra University, 2002

plied a mere brush mark onto a church wall… He made it like a wonderful story. I love art history, and it is ridiculous to say West and East too much. I am a citizen of the globe, a member of the global village. If I am to be an artist, all of art history is my heritage."

Adaptation and resistance in art departments

Art, like other disciplines, has experienced some strain with the rise of the Islamic Republic. A non-academic body, the Ethics Council (*heraasat*), is at large on university campuses. Members of the Ethics Council pride themselves on their Islamic zeal and apply their authority across social institutions as they see appropriate. Their tasks include keeping a check on the overall appearance, dress code, and general conduct of the student body, particularly women. Many women, unable to withstand the mechanisms of control, have been pushed out of the academic and art world altogether, but they have demonstrated resilience and agency, finding new ways of making their contributions independent of formal state institutions. As one such woman relates, "I had a gallery and a bookshop. I had to give up both as a consequence of the change of regime. But you know my skin is tough, it has to be. I am a woman….The 1979 revolution has been like a wave in the streets, it has not really touched the interiors, our hearts. I don't believe the rest of the world has any idea about secular life in this country. I have had to re-establish myself. Instead of teaching at universities, I work from home as a translator and editor of art and academic books…and I'm the main breadwinner in the family. I have educated two of my children at home and they are reasonably good artists now."

Those who have remained within the university system are often penalized when it comes to promotion and tenure, for tenure status is rarely granted to anyone who resists the government's prescribed line. Some tutors, to make ends meet, work part-time teaching posts in the provinces and travel far to reach their classes. Many of the faculty and staff nevertheless, continue to derive energy and hope from their close association to the world of art. As one tutor elucidates:

"I have been teaching art for the last eighteen years at two universities whilst also practicing and exhibiting painting. I love being around my students. They give me energy. I get up in the morning and put my lipstick on and wear my headscarf and go to work. I need the income….I have supported my family financially all my married life and I am proud to have helped my students to get into universities in Japan and Germany. Sadly, in the West, there is no consciousness of women like me in Iran; there are considerable numbers of us contributing, and defying restrictions as much as we can. I for one refuse to apply self-censorship and insist on thinking freely, despite the headscarf. You cannot touch my mind."

Female students are highly conscious and critical of gender issues, constantly drawing comparisons between their own position in society and that of their male peers. This became apparent during the two seminars in which the author responded to enquiries about gender issues in the West, and in England particularly. These students demonstrate initiative by printing and distributing invitations for exhibitions as well as booking rooms, and securing the consent of the head of visual arts department. They robustly express their aspirations for new modes of behaviour on a daily basis through their appearance, art, and social interaction with their male friends. They remain highly critical of the government stance on laws affecting women, though they are somewhat uncertain about their future, particularly considering the recent election results. However, these women push the discussion on gender forward wherever possible. Vibrant in their strife, they are vociferous, visible, and demanding new and secular laws.

Despite their efforts, many mainstream representations of women, particularly in the Western media, tend to be decontextualized, outdated, and sadly misinformed. Despite some notable exceptions, such as Shirin Ebadi who, with her recent winning of the 2003 Nobel Prize for Peace has secured a platform to demonstrate the agency of Iranian and Muslim women, what is often missing in the deconstruction and understanding of gender issues in Iran are women's own voices. The world must be willing to hear these voices and be vigilant in recognizing their courage and struggles.

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Notes

1. For another treatment of the efficacy of using ethnographic research in the study of contemporary Iran see: A. Keshavarzian, "Field Research, Research Design and the Tehran Bazaar", *ISIM Newsletter* 13 (December 2003): 51.
2. Tehran University Archives, unpublished manuscript, 2002.
3. Z. Mirhosseini, *Islam and Gender* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

The Poet and the Prophet

ABDOU FILALI-ANSARY

In 2002, nearly 70 years after its completion, a long essay by the celebrated Iraqi poet Maaruf Rusafi on the nature of prophecy in Islam was published in Germany. His reading of early Islamic history, in particular of the accomplishments of the Prophet Muhammad, roughly coincided with another new reading; that by the Egyptian Ali Abd al-Raziq. Rusafi's admiration for Muhammad is enormous and he credits him with inspiring the Arabs to initiate a new order, taking humanity from the reign of tribal customs to the vision of communities built on shared ethics and beliefs.

Maaruf Rusafi (1873–1945), an Iraqi poet of the early twentieth century, is well known to anyone who attended an Arabic public school. He celebrated the pride of being an Arab at a moment when the domination of the Ottoman Turks was receding in the region, just before the colonial expansion of Europe. His poetry, in form and content, deals with Arabism, freedom, equality, and positive political values and is an example of the forceful mobilisation of classical canons for a "modern" cause. Cultural identity could not be better served, as Arabism was linked to freedom, equality, and all sorts of positive values.

Only very recently, another face of the poet emerged. Late in his life, Rusafi had turned his attention to the early, or "foundational" moments of Arab history and the figure which had forged Arabs as a force to be reckoned with in the region and in the world. He dedicated eight years of his life to the study of the biography of Prophet Muhammad with the intention of "elucidating a sacred myth," i.e. extracting the "true facts" of history from the mythological narratives in which they had been staged. The book, completed in Falluja in 1933, has hitherto remained hidden from the general public. Only recently, in 2002, has it found a publisher.[1]

Rusafi studied the traditional sources on the biography of the Prophet with the idea of going beyond the religious allegories and narratives by which the myth of Muhammad has been constructed. It is remarkable that although his agenda was modern, his sources, methods, and style remained strictly traditional. Besides Arabic, he seems to have had some knowledge of Turkish (he served for short periods in a few journals published in Istanbul) and, to some degree, of Farsi, but no knowledge of European languages. His limited knowledge of some modern theories (such as Newtonian physics or Darwinism) came from his reading of mainly Egyptian journals published in Arabic in the early twentieth century.

However, he clearly adopts the attitudes of a free mind, submitting historical sources to a strictly rational scrutiny, discarding all preconceptions, including the most sacred for his fellow Muslims. As such, he seems to belong to the line of rationalist rebels who have persevered in attempting to cross the red line erected around "orthodox" views quite early on in the history of Muslims, resisting fierce repression and censorship that were exerted at all levels. The book opens with a strange declaration (which includes excerpts from his poems) whereby he proclaims Truth (*Haqq*) as the only divinity worth worshiping and asserts his intention of adhering to it whatever the cost may be.

Elucidation of a sacred myth

His reconstruction of the life of the Prophet brings back a wealth of anecdotes forgotten because later biographers discarded them. The effect, indeed, is to shed light on a historically real figure. He expunges the supra-natural from the historical accounts and shows that it is mainly the outcome of imagination of later narrators, and not fully endorsed by what we know about the understanding of the contemporaries of the Prophet. He quotes extensively the most recognised sources about the life of the Prophet, but uses them in new ways. Through this secularised narration of the Prophet's life and deeds, a novel picture emerges. Its most striking feature is the use of violence which permeates the customs of the time. The Prophet stands out amongst his contemporaries not by being totally different in that respect, but by a personality that has the power to dominate others and a vision which transcends the prevailing conceptions and customs. Rusafi stresses the Prophet's main strength as the capacity to free himself from the categories of culture in which he was immersed. He was able to perceive events beyond the limitations of his personal self and beyond the dominant views and values of pre-Islamic society. The revelations he received were the consequence of an intellectual reasoning through which he broke with the worldview of his contemporaries. Thus, he questions the notion of prophecy as a message literally delivered from God. Most individuals, comments Rusafi, think and respond within the world of meanings built by the language and culture transmitted by their environment. They are thus neither able to distance themselves from their "world," nor to place in perspective the conceptions and values they have inherited. Only a few have the capacity of distancing themselves from the mould of their own value system. Consequently, they are able to contemplate events and things comprehensively and reach a kind of knowledge which is not accessible to their fellow men. Such are, as Rusafi explains, the prophets of the Quranic tradition.

Muhammad was such a prophet, probably the one who has gone as far as any one could go. He had, in addition, the will to apply that knowledge to transform the moral and political conditions of the time. Rusafi stresses the numerous sayings of the Prophet in which he promises his Arab tribesmen, if they were to follow his teaching, a great destiny and an empire that would crush and dominate the existing powers of the time, the Sassanid and Byzantine empires. Here Rusafi shows the limits of his critical reading. While he is critical of later narrators, his criticism of these early narratives does not lead him to question these traditions, which could very well have been retro projections from subsequent history. Instead, Rusafi sees them as the expression of a "grand design" which he supposes to have overtaken the imagination and driven the actions of Prophet Muhammad. He draws the image of the Prophet as the one who envisions and initiates a new community, which is not built on tribal bonds or on the domination of powerful monarchies, as were the big empires of the time, but rather on religious and ethical beliefs. Mohammad's grand design was thus to implement an alternative to tribe and empire, which were the only available socio-political forms his area had known until then. Monotheism and the ethics related to it (solidarity, social justice, and equality) were to provide the foundations a new community. The Arabs, as the ones to champion its building and implementation, would enjoy a privileged role in its subsequent development.

In Rusafi's portrayal the Prophet is not a man who passively receives messages from a transcendent God, as he is depicted in orthodox traditions. He is rather one who accesses the inner processes of nature and history, beyond the cultural framework which determines the thought and action of his time, and brings forth a project which leads to great transformations in the history of mankind: the creation of a social order which enacts the ethical principles brought about by monotheism.

Rusafi's admiration for the Prophet is immense, but not for the same reasons that traditional accounts present. The Arabs are credited, in passing, of being the initiators of a new order, which is supposed to have taken humanity from the reign of tribal customs and brute domination, to the vision of communities built on shared beliefs and ethically grounded regulations.

An alternate portrait

In his reconstruction of the life of the Prophet, it remains unclear if Rusafi was aware of another "secular" reading of the same period of Islamic history, which had been proposed a few years earlier. The resemblance between the two contemporary endeavours is striking. Ali Abd al-Raziq (1888–1966) had published his most controversial essay *Islam and the Foundations of Political Power* in 1925. He also had ventured beyond the traditional narratives of the early phases of the Muslim community in order to find answers to modern questions. His quest, following immediately the abrogation of the Ottoman caliphate by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk in 1924, was to question the prevalent thesis that Islam encompasses both religion and politics. His conclusions, which seem to contradict Rusafi's, are also strikingly original. Abd al-Raziq found that the community created and led by the Prophet in Medina was by no means a state, in the modern sense. Although it shared some external features with those of a polity (collecting taxes, building an "army," administrating justice, appointing "ambassadors" to neighbouring states), it was by all means just a religious community, intended to create a space where individuals could follow their new religious beliefs and practices at a distance from the hostility of their tribal leaders, who had remained hostile to the new religion. The Prophet did not attempt, nor promote, anything beyond this kind of community. The absence of political concerns could be indicated by the fact that he did not appoint any successor or provide rules for the continuity of his community, as any political leader with a political agenda would have done. It was Muslims who, after the death of the Prophet, decided to transform this religious community into a polity, and who made of it, in time, an empire.

In order to defend his thesis, Abd al-Raziq also felt the need to propose a theory of prophecy. He did not question the idea of a message literally delivered from God, as did Rusafi, but stressed its exceptionality. He describes prophecy as a phenomenon which gives an elected man total, comprehensive powers over his fellows. These powers include and exceed those of kings and temporal leaders. The "inclusion of politics within the realm of religion" is thus an exceptional turn, a break into the ordinary course of social and political history, whereby a man endowed with a message and a mission, transforms the prevailing order by providing new moral foundations. The exception is, by definition, not a lasting state and is not intended to outlive its founder.

Although having two different agendas, one rather "liberal" and the other nationalist, both Abd al-Raziq and Maaruf Rusafi wrote at a time where Muslim intellectuals were exposed to deep and rapid changes and enjoyed an unprecedented opening in the intellectual sphere. New explanations had to be sought and could—to some degree—be proposed. They understood, and stressed, that the historical emergence of Islam had deep and lasting political consequences, as it provided new models, aspirations, and values. Both also understood and stressed that the understanding which prevailed in Muslim histories did not depict the depth of such a revolution. The latter raised the accounts of Muslim history, i. e. the building of new empires and sultanates, to the status of an Islamic norm, and distorted the meaning of the "political" message of the Prophet, i.e. that political systems had to be grounded on shared beliefs and ethical principles, not that religion had to provide, or did provide, the blue print for designing these political systems.

However, Abd al-Raziq acted cautiously, perhaps too cautiously, by not publishing anything following the controversy around his book. Rusafi, on the other hand, entrusted his thoughts to an essay that could not be published during his life-time, or even a few decades later. The *Elucidation of a Secret Enigma* is likely to remain the work of a poet who had not fully mastered scholarly methods and discipline, or his impatience with the beliefs and attitudes of his fellow Muslims.

Note

1. Maaruf Rusafi, *The Personality of Muhammad, or the Elucidation of a Sacred Enigma, al-Shakhsiya al-muhammadiya aw hall al-lughz al-muqaddas* (Cologne: *al-Jamal* Publications, 2002).

