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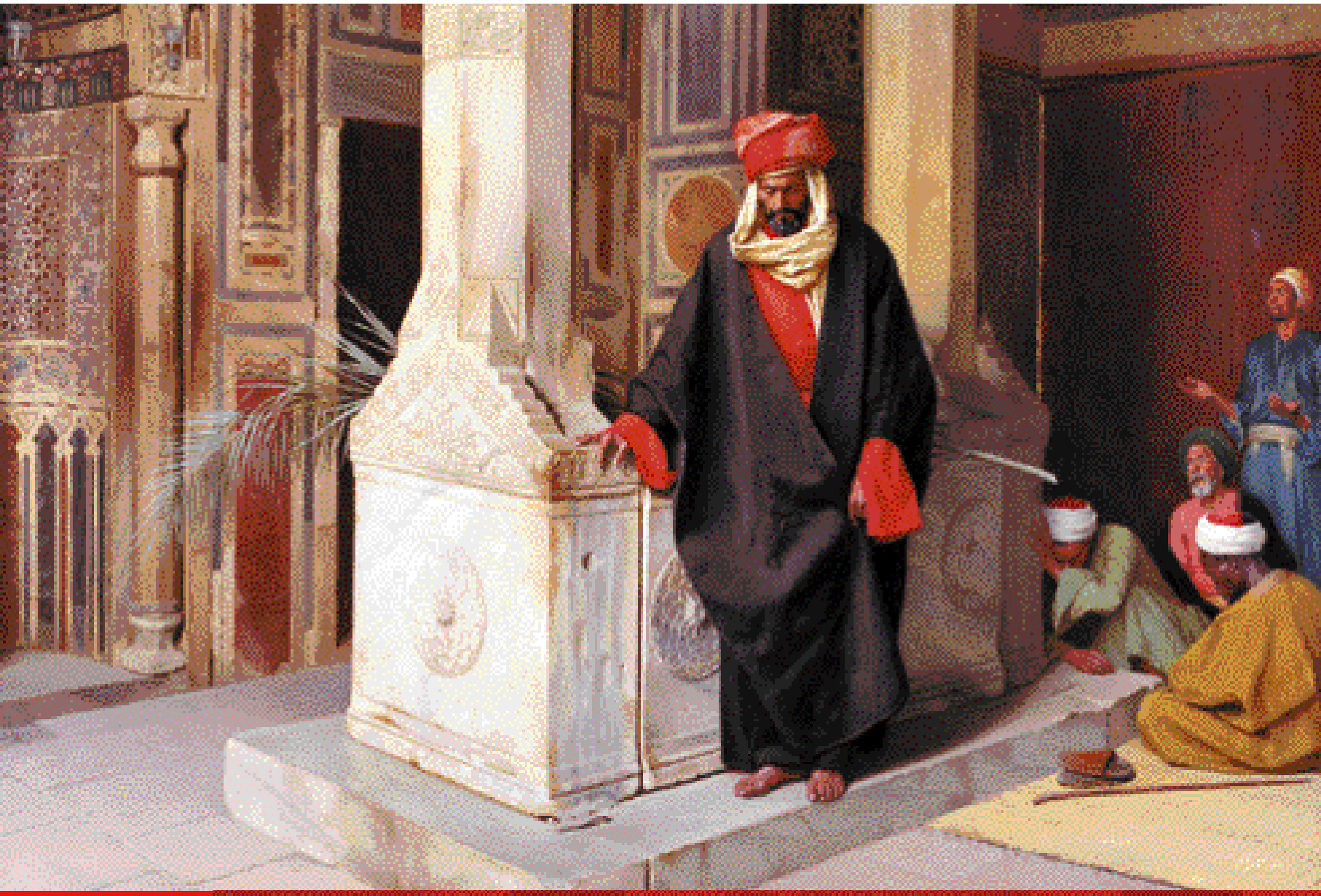

La Priere au Tombeau by Ludwig Deutsch, Oil, 1898, Najd Collection

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■ **'The terrible conflicts that herd people under falsely unifying rubrics like "America," "The West" or "Islam" and invent collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are actually quite diverse, cannot remain as potent as they are, and must be opposed. We still have at our disposal the rational interpretive skills that are the legacy of humanistic education, not as a sentimental piety enjoining us to return to traditional values or the classics but as the active practice of worldly secular rational discourse.'** *(Edward Said, Orientalism 25 Years Later, CounterPunch, 4 August 2003).*

■ Edward Said died on 25 September 2003

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Editorial

DICK DOUWES

During a recent visit to Tunis the French president Jacques Chirac explained the notion of *laïcité* (secularism) in a meeting with students of the local Lycée Français. He pointed out that the French, given their tradition of secularism, feel harassed by the assertion of ostentatious markers of religiosity. Therefore, in the eyes of the French, the wearing of veils in public schools is conceived as a hostile act and, as such, is unacceptable. But he expressed his conviction that Islam is compatible with French secularism, even though certain readings of Islam may be problematic. He explained, for instance, that if a Muslim woman refuses to be treated by a male medical doctor she is, in fact, contesting national regulations that are rooted in French civilization and this is not to be tolerated. According to Chirac the French are not so much prone to impose their values on others, rather they refuse to have their own culture contested. The French president was speaking to a sympathetic audience of Tunisian, French and other international students, but his message was also aimed at the home public on the eve of the publication of a report dealing with the *mode d'emploi de la laïcité* in the context of the proliferation of religious, mainly Islamic, signs in the public domain.

