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Egyptians celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, Alexandria, April 2005

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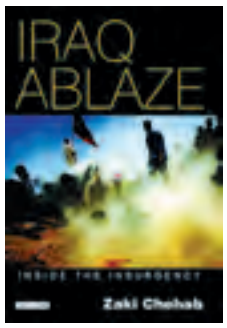

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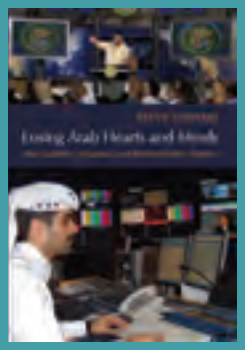

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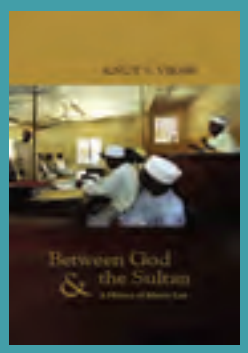

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Editorial

ASEF BAYAT

At times one is compelled to lay stress on what is obvious. And regrettably ours is such a time. Stating that matters in Islam and Muslim societies are much more complex than what presents itself might be obvious for some, but certainly not for the general perception that is informed by a black and white view of the world. The current preoccupation with the powerful images projected by, albeit, small-scale extremist and "Jihadi" streams, has precluded from sight an Islam practiced by the majority of Muslim humanity which cherishes life, beauty, as well as spirituality.

Looking beyond the official Islam of the state in Iran, scores of ordinary people gather in the evenings to share poetry, mysticism, and a spiritual journey. Every year millions of Egyptian Muslim men, women, and children join the Mawlid festivals to celebrate, often for days and nights with food and fair, the birth of revered saints (Schielke, p.6). In Syria, as happening elsewhere, Sufi orders, distant from the jingoism of political Islam and the incumbent regimes, are engaged in rituals that serve ethical enhancement and "moral reform of the self" (Pinto, p.14). Each week, al-Saha village in South Beirut brings together thousands of pious people who also yearn for distraction and the pleasures of daily life (Harb, p. 10). Indian lower and middle class Muslims generate a vast market for a unique popular art form- "religious posters in which Islamic themes derive liberally from the images and symbols of Hindu iconography"; an art form which redefines the very concepts of Islam's monotheism and iconoclasm (Saeed, p.8).

These rituals and practices, shared largely by ordinary Muslims, represent what one may term "popular piety." They signify a fusion of religious sensibilities and mass culture, the sacred and the everyday. As a cultural expression of piety, they embody a humanized, multi-faceted, pluralistic and a concrete religiosity. Popular piety is indeed the antithesis of what Olivier Roy, in reference to the construction of an often fundamentalist "pure" or abstract religion, called the "de-culturation" of faith. It is no surprise, then, that popular piety is often downplayed both by Islamist hardliners and secular modernists. The religious purists charge practices like mawlid festivals as signs of *bid'a*, idolatry, and moral vice, while modernists see in them elements of backwardness, traditionalism, ignorance, and superstition. But in truth, ordinary Muslims project an alternative set of religious sensibilities. They wish to exercise a religion of life, a spirituality of the subaltern whose plebian lives disturb the sensibilities of the elites, political, or religious, who aim to compel rigid structures to ensure social control. Popular piety defies rigid structures and questions the monopoly of divine truth.

This issue of the *ISIM Review*, unlike previous ones, was developed by an editorial team consisting of ISIM Chairs with Martijn de Koning acting as Assistant Editor. A new editor for the future issues will replace Dick Douwes who left ISIM as of 1 January 2006 (p.52). The *ISIM Review* remains committed to unraveling the complexities of current processes in Islamic landscapes, furnishing a forum for scholarly exchange, while retaining a format, language, and style accessible to lay audience.

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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. ISIM was established in 1998 by the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, Utrecht University, and Radboud University 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 science and humanities perspectives. 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, ISIM brings together all areas of disciplinary expertise in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, political science, and cultural studies.

Caricatures of the Prophet
European Integration

ABDULKADER TAYOB

The caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten have certainly taken on different meanings since they were first printed in September 2005. In Europe, the larger debate about the integration of Islam and Muslims became the framework for the discourse on this most recent controversy over Islam and Muslims. Nevertheless, the cartoon controversy provides an opportunity to question this framework as it both obscures as much as it clarifies the public debate on the controversy in particular, and about Islam in general.

The European debate about the Danish caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad turned to the integration of Islam and Muslims in Europe, although questions of iconography, freedom of expression and international relations were raised. The traces of this debate can be identified at several levels. Flemming Rose, the Danish editor, justified the printing of the cartoons by appealing to the integration debate: "We are telling the Muslims that we are integrating you in the Danish culture of satire, because you belong to us." But before Rose, a different approach to integration was evident when children's book-writer, Kåre Bluitgen, searched in vain for an illustrator for his book on Muhammad and the Quran. Apparently, it was his inability to find an illustrator for the figure of Prophet that provided the immediate context for the newspaper to test the tolerance of Muslims. Both Bluitgen and Rose wanted, so they claimed, to make Islam a part of Europe in very different ways.

When the conflict expanded into demonstrations and riots broke out in different parts of the world, the question of integration quickly became, in parts of Europe, even more prominent. The usual commentators were quick to point to the glaring difference between the freedom of expression respected and enjoyed in Europe, in contrast with its place in Muslim cultures. It provided as yet another opportunity to demonstrate the essential difference between Islam and Europe.

Freedom of expression

As freedom of expression became an integration issue, it took on a very different meaning. It became the right to hurl insults and denigrate the sacred symbols of a large number of people. The freedom of expression was, thereby, transformed from the right to express oneself in the midst of a powerful state or institution to a right directed at some of the weakest segments of society. The glaring contradiction of this European virtue was also revealed in the ongoing trial in Austria against David Irving's Holocaust views.

I do not mean to suggest, by this, that the freedom to write critically about religion and its values should be controlled by law. On the contrary, freedom of expression against non-state actors such as radical Muslims presents a challenge to people living in all parts of the world. The European integration question, however, framed the freedom of expression as a unique European value under singular threat from Islam. A little reflection, however, shows that Europe is far from exceptional in facing this challenge.

But the focus on Islam as the main culprit in this issue cannot be summarily dismissed. Unlike the French riots, the conflict deals clearly with both a theological and a religious level. Unlike the radical groups who were causing havoc in Amsterdam and elsewhere, this controversy concerns more than a small group of radical Muslims. The cartoon issue brings virtually all Muslims under the spotlight, and places Islam in the centre of the debate.

Can Islam change?

A deeper reflection on the aftermath and responses to the cartoons forces, once more, into the open a recurring question at the heart of the integration debate. Can Islam adapt itself to Europe? Is it flexible enough to adopt the secular liberal values of Europe? Almost all sides of the debate work with the assumption that Islam belongs to a traditional culture that has resisted change and modernization. In particular, European secular fundamentalists and Muslims radicals thrive on the vision of an unchanging primordial Islam. The two sides cannot deal with the fact that Islamic radicalism can be both Islamic and European. Ironically, the cartoon controversy has highlighted some of these changes within Islam as represented in the public debate. The controversy illustrated how any form of secular polity has become the natural enemy of Islam. The dossier of the Danish Muslims that was prepared to mobilize world opinion particularly lamented the lack of respect for religions in secular Europe. But secularism for them only implied the freedom to insult religions, particularly Islam. This caricature of secularism has become integrated into Islam in public debate. Among other things, it successfully obscures from view the huge failure of religious (particularly Islamic) states in the second half of the twentieth century.

Another such feature of public Islam thrown up in the controversy is its progressive desacralization. Apart from the newspapers that rushed to reprint the cartoons to demonstrate their commitment to freedom of expression, Muslims themselves played an equally large role in spreading the reach of cartoons. Emails were sent around the globe to gather support for the protest actions, but, ironically, in many cases these very emails contained all the cartoons. The first Egyptian newspaper that carried the story of the cartoons also carried one of the cartoons on its front page. The protests have in more ways than one reproduced the caricatures, and demonstrated some of the desacralization at work in public Islam.

The protests have in more ways than one reproduced the caricatures, and demonstrated some of the desacralization at work in public Islam.

Thirdly, and in relation to this, the image of the Prophet became as important for many Muslims as it had been for the cartoonists. In the last few decades, Muslims have become preoccupied by the bad image that they enjoyed in the press and in public representation in general. The cartoons illustrated this negative image in graphic detail. But the reactions pointed out to how deep-seated the representation of Islam had been internalized as a component of public Islam. The image had become everything.

The integration debate in Europe clearly framed and shaped the reception of the controversy. Under its distorting influence, freedom of expression took on a new meaning. But the controversy also manifested the weakness of one of the central assumptions of the integration debate: Islam had to change to accommodate change. It showed that Islam had already changed to take on a new public role. If anything, this should be the starting point of a future debate.

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Mawlids & Modernists
Dangers of Fun

SAMULI SCHIELKE

One possible solution to the puzzle of how to conceptualize the complex interplay of pre-existing Islamic traditions, the influence of European intellectual discourses, and colonial administrative practices is to focus on the genealogy of intellectual traditions and administrative practices, i.e., the conditions of their emergence and transformation. The case of one particular transformation of popular festive traditions shows the novelty of the project of modern Islam which drew upon Islamic and European traditions, local and global power struggles without being reducible to any of its sources of inspiration.

In the early 1880s, Egypt was in a state of turmoil. European powers were exerting increasing pressure on the Khedivial government, and escalating political conflicts were about to lead the country to the Urabi rebellion and consequent British occupation. In this moment, a new kind of debate on religion and society emerged in Egypt. Festive traditions and ecstatic rituals that were a central part of the religious and communal life of the country quite suddenly became the subject of intense criticism, accompanied by attempts to reform or to ban them. The most important issue at stake was *mawlids*, popular festivals in honour of the Prophet Muhammad and Muslim saints. These festivals, which combine the communal experience of a pilgrimage, the ecstatic rituals of Islamic mysticism, and the libertine atmosphere of a fair, had always been to some degree controversial, and some scholars and intellectuals had lamented votive rituals at the shrines, the use of music in rituals, and the general licentious character of the festivities. But theirs was a minority opinion, while orthodox scholars of al-Azhar, mystics (who often were scholars of al-Azhar at the same time), political elites of the country, merchants, and peasants all participated in the festivals that took place at the central squares of major cities.

> Abstaining from sin and the company of the deviant was no longer enough . . .

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, a growing number among the intellectual elites of Egypt began to rally against mawlids and other festive traditions. In 1881, the debate culminated with the ban on the spectacular ritual of *dawsa* that used to conclude the *mawlid an-nabi* (birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) festival in Cairo, where the shaykh of the Sa'diyya Sufi brotherhood would ride with a horse over his disciples (who were not injured, a feat seen as a demonstration of God's grace) together with attempts to curb the ecstatic rituals of Sufi brotherhoods and to impose strict state control upon them. In the following decades, however, mawlids continued to flourish and the criticism grew more radical, so for example in a press article from 1929 calling for complete abolition of mawlids because of the alleged danger to society at large, they presented:

"Mawlids are nothing but superstitions, un-Islamic innovations and dangerous customs that must be abolished. […] They are a suicide of virtue, and they are in reality worse than that, but we lack the expression to describe it exhaustively. Because mawlids, especially in the cities, and what goes on in them, are nothing but various expressions of religious, moral and social vices and truthful expressions of the moral deficiency latent in the minds of a large group of people. And those mawlids incite them and assist them in increasing it (i.e., the moral deficiency). […] Thus why not abolish these dangerous customs that let loose the bonds from all people civilized or on the way to civilization, and that are the source of moral and religious corruption, and which furthermore are a cause for the contempt of the foreigners on us and an incentive to make us doubt in religion and the authority of those who stand to it."[1]

The invention of society

Not only was the increasing popularity of such views novel, also the very discourse that emerged in this period represented a radical departure from the way religion, morality, and communal life had been conceived of and practised until then. In earlier debates on festive and ritual behaviour, Muslim scholars had been mainly concerned with the legal status of discrete practices and their implication on the salvation of the individual believer. While their concern was to determine how to act according to God's commandments and, ultimately, to get to paradise, the modernists of late nineteenth century spoke in very different tones. Abstaining from sin and the company of the deviant was no longer enough: society and religion as a whole had to be purified, reformed and modernized. The behaviour of people at public festivals became a problem of national scale, and reforming them a key to the nation's progress.

In these views, an old (although throughout much of Islamic history, marginal) Islamic tradition of suspicion towards ecstatic emotional states, ambivalent festive traditions, and anything that would compromise a rigid and purified state of the body and soul, comes together with the radically novel concepts borrowed from European intellectual traditions: society—the organic whole in which different ethnic, confessional and professional groups belong to an organic and interdependent whole; nation—the ideological frame of such society; progress—the linear and rational development of the nation towards a growing perfection and power; and religion—the moral and metaphysical foundation of the society that was to be judged by its ability to serve the nation's progress. Self-evident as these concepts may seem in our time, in nineteenth-century Egypt it was radically new to see elites and commoners, Turko-Circassians and Arabs, Muslims, and Christians as part of one organic whole, and even more new was it to measure religion by its functionality for a secular political programme.

Selective synthesis

Where did this new discourse come from, and why was the opposition to festive traditions so important for it? It cannot be reduced to either the pre-existing Islamic tradition or the colonial hegemony. It was an innovative synthesis of both, attempting to reform society and its religion to stand against the European challenge, and in doing so, creating a new and dramatic split between "orthodox" and "popular" Islam and "modern" and "backward" culture. When European observers claimed Islam to be a backward and irrational religion, Muslim intellectuals replied with a twofold strategy: reinterpreting part of the religious and cultural traditions as the true, authentic heritage that would match European standards and serve as the moral foundation of the nation's progress, while excluding other parts from the modernist project by labelling them as backward superstitions at worst, popular religion and folklore at best, but never equal to the true, at once authentic and modern culture.

Islamic reformism and nationalist modernism, in their shared attempt to bestow religion and society with a rational and progressive spirit, were never based on a simple takeover of European concepts but rather developed in confrontation with and inspired by them, just as they, in their construction of true authentic heritage, never were based on a simple reference to the past but rather invented and interpreted it anew. Its sources of inspiration included the older Islamic tradition of ritual and moral reform, colonial administrative practice, Victorian piety and ethics, and French social theory, but the outcome of this selective reinterpretation was historically new, and cannot be reduced, in causal or structural terms, to any of the traditions it drew upon by evoking or opposing them.

PHOTO BY SAMULI SCHIELKE, 2004

Mawlid festivities in Cairo

Insofar as the genealogy of modern Islam is a case of a major paradigmatic shift it cannot be grasped by the concept of "discursive tradition" introduced by Talal Asad and increasingly popular in Islamic studies. Speaking of Islam as a discursive tradition is a convenient way to say what Islam "is" while avoiding the pitfalls of essentialism, nevertheless the range of the concept is limited. While it can be very useful for understanding the continuity and persistence of certain topics, it is not very helpful for grasping transformations. This is not so much to criticize Asad (who in his work has demonstrated an outstanding ability to trace historical transformations of both the subtle and the dramatic kind) than the inflationary use of "discursive tradition" as a trendy label and a politically correct way to speak of Islam as something substantial and concrete. Instead, the concept of genealogy, developed by Foucault and elaborated by Asad, appears to be more useful to detect and analyze both the subtle shifts and the dramatic breaks both of which tend to be obliterated by the successive consolidation of discursive formations (rather than traditions, in this case). This is, as Michael Feener demonstrates in another article in this issue, by no means the only possible approach, and we certainly should not fall in the trap of just replacing one "magic" word by another. It does, however, call to attention that intellectual history should be aware of both the traditions and continuities it deals with, as well as of their often subtle and invisible transformations and reinventions.

Distinction and exclusion

The debate on popular festivals shows to what extent the tradition of Islam, its past and present, is invented, how this invention can dramatically shift the lines that mark religion, and how the projection of contemporary discourse to the past can make such shifts largely invisible to later generations. "Invented" does not mean "false" here, but calls attention to the historical shifts of and struggles over Islam among Muslims. By reconfiguring religion to serve the newly invented nation, members of the emerging middle classes claimed power for themselves, and denied it to other groups in society: peasants, the urban poor, guilds, mystical brotherhoods, and the Turko-Circassian political elites. Taking the role of the avant-garde, an elite at once distinguished from "the masses" and committed to their uplifting, nationalist intellectuals could claim the unity of the nation while excluding other contenders from the power to define it. For this purpose, it was necessary not only to create a reading of Islam and modernity that would stand the European challenge, but also to exclude other readings as backward, superstitious, immoral, and erroneous.

Such exclusive tendency has been characteristic of the project of modernity around the globe, and should stand as a reminder that emancipation, enlightenment and empowerment, so much celebrated as key moments of modernity, have been essentially—not coincidentally—accompanied by discipline, exclusion, and domination. And indeed the search for distinction has been characteristic for the aspirants of modernity in Egypt from the very beginnings of the modernization policies, as was noted by Georg August Wallin, a Finnish Orientalist who in 1844 met "one of those scamps whom the Pasha has sent to Europe for study, this one a mechanician, and who have returned half-educated and thousand times worse than before." In the house of a German family in Cairo where both were invited, the discussion turned to the *mahmal* procession, a colourful parade which used to mark the transport from Cairo to Mecca of a new *kiswa* to cover the Ka'ba prior to the Hajj, and Wallin who had greatly enjoyed the procession the same day, was annoyed to hear the Austrian-trained mechanician "condemn and ridicule these customs of his religion, and calling them nonsense."[2]

More than a century later, the distinction through criticism of festive traditions that was undertaken by a member of this (at the time very small) professional class was to become the "normal" point of view concerning religion and society to the degree that its novelty and innovativeness have become invisible, and its adherents able to claim their point of view as the self-evident orthodox Truth.

Notes

1. Hanafi 'Amir, "al-Mawalid: 'adat yajib al-qada''alayha," *as-Siyasah al-Usbu'iyya,* 21 December 1929, 24.
2. Georg August Wallin, in *Georg August Wallins reseanteckningar från Orienten åren 1843-1849: Dagbok och bref*, ed. Sven Gabriel Elmgren (Helsingfors: Frenckell, 1864), 2:265.

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An Image Bazaar for the Devotee

YOUSUF SAEED

India's publishing industry nurtures a unique popular art form—the religious posters in which Islamic themes derive liberally from the images and symbols of Hindu iconography and vice versa. There is more to the diversity of these images, however, than simply the tactics of the industry—the very concepts of Islam's monotheism and iconoclasm are often redefined here. Ironically, some of these images are commonly venerated in south Asia's Muslim society and reveal a liberalism that would mock the current cartoon crisis around the Muslim world.

Walk on any street of an Indian town, and you cannot miss the buzz of popular visual art—cinema billboards, commercial ads, religious images, and even political heroes in giant cutouts. But the most vibrant images are the religious posters and calendars depicting deities, saints, and shrines, sold at shops or roadside stalls near temples, mosques, and shrines. While it is easy to find a large variety of posters for a Hindu devotee, it is also not difficult to buy images depicting Muslim themes and folklore. The majority of Muslim posters in India portray the shrines in Mecca and Medina, or Quranic verses in calligraphy, but one can also find portraits of local saints, their tombs, and miracles, represented as vividly as in any Hindu mythological scene.

Many buyers of the Muslim posters happen to be pilgrims visiting large shrines from small towns and villages. They embark on these pilgrimages, covering in one trip many tombs of saints such as Haji Ali at Mumbai or Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer, especially during the *urs* (death anniversary); naturally, they need to take back souvenirs. And what better gift than a poster that is bright and colourful, has religious as well as decorative value, and helps them relate to the big shrine and its fervour back home. Many posters purchased at major festivals such as Eid or Ramadan, decorate a newly painted house or a shop (as many Hindus do at the festival of Diwali). In the market where these posters are sold, the devotee cannot ignore the many other devotional items such as songbooks, prayer manuals, shiny stickers, 3D images, framed and gold-plated pictures, revolving lampshades, clocks and electronic gizmos, all with the necessary symbols of Mecca and Medina.

And what better gift than a poster that is bright and colourful, has religious as well as decorative value, and helps them relate to the big shrine and its fervour back home.

Interestingly, the artists, manufacturers, and sellers of these images are not necessarily all Muslim. The publishers are often those entrepreneurs who deal with posters of any religion, irrespective of their own faith. One can easily spot the byline of the printer in a corner of the poster: Brijbasi, Khanna; or of the artist such as Balkrishna, Raja, or Swarup. Whether it is a Hindu artist drawing a Muslim theme, or vice versa, does not seem to bar him from expressing the characteristic pathos and devotion particular to the image. In the entire process of image manufacture, no one, including the commissioning person, artist, printer, or distributor, seems to bother about which religion they cater to, as long as their product augments their client's devotion and their client's spending power. But in the process, they do seem to transplant the icons, symbols, and myths across the borders of faith, making these images so unique to their subject.

Between iconoclasm and idolatry

It is important to explore how this iconography has not only been legitimized in Islam, but also allowed to thrive in the form of an urban mass culture in South Asia. So far, no one hears a complaint or blasphemy charge from the orthodox Muslim clergy about these graphic depictions, some of which could look rather provocative to the purists. Is it because these images circulate only between the lower middle class or rural Muslims rather than amongst elite/urban brethren, who define Islam to be purely monotheistic and iconoclastic? Do the purists overlook these posters simply as part of the larger *bid'ati* culture—to be shunned as un-Islamic? Or, are the market forces too powerful to be affected by the purists?

Among the common users of Muslim devotional posters interviewed, many seemed unclear and sometimes confused about the status to be given to these images, unlike, say Hindu devotees, who would use the image or idol of a deity solely for worshipping. Since most Muslim users of these images come from poor or lower middle class or rural areas, many are probably not familiar with the concept of iconoclasm in Islam. They broadly know that idolatry is certainly taboo (and that this is what differentiates them from the Hindus), but the images of local saints, shrines, Islamic folklore, and many symbols of shared culture, transmitted orally in their families, are openly accepted and venerated, without drawing a line between Islamic and non-Islamic—that is, until someone with a Wahhabi bend of mind "*shirks*" them from doing so. Some devoted Muslims who shun iconography do so because of a popular hadith (tradition) ascribed to the Prophet that anyone drawing the picture of a living thing would be asked on the Day of Judgment to fuse life into it. Though one may mention here that the Quran while it does taboo idolatry it does not have a single line prohibiting the drawing of living organisms.

In a Hindu devotional image, there is absolutely no hesitation about the use of figurative icons or plurality of gods. In fact, iconography and pantheism are the very founts of an average Hindu devotee's faith. Hence, an artist's liberty to interpret and use the representative icons results in a variety of Hindu images that reflect her/his own religiosity, as well as a collective memory of the myth. Pantheism is also a boon for the industry—the more the gods and deities, the better the economics. However, in the case of Muslim images, the publisher is catering to a client who seems to fall in a grey area. While some artists and producers are extremely sensitive about Islam's iconoclasm, and consider it a taboo to portray any figurative image, others have less inhibition and draw freely portraits of saints and holy men. But on the whole, one does notice a sense of reluctance of iconography in many Muslim posters—although it does not seem to limit the diversity of visuals and concepts in them.

Sometimes an absolute (or partial) iconoclasm forces an artist to look for more creative ways to illustrate a concept or folklore without representing the taboo figures. Since the Muslim images are not meant for worship, unlike the Hindu ones, they also provide limitless possibilities to an artist to choose the subject matter and innovative symbols. One cautious poster, for instance, simply shows a large knot of a rope with Quranic text at the bottom: "Hold on tight to the rope of the God's message…and do not disperse…." A rosary, a rose plant, a setting sun, and some flying birds, probably to enhance its mundane look, surround the knot. Another creative poster shows 6 arches, each labelled with a prophet's name—Adam, Noah, Moses, Muhammad and so on—showing symbols of popular folklore related to each: an arc for Noah, fire for Abraham, a cradle for Jesus, and so on—but not the persona of any prophet. Thus, there always remains an unlimited scope for commissioning new works based on innovative visual interpretations of Islamic themes without using human or living figures.

IMAGE BY H.R.RAJA / COURTESY OF YOUSUF SAEED

A stereotyped image of an Indian Muslim boy wearing a Turkish cap, with the backdrop of Mecca and Medina

Printers of the divine

The mass-production of devotional and calendar art was probably pioneered in India by a lithographic colour press established in 1894 by Ravi Varma (b. 1848), the self-taught portraitist from the Travancore royal family, whose realist style of painting Hindu gods and goddesses has remained popular till now. Some images dating back to 1920s from the Ravi Varma Press portray Islamic themes such as Mecca, *Duldul* and *Burraq* (mythical stead of the Prophet), in a somewhat company school style.[1] Ravi Varma's enterprise was followed in 1950s by Hemchandra Bhargava (Delhi), and much later by Brijbasi and many others who focused mainly on Muslim images. Even though Mumbai and Chennai remained for decades the most productive centres of religious art, presses in other towns such as Delhi, Sivakasi, Meerut, Calcutta, Nagpur, and Mathura also turned out cheap posters in large numbers.

The publishers often rely on feedback from the streets of what images sell and where. Local competition compels them to commission new work all the time. But, since some of the old masters who painted the classic images of Mecca, Medina, Karbala, or pious Muslim women in the 1960s, are not active any more, a lot of recycling does take place. Some posters today are hurriedly done remakes of the old images, further decorated with tasteless frills to dazzle the innocent buyer. An artist's quest for showing maximum attributes of a saint and his shrine, using minimum effort, sometimes ends up in a pastiche where the arch and dome come from separate faded photos, the saint's person comes from an old painting, the trees and hills are cut out from a Swiss landscape, the lion from a wildlife magazine, and the *diyas* (lamps) from a Hindu poster. Such cost-cutting measures and cheap assembly lines often produce collages that seem devoid of any visual harmony.

However, among the more competitive and successful publishers in India today, the Chennai-based J.B. Khanna & Co., works at a different plane altogether. With a three-generation old business, Rajesh Khanna, the proprietor, has recently acquired some of the latest state of the art equipment from Mitsubishi that allows him to produce devotional posters at an extremely low-price but with much good quality. The computer makes even his recycling and pastiches as seamless as new. His countrywide business is dominating the small printers. The biggest threat to the J.B. Khanna poster business comes from the frequent piracy of their designs and images.[2] Besides pirating full images, many unscrupulous printers plagiarize Khannas' images or image parts by making slight changes. The new technology, however, gives Khanna a comfortable edge over their competitors, as their dazzling but cheap posters flood the market every Diwali and Eid.

Images for utility

Among the Muslim images that do brisk business are the tantras or talisman printed in attractive style. The traditional practice of treating or solving day-to-day problems of health, business, family, security and so on, through the use of amulets has existed in the Muslim societies since ages. Some of the 99 names or attributes of God are commonly used in talismans: *Ya Razzaq* (O, Sustainer) calligraphed repeatedly in a poster found in many Muslim shops is meant for *makan aur dukan ki khair-o barkat* (the welfare and prosperity of the home and the shop). The small print at the bottom of the poster says, "the enemies of the householder/shopkeeper would bite the dust; the shop would prosper, the profits would soar; the home would be secure from diseases; others' spells would go vain…" For its utility, one cannot help but compare it with Hindu posters of the goddess Lakshmi doling out coins from her hands, with mini astrological charts in the backdrop.

Most amulets are issued for specific problems and users, and cannot be used in general. Some were originally drawn or hand-written in one colour. But when a publisher decided to print these for mass consumption, the artist copying them added colour, floral patterns, and the necessary icons of Mecca and Medina, crescent and star, and so on. But according to a senior *aalim* who issues talismans, "these artistic additions may affect the potency of an amulet, as they are not a part of prescribed prayer." The common believers buying them do not pay much attention to these, as long as the poster describes in small print the benefits of the talisman. An image that both looks beautiful on the wall and "benefits" their lives is an ideal gift to buy. Hence a compact disc printed with the *safar ki dua* (prayer for a safe journey) hanging from your rearview mirror is the most attractive way to show off your car as well as guard yourself from road accidents in India.

Today, the publishers of traditional Muslim images face a new kind of challenge, in the form of a "sanitization" of religious iconography by the purists. Some new publishers, many of them Muslim, have started producing "educational" charts for the elite and educated class of urban Muslims, or those settled abroad. The producers of such charts completely ignore the earthy folklore of the past, and start from scratch—teaching a young Muslim how to make an ablution (washing before the prayer), the correct postures of a prayer, the family tree of the prophets, the timeline of Islam's history, and various moral commandments, in a visual language and symbolism that does not connect with the syncretic past. Such sanitized images may look pretty on a whitewashed wall of a rich Muslim home, but probably not in a roadside haircutting saloon, which continues to be blessed visually with a saint's miracles.

Notes

1. Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger, *Popular Indian Art, Raja Ravi Varma and the Printed Gods of India* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2003).
2. NK: JB Khanna and Company, in *Indian Printer and Publisher* (NOIDA, June 2003).

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Pious Entertainment
Al-Saha Traditional Village

MONA HARB

In the southern suburb of Beirut (*al-Dahiya*), away from mainstream tourism avenues privileged by the post-war reconstruction agendas of Lebanese entrepreneurs and elites, alternative forms of entertainment have been developing for specific types of constituencies. Fifteen years after the organization of the "Islamic sphere," under Hizbullah's umbrella, into financial, political and social networks, new places providing the pious with popular culture services have been multiplying in al-Dahiya. "Al-Saha" belongs to this world of pious entertainment and forms an interesting case-study for understanding the cultural features of the Islamic sphere in Lebanon.[1]

Lebanon is well known for being a major tourist attraction for Arabs and foreigners, who enjoy its position as a "bridge between East and West" and who are seduced by its advertised function as the "Paris of the Middle East." During the post-war reconstruction period, Lebanon's main priority was to confirm this service role and to enhance its infrastructure for tourist attractions. Large public and private investments were made towards this aim: the reconstruction of Beirut's downtown, the building of highways and roads, the restoration of major archaeological and historic sites, as well as the development of a variety of consumption venues such as cafés, restaurants, beach resorts, hotels, and amusement parks. Away from mainstream tourism avenues, in the southern suburb of Beirut, alternative forms of entertainment have been developing for other types of constituencies.

> [Al-Saha] provides an alternative entertainment experience to the visitor—an entertainment rooted in an eclectic mélange of Lebanese, Arab, and Islamic "traditions", imbued with an "educational" message about the value of heritage and of piety.

The southern suburb of Beirut, labelled al-Dahiya, is inhabited by half a million residents, mostly Shia. For the past fifteen years, al-Dahiya has been operating predominantly under the management of Hizbullah which organizes service delivery to its residents through its elected local governments as well as its network of social institutions. Under Hizbullah's umbrella, an Islamic sphere has emerged organizing social and cultural practices in al-Dahiya around a variety of piety principles. Analysis of the features of this sphere goes beyond the scope of this paper. In recent years, the Islamic sphere has been materializing into new physical places providing entertainment services to the pious, such as restaurants and cafés, amusement parks, sports centres, private beaches, exhibition halls and summer youth camps. Al-Saha Traditional Village belongs to this world of pious entertainment and forms an interesting case study for understanding more closely the cultural features of the rising Islamic sphere in Lebanon.

Building heritage in al-Dahiya

Inaugurated in 2001, al-Saha is located on a major urban artery linking the international airport of Beirut to the renovated city centre. The Traditional Village includes, on a surface area of seven thousands square metres restaurants, cafés, terraces, shops, a wedding hall, a motel, a small museum, a library, a children's playground and prayer rooms. Al-Saha does not serve alcohol and provides an environment complying with pious Muslim practices, or what are commonly referred to as *shar'i* practices. Al-Saha is managed by al-Mabarrat, a philanthropic organization led by Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah,[2] who also administers an array of education and charity associations for orphans and needy children. All profits made by al-Saha go to al-Mabarrat.

Al-Saha is designed according to a representation of "traditional" Arabic and Islamic architecture. Flanked by a gas station (also owned by al-Mabarrat), the building stands in the landscape of al-Dahiya as a strange addition that does not relate to the context: its façades are covered with carved stones, domes stand out from its ceiling, a minaret-like structure appears from within its volume, architectural elements and features that the public is accustomed to seeing in nineteenth century historic buildings of Mount Lebanon are pasted here and there. The ensemble was designed by Jamal Makki, an architect heading the architectural firm of al-Mabarrat. He clearly spells out his vision for al-Saha:

"Al-Mabarrat needed a financially productive project. I started thinking about a project that would fit the role given to the city of Beirut. Tourism seemed like an appropriate choice. However, how would you make a tourism project in a site that has no tourist assets?! There is no sea and no mountains here! Moreover, we are in an area known for its ugliness and its urban pollution. So, I thought of creating a project turned inwards and which acts as a tourist attraction in itself. I wanted something everybody would visit: Lebanese, Arabs, foreigners. I started thinking what is the *idea* [in English] that could mobilize a mosaic of different publics? … Of course, it is nostalgia, history, tradition! Everybody feels good about remembering history and tradition! People travel to Spain to admire Islamic and Arab architecture!"[3]

The project is, without doubt, impressive in its scale and in its density of details. The interior conveys a "traditional village" mood that is enhanced by a multitude of features and objects that appeal to the collective memory of the visitors and to the perceptions they probably have of Arabic and Islamic heritage. The architect explains that the challenge was to translate the concepts of history and tradition into elements that materialize their meanings to people:

"I was inspired by the books of Anis Freiha [a famous Lebanese novelist who has written extensively about Lebanese traditional village life]. I took all the descriptive elements from Freiha's books and materialized them in built form, in architectural details, and through artefacts and objects. Here you have Abou-Ahmad house, and here you have Abou-Khalil house, this is the well of the village, this is the '*alliya* (terrace), this is *al-saha* (the open space)… All the objects you see here are mentioned in his books. I want to show that Anis Freiha was right: the village life is the genuine true life that inspires good and generosity. Rida was wrong [in reference to Freiha's son, who rejects his father's nostalgia in his famous book *Isma' ya Rida*, and tells him that the village life is fake and full of romantic lies]. This project is about the values of the Lebanese traditional village, and how these values will invade the city!"

Hybrid meanings of tradition

The meanings of tradition in al-Saha are multiple and hybrid, borrowing meanings from varied sources. First, tradition is Lebanese, as portrayed through the reference made to Anis Freiha. Interestingly, Freiha's romantic narratives of the old Lebanese village have inspired various national popular culture productions, which largely privilege Christian representations of (Mount) Lebanon, at the expense of other histories. Thus, the spatial and physical materialization of tradition through Freiha's narratives for the purpose of creating an Islamic friendly environment highlights a clear claim to the Lebanese traditional values. Second, tradition is Arab and Islamic (both levels are confused in the discourse): al-Saha proudly claims its belonging to an Arab/Islamic world,

renown for its poetry, its music and its arts and aims to show that "Islamic groups in Lebanon can participate to the production of culture and heritage in a superior way."[4] Its goals have been met, as the project was awarded in 2005 an architectural prize by the Arab Cities Association for its "daring design and its contribution to traditional architecture."

Tradition in al-Saha is not only physically materialized for reasons of identity or for the pleasure of aesthetics. As the architect reminds us, "Tradition is profusely displayed in al-Saha to force itself upon the users so they learn about their origins and their identity while they are being entertained." Thus, the mission of al-Saha seems to be also educational and aims at dealing with its consumers as active individuals/"citizens." For that reason, al-Saha is setting up an Arabic poetry library which will be part of a network of Arab poetry houses, and will also act as a meeting place for poets. In addition, al-Saha prides itself on hosting specific types of musical performances, such as *zajal* (a specific type of collective chanting that praises traditional Arab values of pride, honour and nationhood), as well as *anashid* (songs which convey messages related to religion, identity, and resistance).

PHOTO BY MONA HARB, 2005

Shopping alley at al-Saha village, Beirut, 2005

Since its opening in 2001, with one restaurant, al-Saha has been a rising success: al-Mabarrat did not expect such high financial returns. Rapidly, the project expanded to include the variety of services it includes today, and is still planning further developments within the Village itself, but also beyond national borders, as al-Mabarrat will be opening a branch of al-Saha in Qatar. Today, the Village attracts between 700 and 1,000 users daily: families and couples, youth and elderly. Several associations hold their fundraising activities in al-Saha as well. The variety of dress codes reveals the eclectic profiles of users. Though al-Saha is a "pious" place, its customers do not all abide by the pious dress code (several women are not veiled and dressed provocatively while men follow fashionable dress and hairstyle codes not particularly compatible with Islamic norms). Users of al-Saha mostly spend time eating, chatting, gazing and smoking hubble-bubble. They are often gathered in family groups, although exclusive female or male clusters are found. Typically, youth groups take their own tables and spend their time playing computer games, surfing the Internet or chatting on laptops rented from al-Saha. There are also many tourists, Arabs as well as foreigners, especially during holidays and summers. The large numbers of pious Arabs discloses the recent growth of the transnational demand for an entertainment respectful of Islamic codes and values and simultaneously characterized by quality and aesthetics.[5]

How to explain such a success? In a city where public spaces are scarce and have been increasingly replaced by private spaces of consumption, such as cafés, restaurants, shopping centres and malls, al-Saha's ability to attract such a large and varied number of users is not very surprising. Located in a dense area housing half a million people, of mostly middle-income, al-Saha meets the demands of a big pious clientele, wary about its Islamic identity and in need of entertainment. As one of our informants told us: "Who said that pious Muslims do not want to have fun?! We are in more need for fun than anybody else."[6] Moreover, al-Saha provides pious Arab tourists with opportune spaces to spend their money (for Islamic charity) and their time (learning heritage through consumption), while granting foreign tourists an exotic flavour of "traditional" heritage mixed with the "thrill" of being in the notorious al-Dahiya. Indeed, al-Saha also aims at proposing an alternative image of al-Dahiya which is stigmatized as the Shia ghetto of the capital, or also the stronghold of Hizbullah: the project "encourages visitors to come to a place of the city that always inspired fear and to see that it is just a part of the city."[7]

Consuming piety?

Al-Saha reveals and materializes a culture that has been hidden to the eyes of the Lebanese and to those of the average tourist. In this sense, it provides an alternative entertainment experience to the visitor—an entertainment rooted in an eclectic mélange of Lebanese, Arab, and Islamic "traditions", imbued with an "educational" message about the value of heritage and of piety. In addition, al-Saha discloses the extent to which the Islamic sphere in Lebanon has become part of an every day life for many and how this sphere holds transnational linkages with other pious publics.

However, several questions arise about how these forms of entertainment, largely rooted in consumerism, affect pious practices and, more generally, the Islamic sphere they relate to. Is the Islamic sphere losing its moral authority and legitimacy by accepting the market logic of consumption? Is al-Saha related to "the rising phenomenon of religious consumption within the wider context of increasing consumerism and the global market" like Abdelrahman explores in the case of Egypt?[8] Will such places lead to social polarization within the Islamic sphere and reveal hidden social inequalities? Or will we observe, on the contrary, a reinforcement of the Islamic sphere, which is carving its own niche within the popular culture landscape, and thus appealing to a broader potential constituency? More fieldwork on the practices of consumption and the processes of commodification are necessary before we attempt to answer those questions which will guide our future investigations.[9]

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Notes

1. This article is part of a larger paper presented at the ISIM workshop (In)Visible Histories: The Politics of Placing the Past, Amsterdam, 2-3 September 2005.
2. Al-Saha is thus not managed by Hizbullah. Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah is an independent Shia *marja'iyya* (reference). It is however agreed that Fadlallah and Hizbullah belong to the same Islamic sphere.
3. Interview, Architect of al-Saha, 19 August 2005.
4. See N. Al-Sayyad, ed., *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment* (London: Praeger, 2001), 5.
5. See A. Al-Hamarneh and Ch. Steiner, "Islamic Tourism: Rethinking the Strategy of Tourism Development in the Arab World after September 11, 2004," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle-East* 24, no.1 (2004): 173-182.
6. Interview, Head of the Educational Mobilization Unit of Hizbullah, 19 August 2005.
7. Interview, Architect of al-Saha, 19 August 2005.
8. See M. AbdelRahman, "Consumerism, Islam and Fashion in Egypt Today" (2005, unpublished paper).
9. This preliminary work is part of a larger ongoing research project on the cultural productions of the Islamic sphere in Lebanon undertaken with Lara Deeb, Assistant Professor at Women's Studies, UC Irvine.

Creating Islamic Places
Tombs and Sanctity in West Java

JULIAN MILLIE

Identification with authoritative Islamic figures and concepts extends to landscape elements, and many topographical features in West Java become Islamic landscapes through names of Islamic saints and leading figures of Sufi tradition. Such places are regarded as sites of *karamat* (sacred power), and are visited by Sundanese Muslims, whose penchant for making supplications at graves supports a domestic tourist industry.

The Muslim traditions of West Java, the region occupied by the Sundanese ethnic group, share a characteristic common to those of many of Indonesia's Islamic communities; they often represent local conceptions of spirituality and power within specifically Islamic frameworks. In literary representations of the early Muslims of West Java, for example, these figures inevitably travel to Mecca to meet famous Muslims, often returning with an object that grants them power in their proselytizing efforts. This article explores Pasir Jengkol, a site notable for the tomb of Shaykh Jaelani whose name brings to mind Abdul Qadir al-Jaelani (561/1166), one of Islam's most revered intercessors. Apart from giving information about the site, this article discusses two contrasting ways in which holy sites in West Java are interpreted as sacred places. The first is by the connection of the site with a saintly person (*wali*). This connection is largely biographical and textual in nature. The second is through the landscape of the place itself, a connection which is experienced in an unmediated way by the pilgrim. I argue that Pasir Jengkol succeeds only through the second of these processes, in contrast to more successful sites in West Java at which the two processes operate together to create a sacred quality. One of these successful sites, the tomb of Shaykh Abdul Muhyi at Pamijahan, is referred to for comparative purposes.

The tomb

Pasir Jengkol lies above a small hill in a densely forested location in the regency of Tasikmalaya, West Java Province. The site is serene, and the complete absence of vendors testifies that this is not a popular site for pilgrimages. A number of people from the nearby village act as *kuncen* (guardians) and are able to guide pilgrims through a supplication ritual at the tomb. The first step in the ritual visit is the entry to the tomb; the guardian pauses at the threshold before entering while loudly offering three blessings to the *ruh* (spirit) of the Shaykh. He is believed to maintain a non-corporeal presence in the tomb. The tomb's interior is dominated by the casket containing the Shaykh's body. The ritual continues with the oral invocation known as *tawassul* (supplications to mediators), in which gifts of *al-fatihah* (the first chapter of the Quran) are offered up to various parties, including the Prophet Muhammad, Abdul Qadir al-Jaelani and Sunan Gunung Jati (the figure held by tradition to have brought Islam to West Java). After this, visitors are asked to verbalize their *hajat* (intention) directly to the Shaykh. The ritual ends with the recitation of Quranic verses.