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Discourse on martyrdom

While some Palestinian scholars and scholars from other countries condemned the suicide attacks with the argument, that suicide is prohibited in Islam, others justified them as a legitimate part of the national struggle for liberation and a proper method of jihad. The Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Abd al-Aziz bin Abdullah al-Shaykh commented in April 2001 that Islam forbids suicide attacks. His comments raised a storm of criticism from supporters of the Palestinian resistance. Shaykh al-Azhar, Muhammad Tantawi, the highest Islamic authority in Egypt stated in the same year, that resistance in occupied Palestine is a duty for Muslims and these suicide operations a legal means. In general, fatwas frequently refer to Israeli violations of human rights and international law and stress that Palestinians can neither come to their rights by diplomatic means, nor by jihad with traditional means. Martyrdom operations, so they argue, have nothing in common with suicide, because a person who commits suicide escapes life, whereas a Palestinian martyr sacrifices his or her life carrying out a religious duty –the defence of Muslim land and people—while employing the opportunities of modern technology.[5]

A modern theology of martyrdom is as yet under construction. A Hamas website attempts to supply proof to the argument that Palestinian suicide attacks are no innovation but a continuation of Prophetic traditions. Many fatwas and books have emerged, discussing questions including as to whether women who are carrying out martyr operations are allowed to travel without a *mahram*, and whether they may take off their headscarf if required so by their mission.[6] Nationalist arguments merge in theologies of martyrdom. Often terms "nation," "bravery," and "heroism" are mentioned. The fact that Islamic rulings forbid the killing of persons, who are not directly involved in war, is often circumvented by the argument that the entire Israeli society is militarised—with Israel's system of universal conscription often given as "proof"—and that martyrdom operations only return Israeli atrocities.[7]

Political impotence and lack of prospect play a significant role in the present cult of martyrs. Through their deeds they become individuals capable of acting, even if only in the moment of death, which bestows upon them and their families social prestige and financial rewards. The weakness underlying these attacks is thus transformed into a personal moment of strength.

Though there are ways to justify political violence in Islamic terms, these are as such not part of a structural nature of "Islam." The ideological factors that promote the use of the concept of martyrdom for political ends cannot be detached from the rejection of basic rights, grave social inequality, and the repression of non-violent means of opposition and resistance. Confrontational Western models and aggressive politics reinforce constructs of foe images and bring about political and social strategies that are increasingly subject to religious interpretations. The further Islamization of the concept of suicide martyrdom is essentially dependent on the political developments in these regions.

Notes

1. Tilman Seidensticker, "Martyrdom in Islam," *Awraq* 19 (1998): 63-77.
2. See Joseph Alagha, "Hizbullah and Martyrdom," *Orient* 45, no. 1 (January 2004): (forthcoming).
3. This was the sole suicide attack prior to the Oslo Agreements, but some controversy exits as to whether it was an intended suicide attack.
4. http://www.islam-online.net/english/news/2003-01/11/article05.shtml.
5. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "al-Muslimun wal-'unf as-siyasi: Nazariyat ta'siliya," *Islam Online*, 6 June 2004, http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/contemporary/2004/06/artcle01.shtml.
6. http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/arabic/FatwaDisplay.asp?FatwaID=6837.
7. Faisal Maulawi, "Idanat al-amaliyat al-istishhadiya: ru'ya fiqhiya," *Islam Online*, 30 April 2003, http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/arabic/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=46143.

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Culture, Power and Poetry in Shiraz

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Culture is a key word in contemporary Iran, especially in relation to power. Developing a practice begun in the early nineties, several national and local institutions are investing in "cultural activities" as a neutralized ground for the construction of citizens. This process intersects with poetry, which has a great power of recognition and is hegemonic well beyond the state: while on one hand poetry seems to offer expressive possibilities otherwise unavailable, on the other it is in fact an effective modality of power.

Recent months have witnessed a surge of discussions and analyses of the current political situation in Iran and its uncertain outcomes. When newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV in Europe and United States take a wider social view of things, they often note the relevance of intellectual engagement among Iranians. They describe the ways in which they respond to the present political and social situation by avidly reading and discussing social theorists and analysts of different persuasions and positions: Iranian such as Abdul Karim Sorush or Mohsen Kadivar; as well as foreign: Habermas, Popper and lately, Foucault. Even these more expanded accounts, however, are confined to immediate political concerns and focused almost solely on the city of Tehran, the megalopolis that seems to contain all of Iran into itself. If one, instead, takes an ethnographic and thus slower look at transformations and travels to other cities, other dynamics emerge.

What receives less attention is the degree to which debates and confrontations are caught up in questions about the limits and possibilities of "culture," a word that began to be used in Iran early in the twentieth century with an anthropological meaning and a prescriptive bend. Nowadays, the concept is particularly resilient in official discussions as well as in informal settings. *Farhang* (culture) encompasses a broad spectrum of practices, intersects with religious and political trajectories, and is crucial in reflections about identity and the nation. Culture is today the defining articulation of social needs and desires.

It is this poetic power of recognition that makes poetry the dominant discourse of culture: a discourse that crosscuts differences of religion and politics.

I study these dynamics in a specific city, Shiraz, which has been since its foundation in the eighth century an important cultural centre, so much so that it is often called the "City of Knowledge". In the twentieth century the city became more and more identified as the site of "classical Persian culture" in opposition to the modern and bustling Tehran. During the Pahlavi monarchy, in conjunction with orientalist trajectories, the discourse of Shiraz as repository of Persian culture connected the main ruins of the Achaemenid Empire (which are in large part in the region surrounding Shiraz) with two of the major poets from Shiraz, Sa'di and Hafez.The pre-Islamic imperial past and poetry were mobilized to celebrate a racial and nationalized vision of culture. The revolution of 1979 reversed this discourse by rejecting the monarchy's interpretation of the past, substituting it with a religious paradigm. As several scholars have noted, however, national trajectories loomed large in the emergent state and nowadays, twenty-five years after the revolution, several of the elements of "Persian classical culture" are emerging anew, though in a transformed constellation. The municipality and other institutions in Shiraz are promoting a vision of the city as the "cradle of Islamic-Iranian civilization" while reinterpreting the Achaemenid Empire according to the limits of acceptability of public state discourse. These initiatives are in conjunction with a growing attention to the amelioration of public space and the production of a public through spectacles of entertainment like pop concerts, which are regularly organized by the local Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Recent ambitious plans envisage the construction of a host of cultural theme parks: the Park of Culture, the Historical Museum of the Literature of Iran, the Cultural House of the Tribes of Fars, the Museum of Philosophy, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the City of Civilizations (a clear homage to the "dialogue of civilizations" of President Khatami). All of these "administrative" activities, with far reaching political and economic entailments concur in producing a "culture" for consumption that offers a neutralized ground beyond the political constituencies of the day. This public culture appears superficial to many inhabitants, but provides a powerful trajectory for the articulation of the politically sceptical and culturally satisfied citizen.

Power and the selective production of culture

For an ethnographer as I am, however, studying the production of culture does not stop at tracing the genealogy of certain discourses; it implies foremost spending time with people who are engaged in this production. During my many stays in Shiraz, I became more and more interested in the ways in which the discourses mentioned above were articulated in people's lives. Over the years, in my conversations, I came to realize how history and poetry functioned as different modalities in the reproduction of what people called the "culture of Shiraz." Fragments of national and local history combine with poetry to produce a less uniform and more conflicted version of "culture" in which comments about the dire economic situation and the price of books mix with a vague nostalgia or a particularly evocative verse.

History, especially the history of the twentieth century, is a matter of contention. History is a crucial element of the articulation of the "culture of Shiraz", which is deemed essential to its understanding and celebration. The nation is mostly envisaged in historical terms, but history itself is also considered relevant at the local level, as an important tool to understand the present and be aware of the past. People in Iran mention singular historical events or figures to articulate their sense of belonging. Both among professional historians and among those who read them however, there is a widespread uneasiness about available historical narratives. They consider them incomplete, inapt to account fully for "things as they were." Historians point to the lack of sources, to the impossibility of writing without being caught up in political entanglements, or to the difficulties of engaging in *kâr-e jeddi* (serious research), while cultural institutions pursue superficial projects. Readers, who often engage in conversations at bookstores around the city, complain about the "emptiness" of narratives, which contain mistakes, silence regarding certain figures while exaggeration for others, and in the overall, are unable to celebrate the greatness of Shiraz both for itself and for the nation.

Concerns for history and the projection of its inability to represent the past focus both on broad themes, as well as on specific fragments. The events of the 1950s, for example, elicit a great deal of discussion, and the position of the different religious leaders and their followers is still a matter of contention, especially since several of their descendants still play significant political roles today. Heated debates take place around a charismatic ayatullah who opposed Musaddeq's National Front and was said to have "British leanings" but is celebrated today as an "anti-colonialist" leader and a precursor of the Islamic Republic. Historians are afraid to write about him and have a hard time finding materials because support-

ers of the aforementioned leader refuse to give them newspapers, documents, and other relevant sources. Readers complain that available biographies or standard accounts found in local histories, often published by state cultural institutions, distort the activities of this leader and fail to reveal his political strategies. Different trajectories intertwine in such opinions that touch on questions of social constituency as well as religious interpretation and social imagination. The aforementioned leader, for example, heralded a populist approach geared at gaining consensus and power through turning ritual practices such as *ashura* (day commemorating the death of Imam Husayn) into political occasions, while staunchly opposing mystical brotherhoods. However, discussions around this episode, and others, also point to the ways in which causality and agency are interpreted in history and how they are linked to considerations that are more general about the state of the nation. All these tensions underline how history is a crucial site for the production of the "culture of Shiraz." Related to the institutional investment in culture and in part articulated on the same discourse, history plays out many of the conflicting views that make up the Shiraz of today while partaking in the reproduction of its "culture." At the same time as a specific modality, history, at least in the present, is considered inapt to fully articulate this "culture" and is therefore supplemented or often substituted by poetry.

Poetry speaking the unspeakable

Poetry affords the recognition that history cannot deliver. While history with its embedded quest for truth remains controversial and is seen as mostly untrustworthy, poetry constitutes a more secure ground. Poetry is not subject to the same rules of interpretation of history. Lapses, silences, or ambiguities in poetry are not seen as making it incomplete, but rather as a characteristic of poetic discourse itself. Poetry is considered as something that always requires interpretation and its layering are seen as adding to its aesthetic appreciation, thus making poetry more effective. For example, when the topic comes up in conversations, listeners substitute the "absent" historical account of the practices and political position of the aforementioned religious leader by referring to and sometimes quoting verses from *Al-Tafasil* (The Commentary), a satirical book that the Shirazi poet Fereidun Tavallali composed in the early fifties using the famed Sa'di as a model. In the book, without mentioning him by name, Tavallali depicts a certain ayatullah as a *kâsib al-khutabâ* (merchant of sermons) and attacks him vehemently: "He who called people towards God/when the veil was lifted, Satan he was // Look! The *rahbar-i khalq* (guide of the people) was the very one who/robbed mind, faith and religion."[1] This portrait, while elusive, is for Shirazi readers, who are interested in history, an explicit reference to the character in question. It is a depiction whose allusions are not considered as an inaccurate or incomplete account, but rather as more effective through the aesthetic dimension; a dimension that the translation cannot convey. Moreover, the verses, because of their intended vagueness, open up parallels between the past and present. For those who are not familiar with the specific historical context, the verses are still an indication of the power of poetry.

Poetry's relevance is not limited to its satirical efficacy in relation to the past or the present, nor should it be reduced to a counter discourse through which is expressed what could not have been otherwise. Certainly, there are these dynamics at play, as the success of magazines like *Golagha* and others attest. However, there is much more at stake. As mentioned above, Shiraz can claim a special poetic relevance within the national literary constellation, and even if poetry in itself is not something specific to the city, people in Iran in general and in Shiraz in particular grant a special place to Shiraz in poetic practice and imagination. The extent to which the place of poetry relates to its social practice requires careful ethnographic consideration, since it might lend itself to certain naturalizations about poetic knowledge and capabilities. These attributions while celebrating certain skills do not consider how socially differentiated and selective was, and is, the access to a learned tradition that might be, or have been, widespread but was not, and is not, general. This being said, I have rarely met Iranians who dislike or distance themselves from poetry and those who do, have a specific critical agenda, such as that of the nationalist and modernist Ahmad Kasravi. Poetry is sometimes language, sometimes articulation of common sense, and sometimes just the names of a few poets, or a visit to their tombs.

The widely different approaches to poetry reinforce its pervasiveness. Often it is said that the poet Hafiz embodies and expresses "Iranian-ness" at its fullest. Poetry, even when used as an empty signifier, is an articulation of the self. In my encounters, women and men, university professors, shopkeepers, students and local intellectuals rely on poetry as a stable imaginary, as something that could dispense answers not only to the large and small questions of social and personal life but also grant a location and an identity in the world. It is this poetic power of recognition that makes poetry the dominant discourse of culture: a discourse that crosscuts differences of religion and politics. While it might offer a venue for the expression of discontent, poetry is a hegemonic articulation that goes well beyond the administrative initiatives of the state, and whose aesthetic effects heighten its emotional grip. Poetry's inclusiveness makes it appear almost as a natural quality of the "culture of Shiraz," and thus a particularly effective modality of power.

Poem from Diwan, Hafez, edited by Hussein Elahi, p. 33

Note

1. Tavallali, Fereidun. 1952 (AH 1331). *Al-Tafâsil*. 2 ed. Shiraz.

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Islam Takes a Hit

DANIEL MARTIN VARISCO

Cyberspace gives access to an astounding amount of information on Islam. How do we find relevant data and possible answers to the questions one may have? Search engines are convenient tools but have not been designed by specialists in Islam. Many sites, including top ranking hits, fail to plainly indicate the objectives of the individuals or organizations that maintain them, while many others are ephemeral. As a result, researching digital Islam constitutes a major methodological challenge for social scientists.

There are many ways for Americans to learn about Islam, especially with the volume of books that hit bookstores after the 9/11 tragedy. One increasingly popular way is only a click away. It is estimated that for the two days following the hijacked airplane crashes into New York's Twin Towers almost twelve million visitors accessed cnn.com, a sharp rise of 680 percent over previous usage. At least two-thirds of internet users searched the web for news about the bombing. Millions, literally millions, of web pages now have something to say about Islam. Whether people are looking for information or out to put a spin on what Islam really is, there is no question that Islam has reached, in the words of Gary Bunt, a Digital Age.[1]

Through Google eyes

One unsophisticated, but no doubt, popular mode for surfing the web is simply typing in a word or two in a popular search engine. I can imagine that as you read this essay someone somewhere in cyberspace is looking at Islam through Google eyes. If you type "Islam" into Google, as I did in April 2004, you will find well over 8 million results. Most people find what they want, or at least what they get, on the first page of ten hits. Unlike some websites, such as about.com for example, the links are generated by a sophisticated computer program rather than an expert on the subject.

http://www.islamworld.net, viewed 27 May 2004

A critical look at the first ten sites generated by Google on April 11 shows the sampling problem with such a generic search. Eight of these are sites run by Islamic organizations, but there are also links to the official website of the Nation of Islam (www.noi.org) and to a Christian anti-Islamic site at www.answering-islam.org. The top ranked site (www.islamworld.net) provides a wide range of links to onsite and offsite pages describing Islamic beliefs and rituals, but does not provide any information on who puts out the site. It is hard to imagine why this derivative site takes precedence over second-ranked IslamiCity, which has been operating since 1995 and announces that almost 280 million hits have been recorded since January 2001. The fact that IslamiCity is linked by more than 13,500 websites around the world no doubt gives it such high visibility for the search engine. Neither of the first two sites advocates a distinct sectarian version of Islam. Indeed, a visitor to either site would think that one Islam fits all.