It is not surprising to find Jaelani associated with a tomb. His name bears great authority for Muslims in West Java, where rituals in which his intercession is sought are popular. By its association with this most illustrious of *wali*, Pasir Jengkol derives legitimacy as a potent place for making supplications. Such appropriations are not uncommon in Indonesian traditions: Abdul Qadir is held to be the bearer of Islam to some Gayo communities in the north of the island of Sumatra[1] and Martin van Bruinessen has noted the existence of a similar narrative cherished by the Kanoman *kraton* (royal house) of Cirebon, West Java.[2] Abdul Qadir is not the only *wali* whose name is associated with a sacred site in West Java. Not far from Pasir Jengkol is Cipareuan, where the tomb of Jafar Sidik is located. Jafar Sidik (died 148/765) is remembered as a Shiite Imam and Sufi teacher.

The tomb of Shaykh Jaelani is not counted among the well-known tombs of the area. Not far to the west of Pasir Jengkol, at Pamijahan, is found a far more celebrated site, the tomb of Shaykh Abdul Muhyi. This man is recorded in genealogies as the *khalifah* (successor) of the famed Acehnese mystic of the Shattariyah Sufi Order, Abdul Rauf of Singkel (Aceh). Abdul Muhyi's tomb is also connected to Jaelani. A cave at the complex is thought to have been used by Abdul Muhyi to meditate with Abdul Qadir al-Jaelani.

Sacrality and biography

Pasir Jengkol lacks biographical or genealogical details about the holy person lying at rest there. The primary guardian of the tomb, Hassanuddin, claims no line of descent to Shaykh Jaelani. According to him, nobody in the village knows much about the tomb's history or its occupant. They know that Shaykh Jaelani was of Arab descent, that he had studied in Cirebon (on Java's north coast), and later had joined Abdul Muhyi in his struggle for Islam in the highlands of West Java. They had fought battles against what Hassanuddin described as "Javanese followers of the Hindu-Buddhist religion."

Hassanuddin was not aware that there previously existed a considerable body of information about Shaykh Jaelani, most notably in the oral traditions of the area. Some of this is preserved in an academic exercise by Edi Haer, a recently deceased employee of the Department of Education in Tasikmalaya.[3] His thesis contains tales concerning Shaykh Jaelani collected from elders of the villages near Pasir Jengkol. According to these tales, Shaykh Jaelani was delegated by Sunan Gunung Jati, the famous sixteenth century proselytizer of Islam on Java's north coast, to spread Islam in the area of Pasir Jengkol. He was assisted by Shaykh Abdul Muhyi, who was performing the same task in nearby Pamijahan. Abdul Muhyi's wife was from the Pasir Jengkol area, and the two Shaykhs were companions. They would perform the Friday prayer together in Mecca, making the journey from West Java using the tunnel from a cave in Pamijahan that, according to tradition, was utilized by Abdul Muhyi for that purpose.

> [T]he physical attributes of the landscape became the vehicle for expressing the site's sacred power.

One of the stories collected by Edi Haer is as follows: Shaykh Jaelani was travelling to Pamijahan with Abdul Muhyi. Suddenly they were confronted by three thieves intent on murdering them. Shaykh Jaelani used his powers to overcome one with tiredness, the second with itchiness, and the third with fatigue. The two Shaykhs then escaped. But the three assailants used their own powers to throw off their impediments and chased the Shaykhs. Shaykh Jaelani then transformed the road upon which the thieves were chasing them into a dead-end (*jalan buntu*), frustrating the villains. Nowadays, the village of Cibuntu marks that spot.

Yet this material seems to have dropped from memory in Pasir Jengkol, and hence Shaykh Jaelani is a saint lacking biography and genealogy. Sundanese are acutely aware of losses of heritage such as this.

PHOTO BY DR D. A. RINKES, 1910

Supplicants at the grave of Shaykh Abdul Muhyi in Tasikmalaya, West Java, 1910

One often hears the lament that "all our books were taken to Holland," referring to the plentiful material relating to Sundanese Islamic tradition collected by Ch. Snouck Hurgronje and others. Discontinuity in oral tradition is also relevant. The *sasakala* (origin stories) are protected by ritual practitioners who, for various reasons may be reluctant to pass on their knowledge. This occurs simultaneously with a cultural shift whereby the religious legitimacy of rituals associated with sacred places is not so apparent for a younger generation receiving its education in state funded schools and whose cultural awareness is mediated by modern media. Finally, Tasikmalaya has suffered great instability. The area had been destabilized in the war of independence in the late 1940s, and in the decades after that havoc was caused by the Darul Islam *separatist* movement. During this period, according to some residents of Tasikmalaya, many items of heritage significance were destroyed.

For all these reasons, Pasir Jengkol is textually poor. This is not the case with the nearby tomb of Jaelani's companion, Abdul Muhyi. Abdul Muhyi's name appears in a number of genealogies linking him to other sacred sites in West Java and to well known teachers in Aceh and Banten. The tomb derives authority from these influential associations. Furthermore, a number of teachers living near his gravesite in Pamijahan possess manuscripts containing Sufi teachings and genealogies in which they themselves appear as successors of Abdul Muhyi. Cultivation of this legacy adds to their status. A Ph.D. thesis has been completed about his tomb and the related traditions, a textual creation which significantly enhances the tomb's stature.[4] For these reasons, Abdul Muhyi is perceived as a figure whose influence extends outside of Pamijahan. This type of construction of sacrality does not occur in Pasir Jengkol, which simply lacks the discursive materials necessary for it to take form.

Sacrality and place

Yet, a saintly biography is not the only means leading people to perceive graves as places of sacred power. The physical location also stimulates this. Topography can create a sacrality that is independent of the saintly identity associated with the place. As noted, Pasir Jengkol is currently poor in terms of narratives involving the saint, but the landscape itself nevertheless leads pilgrims to construct the place as sacred. An incident that occurred during my visit to Pasir Jengkol nicely illustrates how this occurs. As we were leaving Pasir Jengkol, one of my Sundanese companions named Atam commented on a massive tree located by the enclosure's entrance. Atam lived in a village about two hour's drive from Pasir Jengkol, but had never previously been there. Hassanuddin (the guardian) said that the tree had in the past been cut down, but had then righted itself. Later that evening, when Atam and I were conversing socially with a group of people in his village Atam conveyed only two pieces of information to his friends about our visit to Pasir Jengkol. He firstly described its whereabouts, and then spent some time retelling the anecdote about the tree. No information was offered about Shaykh Jaelani. Instead, the physical attributes of the landscape became the vehicle for expressing the site's sacred power. I observed that although Atam found this sufficiently interesting to tell his friends, he, nor his friends, was not overly impressed by it. Perhaps this was because many Sundanese conventionally associate locations of natural beauty or unusual features such as large rocks or trees with non-corporeal beings. An isolated tomb in a beautiful location automatically creates an aura of sacrality. Against this background, his understanding of the sacred quality of Shaykh Jaelani's tomb required no reference to the individual himself.

If we compare this with the situation in Pamijahan, we realise how much wealthier that site is in terms of its sacred references. Pamijahan is no more beautiful than Pasir Jengkol, but at Pamijahan the guardians tell stories that bring authoritative Islamic figures in contact with the landscape. Take this example, which concerns a deep cave or tunnel visited by pilgrims to Pamijahan: Abdul Muhyi would use the tunnel to attend the Friday prayer in Mecca. Once he arrived late, puffing because his habit of smoking had left him breathless. Abdul Qadir al-Jaelani appeared to him and reprimanded him for smoking. The Pamijahan enclosure to this day remains a non-smoking zone. These stories see the biographical and landscape elements brought together. For the pilgrim, the Sundanese landscape is transformed into a specifically Islamic one by the "presence" of canonical Islamic figures in the stories.

Conclusion

Pamijahan and Pasir Jengkol contrast in the way visitors are able to construct the places as sacred. Textual resources affirm Abdul Muhyi as a figure of influence throughout Indonesia, and the guardians of the tomb make the site an Islamic landscape through stories in which topographical elements are brought into contact with Islamic notables. People approach the site confident that the tomb's occupant is an intercessor of potency. It is no wonder that bus groups are continually ferrying visitors to the tomb, granting the local community a constant flow of income from parking and entrance fees, and from the sale of souvenirs, cigarettes, food, and drinks. The historical representation of the person buried at Pasir Jengkol, by contrast, is weak. The lack of oral and written textual resources makes it difficult for Shaykh Jaelani to appear as a compelling intercessor for pilgrims, and it attracts few visitors. It is to some degree the natural environment of the place that sustains its sacrality, and in this way the tomb is not remarkable amongst the many sites of natural beauty in the sacred topography of the Sundanese.

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Notes

1. J.R. Bowen, *Muslims through discourse: religion and ritual in Gayo society* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).
2. Martin van Bruinessen, "Shaykh 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jîlânî and the Qâdiriyya in Indonesia," in "The Qâdiriyyah Order," ed. Thierry Zarcone, Ekrem Isin and Arthur Buehler, special issue, *Simurg: Journal of the History of Sufism* (Istanbul) 1-2 (2000).
3. Edi Haer, *Tindjauan terhadap tjerita-tjerita rakjat jang terdapat didaerah ketjamatan Tjibalong kabupaten Tasikmalaja; skripsi untuk melengkapi tugas-tugas dan memenuhi sjarat-sjarat untuk udjian sardjana muda pendidikan* (Institut keguruan dan Ilmu pendidikan Bandung extension Tasikmalaya, 1970).
4. Dissertation by Tommy Christomy, a lecturer of Universitas Indonesia currently working at Hankuk University in Seoul. A broadly representative example of his work about Abdul Muhyi is "Shattariyyah Tradition in West Java: The case of Pamijahan," *Studia Islamika* 8, no.2 (2001): 55-82.

Embodied Morality and Social Practice in Syria

PAULO G. PINTO

Sufism plays an important role in shaping contemporary Muslim religiosity in Syria. In order to understand the impact of the normative framework of Sufism in the social practices of its adherents we have to look at the processes of embodiment of its symbols and values as the forms of religious subjectivity that constitute the basis of Sufi identities. The enactment of these embodied principles as moral performances allows the emergence of new circuits of solidarity, moral authority, and social distinction in the Syrian public sphere.

The religious landscape in Syria encompasses a plurality of interpretations and practices of Islam, ranging from text-oriented Salafi religiosity to Sufi mysticism, which are experienced and expressed in a context of enhanced public display of individual and collective piety.[1] Islam as a lived and/or idealized religious tradition constitutes a major source of meaning and identity in the Syrian society, providing the individuals with both collective support and moral justification for their social practices. Therefore, there is a constant expression and affirmation of various Islamic symbols, practices, and values as the normative framework for participation in the public sphere.

The establishment of particular interpretations and practices of the Islamic tradition as public norm in the Syrian society is done less by the elaboration and circulation of discourses aiming to inscribe Islam in the political institutions of Syrian society, than through the continuous enactment of embodied religious dispositions in the ordinary practices of Muslims in their social interactions. The overtly political interpretations of Islam that were fostered by the Muslim Brothers gained social appeal as a form of opposition to the Baathist regime during the 1970s and 1980s. However, Islamist discourses declined as a factor of mobilization in the Syrian society since the military confrontation between the Islamic opposition and the Syrian army in the city of Hama in 1982.[2] On the other hand, the strength of Islam as a symbolic and normative framework for social practice remained unaltered and actually increased during this same period.

> [T]his man presented both his religious piety . . . , and his "modern asceticism" . . . , as complementary parts of his moral performance.

The conspicuous public display of signs of individual and collective Muslim piety—such as veiling for women, wearing a beard for men, and mosque attendance for both sexes—became a common sight throughout Syria, constituting both an affirmation of religious identity and a particular form of participation in the public sphere. While these religious identities are clearly connected to various forms of idealization and imagination of an "Islamic society," they do not amount to an integrated and coherent project with a clear plan of action in the realm of formal politics. In general, we can say that the efforts in affirming Islam as the normative framework for the Syrian society shifted from an overarching Islamist project centred in the political control of the state to a plurality of religious discourses and practices focusing on the moral reform of the individual.

Sufism has an important role in channelling and shaping the growing demand for religious knowledge and Islamic forms of personal piety that characterizes contemporary Muslim religiosity in Syria. The charismatic character of the Sufi communities allows them to spread their influence over a large social spectrum. Reformed forms of Sufism that try to limit the mystical path to Quranic principles, such as the one proposed by Shaykh Ahmad Kuftaru (d. 2004), who combined the functions of Mufti of Syria and head of the Kuftariyya Sufi Order, have a strong influence among middle-class Muslims in Damascus.[3] On the other hand most Sufi communities in Aleppo and, also, Damascus have their religious practices and power relations shaped by shared understandings of *baraka* (grace/sacred power) and its expression in *karamat* (miraculous deeds) performed by the shaykh and his disciples. Reformed and traditional forms of Sufism are often combined in the discourses and practices of Sufi shaykhs and their disciples in Syria.

Ritual and embodiment: Sufi constructions of the self

In order to understand the impact of the normative framework of Sufism in the social practices of its adherents we have to look to the processes of embodiment of its symbols and values as mystical experiences and forms of religious subjectivity, which constitute the basis of Sufi identities. The Sufi communities in Syria have the *rabita* (personal and devotional link) between shaykh and each disciple as their main structuring principle. This personal relation of *murshid* (master) and *murid* (disciple) can be lived as an intense reorganization of the disciple's self if he/her enters the process of *tarbiya* (mystical initiation) in *tariqa* (Sufi path) under the shaykh's guidance, or in more a diffuse way through the attendance of the collective rituals of the *zawiya* (ritual lodge).

The disciplinary practices that constitute Sufi initiation aim to control and reshape the *nafs* (self) of the disciple, so as to detach it from the material universe of worldly appearances and direct it towards the esoteric universe of *haqiqa* (divine reality/truth). The Sufi initiation varies greatly in content, length, and elaboration, but my ethnographic observations in zawiyas linked to the Qadiriyya, the Rifa'iyya, and the Shadhiliyya in Aleppo revealed an overall structure that starts with the memorization and recitation of the Qur'an, proceeds to the study of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and continues with the study of classical and modern Sufi texts. As the disciple moves further in the initiation path the shaykh assigns him more complex and extenuating mystical exercises.

These exercises can range from the silent recitation of the names of God with the help of a *masbaha* (prayer-beads) to a period of complete *khalwa* (reclusion), which takes place in some Qadiri and Shadhili zawiyas in Aleppo in order to make the disciple engage his whole self in the practice of meditation and the dhikr (mystical evocation of God´s names). These mystical exercises allow the disciple to embody religious values and moral dispositions as body positions, corporeal sensations, and physical abilities. The passage from textual study to mystical exercise symbolizes for the Sufis the progression from the *zahiri* (exoteric) intellectual understanding of religious truths to the *batini* (esoteric) experiential apprehension of the divine reality.

The religious experiences that are lived by the Sufis as both mystical states and stages in the Sufi path are not purely subjective phenomena, as they must be expressed and validated within the normative framework of the Sufi tradition. The achievement of a certain degree in the Sufi initiation must be constantly proved through the performance of ordeals and the public expression of mystical states in the collective rituals of the Sufi communities. These rituals are usually open to anyone who wants to participate, gathering the shaykh's disciples, members of the community, occasional participants in the ritual, and visitors.

Therefore, the *hadra* (ritual gatherings) of the Sufi communities constitute arenas of production, expression, affirmation, and dispute of mystical experiences and the religious identities that they ground. The main Sufi collective ritual is the dhikr. It varies in content and style of performance not only between different Sufi orders, but also among zawiyas that are linked to the same Sufi order. The dhikr enacts ideas of order, both social and mystical, and power as they are embodied in the religious persona of the shaykh who presides it.

This is well expressed in the dhikr of the two main zawiyas of the Qadiriyya in Aleppo, the zawiya al-Hilaliyya, and the zawiya al-Badinjkiyya. The dhikr of these zawiyas have almost identical symbolic content, but differ greatly in terms of their ritual performance. The dhikr of the Hilaliyya enacts an ideal of harmonious articulation of the individual mystical experiences within the religious and social order framed by the Sharia and embodied by Shaykh Hilali. The dhikr of the Badinjkiyya emphasizes emotional intensity in the performance of mystical states. The individual mystical experiences achieved in this ritual are hierarchically ordained as effects of Shaykh Badinjki's baraka, which is constantly expressed in the performance of miraculous deeds, such as religious healing.

The influence of Sufism in the Syrian society extends beyond the Sufi communities via services performed by the Sufi shaykhs for a wider audience, such as the dispensation of religious knowledge, religious healing, conflict mediation, and charity. In addition to that, various forms of individual piety or pragmatic religiosity are also channelled into the religious framework of Sufism through the use of amulets, the cult of saints, and the reading of mystical texts.

© REUTERS, 1998

The late Shaykh Ahmad Kuftaru (c) with students at the school for Islamic Studies, Damascus, 1998

Social practice as moral performance: Sufism in the public sphere

The process of mystical initiation as well as the ritual socialization in the Sufi communities aims at embodying the symbolic, practical, and normative framework of Sufism as a set of moral dispositions that guide the social practices of its adepts. This embodied sense of morality is usually referred by the term *adab*, which in its Sufi usage means more than the simple compliance with rules of civility or social behaviour, as it is a practical expression of inner qualities of the self in their posture, gestures, glances and emotional states. It is thus not by chance that the acquisition of adab is usually coupled with the notion of *akhlaq* (morals) in the discourse of the adepts of Sufism. The centrality of the notion of akhlaq for the definition of Sufi identities can be seen in the frequently repeated Sufi adage, "all Sufism is *akhlaq* (morality), so those who advance in terms of morality are also advancing in terms of Sufism."[4]

The acquisition of adab has to be constantly proven and validated through moral performance in the public sphere, creating a framework of individual exemplarity upon which are built social evaluations and expectations about the proper social behaviour in the public sphere. It is common that the disciplinary reconfiguration of the self within a Sufi framework also leads to the reorganization of the social relations of the individual and gives an exemplary character to the individual performance in various social settings.

An example of this kind of "inner conversion" was the case of a young engineer in his thirties from a very secular and rich family who became a disciple of Shaykh Nadim, a Shadhili shaykh of Aleppo. He not only adopted a very strict moral behaviour, growing a beard, stopping to drink and to intermingle freely with women, but also gradually reshaped all his social relations according to the moral principles preached by his shaykh. It is interesting to note that this man presented both his religious piety, such as regular mosque attendance and participation in the Sufi hadra, and his "modern asceticism," such as the practice of sports and a strong work ethic, as complementary parts of his moral performance.

Sometimes this process can create challenges to shared assumptions about the common good social practices that are culturally legitimate can be abandoned or changed as a result of the moral performance of individuals grouped together by their affiliation to a Sufi shaykh. For example, three disciples of Shaykh Nadim who owned shops in the district of Bab al-Faraj in Aleppo decided to abandon the practice of bargaining and haggling over prices in their commercial activities, as they felt that it was contrary to the Sufi principle of *sidq* (correctness). When asked these disciples whether this was not bad for their business, one of them answered, "We have good people who buy from our shops because they know they can trust us. More than that, our master [pointing to Shaykh Nadim's picture hanging on the wall of his shop] is ever protecting us from temptation."

The meaning of the principle of sidq was shaped by an experiential universe defined by a strong sense of personal and public morality combined with trust and respect towards the shaykh, which was enacted by the moral performance of the disciples in their ordinary practices. While other merchants criticized this methodical moral performance as excessive and exhibitionistic, the organization of a moral space for economic exchange, symbolically demarcated by Shaykh Nadim's picture, attracted a regular clientele. Therefore, this orchestrated collective moral performance created the possibility of the emergence of stable circles of shared anticipation and trust even in a public arena as volatile as the marketplace.

This emergence of new circuits of solidarity, moral authority, and social distinction can bring about the re-signification of social practices and the redistribution of prestige, power, and authority in the public sphere. The processes of social change and reconfiguration generated by the performative mobilization of Sufi subjectivities and embodied principles in the public sphere constitute important elements to understand the constraints and possibilities present in the Syrian society, as Syria faces serious political and economic challenges in the international arena.

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Notes

1. The ethnographic data analyzed here were collected during my fieldwork in Sufi communities in Damascus, Aleppo, and the Kurd Dagh from 1999 to 2001 and again in May 2002.
2. Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria* (London: Tauris, 1996), 89-117.
3. Annabelle Böttcher, "L'Élite Feminine Kurde de la Kaftariyya, une Confrérie Naqshbandi Damascene," in *Islam des Kurdes - Les Annales de l'Autre Islam*, no. 5, ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Joyce Blau (Paris: ERISM/INALCO, 1998).
4. 'Abd al-Qadir 'Isa, *Haqa'iq 'an al-Tasawwuf* (Aleppo: Maktabat al-'Irfan, 1993 [1961]).

Bridging Sufism and Islamism

ALIX PHILIPPON

Sufism, perceived as the mystical strain of Islam, and political Islam, labelled as Islamism, has often been presented as quite simply antagonistic both by Muslim actors as well as by scholarly discourse. Recent studies have however, emphasized the fact that the frontiers between the two are far more ambivalent and porous than is generally thought.[1] A Pakistani based Islamic politico-religious organization has tried to reorganize these categories of Islam in a religious reformulation granting centrality to Sufism, thus challenging the stereotypical representations of reformism in its society.

Founded in Jhang, Pakistan, in 1981 by maulana Tahirul Qadri, the Minhajul Quran (MUQ - the method of the Quran) is not *per se* a Sufi order even though the structure of the organization, its ideology and functioning does betray strong Sufi influence. Reformist, this movement inscribes itself in the activist wave of modern Islamic revivalism without denying a strong sense of belonging to the Sufi tradition. At first a religious organization aimed at preaching, educating and providing welfare, the MUQ has turned overtly political in 1989 through the creation of a party, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT). It contested general elections before withdrawing from electoral politics after the leader decided to resign from his seat at the National Assembly in October 2004, seemingly in strong protest against Musharraf. In more than two decades, the movement has become a trans-national politico-religious organization numbering, besides those in Pakistan, more than 25000 members in more than 20 countries, and sympathizers in more than 80 countries -mainly of Pakistani background.

The MUQ describes itself as a "revolutionary movement of revivalism." It has a rationalized organizational model with a strict hierarchy inspired from the biggest Islamist movement of Pakistan, the Jamaat-i Islami. It has been active in re-islamizing Pakistani society from below through a chain of educational institutions, active preaching activities, and the diffusion of the thought of Qadri through hundreds of titles ranging from religion to science in the shape of books, tapes, CDs, and an extensive use of the Internet.[2] The same tools are used to spread the message abroad. Most of the centres in the "West" have been set up as spontaneous initiatives from Muslims of Pakistani origin won over by the message and the interpretation of Islam given by Qadri and who felt the need to organize community centres in order to consort and practise their faith together according to these guidelines.

By its organization and activities, the MUQ does not differ much from other Islamist movements in Pakistan. Its specificity in the Pakistani context is its effort to create institutions in which the spiritual energy and the values associated with Sufism can be channelled in socializing sets. Qadri has reclaimed spirituality as the specific stamp of Islam and as the true representative of the subcontinent's cultural ethos. He is therefore very defensive as far as Sufism is concerned. *Mahfil-e sama* (spiritual recitations) including qawwali music and dhikr recitations are regularly held in the headquarters in Lahore, and one can download recordings of *naats* (praises to the Prophet) and spiritual music, be it Abida Parveen or Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, from the web site. Folk and pop music is also available online. The concept of intermediation, which is at stake in the ongoing debate among Islamic groups, is being defended as a legitimate practice in Islam. Although critical of some ritualistic aspects of the cult of the saints, the members of MUQ do perform *ziyarat,* tomb visitation, which is, to them, the "granite foundation" of the beliefs of the *Ahl-e-Sunnah*. The values of peace, love, tolerance, and brotherhood, identified as Sufi, are promoted as universal references informing the ideology and the modes of action of the organization. The great Sufis are perceived as role models and mysticism as a tool to be used for the ethical reformation of the people in order "to bring peace, harmony, and humanism in society." The greater jihad, the process of self-purification, is the prerequisite for the lesser jihad, whose aim is to purify social and political evils.

Thus, the enemy is clearly identified as the "Wahhabi" trend, which tends to promote a purified Islam while rejecting traditions and customs associated with Sufism and to "monopolize the rhetoric of religious legitimacy."[3] Identified by the leader of MUQ as being a deviation of Islam, it is charged with promoting terrorism and extremism, two evils foreign to Sufism. Qadri was one of the few *maulanas* of Pakistan to have taken a strong stance against Bin Laden. In a country where there is a nexus of the sectarian and jihadi groups with mainstream Islamist organizations, MUQ and PAT seem to have offered an alternative to many Muslims, mainly Barelwis. They have reacted to the construction of the new Islamic identity and thus religiosity, based on an exclusive idea of purity, which have characterized Pakistani activism and militancy mainly since the beginning of the 80's

PHOTO BY ALIX PHILIPPON, 2005

Spiritual dance during a qawali session, Pakistan, 2005

and have promoted a path of "moderation" in rejecting radicalism. For them, revival is not synonymous with conflict, violence or opposition to the West, but with cooperation and dialogue among cultures and religions, with ethical reformation, and with modern and Islamic education. The organization of Qadri has thus tried to avoid sectarian divides in conceptualising an ideology based on universal values.

A charismatic leadership with a Sufi twist

"Shaykh," "Leader," "*murshid* (guide)" are a few of the numerous expressions used to designate Tahirul Qadri. His work has consisted in composing a complex partition of competences and registers of legitimization where the religious, political, academic, and spiritual domains have together composed a unique symphony of power. A prolific author, a respected religious leader, a leader of a political party and of a trans-national organization, a lawyer, a poet, a Sufi venerated by his devotees, Qadri shows his followers the countenance of an absolute guide endowed with great authority.

Within his composite leadership, the Sufi repertoire is of particular interest, for it reinvents a contested tradition, though still very much alive in Pakistan—that of the *pir* (Sufi), whose resources Qadri mobilizes in a modernizing way. A disciple of a Qadiri Shaykh (Pir Tahir Alauddin Al Gilani) under the spiritual guidance of whom he has placed his organization, Qadri has always refused to assume the responsibility of spiritual succession, stopping short of ever initiating disciples through the traditional vow of allegiance-*bai'at*. By doing so, in his own words, he has avoided becoming the rival of all other pirs of the country as well as limiting himself to this traditional status. Therefore, the procedures for membership have been modernized: filling a form is the only requirement, along with a fee. In a way, the traditional authority of the Sufi has been converted into a modern leadership. Notwithstanding, Qadri makes it clear to his followers that a faithful and active commitment within the organization makes them automatically disciples of the tariqa Qadiriyya and that they become the disciples of Abd al-Qadir Gilani. Therefore, if the members are not "disciples" *per se* of Qadri, his own initiation within the Qadiri brotherhood operates as a spiritual channel providing a relay back with the original founder of the order. But most members consider Qadri as their true spiritual leader, the one who can help and guide them, very often through dreams. Furthermore, the leader keeps promising his devotees a place in paradise. As such, he does claim the power of intermediation of a *wali Allah*, a friend of God. This spiritual bond is a strong incentive for activism: members deploy their energies often voluntarily to keep the organization working, especially in the MUQ centres abroad, and donate their money to finance its numerous activities. Therefore, if Qadri is the "patron-in-chief" of an NGO, the leader of a political party and is not a traditional Sufi master as such, for he does not wish his organization to become a Sufi brotherhood, the charismatic element is still dominant in the construction of his authority.

The 2005 spiritual tour of MUQ

Even if not actualized for the sake of modernization, the master/disciple scheme remains the prevalent form of authority within the movement. Last summer, I had the opportunity to join a "spiritual tour" where 250 members of MUQ from the European diaspora accompanied their leader to Syria and Turkey for two weeks. We visited the tombs of great Sufis (such as Ibn Arabi and Rumi), pre-Islamic Prophets (such as Yahya and Zacharia), and illustrious characters of Islamic history (companions, family members of the Prophet, and Umayyad Caliphs). As I have witnessed, the devotion, love and *adab* the members displayed towards their guide recalled the ones traditionally owed to a Sufi master. For example, during the qawwali sessions organized in Damascus, Konya, and Istanbul, Qadri was performing the duty of a traditional shaykh, mediating between the qawwals and the audience, and between them and God. Some members were dancing in honour of the Shaykh with ferocious and spontaneous joy in a style more reminiscent of *bhangra* (Penjabi folk music and dance) than of the whirling dervishes. They sometimes prostrated at his feet in a display of emotion and respect. Labelled as "the true representative of the Holy Prophet" in the present age during a speech delivered by a senior MUQ officer from England, Qadri was presented as an intermediary taking people closer to the Prophet, representing all the Sufi orders, and showering the grace of past Muslim scholars onto all those following his "mission." For example, Qadri made of all the present members of the congregation the "intellectual disciples" of Ibn Arabi during a ceremony held at his shrine in the Syrian capital city.

Two *mahfil-e sama* were also organized with Syrian Sufis of the Shadhiliyya while in Damascus, where dhikr as well as musical spiritual sessions were held. One Syrian scholar, Shaykh Yaqubi, had visited the organization in Lahore in May 2004 during the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet. Following this visit, Qadri was honoured with the title of *shaykh-ul islam* by Syrian religious scholars, such as Ustad Shaykh Assad Asghar, a *muhaddith* and imam at the Umayyad mosque, and scholars from the Shadhiliyya. Qadri was thus acknowledged as none less than the leading religious authority in the present era. This title was bestowed on the basis of his spiritual qualities, his achievements in the fields of education, preaching, as well as his religious and intellectual productions. This validation by Arab religious leaders has considerably enhanced his prestige among his followers and worked as a legitimization tool both in Pakistan and abroad.

A Sufi attempt to build a new political modernity for Islam?

The ideological system of MUQ has been established on the basis of a critical approach to Islamism in its relation with Sufism. It shows an awareness of the fact Sufism has been excluded from the symbolic resources of Islam by many Islamists. It also acknowledges the corruption within some Sufi practices and the necessity to come out from traditional institutions and evolve a modern form of organization. It is critical of the doctrines and actions of what they call "Wahhabis" and has taken into account the way this category of Islamists has shaped Western opinion on Islam. In other words, it has rationalized the terms of the heated ongoing debate about Islam, modernity, and the West and tried to evolve a suitable alternative evolving Sufism as a cultural, ethical, intellectual, and political resource for the Muslim world.

Despite the ups and downs of its history, PAT has attempted to reconcile the Islamic symbolic system with the values of political modernity. A partisan of *ijtihad*, the independent reasoning and interpretation, Qadri believes that Islam is a "dynamical process and an evolutionary system." For him like for other Islamists, Islam is at the same time a comprehensive code of human conduct, and the legal and symbolic basis for a socio-economic and political order. However, the fact that the name of the party does not include "Islam" is a conscious decision to differentiate this political formation from other "religious" parties.

Opposed to any sectarian position, PAT has made an effort towards inclusiveness, and it is open to Shiites as well as Christians. In the frame of the debate about whether Islam is compatible with democracy, the leader of PAT has made a point that the Islamic paradigm is convertible into the modern political idiom evolved in the West. His will to reduce antagonism with Western thought has led him to claim, like the father of Islamic reformism Muhammad Abduh, that "Islamic State means a pure democratic State," even though there might be differences in interpretation and definition. There is a common set of institutions and values shared by both systems: pluralism, human rights, equality, social justice were all present, according to him, in the *nizam-i mustafa*, the political system built on the model of the Prophet's community. "All things which West wants are already in Quran," says Qadri. In a way, PAT has secularized the Islamic principles to make them compatible with the conceptual framework of political modernity. Inscribed in a context of globalization and tense national debate, the ideology of MUQ has probably worked successfully at conquering new religious markets. As for PAT, it has so far seemingly failed in mobilizing the masses.

Furthermore, the leader [. . .] does claim the power of intermediation of [. . .] a friend of God. This spiritual bond is a strong incentive for activism. . .

Notes

1. Thierry Zarcone, *La Turquie moderne et l'islam* (Flammarion: Paris, 2003).
2. http://www.minhaj.org.
3. Carl Ernst, *Shambala guide to Sufism* (Shambala publications: Boston, 1997).

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The Story of a Picture
Shiite Depictions of Muhammad

PIERRE CENTLIVRES
AND MICHELINE
CENTLIVRES-DEMONT

In spite of the relative prohibition of graphic representation of living beings, especially members of the Prophet's family,[1] as expressed by religious authorities in the Islamic world, colourful paper prints showing Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad, and his sons Hassan and Hussayn, even the Prophet himself, are not rare in contemporary Iran. In this article the authors tell the story of how a picture of a Tunesian boy became the model for popular selling posters depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a beautiful young man.[2]

Shiite Muslims in Iran have a very lively tradition of depicting members of the Prophet's family and the Prophet Muhammad himself. Since the end of the nineties, popular selling "posters" are printed in Iran showing the Prophet Muhammad as a beautiful young man, with a turban, a tunic slipped from the shoulder and a languorous expression.[3] The Iranian religious "posters" of today are printed by modern processes, which allow countless variations through the use of paintings, photographs, drawings, or a collage of various images and techniques. Even if the technique is modern, the representation remains traditional: the background is plain-coloured, and the colours are juxtaposed. The images of these venerated persons are depicted with stereotyped features, postures, and attributes that make their identification easier, Ali"s double pointed sword for instance.[4]

But the portrait in question today is significantly different from the previous images: it shows a very attractive adolescent, with tender eyes and a delicate face, evoking the mannerism of the late Renaissance, especially the male adolescents painted by Caravaggio, for instance, the *Young Boy Carrying a Fruit Basket* (Roma, Borghese Gallery) or the *Saint John the Baptist* (Capitole Museum); same velvet softness of the cheeks, same half-open mouth, same caressing look. Though there are several variants of the portrait, they all represent the same youthful face, generally identified by the inscription "Muhammad, Allah's messenger" or by a more precise caption referring to an episode of the life of the Prophet and to the supposed origin of the image. We will come back to that later on.

Picture 1. "Mohamed", postcard number 106, by Lehnert and Landrock. 14 x 8,9 cm

COLLECTION P. AND M. CENTLIVRES

Surprising discovery

By chance, in 2004 we were able to identify the origin of the Iranian poster image when visiting in Paris an exhibition dedicated to the photographers Lehnert & Landrock. It was a photograph made by Lehnert in Tunis, probably between 1904 and 1906, and printed and circulated as a postcard in the early twenties.

Originating from Bohemia, Rudolf Franz Lehnert (1878-1948), associated with the German Ernst Heinrich Landrock (1878-1966), settled in Tunis in 1904, the former as photographer, the latter as manager and publisher. Having sojourned in Tunisia the previous year, Lehnert had been sensitive to the charm of its landscapes and its habitants. The firm (L&L) specialized in picturesque views of Tunis, later of Cairo and Egypt after the first World War, and in scenes corresponding to an exotic-colonial aesthetic. L&L produced thousands of photographs and postcards of Tunisia, Egypt, and other Near-Eastern countries.

Lehnert, who studied at the Institute of Graphic Arts in Vienna, had ties with the pictorialist movement, which considered photography as a work of art. Lehnert's photographs show not only the desert, rolling sand dunes, picturesque markets, and indigenous areas of old Tunis, but also the prepubescent, as pubescent girls and young boys, half undressed, posing against the "oriental scenery" of his old Tunisian palace. With their graceful look of an age that hesitates between childhood and adolescence, between feminine and masculine, these boys and girls as pictured by Lehnert corresponded to the tastes of a European clientele, sensitive to Oriental phantasms and seductions. The publication in 1902 of *L'immoraliste* of André Gide is more than a coincidence.[5]

Lehnert has certainly made use of the register of exoticism and of its phantasms, but with great talent. His images were published in argentic prints, in heliogravure, in four-colour process, or hand-painted. Most of the postcards were printed in Germany from 1920 on and distributed from Cairo.

Matching prints and texts

No doubt that the sepia postcard, number 106 following the numeration of L&L (picture 1) served as model to the Iranian posters. There are traces of sepia visible on some of the Iranian posters. Moreover, the postcard number 106 alone is entitled "Mohamed," which no doubt was one of the reasons why this one was chosen as the prototype for the Iranian portraits. Clearly, the different variants of the Iranian posters all stem from the single postcard number 106; they are all its unmistak-

able reproduction with the first editions of the Iranian posters being the most similar to the postcard. Unwittingly, Lehnert is at the origin of a kind of mystification, which based on the use, by the Iranian publishers, of an ambiguous and colonial portrait that had been given the name of Mohamed.

The question of the correspondence between the traditional descriptions of the Prophet, the written or oral Traditions, and the image of the young Tunisian boy is open. This postcard shows the portrait of a smiling adolescent, with parted lips, a turbaned head, and a jasmine flower over the ear. The same young boy appears in other postcards coloured or sepia, in slightly different poses, and with different names: Ahmed, Young Arab, Young Arab nomad….

We have not been able to discover the path that lead from the postcard printed in the twenties, to Tehran and Qom where the posters have been published since the beginning of the nineties. But we were intrigued by the question of which idea or evidence could have suggested to the Iranian publishers a shared identity between the Prophet of Islam in his young age and the picture of the Tunisian adolescent?

Already before the First World War, the photograph of "Mohamed" was reproduced, for instance in *The National Geographic Magazine* of January 1914, illustrating an article entitled "Here and There in Northern Africa," with the caption "An Arab and his Flower." In the twenties, the Tunisian postcards of L&L were very popular among the French troops in North Africa and the Levant. Recently, in the eighties and nineties, several books including the portrait of the young adolescent were published, but always with other designations than "Mohamed."

The present Iranian versions, touched up, keep something of the seductiveness of the adolescent, but soften his excessively sensual expression, while trying to reconcile the sacred character of the Prophet to the disturbing beauty of the young man. The left shoulder is lightly covered by a drape, the mouth and gaze have been modified. On several posters, the flowers on the ear are fused with the folds of the turban. By many ways, the Iranian artists tend to erase the feminine tones of the photography of Lehnert or what gives the young man a too sensual a character.

The caption on one of the poster images (picture 2) specifies: "Blessed portrait of the venerated Muhammad, at the age of eighteen during his journey from Mecca to Damascus[6] when accompanying his venerated uncle on a trade expedition. Portrait due to the paintbrush of a Christian priest; the original painting is at present in a 'Muze-i Rum'."[7] In another poster, the designer has touched up the face by adding dimples on the chin of the adolescent; the green-striped turban is held by a green and golden braid. In a poster, dated 2001-2002, lines draw rays illuminating the head of the future Prophet. The mountainous background of another print refers to a later event, when, during the flight from Mecca, Muhammad took refuge in a cave, on whose entrance God ordered a spider to spin a web so as to hide the Prophet from his pursuers.

COLLECTION P. AND M. CENTLIVRES

Picture 2. Portrait of the young Muhammad. Poster printed in Tehran. 49,5 x 34,5 cm. Bought in Tehran, November 1998.

Christian origins?

As previously noted, an inscription attributes the work to a Christian origin, and not to an Islamic one, which exculpates the Muslims from the non-observance of the image prohibition and from the sacrilege of representing the Prophet. This attribution also asserts the recognition by the Christians of the sacred character of Muhammad, already in the Prophet's early years.[8] It speaks of a Christian priest, which would appear to be the Nestorian or Orthodox priest Bahira who, according to a story going back to the ninth-tenth century, should have recognized the "Prophet-to-be" by a sign—a mark of prophethood between his shoulders—during his sojourn in Syria. The future Prophet should have said : "When I look at the heaven and the stars, I see myself above the stars," from where the inspiration for the background of some variants showing the vault spangled with stars.

The textual tradition does not say anything on Bahira being a painter. The supposed Christian origin of the portrait refers, perhaps, to another story according to which the Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium (610-641) would have shown to a delegation of Muhammad's companions coming from Mecca the portraits of all the prophets including Muhammad, the last of all prophets.[9]

Even though we have no physical description of Muhammad as an adolescent, there exist descriptions of his features as an adult, transmitted by several sources: he was said to have a white complexion, slightly blushed, black eyes, smooth cheeks, bushy eyebrows in a shapely curve, well separated teeth, and lightly wavy hair. These are also the features of the adolescent on the Iranian posters as well as of many others. It is the portrait of a portrait, a representation of a representation. Thus the Iranian publishers have chosen a model of the Prophet Muhammad representing an ideal of youth, beauty, and harmony.

The Iranian publishers have chosen a model of Prophet Muhammad representing an ideal of youth, beauty, and harmony.

Notes

1. Concerning this prohibition, see, among many others, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and The Prohibited in Islam* (Beyrouth, 1984).
2. This article is a revised and summarized version of: Pierre Centlivres et Micheline Centlivres-Demont: "Une étrange rencontre: la photographie orientaliste de Lehnert et Landrock et l'image iranienne du prophète Mahomet," in *Études photographiques* (Paris), no. 17 (2005): 4-15.
3. Oleg Grabar and Mika Natif, "The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad," *Studia Islamica* (Paris), no. 96 (2003): 35 and Silvia Naef, *Y a-t-il une "question de l'image" en islam?* (Paris: Téraèdre, 2004), 29.
4. Pierre Centlivres et Micheline Centlivres-Demont, *Imageries populaires en islam* (Genève : Éditions Georg, 1997).
5. Michel Mégnin, "André Gide, Rudolf Lehnert et la poésie arabe. Images et réalité de la pédérastie en terre d'Islam," *Bulletin des Amis d'André Gide* 33 no. 146 (April 2005): 153-178.
6. Twelve years old, following the most frequent Tradition.
7. Rum designates a city of the Christian world, Roma, as well as Constantinople in the past.
8. See A. Abel, "Bahîrah," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd. ed.
9. Michael Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465–1535)* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 245.

Pierre Centlivres, Professor Emeritus of the University of Neuchâtel and Micheline Centlivres-Demont, both anthropologists, are the authors of *Imageries populaires en islam* (Genève: Georg, 1997), and of "Une présence absente: symboles et représentations populaires du Prophète Mahomet," in *Derriere l'image* (Neuchâtel: Musée d'ethnographie, 1998), 139–170.

Approaching Modern Muslim Thought

MICHIEL LEEZENBERG

The intellectual history of the modernizing Islamic world remains relatively isolated from research in related fields, and from theoretical debates elsewhere. In consequence, it remains dominated by modernization-theoretical, nationalist, and secularist assumptions, whether in the guise of liberal or of Marxist-inspired approaches. Alternatively, a genealogical perspective is outlined, which places the rise of the secular nation state in a broader perspective of changing ways of governing, taking neither Western economic or cultural dominance as all-determining, nor individual agency as given. Rather, it systematically focuses on changing relations of power as constitutive of new states, new actors, and new forms of knowledge.