The third in the listing is a major Shia site (www.al-islam.org), although its Shia orientation becomes clear by looking at the content of the site rather than by specific admission in the FAQ section. One need not go far into the site to find its sympathies, since a menu item across the top heralds "Islam as Taught by the Ahlul Bayt." This is followed by another general mega site (www.islamonline.net) founded by a Qatari consulting firm in 1999. In fifth place (www.islam-guide.com) is an electronic version, also available in PDF format, of *A Brief Illustrated Guide To Understanding Islam*, first published in Houston, Texas in 1996. This conversion guide may owe part of its popularity to its multilingual versions, available onsite in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish (with Arabic and Russian forthcoming). At number six is a site (www.Islam101.com), billed as educational, but actually a wide-ranging resource sponsored by a somewhat mysterious organization called the Sabr Foundation.

In seventh place is a site (63.175.194.25) dedicated to the work of Shaykh Muhammad Salih al-Munajid, a Saudi religious authority who is imam of a mosque in al-Khobar. Shaykh Munajid offers cyber fatwas to solicited questions in Arabic, English, French, Indonesian, Spanish, and Urdu. The next two web sites present a problem, since one is the official home of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam and the other is a large Christian site dedicated to convincing Muslims of the error of their ways. The latter, *Answering Islam*, is subtitled a Christian-Muslim dialogue, although it is a very one-sided dialogue as one sorts through the apologetic information loaded onsite. This is prefigured in a neon-like flashing pair of verses from the Quran and the Bible. The Quranic selection (2:256) reads "Let there be no compulsion in religion; truth stands out clear from error." But this is rhetorically trumped by a verse from John 8:32: "And you shall know the truth; and the truth shall set you free." Scrolling down the "about us" section ultimately finds the intentions of the site creators. "This all said," they admit, "we are Evangelical Christians and agree without reservations with the statement of faith as given, for example, by the World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization." Both creeds emphasize that there is one "truth" and it is not to be found in the Quran.

If you knew nothing or next to nothing about Islam, several of the top ten sites would set you on the right path. The problem is that all of these first-page links are self-consciously subjective, several with a goal to convert the reader. Not until place number thirteen would you find an educational site attempting to treat Islam in an objective way. This is the excellent and updated scholarly compilation (www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/) of Alan Godlas at the University of Georgia. Unfortunately, the ISIM site is not to be found even in the first hundred on the list (after which I gave up counting). In addition to the long, long list of web pages, Google provides a shorter set of commercially sponsored links. For my entry of "Islam" I could have taken this shortcut to "Meet Tens of Thousands of Muslim Singles for Love or Friendship" (www.MuslimFriendship.com) before I even began to surf. The lesson is that Google is both hit and miss (including a potential Mrs) for anyone looking for a balanced analysis of Islam.

The problem with webservation

The main problem with analyzing the use of cyberspace is that it is virtually impossible to know who is taking advantage of the several million web pages which in some way mention Islam. As an anthropologist I am intrigued by the possibility of a new method of webservation, especially the interactive potential in participating through chat rooms and discussion forums.[2] However, this presents a far different field than the villages in rural Yemen where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 1978-79. While I did not know everyone there on a first name basis, there was an opportunity in a small-scale social context to

observe behaviour and follow up with interviews and casual conversation. Traditional field sites are not likely to be replaced by surfable web sites, but it does seem that the exotic others studied by anthropologists are increasingly to be encountered in html construct rather than ethnographic context alone. This will require a rethinking of how virtual reality is to be related to the more mundane reality of everyday behaviour.

Ironically, the very rationale that has concerned anthropologists to collect information about traditional cultures before it is lost or absorbed in dominant cultures now faces those of us who treat the Internet as a field of study. As Gary Bunt laments, there is no archive of old Islamic web sites, some disappear and others are updated leaving no trace of earlier stages.[3] As a pertinent example, shortly after the 9/11 tragedy I accidentally stumbled upon a Yahoo web ring for "Jihad." By clicking up and down the ring I could access quite a few sites that preached terrorism against specific non-Muslims or fellow Muslims. One Kuwaiti site allowed me to download and watch videos of Bin Laden or read his available works. By the end of 2001 this web ring had been defused and the more militant sites were no longer online. Similarly, long before the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan there was a taliban.org web site, although that had disappeared well before the 9/11 attack. At the time it did not occur to me (nor did I have the digital storage space) to archive such sites. Perhaps someone did, but retrieval for study would no doubt be akin to looking for hand-written manuscripts rather than consulting a library catalogue.

The ephemeral nature of web sites is compounded by the seeming ease with which so many different kinds of sites can be found. If there are indeed over 8 million web pages that mention Islam, it would theoretically take me over four and a half years of non-stop analysis, eight-hours per day, if I only spent one minute on each webpage. Of course not all the potential websites would be of value, but how could such a massive sample be meaningfully analyzed by hand? Consider also that Google does not access every webpage and many of the pages listed no longer exist. The data set in itself is seductive, but how could it be usefully related to the people putting up the sites and surfing through the pages? A media revolution of enormous proportions is taking place in cyberspace. With apologies to Marshall McLuhan, I am not sure that the medium is the message for the Internet, but the medium is definitely a new kind of methodological challenge.

A final vista

My Google search in April 2004 can be compared with a similar effort I made in October 2000 using an earlier search engine called Altavista.[4] Three and a half years ago there were only about one and a quarter million pages for "Islam." The top ten at that point were decidedly more erratic. Oddly, the most rated site was Islam Tanzania (www.islamtz.org), which was hardly a primary hit site even at that time. This web page still exists, but was last updated in December, 2001. Second in the Altavista ranking was the Islam page (www.about.com), not a surprising top choice then or now. In October 2000, however, the Nation of Islam web site registered third, followed by IslamiCity and Islam101. These three sites, though not in this order, are still in Google's April 2004 first page. In sixth place was the main webpage of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement (www.muslim.org/cont-islam.htm), not to be confused with the main Ahmadiyya Muslim Community website (www.alislam.org). The ninth and tenth slots were taken up by Answering Islam, once again giving space to Christian apologetic against Islam.

Whether entering cyberspace in October 2000 or April 2004, the casual browser would find a set of mixed messages. The Islamic mega sites, which tend to duplicate much of the same information, would yield ready access to the Quran, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and details on the major aspects of Islam as a religion. Today, more so than before 9/11, major Islamic portals such as IslamiCity attempt to educate Americans about the peaceful nature of Islam. I am not certain how the average American surfer would evaluate either an Ahmadiyya site or the Nation of Islam. Neither site proclaims that a sizeable majority of other Muslims considers what both stand for as against the mainstream of both Sunni and Shi'a Islam. Christians might prefer the spin of Answering Islam, especially given the apparent interest in dialogue rather than blatant condemnation, which can readily be found elsewhere. But Muslims would feel the need to log onto Ahmed Deedat's Combat Kit against Bible Thumpers (www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/7974/deedat/deedat.html) for relief.

http://www.answering-islam.org.uk, viewed 27 May 2004

http://www.islamonline.net, viewed 17 June 2004

Notes

1. Gary Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).
2. Daniel Martin Varisco, "Slamming Islam: Participant Webservation with a Web of Meanings to Boot" (paper presented at AAA annual meeting, 2000) *Working Papers from the MES*, http://www.aaanet.org/mes/lectvar1.htm.
3. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age*, 17.
4. Daniel Martin Varisco, "September 11: Participant Webservation of the 'War on Terrorism'," *American Anthropologist* 104, no.3 (2002): 934-38.

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His latest book is Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation *(London: Palgrave, forthcoming).*
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Urban Islam
Rethinking the Familiar

MIRJAM SHATANAWI
& DENIZ ÜNSAL

In December 2003 a new exhibition on Islam opened at the KIT Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. This comprehensive exhibition entitled *Urban Islam* is the first one of its kind in the Netherlands to explore the modern aspects of Islam in different parts of the world. *Urban Islam* aims to present a thought-provoking view on Islam by highlighting the complex and dynamic contexts that shape religious ideas and practices in Muslim societies.

As curators of the exhibition, we experienced the challenge to communicate, in an encapsulated yet comprehensible form, our academic insights in the contexts in which Islam is lived and reproduced by ordinary Muslims. In addition, the making of the exhibition concurred with a heightening of the tensions surrounding Islam and Muslim cultures in Dutch society, which put considerable pressure on our project. We were faced with how to present a new perspective on Muslim religious life when public opinion and common knowledge of Islam were quite limitedly and negatively defined. Is it possible to make an exhibition that is neither pedantic nor apologetic?

Rethinking the familiar

Urban Islam intends to broaden and deepen visitors' views of Islam, to make them rethink their opinions about Islam as well as their relation to the available sources of information. In order to do so, *Urban Islam* presents the personal stories of young Muslims living in five modern cities around the globe; Amsterdam, Dakar, Istanbul, Marrakech, and Paramaribo. The personal views and stories represent a particular context specific for the society in which the young protagonists dwell. In this way, not only individual interpretations and personal perspectives on Islam are highlighted but also the different social, political and cultural contexts with which religious life interacts. For instance, secondary school teacher Ferhat from Istanbul explains what secularism in Turkey aspires for; and how deeply it has influenced his lifestyle. While he identifies himself as a real Kemalist, a secular Muslim and a westernized Turk, fragments of daily newspapers are displayed to point to the ongoing discussions in Turkey on the meanings of westernization, modernity, and place of Islam in public life. The newspaper headlines reflect the major divisions in society with respect to the headscarf—is it against secularism or not?—and the expression of religious identity in public space—should religion be confined to the private sphere?

Image from the exhibition *Urban Islam*

©KIT 2004

Re-contextualizing Islam

Next to these four foreign cities where young individuals present their lives, *Urban Islam* also brings Islam to the Netherlands. Amsterdam is designed in a manner slightly different from the other cities. The display is an arena, a symbol for the often-passionate debate about Islam in the Netherlands. The arena serves as a multimedia platform in which the visitors themselves become the protagonists. On a large screen several Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants of Amsterdam give their opinions on issues regarding the place of Islam in Dutch society. Visitors are challenged to share a glimpse of their own views by selecting one of the opinions expressed on the screen. In this way visitors encounter diverging ideas about Islam while forming their own by participating in a virtual discussion.

The Dutch public's knowledge of Islam is shaped by media images, discussions on Muslim minorities in the Netherlands, and representations of Islam in cultural institutes such as museums. In this context, *Urban Islam* can be considered as the makers' statement against discussions on Islam and Muslims in the West, and the Netherlands in particular. It argues to approach religion and society from a human perspective. By centring on personal stories and experiences in everyday life *Urban Islam* distances itself from a-historical and oversimplified representations of Islam. It sketches an image of Islamic practice in the context of social and political relations, of personal choices, economic difficulties, and globalization in modern urban areas.

During the exhibition period, the debate on Islam became more aggressive and one-sided. Several well-known Dutch opinion leaders who advocate a deliberate approach to Islam are reproached for being "politically correct" and too lenient on Muslims. While almost any incident involving Muslims causes a huge outcry in the Dutch media, the critical message of *Urban Islam* is largely ignored in public debate. Given the current political climate, it simply does not seem expedient to challenge the oversimplified portrayal of Islam in Dutch imagery. The experiences of *Urban Islam* reflect some of the difficulties of cultural institutions, like the KIT Tropenmuseum, to engage into the public debate on Islam in a political climate in which a more balanced approach is considered an unwanted deviation from the norm.

Islam gets discursively defined in a two-camped futile discussion in the Netherlands. This discussion is a process where non-Muslims and Muslims define themselves against each other while framing the notion of Islam. The current debate on Islam in the Netherlands is actually an essentialist discourse about what Islam "is." It attempts to make Islam meaningful for the Dutch context by trying to systematize, organize, and categorize a faith that is diversely practiced and interpreted in different parts of the world. The difficulty with this "disciplining" discussion, besides frustrating its participants, is that it can never completely cover Islam—or any other religion. A discursive definition of Islam does not always correspond with what is on the ground. This clash between theory and practice is perhaps an appropriate starting point for rethinking the idea of a "clash of civilizations."

Urban Islam is on view through 12 September 2004. For more information please see http://www.urbanislam.nl

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The Headscarf and the "Neutral" Welfare State

DENIZ COSKUN

The Western welfare state is usually presumed to be "neutral" and not involved in "personal" matters such as religion. The principle of neutrality which is based on the separation of church and State is often put to the test as a society becomes more religiously plural. Questions regarding the legal neutrality of the State came to the fore in a recent German Supreme Court case dealing with whether a teacher should be allowed to wear a headscarf in the classroom (*Teacher with Headscarf case of 24 September 2003*). This case poses questions about the nature of the contemporary German welfare state and whether it can maintain its neutrality when confronted with growing socio-religious pluralism.

The German welfare state is characterized by a system of state supervised compulsory education. Teachers are regarded as civil servants, and, according to the constitution, "Every German is equally eligible for any public office according to his aptitude, qualifications and professional achievements." Moreover, "rights acquired in the public service are independent of religious denomination. No one may suffer disadvantage by reason of his adherence or non-adherence to a denomination or ideology." Do these constitutional provisions apply to a state that is confronted with a growing plurality of its citizenry with differentiated claims or does the state have to adopt another approach?