It is not easy to circumscribe the field of the intellectual history of the modern Islamic world, nor is it immediately clear with what conceptual tools it is best handled. First, contemporary Islamic thought is not institutionally distinguished, as an autonomous academic discipline; it is thoroughly intermingled with various other flows of knowledge. Second, it is far from clear whether Islamic thought can or should be treated in isolation from secular currents of modern thought, be they liberal, nationalist, or Marxist. Third, it remains an open question in how far the intellectual experience of the Islamic world over the last two centuries is radically different, or can even be treated in isolation, from those of, say, South Asia, China, or Africa. In fact, it displays both an obvious geo- and demographic overlap and a common political experience with all of them: all have witnessed social, political and intellectual modernization under (quasi-) colonial rule followed by a—typically nationalist, populist or even socialist—phase of decolonization and the Cold War, and more recently by what have been called ethnic and religious revivals.

The modernizing Islamic world

Premodern Islamic intellectual history is rather easier to delimit. During the classical Age, ranging roughly from the tenth to the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, the Islamic world knew a relatively clearly delineated field of knowledge, or more generally intellectual activity, subdivided into the two paradigms of, respectively, the Greek/rational and the Arab/traditional sciences. Moreover, legitimate forms of higher learning were generally reproduced through recognized institutions of learning like *madrasas*, in which the individual contact between teacher and student was at least as important as written texts or fixed curricula. As an autonomous discipline, philosophy (*falsafa*, or *hikma*) never acquired an official status in the madrasas; but under the guise of logic, theology, and even mysticism, it exerted a lasting formative intellectual influence, especially in Shiite centres of learning. Further, there was a widespread conviction that philosophical and other forms of higher learning were to be the preserve of the educated elites, and should not be divulged to the masses. Last but not least, virtually the entire corpus of premodern Islamic knowledge was written in Arabic.

The story of the modernizing Islamic world is highly complex and poorly understood…

Starting around the nineteenth century, however, all of this was to change. Gradually, new genres of writing emerged, such as the newspaper article, the novel, and the theatre play; new institutions of education opened, often based on modern English or French curricula; while new forms of language were articulated for expressing new ideas and practices. On the one hand, languages hitherto considered unworthy of communicating higher learning, most notably Turkish, came to be adopted as media of communication and instruction; on the other, classical languages, like Arabic and Persian, underwent drastic changes in vocabulary, syntax, and style. Together, these trends not only increased but radically transformed the reading public. Nor were they merely a matter of slavishly copying Western models and influences: they were at least in part driven by changing domestic concerns of central authority and local opposition.

The story of the modernizing Islamic world is highly complex and poorly understood; in the current constellation, there is a particularly pressing need for up-to-date works of synthesis that capture its broader outlines. Over the past decades, valuable studies on cultural and intellectual changes have appeared, but remarkably few attempts at providing comprehensive and accessible overviews. Worse, a focus on individual authors, or a restriction of analyses to specific countries or languages may, despite their inherent value and validity, tend to overlook the large-scale convergences and patterns that transcend national and linguistic boundaries.

Tenacious assumptions

Existing overviews, no matter how good, are by now largely outdated. It may be just a coincidence that in the early sixties, a number of studies appeared in succession, all of which have since established themselves as classics: Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962), Niyazi Berkes's *Development of Secularism in Turkey* (1964), Bernard Lewis's *Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961) and Serif Mardin's *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (1962). In retrospect, all of these appear to share some significant, and rather problematic, assumptions. First, to some extent, all proceed from modernization-theoretical assumptions of a progressive and irreversible process of secularization towards a liberal modernity in both the political and the economic sense. Secondly, they insufficiently thematize the nation state and nationalist ideology. Although they are obviously not nationalist in the political sense, they all tend to assume secular modern states and national languages, including distinct language-based cultural traditions, as the inevitable end-point if not a self-evident framework of their analyses.

One of the prime questions to be answered, however, is precisely why it was specific forms of nationalism (rather than, say, Ottomanism, Islamic Modernism, Pan-Islamism, let alone Socialism) that carried the day in the formation of new states in the region, and how religion was rearticulated against the background of these modern states.

Since then, few works of synthesis have appeared concerning the Islamic world as a whole. Exceptions, like Aziz al-Azmeh's important studies in the history of ideas tend to be formulated in diffusionist terms of how various Arab and Islamic movements copied or imitated post-Enlightenment Western models. Such analyses are a useful antidote to the persistent rhetoric of an essentially anti-modern and unenlightened Islam; but they tend to reproduce stereotypes of the Arabo-Islamic world (and more generally the non-Western world) as the mere passive recipient, if not the helpless victim, of a political and intellectual modernity that originated elsewhere. Recently, such widely-held assumptions about modernity as exclusively European in origin have been forcefully challenged by historians like Christopher Bayly.[1]

Although most present-day exercises in the intellectual history of the Islamic world clearly derive their analytical categories and indeed their inspiration from political, social and economic history, there have been few attempts to link these respective fields more systematically. Indeed, there seems to be little if any exchange between works in these different areas of specialization. For example, Inalcik and Quataert's voluminous overview of Ottoman social and economic history (1996) is silent on cultural and intellectual developments; and Hourani's *History of the Arab Peoples* (1991) does not even mention the *nahda*, the nine-

teenth- and twentieth-century Arab literary and cultural renaissance, by name. References to recent research on, for example, South Asia, not to mention theoretical debates, are relatively rare in works on the Middle East. Conversely, theoretical discussions in intellectual history are either silent on the Islamic world, or rely on outdated or one-sided sources of information. Thus, a recent issue of the *Journal of the History of Ideas* (vol. 66, no.2 (2005), devoted to intellectual history in an era of globalization, makes little reference to anything Islamic other than the September 11 assaults.

Consequently, frameworks of modernization theory and Marxist political economy continue to exercise a tenacious influence. Thus, Bernard Lewis's flawed but highly influential overview *What Went Wrong?* (2002) is dominated by modernization-theoretical assumptions and oppositions; and Ibrahim Abu Rabi's *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1968 Intellectual History* (2004) is informed by a vocabulary of imperialism and cultural hegemony. Neither approach is in and of itself invalid or illegitimate; but it may be of more than academic importance to find a way of avoiding the extremes of, or of transcending the antagonisms between, a self-congratulating narrative of liberal and secular modernity and a repetitive if not stagnant oppositional third-worldism. Books like Lewis's and Abu Rabi's are as much theoretical reflections as practical contributions to an ongoing ideological and political struggle. Faced with the apparently inevitable onslaught of world capitalism, and more recently of neoliberal cultural hegemony, it is tempting to deny non-Western subjects all agency; but in fact, actions on all sides appear thoroughly intermingled, and indeed mutually constitutive. Thus, to mention but one example, Ernest Renan's doctoral research on Averroes and Averroism, and his early sojourn in Lebanon, contributed to the shaping of his later views on nationalism, religion, and civilizational progress; his views on Islam were famously discussed (and in part accepted) by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani; and Renan's reading of Averroes has demonstrably shaped both secular and Islamist thinkers in the Arab world, such as Farah Antoun, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Abed al-Jabri.

Because of the pervasive intermingling and interaction between authors from the West and the Muslim world (not to mention complex patterns of migration, especially among academic authors), it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the initially plausible distinctions between objective science and subjective ideology, between professional academic knowledge and local opinion, or between scholarly and practical reason. It therefore makes sense to look beyond ideas or doctrines as either autonomous or self-sufficient entities or as mere reflections of an underlying economic or political logic, and to study them in the context of changing channels and institutions of knowledge production, and of the changing ways of legitimizing and delegitimizing knowledge.

A genealogical approach

It is at this point that we may see what is to be gained from a genealogical mode of analysis, that is, an approach that looks at the changing ways in which knowledge is involved in changing practices of exercising—and resisting—power. Such a genealogical approach, pioneered by Michel Foucault, cannot be straightforwardly operationalized for the Islamic world, however: what Foucault has to say about the Islamic world is either deeply problematic (witness his much-misunderstood writings on the Iranian revolution), or inexplicably absent (witness his silence regarding French colonial rule over Algeria). More recently, authors like Talal Asad have been trying to open genealogical perspectives on the modern Muslim world.[2]

It may be useful to determine what is central to a genealogical perspective. First, unlike Marxist approaches, it does not proceed from an assumed cleavage between economic base and economic superstructure, but questions how such distinctions emerged historically, especially through changing practices of government. Neither does it treat "ideology" as necessarily false or distorting, and as opposed to some power-free objective scientific truth; rather, it assumes that *all* forms of knowledge and truth are constituted by relations of power. Most importantly, it takes power not as repressive or negative, but as productive of both knowledge and actors. Thus, new vocabularies created by pioneers like Rifa'a al-Tahtawi in Cairo and Ibrahim Shinasi not only helped in thinking about or describing a rapidly changing social reality; in a very real sense, they helped in bringing it about. Thus far, the Arabic literary renaissance or *nahda* has been studied primarily by philologists and literary historians rather than scholars working in intellectual history but its intellectual and even political implications went far beyond literary circles. It is hard to overemphasize the lasting and irreversible effects of such work in cultural translation.

COURTESY OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, 2006

Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Oxford, 1962; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford, 1962; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Montreal, 1964.

Second, a genealogical approach need not proceed from the assumption that all of modernity was imported or imposed from the side of the imperialist West, or that all non-Western action in this process was a matter of either adaptation and collaboration, or of resistance and contestation; rather, it opens the question of what *kinds* of agency were shaped and constituted by processes of modernization. Thus, new local elites and intelligentsia were constituted by new practices of education, publishing, and government playing various new, and highly contested, roles in the intellectual developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, increasingly writing and speaking as rights-bearing citizens rather than the ruler's subordinates.

Third, genealogical approaches focus not on individuals or institutions, but on practices; moreover, they raise questions of how these practices are justified by different kinds of norms, and how they are constituted by different kinds of power. In this way, a more differentiated account of various new forms of non-academic and unofficial "amateur knowledge," produced by lay intellectuals, comes into view.

The proof of the utility of such methodological innovations lies, or course, in their practical value in raising new questions, and in providing new answers. This is not the place for such an evaluation; but it may be that among the more interesting insights to be gained from a genealogical approach is, on the one hand, an awareness of similar or converging patterns across national boundaries, and between thinkers conventionally labelled "Islamic" and "secular"; and on the other, a more thorough questioning of the framework of the nation-state than has hitherto been undertaken.

Notes

1. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 2nd ed. (Verso, 1996); C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Blackwell, 2004).
2. Cf., most famously, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Random House, 1977); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

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Nurcholish Madjid
Indonesian Muslim Intellectual

MARTIN VAN BRUINESSEN

Nurcholish Madjid, Indonesia's best known Muslim intellectual, died in August last year after a prolonged and painful illness. At the time of his death, the country appeared to be drifting away into increasing religious intolerance: physical attacks by radical Muslims on makeshift churches and assaults on the main centre of the Ahmaddiyah movement, death threats against liberal Muslim thinkers, fatwas of Indonesia's Ulama Council, once a paragon of moderation, against "liberal Islam," secularism and religious pluralism. The days in which Nurcholish' voice of moderation and inter-religious understanding was almost hegemonic, at least in the media, are rapidly fading away, and memories of Nurcholish resonate with nostalgia for times of greater harmony.

Nurcholish Madjid's career as a public intellectual was closely correlated with the emergence and demise of Indonesia's New Order, the political system put in place by General Suharto. He was a prominent member of the student generation of 1966, which played an active role in the demonstrations that weakened Sukarno and prepared the way for Suharto's final takeover in 1966. In that crucial year he was elected the chairman of the Muslim student union, HMI—a position he held for two consecutive three-year terms. A number of provocative public statements he made about the need to rethink petrified modes of Muslim thought and patterns of action in the name of Islam received wide press coverage and gave him the reputation of chief legitimizer of the New Order's policies towards Islam. His statements could be, and were, read as a devastating critique of the existing Muslim parties and organizations, their obsession with the ideal of an Islamic state, and the general staleness of their religious ideas. A comment he made on secularization as the "de-sacralization" of concepts and institutions that had been turned into sacred objects by the Muslim community was misread as a call for secularism. This all went down well with the regime, which was bent on depoliticizing society and destroying the political muscle of Islam, but it earned Nurcholish the lasting enmity of many of the older generation of Muslim political leaders—especially those of the Masyumi party, who had been jailed or pushed into the political margin by Sukarno and were never rehabilitated under Suharto.

[H]e argued for a rational and dynamic interpretation of Islam, in which change and development are natural processes and God is the only unchanging Truth.

In the final days of Suharto's rule, when the president made a last-ditch attempt to form a new cabinet in response to the ever louder protests and calls for reform and invited nine Muslim leaders to give him advice, Nurcholish was the only one who had the courage to tell Suharto in polite words that those calls for reform meant that the people wanted him to step down. This was the other side of Nurcholish' position as New Order legitimizer: he could withhold legitimization, as he had been one of the few who could exercise the moderate criticism of a loyal but independent supporter of the regime. Unlike many others, including some who once had been vocal critics, Nurcholish never lost his independence.

Islam, nationalism, intellectual heritage

The impact of Nurcholish' thought on the ideas and attitudes of the educated members of his own generation and the generations following can hardly be overestimated. At a time of rapid economic and social change, he argued for a rational and dynamic interpretation of Islam, in which change and development are natural processes and God is the only unchanging Truth; established practices and received ideas should not be made into sacred icons, for that would be tantamount to *shirk*. In his numerous lectures and papers, quotations of Quranic verses and references to American sociologists and such thinkers as Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre stand side by side. Doctoral studies at the University of Chicago during 1978-84, under Leonard Binder and Fazlur Rahman, further broadened his horizon. He wrote his dissertation on reason and revelation in the thought of Ibn Taymiya, the thinker most venerated by the Islamists who were his opponents at home, and his first major public statement upon return was a collection of translations of Muslim philosophical thinkers, from Kindi and Farabi to Afghani and Abduh, with a lengthy introduction on the intellectual heritage of Islam.

Nurcholish saw himself, and wished to be seen, as standing in a reform-minded and philosophically oriented Muslim intellectual tradition, and he was anxious to point out the genealogy of the ideas for which some of the old Masyumi leaders branded him a heretic. During his years in Chicago, he entered into correspondence with another Masyumi leader, the moderate Mohammad Roem, to explain his ideas in a form acceptable to the older man, and he made sure copies of this correspondence were—against Roem's wishes—widely disseminated. Roem was famous as one of the men who had negotiated Indonesia's independence, a former minister in several cabinets, and a Masyumi politician who had always had excellent relations with secular nationalists; recognition by Roem was very important to Nurcholish, for it gave him, as it were, a legitimate pedigree in Indonesia's Islamic movement and pointed to a respected earlier case of Muslim accommodation with secular nationalism.

For Nurcholish, there was no contradiction between devotion to Islam and nationalism. Throughout his career he frequently made the argument, in one form or another, that the Indonesian nation owed its existence to Islam, for it had been Muslim rulers who had led the struggle against colonial occupation, and Muslim traders who united the archipelago through their trading networks and their lingua franca, Malay. The only art forms that were all-Indonesian and not specific to a single ethnic group are those associated with Islam, such as the musical *qasidah* and *dangdut* genres, with their Arab and Indian Ocean influences. One senses in Nurcholish' understanding of "Indonesian-ness" the influence of Marshall Hodgson's concept of "Islamicate" civilization, with which he became acquainted during his stay in Chicago. Christians, Hindus and Buddhists are equal citizens in Nurcholish' view of Indonesian society, but Islam provides the overarching civilizational unity.

Muslim-Christian relations

Tense relations between Muslims and the Christian minority constituted an important but mostly hidden backdrop to the history of the New Order, occasionally erupting in riots and attacks on churches but soon submerged again, until violent power struggles became a dominant part of the political scene after the fall of Suharto. Muslim leaders, especially the old Masyumi politicians, were obsessed by perceived Christian efforts to undermine the Muslim ummah, to convert nominal Muslims and to expand their control of key positions in the state apparatus through a conspiracy of businessmen, military officers, and foreign sponsors. Against that background Nurcholish' friendly relations with (at least some of) his Christian peers and his consistent defence of the thesis that Jews and Christians are the Muslims' brothers-in-

faith and that in several passages the Quran subsumes them under the label of Muslims represented a major departure from the apologetic or hostile attitudes of earlier reformist Muslim leaders. Along with the traditionalist leader Abdurrahman Wahid, who was to become an even more committed defender of the rights of religious minorities, Nurcholish was an effective builder of bridges between religious communities: not only between Muslims and Christians but also with Hindus and Buddhists (who, he insisted, should also be considered as *ahl al-kitab*, "People of the Book").

He did share the elder leaders' concern about the intentions of some Christian leaders, however, and was wary of being used as a legitimizer of efforts to spread Christianity and to weaken Islam. In the notorious *Monitor* affair of 1990—the popular magazine *Monitor* had published an article that many Muslims perceived as a deliberate insult of the Prophet Muhammad—he responded furiously. The magazine belonged to Indonesia's largest, Catholic-owned, press conglomerate. Militant Muslim groups, which had long nurtured grievances against the Christian domination of the press, organized angry and violent demonstrations against its offices. When the leading daily of the same conglomerate attempted to elicit a conciliatory statement from Nurcholish to deflate the issue, he angrily refused to be used, and made some uncharacteristically harsh comments to other journalists. It was left to Abdurrahman Wahid to try to calm down the situation and remind his fellow Muslims of the example that the Prophet himself had given of patience and forgiving in the face of insults.

The *Monitor* affair remained long on Nurcholish' mind and made him suspicious of Christian intentions. In later years he occasionally complained that Muslim tolerance went unanswered and that certain Christian circles plotted to weaken Islam and keep Muslims in a subjugated position. The only factor that might prevent future outbursts of inter-religious conflict, he believed, was the government's development policies, notably the educational revolution, which benefited especially the relatively underprivileged Muslim masses.

Rise of the Muslim middle class

Young educated Muslims of Nurcholish' generation were in fact among the main beneficiaries of the rapid economic growth and expansion of education during the New Order period. The peer network of HMI alumni moreover provided strong mutual support, and the entire cohort experienced unprecedented social mobility, which enabled them to facilitate the same process for younger HMI members and alumni. By the mid 1980s, people became aware that a Muslim middle class has come into existence: Muslim in cultural background and self-identification, middle class in economic position and taste for consumption. A large proportion of this new Muslim middle class had been HMI members, and many looked up to Nurcholish as the thinker who best embodied Muslim modernity.

Nurcholish returned from Chicago convinced that a strong middle class was a necessary condition for democratization, and from that time on his efforts appeared to be focused on educating and Islamizing the Indonesian middle class. Aided by friends of his HMI days who were experienced organizers and others who were economically successful, he set up a sophisticated "religious studies club" named Paramadina, which was to disseminate "inclusive" religious thought and stimulate intellectual debate. Paramadina provided a new type of religious sermons, or rather seminar lectures, presented in posh modern surroundings, catering to the spiritual needs and intellectual ambitions of the new Muslim middle class. The country's leading intellectuals were invited to deliver lectures at Paramadina, in tandem with a response in the form of a second lecture by Nurcholish himself and followed by a very free discussion. This was so successful that Paramadina had to gradually increase the number of lectures and offer courses on a broader range of religious subjects, among which Sufism became increasingly prominent and the positive appreciation of other religions remained a conspicuous element. Paramadina has played an important role in enriching the intellectual content of public discourse on Islam, and it has not shied away from controversial issues.

Nurcholish continued to value his independence highly; he never accepted prestigious and well-paid official positions and, unlike many of his peers, stuck to a very modest, simple lifestyle. His prestige, however, was enormous; many former HMI activists reached high positions in politics, the media, business, education, and the bureaucracy, and they kept looking towards Nurcholish for moral and intellectual guidance. In the first freely elected parliament after Suharto's fall, the number of delegates with HMI affiliation (present in all major parties) was over fifty per cent—more seats than any single party had won. In an important sense, these elections crowned the success of HMI's political ascension and of Nurcholish' project of building a strong Muslim middle class as a step towards establishing liberal democracy.

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Nurcholish Madjid at the ISIM conference *Muslim Intellectuals and Modern Challenges*, Loosdrecht, 2000

Critics and heritage

At the same time, Nurcholish continued to be the target of often fierce criticism, from the right as well as the left. Conservatives and hardliners objected strongly to his liberal religious views and his pluralistic acceptance of divergent views within Islam as well of other religions. The controversies that had surrounded him in the beginning of his career stayed with him throughout his life. In some of the attacks on Nurcholish in the Islamist media one also senses something of a class antagonism, expressions of disgust with the lifestyle of the affluent middle class with which Nurcholish became increasingly associated. This element is more explicitly present in some of the criticism from the left, inspired by liberation theology. Early in his career, Nurcholish spoke much of social justice as a core element of Islam's message and this dimension of his thought, some young critics assert, has gradually disappeared while he was serving the middle classes. His "bourgeois pluralism" (as one critical book is titled) engages with relations between religions but is blind to the greed and corruption of the middle class and the blatant impoverishment of the masses.

Yet in an important sense these left-wing critics also owe much to Nurcholish and continue aspects of his work. He did not establish a school of thought and did not groom favourites to become his successors. Rather, he stimulated many younger people to think independently and facilitated their intellectual development. Although Paramadina was established as the forum to present his thought to a wider audience, he never imposed his own version of Islam on the younger people who came to work there and who have their own concerns and personal spiritual and intellectual interests, often quite different from his. The role of provocative, innovative and liberating thinker and broker of ideas that he played for his own generation is now played by a highly varied group of younger men and women, in various institutions, NGOs, and informal networks. In his youth, Nurcholish was often called "the young Natsir," after the most influential reformist thinker of an earlier generation. It is his lasting merit that there are many "young Nurcholishes," none of them a clone of the original.

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Contemporary Islam & Intellectual History

R. MICHAEL FEENER

The recent ISIM Conference on Modern Islamic Intellectual History in Comparative Perspective (Utrecht, 29-30 September 2005) brought together scholars working on developments in a diverse range of Muslim societies to discuss the production, transformation, and reception of Islam in the modern period. It was also a much-welcomed opportunity to raise issues of methodological and theoretical relevance for scholars working on Muslim intellectualism of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This is an extremely complex field that requires not only high levels of linguistic expertise and area-specific knowledge, but also a careful attention to the broader political and epistemological contexts of globalization. The truly trans-regional nature of developments affecting contemporary Muslim societies pose new challenges to scholars of Islamic Studies in which traditional "Area Studies"-type training will continue to be valuable in preparing for scholarship in this field, but it is no longer sufficient in itself to deal with the global dimensions of regional developments.

Attempts at understanding contemporary Islam through its intellectual history demand new analytical frameworks to be brought to bear on both Muslim religious thought and the academic study of religion. Contemporary scholars must thus begin to explore new approaches that build upon the traditional strengths of Islamic Studies while also taking into account contemporary realities that add new dimensions to the processes of producing and transmitting knowledge. This will require a self-conscious engagement with developments in fields ranging form the sociology of philosophies to media studies.

Attempts at understanding contemporary Islam through its intellectual history demand new analytical frameworks to be brought to bear on both Muslim religious thought and the academic study of religion. The established Islamic Studies methodologies developed to deal with the medieval period, such as philological analyses of texts and the documentation of chains of teacher/student transmissions of knowledge, are simply inadequate for dealing with the intricacies of the modern period. What is needed are new approaches to modern Muslim intellectualism that build upon the traditional strengths of Islamic Studies while also taking into account contemporary realities, which add new dimensions to the processes of producing and transmitting knowledge.

The problematics of conceptualizing such a project, however, are considerable, for beyond the boundaries of Islamic Studies the very field of "Intellectual History" itself has experienced a rather tumultuous time in modern scholarship. Both internal debates and critiques from outside have characterized the historiographies of ideas and intellectual history since the early twentieth century. Much can be gained from a critical and selective engagement with recent developments in the field. However in doing so students of modern Islam must negotiate several significant obstacles, including that posed by the fact that intellectual history has been heretofore almost exclusively focused on ideas and texts produced in the "West." Recognizing this fact and facing this challenge can, in fact, provide opportunities to reconsider the ways in which various "voices" in modern discourses are presented and placed in conversation with each other.

> This situation . . ., has not been a result of disembodied developments . . ., but rather one that arose within a specific set of historical circumstances within contexts of colonialism and its accompanying asymmetrical systems of knowledge and power ...

Modernity, media, and Muslim thought

One of the central issues in debates on intellectual historiography is that of "contextualization" and the problematizing of the selection of particular contexts within which to situate our discussions of specific texts. This becomes an especially complex question for studies of modern Muslim writings; should, for example, modern Islamist elaborations of *Sunnatullah* as a "natural law" concept be read against the background of medieval *falsafah*, twentieth-century Neo-Thomism, or the works of Leo Strauss? In selecting specific texts to be subjected to such contextual analyses, the historian must devote careful attention to the identification of texts that might be considered as particularly illuminating examples of the intersection of established traditions and contemporary concerns and insights situated in concrete historical moments.

Striking a balance in scholarly attention between a focus on the particularities of a given text and a work's embodiment of broader trends within the cultural contexts of its creation requires considerable efforts to resist the pulls of polar methodological orientations toward either an over-emphasis on idiosyncratic attributes or a tendency toward some form of contextual reductionism. A nuanced treatment of both a book's unique qualities and the general cultural background against which they are elaborated can make it possible to open up new discussions of the ideas presented and the processes by which they are symbolized, thus facilitating the recognition of connections between various facets of the broader cultural histories of Muslim societies and the diverse social functions of ideas and rhetorical formulations in changing historical contexts. What is called for then is not the dogmatic adherence to the abstracted ideals of any one school of historiography, but rather a theoretically aware—as opposed to conceptually oblivious—methodological flexibility that self-consciously moves back and forth between text-specific and broader cultural dimensions of analysis.

Interpreting modern Muslim thought and its public impact also requires a nuanced appreciation of the media through which ideas are developed and distributed. Thus approaches need to be developed that can address issues of both the production of knowledge and its reception by diverse publics. This will require thinking through new ways of situating the works of prominent writers in relation to readers in the creation of contemporary discourses on Islam. Here there are rich developments in other academic fields including the History of the Book and Media Studies that can be drawn upon to construct models for contextualizing the production, distribution, and

reception of texts in modern Muslim intellectual history. An acknowledgement of the significance of media and communications technologies in the modern period should not, however, be taken as implying any totalizing role for technological determinism in the development of new forms of discourse. Rather these technologies should be regarded as important factors that present new possibilities for, as well as new restrictions on, the production and dissemination of knowledge. Such an approach, for example, could help us to better understand the diverse impacts that "media muftis" and celebrity preachers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Amr Khalid, or A.A. Gym are having upon Muslims in diverse societies all across the contemporary world. *Pace* McLuhan, modern media, while important in its own right, still conveys messages that need to be carefully parsed.

Insiders, outsiders, and the production of knowledge

In the modern period definitive lines between "Muslim" and "Western," as well as "academic" and "confessional," conversations on Islam have often been obscured in the permutations of public discourses of identity and power politics. Given this historical reality, any rethinking of the field of modern Muslim intellectual history must start with a frank recognition of the fact that for well over a century now the blending of emic and etic discourses on Islam has been a complex and creative dynamic in Muslim thought. Perhaps the most high-profile individual example of the politicized intellectual interactions of Western and Muslim scholars can be found in the late nineteenth-century polemics between Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Ernst Renan over the relation between "Islam" and the complex of "science" and "progress" that was considered to comprise "modernity" at that time.

All across the Muslim world during the modern period, Western scholarship came to exercise complex influences on the development of internal Muslim conversations—sometimes with very specific connections. One thinks, for example of the impact of modern Orientalist "discoveries" of Ibn Khaldun on Muslim social scientists in North Africa, and the impact of Geertz' work on conversations among Indonesian Muslims. Such works held prominent place within a rather eclectic set of canons formed out of some rather odd combinations of Western authors frequently cited in modern Muslim literatures—with colonial classics such as Carlyle's portrait of Muhammad in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* and Lothrop Stoddard's *New World of Islam* gradually giving way to works like Maurice Bucaille's *La Bible, Le Coran, et la science,* and Samuel Huntington's *Foreign Affairs* article on "The Clash of Civilizations" in more recent years.

Beyond this, however, over the latter decades of the twentieth century, there developed in the work of some Muslim scholars and authors trends toward an increasing openness to and influence of "Western" thinkers beyond those dealing with issues of Islam and Muslim societies. The first influences were most commonly from the social sciences, as seen for example in the impact of modern social sciences theories on the work of Ziya Gölkap, Ali Shariati, and Nurcholish Madjid in modern Turkey, Iran, and Indonesia, respectively. More recently, however, international developments in hermeneutics and other fields of the Humanities have also come to be both reflected and further developed in the writings of such thinkers as Muhammad Arkoun and Nasr Abu-Zayd. Over the course of the twentieth century, the works of various "Western" authors on Islam began to serve as major points of reference in the rhetoric of modern Muslim authors across a diverse range of African, Middle Eastern, and Asian societies, producing a rich range of modern Muslim thinkers.

Post-"Orientalism" and globalization

In assessing the impact of "Western" academic writings on the scholarly and public discourses of twentieth century Islam, particular attention must be directed toward interpreting the legacies of "Orientalist" scholarship in modern understandings of Islam among particular Muslim communities—the nature and history of which have been both more profound and more nuanced than may be apparent in the treatments of the subject developed in circles of literary critics. To cite just a few examples from mid twentieth century Indonesia: In his oft-republished history of Sufism, the popular preacher and novelist Hamka praised Louis Massignon as "the great pillar of all Orientalists" and cited approvingly his work on Hallaj, as well as the Frenchman's speculations on the relevance of this tenth century figure for the later development of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago.[1] Well outside of Sufi Studies, H.A.R. Gibb's observation on the totalizing, holistic nature of Islam became a dominant trope in the public speeches and published writings of the prominent Islamist politician M. Natsir during the middle decades of the twentieth century.[2] Indeed, the impact of essentialized conceptions of Islam that were originally developed in Western scholarship upon the formulation of modern "fundamentalist" understandings of Islam as a system and a "total way of life" is something that must be more widely recognized and understood in any future analysis of modern Muslim intellectualism.

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Ziya Gökalp, *Hilafet ve milli hakimiyet.* Ankara, 1921; Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, *al-'Urwa al-wuthqa.* Reprint, Cairo 1928; Ali Shariati, *Ummat wa Imamat*. [S.l.], 1972; and Muhammad Arkoun, *al-Fikr al-islami: qira'a 'ilmiyya*. Bayrut, 1987.

This situation, it is important to recognize, has not been a result of disembodied developments on a purely theoretical level, but rather one that arose within a specific set of historical circumstances within contexts of colonialism and its accompanying asymmetrical systems of knowledge and power—contexts about which modern Muslim thinkers have been acutely aware and critical. Likewise, for historians of these modern developments, such political, economic, and social realities must be kept in mind when examining the use of religious and cultural symbolism as analytical tools for rethinking and re-conceptualizing modern religious thought and practices in Muslim societies. Attention to the complex social locations of those producing and distributing ideas and texts, and the networks within which they interact, thus becomes another important aspect of formulating an interdisciplinary approach to Islamic thought. Such a development requires moving beyond simply critiquing the power dynamics of early scholarship in attempts to come to terms with the diverse and complex ways in which earlier European works on Islam and Muslim societies have become a part of conversations not only between "Muslims" and "non-believers" but among Muslims themselves in various ways over the past century. The convergence of such conversations in the era of globalization has been a major aspect of the development of modern Muslim thought, and for contemporary researchers in Islamic Studies interpreting these developments now demands that our usual philological proclivities now share more time in our studies with theoretical modes of reflection.

Notes

1. Hamka, *Perkembangan Tasauf dari Abad ke-Abad* (Jakarta: Pustaka Keluarga, 1952), 116.
2. "Islam is much more than a system of theology; it is a complete civilization." (*Whither Islam?*, 12), was repeatedly quoted by Natsir and other prominent Islamists in the twentieth century. See, for example: M. Natsir, *Islam Sebagai Ideologie* (Jakarta: Penjiaran Ilmu, 1950), 7.

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Shiite Perspectives on **Kinship and New Reproductive Technologies**

MORGAN CLARKE

Lebanon has a thriving and diverse reproductive medical sector: procedures are practised that have aroused much ethical controversy, such as those using donor eggs and sperm. Sunni ulama have reached a broad consensus on these matters, and do not allow donor procedures. However, Shiite opinion remains diverse: some Shiite authorities allow their followers these controversial treatments, but have evolved concomitant rulings that entail surprising new patterns of kinship relations.

Islamic medical ethics are a burgeoning topic among ulama and academic scholars alike. Organ transplantation, cloning and euthanasia have provoked widely documented Muslim debate. Some of the most interesting issues are those centring on the new reproductive technologies (NRT) such as in vitro fertilization (IVF). Muslims have for the most part welcomed these new medical techniques as a remedy for infertility. And yet some of the possibilities such procedures raise are still problematic for many, coming from a variety of ethical perspectives. IVF involves fertilizing an egg outside the body with a sperm and then transferring it to the uterus of a woman for gestation and delivery: this allows eggs, sperm and uterus to be from unrelated parties, unrelated that is, in terms of marriage or "partnership." Commentators in the West have sensed that such possibilities herald a new age in kinship thinking and practice, or at the very least force people to question the meaning of even the most basic kinship concepts, such as motherhood: is motherhood a genetic relation, or one earned through the carrying and delivery of the child? My own research has investigated to what extent such transformations and interrogations might apply in the Islamic Middle East, both in theory and in practice: for, beyond the discussions of the ulama, IVF and allied technologies are now widely available and utilized in the region.[1]

Doctors keep Khamene'i's fatwa collection on the shelves of their surgeries.

Sunni ulama have reached a broad consensus that medical interventions in human reproduction should restrict themselves to a husband and (one) wife couple, without the involvement of any other parties, as would be the case in those procedures using donor sperm and eggs, and gestational surrogates (where another woman carries an embryo formed from the couple's sperm and egg). Such third party procedures are seen as akin to, if not identical with, *zina*: that is, illicit sexual relations, such as fornication and adultery. They, like zina, imply a "mixing up" or "confusing" of relations. This is consonant with a wider popular unease concerning such procedures. However, while many scholars have assumed that this Sunni consensus signifies the end of the matter, some Shiite opinions are at stark odds with this position, and these issues are far from finally resolved in Shiite jurisprudential circles.

I have been studying these debates and examining their consequences for kinship thinking, and have carried out extensive fieldwork in Lebanon, in both medical and religious settings. Lebanon is rich in religious diversity: for one thing, clearly, Christian opinions are important as regards religious debate and medical practice; but, furthermore, Shiite and Sunni opinions are to be found alongside one another, and thus debate is perhaps more immediate than elsewhere. Techniques such as IVF are widely available and utilized in Lebanon. However, no consensus has been reached on the ethical regulation of such technology between the religious communities, and so even ethically controversial procedures such as those involving donor eggs remain relatively freely practised; and indeed patients come from other Middle Eastern countries to benefit from this relatively relaxed regime. Of course, not everyone pays strict attention to the opinion of religious experts, and the relationship between fatwa and practice has formed an important part of my research.

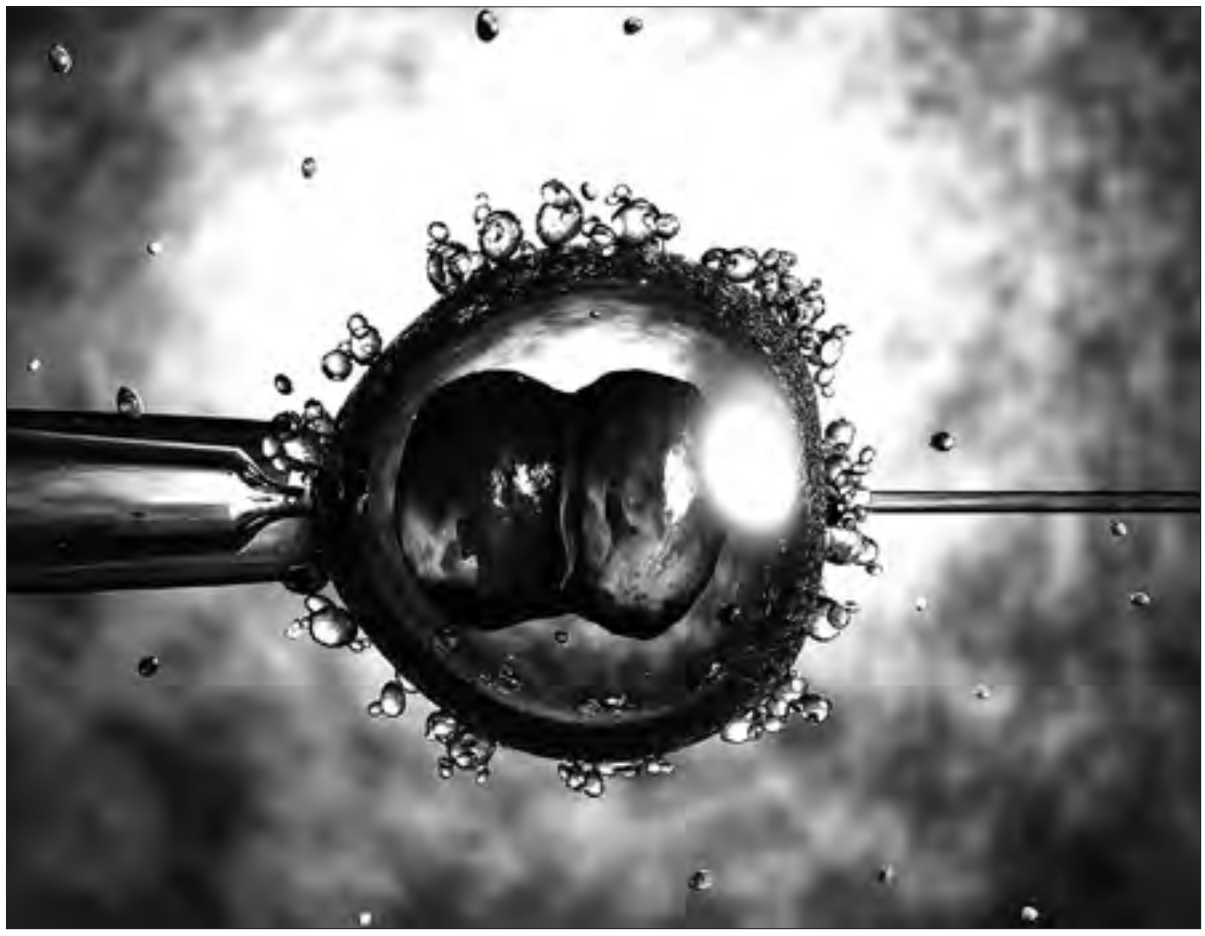
Shiite opinions on IVF

The lack of consensus in Lebanon over these matters, and the widespread practice of donor egg procedures, among other controversial measures, is in no small part due to the position adopted by Ayatollah 'Ali al-Khamene'i, spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and thus widely followed amongst Lebanese Shiites. Khamene'i does not prohibit the use of sperm or eggs from a third, or even fourth party, by a husband and wife[2] (nor, by implication, does he prohibit surrogacy arrangements), as, he holds, zina requires the physical act of sexual intercourse. This opinion, stated in a fatwa collection widely available in Lebanon and confirmed for me by Shaykh Muhammad Tawfiq al-Miqdar, Khamene'i's representative in Beirut, has proved highly influential in the practice of such procedures in Lebanon.[3] Doctors keep Khamene'i's fatwa collection on the shelves of their surgeries to demonstrate the permissibility of such procedures to sceptical Muslim patients; and many such patients have profited from it to undertake donor sperm and egg procedures, even surrogacy arrangements, with a clear conscience. Amongst the ulama, however, it is viewed with some astonishment, consistent with a common lack of high regard for Khamene'i as a legal thinker. I was strongly advised by those in Shiite jurisprudential circles in Lebanon to go beyond Khamene'i's opinion to look at those of other authorities.

Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Lebanon's most prominent Islamic figure, does not hold with the entirety of Khamene'i's opinion, finding the use of sperm from a third party unacceptable. He does, however, permit the use of donor eggs.[4] While, according to doctors, patients were previously advised by Shiite authorities that it was advisable, or essential, for the egg donor to marry the husband, albeit temporarily, this condition seems recently to have been lifted. This holds true of Fadlallah's position, as I discovered from my interviews with him and other members of his staff. For his part, Khamene'i clearly stipulates in his fatwa that marriage is not required. This removal of the need for such a marriage is significant for the practice of egg donation, not so much because of the difficulty of persuading an egg donor to undertake such a marriage, as due to the fact that egg donation very frequently occurs

between sisters. In Islamic law, a man is forbidden from marrying two sisters simultaneously; but the way has now been cleared by this new wave of Shiite rulings for what is, doctors assured me, a relatively common procedure in Lebanon nowadays.

However, again, Fadlallah is considered somewhat "hasty" by many others in jurisprudential circles, and I was further recommended to check the thinking of some other authorities, notably Ayatollahs 'Ali al-Sistani and Muhammad Sa'id al-Tabataba'i al-Hakim. Both these authorities advise caution in these matters, and view third party interventions as most likely unacceptable.[5] But in terms of the practice of these procedures in Lebanon, and despite the widely acknowledged and growing supremacy of Sistani's opinions more generally, these other standpoints regarding IVF are not widely known. No doubt this is because they are not as immediately useful for patients or practitioners: while it is commonly sensed that the use of donor sperm or eggs is in some way ethically dubious, those opinions that hold otherwise are valuable evidences for the moral permissibility of undertaking such a course.



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Digital rendering of the IVF process

Debating kinship

What of the potential "confusion" of kinship relations identified by the Sunni ulama? Khamene'i, Fadlallah and many other Shiite authorities hold that paternity and maternity follow the sperm and the egg: that is, the genetic relation. This is not, one should note, the opinion of Sistani, who follows the late Ayatollah Abul-Qasem al-Khu'i in holding that it is the gestational carrier who is to be considered the mother, and not the provider of the egg. This latter is also the opinion of those Sunni authorities who deal with this problem, and, for that matter, that of the British Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill of 1990. The consequence of following the genetic principle is that, in the case of the use of sperm or eggs from third parties, new and unconventional—albeit clear—patterns of relation are created. A child of donor sperm will be the child of the sperm donor and not of the man who raises that child. This has consequences for concomitant principles: veiling and inheritance. A girl born of donor sperm, for instance, would have to veil before her unrelated "social father" (an anthropological rather than Islamic phrase). This would seem to raise considerable problems for the practicalities of domestic life, not to mention undermine the objective of undertaking such a procedure in the first place. However, Shiite doctors working within circles following Khamene'i assured me that these rulings are followed, and that there are ways of obviating the problems: in the case of inheritance through gifts and bequests; and in the case of veiling, through the institutions of *rida'* (milk kinship) and the rulings associated with being the guardian of a *rabibah* (foster-daughter), both of which entail marriage prohibitions and hence obviate the need for veiling. I should say that, whatever the case, where Shiites in Lebanon are using these permissions and procedures, they are for now keeping their actions completely secret. Public opinion is lagging behind that of these religious specialists here, and the extent to which these complex ramifications of kinship may unfold is an open question for the future.