The question of plurality of citizenship came to the fore in the above-mentioned case. The plaintiff, a Muslim woman born in Afghanistan in 1972, had lived in Germany from 1987 and acquired German nationality in 1995. In 1998, she had completed her education to become a teacher in an elementary school, but was refused commission because she was not willing to remove her headscarf before class. As a justification for their refusal, the executive board of the elementary school argued that the headscarf was an expression of a cultural demarcation and was not only a religious, but also a political symbol. Furthermore, they referred to the changing nature of the neutrality of the German state that required a more strict separation of church and state. The plaintiff responded that the headscarf, as distinguishable from the crucifix, was not a religious symbol but was actually an expression of her religious faith. She maintained that her wearing of the headscarf, represented individual and religiously motivated conduct that was protected by the constitution.

The Supreme Court ruled that the headscarf is not a religious symbol pure and simple.[1] It ruled that only by taking into consideration the impact of the applied medium of expression, as well as the totality of potential meanings that are eligible for it, could a certain religious garment or sign be attributed symbolic meaning that directly or indirectly is tantamount to the endorsement of religion by the state, and hence a violation of the principle of the separation of church and state. Whether a headscarf has such symbolic meaning cannot be judged, therefore, independent of the person wearing it or unaccompanied by concrete conduct. In other words, if a teacher, by wearing the headscarf, attempts to religiously influence the children under her care, this would represent a breach of official duties, among which could be guaranteeing the neutrality of the state. Accordingly, it ruled that, since the headscarf as such does not constitute a religious symbol (pure and simple), the wearing thereof by a civil servant in front of a class of students is constitutionally protected by the principle of freedom of religion.

The obligation of the state to maintain religious neutrality is not to be understood as a disassociation in the sense of a strict separation of church and state, but rather as an attitude of transparency and generality, that obliges equal protection of the freedom of religion of any creed. The right to freedom of religion, in the positive sense of the word, obliges the state to guarantee a space for the active endorsement of faith and the realization of the autonomous personality on the ideological-religious field. This right also applies to the duties of civil servants of the state.[2]

The nature of state supervised compulsory education factored significantly in the Supreme Court decision, since, as stated in the ruling, " in its nature, religious and ideological perceptions were relevant from the beginning. … Subsequently, Christian elements in the formation of public schooling are not simply prohibited; education, however, has to be open also for other ideological and religious substances and values."[2] In this openness, the constitutional state maintains it religious and ideological neutrality. As to the tensions that are unavoidable in the common education of children from diverse backgrounds, a solution must be found by taking into consideration the duty of tolerance as an expression of human dignity. The right to freedom of religion authorizes the individual to decide for oneself which religious symbols one recognizes and honours, and which one abhors. However, in a community, that harbours numerous articles of faith individuals or groups do not have the right to remain "untouched" by, or protected from, alien expressions of faith, cultic acts, and/or religious symbols. Finally, the Supreme Court found it, in line with Article 9 of the European Convention for Human Rights, unconstitutional for the executive powers and the judiciary, to restrict the exercise of the right to freedom of religion, absent any proper legislative enactment from the democratically elected parliament.

The Supreme Court rightly avoided questions and interpretations of what a religion "exactly" prescribes for its participants, an activity that is reserved for the individual by the constitutional and human right to freedom of religion. Furthermore, it refrained from answering the question of what is the fair balance of (potential) interests to be struck; that is a task exclusively attributable to the democratically elected legislative power. In effect, the Supreme Court made understandable the rationale and legitimacy of the principle of neutrality within the welfare state. It requires "*respecting, and anticipatory neutrality*," that obliges the state "*to secure for the individual, but also for religious and ideological groups, a free space of action*."[3]

Notes

I would like to thank Edith Brugmans, Janske Hermens, Louis Logister, Thomas Mertens, and Derk Venema (Nijmegen) for comments on the original paper.

1. Cf. 1 BvR 647/70 and 7/74 of 16th October 1979 (Prayer in the Classroom-case [*Schulgebet-Entscheidung*]): "*The crucifix … is pure and simple its* [Christianity's] *plain religious symbol. … It symbolizes the essential core of Christian creed ….* "
2. See: BverfG, VBvR 1436/02 vom 3.6.2003, Absatz-Nr. 44.
3. See: BverfG, VBvR 1436/02 vom 3.6.2003, Absatz-Nr. 10.

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Al-Azhar in the Post 9/11 Era

ELENA ARIGITA

Al-Azhar promptly responded to 11 September by portraying Islam to the rest of the world as monolithic, free of internal dissent and preaching peace and love between all peoples, while also discrediting challenges to its authority. It followed a strategy of showing the entire world *al-islam al-sahih* (the correct Islam) through initiatives such as the renewal of inter-religious dialogue with Christian and Jewish representatives.

While al-Azhar already had an institutionalized tradition of inter-faith dialogues, 9/11 consolidated this trend to promote agreements and initiatives of dialogue that stressed the idea of a positive, unique and universal image of Islam as represented by al-Azhar. The Shaykh al-Azhar, Dr Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, has been especially interested in improving Western perceptions of Islam.[1] In 2002, for example, al-Azhar initiated a program with the German Embassy in Egypt to train a select group of German citizens residing in Cairo in religious sciences, in order to "teach non-Muslims about Islam and to improve its damaged image in the West after September 11th."[2]

Nevertheless, this official discourse shows its contradictions and weakness in times of crisis, as the legitimacy of al-Azhar to speak in the name of Islam constantly needs to grapple with its submission to the political power, while also, satisfy the pleas and vindications of the Arab and Islamic public opinion. There are many examples throughout the modern history of al-Azhar: at the time of the Napoleonic Expedition in 1798, al-Azhar proved its capacity to move from the negotiation and rich exchange of knowledge with the French Mission to its position at the head of the revolts against the occupation. Also under the British rule, the institution showed its capacity to accommodate to the political needs and reproduce the myth of leadership during the struggle for independence. But probably it has been throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when it has become more evident the accommodation of al-Azhar official discourse, which fluctuates from the dialogue imposed by political strategies to sharp condemnations against Israel when the Arab and Muslim public opinions gets strongly mobilized in support of the Palestinian people.

Al-Azhar engages in a conflicting balancing act; on the one hand, it accommodates moderate official discourse, and on the other, it advocates a more revolutionary mobilizing one.

Following the same path, the pressure of public opinion on al-Azhar's position within the context of the post 9/11 era has reproduced this pattern of submission to political needs and legitimating strategies in front of its Muslim public. Thus, besides the effort to promote an official Islam as described above, when in March 2003 mass demonstrations rose against the possibility of a war in Iraq, Tantawi issued a fatwa calling upon all Muslims for jihad in the case that the US went through with launching its attack on Iraq. Al-Azhar engages in a conflicting balancing act; on the one hand, it accommodates moderate official discourse, and on the other, it advocates a more revolutionary mobilizing one. Al-Azhar can thus be seen as both responding to the expectations created by its official position, and to legitimizing its moral authority among Muslims.

Al-Azhar University projects an image of a thousand year old institution that has symbolized the authority and reference point for Sunni Islam and has been involved in struggles for national independence. A jealous guardian of the Arabic language and its culture, al-Azhar has the pretension of exerting its influence throughout the entire Islamic world. Nevertheless, the idealized image that it projects is quite far from the complex reality al-Azhar actually faces, and the post 11 September 2001 period has made evident the challenges this institution is confronting.

Contested authority inside the institution

While al-Azhar perpetuates a myth of autonomy, it in fact submits to a large degree to the will of state authorities, as long as the budget of the institution depends on the Ministry of Awqaf and the President of the Republic appoints the Shaykh al-Azhar. Frequent polemics have risen around diverse questions dealing with worship, morality, and the economy; constantly resisting the assumed authority of these men of religion assigned with official responsibilities, and thereby questioning the validity itself of an official Islam.

A recent example of internal dissension is the polemic surrounding the use of the veil in France.[3] The international reverberations of the law resulted in Shaykh al-Azhar taking a stand by making it permissible for a Muslim woman not to wear the veil if she lives in a non-Islamic country where the law forbids the use of the hijab. As is to be expected, the statement—like many of Dr Tantawi's other fatwas—caused a huge outcry and also produced a debate within the heart of the institution itself; which made evident the important differences that exist between its different authorities. What is more important is that it questioned the Shaykh al-Azhar's authority. Furthermore, when Shaykh Tantawi summoned the Islamic Research Academy—the al-Azhar organ that brings together important ulama and whose function is to serve as a consultant for doctrinal or social questions related to Islam—, it highlighted the fact that Shaykh Tantawi stood alone in his opinion. In this case, the differences not only divided the ulama, they also divided the media that reproduced the polemic in a broader public debate by reporting the different statements made by those involved. The fact that differences in opinion can be expressed openly in the press and in other situations not, is evidence that the hierarchical authority is contested from within, and that it extends the limits of dissension and internal debate; it thus exposes the fragility of its supposed hierarchical authority.

In addition, the statement also points out the place of al-Azhar regarding its official position towards the representatives of the State; because the media stressed that Tantawi had made the announcement during a press conference following a meeting with the French Minister of Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy. On the one hand, al-Azhar and its foremost representative were taken as the authorized voice to give an opinion for a European non-Muslim government, even though specific French and European institutions which had been created specifically to give an answer to those kind of matters, had already expressed their opposition to both the French law banning the hijab and the statement made by Tantawi. One could conclude then, considering the pro-governmental attitude, that Tantawi has shown along his career, that by asking for the Shaykh al-Azhar official opinion, Sarkozy was trying to assure a favourable statement in support of the law. On the other hand, the statement also caused an important lack of credibility to Tantawi's legitimacy in front of Muslim public opinion and inside the institution that he is leading.

The internal fragmentation that this case illustrates is thus reinforced by the open criticism from sectors outside of al-Azhar, which range from other Muslim scholars to the Islamist groups who question any Islamic authority submitting to the will of the political authorities. In addition, the secular and leftist intellectuals criticize the conservatism and censorship that al-Azhar exerts over its intellectual production. In this context, al-Azhar demonstrates its capacity to survive by collaborating unreservedly with the regime, and backs it with an Islamic dis-

course that legitimises the regime's political authority when Islamists contest it. It is on these grounds that the plurality and dissention manifested by al-Azhar in questions of public morality (such as the veil or censorship), give way to a univocal discourse.

Censorship and the production of a correct Islam

An official discourse whose objective is to produce a correct Islam separate from the polemics and differences in interpretation does exist; and it serves on political grounds to quieten Islamism, which opposes the elite in power with Islamic arguments. In these cases, the effectiveness of al-Azhar is supported not only by the government, but also by the intellectual classes, even if they are very critical of the conservative morality that al-Azhar attempts to impose. The latter are very much in favour of stricter control of the *da'wa* as a means to discredit not only radical Islamism but also moderate Islamist trends.

The control of the *da'wa* is a recurring theme, since the time of Muhammad Ali, which has been pursued by the different protectorate regimes, the monarchy, and the Republic. In addition to the political will demonstrated by the State, the control of preaching has basically depended on how motivated al-Azhar reformers were. However, the control of preaching and proselytizing, which was really only completed with Nasser's nationalism project, has always been fragile. The traditional conception of Islamic authority does not envisage the existence of one institution that monopolises the production of Islamic knowledge. One can thus observe the burgeoning of alternative discourses, from the *da'wa* of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920's, to the proliferation of mosques that escape the control of the Ministry of Awqaf in the 1980's, and to the success throughout the last decade of the *shuyukh al-casette wal-television* (cassette and television preachers). The preoccupation of those responsible in the Ministry and in al-Azhar has been obvious and has consequently emphasized the need for control of the mosque, the correct training of officially certified Imams, and other initiatives that have not been very efficient, such as the uniformity of the Friday sermon. Even though, in the aftermath of September 11, al-Azhar renewed its efforts to control the *da'wa*, yet it followed previous initiatives that had proven to be non-effective, such as the implementation of the budget for the training of imams, and once more, the control over the Friday sermon. The latter move was denounced by the Muslim Brothers as an attempt to limit the freedom of expression and religious freedom. By controlling the *da'wa*, al-Azhar also attempts to diminish any possibility of contestation to its legitimacy as the only voice authorized to speak in the name of Islam.

Another kind of censorship, which exists in order to control public morality and is directed primarily at intellectual productions: novels, films, and academic works, is also under al-Azhar's strict control. Although censorship is legally a duty of the Ministry of Culture, in 1994 the State Council recognized the right of al-Azhar to censor the licenses for the audiovisual productions related to Islamic topics. Apart from that, the Islamic Research Academy frequently advises and influences in matters of censorship. From the early veto in 1925 to Ali Abd al-Raziq's *Islam and the Principles of Government* to the recent polemics that regularly arise about novels and academic works, al-Azhar is persistently exerting its control over intellectual production and promoting a conservative morality. By doing so, the institution empowers its presence in the public sphere, as well as with the government that in turn uses al-Azhar's authority to control the demands coming from both the secular and leftist sectors and the Islamist trends. Thus, the censorship of al-Azhar and its conservative doctrine is openly criticized from outside by both progressive sectors and leftist intellectuals. However, the effectiveness of al-Azhar's status as an official Islamic institution is relatively seamless when it comes to opposing political Islamist discourses, which attempt to exert their opposition to political power with religious argumentation. In this context, al-Azhar *survives* by using the authority that the law grants it to impose its influence in the public sphere and to exploit strategically its symbiotic collaboration with political powers, which it knows how to use to extend its influence in questions related to public morality.

The aftermath of 9/11 illustrates what has been felt to be the necessity for an official Islamic discourse that would exert control over radical trends, but at the same time, the nature of Islamic authority itself favours its fragmentation. If 11 September affected in some way the position of al-Azhar as representative of official Islam, it was in effect, the growing concern about controlling Islamic discourses that gave to the institution the task of producing a correct Islam. However, both the secular trends, as well as the Islamist ones, consider the submission of al-Azhar to political power as a lack of credibility.