Clearly, the adoption of such a "biological" principle of relation has profound consequences, and cannot easily be squared with all the rulings of *nasab* (filiation) of classical Islamic jurisprudence, formulated at a time when the existence of the female egg, if suspected, was not known for certain. While for the most part the literature available for interested parties is rather schematic, following the fatwa (response) format or the somewhat bare presentation of the *risalah 'amaliyah* (legal handbook), Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani's son, Muhammad Rida al-Sistani, has chosen to devote an entire volume of richly documented *fiqh istidlali* (legal analysis) to these debates, an invaluable resource for other scholars.[6] Here a comprehensive range of scenarios—artificial insemination by husband and donor, egg donation and embryo transfer, among many others—are fully explored, with the arguments illustrated with a wealth of citations of the Quranic and *riwayat* literature, as well as references to secondary works and the opinions of the major authorities. Paralleling to some extent discussions in Western "bioethics" and anthropology, the consequences for relatedness and even the meanings of basic kinship terms such as "mother" and "father" are debated, as well as more typically Islamic concerns such as the ramifications for inheritance law and marriage regulation.

Sistani's work, while perhaps posing more questions than clear answers, opens up for other scholars a fascinating window into this area of Shiite jurisprudential debate, at a time when the Western media are just waking up to the vibrant engagement Shiite scholars have had with other such new technologies, as witnessed by last year's interest in Britain and the United States in Ayatollah Khomeini's permission of transgender surgery some forty years ago.[7] These debates are not just important in terms of "medical ethics," defining the boundaries of medical practice for Muslims, but touch on much more general and important issues. They bear witness to the continuing dialectic between revealed religious knowledge and the propositions of modern science, and test the ability of religious specialists to push the thinking of their followers regarding the most fundamental of social categories in new and unexpected directions.

Notes

1. As medical anthropologist Marcia Inhorn has documented: see, for example, her *Local Babies, Global Science* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
2. As Inhorn has noted: "Religion and Reproductive Technologies," *Anthropology News* 46, no. 2 (2005): 14.
3. Ayatollah 'Ali al-Khamene'i, *Ajwibat al-Istifta'at* (Beirut: al-Dar al-Islamiyah, 2003), part 2, 69-71; interview with Shaykh Muhammad Tawfiq al-Miqdar, Beirut, 2003.
4. Interviews with Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah and Shaykh Muhsin 'Atwi, head of Ayatollah Fadlallah's fatwa department, Beirut, 2004.
5. I am drawing on email correspondence and interviews with representatives in Beirut, as well as published sources here: Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani, *al-Fiqh lil-Mughtaribin* (Beirut: Dar al-Mu'arrikh al-'Arabi, 2000); Ayatollah Muhammad Sa'id al-Hakim, *Fiqh al-Istinsakh al-Bashari* (Beirut: al-Murshid, 2001).
6. Muhammad Rida al-Sistani, *Wasa'il al-Injab al-Sina'iyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Mu'arrikh al-'Arabi, 2004).
7. See, for example, Frances Harrison's *BBC Newsnight* report of 6 January 2005, and Nazila Fathi's piece in the *New York Times*, 2 August 2004.

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Islamic House Purchase Loans in Britain

ELAINE HOUSBY

In the last few years some British banks have begun to offer loans for house purchase which satisfy the Quranic prohibition of interest. This presents the paradox of a retention of cultural difference being used to promote integration with the norms of the wider society. It raises concerns about the exclusion of less affluent Muslims. There is also some question as to whether the banks are in tune with the thinking of younger British Muslims.

Since the bombs on the London Underground on 7 July 2005, a great deal has been heard about the necessity for British Muslims to integrate with something called the *British Way of Life*. Beyond an assumption that the British Way of Life precludes terrorism, the definition of this concept is distinctly hazy. It has been invoked in the media in support of everything from a basic commitment to pluralist liberal democracy to getting more Muslim players into premiership football teams, via expecting schoolchildren regardless of origin to memorize details of the Battle of Trafalgar.

Beyond all of this newly self-conscious discussion, there is one feature of the British Way of Life which is taken so completely for granted that only eccentrics or foreigners ever question it. The British are a nation of homeowners. Continuing to rent beyond one's early twenties is frequently regarded as a sign of failure in life, and the majority of citizens are desperate to free themselves from this stigma, no matter how much house purchase may strain their finances.

The Quran forbids *riba*, which is normally understood to be charging interest on loans. The prevailing interpretation of this prohibition is that not only receiving but also paying interest on a loan is sinful. The ubiquity of house purchase through interest-bearing loans in contemporary Britain has brought this Islamic prohibition into direct confrontation with the habits and aspirations of the vast majority of non-Muslim citizens.

I began work for a Ph.D. in October 2001 and finally submitted my thesis in the middle of August 2005. I therefore found that it had inadvertently become a record of the period between 9/11 and what is now being called 7/7. My topic was the rapid development of Islamic financial products in Britain during this period, of which the most prominent aspect was the appearance of so-called "Islamic mortgages," that is forms of house purchase loan which claim to be "Sharia-compliant." These loans offer an interesting case study of a phenomenon situated right on the interface of cultural difference and integration.

One perception of the promotion of Islamic loans would be that by emphasizing cultural difference it works against integration. I argue that on the contrary it is working to prevent the development of genuine cultural difference by assimilating dissident elements of a minority religious culture into the mainstream of British life.

A notable feature of the emergence of Islamic home loans was the degree of support given to them by the government. For some years the Treasury, the department of the British government dealing with financial matters, had been involved in a working party on Islamic financial products, which also included representatives of some major banks and Muslim organizations, notably the Muslim Council of Britain. The remit of this working group was to identify obstacles to the creation of financial products which conformed to Sharia and suggest ways of removing these obstacles.

The most highly publicized result of its efforts was the announcement in the Budget of 2003 that the burden of "double stamp duty" would be removed. "Stamp duty" is a tax payable on the registration of a change of title to a property, which in effect functions as a tax on house purchase. The usual forms of Islamic home purchase loan (described below) involve transferring title twice, and therefore used to make the purchaser liable to pay this duty twice. After this announcement the relevant regulations were amended to say that where change of ownership was merely a technical aspect of the financing arrangement it would not attract duty.

This concession received a considerable amount of coverage in the general press. The Muslim organizations which had lobbied for the change had an interest in presenting it as a campaigning triumph, and the government wished to use it to signal its interest in Muslim voters. In fact the loss of revenue involved was, according to the Treasury itself, negligible, and arguably the government purchased the goodwill of Muslim house-buyers very cheaply.

The two common forms of Islamic contract for house purchase finance are *murabaha* and *ijara*. In the first arrangement, the bank buys the house and sells it back to the purchaser at a higher price, which is repaid in instalments. In the second, the bank buys the property and rents it to the purchaser, who makes payments which cover purchase of the equity by instalments and rent for use of the amount of equity still owned by the bank. The earliest Islamic house purchase loans offered in Britain were murabaha arrangements, but the second form of contract is now becoming more common. This may be partly because murabaha has been criticized by some scholars for being no more than a device to disguise the charging of what is in effect fixed interest, but it seems also to be due to the fact that is easier for the bank to vary repayments under an ijara contract. The explanation of the Manzil house purchase scheme of the Ahli bank states explicitly that ijara is like a variable rate conventional mortgage, while murabaha is like a fixed rate mortgage. The Council of Mortgage Lenders has also said explicitly that these payments will be varied to correspond with the variation in the rate of interest under a conventional mortgage.[1]

> [Islamic loans] prevent the development of genuine cultural difference by assimilating dissident elements of a minority religious culture into the mainstream of British life.

For a long time the only halal house purchase loan available was that offered by the United Bank of Kuwait (the former name of Ahli bank), which was not widely advertised and difficult to access, especially for those living outside London. The launch in the summer of 2003 of an "Islamic mortgage"

by HSBC bank marked a new era of availability of halal loans from a mainstream bank with branches in almost every town. Since then other high-street banks have followed suit, notably Lloyds TSB in early 2005. There has also been interest from banks based in the Muslim-majority world, notably the oil states, in entering this market, although to date none of them offer a widely available home loan.

All of the presently available Islamic house purchase loans are more expensive to repay than a conventional loan, and they all require a fairly large deposit, normally 20% of the value of the property, whereas a conventional lender can usually be found prepared to settle for a lower deposit. These factors immediately exclude those who are struggling financially, and mean that the decision to conform to Islamic principles is in itself a luxury.

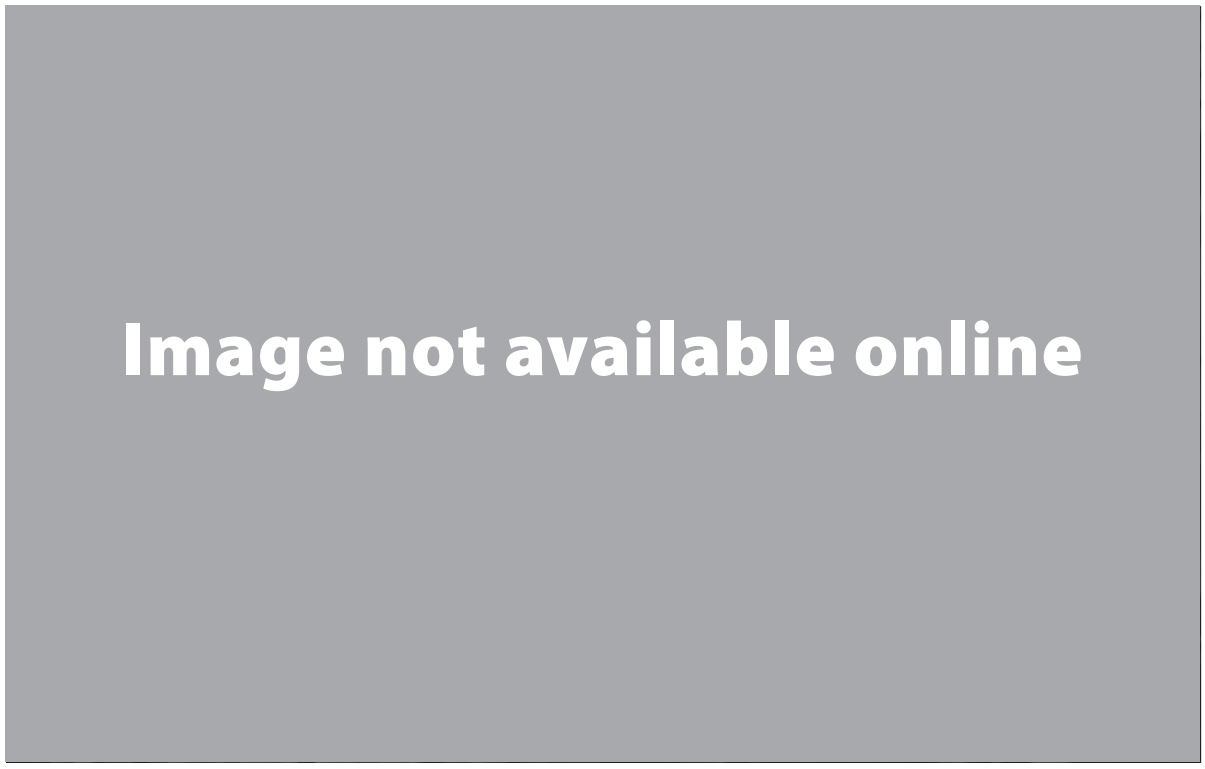

PHOTO BY RUSSELL BOYCE / © REUTERS 2005

Boards advertising property for sale and rent, East London, June 2005

Some of the published ruminations of participants in the working party on Islamic finance indicate an unexamined assumption that Muslims currently living in rented housing would become owner-occupiers if only they could access a Sharia-compliant loan scheme.[2] The government was particularly anxious to dislodge those who could in fact afford to buy a property from social housing, in order to free this for those in the greatest housing need, and seem to have believed that a significant number of these would buy if they could so without compromising their religious principles. An unforeseen factor, which has prevented the opportunity to buy by halal means being taken up as widely as hoped, is that a clause in another scheme designed to encourage tenants of social housing to buy their home, by offering them a discount on the market price, excludes rapid re-sale of the property to a third party. This means that murabaha and ijara contracts cannot be used to take advantage of this discount. However, the most important reason why the government's hopes have not been fulfilled is that the majority of those in social housing simply cannot satisfy the conservative lending criteria of the banks.

The introduction of these so-called "Islamic mortgages" does nothing to reduce the fundamental division in British society between home owners and non-home owners, especially those living in social housing. It does not acknowledge that it is poverty, which is the main obstacle to house purchase for those Muslims who are still living in rented accommodation, and not the lack of readily available Sharia-compliant loans. The increasing availability of "Islamic mortgages" may actually increase this polarization, as banks and other providers of financial services make increasing efforts to court affluent Muslim customers while disregarding Muslims who are of no commercial interest to them.

The marketing of Islamic loans reduces culture to an aspect of consumer behaviour. While academics and politicians continue to debate whether the appearance of British-born bombers demonstrates that "multiculturalism" has failed, the commercial world is happy to promote any aspect of cultural difference, which can be turned into a distinctive product or unique selling proposition.

The trend in the development of Islamic financial products is all in the direction of merely technical differences from the norm. This is even more marked in the area of investment banking than in that of loans. Companies advertise the fact that they have teams of experts working on ways of producing halal versions of conventional products. There is little sign that the ethical concerns which lie behind the Quranic prohibition of riba and of a variety of unfair trade practices are inspiring radically new ways of conceiving lending and investment.

The seal of acceptability of all Islamic financial products is an endorsement by a team of Sharia advisors. Scholars prominent in this specialized area are retained by the banks to confirm that their products are halal. Publicity material produced by the banks is normally worded in a way which encourages customers to place total reliance on these scholars rather than attempt to understand for themselves the implications of Islamic thought for their consumer decisions.

In this, it is possible that the banks may be moving in the opposite direction from their customers. The affluent, highly educated younger Muslims who are their main target market are becoming dissatisfied with an uncritical acceptance of scholarly authority. An increased scripturalism and return to primary sources has been widely observed among this group. There may in time be a reaction against the generation of scholars who are approving the current spate of Islamic loans and investments. A factor which makes this particularly likely is the involvement of the same scholars with a great many companies. The same names recur again and again on the Sharia advisory committees of different banks. (The Pakistani judge Muhammad Taqi Usmani is particularly dominant in the field.) This is, to be fair, mainly because very few scholars have the necessary combination of training in traditional Islamic scholarship with knowledge of the extremely complex world of modern finance. It is though leading to an undesirable monopolization of the approval of financial products by a few people.

Another aspect of the present situation, which may eventually cause a reaction, is the fact that some of the banks most heavily involved in developing and promoting Islamic products are non-Muslim institutions which see Muslims as simply one more market to target. They are deeply involved with riba in all of their other activities. We may see a swing back to favouring Muslim owned institutions by the most religiously aware and active Muslim customers.

Although, it is also likely that such potential customers may come to see a truer adherence to the ethical spirit of Islam lying in convergence with non-Muslim projects in the area of "fair trade" and "ethical finance." This argument has already been made by Tariq Ramadan,[3] currently one of the most influential of European Muslim thinkers.

It will, then, be interesting to see whether Muslims who have the means to do so decide to fall in with the British Way of Life by purchasing a three-bedroom red-brick semi-detached house in the suburbs with a loan which is technically riba-free, or whether they will seek other ways of reconciling their Islamic inheritance with the national obsession with owner-occupation.

Notes

1. Council of Mortgage Lenders, *Islamic Home Finance*, 2001, http://www.cml.org.uk/cml/home
2. *Ibid*.
3. Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2003)

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Islamization of the French Riots

MARTIJN DE KONING

In October and November 2005, France witnessed a series of riots and violent clashes between youths and its police. Laurent Chambon, a French sociologist, born in one of the Paris banlieues and now living in the Netherlands, emerged, at that time, as an engaged social scientist worried by the islamization of the riots-discourse and by the way the French state handles the problems of the areas he knows so well from his childhood. Instead of riots of "youth gangs inspired by radical Muslims," he argues in this interview that these riots should be seen as part of a movement against the "precariousness" of everyday life in the French banlieues.

On Thursday, 27 October 2005, a group of teenagers were playing football in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois. When police officers arrived to check their ID's, they tried to run and hide. Three of them, thinking that they were being chased by the police, climbed over a wall to hide in a power substation. Bouna Traore, 15 year old and of Malian background, and Zyed Benna, 17 year old and of Tunisian origin were both electrocuted by a transformer in the electric substation. The third boy, Muhittin Altun, 17 (from Turkish Kurdish origin) was severely injured and brought to hospital. This event triggered the riots of October and November 2005 that were initially confined to the Paris area. The unrest subsequently spread to other areas and cities in France. Thousands of vehicles were burned, and, at least, one person was killed by the rioters. Close to 2900 rioters were arrested. In this interview French sociologist Laurent Chambon talks about his personal and professional engagement with these riots and the current social and political circumstances in the French banlieues and French society in general. Laurent Chambon was born in 1972 in Châtenay-Malabry in France. Living in his younger days in the ethnically mixed neighbourhood, he recalls his youth as a happy period. Regardless of their ethnic or religious background, he and his friends considered themselves as French.

Martijn: Being a French citizen regardless of your ethnic and religious background is an important prerequisite of the French model of integration. Do you still believe in that model?

Laurent: This might sound a little bit nationalistic or chauvinistic but I believe that the French Republican model is a generous and very effective model for emancipation of French civilians. What I worry about is that people like Alain Finkielkraut and the French Minister of Interior, Sarkozy, are constantly promoting this model, while at the same time not living up to the promises of this model such as equality and dignity with regard to how they treat the people in the French suburbs. In this way they are destroying the model for their own benefit and at the cost of the people in the French banlieues; people I grew up with, I know their older brothers and sisters. So, you could say I'm involved.

Martijn: Can you explain how Sarkozy and Finkielkraut did that and why did they do it? I have a hard time in believing that they would deliberately want to cause trouble for these people?

Laurent: One of the most important things is that they islamized the riots. During the riots, the French Minister of Interior and probable presidential candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, stated to the press that the rioters were either a band of criminals violating Republican order or under the influence of radical Muslims. Everyone thought of Al Qaida, of course. Judges were asked to put these criminals in jail, and send the ungrateful foreigners back home. Unfortunately for the Minister, the French Intelligence Services issued a few weeks later a report stating that, firstly, most of the youngsters who had a police file were known to belong to problematic families or had been victims of violence themselves. Only a very small minority had been involved in criminal activities, and those mostly very mild ones, something not extremely abnormal in these areas. In other words, one cannot speak of a "criminal operation." Secondly, that it was absolutely not planned in any way. The media, through their coverage, did encourage youngsters to emulate their companions of misfortune, but one cannot speak of a structured movement. Thirdly, to the big desperation of the Extreme-Right and the Muslim fundamentalists, that Islam did not play any role in these riots. Sarkozy islamized the riots also by first asking the imams to stop the riots and later asking for a fatwa that would condemn these riots. Unfortunately for him, the youngsters in question have shown little interest in traditional Islam, and even less for first generation preachers. Finally, the bands were made of French young men. Roughly, over one third was of North-African origin, slightly less than a third of African origin, and about one third of "natives." If racism and religious discrimination were definitely part of the problem, the fact that these bands of young men were almost systematically ethnically mixed proves the theories of racial riots or Islamic conspiracy wrong. These three categories of rioters cannot be seen as distinct groups. In fact they see themselves as one group: French people from the banlieues. Although Islam played a very small role at the origins of the riots, Islam became a very debated issue, especially under the influence of culturalists or neo-reactionaries like the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut.

Martijn: What is this Islamized discourse on the riots all about?

Laurent: The main argument of influential politicians and public intellectuals, is that what happened is a living proof of the growing cultural gap between a civilized West and a barbarian East, the rioters being its latest avatar. With a legitimacy deeply rooted in the analysis of anti-Semitism, Alain Finkielkraut became the herald of the culturalists, called "nouveaux réactionnaires" by the French press, as he maintained, in an interview given to journalists of the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, that the riots were "anti-white, anti-republican pogroms" and constituted "a revolt with an ethno-religious character… directed against France as a former colonial power, against France as a European country. Against France, with its Christian or Judeo-Christian tradition."[1] While fiercely criticized in France, he had to apologize, his analysis became very popular mainly in the United States, Russia and the Netherlands, and not by coincidence: these three countries are very busy, in their own way, with neo-colonial, imperialist, islamophobic issues and Finkielkraut's theory did resonate well with their internal political obsessions. The goal of this intellectual strategy is to transform the traditional "Freedom versus Solidarity" issue, where political parties put their own cursor from right to left, into a "Civilized versus Barbarians" one, where nobody can really choose for Barbarians. Sarkozy supported Finkielkraut by stating that if there is so much criticism of him, it might be just because he says things that are correct.[2] I am convinced that the call from Minister Sarkozy to the imams to stop the riots, with a fatwa if necessary, is part of a broader strategy of islamization of social problems and criminalization of poverty.[3] While, almost from day one, many reliable sources indicated that the riots were mostly socially motivated, Mr. Sarkozy chose to introduce the Muslim factor to reinforce his own conservative agenda on security, integration and immigration.

Martijn: Many analysts also point to the grave social circumstances in the banlieues as the cause for these riots. Feelings of humiliation, no prospects for having a job, bad housing, and the overt racist behaviour of the police, contributed or even caused these riots. You lived in these banlieues. Can you tell us something more about that?

Laurent: As stated in different reports, especially from Amnesty International[4], the French police are characterized by strong shortcomings:

structural racism and xenophobia, culture of impunity, and abusive procedures against victims of misconducts. The culture of the French State, focused on exportation of the "French culture" for the good of humanity, has produced a very strong colonial culture, not necessarily racist, but strongly ethno-centrist, where the Other is seen as a "Barbarian" who needs to be tamed. The relation colonizer/colonized can well define the one between the youngsters from the banlieues and the police. Besides, especially under a right-wing government, the French police enjoy a large impunity when it comes to power abuse and misconduct. Even in the case of deadly misconducts, the chance of seeing a policeman in jail is close to zero. Finally, the French police is in a very poor state: high figures of alcoholism, divorce and suicide, a very poor diversity policy, women and migrants are not welcomed at all, very low salaries and a toleration for misuses of the law to make some extra earnings are endemic problems. The abusive use of the "insult to agent" procedure, meant to protect the police from harassment, its costs being covered by the prefecture and generating well-paying compensations, is an easy way to complete a small pay-check. It is also a way for the police to cover its misconducts: the judge will generally listen first to the policemen if such a procedure has been engaged, guaranteeing amnesty for them, even if they have gone far over the red line. What is also important, is the structural discrimination and racism of French society, but there is something more important going on. Although I might seem a little bit too Marxist in my analysis, what is happening nowadays in France is that when you are born in the wrong class your chances of having a prosperous future are very limited. You can have all the degrees you want, you can be an excellent student at an excellent institute, but when you are from the banlieues, you have a problem. France often proudly presents itself as a meritocracy: if you have the right qualifications, you can find a good and steady job and secure your future. But in fact, nowadays, France looks more like an aristocracy: with the French upper class securing its own positions. For example, I was doing well at university but when people found out that I was from the banlieues, they stopped talking to me. People from the French upper class, the aristocracy, the establishment, have no problems in finding well-paid, secure jobs. Others, no matter what their ethnic or religious background is, have far fewer chances. The question therefore is not if these riots are ethnic or Islamic, but "how" and "why" these riots became islamized. By islamizing these riots, politicians and public intellectuals are actually diverting their attention from this issue to another one that is far more popular. They are avoiding that their own position comes under close scrutiny and reforms of the system are implemented. As said, this problem affects everyone from the banlieues. When you are a white, middle class man like me, and probably more when you are an Arab or black, lower class Muslim. Another problem that relates to this aspect of aristocracy is the crisis of political representation, something which I have researched.[5] People from the banlieues are hardly represented in the French political system because the way people are elected. Any desire for reform to include more women or ethnic minorities, is refused by the political elite. Look, for example, at the people in the Assemblee Nationale, only 10% are women.

Martijn: You characterize these riots as a clash between the lower class from the banlieues and the French establishment. Is there any proof that this has a broader impact that extends beyond the banlieues only?

Laurent: There is, when you look at the unrest in France of March 2006. Students are protesting against the new work laws. These are seen by students and many on the left as an attack on job security at a time when many in France are feeling deeply threatened by globalisation and any hint of change at home. What these students fight against is actually for a large part the same as for the people in the banlieues in 2005. The crisis of meritocracy is not only affecting the youths of the banlieues but also middle class youth who, with all their university qualifications, can only find insecure temporary jobs if any. Both the students now and the banlieusards back then, can be seen as part of a precarious movement.

Martijn: "Precarious" means unsure, uncertain, difficult, and delicate. Since the early 80s the term has been used more and more in relation to work. Precarious work refers to all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible forms of labor such as illegal, seasonal, and temporary employment, subcontractors, freelancers, or so-called self employed persons. Is it only about work and is this a new kind of workers' movement?

Laurent: It is more than that. Precariousness refers to living and working conditions without any guarantees, to the uncertainty of all material and immaterial conditions of life. For example, it is difficult for these students who are revolting now, to find a good and steady job as it is. The new work laws will make it increasingly difficult because after a short period they can be fired without any conditions attached to it. For the people from the banlieues it is even more difficult. Not because they are not that qualified but because they are from the banlieues and lack the necessary networks for social mobility. For Arab and black people of the banlieues, racism and discrimination comes on top of that and the islamization of the riots makes that worse than it already is. The precariousness therefore relates to these so-called flexible jobs, but also to identity issues, geographical locations, and an uncertain future. And especially in France it also has to do with, and again this is what makes me so angry: the French state not living up to its own standards of "republican equality."

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Participants at a silent march, Clichy-sous-Bois, Paris, 29 October 2005

Notes

1. *Ha'aretz*, 18 November 2005.
2. See for example *Ha'aretz*, 6 December 2005.
3. See Loïc Wacquant, *Punir les pauvres, Le nouveau gouvernement de l'insécurité sociale* (Paris: Agone, 2004); and see also http://lmsi.net/article.php3?id_article=481.
4. See the report online: http://web.amnesty.org/report2005/fra-summary-fra.
5. See Laurent Chambon, *Le sel de la démocratie. L'accès des minorités au pouvoir politique en France et aux Pays-Bas* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2002), see also http://users.skynet.be/suffrage-universel/fr/frmiel.htm.

An Anti-Riot Fatwa

ALEXANDRE CAEIRO

A French fatwa condemning the 2005 riots in Islamic terms gave rise to a controversy around the legitimacy of this particular Muslim technology in a secular polity. To seize the significance of the text one must place it in the tradition of the Salafiyya, where Islamic forms of reasoning acquired a distinctively public dimension, and map out the recent—and contested—discursive shifts in French laïcité.

Fatwas are powerful symbols. As statements made in the name of God, they often carry an aura of sanctity. Fatwas are nevertheless progressively acquiring, in the Muslim world, a meaning close to the English "sermon"—a form of moralizing religious advice largely out of tune with reality. Since the Rushdie case, fatwas are regarded with even greater hostility in the West, denoting, if not a death-threat, a normative genre which looks to liberal minds uniquely obscure; and committed European Muslims are increasingly debating the legitimacy of such texts. When in 1996 the Haut Conseil des musulmans de France issued a fatwa condemning the kidnapping of Catholic monks in Tibéhirine (Algeria) by Islamist radicals, the Grande Mosquée de Paris swiftly responded that, "A fatwa fulfils a number of conditions laid out in Quranic Law (sic). We are here under French Law, which separates strictly between religion and the Republic. [If we issue a fatwa today] why wouldn't we throw a fatwa tomorrow to demand polygamy?"[1] Some Muslim institutions have preferred to avoid the term "fatwa," delivering other forms of Islamic advice: the largest confederation of Muslim scholars in France, the Conseil des imams, reacted to the recent discussion on banning the Muslim headscarf from public schools by issuing a press statement which "follows the method of a fatwa," but is not called so "in regard to the sensitivities of the French public sphere."[2]

PHOTO BY VINCENT KESSLER / © REUTERS, 2005

Cars burned during riots of 8 November 2005 stacked up at Strasbourg's city impound lot

These *constraints of publicity* render the "fatwa concerning the troubles affecting France" issued at the height of the violence on 6 November 2005 by the Union des organisations islamiques de France all the more remarkable. Drawing on Quranic verses condemning destruction and disorder, the theological body of the UOIF, Dar al-Fatwa, ruled the following: "Every Muslim living in France, whether citizen or guest, has the right to demand the scrupulous respect of his being, dignity and belief, as well as to act for greater equality and social justice. But this action…must never take place against the Islamic teachings and the law which regulates common life."[3]

The fatwa was delivered in response to demands from the grassroots, particularly those Muslim families most affected by the destruction of (their) cars. The UOIF reported a high number of telephone requests to publicly condemn the violence. By voicing such loud criticism of the riots in Islamic terms, the leaders of the UOIF were drawing on the tradition of the Salafiyya which since the nineteenth century has geared Muslim technologies not (only) for individual salvation but for purposes of social governance and the formation of moral citizens. The fatwa has been one of Muslim reformers' key instruments in this project.

The "preventive" text, as the fatwa was described, signalled also an attempt to dismiss the insinuations of a religious manipulation behind the riots. Under normal circumstances Islam represents for mainstream French society all the alterity of the banlieues. Many of the problems of these areas had been in recent debates explained through references to the spread of Islamic Revivalism. Although the riots themselves were mainly understood as the product of social and urban exclusion, some politicians did (wrongly) suggest the implication of Islamist groups. By issuing a religious statement against the violence, the UOIF was countering such claims.

The fatwa fell logically within the expectations of large sections of the political establishment, particularly the Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, who plays a key role in both maintaining order and managing religious diversity in France. The Minister included the controversial Islamic organization in the official Muslim representative body set up in 2003—a decision which greatly improved the UOIF's access to political and civil opportunity structures. The successful establishment of the representative body has in turn been used by Sarkozy to further his political ambitions. When political actors on the left and Muslim leaders criticized the fatwa, accusing the UOIF of either tainting social problems with a religious colour or of bestowing upon religion an illegitimate public role, Sarkozy's party promptly issued a press statement in defence of the use of fatwas in France.

The religious statement formalized the mediating function of Islam in the French suburbs. Although they did not generate as much publicity, religious volunteers had from the beginning attempted to dialogue with the young rioters in order to appease the situation. Coherent with the UOIF's imagined role for religion in the public space, the fatwa's wider resonance was made possible by the emergence of new discursive spaces in France: subverting the dominant conception of laïcité, which postulates a strict separation of religion and state, French authorities have for two decades now been performing a semantic shift between "immigrant" and "Muslim." Against the backdrop of international terrorism and the perceived crisis of the French model of integration, political leaders have not hesitated to draw the debate back to the theological plane, discoursing time and again about the "authentic" Islam of "peace" and "social cohesion." The consequent distinction between "good" and "bad" Islams drives the call for a French and "Enlightened" Islam—the latest version perhaps of what Olivier Roy has called the time-old theological temptation of the French religious "neutrality."[4] In this project of Gallicanization the UOIF occupies an ambivalent place. Although suspected of Islamist affiliations and accused of "fundamentalism," its contextualized reading of the Islamic sources and its vision of a "civic Islam" falls logically within the French debate.[5] They respond directly to the expectations of the society and reproduce the idea of a necessary aggiornamento as a prerequisite to the integration of the Muslims—setting the conditions not for a privatization of faith, but for a public Islam.

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Notes

1. *Le Monde*, 26 May 1996.
2. Secretary-general of the Conseil des Imams, personal communication, Paris 2004.
3. The full text of the fatwa is available from the UOIF's website, www.uoif-online.com.
4. Olivier Roy, *La laïcité face à l'islam* (Paris: Stock, 2005).
5. See Frank Peter, "Towards Civil Islam? A Comparison of Islam policies in Britain and France," *Recht van de Islam* 23 (2006).

Famine and Democracy in Mauritania

STACY E. HOLDEN

In August 2005, a military junta engaged in a bloodless coup in Mauritania that ousted President Maaouya Sid' Ahmed Ould Taya. Supporters and critics of this coup both explain this event in terms of a struggle for democracy. According to the author this analysis can neither explain the coup nor the popular support of it. Instead, she argues that environmental catastrophe has long acted as a catalyst for political change in Mauritania, just as in other countries in North Africa. Political instability in other countries will surely follow in the wake of more bad harvests.

Mauritania's military and the international community are at loggerheads over the recent coup in this Sahelian country. In response to the coup, Nouakchott's residents engaged in a joyful street celebration. Despite this sign of popular support for the new junta, foreign governments denounced the military's confiscation of political power.

Both the Mauritanian military and its international critics present themselves as champions of democracy, so these outwardly opposing sides are in fact interchangeable in regard to their mutual endorsement of an inaccurate explanation of this political crisis. President Taya held power for twenty-one years. The seventeen members of the ruling junta insist that Mauritanians could no longer support his harsh rule, and they promise to set up democratic institutions by 2007. Foreign leaders, however, insist that the junta must respect the existing constitution and reinstall President Taya. The opposing sides offer different interpretations of the rule of law and fair electoral process, but they do not advance contrasting explanations either for the coup or for the popular support of it.

Though journalists and pundits do not give credence to arguments that the coup centres on the struggle for democracy, they too offer faulty analyses. In some cases, they conclude that an Islamic movement generated unrest in this North African country. This argument is based on Taya's decision to open diplomatic relations with Israel six years ago, which angered politicized Muslims. In other cases, they conclude that this coup represents an effort to control the resources of an emerging rentier state. This argument focuses on Taya's decision to eventually engage in offshore oil production. My criticism hinges on the chronological understanding of cause and effect. Both arguments look either to the past or to the future to explain the present crisis. And right now, today, in a country dependent on rain-fed agriculture, drought and locusts have destroyed its crops.

The Mauritanian coup builds upon the Sahel's long history of environmental crisis as a catalyst for political change. Taya himself organized a military coup in 1984, the third year of a severe drought. By that time, hungry nomads had set up shantytowns on the capital's outskirts, and their arrival doubled the Nouakchott's population. Mauritania is now in the second year of a similar food crisis, and the military, just as Taya and his cohorts once did, deposed a ruler who could not prevent famine. In this instance, the military's action sustains the environmental logic dictating this region's event history.

I worked at the US Embassy in Nouakchott in 1998, and I observed Taya's efforts to care for his country's marginalized masses. I came to Mauritania two months after a visit by the Under Secretary of State for Human Rights, who took this country off the US list of human rights abusers. When I travelled inland through Atar, I saw no evidence that Taya abused his power to enrich himself or his supporters. His hometown was just as run-down as other villages in the region. And Taya's government cared for displaced migrants. In showing me Nouakchott, an Embassy official drove a 4 X 4 along a network of paved roads that led to the shantytowns. As a public work, these roads allowed the capital's poorest residents to take buses downtown and to receive barrels of fresh water.

Though Taya's policies exhibited concern for the lot of ordinary people, his efforts to institute democracy were superficial. The first presidential election after Taya's coup took place in 1991, and the President was re-elected with an implausible 90% of the vote. In both 1997 and 2003, the incumbent's margin of victory was a more realistic percentage, but Taya jailed his principal opponent in the latter election. If Mauritanians loathe authoritarianism and aspire instead to representative institutions, then a popularly supported military coup should have taken place well before August 2005.

It was only at the end of pitiful harvest season, as Mauritanians faced a second year of poor crops, that military officers ousted Taya. Even in the best of times, most people in this country hardly earn enough to feed their families. The US State Department estimates that the average annual income of the 2.5 million people in Mauritania remains close to only $380 a year. Now, locusts and droughts have destroyed this region's crops, so food is costly or, even worse, unavailable. Only three days after the coup, the United Nations World Food Programme pointed to Mauritania as one country that has been most affected by the current environmental crisis in the Sahel. If there is one issue that obsesses most Mauritanians right now, it is the cost and availability of staple food.

The reporting on this coup did not take into consideration the agricultural foundation of Mauritania's political life. At present, the UN estimates that famine threatens more than one million people in North and West Africa. Environmental catastrophe has long acted as a catalyst for political change in North Africa, and this coup perpetuates traditional patterns of power transfer in these arid lands. Ensuring public access to food is a basic task of any government, so famine in the Sahara's borderlands contributes to the rise and fall of empires. Political instability in other countries will surely follow in the wake of more bad harvests. But unmistakably, future demonstrators, much like the Mauritanians who danced in the streets last August to celebrate the military coup, want food, not democracy.

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Distribution of food at a village nearby Nouakchott, 9 June 2002

PHOTO BY GEORGES GOBET / © AFP, 2002

The Ayatollahs and Democracy in Iraq

JUAN R.I. COLE

Professor Juan Cole delivered the ISIM Annual Lecture on 1 December 2005 at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam. He argued that clerically-led Shiism in Iraq is undergoing a sort of reformation, in which leading figures are attempting to reconcile the principles of Islam with those of the Enlightenment. The current attempt by ayatollahs to engage with the ideals of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is among the more thoroughgoing and institutionally promising in modern history. This article is an adjusted version of his lecture.[1]

Leading Shia clerics in Iraq are seeking rapprochement between the principles of Shiite Islam and the ideals of democracy. One of the key figures in this development is Ali Husayni Sistani, born in 1930 in Mashhad, eastern Iran. Sistani, from a clerical family, carried out his initial studies with his father and other great clerics in the city of his birth. Around 1948 he went off for higher studies to Qom, not far from the capital of Tehran in the north-central part of the country. There he worked with the greatest Shiite authority of the time, Ayatollah Husayn Burujirdi. Late in 1951, the young Sistani went to Najaf in Iraq to complete his education, and ended up staying there the rest of his life. For the next decade, he studied with the leading jurists of that city. To any extent that Sistani thought about political matters, he appears to have been shaped by the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution in early twentieth century Iran (1905-1911). In post-Saddam Iraq, Sistani referred proudly to the role of Najaf clerics in theorizing a synthesis of Shiite Islam and Western-style constitutionalism in 1905-1911. That experiment ultimately failed, but left behind a body of thought on which clerics of Sistani's generation continued to draw.

In 1968 the secular, Arab nationalist Baath Party came to power in a coup. Sistani himself adhered to the quietism of Burujirdi (d. 1961), Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim (d. 1970), and Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Khu'i (d. 1992). He therefore avoided coming into direct conflict with the one-party state, though he clearly rued the way in which the seminary city of Najaf was reduced to a shadow of its former self and the Shiite clergy were driven into exile or killed in the dozens. There is some reason to think that Sistani also regretted the excesses of the Islamic Republic from 1979 in his homeland, where Ruhullah Khomeini instituted a clerical theocracy. Shiites hold that the line of the Imams or descendants of the Prophet had ended with the Twelfth Imam, who is said to have vanished into a mystical realm in CE 873, from which he will someday return. Shiites had dealt in various ways with the problem of legitimate authority that ensued from the Imam's disappearance or occultation. Khomeini put forward a novel theory that in the absence of the Imam, the trained Shiite clerics should rule, in accordance with Islamic law. He was dismissive of democracy, saying that if the people disagreed with the religious texts, the people would be wrong.

> [T]hey survived the dictatorships of Saddam and Khomeini alike, becoming disillusioned both with secularism and with theocracy.

In his first major fatwa after the fall of Saddam, critiquing the American plan to appoint a committee to draft the Iraqi constitution, Sistani rejected the Khomeinist tradition by accepting the principle of popular sovereignty. In his ruling or fatwa of 28 June 2003, Sistani explained that there was no way of being sure that the American-appointed committee "will draft a constitution that conforms with the highest interests of the Iraqi people and would express its national identity, one basis of which is the pure Islamic religion and noble social values." Sistani insisted that any body that drafted the new constitution would have to be elected by the people. He said that the draft constitution should then be submitted to a national referendum.

In other statements coming out of Najaf, it was clear that the high clerics, including Sistani, saw governmental legitimacy as deriving from two sources. One is the seal of *al-imda'* (approval) given by the grand ayatollahs in Najaf. The other is the approval or agreement of the people through a general election. In the absence of these two, the Interim Governing Council lacked legitimacy, according to the communiqué. The dual sources of legitimacy did not imply, in the thinking of Sistani and those around him, any sort of theocracy.

On 15 November, US civil administrator Paul Bremer made a pact with the Interim Governing Council that he himself had appointed, which called for council-based elections in May 2004. The system Bremer put forward would involve voting by members of the provincial and municipal governing councils established by the Americans and British. These council members had gotten into power because of small, unrepresentative selection processes overseen by the occupation authorities and companies it hired.

Sistani rejected this plan out of hand. In response to the questions of Anthony Shadid of the *Washington Post*, he gave his most explicit fatwa yet on popular sovereignty. Responding to Bremer's council-based plan, he said, "The instrumentality envisaged in it for electing the members of the transitional legislature does not guarantee the formation of a parliament that truly represents the Iraqi people. It must be changed to some other method, which would guarantee it. And that is [direct] elections, such that the parliament would derive from the will of the Iraqis and would represent them in a just manner and will safeguard it from any challenge to its legitimacy."

Other clerics who worked under Sistani's penumbra, whether in religion or politics or both, took up the discourse of the popular will. In December of 2003, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, visited Germany and consulted with Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. While in Berlin, al-Hakim said that he supported a greater United Nations role in establishing democracy in Iraq.

When Bremer and his Interim Governing Council rejected Sistani's demands, the grand ayatollah demonstrated the sort of hold he had on the Iraqi street. In mid-January 2004, he called tens of thousands of demonstrators into the streets of Basra and Baghdad, demanding direct elections. He also said that the United Nations should send an envoy to investigate the political situation in Iraq and to look into the feasibility of holding direct elections in May 2004. The Bush administration immediately backed off, faced with these massive rallies, and cooperated with the sending of a UN envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi. In the end, the plan Brahimi worked out with his American and Iraqi interlocutors gave Sistani most of what he wanted, though he did not get his May elections. Open elections were planned for late January 2005, after an initial transition from a purely American administration of the country to an American-backed interim government. Sistani also got a United Nations resolution midwifing the new Iraq, internationalizing the process far beyond what the Bush administration had wanted.

In a February 2004, interview with the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, Sistani said that he felt that the only way forward out of the quagmire was democratic elections. When the German interviewer inquired as to whether they might not produce a tyranny of the Shiite majority, Sistani demurred. "Not at all. Even if a certain community holds a majority in numbers, this will not lead to the creation of a political majority, because in every community there are different political orientations." He felt it was important that governments succeed one another peacefully, something that had been rare during his lifetime in Iraq. He added, "Also, since the majority of the Iraqi people are Muslims, they are sure to choose a system which will respect the principles of the Islamic Shariah, and also protect the religious minorities."

PHOTO BY AKRAM SALEH / © REUTERS, 2004

Poster urging followers of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to participate in the January 2005 elections, Baghdad, December 2004

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim clearly disagreed with Sistani about clerics playing a key role in politics. But he eagerly embraced the new discourse of national liberty through parliamentary elections. In early March of 2004, he gave a sermon on the ninth of Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, the central ritual commemoration of Shiite Islam. It was carried in the newspaper *al-Adalah* [Justice] on 4 March. In the Shiite narrative, Husayn had stood against the oppression of the Umayyad Empire, then was cut down by the armies sent out by the Caliph Yazid on 10 Muharram, 680. Al-Hakim said, "We … pledge to our Imam al-Husayn to walk along his path, which calls for adherence to right, justice, and freedom, and rejects injustice, arbitrariness, and tyranny." In this litany, "freedom" is perhaps the only truly modern element, added by al-Hakim to the more traditional values of justice and right. The clerical leader now configures the martyrdom as an element in modern Iraqi nationalism. He proclaims, "The land of Iraq is the land of the holy places and the cradle of freedom, and our Imam Al-Husayn may peace be on him, is the leader of the martyred and father of the free peoples." He now suggests a cycle of descent into tyranny and ascent into liberation. He says that in order to "close the road to all kinds of dictatorships" and to forestall any repetition of the bitter experiences of Iraqis under Saddam Hussein, "our demand for this dangerous and sensitive stage of our struggling people's life is to insist on the holding of free and fair elections to enable our peoples to have their say and express their opinion about whom they may choose to represent them." Al-Hakim here sets up a neat parallel between the martyrdom of Husayn in the seventh century and the rise of democracy in the early twenty-first century. Iraq was the scene of both epiphanies. In both cases a long period of tyranny led the people to rise up. Inspired by the sacrifice of the Prophet's scion, the Iraqi people now had the opportunity to institutionalize the values inherent in Ashura of refusal to countenance oppression. Not only free and fair elections but also the rule of law are key to this new, continuous liberty. "The conferring peoples confirm the need to issue a permanent constitution in the country. The constitution should ensure the free and effective participation of all sectors of society in the administration of their country in legitimate and decentralized ways." Here we hear an early echo of al-Hakim's other disagreement with Sistani, over whether Iraqi governance was best pursued through a strong central government or through a decentralized, loose federalism.

Other high Shiite religious authorities also weighed in on democracy and popular sovereignty. The Baghdad newspaper *al-Furat* reported on 10 October 2004, that Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Ishaq Fayyad, a colleague in Najaf of Sistani who originally hailed from Afghanistan, also supported the electoral process. He demanded that the elections be held on schedule (i.e. no later than 30 January 2005) and "added that the elections represent the first step in the right direction toward building a free Iraq and achieving justice and stability for the Iraqis." He elaborated on the security issue, saying "that the security situation is connected to the holding of the elections, which would lead to a free and democratic government." Implicit in the ayatollahs' statements was a conviction that only an elected government would have the authority and legitimacy to begin working on ending the foreign occupation of the country. Another Najaf grand ayatollah, Muhammad Sa`id al-Hakim, was asked if the religious establishment had a plan for the elections. He replied, "Its plan is to hold real and national elections that lead to the composition of a truly sovereign and independent government. He stressed that the objective of the religious establishment is to unify the national ranks and underscore efficiency and national will." The Rousseauan language of the national or general will recurs here, and it shows that Sistani was not alone in his interest in Enlightenment ideals about popular sovereignty.

In conclusion, one can trace from April 2003 through January of 2005 a remarkable development in Shiite religious and legal thinking about democracy in Iraq. The ideals of elections, representation of the people, the expression of the national will, and a rule of law are invoked over and over again by the most prominent religious leaders. Unlike Khomeini in 1979, they are completely unafraid of the phrase term "democracy," and generally see no contradiction between it and Islam. These democratic convictions, of course, have an immediate context. They give the religious establishment a means to ensure that the Shiite majority in Iraq gains its political voice after decades of severe repression. They also pave the way to an independent, sovereign Iraq that may finally escape foreign domination. This instrumental utility of democracy, however, cannot entirely explain the ayatollahs' infatuation with it. Rather, they survived the dictatorships of Saddam and Khomeini alike, becoming disillusioned both with secularism and with theocracy. In the phrase of sociologist Asef Bayat, their democratic thinking is a manifestation of "post-Islamism," and very possibly the beginning of the Islamic Enlightenment.

Note

1. The full text of the lecture will also be available as an ISIM paper.

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OIC: A Voice for the Muslim World?

IBRAHIM KALIN

The Third Extraordinary Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit held in Mecca on 7-8 December 2005 has brought to the forefront the question of whether it can serve as a voice for the Muslim world in its struggles to cope with the political and spiritual challenges it faces. Though the OIC has been severely criticized for its ineffectiveness, as the cartoon crisis in Denmark shows, the author argues that it is bound to play a critical role in the relations between the Muslim world and the West especially at a time when the former is struck with a sense of distrust, dislocation, and dispossession.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was established in 1969 with the goals of representing the Muslim world and support cooperation among Muslim nations and is the largest transnational Muslim organization representing 57 Muslim countries. Institutions like the OIC are needed not only for political reasons but also because of the feeling of alienation, insecurity and dispossession among the Muslim masses. This feeling is caused by the rapid process of tortured modernization and international politics that surround the relationship between Muslim societies and the major power players of the modern world. Furthermore, the Euro-centric historiographies of our educational systems make it virtually impossible to place non-Western histories on world history charts. History is assumed to begin with Greece and end somewhere on the two sides of the Atlantic.

Newly emerging networks of communication including the OIC are seen as potential voices for the Muslim world. Such voices are direly needed to express the concerns of Muslim societies to foster peace, justice, and equality. The omnipresent reality of the voices of wisdom, compassion, and moderation was a leitmotif of the classical Islamic tradition, which has succeeded in overcoming its own eccentric and extreme sides. Today, the Muslim world is a world without a centre. It seems to have lost its spiritual dignity and magnanimity. It wants to join a battle in which there are no winners. It is a world without a voice.

[T]he OIC can and should play a constructive role in overcoming the mental and spiritual trauma created by the crisis of the nation-state on the one hand, and secular modernism and globalization on the other hand.

Obviously, there cannot be one single voice for a world as vast and complex as the Muslim world. No single person, institution, or government can claim to speak for the entire Muslim world. What I have in mind is not a central authority that issues fatwas or makes declarations on issues of concern. Rather, it is something that will embody the ideal of finding the middle path of the Islamic tradition where the Muslim world will once again see itself as the "middle community" (*ummatan wasatah*). It is the "middle way" of traditional Islam "defined by that sophisticated classical consensus which was worked out over painful centuries of debate and scholarship."[1]

Not one but many voices of the "middle way" have to emerge to reflect the rich diversity as well as the multifaceted concerns and anxieties of Muslim communities the world over. This is what is happening in different parts of the Muslim world. Countless Muslim organizations, small and big, conservative and liberal, local and international, are converging on the necessity of such platforms where the voices of moderation, wisdom, mercy, and serious thinking can flourish. They are seeking the "middle path" to make sense of everything from the Danish cartoon saga to the mindless killings in Iraq.

OIC or the saga of an international organization

Can the OIC be such a platform? Given the OIC's rather uninspiring past in the last four decades, it is hard to give an answer in the affirmative. Like many other Muslim organizations, the OIC is hampered by numerous political, economic, and structural problems. Since its establishment in 1969 and official launching in 1972, the OIC has consistently failed to live up to its promise, i.e., to represent the Muslim world on a global scale, increase economic and scientific cooperation among Muslim nations, and find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem. In none of these areas did the OIC deliver. It failed over and over again and each failure led to further failure of many similar attempts. Its ineffectiveness in the massacres of Bosnia, Grozny, Palestine, Fallujah, to name a few, made the OIC further removed from the minds and hearts of Muslims across the world. Sadly, it became a joke: saying "O! I see!" and then doing nothing became the motto for the OIC.[2]

The political and structural problems surrounding the OIC and similar transnational institutions in the Muslim world are manifold and do not lend themselves to neat categorizations. The tension between the modern nation-state and any transnational organization that questions its legitimacy is clearly present in OIC's ongoing struggle and often disappointing failure to get its 57 members to commit themselves politically and act on key issues unanimously. Most of the member states have their own national agenda and lack the political will needed to address the issues of the Muslim world without the "rhetoric of blame"[3] and without the patronage of one or another super power. Even the name of the OIC has its problems. The word "conference" is out of place if the OIC is defined as a permanent organization. The word "Islamic" is too value-laden and susceptible to rival interpretations and often, useless discussions of what makes something "Islamic."[4]

Today, the allegiance of Muslim nations to their nation-states, which are constructs of power rather than embodiments of their values and aspirations, runs deeper than we may like to think. The rising Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms in Turkey, state nationalism in Pakistan, political nationalism in Iran, the forced nationalism of resistance in Palestine, regional nationalisms in the Arab world and the numerous other forms of "nation-statism" make it almost impossible for transnational identities and institutions to take root in Muslim countries. The legacy of colonialism, the mental geography of the nineteenth century, and the return of the empire in more oppressive and subtle ways preempt the possibility of forging larger and more universal codes of allegiance.

But it is precisely because of such concerns that institutions like the OIC can and should play a constructive role in overcoming the mental and spiritual trauma created by the crisis of the nation-state on the one hand, and secular modernism and globalization on the other hand. Despite its rather disappointing past, the OIC has a chance to bring the diverse voices in the Muslim world together and work towards a shared sense of common destiny. This is urgently needed at a time when the cost of the irresponsible and unjustified acts of a few is higher than ever for the entire Muslim world.

The Mecca Forum and the extraordinary summit

It is with these concerns in mind that the OIC held a meeting in Mecca on 9-11 September 2005 under the able leadership of the new OIC Secretary-General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. The meeting, called the "Forum of Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals Preparatory to the Ex-

PHOTO BY ZAINAL ABD HALIMION / © REUTERS, 2005

traordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference," was convened by HE King Abdullah ibn Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia. King Abdullah had called the meeting to address the issues of "unity" and "joint action" and set the Muslim world free from its "state of impotence and disunity it is suffering from." A similar call had been made at the tenth Islamic Summit Conference held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, October 2003, where the establishment of a Commission of Eminent Persons from the Member States was decided "with a view towards formulating a strategy and plan of action to enable the Muslim ummah to meet the challenges of the twenty first century, to adopt measures and programmes to disseminate the ideas of enlightened moderation in Islam, and to make recommendations to reform and reorganize the OIC System in order to provide it with new visions, goals and objectives."[5] The Commission of Eminent Persons consisting of 18 persons from 18 Muslim nations held a meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, May 29, 2005 and issued a 15-page report on the current situation of the Islamic world. The report highlighted many of the issues raised at the Mecca Forum.

The main agenda of the Mecca Forum was the reform and restructuring of the OIC in view of the current problems in the Muslim world. In the Forum, the participants discussed a long list of issues and made a number of suggestions. The themes of the forum were divided into three main areas: political, economic and scientific, and cultural-intellectual. Each panel proposed a vision, evaluated the current situation and challenges, and made suggestions as to how to achieve the projected goals. One of the themes that came up recurrently was the lack of political will on the part of member states to implement the numerous resolutions of such meetings. The gap between what is said and what is done was highlighted as a major defect undermining the credibility of the OIC and similar institutions.

The recommendations of the Forum were submitted to Heads of State in the Third Extraordinary OIC summit held in Mecca, 7-8 December 2005. Fifty-seven presidents, prime ministers, or their representatives attended the Summit. The Forum and the Summit produced three documents: the Mecca Declaration, Final Communiqué and the 10-year Programme of Action. One of the central messages of the Summit was striving for unity and solidarity among Muslim nations, fighting against terrorism and extremism of all kinds, and recovering the middle path of moderation. Corruption, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of transparency and political accountability in Muslim countries were singled out as among the most pressing issues. It was also emphasized that unity among Muslim nations should be strengthened and that Muslim countries should play a larger role in all the major international organizations.[6]

The other issues discussed included the formation of a joint Islamic solidarity fund, cooperation among NGOs, curbing extremism and preventing ethnic and sectarian clashes, establishing a balance between security and freedom, giving a larger role to women, ensuring the protection of human and minority rights in Muslim countries, combating terrorism and Islamophobia, improving relations between the Muslim world and the West, increasing economic and scientific cooperation among the OIC members states, investing more in education, and opening new offices of the OIC in places where Muslims live as minorities.

Giving just a list of the above issues attests to the enormity of the problems faced by the Muslim world today. They point to the urgency of taking action to stop the further alienation and frustration of Muslim communities throughout the world. In the absence of proper representation, such lingering problems are bound to result in chaos and further destruction. At this point, the Danish cartoon crisis gave the OIC a unique chance to play the role of a credible negotiator between Europe and the Muslim world. It was important for the OIC to make a plea of calm and moderation in the name of the Muslim world. Even though these calls did not have an immediate impact on street demonstrations, they helped start a number of official initiatives to address the crisis at an international level. OIC became the main institution to convey the message of the Muslim masses to the halls of European Union, and this is no small matter for the global representation of Muslim issues in the West.

Institutions like the OIC, if endowed with a proper vision and equipped with the necessary means, can make a difference to alleviate some of the pain suffered by millions of people within and outside the Muslim world. Otherwise, the hard realities of poverty, corruption, impotence, mistrust, anger and indifference are bound to continue to produce confused minds and hardened souls. Reversing the course of events for the better will be a historic moment not only for the Muslim world but for all the children of Adam.

Statesmen from OIC member states at the Mecca summit, 8 December 2005

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Notes

1. T. J. Winter, "Poverty of Fanaticism" in *Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition*, ed. Joseph E. B. Lumbard (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2004), 294.
2. For a history of the OIC and its structure, see Abdullah Ahsan, *The Organization of the Islamic Conference: An Introduction to an Islamic Political Institution* (Herndon: IIIT Publishing, 1988).
3. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Boks, 1993), 18.
4. Cf. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Kylie Connor, "The Organization of the Islamic Conference: Sharing an Illusion", *Middle East Policy* 12 no. 2 (Summer 2005): 80. See also Sohail H. Hashmi, "International Society and Its Islamic Malcontents," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*13 (Winter-Spring 1996): 13-29.
5. From the opening speech by Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the Secretary-General of the OIC, Mecca, 9 September 2005.
6. The Summit details and documents can be found on the OIC website http://www.oic-oci.org.

War on Terror and Social Networks in Mali

DAVID GUTELIUS

How the US has chosen to carry out and rhetoricize its War on Terror with the Malian government has had important consequences for the political and economic stability of northern Mali. Pre-existing political and economic disparities have grown since 2002, spurring deeper social and cultural shifts and bringing a group of young, reformist Muslim intellectuals to leadership roles in new kinds of community-based organizations. The author explores these processes and their implications for social networks and corporate identity in Malian society north of the Niger Bend.

In 2002, the US opened a new front of the War on Terror in Saharan Africa, with the Malian government designated as a key strategic partner. Since then it has provided troops, materiel and funding to combat what the Bush administration regards as an abiding threat: a large, sparsely populated expanse sheltering terrorist groups linked to al-Qaida.

Aside from the weakness of evidence for such groups operating in the Sahara, the way the US has chosen to both carry out and rhetoricize its War on Terror in Mali has heightened regional tensions and widened pre-existing political and economic disparities. Social networks, particularly those networks based on different types of Muslim corporate identity, are one important area of social and cultural change. Older Sufi-based networks are giving way to new kinds of Muslim social organizations often funded by outside patrons and to new ways for northern Malians to get access to a variety of resources they have been denied.

Structural adjustment and open revolt

The story begins with the structural adjustment programmes and increasing presence of multinational companies in the 1980s and 1990s. During that period the IMF, World Bank, and other foreign donors struck a series of agreements with various Malian governments that attempted to address spiralling past debt service (most notably in 1982, 1988, 1996, and 1998) and underwrote large-scale works projects meant to increase foreign direct investment, with the larger goal of development along neo-liberal free-market principles. The impacts of these programmes varied across the country with the degree of existing social inequities, the level of government corruption and the local structures of political and economic control. But by 1989, Mali spent 100.8% of its GNP on debt service. Forced privatization measures hurt many markets—notably cotton, but also fragile farming in the north. At the same time, the Traore government cut social and health programme budgets. While Malians across the country felt the impact of these measures, they disproportionately affected the crumbling northern economy. Subsequent anti-government protests led to military coup in 1991, and coincided with the outbreak of a protracted armed rebellion in the north.

During the 1990s, important trends began to emerge in Mali's Saharan periphery that highlighted the direct and indirect effects of these external inputs, as well as aid's politicization. Reliable total aid figures are surprisingly sparse, since they include not only the official IMF and Bank loans and grants but also the parallel, often undocumented, monies invested by large multinational companies, in the wake of privatization, to gain favourable access to new opportunities as well as private NGOs and foreign state country aid. What is clear, however, is that the benefits flowing from these investments remained in the hands of mostly southern elites who actively supported or were part of the Bambara-dominated Konaré government.

An American officer training Malian soldiers, 2004

© DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, USA, 2004

1990s: Failing economy and new alternatives

Over the nineties, those leaders and communities in northern Mali who refused to cooperate with national government programmes and policies lost out to those who did. These communities received proportionally fewer opportunities than others precisely when in many cases they needed this help the most, with the slow but inexorable movement of the desert southwards and several successive years of devastating drought. For a social fabric already stretched thin by two decades of environmental degradation, neo-liberal economic reforms that undermined rural economies, and several disease outbreaks, the timing could not have been worse.

Local leaders responded in various ways. One option was open revolt, the choice made by the Ifogas Tuareg and allies in the early nineties. Another, more common option was simply acquiescing to government requests, the path that many older Songhai, Bellah, and Fulani community leaders chose. But a

new, third option emerged for community leaders in the nineties with the arrival of Islamic NGOs and missionary organizations, as a way of both differentiating themselves from those leaders who "sold out" and getting access to needed resources, connections, and clout. Saudi, Libyan, and Pakistani organizations brought with them economic opportunities as well as community prestige for those who choose to join them. These groups also frequently offered scholarships to young students to study at religious centres in the Middle East. At the same time, less missionary-focused Islamic relief organizations stepped into the gap left by both the international aid community and local governments, providing crucial services where others were not.

Interviews conducted with members of different generations across ethnic groups in northern Mali suggest that the older leaders felt increasingly threatened and pressed as the nineties drew to a close. Many of the younger scholars, some returning from the Middle East, had developed their own connections to Islamic aid monies and brought in projects to areas that Western aid and the Malian government shunned. The late nineties brought a kind of desert bloom in local Muslim grassroots self-help organizations, seeded and actively supported by various kinds of Middle East-based interest groups. Most of these organizations were more or less focused on community development, but some, like the Saudi and Pakistani da'wa organizations, were interested in much more—in spreading what they saw as a purer kind of Islam.

The Bambara-dominated Malian government tried to counter this by inviting Libyan organizations to build new mosques and infrastructure improvements while also establishing an official Islamic High Council in 2002 that purports to regulate the quality of preaching and oversees the religious affairs of the country. In many cases the government succeeded in co-opting the older generation of Islamic leaders from across Malian society, particularly Tijani and Qadiri Sufi leaders, pressured by new types of community competition.

In 1991, Mali officially hosted only a handful of large foreign Islamic NGOs with mostly modest local operations. In the late 1990s, new Malian reformist groups made their voices increasingly heard, including organizing large demonstrations in Bamako to force the government to shut down businesses during Ramadan and to protest Christian Evangelical missions.[1] By the year 2000, Mali had more than 110 officially-sanctioned Islamic NGOs and hundreds of smaller unregistered local organizations supported by foreign donors—overwhelmingly based in the far north of the country.

A new Saharan front on the war on terror

In early 2002, the Pentagon devised a new military programme meant to outsource intelligence gathering to African allies and to prevent terrorist organizations from using the Sahara as staging area, which it dubbed the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI). High-ranking officials and spokesmen developed a shared rhetoric about the operation, repeating key imagery in public statements that evokes an inherently lawless, violent, alien nature of the Sahara and those who live there. These statements were not only broadcast in American papers to the intended domestic constituents, but also quickly appeared on *Al-Jazeera*, the Internet, Malian papers, and radio broadcasts throughout the Sahel.

Many northerners formed their own opinions about PSI long before US personnel appeared in Mali. Most Tuareg and Hassani leaders bristled at the prospect of the Malian army being reinserted into their territories and interfering with the trans-Saharan trade they profit from and control. In 2003, rumours began to spread about what the Americans were already doing covertly, or would do with the help of Bambara military forces.

Other leaders used War on Terror to assert their claims to authority and ramped up their own rhetoric in response. By 2003, young Fulani, Bellah, and Songhai scholars from Timbuktu, Gao, and Mopti had transferred blame for local conditions in radio programmes and sermons from "Globalization" and the Bambara to the U.S. and its Malian sycophants, who now included older-generation local leaders of the Tijani and Qadiri Sufi *turuq*. Rumours about the War on Terror and the rhetoric it has inspired on all sides has given younger Muslim community leaders—particularly ones who have established outside funding sources—new, more receptive audiences in the north.

New local Islamic reformist organizations meanwhile have increasingly become sites where individuals can negotiate not only identity but also social status, with attendant effects on normative social form, the shape and dynamics of social networks, access to productive resources and market opportunities and cultural practices. Small new madrasas in northern Mali provide food, clothing, and education. At the same time they serve frequently mixed communities of Hassaniyya, Tamasheq, Fulbe, and Songhai speakers, who learn classical Arabic and a range of religious topics together. Small sponsored farming cooperatives, such as those based near Kidal and Timbuktu, meanwhile provide modest economic opportunities and protection for their members.

And yet there is no evidence that discrete terrorist cells are operating in any coordinated way in the Malian Sahara and there are few, if any, ties between Malian reformist groups and any known terrorist group. Moreover, while a reformist movement is making progress broadly in Mali, there are competing groups and interests within it as well as mixed feelings of Malians towards foreigners telling them what is proper worship, let alone how to live their everyday lives.

Alternative authority, competing claims, rising stakes

The US War on Terror, the conduct of the American military and its proxies in the Sahel, and the rhetoric the war has inspired has made the possibility of violence more likely, rather than unlikely. Stories about inappropriate conduct of US personnel, whether fictions created to help northern leaders acquire authority and followers or not, have begun to spread across the desert zone. Further, the US has helped reinsert the Malian army in sensitive areas that were part of the 1996 cease-fire and are claimed by former rebellion participants.

> [T]he way the US has chosen to both carry out and rhetoricize its War on Terror in Mali has heightened regional tensions and widened pre-existing political and economic disparities.

The ensuing growth in military and other spending to extend Malian government military and intelligence capabilities and protect foreign commercial ventures has been a rhetorical gift to that younger generation of reformist scholars and leaders. More moderate Muslim leaders of all ages have lost influence as they have become more strongly identified with a national government at the beck and call of what some now imaginatively call a new Christian Crusade.

The US has also pressured the Malian government to shut down smuggling networks to starve potential terrorist networks. Control of informal capital flows and markets remains a key site of struggle and rumour, which, next to aid dollars, bolster northern Mali from the Niger Bend north. The question over who gets access to capital of differing types—including social prestige, *baraka*, authenticity, rightful claims to privilege as well as property, goods and currency—and the extent to which local leaders establish their own social positions as providers of this expansive sense of capital reflect the social power they wield.

What the US and its allies have failed to recognize is the multivariate nature of these struggles, which comprise in any case more than smuggled cigarettes or other goods thought to fund al-Qaida. Informal marketing activities are social mechanisms by which communities not only cope with serious environmental degradation and deep social change, but also the shifting formal sector markets over which they have little control and to which they have little access. Further, "formal" markets in Mali are themselves often corrupt and manipulated by those who control them. Destroying the informal sector in the north only, without providing viable alternatives, is having the opposite effect of what most American strategists would intend: growing political and economic instability.

As the Pan-Sahel Initiative now grows into the larger Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorist Initiative, the composition of social networks and political alliances in northern Mali are continuing to shift in response. Whether the US and Malian governments recognize the damage PSI has done so far and the degree to which they can include northerners more effectively in their own governance and economic development remains an open question.

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Note

1. Michael Rubin, "Deserted," *New Republic*, 11 Feb. 2002.

Defying Sufism? Senegalese Converts to Shiite Islam

MARA LEICHTMAN

Beginning in the mid-1980s, some Senegalese Sunni Muslims began to convert to Shiite Islam. Converts claimed that Shiite Islam better addressed their theological questions, being more textually based than the versions of Sufi Islam practised in Senegal and dominated by marabouts, Islamic leaders, with *talibés* (disciples) who submit to their ultimate authority. Senegalese intellectuals disapprove of the central role the Sufi brotherhoods play in Senegalese politics and society. Choosing another branch of Islam enables converts not to follow the established marabouts by heading their own religious movement.

Shiite Islam was brought to Senegal through the migration of people and ideas, and both Lebanese and Iranian influences. Lebanese migrants first arrived in West Africa as the result of a colonial fluke. As early as the 1880s, and especially during the 1920s, emigrants left Lebanon because of economic hardship for Marseilles, the transportation hub of the time. They planned to continue on to the United States or South America, where there had been previous Lebanese immigration, but their ship docked at Dakar. The French colonial power convinced the Lebanese to stay in West Africa to work as intermediaries between the French in the cities and the West Africans in the interior in the peanut trade. Religion, in particular Shiite Islam, had not been featured in the Lebanese process of settling in Senegal and forming a new identity. In fact, Shiite Islam in Senegal was not a powerful or identifiable force until the arrival in 1969 of Abdul Monem El-Zein, a shaykh from Lebanon who had trained in Najaf, Iraq, and came to Dakar only shortly before the Lebanese civil war (1975-1992) and the Iranian revolution (1979), two important events in the making of a transnational Shiite movement.

There was no formal Shiite religious representation in Senegal until the founding of the Lebanese Islamic Institute in 1978. Shaykh El-Zein's two-pronged strategy was to restore religious identity to Lebanese Muslims, while also guiding the theological development and numerical growth of the newly converting Senegalese Shia, a goal he had to mask in order to remain in favour in the eyes of the Lebanese community and the Senegalese government.

The Iranian embassy also played a subtle role in encouraging Shiite Islam in Dakar. Iran has a history of economic cooperation with Senegal from the time of the Shah, but the embassy was closed in 1984 for spreading Islamic propaganda. The Iranian embassy reopened in the early 1990s and continues (more subtly) to promote Shiite Islam. Iranians hold an annual reception for prominent Lebanese and Senegalese Muslims for the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, and finance Senegalese intellectuals to attend Islamic conferences in Teheran. Iranian president Rafsanjani's presence at the Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting in Dakar in 1991 was highly publicized, as was Senegalese President Wade's 2003 visit to Iran. In addition, an Iranian shaykh built the *Hauza Al-Rassoul Al-Akram* three years ago,[1] which is located not far from the University of Dakar.

With the recent discovery of Shiite Islam by the Senegalese, competition is emerging over who will shape this new movement: Lebanon or Iran. Tension between Arab and Persian schools of Shiite thought results from political views: Iranians believe in Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih,* which gives religious judges the divine right to rule. Lebanese do not support this view, nor do they approve of the propagation of the Iranian revolution.

Senegalese claim that even though Lebanese Shia began to arrive in Senegal over a century ago, today's movement of Senegalese Shia is much more recent, and was brought about by two processes. First, books in Arabic, French, and English translation began to circulate in Senegal from Iran as early as 1971. Second, the Lebanese Shaykh began to teach Shiite Islam to Senegalese. Whereas the Islamic Institute in Dakar caters primarily to Lebanese, Shaykh El-Zein has founded five mosques and approximately 130 madrasas, religious schools, located outside of Dakar and led by Senegalese religious men whom he trained.

Senegalese conversion to Shiite Islam

Despite the efforts of the Iranian embassy and the Lebanese shaykh to bring them to Shiite Islam, many Senegalese Shia came to the religion on their own. Typically leaders of Senegal's small but growing Shiite movement are fluent in Arabic, and many have a university education from the Arab world. Alhousseynou,[2] the first Senegalese convert to Shiite Islam, or so he claims, worked at the library of the Senegalese-Turkish school in 1985 at age 22. There he discovered books on Shiism, but was told by a librarian that Shiites are heretics and the books were not useful. Such comments only sparked his imagination more (as man is always curious about what is forbidden to him), and he began to read, eventually becoming a Shiite. Assane, on the other hand, discovered Shiism as a result of the Iranian revolution. He followed how the press portrayed Khomeini, and was disgusted at how he was demonized by Western and Senegalese journalists, and how Shias were accused of being blasphemous. For him, the Iranian revolution restored dignity to Islam and belief to Muslims, and was the only successful revolution since the time of Mohammad. He became Shiite in 1987 in his late twenties.

Other leaders of the Senegalese Shiite movement encountered Shiism outside of Senegal. Abdou was studying in Canada in 1988 at the age of nineteen, and read books on Islam alone in the McGill University library. He discovered that the Shiite school of thought convincingly answered his questions about Islam that were left unaddressed by the Senegalese Sufi brotherhoods. Ibrahima was a student at the University of Dakar and was introduced to Shiism in 1987 through magazines from Iran which he found in the Arabic department. After graduating he went to Sierra Leone where he studied Sharia and Islamic law in a Lebanese and Iranian run *hawza*. Still others learned about Shiism at even younger ages when they were recruited from Sunni religious schools by Shaykh El-Zein and given scholarships to study in the Lebanese Shiite *Collège Al-Zahraa* in Dakar. Lebanese and Iranian proselytizing efforts were sometimes successful.

Senegalese men are more active in the Shiite movement than women, and female converts tend to be wives or family members of male converts. However, a few Senegalese women also found Shiite Islam by themselves. Khady began to learn about Islam from the leaders of the Senegalese Shiite movement, who never told her they were teaching her Shiite Islam. She began to wear the veil in 1990 in her mid-30s, and in those days the few veiled women in Senegal befriended one another. She had a friend who was a member of Ibadou Rahman, a Sunni reformist movement. The friend tried to initiate her into this school of thought, bringing her to some of the Ibadou Rahman leaders, who called her a Shiite. Khady had never heard this word before. She began to read about Shiism, praying at night that God would guide her to choose the right path, whether Sunni or Shiite Islam. One night in

1993 her prayers were answered. It was the dry season in Senegal, and as she prayed to end her confusion, a heavy rain began to fall. She was thus convinced, in a mystical moment, to openly identify as a Shiite.

The Development of the Senegalese Shiite movement

Senegalese Shia perceive of their calling to be that of missionaries—to spread the truth regarding Shiite Islam and to encourage the growth of their movement. Many Senegalese Shiite schools and institutes were built in the 1990s, hidden in Dakar's suburbs of Guediawaye, Parcelles and Yeumbeul, or in the Casamance region of southern Senegal, such as Kolda and Ziguinchor. The movement's leaders know one another and speak highly of the other, but tend to work independently in their native neighbourhoods, or in areas they think are ripe for change. Leaders specialize in different aspects of Shiite Islam. Some are trained shaykhs whose expertise ranges from Islamic jurisprudence to Sunni and Shiite philosophy; others are laymen who are artists, government employees, bankers, teachers, or students.

Starting in 1994, Shiite converts took advantage of the popularity of the radio in Senegal to spread knowledge about Shiite Islam on the air. The goal of the radio shows was to counter anti-Shiite stereotypes, and debates concerned differences between Sunnism and Shiism, and discussed monotheism, the Quran, prophecy, and Islamic history. Publicity for Shiism was also gained through inviting speakers representing different Islamic schools to voice their opinions. One programme paired Youssou N'dour, Senegal's most famous musician, with a Shiite painter to discuss what Islam says about art.

Senegalese Shiite practices

The efforts of Senegalese Shiite leaders will only be successful if they can convince other Senegalese of the message of Shiite Islam. Making this global religion more local enables Senegalese to relate to Shiite Islam. Senegalese Shiites stress that although they may be influenced by Iranian or Lebanese Shiites, the Islam they practice is distinct from that in the Middle East or Asia: it is Senegalese. This is evident in their adaptation of three provisions of Shiite Islam, the *marja'* system, *taqiya*, and the commemoration of Ashura, to the Senegalese context.

Many Shia emulate a marja', or a religious scholar of Najaf or Qom who serves as a reference. While not all Senegalese Shia are knowledgeable about this fundamental Shiite principle, many Senegalese draw their influences from a variety of Shiite thinkers. While some of them choose the teachings of Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, Khomeini's successor in Iran, others abide by the authority of a combination of others, including Ayatollah Ali Sistani in Najaf, Sayyed Mohamed Hussein Fadlallah in Lebanon, and Imam Mohamad Shirazi of Iran, who was popular among the Shia of the Gulf. This fusion of *maraja'* (pl.) distinguishes them from the Lebanese shaykh, who exclusively follows Sistani, and the Iranian embassy, which officially carries out the work of Khamene'i. One Senegalese informant explained that the marja' system resembles Senegal's medical system: when somebody needs surgery and the medical specialist for their particular ailment cannot be found in Senegal, they go to France or another country for the operation. The marja' system works in the same way. If there is an expert in Shiite Islam in Senegal, they can approach him with questions, but given the lack of expertise they go to Iran or Iraq.

Taqiya, or dissimulation, is permitted when persecution is imminent. Senegal is not a country where people are oppressed, therefore, Senegalese Shia claim, they do not need to practise taqiya. However, many of them are not open about being Shiite and do practise dissimulation. For example, when praying in Sunni mosques, Senegal's Shia hide their Shiite customs to avoid lengthy explanations to people who are unlearned, who may not have open minds, and who may think that the Shia are mistaken in their practice of Islam. Furthermore, a small number of Senegalese scholars earned the turban in Iran for their knowledge of the Shiite religion. While some of them wear it openly, others do not, afraid of being targeted by the anti-Shiite campaign of the Wahhabis. One Senegalese Shiite shaykh, who studied in Iran during the revolution, does not wear his turban in Senegal so he can continue to guide both Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Well respected for his knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, he is not only a *wakil*, authorized representative, for Khamene'i, but he is also a *muqaddam,* the Sunni equivalent of *wakil*, for a prominent Senegalese Sufi leader. Senegalese use of taqiya to move adeptly between the Sunni and Shiite worlds gives them more liberty than the formal Lebanese and Iranian institutions allow them. This is important in convincing other Senegalese that Shiite Islam is the true path.

COURTESY OF MARA LEICHTMAN

Senegalese Shiite Shaykh, date unknown

Another distinctly Senegalese Shiite adaptation is the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the son of Imam Ali, in the Shiite mourning period known as Ashura. The Lebanese in Senegal invite a visiting storyteller from Lebanon, with a full ten days of lectures, food, and decorations. The Lebanese conduct activities in the Lebanese dialect, which is foreign to Senegalese Shia, who are fluent in standard Arabic. Senegalese Shia prefer to organize their own tribute to Hussein in the Wolof language. A commemoration in the style of the Lebanese costs money and Senegalese Shia have meagre means. They are only able to observe the tenth day and night of the month of Muharram, convening to listen to a debate concerning the meaning of Ashura. They use what resources they have to organize a feast of Senegalese delicacies.

Although poor financially, the leaders of the Senegalese Shiite movement are rich intellectually. Fluent in the Arabic language, many have university degrees from the Arab world. Drawn to the religion for many reasons—political, spiritual, philosophical, financial, or because Shiite scholars convincingly answered their questions about Islam—their mission is to convince others. They spread the word in Wolof or other local languages, first to friends and families, and eventually to a larger population through teaching, conferences, holiday celebrations and media publicity. Senegal's Shia depend on two independent transnational Shiite networks, one Lebanese (Arab) and the other Iranian (Persian), to help finance their institutions and activities. Most importantly, while influenced by the maraja' of Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, Senegalese Shia emphasize that their Shiism is *Senegalese* (African). Indeed, through keeping their feet in both Sunni and Shiite worlds, Senegalese Shia hope to find their place in Senegal's politics of religion.

Notes

1. A *hawza* is a traditional Shiite school.
2. All names of converts are pseudonyms to protect the identity of my informants.

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Travelling with the Tablighi Jamaat in South Thailand

ERNESTO BRAAM

Even as the situation in southern Thailand degenerates into one of daily violence, the Tablighi Jamaat continues to take its message to the remotest villages. Ernesto Braam accompanied a group of followers to a small mosque in the Thai province of Pattani. The aim of this missionary movement is both to renew the faith of its followers and to appeal to villagers to come to the local mosque more often. The Tablighi Jamaat has attracted thousands of followers in Thailand's predominantly Malay Muslim Deep South.

Thailand's southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat have seen a wave of violence since 4 January 2004, when simultaneous attacks took place on Thai army bases, police posts, and schools. Since then, violence in these majority Malay-Muslim provinces has escalated through the consequent siege and storming of the historical Krue Se mosque in Pattani province, the deaths of 78 demonstrators after their arrest in Tak Bai, and the killings of policemen, soldiers, and civilians claiming more than a thousand lives. Fingers have been pointed at Malay-Muslim separatists, renegade soldiers and policemen, crime syndicates, and individuals settling personal feuds.

In the midst of this violence, the principally apolitical Tablighi Jamaat continues to carry out its *da'wa* (call to Islamic practice). Groups of dedicated followers in south Thailand visit the *markaz* (Tablighi Jamaat Centre) in the city of Yala at least once a week. They go on *khuruj,* tours to propagate their version of Islam, to fulfil the Tablighi's religious obligation, further deepen their faith and, perhaps, also escape the harsh day-to-day reality of violence on the streets. In more than one way, the Tablighi Jamaat can be seen as a safe haven from worldly affairs.

> The aim was to strengthen the listeners' faith and motivation to carry out the duty of approaching other Muslims with the same message.

The Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic missionary movement originating from the Indian subcontinent, first got a foothold in Thailand in the early 1980's when *ijtima'* (major gatherings) were held in Bangkok and Yala. From then, the movement's ideas spread rapidly among Thailand's Muslims. In the course of my research on Islamic reformism in southern Thailand, I was invited by the Tablighi movement to participate in one of its three-day khuruj trips. The *shuras* (councils of elders) in Bangkok and Yala deliberated whether an outsider could participate and decided positively. In the current escalation of violence and suspicion, the movement's leadership felt it had nothing to hide. This is an account of my three-day journey with the Tablighi Jamaat in the Deep South.[1]

The markaz in Yala consists of two main buildings: the two-storey headquarters and a large mosque used by up to 10,000 to 12,000 people during Friday prayers. The markaz is the base from which the Tablighi set out to visit villages and communities fulfilling the important duty of going on khuruj—the most visible characteristic of the Tablighi. The deputy head of the markaz explained that the first goal of khuruj is to "develop ourselves" by following in the footsteps of the Prophet. "The reward is Paradise. If we don't do this then we will follow our own desire," he said.

The Tablighi in south Thailand are of varied occupational backgrounds: teachers, businessmen, shop owners, students, lawyers, and medical doctors. The leaders estimate that 20,000 people go on khuruj every year. There is, however, no registration of membership. Most men wear a white Saudi style *thawb* (loose long-sleeved ankle-length shirt) and a *taqiya* (skull cap) because that would best imitate the dress of the prophet. Some men, however, wear the traditional Malay *sarong* and *songkok* (cap).

Preparation

Going on khuruj requires both spiritual and logistical preparation. The Tablighi use the *Guide for Tableegh Journey and Six Points*, printed in Pakistan, as an instruction manual. The leadership reiterated the six principles as presented by Tablighi Jamaat founder, Mawlana Ilyas, in India in 1934, namely 1) the belief in Allah and practice according to the prophet's way of life; 2) praying with attention to Allah; 3) knowledge of Islam and remembrance of Allah; 4) respect for others, Muslim and non-Muslim; 5) serving Allah without benefit; 6) allocating time to *da'wa*.

The leadership also explained the "sixteen rules" which should be obeyed while on khuruj: four sets of four practical rules—respectively four things to do more of, four things to do less of, four things not to do, and four things to ignore. The latter however are not mentioned in the *Guide.* They include the rules to ignore politics, conflict between different Islamic groups, one's own title and position, and donations. The leaders explained that the goal of khuruj is to increase one's personal belief in Allah and to practice Sunnah as shown by the prophet. The leaders did not elaborate on the *Guide's* very specific etiquettes of eating, sleeping, and going to the toilet.

In line with the general tenets of the Tablighi movement, its adherents in south Thailand have to go on khuruj three days every month or 40 days in a year in groups consisting of six to seventeen members. The goal is to spend at least four months in a lifetime on khuruj. They have to use their own money and time.

A local shopkeeper was appointed amir (leader) of our small group. The destination was decided based on which villages had not been visited recently. Typically, at a meeting, the destinations of future trips are selected, and mosques at those communities contacted to inquire if they would be willing to receive a *jama'ah* (group). The participants in the khuruj had each brought a small bag of clothes, toiletries, a mat to sleep on and a mosquito net. Finally, they and the other Tablighi prayed together.

Going on khuruj

We set out by car from the markaz to the small town of Prigi in Pattani province. The destination, less than an hour away, was a small mosque on the main road. The countryside of the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat—where up to 80% of the population are Malay-Muslims speaking a local dialect of Malay—is covered by rubber plantations, interspersed with kampongs (villages) and paddy fields. About 10 local Malay Muslims out on khuruj had already arrived, as well as a jama'ah of seven men from Saudi Arabia. Normally, the participants of a khuruj do household chores like cooking, washing, cleaning etc. for themselves. But because of the presence of a group from Saudi Arabia, the local Malay men at the mosque had taken it upon themselves to perform these duties. They prepared several meals a day and served them on large platters around which the Tablighi gathered, eating in a commu-

nal fashion using their right hand. The locals waited until the visiting Tablighi had finished before they took their fill.

Communication between the Malays and the Saudis was hampered by the language barrier. However, some Malays spoke Arabic, which they had learned while studying in the Middle East. The Saudis were travelling through Thailand on a 40-day khuruj tour. This was quite significant because, as they explained, the Tablighi practices are forbidden in the official Wahhabi doctrine of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the Saudis had to travel abroad to be able to join the Tablighi Jamaat. Coming from the holy city of Medina, they were treated with great respect and often led the prayers. In Thailand, the Tablighi are not welcome in mosques affiliated with what local people call "Wahhabis" or "Kaum Muda" (Malay: "New Group"). In fact, some followers of the traditional Malay Islam, hold negative views of the Tablighi Jamaat, saying it is alien to south Thailand and that its followers abandon their families when on khuruj.