©REUTERS, 1998

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak with Shaykh Al-Azhar Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, 7 July 1998

Notes

1. For an interesting portrait of Dr. Tantawi as Mufti of *Dar al-Ifta*, before his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar, see J. Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
2. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 15, 2002.
3. It is not unusual that al-Azhar gives an official opinion on matters related to other Muslim communities. In fact, the Azhar Law of 1961 addresses explicitly its pan-Arab and pan-Islamic will.

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Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Central Asia

SÉBASTIAN PEYROUSE

Perestroika, followed by independence, offered Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union religious freedom. Several Christian—especially Protestant—organizations developed missionary projects and established new churches. Representatives of "local" religions, Islam as well as, Russian Orthodoxy, have allied to put pressure on governments in order to curb proselytizing and restrict religious conversion. While it is difficult to ignore the claims put forward by the main religious communities, most governments tolerate the growth of religious diversity, albeit at varying degrees.

During perestroika, after a moment's hesitation, President Gorbachev decided to depart from the antireligious policies of the Soviet regime and to liberalize religion. With the independence of the republics of Central Asia in 1991 believers and those in power had to re-determine the relation between religion and state, individual and national identity. Since then these newly independent States have to manage Islam, as the majority religion, in the context of an increasing religious diversity which mainly consists of Christian denominations. Each president in the area has demonstrated to the population—and foreign countries—the desire to grant religion sufficient space in public life. New images of liberal religious policies are all the more necessary because four of the five presidents that are heir to the former Soviet republics were actually *apparatchiks* of the former Communist Party. All of them went on pilgrimage to Mecca. The presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Niazov and Karimov, even encouraged, just after independence, the presence of foreign Muslim missionaries in their respective republics. Moreover, Karimov came into office by taking his oath on the Quran.

However, at the same time, new legislation in the republics forbids attempts to incite religious antagonism. No constitutional or legislative specificity links up with any religion or denomination. None of the constitutions include references to "Quran," "Islam," "Muslim" or "Christian" and "Christianity." Each state champions, in principle, the separation of state and religion. This secularism appears to be aimed at avoiding favouring Islam and ostracizing religious minorities, in particular, Christian.

In spite of the display of religious freedom, political authorities are, in fact, trying to control religious movements in order to prevent them from getting actively involved in politics. After the Soviet attempt to divorce religion from the society, the present authorities fear that religious inclinations of the population could evolve, in the framework of the state-nation building, toward a politicization of certain religious—and especially Muslim—movements. Consequently, all governments have very firmly opposed political Muslim movements, which are accordingly branded "extremist." Any movement that challenges secularism is prohibited and generally labelled as being "Wahhabi." Moreover, each of the post-Soviet presidents promotes the ideal of the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians in Central Asia. In official parlance, possible differentiation within society does not follow from religious variation but rather from divergent regional and nationalistic schemes.

> . . . the missionaries believe that their call appeals to the public because the latter tend to practice a tolerant and traditional type of Islam, often without any theological grounding.

Religion, nevertheless, was offered new opportunities by perestroika and independence. Muslims were able to reorganize the networks of mosques, shrines and religious schools that had been suppressed from the 1920s onwards. In the span of a few years, not only did Islam get a wider visibility, both in urban and in rural areas, but so did Christianity, the second largest religion in Central Asia. Many Christian—Orthodox, but also Catholic and Protestant (Lutheran, Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, Jehovah witnesses etc.)—prayer houses and churches were reopened or newly built.

Religious revival is clearly manifest in the activities of particular Christian—especially Protestant—movements, which were prohibited during the Soviet Regime, such as the Charismatic and Presbyterian Churches, and Jehovah's Witness which are now involved in active proselytization. The local population has become the target of such Christian missionary movements; and the missionaries believe that their call appeals to the public because the latter tend to practice a tolerant and traditional type of Islam, often without any theological grounding.

Christian proselytizing

The emergence of new and active proselytizing religious groups has caused great unease among the two main religious communities of Central Asia, Muslim and Orthodox. Their responses were essentially aimed at Protestant movements and, in a lesser measure, the Catholic Church. The quick expansion of foreign Christian missions and the conversions of locals to various Protestant denominations aroused some hostile reactions from the Muslim clergy who deem that the native population must remain de facto Muslim. They declare their respect for Christianity, but oppose Christian groups whose proselytizing activities are too potent. In 1994, the mufti of Tajikistan affirmed his respect for biblical texts; but he added that it is intolerable that a Muslim apostatizes and converts to another religion.[1] The press in Central Asia frequently features Muslim representatives who are hostile towards "these too smiling guests whose essential goal is to divide the Muslim people."[2] Resentment against Protestant missionary movements is present not only in countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan where Islamic movements are energetic, but also in Kyrgyzstan where the Christian missionaries are more active. Petitions were signed in Kyrgyz mosques, expressing opposition to, not only new, religious movements like the Moon movement, but to all Protestant denominations. Such protests are reported at the official level: in Uzbekistan, the president of the Council for Religious Affairs declared in 1994: "All these things are alien to our people and of course annoy the Moslems. If we do not take some decisive measures, a lot of blood might flow."[3] Many Muslim representatives, therefore, propose a strict distinction between autochthonous groups who are considered as Muslim and Europeans who can be Christian. Several violent altercations have already occurred in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and especially in Tajikistan, where protestant Churches and even the Orthodox Church were bombed in Dushanbe.

The Muslim and Russian Orthodox alliance

The Russian Orthodox Church has lost many of its believers to new Protestant denominations. Consequently, the Orthodox Church strongly questions the legitimacy of what it considers as "foreign" and "non-traditional" Churches. The link between nationality/locality and Russian Orthodoxy is accentuated by the notion of canonical territory, a notion which concerns, according to Orthodoxy, the entire Post-Soviet space: because of the historical precedence over all other Churches today present in former Soviet Union, Orthodoxy has the right of pre-eminence on the entire region. Claiming that national stability is threatened by the proselytization of so-called foreign denominations, Orthodox authorities try to polarize the religious spectrum around an Orthodoxy-Islam axis. "In Central Asia and in Russia, there is a natural distribution of influence between the two main religions, Orthodoxy and Islam, and no one will destroy this harmony."[4] The Orthodox hierarchy in Central Asia continues to stress its mutual understanding with Islam and asserts that "Islam is closer to Orthodoxy than all other Christian denominations."[5]

Even though the Orthodox Church does not regret the downfall of the Soviet regime, it regularly complains that the former Soviet republics "…today blindly copy the West and the freedom of expression and authorize everything and everybody." Newspapers and especially the local Orthodox journals,[6] regularly criticize the missionary movements, "whose discourses are alien both to Orthodox and Muslims."[7] The Orthodox Church is thus endeavouring to counter the current evolution of Central Asia—which is more criticized for its "Occidentalism" than for its indigenization—in the name of the protection of the national and indigenous specificity. In each republic, the Orthodox and Muslim hierarchies have allied to put pressure on the government in order to counter the Western missionary activities.

Official responses

The Muslim and Orthodox responses to proselytizing Protestant groups have a significant influence on the political authorities and have led several republics to question the principle of religious liberty. In Turkmenistan, a new law was passed in 1995 that requires the religious communities to gather 500 signatures in order to obtain the compulsory registration. Considering the small number of representatives of national minorities, except Russians (the majority of Poles and Germans have left the country), most Christian movements fail to meet these conditions, even in the capital Achkhabad, and have been, thus, forced underground. President Niazov has divided the religious spectrum into two distinct units: a Turkmen is supposed to be a Muslim while a European an Orthodox. An Orthodox is not allowed to convert a Turkmen to Christianity and a Muslim should not convert a Russian (European) to Islam. A virulent religious activism may cause the government to take radical measures: some preachers have been sent to jail, several churches have been closed, and the Adventists' church in Achkhabad was demolished in 1999. Protestant movements undergo permanent administrative and police pressures, in contrast to the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The latter has in Achkhabad a Vatican diplomatic representation that is mainly frequented by expatriates.

In Uzbekistan, new legislation passed in 1998 requires religious communities to apply for a new registration and to collect 100 signatures. This new policy implies a policy of suppression of Christian communities located outside Tashkent and large cities, except for the Orthodox, the main Protestant and Catholic communities. However, important minority communities are still present on the Uzbek territory: although proselytization is forbidden, Protestant denominations remain present and active. Some believers who engaged in missionary work have been jailed for several years. In Kazakhstan, legislation on religion has been drafted, but none has been confirmed. In 1998 a concordat was signed between the Kazakh State and the Vatican that grants the Catholic Church official status. Meanwhile, it then ignores pressures that several Protestant movements undergo, despite the formal equality of all confessions before the law.

Religious disagreement is much more apparent within the Christian realm than between Islam and Christianity. Among the five States in the area, Kazakhstan—and to a lesser degree Kyrgyzstan—has given several Churches equal status and does not recognize any special rights of Orthodoxy, as is the case in some Slavic and Caucasian republics.

PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN PEYROUSE, 2004

Mosque in Achkhabad

The political authorities do not fear Christianity as such, but rather the religious pluralism it implies, as well as some of its numerous active missionary movements. Besides, Islamic movements face similar difficulties: in 1997, the president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, declared that Muslim fundamentalists "destroy the stability, the civil and ethnic harmony, discredit the democracy, the secular state, and the multinational and multi-confessional society."[8] Several campaigns have led to multiple extra-judicial measures that range from the disappearance of suspected militants to the exclusion from universities of students. Such measures have occured in all five republics, but with a particular vigour in Uzbekistan, which is considered as a meeting place of Islamic militancy. Although Islam is always presented as the "national" and "natural" religion of autochthonous populations, Muslims do not enjoy more rights than adherents of any Christian denomination.

The appearance of new religious movements along with the renewal of religious activities contributes to the notion of religious revival in Central Asia, as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. However, this phenomenon should be viewed cautiously because the fall of communism has not given rise to a proliferation of mass religious movements. On the one hand, despite all the measures taken against religion during the Soviet regime, the state never managed to entirely eliminate religion. Islam and Christianity have widely persisted in more or less official or clandestine ways. On the other hand, the present political establishment has discouraged the proliferation of religious movements, in particular those judged to be too activist and "foreign," fearing that an increased religious diversity may destabilize the new states of Central Asia.

Notes

1. F. Šarifzad, "Islam – ne politiki," *Nauka i religiâ,* no.11 (1994): 32.
2. E. Luzanova, "Religious Renaissance or Political Game?" *Central Asian Post*, March 23, 1998.
3. *News Network International,* June 14, 1994.
4. *Slovo žizni,* March16, 1993, 4.
5. The Archbishop of Ural'sk, interview by Antonij Gureev, "Cerkov' že nažu â vižu cvetušej," *Vedi* 17, no. 3 (1998): 2-8.
6. Svet pravoslaviâ v Kazahstane, Vedi (in Kazakhstan), Slovo Žizni (in Uzbekistan).
7. E. Luzanova, "Religious Renaissance or Political Game ?".
8. I. Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the XXIst Century* (Tachkent, Uzbekistan: 1997), 39.

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African Muslims and the Secular State

DONAL B. CRUISE O'BRIEN

Postcolonial Africa has witnessed problematic processes of nation and state building, but in general the state structures as designed in late-colonial and early independence endure, including their secular orientation.
A major challenge for the state in Africa is to advance its respect for devotional diversity, because the secular state has an interest in religious diversity.

The postcolonial African state is a weak institutional structure, deficient in many respects—in structural capacity, in the legitimacy of authority, (and of course, in economic performance). There is a wide margin of difference between states, from the relatively successful Ghana or Uganda to disaster cases such as Sierra Leone, but there is also a point in common. The African state has not inspired an intense loyalty; it has not been loved by its citizens. It was in origin an alien imposition, the creation of European colonial rule at the end of the nineteenth century, and a conquest state. That state is still there now, the same territorial frontiers, the same capital cities, even if the performance of state institutions has been weakened by corruption and predation, as some see it by patron-client politics. And the idea of a secular state, standing aside from religious identification, is itself a colonial legacy, again a legacy that is still there. The state may for the most part not be loved, there is no intense national commitment, but there is also more of emotional involvement in the African state than at first appears.

State and religion: symbiotic relations

How do the citizens imagine the state? How do the people imagine power? The state has no surer foundations than are to be found in the people's imagination of authority, the symbolic language of power. The colonial governments of Africa indirectly recognised as much when they chose to rule through chiefly intermediaries, through chiefs who had their own symbolic capital. Thus the European rulers could have legitimacy at second hand. Postcolonial African rulers can do some of the same with the chiefs, but in looking for a symbolic language for state authority they have turned to the markers of religious devotion. The holy symbols are the respected symbols, indices of devotion, of love. Thus the postcolonial state can hope to borrow a little of its own second-hand legitimacy, pilfered from the pious. Power in Africa is often imagined to be of other-worldly origin, rulers can usefully suggest a religious mystique to themselves; they know where to look for the symbols. Given the religious diversity of Africa, between Islam, Christianity, and religions of African origin, they have plenty of symbols from which to choose. Islam and Christianity each have their hierarchical structures of devotional authority, their shrines to give a geographical focus to devotion; West African voodoo too has its shrines, and each of the three religious forms has its powerfully loaded symbolic language, a language loaded with the symbols of power. So the state has every interest in doing political business with the religious, however secular it may proclaim itself to be. The religious return that interest, the state remaining the fount of resources of many kinds, including those of symbolic endorsement.

The secular self-identification of the state in Africa is however no mere convenient fiction. The state may borrow or pilfer from the religious in its search for symbolic authority, but it also really does have a fundamental interest in staying secular, and in being perceived so to do. The diversity of African religiosity means that the state stands aside from religion in the interest of its own unity. And this basic logic still applies where the majority of the population is Muslim, as in Senegal where 90% of the population is Muslim but the Muslims are divided into a number of rival Sufi orders. Sufis cherish their differences, their devotional particularities, and in a secular state they find an authority which respects those particularities. An "Islamic state," the project of an activist minority, is likely to be a great deal less tolerant of devotional particularity and much more intrusive in spelling out the detail of correct Islamic practice. And who is to be in charge of an Islamic state? Muslims are divided in many ways: in Sufi orders, in sects, in rival ethnicities or racial categories, and in rival schools of thought. Only a charismatic leadership could hold such diversity together, an Islamic Leninism, and charisma as we know does not last.

Love transactions

So back to the secular state, a state that knows how to mind its own business, to respect devotional diversity. In giving that respect, in its symbolic recognition of the differently devout, the state may begin in return to win that warmth of popular respect which it so badly needs. The state has an interest in the differences, the interest of its own indispensability; and the differences have an interest in the state, the interest of their own preservation. But more than interest may be involved here; as the state does its pilgrimages to the different holy places, be present for the holy occasions, it begins to be recognised not only as a valuable witness but as "our" state, a possible object of love. Love too is a transaction, and the African state need not be so wholly bereft.

The State as Devil, painting by Alexis Ngom, Dakar, 1970

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Islamic Associations and the Middle Class

JANINE A. CLARK

To what extent are Islamic associations vehicles for recruitment for Islamist movements? Whom do they recruit? How does recruitment occur? Does the mere provision of health care suffice as a basis for recruitment? Can we assume that all those who work and volunteer in Islamic associations are Islamists with a political agenda? These represent some of the questions that motivated research in Jordan in 1998 to examine the political significance of the Islamic Centre Charity Society (ICCS) as part of a larger comparative study of Islamic associations in Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt.

The Islamic Hospital in Amman is the jewel in the Islamic Centre Charity Society's crown. It is an important symbol of the viability of the Islamist model for the Muslim Brotherhood that established it. In keeping with its stated philanthropic aims, the prices listed at the hospital are significantly lower than at other hospitals. The cost of a natural childbirth delivery is only 15 Jordanian Dinars (JD) compared to 18 JD at the al-Bashir Hospital, a public hospital for the poor, and over 200 JD at the Farah Hospital, considered the finest private hospital in Jordan. Furthermore, the hospital's Fund for the Sick and Poor provides subsidies for medical treatments; in 2002 alone it distributed a remarkable 4.5 million JD.[1] These statistics appear to support the widely held image of Islamic charitable and social welfare associations as targeting the poor with the aim of recruiting them. The authenticity of this image of philanthropy combined with recruitment of the poor has largely gone unquestioned.

Due to their operational and instrumental dictates, Islamic associations are largely run by and for the middle class and not the poor. Islamic associations' services are driven by the associations' needs for donations and professionals, the demands of the professional middle class for employment, good schools and hospitals, and the response of the Brotherhood to its predominantly middle-class constituency. As a result, they forge strong middle-class networks. Rather than the recruitment of the poor, the activities of such associations directly and indirectly contribute to the expansion and strengthening of middle-class ties of solidarity that reinforce an Islamist worldview and bind Islamists, non-Islamists, and the institutions of the Islamist movement.

Islamic associations and the middle-classes

The ICCS, and particularly the Islamic Hospital, is a case in point. The Brotherhood in Jordan is largely a professional middle-class phenomenon.[2] This is reflected in the ICCS' services. Of the ICCS' forty kindergartens and schools, one college, two hospitals, thirty-two medical clinics, six training centres, and thirty-three centres for orphans and poor families, its largest facilities –the kindergartens, schools, college, and hospitals—are all not-for-profit enterprises that are commercial-like in that they target a paying middle-class clientele and not the poor.

A second look at the Islamic Hospital's prices reveals its middle-class bias. While the base cost of a delivery is 15 JD, the hospital charges separately for each additional service and tacks on the costs to the original base fee. The result is that the delivery of one child with no complications, and with one overnight stay in a third-class room actually costs 190 JD. Patients without medical insurance are charged an extra 20% of the costs. The hospital's Fund for the Sick and Poor subsidizes up to 20% of the costs for poor patients thereby reducing the cost of a delivery to 152 JD. Jordan's poor, however, spend 15.88 JD or less per year on medical expenses.[3] The hospital is simply beyond their means. And the same can be said for the ICCS' private kindergartens, schools and college.

The ICCS not only targets a middle-class constituency as its clientele, but for employment purposes as well. The Islamic Hospital alone has approximately 12,000 employees, seventy-seven resident doctors, twenty-one interns, and 445 nurses.[4] The ICCS employs thousands of people—mainly professionals who are attracted by handsome pay, full benefits, and excellent equipment. Furthermore, hiring for the ICCS' private enterprises is prioritized over hiring for those facilities meant for the poor. While approximately 200 doctors (including residents and interns, but not part-time doctors) cater to the needs of the hospital's middle-class clientele, only thirty-two doctors in total tend to the poor in the ICCS' medical clinics. Three of these clinics, moreover, are located in the ICCS' private schools.

It is not surprising that ICCS centres are predominantly situated in the middle-class neighbourhoods of Amman and Zarqa. Here the ICCS finds middle-class clients, employees, and also donors. The very fabric of the ICCS is made up of the ongoing development and maintenance of middle-class social networks—interpersonal ties that are constantly being created and/or solidified in order to secure the donations and staff the association requires. ICCS directors make individual appeals for donations of money, services or items to neighbours, friends, colleagues, and merchants. In this manner, overlapping networks between the home, mosque, workplace, and other associations make the ICCS possible. These networks include individuals who may only donate once per year, those looking for an extra income, those wanting to fulfil a personal Muslim obligation, and more committed Islamists.

My research found that donating to, volunteering, and working in Islamic associations gradually creates middle-class networks of teamwork, trust, and solidarity. These are reinforced by the benefits the middle-class receives—jobs, educational and health services, a sense of purpose, and friendships. Furthermore, by bringing different social networks together in the provision of charity, Islamic associations create new social networks and introduce Islamist networks and worldviews to non-Islamists.

Do Islamic associations recruit the middle-class? The provision of health care does not directly lead to recruitment. Rather the creation and strengthening of intricate social networks indirectly binds their middle-class members ever closer to Islamist movements. The question to be asked is whether this focus on the middle class has alienated others.

Notes

1. Interview with Ra'if Nijim, former Director of the Fund for the Sick and Poor, Amman, Jordan, August 10 2002.
2. For example, of the 353 founders of the Islamic Action Front, the Muslim Brotherhood's political party, 37.7% were professionals: 24 university professors; 26 physicians; 22 engineers; 16 pharmacists; 25 lawyers; 17 managers; 3 journalists. This excludes business people and salaried employees. See Ahmad Jamil Azm, "The Islamic Action Front Party," in *Islamic Movements in Jordan*, ed. Hani Hourani (Amman: Al-Urdun Al-Jadid Research Centre, 1997), 101-103.
3. World Bank, Population and Human Resources Operations Division, Country Department II, Middle East and North Africa Region, *Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Poverty Assessment*, vol. 1, *Main Report*, Report no. 12675-JO (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1994), 12, 167.
4. E-mail communication from the medical director, Islamic Hospital, July 18, 2001.

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ISIM EVENTS

Workshop:
"Rights at Home" Advanced Training
The training will be a hands-on, interactive experience that will bring the best in international human rights perspectives, interactive skills transfer, and Muslim legal theory in context. The training aims to focus on actual experiences of women and children in Muslim societies.
Date: 23 June – 8 July 2004
Venue: Zahlé, Lebanon
Organizers: "Rights at Home" Project/ ISIM, Sahiba Sisters Foundation, Tanzania, SIS Forum Malaysia.
Sponsor: Dutch Foreign Ministry

Round table:
The Islamic Resurgence in Southeast Asia
Round table discussion at the European Association for South-East Asian Studies (EUROSEAS) Conference 2004
Date: 2 September 2004
Venue: University of Paris: Sorbonne Centre, Paris, France
Organizers: Rémy Madinier, Mathias Diederich and Martin van Bruinessen

Inaugural Lecture:
Prof. Abdulkader Tayob
Reading Religion and the Religious in Modern Islam
Date: 10 September 2004, 15:45 hrs
Venue: University of Nijmegen: Aula, Comeniuslaan 2, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Conference:
Islam and Public Life in Africa
Religious discourses are an inescapable facet of public life in Africa. Islamic discourses, being no exception, reflect varying local and global, social and political contexts.
The conference aims to build on previous meetings supported by ISIM on mapping the experiences of Muslim societies in different contexts.
Date: 10–13 September 2004
Venue: Conference Centre Holthurnsche Hof, Berg en Dal, The Netherlands

Workshop:
Islam and Modernity
Workshop in preparation of a book of readings.
Date: 29–30 September 2004
Venue: University of Leiden: Not open to the Public
Convenors: Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore, Martin van Bruinessen and David Waines

ISIM at MESA 2004
The ISIM supports three panels at the 2004 Annual Conference of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) See elsewhere on this page for a detailed description of the respective panels.
Date: 20–23 November 2004
Venue: San Francisco, United States of America

ISIM Annual Lecture 2004:
Lecture by Prof. Lila Abu-Lughod
Date: 17 December 2004, 16:00 hrs
Venue: Utrecht University: Utrecht, The Netherlands

For more information on these and other ISIM Events please consult the ISIM website or contact the ISIM Secretariat:
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ISIM FELLOWSHIPS

The ISIM invites applications and research proposals for its various programmes. Applications from candidates in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, cultural studies and political studies will be considered. Applicants should be competent in academic English.

The ISIM fellowships and their respective application deadlines are as follows:

– Ph.D. fellowships *(1 September 2004 and 1 March 2005)*

– Post-doctoral fellowships *(1 September 2004 and 1 March 2005)*

– Visiting fellowships *(1 September 2004 and 1 March 2005)*

– Sabbatical fellowships *(1 September 2004 and 1 March 2005)*

For more information on the various fellowships and for application forms, please consult www.isim.nl.

ISIM AT MESA 2004

The ISIM supports three panels at the 2004 Annual Conference of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), (http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/index.html), San Francisco, 20 – 23 November 2004.

Cultural Politics of Muslim Youths in the Middle East (P007)
Organized by: Asef Bayat
Chair/Discussant: Shahnaz Rouse, Sarah Lawrence College

– Asef Bayat, ISIM/Leiden University
Subversive Accommodation: The Cultural Politics of Youths in Iran

– Ayse Saktanber, Middle East Technical University
Negotiating Muslim Identity and Youthfulness: The Cultural Dilemma of Muslim Youth in Turkey

– Linda Herrera, ISIM/Leiden University
Cultural Agency of Youth: Negotiating Morality in Egyptian Education

– Mounia Bennani-Chraibi, IEPI University of Lausanne
Moroccan Youth and Religion

– Nikola Tietze, Hamburger Institut Fur Sozialforschung
Young Muslims in France and Germany: Youthfulness, Religiosity and Recognition

The Cultural Politics of Dress and Fashion (P092)
Organized by: Annelies Moors
Chair: Annelies Moors, ISIM/University of Amsterdam

– Jeni Allenby, Palestine Costume Archive
Re-inventing Cultural Heritage: Palestinian Traditional Costume and Embroidery since 1948

– Annelies Moors, ISIM/University of Amsterdam
Islam and Fashion on the Streets of San'a, Yemen

– Alex Balasescu, UCI/EHESS
Time, Space, Dress, Fashion and Aesthetic Authority in Tehran

Educating Imams (P037)
Organized by: Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Thijl Sunier
Chair: Thijl Sunier, University of Amsterdam
Discussant: Martin Van Bruinessen, ISIM/Utrecht University

– Jonathan Birt, Islamic Foundation
The 'Ulama, the Literate Masses and the Search for Authentic Islam in an Age of Disembodied Knowledge

– Frank Peter, ISIM
Training Imams in French Islam

– Nico Landman, Utrecht University
Islamic Higher Education in the Netherlands on the Crossroads of Academic Traditions

– Jane Smith, Hartford Seminary
Training Muslims for Chaplaincy at Hartford Seminary

– Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Georgetown University
Imam Training: Is American Paranoia Justified?

Millî Görüş in Western Europe

MARTIN VAN BRUINESSEN

ISIM, in co-operation with Gerdien Jonker (Marburg University), held a workshop on 9 January 2004 to take stock of previous research on the Turkish religious movement *Millî Görüs* ("The National Vision") in Western Europe. The workshop brought together scholars from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, whose research was at least in part concerned with this movement.

In 1975 the Turkish politician Necmettin Erbakan published a manifesto that he gave the title *Millî Görüş*, "The National Vision." It dealt only in the most general terms with moral and religious education but devoted much attention to industrialization, development, and economic independence. It warned against further rapprochement towards Europe, considering the Common Market to be a Zionist and Catholic project for the assimilation and de-Islamization of Turkey, and called instead for closer economic co-operation with Muslim countries. The name of *Millî Görüş* would remain associated with a religio-political movement and a series of Islamist parties inspired by Mr. Erbakan, one succeeding the other as they were banned for violating Turkey's *laik* legislation. Following the ban of the Virtue (*Fazilet*) Party, a rift that had been developing in the movement resulted in two parties taking its place, the Felicity (*Saadet*) Party representing Erbakan's old guard, and the Justice and Development (AK) Party led by younger and more pragmatic politicians around Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who claimed to have renounced on a specifically Islamist agenda. The AK Party convincingly won the 2002 elections and formed a government with a strong popular mandate that brought Turkey closer to acceptance for membership in the European Union than any previous government had done.

Among the Turkish immigrants in Western Europe, *Millî Görüş* became one of the major, if not the major, religious movement, controlling numerous mosques. Like the movement in Turkey, it went through some remarkable changes, not least because the first generation, which was strongly oriented towards what happened in Turkey, is gradually surrendering leadership to a younger generation that grew up in Europe and is concerned with entirely different matters. *Millî Görüş*' public profile shows considerable differences from one country to the next, suggesting that the nature of the interaction with "host" societies may have as much of an impact on its character as a religious movement as the relationship with the "mother" movement in Turkey. This is a strong argument for studying this and similar movements in comparative perspective and taking the context of the "host" societies explicitly into account.