PHOTO BY STRINGER / THAILAND / © REUTERS, 2004

Thai reading notes on origami cranes, dropped by military planes, that promote peace, south Thailand, 2004

As expected, the Tablighi participated in the mandatory prayers five times daily. An extra prayer at 2am was optional. At most prayers, local Malay men from the kampongs in the vicinity joined in. They numbered between 50 and 80, and comprised mainly those who were regular visitors to this village mosque. Women apparently sat behind a curtain that cordoned off an area of the mosque. They were from the local community and played no noticeable role in the khuruj. The leadership had, however, said that women could participate in the khuruj with their husbands, but would have to stay separately at the house of relatives or (female) friends. The prayers were generally followed by a *bayan* (story, sermon) told by one of the Saudis and translated into Malay, and sometimes told by a local Tablighi. A different bayan teller was chosen earlier in the day at an informal meeting of the more senior Tablighi. A congregation of both Tablighi and local non-Tablighi listened to the bayans attentively. The bayans took between 30 and 60 minutes and were generally based on stories from the *Faza'il A'maal,* which is prescribed literature for Tablighi comprising stories of companions of the Prophet, virtues of the Holy Quran, virtues of *salaat* (prayer), virtues of zikr (remembrance), virtues of tabligh, virtues of Ramadan and "Muslim degeneration and its only remedy." They were told with a strong conviction and concentrated on virtues and morality, applied to current day situations. The aim was to strengthen the listeners' faith and motivation to carry out the duty of approaching other Muslims with the same message.

After the bayan, especially in the evening when the mosque was more crowded, another Tablighi would stand up next to the bayan teller and appeal to the local non-Tablighi Malay-Muslims to go on khuruj. This was the liveliest part of the day in the mosque. First this person would ask who wanted to go on khuruj for four months. Sometimes twenty people would raise their hands, sometimes ten and occasionally no one. Then other people were asked to go on the 40-day khuruj trip. All this was done with some encouragement to convince those who looked away with timidity to sign up. Finally, the speaker loudly asked who would go on the three-day trip. Attendees often looked at each other and some of the younger ones would poke their friends. There was clearly an atmosphere of duty more than of coercion. When everyone had had the opportunity to raise their hand—by far not all did that—the names of men wanting to go on khuruj were taken down. Later, they would visit the markaz to talk to Tablighi elders, who would decide if their family situations permitted the volunteers to go on khuruj. After this session, or directly after the bayan, the congregation broke into smaller groups to read and discuss some stories from the *Faza'il A'maal.* At this point most local Muslims returned to their work or families.

The most outgoing part of the khuruj was when the Tablighi left the mosque to visit Muslims in the vicinity to invite them to join evening prayers at the mosque. No effort was made to convert Thai Buddhists. Groups of five to ten Tablighi went in different directions by car, scooter, or on foot. I walked with a group of ten in a queue with a young man from the local community as guide and a Saudi Tablighi as group leader at the head. The group walked through paddy fields and bushes to preselected houses in the kampong. A loud *"as salamu alaykum"* by the Saudi usually urged the shy resident to come outside. The group leader then expressed the greatness of God, stated that man and woman were created for worship and invited the resident to come to evening prayers at the mosque. This took about five minutes after which, in the same fashion, seven to ten other houses were visited. Sometimes people on the street or on a football field were addressed. Most of them agreed to come to the mosque, but generally did not show up that evening.

The whole group of Tablighi slept at the mosque on the floor, careful not to point their feet in the direction of the Holy Places. However, the etiquettes of sleeping under point 4 of the *Guide* (sleep on the right side of the body) were not strictly followed. The other days basically followed the same routine.

It was easy to forget the outside world, in spite of the Thai army truck that would show up every morning in front of the mosque, armed soldiers jumping off to guard the school across the street. For the duration of those three days, those present formed a tightly-knit group sharing a strong sense of fate and solidarity, praying, eating, and sleeping together, at the same time and in the same space. As an outsider I felt genuinely accepted by the group and included in all activities. The rather inconspicuous mosque had become a retreat from the turbulent world outside, and provided an oasis of spirituality, bridging language and cultural barriers, in fact, rendering them obsolete.

Note

1. The author would like to thank Mr. Muhamad Mukta Koleh for introducing him to the Tablighi Jamaat.

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The Prophet's Path
Tablighi Jamaat in The Gambia

MARLOES JANSON

Over the years, the Tablighi Jamaat has expanded into what is probably indeed the largest Islamic movement of contemporary times. Despite its magnitude, its impact in sub-Saharan Africa has been largely neglected. This article, based on ethnographic field research, focuses on the Jamaat in The Gambia (West Africa) where particularly youth convert to Tablighi ideology, in what could be seen as a form of rebellion against the authority of their elders. In the process, established religious and social values are redefined.

On our way to visit a local Islamic scholar, my research assistant Fatu ran into her cousin. Whereas normally she was exuberant, she greeted this young man, called Lamin, in an almost shy manner. I was surprised not only by Fatu's attitude but also by Lamin's appearance. During their short conversation, Lamin criticized Fatu for wearing a ponytail, which made her "look like a camel," and he urged her to put on a veil. When we continued our journey, Fatu told me that since her cousin is a *Mashala* he wears the "*Mashala* uniform." This term is derived from the Arabic *Ma sha' Allah* (what God wishes), an expression that is frequently exclaimed by people like Lamin. Fatu explained that, following the Prophet Muhammad's example, Mashalas wear a turban and trousers above the ankles in order to scare off Satan and prevent their feet from burning in hell. After I invited him to talk more about Islam, Lamin visited Fatu and me in the compound where I was staying. My surprise grew when my host, an elderly Muslim man educated in the Sufi tradition, greeted him in the following way: "Is your father not at home? Where is your mother? Don't you have a wife? How do you feed these people? It is better to support them than to sit the whole day in the mosque and call people to Islam." Lamin reacted to this offensive greeting by saying that it is his duty to worship Allah and "to invite people to follow the Prophet's path." When my host had left, Lamin sighed that he had expected to hear such a thing from the "old grandpa."

Tablighi religiosity is a protest against the religious festivities of the "old" and their conspicuous consumption.

This incident, illustrating the competing Islamic discourses in The Gambia, has to be seen against the backdrop of the proliferation of the Tablighi Jamaat. This transnational Islamic missionary movement, which originated in the reformist tradition that emerged in India in the mid-nineteenth century, encourages greater religious devotion and observance. Its founder, Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas, strove for a purification of Islam as practised by individual Muslims through following more closely the rules laid down in the sunnah. In order to make Muslims "true believers," Ilyas insisted that it was the duty of not just a few learned scholars but of all Muslims to carry out Tablighi work. Missionary tours by lay preachers became the hallmark of the Jamaat, established officially in 1927 in Delhi.

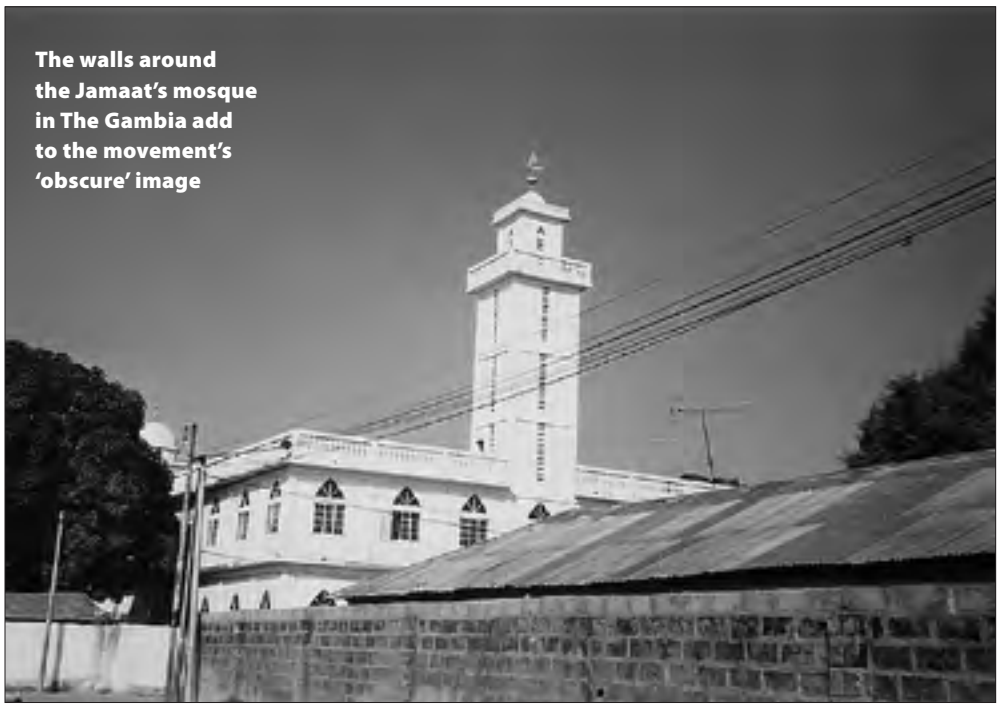
Over the years, the Tablighi Jamaat has expanded into what is probably the largest Islamic movement of contemporary times. Despite its worldwide influence on the lives of millions of Muslims, scholars have paid almost no attention to its spreading in sub-Saharan Africa. An explanation for this indifference is that this region is frequently, but unjustly, seen as the "periphery" of the Muslim world. I focus on The Gambia, which, despite its small size, has turned into a flourishing centre of Tablighi activities in West Africa during the last decade. Adherents from other countries regularly assemble here to exchange ideas on the proper Tablighi method that is, missionary work aimed at the moral transformation of Muslims.

Jamaat's rooting in The Gambia

South Asian missionaries reached West Africa in the early 1960s,[1] but their ideas did not find a fertile breeding ground in The Gambia until the 1990s. A factor that has facilitated the spread of Tablighi ideology in this country is its colonial heritage. The ideology has been disseminated mainly by Pakistanis, who preached in English (which had become the national language in colonial times). Due to the recent Islamic resurgence, a process that coincided with the assumption of power in 1994 by Yahya Jammeh—who appealed to Islam to enhance his legitimacy and to establish closer relations with the Islamic powers in the Gulf States—a growing number of Gambians seemed to be receptive to a new interpretation of their faith, and the Pakistani preachers took advantage of this need.

The history of the Tablighi Jamaat in The Gambia started with Imam Dukureh, who studied in Saudi Arabia for several years. After his studies, this imam returned to his native village and set out to make the villagers more aware of their religion by denouncing their traditional ways of worship. The villagers did not agree with his reformist ideas, except for a few young men. The latter realized that the village was too small for Dukureh's innovative ideas, and built a compound for him in the city of Serrekunda. The ideas of a group of itinerant Pakistani preachers fitted in with Dukureh's, and he lodged them in his compound. Over the years the compound has expanded, and nowadays a two-storey building accommodates Pakistani and other visiting preachers disseminating the Tablighi ideology. In the early 1990s a mosque was constructed adjacent to Dukureh's compound.

The striking features of the Jamaat in The Gambia are its popularity among the local African population and youth in particular. In South and East Africa the Jamaat appeals primarily to Muslims of Indian ancestry.[2] In The Gambia this group is very small. After training by mainly Pakistani preachers, the Tablighi effort has been adopted especially



The walls around the Jamaat's mosque in The Gambia add to the movement's 'obscure' image

PHOTO BY MARLOES JANSON, 2004

by Mandinka, who form the largest ethnic group in The Gambia. Nevertheless, these local Muslims are frequently considered "outsiders" by the more "mainstream" Muslims on account of their ideas, practices, and dress code. This applies particularly to the female followers; because their faces and bodies are usually completely covered, many Gambians assume that Saudi Wahhabi women are hidden behind the body-covering veils.

The Tablighi Jamaat holds special attraction for middle-class Gambians in their twenties, who had a modern, secular education. Its appeal to young people—both men and women—could be explained by the current economic depression in The Gambia and its drastic social effects, which influence the ways they perceive their lives. In order to stand up to the malaise, a growing number of youth, who are based primarily in the urban area, invest in Tablighi work. Although they do not get a material reward out of it, they are assured, they believe, of a spiritual reward.

Although the Jamaat's followers are proliferating in The Gambia, they still form a relatively small group. I estimate the number of adherents at a few thousand (less than one percent of the Gambian population), but in the absence of membership records it is hard to calculate the exact number. Despite its small size, the Jamaat is not an insignificant group in The Gambia, as it is largely responsible for bringing about a religious transformation in the society, especially in the celebration of life-cycle rituals. Tablighi religiosity is a protest against the religious festivities of the "old" and their conspicuous consumption. Because of the movement's success in transforming ritual practice, a member of the Supreme Islamic Council told me he suspected that "the *Mashala*s will dominate The Gambia within a period of five to ten years and will eventually destroy the country."

"Conversion" stories

Sikand rightly remarks that in the literature on the Tablighi Jamaat attention is paid primarily to explicating the movement's worldview and its fundamental tenets, while the question as to how the Tablighi ideology plays itself out in the lives of individual Muslims is neglected.[3] In order to gain insight into how doctrine is put into practice, I have recorded the "conversion" stories of several young Gambian Tablighi devotees. Conversion does not refer here to the transition from one religion to another, but to the turning towards a new form of piety.

Lamin, whom we met in the introduction, described his conversion to Tablighi ideology as a process of enlightenment to me:

"Islam means only two things, that is following the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad and doing good. There is only one path in Islam: the path of the Prophet. When I became aware of this, my life changed completely. I have seen the light, and I want you to see the light too. In fact it is very simple. In order to become enlightened, you have to read the Quran and hadith. But one should not only read hadith, one also has to practise the sunnah."

Before Lamin joined the Jamaat about three years ago, he spent his time listening to music and going to nightclubs, but he stopped these activities upon his conversion. Furthermore, he stopped smoking and cut his dreadlocks, which were the outward sign of his preference for reggae music. Finally, he stopped dating girls and entered into the obligations of a married man. When I asked him what caused this transformation, Lamin replied:

"My friend and I attended a naming ceremony in the town of Brikama. During the ceremony we were invited by a visiting jamaat to participate in a congregational prayer in the mosque. An old friend, who I got to know as a very stubborn boy, preached about our purpose on this earth. I was impressed by his change of behaviour and I decided to be like him. After the congregational prayer I changed my life. I joined the Jamaat for three days in order to learn more about the faith. Even after one day, I noticed a difference: I was less occupied with worldly affairs. Before the khuruj [Tablighi missionary tour] I prayed and fasted, but I did not know much about Islam. I conceived Islam as my right and not as a favour from Allah. After the khuruj I tried to observe the sunnah more strictly. Nowadays even when I am sleeping I observe the sunnah. I worship Allah 24 hours a day."

Lamin's narrative illustrates that youth's conversion to Tablighi ideology has far-reaching social consequences.[4] Because of his limited financial means, Lamin lives in his family's compound, but his relatives hold different ideas of Islam than he and do not accept his lifestyle. Therefore his ideal is to move with his wife and child to the countryside, where he would earn a living as a farmer. He would grow his own food crops, so that his wife does not have to leave the home to go to the market. In the countryside they would lead an isolated and quiet life:

PHOTO BY MARLOES JANSON, 2004

Mural at a youth meeting place in The Gambia

"It is not good to mingle too much with others as we must profess our religion in our own way. I will not inform others when my wife delivers. All I would do is sacrifice a ram, shave the baby's head and name him. Even my parents would not know that my wife had delivered. The Prophet incited us to respect our parents, but when they become like a millstone round one's neck, we have to be on the alert."

Intergenerational conflict

Other young Gambians also noted that their conversion to Tablighi ideology resulted in conflicts with their families, and I even heard about youth who broke off with their parents. Yet, these youngsters felt strongly they had to convert in order to become genuine Muslims. During my field research it emerged that Tablighi adherents validate the "authenticity" of their beliefs and practices by contrasting them with those of the older generation, and the Jamaat can therefore be seen as the younger generation's rejection of their parents. They equate being old with being rigid and holding on to sinful customary practices. As appeared in the introduction, the older generation finds it in their turn hard to take that inexperienced "children" tell them how they should profess their religion.

As such, the Gambian branch of the Tablighi Jamaat represents a new expression of religiosity of young Muslims, which could be seen as a form of rebellion against the authority of the old. This rebellion is expressed in religious terms and assumes the character of conversion from the established Sufi expressions of Islam toward new expressions of Islam, which cultivate modesty in dress and demeanour, austerity, and greater social equality between the age sets. This shows that although "youth" can generally be thought of as the period between childhood and adulthood, it is also an emergent category,[5] which is being conceptualized and experienced through Islamic reform in The Gambia.

Notes

1. Marc Gaborieau, "The Transformation of Tablighi Jama'at into a Transnational Movement," in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the* Tablighi Jama'at *as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. M. Khalid Masud (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 129-31.
2. Ebrahim Moosa, "Worlds 'Apart': Tablighi Jama'at in South Africa under Apartheid, 1963-1993," in *Travellers in Faith*, 206-21; Goolam Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy': The Tablighi-Sunni Conflict among South African Muslims in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no. 2 (2003): 313-34.
3. Yoginder Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi-Jama'at (1920-2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002), 10-12.
4. For Lamin's full conversion story, see Marloes Janson, "Roaming about for God's Sake: The Upsurge of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in The Gambia," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, no. 4 (2005): 450-81.
5. Cf. Alcinda Honwana and Filip De Boeck, eds., *Makers & Breakers: Children & Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Oxford: James Curry; Trenton: Africa World Press; Dakar: Codesria, 2005).

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Informal Links
A Girls' Madrasa and Tablighi Jamaat

MAREIKE JULE WINKELMANN

The Tablighi Jamaat opposes formal associations with educational institutions. In this article, based upon a fieldwork in a girls' madrasa in New Delhi, Winkelmann argues that a larger network connects that madrasa to the Tablighi Jamaat. This network is based on common areas of origin and the active involvement in the Tablighi Jamaat of the men who are in charge of the madrasa. This is illustrated by the author's analysis of a particular ideal of Islamic womanhood of the Tablighi Jamaat that is part of the curriculum of the madrasa and that is different from their standardized curriculum.

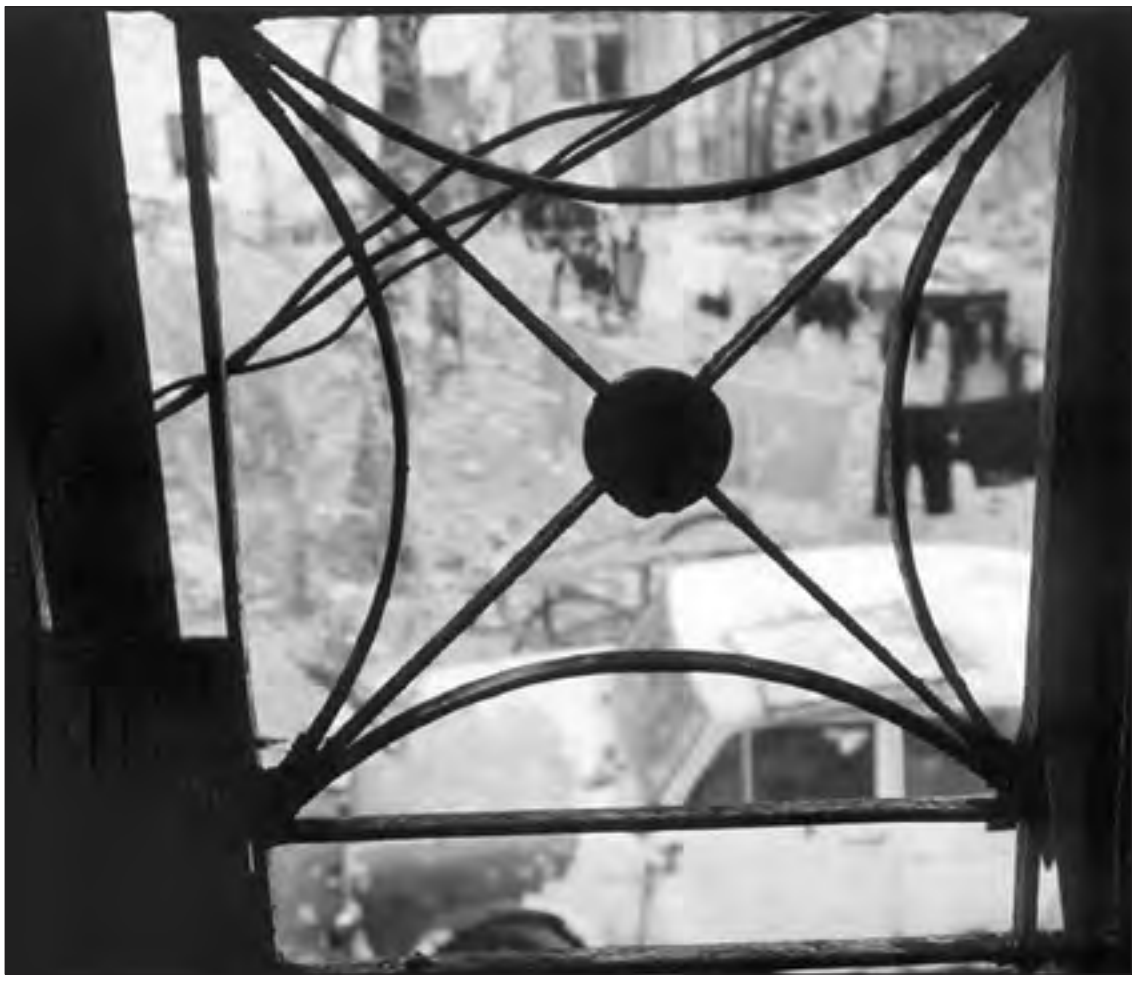
During my fieldwork in the Madrasatul Niswan, a girls' madrasa in New Delhi I was struck by its informal links with the lay preachers' movement known as the Tablighi Jamaat. The Madrasatul Niswan was founded in 1996 with the aim of "improving the life of the students," to increase religious consciousness, and to allow for equality of access to religious knowledge, as the founder stated. He was a trained Arabic teacher who taught in the Kashful Uloom madrasa for boys in the nearby headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat.[1] He also opined that there was nothing objectionable about a woman taking up a professional career, provided that she wore a burqa and worked in a gender-segregated environment. As the manager of the madrasa, a graduate of the above-mentioned Kashful Uloom, was his son-in-law, initially it seemed as if it was mainly the men in charge of running the Madrasatul Niswan who were associated with the Tablighi Jamaat.[2] Over time conversations with the two men indicated that they were part of a larger network, formed by a number of families in the same predominantly Muslim area in New Delhi. This network appeared to be based on common areas of origin and above all the men's active involvement in the Tablighi Jamaat. It extended among the teachers and students, as two out the fourteen teachers at the time of my fieldwork were maternal cousins, whose female siblings were also enrolled in the Madrasatul Niswan as students or worked there.

Besides personal reform, the grooming and competition at the level of piety among the girls represented the strive for upward social mobility.

Apart from the men in charge of running the madrasa, the students and teachers too referred to the Tablighi Jamaat in various ways. Although they were not actively involved in the tablighi activities, they nevertheless frequently voiced their admiration for the work they observed among the men in their families. At times, the girls' admiration seemed to be paired with a tinge of envy, especially when they talked about how the men in their family regularly travelled "in the path of God" for the Tablighi Jamaat, as such activities epitomized the mobility, freedom, and excitement the young women were missing in their lives. On many occasions they expressed regret that owing to their observance of an extremely strict form of female segregation or purdah,[3] activities like travelling were beyond their possibilities. In this particular community, the women not only donned a burqa or ankle-length manteau, combined with the hijab or veil including the *niqab* or face veil, whenever venturing outside the madrasa, as they took pride in adding to the above attire thick socks until above their knees and dark gloves reaching above their elbows. Although the young women were not allowed to participate in the practice of travelling "in the path of God," the core piece of literature or "manual" of the Tablighi Jamaat, namely the *Fazail-e-Amal* (*Virtues of Everyday Actions*) was included in the madrasa curriculum for daily reading throughout the five-year course. Besides the internalization of virtues associated with the lifestyle promoted by the Tablighi Jamaat, the girls were also trained in a particular style of *dawah*, which the students initially practised on me on various occasions. In other words, apart from kinship, the shared worldview influenced by the men's affiliation with the Tablighi Jamaat had brought together this group, and bonds between the families were maintained, reinforced, and extended through arranged marriages among children of these "core families." In short, the above-mentioned families formed the backbone to a number of important activities inside the madrasa, such as looking after everyday affairs and setting the curriculum.

Contents of learning

While the men in charge suggested that the curriculum was based on the standardized madrasa curriculum known as the *dars-e-nizami*,[4] my observations suggested that substantial modifications had been made in line with a particular underlying ideal of Islamic womanhood. A close comparison of the two curricula indicated that a range of subjects was either not taught at all, or the contents were selectively shortened, allegedly so as to fit the shorter duration of the course in this girls' madrasa. What was taught in practice again deviated in many cases from the formal curriculum. For example, while only eight hours of *adab* or value oriented literature in Arabic,[5] were scheduled on the timetable, which were not mentioned at all in the formal curriculum, value education took up significantly more time than that. Combining the daily readings from the *Fazail-e-Amal* and adab, value education—formally and informally taught—aimed at all spheres of life, which was facilitated by the given that the madrasa was a boarding institution. The limited space necessitated discipline, combined with the internalization of a particular modest dress code, as we saw above. Such processes are best subsumed under the madrasa's "civilizing mission,"[6] because apart from training the often lower caste rural students in Islamic theology, the underlying educational aim of "improving the students' personal lives" hints at something larger. By adopting Arabic as the main language of instruction at an advanced stage of the five-year course, the importance given to lessons in adab and the emphasis on the virtues or *fazail* taught in the everyday readings from the Tablighi *Fazail-e-Amal*, the students were groomed into a particular worldview, lifestyle, and ideal of Islamic womanhood. Nevertheless, the seemingly all-pervading discipline also offered space for deviation as well as competition with regard to who was the most pious among the girls. Besides personal reform, the grooming and competition at the level of piety among the girls represented the strive for upward social mobility. While most of the students and their parents indicated that the main reason for the girls' studies in the madrasa was religious merit for them, their families, or the community at large, I often observed that the "civilizing mission" served as a preparation for marriage with young men from wealthy families, not rarely settled abroad in South Africa or in the Gulf States.



A glance through the staff-room window of the Madrasatul Niswan, Delhi, 2003

PHOTO BY MAREIKE JULE WINKELMANN, 2003

A Tablighi perspective on women's education

As the views of the men in charge suggested a link between their educational ideas and the particular worldview promoted by the Tablighi Jamaat, I tried to identify relevant literature in the nearby bookshops. Here the books studied in the madrasa were sold off the shelf and numerous treatises for women or addressing the topic of women in relation to a host of related issues were available as well. One such example authored by a Tablighi activist is a treatise called *Women in the Field of Education and Piety* wherein Islamic education for women is promoted, as "failing to do this women and their innocent offspring will be washed away in a flood of irreligiousness, and ruin their worldly and next lives."[7] It is suggested that women are obliged to know *masail* (questions pertaining to Islamic law) and to seek knowledge about creation and law, so that they may become aware of evils that may harm their children, which include novels, television, cinema, theatre, and fashion. From a tablighi point of view, women are seen as equal to men with a view to acquiring *sawab* (merit) for the Hereafter and by a similar token purdah, in the reduced sense of modest behaviour, should be observed by men and women alike and should not form a hindrance in women's pursuit of knowledge. Characteristic of the Tablighi perspective on women's education are the idealization of past role models, such as the female companions of the Prophet, paired with apprehensions concerning new areas of studies, especially with regard to non-Islamic or *duniyavi* subjects. Owing to the above reservations, the suggested method of learning is that women should be taught by a knowledgeable man from behind a curtain at home, while the women in turn should teach others in their neighbourhood.

Weekly women's meetings

Apart from being taught at home, weekly *dini* (religious) programmes for women should facilitate the process of self-reformation. Such women's programmes should include the following elements: a reminder to perform the five ritual *salat* (prayers) regularly; a reminder with regard to punctuality in counting *tasbihat* (rosaries); encouragement to study books on *fazail* (virtues); and an encouragement to send out the men in the path of God. Such weekly meetings for women represent yet another parallel between the madrasa and the Tablighi Jamaat. While in the Tablighi centre these *bayans* (lectures) were held by a man, who spoke from behind a curtain every Thursday afternoon, in the Madrasatul Niswan the Programme was organized by the teachers and students themselves.

A group of teachers from the Madrasatul Niswan frequented the bayans in the Tablighi centre regularly, because apart from hoping to learn something new, the short trips to the nearby centre provided an opportunity for regular outings, which were rare otherwise. Prior to the bayans in the centre, the teachers and students in the Madrasatul Niswan held their so-called Thursday Programme around noon.

Here the gatherings generally consisted of the following elements: recitations from the Quran; *ahadith* (traditions of the Prophet); *namaz* (prayer); *tafsir* (exegesis); *fiqh* (Islamic law); *naath* (religious poetry in Urdu); *tarana* (Urdu or Arabic anthems in praise of the madrasa); and finally value oriented literature. Since the Programme was held in Urdu as well as Arabic, the latter was translated for those less familiar with the language. While for the young women belonging to the core families, knowledge of "true Islam" was closely associated with the mastery of Arabic, for the majority of lower caste rural students Arabic merely represented another tough subject they had to master. For the neighbourhood women who came to attend the Programme on a regular basis, the event provided an opportunity to learn something about Islam and to be reminded of one's moral obligations, which seemed to be the primary aim of the weekly meetings.

Although the Tablighi Jamaat is known to oppose formal associations with educational institutions, let alone with a girls' madarasa, the links and points of overlap mentioned above between the Madrasatul Niswan and the Tablighi Jamaat indicate that at the informal level the situation is far less clear-cut and the boundaries are blurred.

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Notes

1. The Kashful Uloom madrasa for boys was established by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, founder of the Tablighi Jamaat.
2. Although the name of the madrasa is fictitious, it is a name I encountered during fieldwork, be it in a different context.
3. I use "purdah" in a broader sense denoting female segregation, modest behaviour, as well as modest dress.
4. Regarding the history of the *dars-e-nizami* see Jamal Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien. Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow* (Leiden, Brill, 1997), 522-541.
5. While *adab* is often translated as social etiquette, in this context what was taught incorporated more than just etiquette and hence the use of the term "value education."
6. With regard to the "civilizing mission" of madrasas see Patricia Jeffery, Roger Jeffery and Craig Jeffrey, "The First Madrasa. Learned Mawlawis and the Educated Mother," in *Islamic Education, Diversity and National Identity. Dini Madaris in India post 9/11*, ed., Jan-Peter Hartung and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).
7. Mohammed Yunus, *Women in the Field of Education and Piety* (Dewsbury: Darul Kutub, 1994).

Deoband's War on Television
Fury over a Fatwa

YOGINDER SIKAND

In 2004 the Dar ul-'Ulum at Deoband, India's largest Islamic seminary, issued a fatwa declaring watching television, including Islamic channels, impermissible. Issued by Mufti Mahmud ul-Hasan Bulandshahri, a senior scholar at the Deoband madrasa, the fatwa declares that television is forbidden to Muslims because it was principally "a means for [frivolous] entertainment." Sikand explores the debate about television and islam that was caused by this fatwa.[1]

In 2004 Deobandi ulama issued a fatwa that forbid watching television. Although the fatwa did not clearly specify this, critics argued that it had in mind the new and increasingly popular Urdu islamic television channel Q TV, which now has millions of viewers in India and Pakistan. Based in Dubai, Q TV offers a mix of traditional Barelvi Sufi piety, regarded by many Deobandi ulama as nothing short of anathema, and neo-islamist apologist rhetoric by "lay" preachers such as the Pakistani Israr Ahmad and the Mumbai-based Zakir Naik, both of whom are trained medical specialists. Presumably, being non-ulama, they are regarded by the Deobandi ulama as a challenge to their authority. This, in addition to the Barelvi factor, probably has much to d with both the timing and the contents of the fatwa.

Protagonists of the fatwa

The fatwa has set off a major debate on the "Islamicity" of television. A good indication of the issues involved is provided by a few examples of the numerous articles on the fatwa that appeared in the New Delhi edition of the Urdu *Rashtriya Sahara* 22 August 2004. Both supporters as well as opponents of the fatwa frame the terms of the debate in "Islamic" terms, some seeing the fatwa as Islamically valid while others viewing it as a gross misinterpretation of Islam.

A vociferous backer of the fatwa is a certain Mufti Aijaz ur-Rashid Qasmi, a Deobandi graduate. In his article he declares watching any television programme prohibited for Muslims. He argues that no film can be made in an attractive and persuasive manner without including pictures of women or succumbing to sheer entertainment, both of which he castigates as "un-Islamic." He backs this claim by declaring that many Deobandi ulama believe that television has "become an expression of Satanic wiles." Seeking to preempt his critics who believe that television could be used for Islamic missionary purposes, he writes that while the duty of propagation is binding on all Muslims, this should be done only through "proper" means. Since television is used largely for "broadcasting immoral programmes" and is "basically a means of entertainment," it is not a proper means for Islamic propagation work.

The Mufti's defence of the controversial fatwa is backed by a declaration by the deputy rector of the Deoband madrasa, Abdul Khaliq Madrasi, whose article is titled "The Fatwa is Right and True." He adds that another reason why television is impermissible is because photography is forbidden in Islam. While thus castigating television, he approves, interestingly, of the Internet, which, he claims, is "to a large extent, free of pictures." He declares that the Internet can be used for "legitimate" purposes, provided pictures are not used. Accordingly, Deoband, while disapproving of television, has its own website and numerous Deobandi groups now offer online fatwas.

© AFP, 2000

Pakistani youth burning television cables, Peshawar, 20 September 2000

Its critics

Not all Deobandi ulama agree. A number of younger Deobandi graduates appear to be critical of the fatwa, as appears in their articles in the *Rashtriya Sahara*. A good example is Waris Mazhari, editor of the Tarjuman Dar ul-'Ulum, the official organ of the Deoband madrasa's alumni association.

The fatwa's claim, he writes, that television is basically a means of frivolous or immoral entertainment, and, hence, Islamically impermissible is incorrect. Television can also be used for proper purposes, such as for providing news and information, rebutting "anti-Islamic" propaganda and for explaining Islam to Muslims as well as to others. Indeed, many Arab television companies host such Islamic programmes. Hence, rather completely shunning television, Muslims should stay away from "improper" channels while not hesitating to watch other channels that are "useful." In addition, Mazhari writes, Islamic television channels are fully legitimate.

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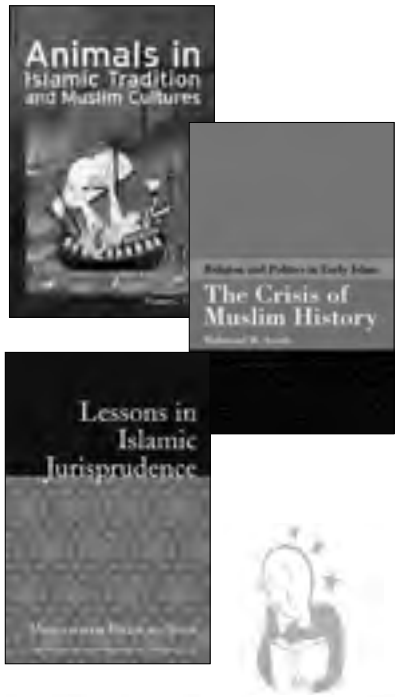

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ONEWORLD

[T]he fatwa is based on ignorance of the real world.

Despite being a trained *'alim* himself, Mazhari comes down heavily on the conservative ulama, including the author of the anti-television fatwa, for their hostility to progress. He sees the anti-television fatwa as part of a long tradition of ulama opposition to new inventions.

Yet another Deoband graduate who has spoken out against the fatwa is Asrar ul- Haq Qasmi. In his article he comments that the fatwa is based on ignorance of the real world. Questioning the authority of the author of the anti-television fatwa, he says, "If the 'alim is not well-versed with the spirit of the Shariah and its aims he does not have the right to issue a fatwa and the fatwa that he gives will have a wrong effect." Without naming the author of the fatwa but indirectly referring to him and other such ulama, he cites a hadith which castigates ulama who hasten to issue fatwas without careful reflection, and promoting their personal agendas.

Anzar Shah Kashmiri, a leading Deobandi 'alim, critiques the fatwa for "giving Islam a bad name [by depicting it as] intolerant, narrow-minded and obscurantist." To ban it simply because it is also used for broadcasting "immoral" programmes is as ridiculous as demanding that telephones be banned because they can similarly be misused. He believes that the fatwa is based on the outdated views of medieval scholars as contained in the books of medieval Islamic jurisprudence, and calls upon Muslim scholars to evolve understandings of Islam more relevant to today's context.

Besides criticizing the fatwa on "Islamic" grounds, Umaid ul-Zaman Qasmi Kairanwi, Acting President of the Deoband madrasa's alumni association raised the question of the double-standards in the arguments used by the author of the fatwa. Despite the fatwa's banning of television, numerous Deobandi ulama regularly appear on television and arrange to have their rallies broadcast on television channels. Riyaz ul-Hasan Nadvi, Convener of the Milli Council of Uttaranchal, points out what the contradiction in declaring television wholly impermissible (on the grounds that some channels promote immorality) while allowing for the use of the Internet.

Despite the hue and cry being made by defenders and opponents of the fatwa, not many Muslims seem to have taken it seriously. Certainly, there has been nothing like the organized smashing of televisions by Deobandi activists in Pakistan's North-Western Frontier Province some years ago. Fatwas like this one might be remarkable simply for the struggles among the ulama within the Deoband, but they serve little positive purpose for Muslims enjoying the new programmes on offer.

Note

1. An earlier version of this article was published in April 2005 on the Qalander website: www.islaminterfaith.org.

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If only there was *khul'*...

NADIA SONNEVELD

In the mid 1970s, a film, *Uridu Hallan* (*I Want a Solution*), drew attention to the plight of women applying for divorce under Egyptian law. Three decades later, Egyptian women are the first in the Middle East to have gained the right to unilateral divorce through a procedure called *khul'*. Cartoons and two films now depict khul' as a law designed mainly for immoral westernized Egyptian women from the upper classes.

In *Uridu Hallan*, Doreya, a middle-aged Egyptian upper class woman, wants to divorce her husband. Since her only son had grown up and had just left the parental home in order to study abroad, she decided that the time was ripe to divorce her unfaithful, alcoholic, and abusive husband whom her father had forced her to marry twenty years earlier. When she requested him to divorce her he refused, saying that he could not understand that she suddenly wanted a divorce after twenty years of marriage unless "her eye was on another man." As a consequence, Doreya was left no other choice then to file a divorce case in court. Her case was endlessly postponed and she found herself dividing her time between work and going to the court without any results. As her case dragged on, she became more interested in learning the difference between women's divorce rights in Islam as compared to the divorce rights she had as an Egyptian Muslim woman under the Egyptian legal system. She discovered that Islam gives women the right to divorce their husband unilaterally through a procedure called khul'. One day, she found the police at her door—sent by her husband—to force her back to the marital "home" through a so-called "*ta'ah*" (obedience) ordinance. Instead of returning "home" Doreya ran down the stairs and fled to her brother's apartment.[1] There she met a friend of her brother and after a while they fell in love. Slowly Doreya started getting hopes for a new future.

Cartoons appeared to provide a very popular means for those opposing reform of divorce rules to express their criticism of the new "khul' law."

Yet, the "obedience" ordinance had angered her to such an extent that she decided to make an appointment with the Minister of Justice. During her visit she told him about the "khul' hadith" in which a woman approached the Prophet telling him that she hated living with her husband although she thought of her husband as a good and religious man. The Prophet asked her if she was willing to give back to him the *mahr* (dowry) which he had given her upon marriage. She agreed, and after she returned it to her husband, the Prophet divorced her from him. The Minister of Justice was impressed by her knowledge of Islamic law and he promised to study the matter. He abolished the "obedience" ordinance in the sense that the police was no longer allowed to force a woman back "home."[2] However, he did not give women the right to divorce by way of khul', nor did he set out to facilitate the existing divorce procedures so as to put an end to a practice which made women spend years in court without necessarily obtaining a divorce at the end of that period as happened to Doreya. After four long years the judge refused to grant her a divorce. Instead of marrying the friend of her brother whom she was in love with, she was still legally married to a man whom she hated and from whom she had already been separated for years.

AL-WAFD NEWSPAPER, 2000

A woman tells her new lover: "Just a minute please... I will divorce my husband (through khul') and come to you immediately!" ***Al Wafd*** **Newspaper, 8 February 2000**

Finally there was khul'

In actuality Doreya is a character played by Fatin Hamama (1931-), one of Egypt's most famous actresses. Released in 1975, *Uridu Hallan* (*I Want a Solution*) had a profound influence on the public and many claimed that it revived the reform initiatives of the old Personal Status Laws which had last been amended in the 1920s. It is difficult to measure its effects, but it is beyond doubt that the film reflected the mood of the seventies in which hope, when a new reform proposal was introduced, and disappointment, when it was rejected again, succeeded each other. While the reform initiatives of 1971, 1975, and 1977 were all rejected by Parliament, Sadat pushed through a reform of Personal Status Law in 1979 during a period of parliamentary recess. The new law aroused a lot of controversy and especially the fact that women were given automatically the right to a divorce in case their husband married a second wife, enraged religious leaders, as well as the general public. However, since Sadat had issued the law when Parliament was in recess, some lawyers appealed the constitutionality of the law in the High Court which declared it unconstitutional on formal grounds in May 1985. The High Court did not declare the law unconstitutional on the ground that its content violated the Sharia. Although in July 1985 a new, adapted version of the 1979 law (law no.100/1985) was accepted by the Parliament, women felt disappointed. They again set out to reform Personal Status Law.

Where in the film, Doreya went to visit the Minister of Justice in order to ask him to change the "obedience" ordinance and urge him to introduce unilateral divorce by way of khul' instead, more than a decade later, women's activists also went to see the Minister of Justice, in order to discuss how they could facilitate the procedures governing judicial divorce cases initiated by women. After years of working with the Ministry of Justice, government officials, well known lawyers, and religious authorities, the women's activists made a big step forward when the

People's Assembly passed Law no. 1/2000 on the Reorganization of Certain Terms and Procedures of Litigation in Personal Status Matters.[3] Soon the law became known as the "khul' law" after one of its 79 clauses which allowed for a khul' without the consent of the husband. According to this interpretation of khul': "A married couple may mutually agree to separation. However, if they do not agree and the wife sues demanding it; separates herself from her husband by forfeiting all her financial legal rights; and restores to him the *sadaq* (dowry) he gave to her, then the court is to divorce her from him" (article 20).

The "khul' law" criticized

In contrast to what one might expect, khul' was criticized by many defenders of women's rights, one of whom was Husna Shah, the scriptwriter of *I Want a Solution*. In an interview in an Egyptian newspaper in 2000 she said that khul' will only be used in case of extreme necessity since the wife will have to forgo her financial rights such as alimony. For this reason, a woman will hesitate to approach a court. Husna Shah even predicted that women who do not opt for khul' but who continue to live in discordant marriages, will resort again to "the cleaver and the plastics bags," a reference to criminal cases in which women, unable to obtain a divorce, ended up murdering their husbands.

Husna Shah did not stand alone in her criticism. Other proponents of women's rights also were of the opinion that khul' would only be an option for richer women since they were the only ones likely to be able to pay back the dower as well as give up their financial rights. Opponents of reform of the existing divorce rules articulated much fiercer criticism. They also stated that giving women unilateral divorce rights would lead to skyrocketing divorce rates, and hence the destruction of the Egyptian family since women were too emotional to be given this right. As long as women remained obedient to their husband, family life and society in general would prosper. However, when women would leave their husband and ask for a khul', this would lead to the breakdown of the Egyptian family and, hence, to that of Egyptian society at large. Often opponents called women applying for khul' *nashiz* (disobedient).

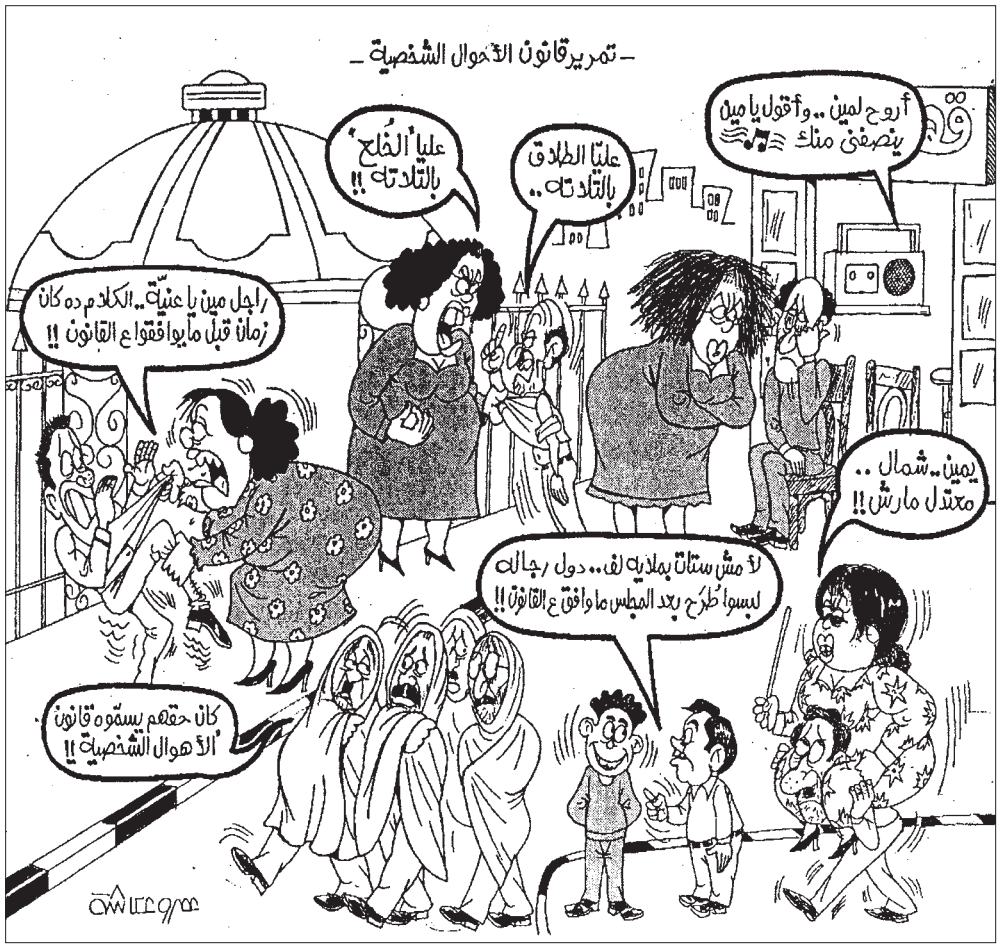
Cartoons appeared to provide a very popular means for those opposing reform of divorce rules to express their criticism of the new "khul' law." They depicted women with moustaches, women flirting with other men, men in shackles and men pushing prams, all conveying the same message: once women were giving the right to unilateral divorce, they would misuse it. As a result Egyptian family life would fall apart. What is particularly interesting is that many, if not all, cartoons depicted women as westernized Egyptian women who did not wear the veil, but instead wore tight garments and who walked on high heels.

The issue of westernization and women's (dis)obedience was also a central theme in two films which dealt with the development of khul' after its introduction in 2000. Both films were comedies and in both cases they showed how two women from the higher classes tried to divorce their husbands. The first film, *Muhami Khul'* (*Khul' Lawyer*) was released in 2003 and showed how a young and attractive woman of the high heels and tight clothes type, who owned a factory wanted to divorce her husband because he was snoring. For this purpose she approached a lawyer who accepted her case but only on the condition that they would construe snoring as sexual impotence, otherwise they would have no chance of winning the case.[4] During the process they (not surprisingly) fell in love with each other. She won the case but in the end the two did not marry each other after she caused a scandal by swimming in her bikini in the river which ran along the house of his parents in the village.

The title of the second film *Uridu Khul'an* (*I Want Khul')* is a pun on the film *Uridu Hallan* and was released in late 2005. Again, we see how an upper class woman with two children resorts to khul' in order to pressure her husband to give her permission to leave the house in order to work again. He had refused to let her work after he had come home one afternoon only to find out that his two children had changed the house into a chaos during his wife's absence. Since he thinks that her main responsibility is in the house, he refuses to let her work again after which the wife files the first khul' case in the country. The media, eager to cover this first khul' case, starts to cover her case in every national paper and on television. As a consequence the husband, afraid of his high position, becomes so embarrassed that he starts to give in to her wishes bit by bit.

Both the cartoons and the two films use the imagery of westernized Egyptian women to suggest that khul' is only in the interest of already liberated and immoral rich elite women who will only use it for frivolous reasons. In fact, however, the majority of those filing for a divorce through khul' are Egyptian women from the lower middle classes who do not wish to divorce their husband merely because they snore or because they forbid them to work, but because their lives have in some way been made impossible. Many of these women have husbands who do not have jobs and refuse to work, or husbands who have left them for another woman without divorcing them, thereby forcing them to run the household alone and to work outside the house as well as making it impossible for them to remarry. In such cases it is ironic that husbands frequently react to their wife's khul' case by filing an "obedience" ordinance. Apart from attempting to save their honour by putting the blame on their wife, they hope to make it difficult for her to obtain a divorce or they hope that the "obedience" ordinance will scare her to such an extent that she will withdraw her case.

The problems of these women are not easily recognized as the main discourse still relates khul' to women's disobedience and consequently the destruction of the Egyptian family. Approximately 35 years after Doreya's *Uridu Hallan* Egyptian women are in a position to say *Uridu Khul'an*. The relationship between khul' and disobedience, however, makes filing for a divorce through khul' a stigmatizing experience. What is more, this problem is not limited to a small group of westernized elite women as most women who resort to khul' are from modest backgrounds.



AL-WAFD NEWSPAPER, 2000

Cartoon from *Al Wafd* Newspaper foresees that, after the passing of the new Personal Status Law, women will be in control, 27 January 2000.

Notes

1. When a wife left the marital home without her husband's permission he was legally permitted to force her home by police force.
2. It was really abolished in 1967.
3. For more information, see Diane Singerman, "Rewriting Divorce in Egypt: Reclaiming Islam, Legal Activisim, and Coalition Politics," in *Remaking Muslim Politics, Democratization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 161-188.
4. This clearly goes against the idea of the "*khul'* law" of 2000 under which women no longer need to prove that they have "valid" reasons for divorce.

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Interview Dick Douwes
Resisting Uniformity

MARTIJN DE KONING

After a career of seven years as Academic Coordinator (later Executive Director) and Editor of the *ISIM Newsletter/Review*, Dick Douwes now joins the Erasmus University Rotterdam as Chair of History of Non-Western Societies and Dean of Faculty of History and Arts. In this interview he talks about his research interests, the building of ISIM, and the development of the *ISIM Newsletter* into the *ISIM Review*. One of his growing concerns is over what he sees to be an increasing pressure to conform to the "acceptable," which allows for very little chance for the expression of authentic identities; a regrettable development that he witnesses not only in the Middle East but also in Europe, and in particular, the Netherlands.

Back in his student days, the young Douwes worked his summer holidays in a factory in order to finance his travel to the Middle East. On one of his journeys in Syria, while travelling from Aleppo to Abu Kamal, he met on the bus a dealer in used car parts who invited him to his house in Salamiyya, a rural town to the southeast of Hama.

Martijn: There, you found out that this man, as most of the inhabitants, was an Ismaili whose grandparents had migrated from the coastal mountains to the inland plains in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

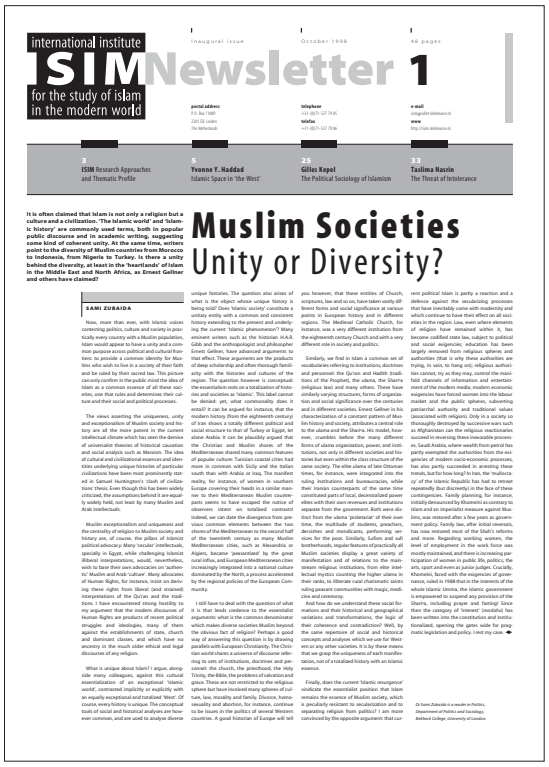
Dick: Yes, he was not a religious man and was often dressed like the Arab nomads with whom he traded spare car parts. As an M.A. student I was primarily interested in the migration to and re-cultivation of the areas adjacent to the Syrian steppes. In the process I happened to stumble on the curious history of the recognition of the Bombay-based Aga Khan by a part of the Syrian Ismaili community at the end of the nineteenth century. The problems ensuing from that recognition, including the trial for treason of their religious shaykhs, caught my attention. My later Ph.D. research aimed at examining the non-mainstream Muslim communities in the closing decades of Ottoman Syria, but during my research in the Syrian National Archives I discovered unique material on the rural crisis of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and decided then to elaborate on that topic.

Martijn: Coincidence may have played its part in your career but the Ismailis (and later the Alawis), Lebanon, and Syria remain important themes in your research interests. Why direct your gaze at the marginal?

Dick: I am concerned with the—so to speak—"multicultural drama" accompanying the demise of the Ottoman Commonwealth; how ethnic, linguistic, and religious plurality became increasingly tested by forces of colonialism and post-colonialism, by the market, and, most of all, by various brands of nationalism. Differences in ways of life, religious convictions appeared to have been less problematic in the early modern era, certainly when compared to more recent conditions in the successor national states. What interests me is the process in which traditions and ways of interaction between people become problematized and politicized through the discourses of colonialism, nationalism and, more recently, Islamism. As a consequence some people feel less at home than they used to. In some way this is related to what we witness now globally, in debates about identity, conduct, and visibility of minority communities. It is not at all restricted to the Middle East but one can find it in Europe, and in particular, in the Netherlands. It is the majority that critically evaluates the conduct of others with their own principles and ideals—and not necessarily their actual behaviour—as is the case in the Netherlands, the result is that for an individual Muslim it is difficult to feel at ease and to express oneself freely.

Martijn: Your work is mostly historical. Do we need the historical perspective in order to understand current developments?

Dick: It is useful to reconsider earlier experiences as well as uses of the past. For instance, when one works with a historical perspective one immediately sees the rapid changes in the public debate; in the Netherlands, the initial positive approach of multiculturalism was faded out by severe criticism within the span of only a few years. A historical perspective is, in my opinion, also important for ISIM to keep in mind, because every group acts and develops action based on historical experiences, at the least generational but often spanning longer cycles. Moreover, the use of the past offers rich avenues for research. Within religion it is often habitual to refer to historic precedent. This is also true for Islam. For example, a century ago the paradigm of the prophet Muhammad evolved primarily around ritual and pious behaviour, aspects that have remained of great concern for practising Muslims. However, within that century he has assumed an ever more political role and his quality as a man of state has gained considerable strength.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ISIM
for the study of islam in the modern world

Inaugural issue | October 1998 | 48 pages

Newsletter 1

Muslim Societies
Unity or Diversity?

SAMI ZUBAIDA

ISIM Newsletter **1, October 1998**

From *Newsletter* to *Review*

Martijn: Apart from your involvement with organizational matters, your main contribution to the ISIM enterprise was as editor of the *ISIM Newsletter/Review*. What shaped the *ISIM Newsletter*?

Dick: The first *ISIM Newsletter* was the combined effort of a very small team that had to deliver a product in only three months to accompany the formal opening of the Institute. The opening was in October 1998 but I was actually involved, with others, in the bringing about of the institute from 1996 onwards. The *ISIM Newsletter* has continued to rely on the exceptional skills and commitment of people like Gabrielle Constant in the early days and later on also Noel Lambert, Linda Herrera and, of course, Dennis Janssen. ISIM and the *ISIM Newsletter* were always meant as a platform to stimulate a more diverse scientific discourse on research in social, political, and religious processes. First of all we wanted to demonstrate through the articles in the *Newsletter* that a religious life is actually a very normal life; when looking at religion, religious movements, religious conduct, one al-

ways has to look at the contexts in which religion plays a role, such as family, schooling, work, politics etc. When, why, where, and how does religion play a role? Some Islamologists present Muslims as living in a habitat defined by Quran, hadith, and Sharia, in other words, as religious creatures living in a—according to their view—obscurantist world. In a sense, they are not that far removed form the type of Islamist activism that claims that the Sharia alone defines and brings about comfort and prosperity. The idea that "Islam" explains everything, something in which both Salafists and some of their critics find their common denominator, is certainly challenged by ISIM. Conversely, we have had articles dealing with more secular concerns and with issues that may be seen as challenging dominant religious views, such as the recent "Queer Jihad"(*ISIM Review* 16). We also wanted to show that Islam does not only manifest itself in the Middle East but that the majority of Muslims live elsewhere, primarily in South and Southeast Asia, but also in Africa and in unexpected places like, for example, Poland where a few villages of Tatar Muslims survive. We have always paid attention to details of local forms of Islam. In this and other ways we try to turn away from the more dominant perspectives on Islam and Muslim, not only among non-Muslims but, also, among Muslims.

Dick Douwes

Martijn: By focusing on specific authentic approaches to Muslim societies and Muslim communities ISIM took a different stand compared to those of certain participants in the Islam-debate. Can you tell us something about the responses to ISIM?

Dick: ISIM was criticized for this approach; allegedly we were too distant from scriptural Islam, if not religion for that matter, and too much informed by social sciences in our understanding of Muslim societies and communities at the expense of philological and theological readings. I disagree with this critique; when one looks at the past and current work of the ISIM Chairs religion is very much present, also in its more formal appearances. I have always found it odd to hear that ISIM was not fully qualified for its tasks because it lacked an input of knowledge based on readings of religious texts considering the fact that from the very start Martin van Bruinessen was involved in the project and that Muhammad Khalid Masud acted as its first Academic Director. What was striking for the *Newsletter/Review* is the lack of critical reactions. We do get occasional letters to the editor, but most of them very positive. There was this one reaction, curious, about the cover article of the first *Newsletter*. A known US professor praised us for having a Muslim on the cover page. When I pointed out that the author, Sami Zubaida, was not of Muslim background, the person was quite embarrassed about his remark. It may be that political correctness or in-correctness cannot always be avoided but I think that ISIM avoided it for most of the time. The highest instance of negative reactions was regarding the article "Between Pipes and Esposito." Most of these reactions were not about Pipes, as some might expect, but about the fact that the author was deemed to be too critical of Esposito. It was only then that Pipes contacted the ISIM secretariat asking for a subscription for the *Newsletter*. It seems that people who would basically disagree with us, may sometimes read us but usually, just ignore us. Many others read us and feel at home. One of the questions for the future of the *Review* is if, and how, the *Review* would like to be a platform for debate? The articles of the *Review* are now more academic compared to those of earlier issues and this affects the different types of audiences you aim at. In my view ISIM and the *ISIM Review* should also develop into a platform for debate and it should be no problem if there are, occasionally, articles included with which the editors disagree, as long as the matter concerns a sound text.

Alternate approaches

Martijn: The intention of showing the other side and offering alternate readings to the dominant culture, was that present from the start?

Dick: Yes, and I think that the international success of ISIM is partly rooted in that attitude because it gave expression to a broadly felt need for alternate approaches. The tendency within ISIM to keep a certain distance from the dominant groups and to view things from the oppositional angles was continued, not only in issues concerning the Netherlands and the USA but also in Muslim countries. This probably also explains why ISIM has experienced some difficulties in manifesting itself in mainstream media and debates, in particular in the Netherlands itself. The public visibility of ISIM is an issue, also because it impacts upon the fundraising capacities of the Institute. Of course, the visibility of ISIM not only relies upon the *ISIM Review*; ISIM has developed a number of activities for various audiences, offering expertise and offering a platform for public debate. In this we work together with a growing number of partners, including on the national and local levels. We also make available materials in Dutch and will probably do more so in the future in order to cater to the Dutch society and in particular on the level of municipalities. There, of course, is where it all happens, not in the debates in the media. These debates are important, but I think ISIM should be there where the debates are transformed into policies that directly influence people.

Martijn: The global and local conditions are important for ISIM and for the position of ISIM. What kind of future do you see for ISIM or institutions such as ISIM?

Dick: The greatest achievement for ISIM is the international recognition and research. ISIM, of course, has to maintain this: it constitutes a sound basis from which to expand. Being situated in Western Europe and relying primarily on national funds, a clearer focus on Muslim presence in Europe seems inevitable. Currently, ISIM hosts several programmes on Europe on Ph.D. and Post-doctoral levels, but establishing an ISIM Chair for Muslim Communities in Europe would be a great asset. Because ISIM is situated in Europe it is able to tap on the varied European currents in academia and public debate. After all, the very strength of Europe lies in its diversity.

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Interview Akiedah Mohamed **Humanizing Muslims through Visual Media**

SINDRE BANGSTAD

In this interview, Akiedah Mohamed, a young female filmmaker from Cape Town, talks about her work and what being a Muslim means to her in the context of her filmmaking. She argues that in spite of all the usual representations to the contrary, the visual media have a potential for humanizing Muslims in the contemporary world.

In South Africa, a mere 1.4 percent of the population is Muslim. In the South African public sphere however, South African Muslims have a far more significant presence than what their actual numbers would suggest. In the media and in the arts, Muslims feature prominently; think of names such as novelists Achmat Dangor, Ahmed Essop, Ishtiyaq Shukri, and Rayda Jacobs; poets Gabeeba Baderoon and Shabbir Bhanoobhai; and the filmmaker Zulfah Otto-Sallies. Among the lesser known emerging young female Muslim voices in South African documentary filmmaking is Cape Town-based Akiedah Mohamed (b.1971). A single mother living in the suburb of Woodstock in Cape Town, her work has been screened domestically as well as internationally. Mohamed had her debut with the film *The Malawian Kiss* (1999), a documentary about the first Muslim in South Africa to openly declare her HIV-positive status, Faghmeda Miller. She has also made a documentary about a Muslim couple in a polygamous marriage in Cape Town, *The Second Wife* (2001); a documentary about Muslim women involved in the work of ritually cleansing the bodies of the deceased, *Tales of the Tukamanies* (2001), and a documentary about the month of fasting, Ramadan, and its significance for Cape Muslims, *Portraits of Ramadan* (2003); and finally *Freedom is a Personal Journey* (2004), about two South African ex-prisoners. She is currently working on a drama series for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) based on a story by the South African author Ahmed Essop about love across the colour line. Mohamed grew up in a foster family in a southern suburb of Cape Town, has an undergraduate degree in Islamic Studies from the University of Cape Town (1994), and worked with various film production companies before her cinematic debut. I interviewed her at her home in February 2005. In the interview, Mohamed talked about her filmmaking, her problems with being labelled a "Muslim" filmmaker and her sources of inspiration.

PHOTO BY SOLOMON YIGSAW & M. FATIEG BEHARDIEN, 2004

Akiedah Mohamed at the filmset of *Freedom is a Personal Journey*, 2004

"Muslim" filmmaker

Sindre: Would you define yourself as a "Muslim" filmmaker, and what, if anything, does being a "Muslim" filmmaker entail?

Akiedah: "Muslim" is such a loaded term in the same way as "Christian" or "Hindu" is in terms of identity. I deal with issues that affect me as a person who is Muslim, you know. That's the best way I can describe the work that I do. I think the filmmakers and the writers often occupy the space of the outsider in order to see clearly. But at the end of the day, my experience of the world is so limited. My understanding of life, and of religion is only contained in what experiences I've had in life. So, I can't speak with authority, and I don't want to be seen as doing that.

Sindre: In an era in which the visual representations of Muslims worldwide is often limited to veiled Muslim women and gun-wielding Muslim men,[1] the documentaries of filmmakers such as Mohamed, which concentrate on the daily lives of ordinary Muslims in a secular context, seem to me to have a humanizing potential. How do you look upon the media representations of Muslims?

Akiedah: Often I think that even our understanding of what it means being a Muslim is quite limited. It's limited to being in a mosque, or being on a musallah (prayer rug), or being in a prayer, or protesting against the situation in Israel and Palestine, or to being a terrorist. I think that there's a frail human face to being Muslim that we don't see in the media, one that Muslims experience in their intimate day to day lives, and this frailty is very important to me because it talks about our limitations and our struggle in a complex modern world. And in that lies the seed in a way, of our liberation, if we can find a way to accept our imperfections, and to make it an acceptable part of our journey through life.

Sindre: From your films I sense a very strong tendency towards representing voices that are, to a certain extent, marginal within the general Cape Muslim community: such as the co-wife in a polygamous marriage, the Muslim living with HIV/AIDS, the Qadari Sufi?

Akiedah: Yah, I think it's a very conscious decision to explore a wider range of experiences of being Muslim. What you see generally in the public sphere are those who are in positions of authority. They have the voice, and their voice is what is represented as the ideal. Most of the documentaries I have made deal with women because I'm a woman, and there are issues which women face that are gender specific. Also, in terms of literature and in terms of the visual media, women are underrepresented. They make up the other half of the Muslim population. In some traditional aspects of religion women

are encouraged to cast their eyes down, not to speak too loudly, not to draw any attention to themselves in any way. This is seen as an ideal personality…I think that perhaps I've struggled with that because that hasn't been who I was… What I like is that there exists within the Cape Muslim community an acceptance for being yourself. The Muslim women's voices aren't silent. They do laugh, they do talk, they do speak their minds.

PHOTO BY SOLOMON YIGSAW & M. FATIEG BEHARDIEN, 2004

Akiedah Mohamed at the filmset of *Freedom is a Personal Journey*, 2004

Creating meaning through the "word"

Sindre: You have started writing poetry in primary school, and was further encouraged in your artistic endeavours by your former Jewish high school teacher. There is a connection between your foster father's story-telling at weddings and funerals and your own need to express yourself artistically. The desire to integrate words and visuals is most apparent in *Tales of the Tukamanies* where poems by the Sufi poet Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi is interwoven with the visuals. Does this point to you being a filmmaker whose inspiration is drawn from poetry?

Akiedah: For me, there's something that is very, very magical about creating a meaning through the "word." I always wanted to write. In terms of filmmaking, I'm still finding my feet, trying to understand filmmaking. What excites me about the film media is its ability to connect to people through the sharing of an experience, and perhaps by stimulating them to think about their experience. I think it is important to be able to find ways to share truth, or share ideas. We have lots of experiences of our own reality, or this world, that we don't share with other people. But the assumption is that our experience of the world is the same as that of other people, but this is not so. The visual media allows me to portray to some extent, or to share with someone, how I'm experiencing this reality. This is difficult in light of the fact that reality or experience is affected by our current emotions or state of mind. This reality is not an absolute truth. It is only one way in order to begin to understand or make sense of our world, and to start engaging in that sort of dialogue.

The human connection

Sindre: Most of your documentaries have been commissioned by the state broadcaster in South Africa, the SABC. Being an independent filmmaker in a developing country where art is hardly the first of the state's priorities and the limited market is at present saturated with documentary filmmakers is demanding. The independent broadcaster E-TV, based in Cape Town, hoped to offer some opportunities for independent documentary filmmakers, has not commissioned local documentaries for years. SABC first started TV broadcasts in 1976, and these served as a propaganda instrument for the apartheid state until 1990. Ongoing conflicts relating to transformation and editorial policies within the SABC notwithstanding, charges of being aligned to the ANC have frequently been levelled against the SABC, and the SABC News in particular, in the post-apartheid era. From the point of view of an outsider, it seems however that there is less editorial oversight on the part of the SABC with regards to commissioned work like documentaries. Most of your documentaries have been commissioned by *Issues of Faith*, a weekly SABC programme about religious issues in various communities in South Africa.

Akiedah: Look, they're [the SABC's commissioning editors] based in Johannesburg, so there is a great physical distance between us. It impacts on the kind of relationship one is able to build. I cannot walk into their offices to have a meeting. Even within the broadcasting scenario, the human connection is so important. If they do not relate to you, you are merely a number on a proposal. The warmth of human interaction permeates all levels of society, including work. I've dealt mostly with religious programmes perhaps because the broadcaster considers that I have a degree in Islamic studies, or because I come from the Muslim community, and hence may have some insight into the documentaries directed.

Sindre: Even though your documentaries more often than not focus specifically on Muslim women, the documentaries also include interviews with the ulama of Cape Town about some of the moral and social issues raised in the documentaries. I am interested in learning more about how you got along with the ulama in the process of making some of your documentaries. In your documentaries, you have worked closely with quite conservative ulama in Cape Town. What kind of specific challenges did you face in your interaction with them, given that you are a Muslim woman who doesn't wear a scarf, who raises her voice in public, and—to the extent that they know this—is a single mother—characteristics that you previously indicated might be seen as problematic by some conservative Muslims?

Akiedah: Let's just say that I'm very fond of them… I mean, they're conservative, but I don't see that as a bad thing, you know, conservatism isn't a bad thing. I think because I understand that they are protecting certain issues that they believe in. They want to protect the sacredness of family and the sacredness of life. They want an order, they want calmness, you know. So it's not that they're bad people—they're not. I don't generally go into attack. I go into dialogue with them, to speak to them, and to respect their position and who they are, you know, because that's how I would like them to treat me. And generally in my interactions I try to focus on the issue, and I do solicit their help, and I do want to give expression to their voice. Because that is part of the dialogue of understanding. Because I don't want to go and distort what anybody says, or who they are, or what they believe in—that's not the point. To engage in dialogue is more important. To move away from being judgmental of oneself and of others is the greatest challenge, and through a documentary, this aspect of one's approach is always tested, and sometimes one succeeds and sometimes not, but that is part of the process.

> [T]here's a frail human face to being Muslim.

Sindre: Do you think that the visual media has a potential for humanizing Muslims, in spite of all the media representations to the contrary?

Akiedah: I think the media doesn't humanize well. I think the media lends itself towards fragmentation. Because the images, I mean the way we experience life, as John Berger says,[2] before we even speak, we see things and we read through the visuals. Our reality's made up in that way: and then we start to connect our words to this visual world around us. I think the key lies in how we build that relationship: that's why words are so essential. The media can be used—as we have already seen—to portray a kind of demonized expression of being Muslim. It can be used that way. So it stands to reason that it can also be used for its opposite. The key, I think, in the humanizing process, is twofold—it relies on how that reality is built up in the media, as well as on people's relationship to the media.

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Notes

1. This is largely true of representations of Muslims in South African post-apartheid media too. This topic is explored in a recent Ph.D. by Gabeba Baderoon titled *Oblique Figures: Representations of Islam in South African Media and Culture* (University of Cape Town, 2004).
2. John Berger, British novelist and art critic, probably best known for *Ways of Seeing* (reprint edition, Penguin 1995), which is the work being referred to here.

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- Muslim Minorities, 3

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BRILL

Changes in directorship

Dick Douwes has left ISIM on 1 January 2006 to take a new position at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Douwes joined ISIM as the Academic Coordinator from the very inception of the Institute in 1998. In 2002, he became ISIM Executive Director where he managed the internal affairs of the ISIM, taking care of finance, outreach, and ISIM external relations with Dutch institutions. At the same time, Douwes acted as Editor of the *ISIM Newsletter* (later the *ISIM Review*) beginning with the first issue in October 1998. Both in his managerial capacity and as Editor of the *ISIM Newsletter*, Douwes made a valuable contribution to the institutional formation of ISIM during its formative years, and to the growth of its main publications and outreach. Before joining ISIM Douwes taught History of the Modern Middle East at Radboud University of Nijmegen, where he had obtained his Ph.D. in History. He holds various publications on Modern History of the Middle East and on Muslims in the Netherlands. Currently, Douwes has joined the Erasmus University of Rotterdam as the Chair of Non-Western History and the Dean of Faculty of History and Arts. We wish him every success in his future work.

With the departure of Dick Douwes, **Marlous Willemsen** became the Deputy Director of ISIM, as per 1 March. Marlous studied Arabic Language and Culture with specialization in Islamic Art at both Utrecht University and Bamberg University. She brings with her a vast experience in management and outreach from the Prince Claus Fund where she worked as Policy Officer for the Prince Claus Awards programme and as Executive Secretary of the Cultural Emergency Response programme. In these capacities, she also edited and contributed to the bi-annual *Prince Claus Fund Journal* as well as other publications on art and culture. Currently she serves as advisor for various cultural organisations, such as the Prince Claus Fund, Fatusch Productions and the European Cultural Foundation. At ISIM she will take charge in the areas of general management, outreach, fundraising, and fellowships. We cordially welcome Marlous Willemsen to ISIM and look forward to working with her for years to come.

PHOTO BY BEA BLAUWENDRAAT, 2005

Marlous Willemsen

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ISIM EVENTS

2 May 2006
ISIM Ph.D. Seminar
Towkays and Islam: Religious Leadership of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim Merchants and Economic Thinking of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim Preachers
Lecture by Thomas Chiou
Venue: ISIM

16 May 2006
ISIM Ph.D. Seminar
Occidentalisms: Moving Beyond "Ambiguity" in Assessing Egyptian Images of the West
Lecture by Robbert Woltering
Venue: ISIM

30 May 2006
ISIM Staff Seminar
On Merits and Modalities of Writing and Comparing: Methodological Remarks
Lecture by Asef Bayat
Venue: ISIM

28 June 2006
Workshop
Islam in Africa: Globalization and Moving Frontiers
Venue: ISIM
Convenors: Peter Geschiere & Abdulkader Tayob

6–7 October 2006
Workshop
The Making of Muslim Youth II
Venue: Institute for Social Studies (ISS), The Hague
Organizers: ISS & ISIM
Convenors: Asef Bayat & Linda Herrera

13–15 October 2006
Conference
Youth and the Global South: Religion, Politics, and the Making of Youth in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East
Venue: Dakar, Senegal
Organizers: African Studies Centre (ASC), Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA), International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) & ISIM

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InVisible Histories
The Politics of Placing the Past

VAZIRA FAZILA-YACOOBALI

The ISIM and the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (ASSR) jointly organized the workshop InVisible Histories: The Politics of Placing the Past, which was held on the second and third of September 2005. The workshop took place at the University of Amsterdam with additional financial support from Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO) and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). The workshop engaged two kinds of enquiry—research on the spatially fixed and research on the visually mobile aspects of material culture—and proposed a dialogue between them.

This multidisciplinary workshop brought together anthropologists, historians, art historians, and a cultural activist, who work on South Asia and the Middle East, to focus on material culture—to examine, on the one hand, how specific sites and buildings acquired significance in discourses of archaeology, heritage and civilization, and on the other hand, how images of sites and on sites transformed the meaning of places as they circulated through catalogues, calendars, posters, and postcards to make national, ethnic, or religious claims between people and places.

In a panel entitled Ruined Histories, Sitting Politics, the papers examined the construction and circulation of antiquity and world heritage. Ayfer Bartu Candan focused on the politics of a 9000 years old, world famous Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey, to examine how a global archaeological community, heritage and art groups, tourists including "goddess" groups, as well as local government officials and villagers made multiple claims on the site, and argued that it is "through the encounters of these publics of Çatalhöyük that the public memory of the site is constructed" which "cross-cut, complement, and trouble one another." Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali drew upon her ISIM based research on the World Heritage site of Takht-e-Bahi in northern Pakistan to track the historical transformation of "local ruins" into a Gandharan Buddhist religious site. She argued that the ideological inscriptions of emerging colonial archaeology, which "fixed" the meaning of the site, placed Buddhism at the apex of Indian civilization, and Islam as its nemesis, a religion of destruction and barbarism. Elizabeth Smith's research examined how Robert Fernea's "salvage ethnography" and photographs, taken at the time of the flooding of ancient Nubia because of the Aswan dam, continue to be produced and reproduced to authorize the placing of memory and identity amongst different Nubian communities.

PAPERS PRESENTED

- **Ayfer Bartu Candan,** Bogaziçi University, Istanbul
  Public Pasts: Multiple Claims on a Prehistoric Landscape
- **Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali,** ISIM
  Where have the Buddhas Gone? Ruined and Recovered Histories in North-Western Pakistan
- **Elizabeth Smith,** New York University
  The Photographic Production and Reproduction of Nubians in Egypt
- **Catherine Asher,** University of Minnesota
  Supersizing the Taj
- **Sandria Freitag,** University of North Carolina
  Situating the Self: South Asian Visual Culture and Muslim Identity
- **Yousuf Saeed,** Delhi, India
  Contemporary Challenges to Pluralism in Popular Devotional Art of South Asian Muslims
- **Martina Rieker,** American University in Cairo
  Envisioning Motion Before and After Barcelona: Inscribing Heritage in the Southern Mediterranean
- **Mona Harb,** American University in Beirut
  Islamizing Entertainment and Tourism Activities in Lebanon (or the Cultural Materialization of Hizbullah's Islamic Sphere)
- **Naveeda Khan,** John Hopkins University, Baltimore
  What is it to build a Mosque? Or, the Violence of the Ordinary
- **Pnina Werbner,** University of Keele
  Ziyarat: Words and Deeds, Death, and Rebirth of a Living Saint

In the panel Muslim Pasts, National Places, the emphasis shifted largely to the Indian sub-continent. Catherine Asher focused on the Taj Mahal as the premier icon of an imagined India. She traced its art historical significance from the time of its building by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan to the present, to argue that while the building was not considered of extraordinary importance at the time it was built, European aesthetics established it as the most sublime representative of Indian architecture. However, she particularly paid attention to the ways in which the Muslim mausoleum is imagined and claimed as a Hindu palace or temple, and its complex relationship to Muslim communities, in contentious contemporary Indian politics. Sandria Freitag and Yousuf Saeed examined a vibrant genre of print culture—popular posters from what Freitag called the "Indian Muslim niche market." Freitag used her archives of posters to examine the two ways in which "Indian Muslims participate in a larger world of ocular practices' as well as 'consume mass-produced visuals that belong to a specialized set of understandings." Saeed, a cultural activist, on the other hand, focused on the production and circulation of these posters and saw them as a visual expression of an increasingly fragile "pluralism" in India.

In another panel Touring Histories, Alternative Geographies, the focus was on the Middle East. Martina Reiker critically engaged tensions between "mobility" and "locality," as she examined the "museumification" and "re-scripting of heritage" in old urban spaces of Cairo located in global visions of EuroMed Heritage programmes, against the experiences of the working poor and middle classes that historically inhabited these spaces. She powerfully captured "a new local that, unlike capital, cannot or refuses to flow," in the words of a displaced woman kiosk owner now selling fruit on a blanket in the street in historic Cairo—"They speak of change? Change to what? I do not speak the language of antiquities? How can I possibly learn that language?" Mona Harb, on the other hand, explored the makings of an "alternative Islamic sphere" through Hizbullah inscriptions of cultural spaces in a southern suburb of Beirut in post-war Lebanon. Examining diverse sites such as al-Saha, an entertainment "village," al-Sayf, a summer youth camp, as well as martyr posters and the Al-Khiyam Detention Centre where Israeli forces held and tortured Hizbullah inmates, she raised questions about the relationship between consumer entertainment and resistance ideology in the making of Hizbullah's new cultural economy.

Different anthropological readings of contestations over sacred spaces in Pakistan were presented by Pnina Werbner and Naveeda Khan in the panel entitled: Sacred Spaces, Contested Meanings. They were paying particular attention to the sensory and affective experiences of social relationships in these spaces. Khan's paper on neighbourhood mosques and their "entanglements with ordinary life and sectarian politics," explored what she called the "violence of the ordinary." Werbner revisited the burial site of a living Sufi saint that she had been doing research on, and is the basis for her book *Pilgrims of Love*, to reflect on the ways in which the stage by stage building of the shrine of the saint transformed his presence and his relationship to his followers.

A rich and engaged discussion was provided by an array of notable discussants. Indra Sengupta, a Research Fellow at the German Historical Institute in London, and David Geary, a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, traveled at their own expense to participate in the workshop as discussants. Annelies Moors, the ISIM Chair at the University of Amsterdam, provided the opening discussion, and Peter van der Veer from University of Utrecht, Patricia Spyer from Leiden University and Kamran Asdar Ali, a visiting ISIM scholar, served as valuable discussants.

Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali was a post-doctoral fellow at ISIM from September 2003 till December 2005. Currently she is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Brown University, Providence.
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Contemporary Islamic Movements
Ideology, Aesthetics, Politics

HILLARY HUTCHINSON

The Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, South Asia Institute, the Centre for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, and the Centre for European Studies, the Religious Studies and College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin collaborated with ISIM to organize an international conference on *Contemporary Islamic Movements: Ideology, Aesthetics, Politics* (16-17 February 2006).

The conference sought to explore Islamic thought, politics, and social life through an interdisciplinary approach. The representation of Muslim life and Islam in public and private forums leaves much to be desired in terms of its depiction of the complexity of Muslim experiences and practices across the globe. By assembling scholars who have first hand knowledge of Muslim societies and of Islam, the conference addressed and engaged with these representational themes. The presenters had conducted scholarly investigations in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, Europe, and Africa and spoke on Islamist movements, theological debates, Muslim aesthetics, gender categories and politics, and on Muslims living as demographic minorities, all of which are extremely pertinent issues in the contemporary moment. The endeavour was to bring forward a comprehensive and broad understanding of the variety of ways Muslims lead and experience social life and practise their religion over a range of geographical spaces and political circumstances.

The conference got off to a rousing and somewhat controversial start with the presentation by keynote speaker Reza Aslan, discussing his celebrated book *No god but God*. He began by speculating that the rumours of Bin Laden's death were greatly exaggerated, but it would not be too early to speculate how he will be remembered 100 years from now: as a murderous criminal or character in the "Islamic Reformation" like Thomas Muenster and Martin Luther, Christian Reformation radicals. Aslan used the term Reformation deliberately to emphasize that the current bloodshed and violence are 1) not an expression of a "clash of civilizations" but rather an "internal civil war in Islam"; and that 2) these current conflicts are questions all religions grapple with while confronting modernity. Thus, the Christian reformation itself was a "bloody" argument, Aslan argued, that extended for over a century about who defines faith: the institution or individual. Aslan's thesis was that the current friction in Islam is a more complicated version of the same process. The audience did not seem to totally agree with Aslan's postulations as they put forward many historically based challenging questions, forcing him to reconsider some of his more generalized arguments.

The subsequent day and half were taken up by a series of panels. The first, Pushing Boundaries: Gendered Lives in Muslim Context, sought to explore the multiple ways gender and religious practice intersect in diverse Muslim societies. In his paper Scott Kugle showed how groups of believing Muslim homosexual and transgender populations in South Africa struggle to balance their faith with their participation in the politics of rights and sexual freedoms. Another panellist, Lara Deeb, presented ethnography of women activists in the Shia politics of Lebanon, while Schirin Moazami read a critical piece on Muslim feminist intellectuals in Europe. The panel on Muslim Aesthetics, Popular Politics included papers by Moustafa Bayoumi, who spoke on Iraqi immigrants and their everyday life in Lebanon. This was followed by Iftikhar Dadi's exposition on the modern usage of the forms of Mogul Miniature in the art of contemporary Pakistan and concluded by Asef Bayat's sociological investigation of the question whether Islam allows for fun or not.

The first panel on the next day was Jihadis in Action: Social Movement Actors, Anarchists or anti-Globalization Activists. The three speakers on this provocative panel explored the multiple ways in which contemporary Jihadis need to be understood in relation to their particular histories and social milieu. One panellist (Devji), borrowing from his recent book, argued that Jihadis should be looked at in terms of global social movements, such as the environmental movement. The next panel on Islam: "Traditional" or "Modern" included papers by Abdulkader Tayob and Laura Adams that explored the role of Shariah and Muslim identity in different geographies. The final panel on State and Civil Actors: Islam in Diverse Spaces, discussed secular Muslim cultures that are trying to reclaim Islam, especially in Central Asia and Turkey.

The conference drew to a close with the remarks by Barbara Metcalf, Professor of South Asian history at the University of Michigan, who asked the question "what other Islamic movements got missed?" in the discussions that ensued. She also observed how the two days of deliberation seemed to coalesce around the nation-state and its boundaries, and this was in direct contrast to the constant discussion one hears in academia of trans-boundary issues linked to Islam. In her opinion, all papers sought to de-'exoticize' Islam and contextualize their research by placing their arguments within the modern nation-state and, in particular, geographies and histories. The conference was adjourned after a vote of thanks.