The participants presented, in roughly equal measure, work in progress, completed research, and new projects in the initial stages. Nico Landman (Utrecht University) had studied the evolution of mosque and mosque communities in the Netherlands; Thijl Sunier (University of Amsterdam) Turkish youth and Muslim organizations in Rotterdam; Kadir Canatan (Islamic University of Rotterdam) shifts in religious leadership among Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands; Nikola Tietze (Institute of Social Sciences, Hamburg) patterns of religiosity and group identity among young Turkish men in Germany and France; and Levent Tezcan (University of Bielefeld) political symbolism and collective presentations in the *Millî Görüş* community. Four participants are carrying out relevant Ph.D. research projects. Meryem Kanmaz (University of Gent) and Welmoet Boender (ISIM) are studying Turkish and Moroccan imams and mosque congregations in Belgium and the Netherlands respectively, and both found *Millî Görüş* mosques to be involved in a wider range of social activities than others. Ahmet Yükleyen (Boston University and ISIM) studies communication within Turkish Islamic associations in the Netherlands and Germany and between these associations and state organs. Sarah Bracke compares *Millî Görüş* women's groups with "fundamentalist" women in Protestant and Orthodox Christian contexts, in a study of resistance to secularization.

Gerdien Jonker (Marburg) and Werner Schiffauer (University of Frankfurt/Oder) presented two new research projects in which Alev Masarwa (University of Münster) and Levent Tezcan will also be involved. Schiffauer and Tezcan will focus on the young generation and the dilemmas they face in their attempts to change *Millî Görüş* without alienating their elders. Rising young leaders are aware that much in the discourse of the first generation, understandable in the Turkish context, offends the sensitivities of German society and is irrelevant to many young Turks, but they have none of the charisma of the older guard of leaders. Jonker and Masarwa will take part in a larger project on adaptations between German law and Islam. Masarwa will compare *Millî Görüş* muftis in a German and a Turkish town; Jonker will be studying how *Millî Görüş* defines its religious identity through court cases. Two board members of the Northern Netherlands federation of *Millî Görüş*, Haci Karacaer and Üzeyir Kabaktepe, took part in the discussions and commented on the researchers conclusions and hypotheses. Discussion among the participants suggested that different European societies impose different ways of asserting Muslim identity: in Germany, the court of law is a major arena of communication; in the Netherlands, there is a permanent process of negotiation and gradual adaptation; and in France, Muslims position themselves more assertively in debates in the public sphere.

MILLÎ GÖRÜŞ, 2003

The Wester Mosque, Amsterdam

Martin van Bruinessen holds the ISIM Chair at Utrecht University.

Saudi Futures

GERD NONNEMAN

From 19-21 February 2003 ISIM hosted a workshop, *Saudi Futures*. Paul Aarts (University of Amsterdam) and Gerd Nonneman (Lancaster University, UK) brought a group of experts from around the world, together with a number of Saudi commentators and observers representing a wide spectrum of opinion. The workshop was also sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lancaster University and the Mediterranean Programme of the European University Institute. Topics for discussion included trends in Saudi politics, society, economy and international relations in the post-9/11 and post-Iraq War era.

It is likely that for at least the next twenty years Saudi Arabia will retain (and indeed increase) its central importance as a supplier of energy to the world economy. Hence the US and the industrialized world will maintain a strong interest in the country. But it will probably be Asia that will see the biggest growth in imports of hydrocarbons, and increasingly also petrochemicals, from the Kingdom. Even so, the balance between resources and demands within Saudi Arabia will remain under heavy pressure, as population growth will outstrip the growth in revenues. In this context, the cost of the large royal family (some 7000 princes) is also attracting some criticism within the country; it is unclear whether Crown Prince Abdallah's awareness of this issue will lead it to be addressed effectively.

The most serious problem for the economy and for the longstanding "social contract" between the regime and society, is the question of employment. The economy is simply not generating sufficient jobs for the growing number of young people. If this could be bridged, the country would theoretically be in a good economic position. Hence is the crucial importance of economic reform and diversification, and of the role of the private sector. Saudi Arabia remains in many respects a rentier economy, and largely also a rentier polity, with the peculiar social contract that comes with this. Nevertheless, the private sector does appear to have acquired a degree of autonomy, and increasingly produces "added value" rather than merely resting on subsidised activity. This is also true for a state-owned concern such as SABIC (Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation), which in fact functions very much with a market-oriented business ethos. The business community (of perhaps 200,000 people) has, in this context of greater autonomy, also developed a greater desire for political participation. But this does not mean a commitment to whole-scale democratic reform; they have little enthusiasm for the kind of political reform that would hand the levers of power to the more radical, anti-Western Islamist strands in society.

A different problem relates to the traditionally large amount of military spending. Judging by the evidence of the past two years, however, giant weapons acquisition programmes seem to be a thing of the past (the only such project still running its course is the al-Yamamah project with Britain).

Notwithstanding the reported tensions in US-Saudi relations since 9/11, the two governments remain mutually interested in safeguarding a healthy world economy, a predictable supply of energy at stable prices, and the survival of the Saudi regime. This does not mean there may not be serious friction, or that some in the US will not question certain aspects of the relationship. While there have been several earlier periods of friction that were overcome, this time the Cold War context within which Saudi-US relations developed ever since 1945, and from which much of the current Kingdom's strategic and ideological importance derived, is absent. A real rupture, however, seems unlikely, although actors on both sides will need to tread carefully if further complications are to be avoided.

> . . . questions once deemed too sensitive to touch . . . are now being discussed . . . thus in effect breaking the long-held Wahhabi endorsed principle that only their school had a legitimate voice.

Political stability and religious reform

On another note, the alliance between the Al Saud and the Wahhabi ulama which has long been part and parcel of the Saudi system has been showing some evidence of strain. Yet "Wahhabism" is itself not monolithic, either in theory or in practice. On principle, however, the ulama have generally upheld the need to support an effective ruler rather than risk chaos. Hence, even where there is disagreement with the Al Saud, this has not been pushed so far as to turn mainstream ulama into a stance of real opposition. Yet other, newer strands have emerged, consisting of younger, more radical ulama, and especially also non-ulama who now claim religious expertise and who are accepted as such by parts of the population. And this strand has indeed, with various degrees of radicalism, expressed some form of opposition. Yet two trends need to be set against this. The first is that the Al Saud have been exceptionally good at co-opting opposition voices—most recently by bringing onside prominent figures among the critical ulama, once the latter had condemned the bombings in the country after 9/11. Secondly, there is the fledgling development of a new more liberal type of Islamism, with Saudi intellectuals beginning to think outside the "Wahhabi" context altogether. A significant move has also been effected with the National Dialogue, under the auspices of the Crown Prince: it is not just that questions once deemed too sensitive to touch (such as the role of women) are now being discussed; the *very composition* of the Dialogue is telling. Indeed, the presence of a variety of groups, strikingly including Shia religious scholars, legitimates both their role and the principle of pluralist dialogue—thus in effect breaking the long-held Wahhabi endorsed principle that only their school had a legitimate voice.

Whether and how this mix of older and more fledgling trends might lead to the sorts of reforms that would assure long-term political and economic success remains an open question. The pressures from population growth, globalization, and bottom-up demands for reform are palpable—but they are neither translated into common views by different parts of the Saudi public, nor, as yet, responded to effectively by the Al Saud and its own internal constituencies.

Gerd Nonneman, Reader in International Relations and Middle East Politics at Lancaster University.
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The convenors plan to publish the findings of the conference in an edited book.

Religion and Transformation in West Africa

HAJJ MUMUNI SULEMANA

The African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) held a three-day regional conference under the title, The Role of Religion in the Socio-Cultural Transformation of West African Sub-continent from the 5th–8th February 2004 in Ghana at the Ghana Institute for Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). Among the topics covered were: religion and the state; conflict and violence; religion in contestation; religion as a source of values; and the study of religion.

The main objective of the conference was to explore the relationship between social and cultural institutions and religious practices in contemporary West African Societies. Twenty papers were presented covering a wide spectrum of topics and countries. The conference participants debated public policies, dress codes, sharia, and gender issues.

The first keynote address was delivered by Prof. J.K. Olupona who emphasized the need for a clear-cut methodology for the academic study of various religious traditions. He pointed out that thematic studies of religious traditions, rather than studies on particular faiths, would bring the field further. He also advocated that religious leaders play a role in not only bringing about a democratic renaissance in West Africa, but that they work towards sustaining these democracies. Desmond Tutu's role during the Apartheid and post-Apartheid political developments in South Africa served as a case in point. He emphasized the urgent need for religious leaders to be active in social issues such as corruption, indiscipline, abuse of power, and ensuring good governance and rule of law.

Abdulkader Tayob brought to the fore the need to distinguish between a scholar of religion and a religious leader in another keynote address. He was of the conviction that the two perform different roles in society. He made it explicitly clear that, as a scholar of religion, Desmond Tutu is not his role model. However, he was quick to add that most participants will disagree with him. He dwelt on the problem of Muslim representation in government. In Ghana for instance, there is always the problem of which body represents Muslims at the national political level. Currently, there is a struggle between the office of the national Chief Imam (spiritual leader) and the Federation of Muslim Councils, the legitimate mouthpiece for Sunni Muslims in dealings with the government. He further dealt with the emergence of Islamic reformist movements and the Islamic ideological debate about the state. He is of the conviction that the Islamic state has failed.

Another theme that generated much discussion was the dress code in some Nigerian universities. Muslim female students began wearing face veils, leaving some university authorities with the problem of identification of female students during examinations and official university activities. To overcome the problem some universities came up with a dress code, part of an attempt by university officials to curb the global renaissance of Islamic movements; especially after the introduction of sharia in Northern Nigeria since the reintroduction of democracy. This development was surprising to the Ghanaian participants because Ghanaian tertiary female students prefer western fashion, which is seen to be incompatible with the African culture. Yet, at the same time, there is also an upsurge of the use of the veil by Muslim female students in the tertiary institutions in Ghana.

The implementation, structures, and problems of sharia in Northern Nigeria generated a great deal of discussion (presentations by Muutasim Dawood and Lateef Mobolaji Adetona). Lateef argued that the sharia was becoming an issue in the Southwest especially among the Yoruba in Nigeria where independent sharia committees are emerging under the supervision of the Supreme Council for sharia. Eventually sharia law will be implemented at the federal level.

The conference was supported by the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Leiden, the University of California, Davis and ICCO-Zest, the Netherlands. More than thirty scholars from the Netherlands, the United States, Britain, Nigeria, the Gambia, and Ghana, participated in the conference.

Hajj Mumuni Sulemana, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana.
The conference organizers plan to publish selected papers in an edited volume.

ISIM POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) invites applications for ISIM post-doctoral fellowships. The fellowships are available to scholars who have recently (within five years) obtained a Ph.D. degree in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, cultural studies or political science.

The ISIM conducts and promotes interdisciplinary research on contemporary social, political, cultural, and intellectual trends and movements in Muslim societies and communities. The ISIM welcomes research proposals which are informed particularly by a social science perspective and fit in with the research profile of the ISIM in general, or related to the specific research programmes of the ISIM Chairs. The current ISIM research programmes and projects include: Islam, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere; Muslim Cultural Politics; Debating Family Dynamics and Gender; Islamic Family Law in Everyday Life; The Cultural Politics of Domestic Labor; The Politics of Representation in Muslim Societies; The Production of Islamic Knowledge in Western Europe; Islam and the Public Sphere in Africa; Religion, Culture and Identity in a Democratic South Africa; and Socio-Religious Movements and Change in Muslim Societies.

ISIM post-doctoral fellowships are awarded twice per year. The deadlines for applications are 1 March and 1 September of each year.

ISIM post-doctoral fellowships at a glance:
- granted for a period two years
- monthly stipend
- office space, a personal computer, telephone on the premises of the ISIM in Leiden
- travel expenses to and from the country in which fieldwork will be carried out

Post-doctoral fellows are located in the historic city of Leiden with convenient links to the coast, the airport, and major European cities. Fellows have full access to extensive libraries, research centres, and the facilities of the universities participating in the ISIM: the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, the University of Nijmegen and Utrecht University.

For details on ISIM post-doctoral fellowships and an online application form, please refer to the ISIM website http://www.isim.nl under the link "Fellowships" or contact the ISIM secretariat:

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Madrasa in Asia

YOGINDER SIKAND

During the last week of May this year ISIM, in collaboration with Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Berlin, organized a two-day workshop on the theme *The Asian Madrasa: Transnational Linkages and Real or Alleged Political Role*. The nine papers that were presented at the workshop looked at madrasas in different Asian countries in the context of the ongoing debate on "terrorism."

Five papers presented at the workshop dealt with madrasas in South Asia, home to the largest concentration of Muslims in the world. Adil Mahdi, a doctoral student at the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, spoke about the Indian madrasa and the spectre of "terrorism." He argued that unlike the case of certain madrasas in Pakistan, not a single madrasa in India has been involved in "terrorist" activities. Numerous madrasas played a leading role in India's freedom struggle. Yet, the Indian state and the media have mounted a relentless campaign to demonize the madrasas as "anti-national." Mahdi also spoke about the Deoband's links with the Taliban, arguing that although the two shared a common vision, they differed in matters of strategy. The rise of the Taliban to power, he stressed, owed less to their Deobandi ideology, than to political factors, including the support given to the Taliban by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the US.

Dietrich Reetz of the ZMO spoke about the changes in the Deobandi madrasa following its split in 1982. Countering the stereotype of Deobandi madrasas as hostile to change, he noted the reforms recently introduced at the Dar ul-Ulum, including the setting up of departments of English and computer applications. Regarding the Deobandis' links with other groups, Reetz argued that the Deobandi ulama were more concerned with countering other Muslim groups than with non-Muslim communities. He also spoke of the efforts of some Deobandis in promoting dialogue with Hindus.

Girls' madrasas in contemporary India are a fairly recent development. Mareike Winkelmann of ISIM dealt with the case of a Deobandi girls' madrasa in Delhi, showing how, by providing free education that was also culturally relevant, such madrasas are playing an important role in promoting literacy among girls from poor families. Although its curriculum is conservative in terms of its vision of gender relations, the madrasa affords new spaces for Muslim girls, including involvement in the reformist Tablighi Jama'at, arguably the largest Muslim movement in the world today.

Farish Noor's paper dealt with the case of over a dozen Indonesian and Malaysian students at two madrasas in Karachi, Pakistan, who were recently deported to their countries and arrested on charges of being involved with "terrorist" groups. These students have been denied a fair trial by their governments, who, Noor claimed, appear to have joined hands with the US to clamp down on dissenting Islamic movements, branding them all as "terrorist." This must be seen in the context of the complex links between the US and governments in Muslim countries allied to it, for both of whom the talk of madrasas as "dens of terror" has come in handy to clamp down on internal opposition. The agenda for reforming the madrasas has, unfortunately, today come to be linked with the question of countering "terrorism." Yoginder Sikand's paper focused on efforts being made today by ulama and Muslim activists in India to introduce modern subjects in the curriculum, excise subjects and books that are considered irrelevant, and introduce reforms in teaching methods.

Noorhaidi Hasan of the Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, dealt with the Salafi or "Wahhabi" madrasas in contemporary Indonesia. He traced the evolution of the Salafis in Indonesia and their adversarial relations with the Shafi'i ulama, Sufis, and abangan or "lax" Muslims. He noted that some Salafi madrasas have been receiving generous support from Saudi Arabia, linking this to the Saudis broader goal, which they shared with the US, of promoting a conservative, status quo, literalist Islam to counter anti-monarchical tendencies in Muslim countries following the Iranian Revolution. He spoke of the involvement of some Salafi madrasas in Indonesia in the militant Lashkar-i Jihad movement and in the 2002 bombings in Bali, after which, he noted, some of them have been banned by the government. Following the events of 11 September 2001, he added, Saudi financial support to Indonesian Salafi madrasas has significantly declined, leading to a crisis in the Salafi camp.

Martin van Bruinessen's paper focused on the pesantren system of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. He noted that although a few pesantren in the country could indeed be said to be militant, this was hardly true of the vast majority. The radicalization of some Indonesian pesantren must be seen in the wider political context, and as a consequence of the suppression of opposition movements by the Indonesian state.

In her paper on Islamic education in China, Jackie Armijo of Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, examined the growth of madrasas across the country in a climate of greater religious freedom. Some of these are part-time schools that allow their students to simultaneously study at regular schools and colleges. Madrasas in China, except in the province of Sinkiang, she said, are not a platform for anti-government propaganda. She also referred to a number of Chinese Muslims who have studied in Iran or in Arab countries and their role in setting up Islamic schools in China after completing their studies abroad.

Christine Hunner of the University of Bochum, Germany, dealt with Islamic education in contemporary Azerbaijan. Because of decades of Soviet rule, she said, few Azeris have a sound knowledge of Islam, although Islam remains an integral part of Azeri identity. She looked at new ways of imparting Islamic education in Azerbaijan, including the newly established Islamic Theological Faculty at the University of Baku and Islam University in Baku, in which both Shias and Sunnis study together. She also reflected on the possible political implications of the Turkish government's promotion of a specifically Turkish form of Islam in programs in this Shia majority country.

Overall, there seemed to be a near unanimity among the participants about the fallacy of labelling all or even most madrasas as "dens of terror," although they pointed out that some madrasas in certain countries can be said to be militant or even terrorist. Further, it was also generally agreed that intellectual and financial links have long existed between madrasas in different countries, and that most madrasas with transnational connections have had nothing to do with terrorism, although some certainly have. Some participants stressed the need to look at the phenomenon of militancy in certain madrasas as, at least partly, a reaction to state terror and to Western, particularly American, hegemony. Stressing the need to counter misleading stereotypes, the participants underlined the need for more empirically grounded studies of madrasas and their transnational linkages.

Yoginder Sikand was until recently a post-doctoral fellow at the ISIM. He now works as a reader at the Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi.
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ISIM PUBLICATIONS

The following ISIM publications are available in hard copy. Please use the order form on the ISIM website.

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- *Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt* (ISIM Papers 2) by Talal Asad
- *Shari'a, State, and Social Norms in France and Indonesia* (ISIM Papers 3) by John R. Bowen
- *"Traditionalist" Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs* (ISIM Papers 4) by Barbara D. Metcalf

Special ISIM Publications include:
- *Muslim Jurists' Quest for the Normative Basis of Shari'a* (ISIM Inaugural Lecture) by Muhammad Khalid Masud
- *New Voices of Islam* by Farish A. Noor (Interviews with Muslim Intellectuals)

European Islam and Tariq Ramadan

ALEXANDRE CAEIRO

In the context of the exhibition *Urban Islam* in Amsterdam (see p. 44), the Royal Tropical Institute and the ISIM co-organised a series of lectures and debates. The theme of the meeting held on 27 April 2004 was "From Cyber Imam to European Islam: Youth and Islam in Europe." In his introduction to the event, Alexandre Caeiro (ISIM) focussed on how the Internet is giving rise to new types of socialization among Muslims in Europe, including original matrimonial strategies and enhanced modes of political mobilization. The main speaker for the evening was Tariq Ramadan who delivered a lively lecture on the role of Western Muslims and the future of Islam to a mixed audience of Muslim youth and non-Muslims.

Ramadan's major contribution to the debate on Islam in Europe is perhaps his re-conceptualization of the traditional *fiqh* categories related to space (from *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* to *dar al-shahada).* While Ramadan has no formal linkages to the class of ulama, his contribution to the debate is testimony to the worldwide emergence of a Muslim intellectual elite, with a secular background (in his case, a doctorate in philosophy), entering the restricted world of religious representation and interpretation.

For many years now, Ramadan has been touring Europe persuading Muslims, and in particular the youth, that they do not have to feel any guilt or reservation about living in the non-Muslim West. He argues that the Muslim communities in Europe should not wait for an Arab scholar to come and solve their problems, but should start actively participating in their new societies in order to find answers to their predicament; Muslims, as upholders of a universal religion, are not in need of a justification for living as minorities, "spreading out on the earth," and "enjoining the good."

Many contemporary Islamic scholars would undoubtedly agree with Ramadan that the dichotomy between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* has become obsolete in our globalized world. This consensual assertion, however, often hides the differences that still underlie, in the minds of the ulama, Islamic thought and practice in the Muslim world, on one hand, and in the "diaspora," on the other.

PHOTO BY MARTIN BUREAU, ©AFP, 2003

Tariq Ramadan at the European Social Forum, 2003

For Ramadan, on the contrary, a European Islamic identity is not—or, should not be—a minimalist one. Exceptions based on rules of necessity (which, thus, do not question the norm) are no longer deemed suitable. Rather, Muslims in Europe (and now, in America too) must provide answers to the dilemmas they are facing, drawing mainly on the Islamic principle which states, "all that is not strictly forbidden is allowed," allowing them to incorporate whatever good they encounter.

This and other juristic principles governing the presence of Muslims in the West were first enunciated in his book, *To Be a European Muslim*, published in 1999. More recently, in his *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (2003), Ramadan has attempted to provide concrete applications for these principles.

In his lecture Ramadan adamantly stressed the importance of binding one's loyalty to Islamic faith to one's loyalty to the nation-state, whose secular values allow Muslims to live their religion peacefully. Referring to the contemporary reflection on issues of *fiqh al-aqalliyat* (Islamic law for Muslim minorities), which takes a similar stance on loyalty, Ramadan criticised what he perceived as the negative consequences of the minority syndrome, which encourages "ghettoization," preferring to emphasize the key concept of *citizenship* instead.

Arguably, at the grassroots level, this is already happening: "Western Muslims"—and this is a central theme of Ramadan's work—are shaping a new and civic form of Islamic religiosity in tune with their time and place. They are sowing, and perhaps already harvesting, the seeds for a "silent revolution," inexorably taking place outside the media limelight. In Ramadan's view, Western Muslims are thus starting to re-read the Islamic texts in the light of their cultural base and social context, attempting to reconcile between their Islamic values and those of the democratic forms of participation, and prevalent human rights discourses.

This, as Ramadan knows only too well, is only one part of the multifaceted dynamics of Islam in the West: along with progressive interpretations and positive engagement co-exist fundamentalist movements and strong inward tendencies, each claiming to speak for the true Islam. As a committed Muslim intellectual he is faced with a difficult choice: either to argue that only the ulama may interpret the religious texts, and thus exclude other voices (including, perhaps, his own) from the debate on the meaning of Islam; or to call for the democratization of religious interpretation, despite the very real fears that this may also lead to extremism.

Specifically questioned by the audience in relation to the above, Ramadan was rather prudent in his articulation of what constitutes Islamic authority in the West: Muslims must start training their own future scholars, specialised in both Islamic sciences and knowledge of the local contexts and histories; but until then it is up to the ulama, including those living in the "East," to draw the contours of the Western Islam for which he has been advocating.

At the confluence of disciplines, Tariq Ramadan was perhaps not interested in (sociologically) dwelling on the impact of national dynamics on Muslims in the various European countries, nor did he elaborate on the links between Europe and America. More importantly, given his (implicit) theory that Muslims in the West *represent* the future of Islam, he did not address the specificities of "Western Muslims" regarding Muslims in the "East." A frequent visitor to Muslim majority countries, both in the centre and in the periphery, Ramadan is aware that the new perceptions emerging among Muslims in the Western world are not without precedents in the Muslim heartlands. As the life-stories of Alioune (Dakar), Farina (Panamaribo), Ferhat (Istanbul) and Hanane (Marrakech) from the *Urban Islam* exhibition (see p. 44) suggest, the Muslim world as well, is undergoing profound structural changes, forcing each individual believer to take position amid conflicting interpretations and engage in the hermeneutics of sorting out the cultural from the religious.

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Memoires of an Iranian Rebel
by Masoud Banisadr
London: Saqi Books, 2004

Masoud is a story unlike any other to come out of Iran; at once a passionate and terrifying account of one man's revolutionary journey, it is also a poignant warning against the dangers of extremism, such as that of the Mojahedin.

Contemporary Arab Thought
Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History
By Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi'
London: Pluto Press, 2004

This book retraces the Arab world's aborted modernity of the decades after 1967 and explores the development of contemporary Arab thought against the background of the rise of modern islamism and the impact of the West on the modern Arab World.

Humanism and Democratic Criticism
By Edward W. Said
New York: Columbia University Press, 2004

Ever since the ascendancy of critical theory and multicultural studies in the 1960s and 1970s, traditional humanistic education has been under assaul. The late scholar and humanist Edward W. Said, in a series of lectures given at Columbia University in 2000, forcefully argues for revitalizing the humanities and for intellectuals to reclaim an active role in public life.

Rethinking the Qur'ân
Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics
By Nasr Abû Zayd
Utrecht: Humanistics University Press, 2004

Since the ninth century, discussion about the nature of the Qur'ân has been blocked in favour of the Orthodox view that it is the exclusive verbatim Word of God. This book aims to reopen the debate by rereading the classical material and addressing the present situation of Muslims in the context of the challenges of modernity.

Good Muslim, Bad Muslim
America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror
By Mahmood Mamdani
New York: Pantheon Books, 2004

In this provocative book, distinguished political scientist and anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani dispels the idea of "good" (secular, westernized) and "bad" (premodern, fanatical) Muslims, pointing out that these judgments refer to political rather than cultural or religious identities. This book argues that the terrorist movement at the center of Islamist politics followed America's embrace of proxy war after its defeat in Vietnam. With the invasion of Iraq, as in Vietnam, America will need to recognize that it is not fighting terrorism but nationalism, a battle that cannot be won by occupation.

Holy Terrors
Thinking about Religion after September 11
By Bruce Lincoln
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003

It is tempting to view the perpetrators of the September 11 terrorist attacks as evil incarnate. But their motives, as Bruce Lincoln reveals, were profoundly religious. Lincoln argues for greater clarity about what we take religion to be. Holy Terrors sorts through the details and the religious rhetoric of September 11 and examines their implications for our understanding of religion and its interrelationships with politics and culture.

Qajar Reinterpreted

©SHADI GHADIRIAN, 1999

Shadi Ghadirian is representative of the young intellectuals and avant-garde artists of Iran at the beginning of the 21st century. She studied photography and was influenced by the most liberal and creative of minds while even so she also worked in an environment in which she was required to participate actively in the acquisition of religious knowledge. From this situation emerges a body of work imbued with paradoxes.

©SHADI GHADIRIAN, 1999

Qajar Series by Shadi Ghadirian, 1999

The old sepia finish of the photographs shown here evokes the impression of something outmoded. In them, Ghadirian plays with a juxtaposition of modernity and tradition. But there is further ground to these images. Modern identity is a lens through which life in Iran is depicted. The tension evolving from the distance between the photographer's perspective (modern identity) and the photographed subject (traditional identity) is strained with an irony that leaves the viewer with a feeling of joy, rather than resignation.

HEIKE GATZMAGA FOR THE HOUSE OF WORLD CULTURES

Shadi Ghadirian has been one of the contributors to the exhibition Far near Distance: Contemporary Positions of Iranian Artists, *House of World Cultures, Berlin, 19 March – 9 May 2004. For more information please consult http:www.hkw.de.*

Millions of voters were mobilized through popular methods for elections in Malaysia and Indonesia in past months. Voters participated in spectacular rallies reminiscent of football rallies, and festive promotion materials were distributed in the streets.

▲ Supporters of Indonesia's ruling party Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) led by President Megawati Sukarnoputri ride a mock bull as they wave party flags during a campaign rally in Surabaya, 1 April 2004.

©AFP, 2004

▶ A Malaysian boy holds balloons with the logo of the country's ruling Barisan Nasional as he awaits the arrival of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at a campaign rally in Sik, 1 March 2004.

PHOTO BY BAZUKI MUHAMMAD, ©REUTERS, 2004