Hillary Hutchinson is Special Events Coordinator at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Texas (Austin). Her main research interest is around issues concerning academic freedom in US post 9/11.
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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- **Reza Aslan,** University of California, Santa Barbara, Author of *No god but God,*
  Keynote Speaker
- **Laura Adams,** Princeton University
  Ideology and Elites in Post-Soviet Central Asia
- **Irfan Ahmad,** University of Amsterdam
  Erosion of Secularism, Explosion of Jihad: Explaining Islamist Radicalization in India
- **Schirin Amir-Moazami,** University of Frankfurt-Oder
  Feminism, Islam, and Liberal Public Spheres in Europe: A Case Study on Secular-Feminist Intellectuals in France and Germany
- **Asef Bayat,** ISIM / Leiden University
  Does Islam Have No Fun?
- **Moustafa Bayoumi,** City University of New York
  A Grammar of Motives, or How to Read Flags, Keffiyas, and Hijabs in Brooklyn New York
- **Iftikhar Dadi,** Cornell University
  Historicizing the Mughal Miniature in Contemporary Pakistani Art
- **Lara Deeb,** University of California, Irvine
  Pious Modern: Lebanese Shii Women and Transformations in Religiosity
- **Georgi Derluguian,** Northwestern University, Chicago
  The Young Anarchists with Qurans in the Northern Caucasus
- **Faisal Devji,** New School University
  Landscapes of Jihad
- **Najeeb Jan,** University of Michigan
  Having a Party Ulama Style: The Deoband and the Politics of Blasphemy
- **Scott Kugle,** ISIM
  Queer Jihad: Gay and Lesbian Muslim Activists Between Virtual and Actual Communities
- **Barbara Metcalf,** University of Michigan
  Concluding Remarks
- **Nazif M. Shahrani,** Central Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Indiana University
  Reclaiming Islam in Uzbekistan: Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet Realities
- **Abdulkader Tayob,** ISIM / Radboud University Nijmegen
  Shariah Between Law, Religion, and Identity
- **Jenny B. White,** Boston University
  The Sacred and the Profane: Turkish Islam in Transition

Religious Authority in Western Europe

FRANK PETER &
ELENA ARIGITA

A workshop dedicated to the topic of Muslim Religious Authority in Western Europe took place from 30 September–1 October at the ISIM in Leiden. The aim of the workshop, which was convened by Frank Peter (ISIM/Free University of Berlin) and Elena Arigita (ISIM/University of Granada), was to bring together scholars working in what is arguably one of the most dynamic research fields in the study of European Islam, in order to stimulate exchange and reflection on current and future research agendas. 18 papers were presented before an audience of 40 persons, comprising academics, policy-makers, and journalists.

PAPERS PRESENTED

- **Mohammed Amer,** ISIM
  Dressing up for your Shaykh: the Minhajul Quran Movement in London
- **Schirin Amir-Moazami,** University of Frankfurt-Oder
  Muslim Women in French and German Mosques: Pioneers for Transformations of Gender Conceptions and Religious Authority?
- **Elena Arigita,** ISIM / University of Granada
  Muslim Leaders in Spain: Discourses about Representation and Authority after March 11
- **Jonathan Birt,** University of Oxford / Islamic Foundation
  Muslim Religious Leaderships, Civic Religion and Paradigms of National Integration in Britain post-9/11
- **Welmoet Boender,** ISIM
  From Periphery to Centre: Muslim Female Leadership in Milli Görüs in the Netherlands
- **Amel Boubekeur,** École des hautes études en sciences sociales Paris / École normale supérieure
  Muslim Stars, Islamic Ethics, and Religious Authority in France
- **Alexandre Caeiro,** ISIM
  The Functions of the Mufti in the West: Tradition & Change in the Practice of Ifta'
- **Nathal Dessing,** ISIM
  Authority among Muslims in Europe: The Role of New Organizational Forms
- **Bettina Gräf,** Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin
  Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in Cyberspace: Representing Translocal Authority
- **Dilwar Hussain,** Islamic Foundation, Leicester
  Young Muslim Leaders and Shifting Boundaries in British Islam
- **Jeanette Jouili,** University of Frankfurt-Oder / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris
  Reflections on the Relationship between Pious Muslim Women and Religious Authority in Germany
- **Melanie Kamp,** Free University, Berlin
  Fatwa-Councils, Muftis and their Fatwas—A Preliminary Study of Concepts, Institutions, and Actors of Islamic Legal Counselling in Germany
- **Moussa Khedimellah,** École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris
  Leadership and Legitimacy in the Jamaat Tabligh in France
- **Inge Liengaard,** University of Aarhus
  Leading the Prayer in Denmark: A Variety of Mosques and Imams
- **Brigitte Maréchal,** Université Catholique de Louvain
  The Muslim Brotherhood and Religious Authority in Western Europe
- **Ruth Mas,** University of Colorado-Boulder
  Liminal Cases: Liberal Muslim Intellectuals in France
- **Frank Peter,** ISIM / Free University, Berlin
  Islamic Reformism and Authority: A Study of Imam Khatibs in France
- **Levent Tezcan,** University of Bielefeld
  State-Administered Religion in Cross-Cultural Communication: The Islam of Priests

LIST OF DISCUSSANTS

- **Martin van Bruinessen,** ISIM / Utrecht University
- **Christine M. Jacobsen,** University of Bergen
- **Tina G. Jensen,** University of Copenhagen
- **Martijn de Koning,** ISIM / Free University, Amsterdam
- **Nico Landman,** Utrecht University
- **Lena Larsen,** Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo
- **Riem Spielhaus,** Humboldt University, Berlin
- **Thijl Sunier,** University of Amsterdam

If the topic of Muslim religious authority has been high on the agenda of scholarship for the last decade or so, this can be partially attributed to the rapid institutionalization of Islam in Europe as well as the public and political interest in it. Undoubtedly, this context has strongly impacted the framing of current research, which is in some respects but a reflection of the preoccupations of national policy agendas. However, particularly in recent years, scholarly approaches and concerns have diversified considerably. Today, any attempt to bring into dialogue the different research traditions intermingling in the study of European Islam seems more than ever, both challenging and rewarding, and it is to this new situation that the workshop in Leiden aimed to respond.

The meeting was divided into six panels supplemented by two discussion panels. The papers and ensuing discussions addressed a variety of intersecting topics (see box for complete list of participants and titles). Several presentations engaged with state policies regarding the institutionalization of Islam, pointing in particular to their increasing proximity to variously defined policies of integration. The position of young Muslim women towards and inside religious hierarchies was a second focus of attention where questions of education, generational change, and organizational patterns were discussed in relation to more general reflections on concepts of authority. Not surprisingly, a sizeable number of participants analyzed specific types of authority, intellectuals, preachers, muftis, and imams. The impact of new media, mass education, and state policies on the scope and shape of authority was at the centre of discussions here. The study of Islamic movements and organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat al-Tabligh, and Minhaj ul-Quran, highlighted both distinct structures of organization and general patterns of configurations of religious authority.

The workshop highlighted the salience of connecting the study of Muslim religious authority to broader questions of power. It provided further evidence that the study of religious authority is inextricably bound in reciprocal relation to the analysis of the multi-sited process of defining religion. Finally, the discussions revealed the difficulty of conceptualizing "Islamic" in ways that do without the regularly voiced restrictions placed on the use of these concepts. From this perspective, the lively discussions around analytical approaches to Islam as a religious tradition were particularly appropriate and merit expansion.

A selection of presented papers will be published in a special issue of *Muslim World* in October 2006.

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Ethnobarometer: Europe's Muslim Communities

ISIM joined in mid 2005 a research project on current debates on Islam and integration in response to 9/11 and the murder of Van Gogh. The project is organized by the Ethnobarometer programme. This is a programme of concerned social scientists who provide independent and research-based reports on levels of racism, xenophobia, and ethnic conflict in selected countries of Europe (see: *www.ethnobarometer.org*). It aims to monitor events, highlight areas of tension and identify relevant topics for further research and inquiry. The current research project is carried out in the form of moderated and closely monitored focus group discussions in Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, the UK, and now the Netherlands. The focus groups are held in locations where there has been inter-ethnic or inter-religious tension or conflict, and their composition more or less represents the various groups involved.

Social Change and Identity in Muslim Societies

KINGSHUK CHATTERJEE

SEPHIS, in collaboration with ISIM, organized a training Workshop on Identity and Social Change in Muslim Societies at the Orient Institut, Beirut (7-14 December, 2005). Convened by Asef Bayat and Shamil Jeppie, the workshop drew in young scholars from around the world working on Muslim societies.

The workshop aimed at familiarizing the participants with some of the issues, which dominate current research on Muslim societies, and basic methodological approaches that are being (or can be) deployed in such research. The workshop pivoted principally around the location of individuals vis-à-vis the matrices of civil society and the state. In both respects, the issue of gender relations featured quite prominently in course of the ensuing discussions.

Shamil Jeppie, Asef Bayat, and Dick Douwes were the principal resource persons at the workshop for discussions on research methodology, which revolved around the notion of identity in the contemporary discourse on area studies. The thrust of such discussions was to underline the significance of historical contexts in which the notions of identity and the dynamics of social change evolve. In this respect, the twin discourses of "modernity" and "orientalism" were treated in some depth, and situated almost as sub-discourses within the larger discourse of "power." A caveat was issued, however, against the temptations of *essentialization* that characterizes a considerable part of the discourse of power, lest the wide-ranging diversities that have occasioned the emergence of the discipline of "area studies" be subsumed within the broader discourse of power. This came out best in discussions on the broader question of "pluralism" in modern states, which focused on the manner in which the category of *minorities* have tended to be constructed, and how the state of Lebanon handled the issue since its creation in the twentieth century.

Papers presented at the workshop could be classified into two types. Those that handled the nature of Muslim identities "as a whole," and those that dealt with women in Muslim societies. Comparison of experiences of Muslim societies from across the globe, suggested the clearly political character of *construction* of identities within the parameters of the modern state. Case studies indicated the convergence of political compulsions and reworking of the Islamic identities prompted by several factors—viz. use of Islamic discourse as a legitimating tool for purposes of political reform (Cameroon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey) or resistance (Iran, Malaysia); use of Islamic organizational networks either to complement (Nigeria) or supplement (Indonesia, South Africa) the state apparatus, etc. There was a general consensus that, leaving aside only the broadest confessional implications, the identity of a Muslim in the modern world was a product almost entirely of its local societal, political, cultural, and economic dynamics, and that it was almost entirely transmutable across time.

The other set of papers challenged the very notion of any Muslim identity "'as a whole'" (within, however, localized a space), by breaking most of such identities down in terms of their gender attributes. Focus on the position of women in widely divergent societies (India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania) revealed a widely prevalent (although not necessarily Islamic) tendency to subsume the identity of women underneath the shibboleth of a heavily patriarchal construct of the Muslim "self." Most of the papers of this category pertained to how women negotiated with those who wield power (societal and political) in contemporary Muslim societies in order to assert their own existence. Strategies of negotiation that were highlighted ranged between deriving benefits of confessional conformism (Sri Lanka, Iran, Saudi Arabia) and tacit resistance by interrogating the limits of traditionally acceptable behaviour in the realms of society (Iran, Tanzania) or polity (India). Admittedly the fortunes of such negotiating strategies have been far from uniform, not least because they are in different stages of progression. Far more importantly, something like a consensus evolved in the workshop to suggest that hitherto differential outcomes were not the result of different strategies, but rather that divergent strategies of negotiation were owing to the divergences of the social, cultural, and institutional setting of the polities within which the negotiations were being worked out—no uniformly applicable panacea was suggested.

Participants in the workshop were, further, familiarized with some of the dynamics operating in modern Lebanon, especially with reference to the situation evolving after the decade long civil war that came to an end in the 1990s. Interactions with local journalists and social activists helped the participants to understand the complex "history" of a country that came into being in the twentieth century and only then began to "remember" its past(s)—a process that, among other material considerations, serves to keep Lebanon dangerously poised between civil war and peace. Resource persons from the host, the Orient Institut, took the participants on guided tours—Ralph Bodenstein around the city of Beirut and Stefan Weber in Tripoli and Byblos—which told the history of Lebanon through the prism of urban architecture. This was a particularly instructive way of getting across Lebanon's character as a cultural mosaic, because Tripoli (Trablus in Arabic) is a city (going back to the Umayyad rule, seventh century) overwhelmingly Muslim in its social composition; Byblos is overwhelmingly Christian (dating back to the Roman times); and despite the persuasively thorough architectural reordering of Beirut in the past decade, the scars of the civil war are quite obvious in the sectarian character of the various localities of the city.

Kingshuk Chatterjee teaches History at Scottish Church College, Calcutta. He is working on the intellectual origins of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, 1979 for his Ph.D. from the Department of History, Calcutta University.

The objective of the Ethnobarometer research is to assess the consequences of the various responses to 11 September and the murder of Van Gogh in November 2004 for both the Muslim communities and European societies at large and, in particular, the relations between Muslim communities and the rest of the population. We decided to start with a small number of focus groups in Gouda, a middle-sized town of 70,000 inhabitants in the western part of the Netherlands (at equal distances from Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht), which is in many respects representative for many such towns—a Dutch "Middletown." Almost 10 per cent of the population has a Muslim background: Moroccans with 6,000 constituting the largest group, Turks a distant second with 400; there has been a history of conflict in several districts of the city. Right wing and xenophobic populists have a certain following in Gouda, though they are less prominent than in Rotterdam. We made an effort to form focus groups that were broadly representative of the population in terms of age, political attitude, and ethnicity. To this end, we recruited participants through appeals communicated in a range of media: an interview in a widely read regional newspaper, appeals placed on various Dutch and Moroccan internet discussion lists, direct invitations to people who attended a "multicultural" day in one of the neighbourhood centres, and through street interviews. The overall report of the Ethnobarometer project will appear by the end of 2006.

RESEARCH TEAM

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- *Interns:* Birgül Özmen, Nora Asrami, Talita Groenendijk and Bea Hekhuis

Islam and the "Carriers" of European National Identities

BARBARA THÉRIAULT
& FRANK PETER

On 24–25 February 2006 in Frankfurt-Oder, Barbara Thériault and Frank Peter convened a workshop on Islam, European Societies, and the "Carriers" of National Identities. The workshop, co-organized by the CCEAE (Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes) at Université de Montréal and ISIM, dealt with the incorporation of Islam in different national contexts. This workshop suggested a new perspective on the transformations triggered by the presence of Muslims in European societies by recasting attention to those who deal with the incorporation of Islam in Europe: the "carriers" of national identities.

Today, the dominant approaches in studies of the incorporation of Islam typically centre on the importance of national traditions, primarily church-state relations and citizenship laws, to account for the nature of debates and practices related to the incorporation of Muslims. Alluding to Max Weber's sociology, the concept of "carrier" was introduced in order to initiate a more systematic and comparative study of the reworking of national identities by specific groups and configurations of actors, both Muslim and non Muslim, such as civil servants, religious specialists, or social scientists. These configurations of actors distinguish the countries surveyed at the workshop. While these actors might contribute to changes in the understanding of national identities, the papers have shown that this is not necessarily their intention. As such, not only the intentions underlying their actions, but their consequences as well, were underscored by the participants—an aspect the term "carrier" expresses more sharply than that of "agent." Building and supplementing on the literature on the incorporation of Islam, participants of the workshop thus took a fresh look at this growing body of literature from the vantage point of particular types of actors, those who could be referred to as "border crossers" or those who contribute—knowingly or unwittingly—to the incorporation of Islam and thus often challenge the borders of national identities.

Among the different actor constellations who impact processes of institutionalization of Islam in Europe, Tina Jensen analyzed the ambiguous role played by converts in Denmark. Surveying mosques in the same country, Lene Kühle also pointed to the importance of municipal authorities in the process of Muslim institution building while challenging the use of the category "religion" for analyzing contemporary "Islam" in Denmark. In the case of Germany, Barbara Thériault drew attention to the role of civil servants and conservative forces in incorporating Islam. Studying a conflict around the construction of a mosque in Germany, Jörg Hüttermann pointed to the prevailing importance of "rules of hospitality" in his analysis of the actions taken by parties in favour or against the religious building. Concentrating on the figure of intellectuals of Islamic background and social scientists in general, Schirin Amir-Moazami, Ruth Mas, and Frank Peter examined discursive constructions of Islam in France and Germany while Nadia Fadil critically engaged in her study on Muslim believers in Belgium with the private/public dichotomy as a technique of liberal governance.

To be sure, the stress on "carriers," both Muslim and non-Muslim, does not exhaust our understanding of the incorporation of Islam and changing national identities. However, it introduces a shift of perspective, which puts in the hot seat particular constellations of actors and how they negotiate, in their daily work and intellectual production, the tensions between the universal and the particular. They do so, as was stressed by Till van Rahden and Denise Helly, from distinctive positions of power within specific national and/or religious traditions. Such an analysis also opens up a new perspective for understanding the ongoing debates set off by the new Muslim presence as has been exemplarily illustrated by Martijn de Koning in his enquiry on the diverging meanings conferred on the concept of tolerance in the Netherlands. Concepts such as tolerance, Thijl Sunier compellingly argued in the case of the construction of religious buildings in Amsterdam, should not be taken for granted. They reflect on past and ongoing struggles for the appropriation of space within the history of different national states.

Considering the incorporation of Islam from the standpoint of particular "carriers" has both opened up a new perspective and raised an array of new issues, which will be hopefully discussed at an upcoming workshop.

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- **Schirin Amir-Moazami,** Humboldt University / University of Frankfurt-Oder
  Feminism, Islam and Liberal Public Spheres in Europe: A Case Study on Secular-Feminist Intellectuals in France and Germany
- **Ruth Mas,** University of Colorado-Boulder
  The Franco-Maghrebi Subject: Culture and the Decentering of the Quran
- **Nadia Fadil,** University of Leuven
  Observing Transgressive Religious Practices: The Performance of the Public and the Private
- **Barbara Thériault,** University of Montreal
  The "Carriers of Diversity" within Police Forces in Germany: Contemporary Manifestations of Religion?
- **Frank Peter,** ISIM / Free University of Berlin
  Immigrant Youths, Education, and the Incorporation of Islam in France
- **Tina Jensen,** University of Copenhagen
  Danish Muslims: Mediators as Tricksters or Catalysts of National Identity?
- **Jörg Hüttermann,** Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (IKG), Bielefeld
  Neighbourhood Conflict as a Ritual of Incorporation: Case-Based Remarks on a Conflict about a Minaret-Building
- **Thijl Sunier,** University of Amsterdam
  No White Sugarbread in Our Neighbourhood! Religion and the Politics of Space in Amsterdam
- **Lene Kühle,** University of Aarhus
  Organizing the Mosque as a Religious Community
- **Martijn de Koning,** ISIM / Free University of Amsterdam
  "Dreaming in Dutch": Conflicts and Tolerance in Dutch Society

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- **Till van Rahden,** University of Cologne
- **Denise Helly,** INRS, Montreal

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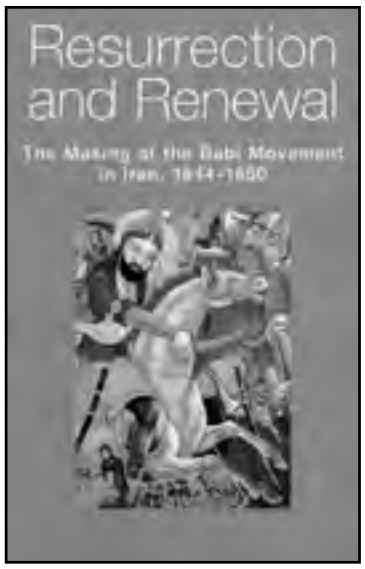
- **Scott Kugle,** ISIM
  Restraint of Violence in Modern Islamic History: The Intellectual Legacy and Ethical Challenge of Abul Kalam Azad
- **Benjamin Soares,** Africa Studies Centre, Leiden
  Muslim Public Intellectuals in Contemporary West Africa
- **Roel Meijer,** ISIM / Radboud University Nijmegen
  Intellectuals and Politics in Iraq: The Association of Muslim Scholars and its Ideological Justification of the Sunni Resistance
- **Recep Senturk,** Centre for Islamic Research (ISAM), Istanbul
  Intellectual Dependency: Muslim Intellectuals in Search for Human Rights?
- **Samuli Schielke,** ISIM
  The Making of Popular Religion: Nationalism, Islamic Reform, and The Construction of Mawlid Festivals as an Other of Modern Egypt (1880-1950)
- **Patrick Desplat,** Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz
  On the Confessions of a British Spy and "New" Readings of Tawhid - Contemporary Interpretations in Islam and their Contextualization in Ethiopia
- **Farzin Vahdat,** Harvard University, Cambridge
  Critical Theory and the Islamic Encounter with Modernity
- **Richard Martin,** Emory University, Atlanta
  Enlightenment in Islam: Denied, Rejected, Forgotten, Remembered
- **Annemarike Stremmelaar,** Leiden University
  The Islamic Ethic and the Spirit of Modernity: The Protestantisation of Islam according to Islamist Intellectuals in Turkey
- **Michael Feener,** University of California, Riverside
  Cross-Cultural Contexts of Modern Muslim Intellectualism: Reflections on a History of Islamic Legal Thought in Indonesia
- **Michiel Leezenberg,** University of Amsterdam
  Laying Down the Law: State, Religion, and Gendered Violence in Iraq
- **Abdulkader Tayob,** ISIM / Radboud University Nijmegen
  Religion in Modern Islamic Thought and Practice



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Modernity and the Millennium: the Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East by Juan R. I. Cole.

Columbia University Press. *$19.50 paper; $45.00 cloth*

Cole examines Baha'u'llah's response to the issues of his time-- religious liberty, the separation of church and state, the need for peace and collective security, the rights of women, the dangers of unbridled nationalism. He demonstrates how the early teachings of Baha'u'llah both engage with and critique modernity.

A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Bab by 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated and edited by E. G. Browne

Originally published in 1891, the main body of the book is Browne's translation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's own history of the Bab and his religion. Browne provides hundreds of notes and dozens of essays on the history of the Baha'i religion.

Resurrection and Renewal: the Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850 by Abbas Amanat

"Resurrection and Renewal is in my judgment one of the most important books written on nineteenth-century Iran, and perhaps the fullest account we have of the development of any ideological movement in the Islamic Middle East in the nineteenth century. The story of how eschatological expectations became converted into a new religion is told here with exacting scholarship and an abundance of detail."

--Roy Mottahedeh, Professor of Islamic History, Harvard University

Second Paperback Edition, US $29.95

Church and State: a Postmodern Political Theology by Sen McGlinn

Includes a new interpretation of Muhammad at Medina and a new reading of relevant Quranic texts, to show that the separation of state and religion is a universal ideal.

Modern Islamic Intellectual History in Comparative Perspective

ABDULKADER TAYOB

On 29-30 September 2005 a two-day conference on Modern Islamic Intellectual History in Comparative Perspective, was held in Utrecht. Altogether, the conference papers raised issues and questions about the production, transformation, and reception of Islamic intellectual discourse.

On the first day, presentations focused more on the contextual dimension of the modern intellectual production, whilst on the second they stressed the theoretical questions that have been raised for the last one hundred years by and about Muslims. Despite the difficulty of neatly dividing the individual papers along these lines, these processes, however, overarched the lively and critical discussion that ensued.

Soares opened the conference with his paper on Islam and Its Expression in Twentieth-century West Africa. He drew from a rich sample of case studies on the appeal and influence of public intellectuals in West Africa, a challenge to the adequacy of Weberian categories of rationalization and disenchantment to explain these movements. On the other hand, Schielke's paper on the debate over *mawlids* in Egypt revealed a religious trend (even though a minority) that matched Weber's predictions. And a case study of a small group of intellectuals in Turkey by Stremmelaar, showed how Weber was used as an anti-symbol to deride an emerging Protestant Islam among the middle classes of Turkey. The conclusions drawn from the discussions pointed to the persistence of Weber's thesis despite its inadequacy.

Another set of papers highlighted the production of intellectual capital in certain very specific contexts, and through very different resources. Kugle's paper on Advocates of non-Violence in Modern Islamic Theology traced this ethic in the Quran, and more significantly, in modern Indian history in the Khudai Khidmatgar (servants of God). Senturk's paper: Intellectual Dependency: Muslim Intellectuals in search for Human Rights in Islam, argued that an Islamic justification for human rights in late modernity was both necessary and unavoidable. While Meijer's paper traced the emergence of new Islamic politics in the posturing and missives of the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, Desplat's paper showed how orthodoxy was constructed partly also by conspiracies, forged documents, and the Internet.

The conference also featured papers on the theoretical conception of modern Islamic thought. Vahdat launched the second day with a paper on the possibility of critical theory among contemporary Muslim intellectuals. Martin's paper reflected on a Muslim Enlightenment that was not restricted to the eighteenth century, but alternatively to a set of ideas and dispositions about the religious and the secular. Leezenberg considered the application of Foucault or Stalinism to better understand Saddam Hussein's reign of terror. Tayob concluded the presentation of papers by appealing to a discursive employment of religion among Muslim modernists.

The conference ended with a general discussion on the two-day meeting. Three possible areas of attention were highlighted. The first, on a better comparative understanding of public intellectuals; second, attention to explicit and implicit modern definitions of Islam; and last, attention to adequate theoretical tools to develop our understanding of the trajectory of Modern Islamic intellectual discourses.

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Rights at Home
Advanced Training Manual

MARIËTTE VAN BEEK

The ISIM "Rights at Home" Project rounded up its activities on 1 October 2005. The four-year Project focused on challenges and opportunities facing human rights activists in Muslim societies and communities. The overall purpose of the Project's sounding board meetings, regional workshops, advanced training workshops, and follow-up programmes was to rethink strategies, theories, and histories of human rights and Islamic legal theory. The Advanced Training manual gives a good impression of the process of reflection throughout the years. It includes the approaches developed to thinking about and struggling for human rights, its methodology, results, and findings.

The Advanced Training manual was developed in the run to the Advanced Training, the most important training component of the programme that took place in 2004 in Lebanon. During the training, the manual was intensively used, and in the aftermath evaluated and adjusted by the Advanced Training programme director/manual developer Cassandra Balchin, and all advocacy oriented trainers and Islamic Legal Theory experts involved. Significantly, the input of cases by the 43 participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Tanzania, and Yemen to the Advanced Training manual reflects the daily reality of local activist organizations and agents of change. The cases make clear that human rights were not to be understood exclusively as social, political, and intellectual goals: living human rights demands, above all, a personal transformation. Legal codes might go a long way to ensure rights in social and political contexts, but it was the appropriate disposition and commitment that could turn societies around.

The story of Khadija

The life story of Khadija from Tanzania is one of many examples given in the Advanced Training manual. The very young Khadija was married off to a middle-aged man who seemed respectable. He introduced himself as a businessman, but what Khadija and her family did not know was that he was a widower having lost his wife earlier to AIDS. Khadija gave birth twice, but both children died three months after birth. Soon thereafter, her husband's health deteriorated. He admitted his HIV status and asked Khadija for forgiveness for knowingly infecting her. Not only was Khadija a widow before twenty but she was also childless and infected with the HIV virus. Moreover, her in-laws took all her property, including her cooking pots! When she challenged the matter in a religious institution, her in-laws ended up with a bigger share than she got. She did not even get her entitled quarter of the property.

The distribution did not take account of the fact that her husband could not work for a significant period in which they were married. Actually, it was Khadija who had paid all the bills and looked after the home from her catering business. While she had expected justice, her in-laws and religious institutions did not think she was entitled to claim her contribution in the matrimonial property or to be compensated for the harm deliberately done to her. Khadija now is one of the few people in Tanzania who are open about her HIV status and is a member of a national network of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Human rights and Islamic legal theory

The Rights at Home Advanced Training manual uses cases like these as starting points for the examination of the relationship between human rights and Islamic Legal Theory. The programme carefully discusses the best way to get a direct hands-on approach to a creative understanding and application of Islamic Legal Theory, which would take the rights of the marginalized like Khadija into consideration. It contains a useful appendix entitled Outline of the Islamic Legal Theory Component that gives an overview of the approach adopted. In this view, the Islamic tradition provides some fundamental resources for thinking and acting on human rights. However, in order to draw on these resources, there was an important need for a paradigm shift in how Muslims think about the Sharia. Social justice must be the key or main value in the reconstruction of Muslim laws.

Two bottom-line goals for the Rights at Home Advanced Training programme have been identified: there are no easy answers in Muslim law; and, you can trust yourself to use the same tools to advance legal theory that others have used in the past. These goals have been thoroughly integrated in the structure and contents of the Advanced Training manual. But the Manual does not only propose new strategies for Islamic law. Basically, it describes an intensive training programme of 14 days—each training day focusing on a theme and providing a time schedule, interactive exercises, handouts and relevant documents to treat this theme. The programme consists of a unique balance of elements of Islamic Legal Theory and practical strategies and skills ranging from sessions on hadith and gender as a social construction, to workshops on the development of advocacy plans. Experiences of both trainers and participants during all parts of the training are given in "How it worked" sections throughout the whole manual.

Results of the Rights at Home Project

The Rights at Home Advanced Training manual is one of the main results of the project as a whole, to be used in broader settings, and in accordance with the attempt to sustain and further refine the Rights at Home approach through ongoing critical debate, and exchange of creative and constructive solutions. In Summer 2005 the Advanced Training manual was temporarily attached to the ISIM website, after which the Rights at Home website took it over. For those target groups of the Rights at Home Project, which could not gain easy access to the Internet to download the Advanced Training files, hard copies were printed and dispersed. Next to the training manual, video recordings of several parts of the Rights at Home Advanced Training were put on CD-ROM's and made available for future trainings. Moreover, complementary documents on the priority issues of the Rights at Home project can be found on the Rights at Home website. Some of the documents are available in Arabic and Swahili.

INFO

- **Cassandra Balchin** (Compiler/Editor), *Advanced Training Manual for Social Agents of Change in Human Rights Advocacy and the Family. 23 June-8 July, 2004, Zahlé, Lebanon,* Leiden: ISIM 2005.
  ISBN-10: 9090197117
  ISBN-13: 9789090197117

- The manual can be downloaded at www.rightsathome.org or ordered through info@isim.nl.

Mariëtte van Beek was Project Manager of the Rights at Home project. Currently she is Project Manager of the Morocco Fund.

New ISIM Book Series

In cooperation with the Amsterdam University Press, ISIM has taken the initiative to launch the ISIM Book Series. The Series will publish innovative and interdisciplinary research on trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies and communities, bringing together expertise in anthropology, sociology, political science, social history, cultural studies, and religious studies. The aim of the Series is to present the best and leading scholarship on Islam and Muslim societies in different parts of the globe. It will particularly expose both the distinctive and comparable aspects of trends and developments in Muslim societies. Monographs and edited volumes are invited that are both theoretically informed and grounded in empirical research in specific geographical areas or across cultural and regional boundaries and interests. Proposals will be reviewed by experts in the field, under the direction of an international editorial board. Titles from Amsterdam University Press in the US and Canada are distributed by the University of Chicago Press.

For more information about the Series and guidelines for authors, please contact the coordinating editors at review@isim.nl

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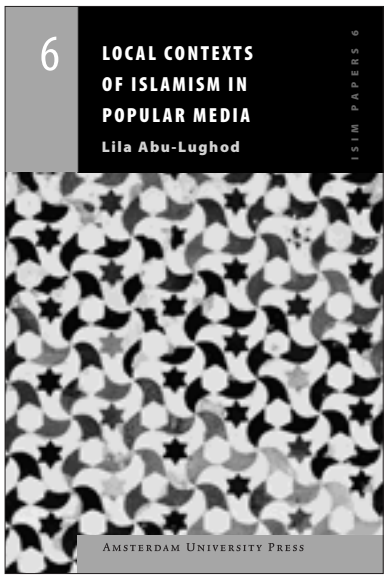
ISIM Papers

■ Paper 5: Abdulaziz Sachedina
The Role of Islam in The Public Square: Guidance or Governance?

Abdulaziz Sachedina's paper deals with the role of religion in the development of democratic institutions in the light of the American intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. With this intervention, constitutional debates have as yet to tackle the role of religious convictions and values in the development of democratic institutions to guarantee basic freedoms and rights in those countries. A major stumbling block to democratization, Sachedina argues, is the way the role of religious values is currently defined. He pleads for developing an inclusive sense of citizenship without insisting upon doctrinal and theological uniformity.

Abdulaziz Sachedina is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

24 pages ISBN 90 5356 825 5 € 13,50



■ Paper 6: Lila Abu-Lughod
Local Contexts of Islamism in Popular Media

It is well known that after the events of 11 September 2001 media representations of Islamists, and Muslims more generally, in the West became even more negative and stereotyped than previously. What is less well known is that in the 1990s many regimes in the Arab Muslim world perceived Islamists as a threat, a perception that was reflected in popular Arab media. Through attention to television media, particularly in Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod analyzes portrayals of Islamism and "religious extremism". She poses pressing questions about how these new representations of Islamists, and the debates they sparked nationally, have contributed to a reconfiguration of "religion" itself.

Lila Abu-Lughod is Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies, and Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia University, New York.

24 pages ISBN 90 5356 824 7 € 13,50

■ Paper 7: Juan R. I. Cole
The Ayatollahs and Democracy in Contemporary Iraq

Iraqi Shiism is undergoing profound changes, leading to new elaborations of the relationship between clerics and democratic principles in an Islamic state. The Najaf tradition of thinking about Shiite Islam and the modern state in Iraq, which first developed during the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905–1911, rejects the principle that supreme power in an Islamic state must be in clerical hands. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani of Iraq stands in this tradition, and he has striven to uphold and develop it since the fall of Saddam Hussein. At key points he came into conflict with the Bush administration, which was not eager for direct democracy. Parliamentary politics have also drawn in clerics of the Dawa Party, the Sadr movement, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, all of which had earlier been authoritarian in outlook. Is Iraqi Shiism experiencing its enlightenment moment?

Juan R. I. Cole is Professor of Modern Middle East and South Asian History at the University of Michigan. *(Available summer 2006)*

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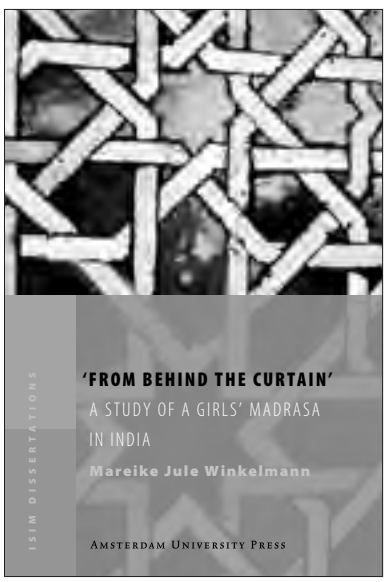
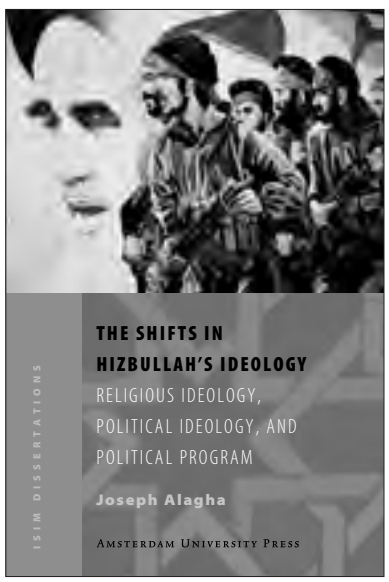


■ Mareike Winkelmann
'From Behind the Curtain': A Study of a Girls' Madrasa in India

In the aftermath of 9/11 Islamic seminaries or madrasas received much media attention in India, mostly owing to the alleged link between madrasa education and forms of violence. Yet, while ample information on madrasas for boys in available, similar institutions of Islamic learning for girls have for the greater part escaped public attention so far. This study investigates how madrasas for girls emerged in India, how they differ from madrasas for boys, and how female students come to interpret Islam through the teachings they receive in these schools.

Mareike Winkelmann defended her thesis at the University of Amsterdam (December 2005).

176 pages ISBN 90 5356 907 3 €29,50



■ Joseph Alagha
The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program

The Lebanese Shiite resistance movement, Hizbullah, is going through a remarkable political and ideological transformation. The line of argument in this dissertation is that Hizbullah has been adjusting its identity by shifting emphasis among its three components: (1) from propagating an exclusivist religious ideology (2) to a more encompassing political ideology, and (3) to a down-to-earth political programme.

Joseph Alagha is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at the Lebanese American University. He defended his thesis at the Free University Amsterdam (February 2006).

384 pages ISBN 90 5356 910 3 €49,50

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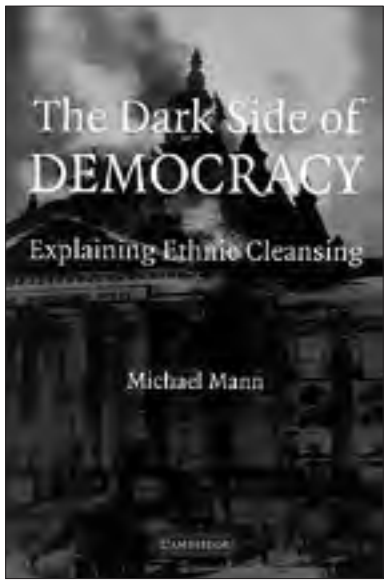
The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing

By **Michael Mann**
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.



This book presents a new theory of ethnic cleansing based on the most terrible cases (colonial genocides, Armenia, the Nazi Holocaust, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Rwanda) and cases of lesser violence (early modern Europe, contemporary India, and Indonesia). The author argues that murderous cleansing is modern: it is "the dark side of democracy." Among other things, it results where the demos (democracy) is confused with the ethnos (the ethnic group).

Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism

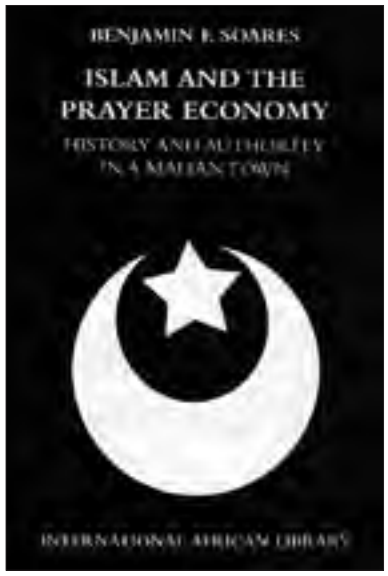
By **Janet Afary** and **Kevin B. Anderson**
Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005.

Foucault and the Iranian Revolution is the first book-length analysis of the essays of Michel Foucault on Iran. Afary and Anderson illuminate Foucault's support of the Islamist movement and show how Foucault's experiences in Iran contributed to a turning point in his thought, influencing his ideas on the Enlightenment, homosexuality, and his search for political spirituality. The authors argue that Foucault's provocative writings are essential for understanding the history and the future of the West's relationship with Iran and, more generally, to political Islam.

Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India

By **Yoginder Sikand**
New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005.

An excellent, well-informed study of the history and organization of the madrasa in the Indian subcontinent, with special attention to efforts at reform of this institution. A large section is devoted to a clear-headed discussion of the alleged role of Indian and Pakistani madrasas as hotbeds of potentially violent radicalism and of the wider political context of inter-religious tension.



Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town

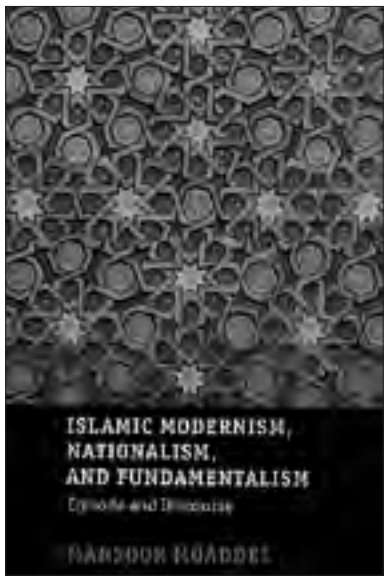
By **Benjamin F. Soares**
Edinburgh; Ann Arbor: Edinburgh University Press; University of Michigan Press for the International African Institute, 2005.

The book races the changing meaning of Islam in Mali from the colonial period to the present. It particularly focuses on the meaning of power and authority in a Malian town, and the changing patterns of Islam at the hands of colonial and post-colonial political leaders, Sufis, reformists, and secularists.

Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse

By **Mansoor Moaddel**
London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

This is an extensive review of the three main intellectual and social movements in contemporary Muslim societies. Islamic modernism, secular trends, and fundamentalism are presented in rich detail and contextual location.



Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject

By **Saba Mahmood**
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Politics of Piety is a groundbreaking analysis of Islamist cultural politics through the ethnography of a grassroots women's piety movement in the mosques of Cairo. This study shows how the ethical and the political are indelibly linked within the context of such movements. It thoroughly challenges conventional notions of agency, religion, liberalism, and feminism.

Without Boundary

Seventeen Ways of Looking "Islamic or not"

The Museum of Modern Art in New York (www.moma.org) exhibits seventeen artists who come from the "Islamic" world but do not live there. Depictions here show two perspectives used in *Without Boundary* to defy the binary oppositions of current politics by resisting essentialist notions of who they are such as: "Islamic or not." First, Ghada Amer looks at "Islamic art" as a matter of identity and, in particular, the relationship between gender and identity. While this often entails a focus on women wearing veils, Amer tries to undermine this expectation by depicting nude and near-nude women. Her *Eight Women in Black and White* (2004) are actually veiled by embroidery, tangles of thread, and the different layers of stitching. *Eight Women* expresses her opposition to the attempts of fundamentalists or feminists to make the female body asexual. Secondly, Raqib Shaw's *Garden of Earthly Delights III* (2003) is inspired by the *Garden of Delights* of the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, but Shaw also draws from other sources such as Japanese Hokusai prints and traditional Persian Miniatures. It breathes in a permissive and celebratory way the generation of new, hybrid possibilities. (Description based upon an excerpt from the publication *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking "Islamic or Not"* by Fereshteh Daftari, 2006)

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GAGOSIAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

Ghada Amer (b. 1963 in Cairo, Egypt, lives and works in New York). *Eight Women in Black and White*, 2004
Acrylic, embroidery and gel medium on canvas
7' x 6' 4" (213.4 x 193 cm)

PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY VICTORIA MIRO GALLERY, LONDON

Raqib Shaw (b. 1974 in Calcutta, India, lives and works in London). The Garden of Earthly Delights III, 2003
Mixed media on board. Three panels, overall: 10 x 15' (305 x 407.5 cm), each panel: 10 x 5' (305 x 152.5 cm)

Sports:

transcending differences, overcoming atrocities of the past, moving forward to a new future, and challenging stereotypes

PHOTO BY ISSOUF SANOGO / © AFP PHOTO, 2006

Members of the Amputee Soccer Team of Sierra Leone at a beach in Freetown, April 2006: Team members are victims of amputations by rebels during the civil war. The team is a joint effort of Christians and Muslims from different tribal and cultural backgrounds.

PHOTO BY SHAH MARAI / © AFP PHOTO, 2006

Group of Afghan athletes who have lost their leg to mines in Olympic outfits: Taking part in a ceremony marking the International Mine Action Day, Kabul, April 2006.