In Western Europe the increased presence of Islam is the subject of heated debate in which Islam is often seen as being incompatible with European culture. The national context of the debate varies and in some countries, like France, the government is more interventionist than elsewhere (Peter, p. 20). But the debates in Europe are becoming remarkably similar in content, particularly after 9/11 when questions increasingly concentrate on issues regarding 'real' and 'good' Islam as opposed to supposedly less constructive readings of Islam (Bonnefoy, p.22). Today, members of government and parliament in France and elsewhere are actively engaged in defining the 'proper' behaviour of Muslim citizens and with some regularity they transgress the sacred boundaries of separation between state and religion.

The debate coincides with the state-sponsored formation of representative Muslim councils in several countries. Representatives of Sunni mosque and welfare organizations tend to dominate these new bodies. It remains to be seen to what extent these new councils represent Muslim communities because many Muslims in Europe have little or no dealings with these more formal organizations, and quite a number of them have developed their own informal groups, such as those on the internet.

Beyond doubt it is the veil, whether the face-veil or headscarf, that represents the principle 'ostentatious' religious marker. Continuous incidents around veiling have put this practice at the centre of public apprehension. Apart from what veiling may reveal about gender relations, issues of veiling and measures introduced to discourage or ban (certain types of) veiling touch upon a number of other concerns, such as access to education and individual liberties, integration and cultural authenticity (See Herrera and Moors, p. 16 and Fazila-Yacoobali, p. 63 on the recent debates). Veiling is clearly not only a contentious issue in Europe; it is being debated in many Muslim countries where degrees of veiling are being negotiated and states implement policies that both impose and discourage veiling. The politics of veiling are highly complex, as was demonstrated during the Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi's recent visit to Europe. By her unveiled appearance at a Paris press conference in conjunction with her emphasis on her Muslim identity, she '… subtly implied that religious identity is a social construction, and that every member of the community has the right to participate in its definition. She is, therefore, pushing for a more inclusive and pluralistic definition of what it means to be Muslim and implying that the definition of religious identity cannot be monopolized by a government or the religious establishment.' (Shahrokni, p. 6). In an interview with a Dutch daily Ebadi expressed her concern about debates on the veil in Europe, commenting that forbidding veiling is no less problematic than prescribing it.

I S I M

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

The Use and Abuse of **'Muslim Societies'**

ASEF BAYAT

The central function of the ISIM is to conduct and promote research in contemporary 'Muslim societies'. The term refers to both a 'particular' culture and a geographical area of the world, albeit one which is dispersed across the Middle East, South and South-East Asia and Africa. While the term may offer a common identity for scholars working on countries ranging from Morocco and Iran to India and Indonesia, it can also invoke a sense of anxiety and hesitation. It is not just that as an analytical category 'Muslim societies' may be vague and therefore lacks coherence, but some may fear that it can cause more intellectual harm than benefit. By employing such a broad category are we not in a sense 're-orientalizing' Muslim societies and cultures, constructing homogenous entities where they do not exist? Is it valid to speak of, say, 'Christian societies' or 'Buddist societies'? Does the category 'Muslim societies' not imply that we consider religion, i.e., Islam, as the defining feature of these societies? Finally, would this category not exclude, and otherize, the non-religious and non-Muslim from membership in Muslim majority nations? While such questions address legitimate concerns, I would like to suggest that 'Muslim societies' can serve as a useful analytical category.

The terms 'Islamic world' or 'Islamic society', used in singular abstract forms, may indeed imply that Islam is the central factor that shapes the dynamics of these societies. 'Islamic society' becomes a totalizing notion which is constructed by others to describe Muslims and their cultures. It tells us the way others imagine how Muslims are and even how they should be. This worldview has partly been perpetuated by some Muslims such as Islamists, who likewise construct a unitary Islamic landscape.

In contrast, 'Muslim societies', understood as plural and concrete entities, allow a self-conscious Muslim majority to define their own reality in an inevitably contested, differentiated and dynamic fashion. Here the emphasis is not on Islam, but Muslims as agents of their societies and cultures, even if not of their own making. And 'culture' is perceived not as static codes and conducts but as processes, always changing, flexible and contested. These are the societies in which aspects of Islam, interpreted and adopted in diverse manners, have influenced some domains of private and public life—including the realms of morality, family relations, gender dynamics, law, and sometimes (but not always) politics and the state. 'Muslim communities' outside Muslim-majority countries contain perhaps a more complex social dynamic, since Muslims are compelled to negotiate their identities within the prevailing non-Islamic legal and normative structures. What make them 'Muslim communities' are the diverse 'Muslim identities' the members hold.

Yet 'Muslim societies' are never monolithic as such, never religious by definition, nor are their cultures simply reducible to mere religion. Indeed, national cultures, historical experiences and political trajectories have often produced different cultures of Islam or religious perceptions and practices across different Muslim nations. In this sense, each 'Muslim' (majority) country is comprised of an ensemble of people with various degrees of religious affiliations ranging from political Islamists, actively pious, ordinarily religious, seculars or non-Muslim minorities. Indeed, the degrees of religious affiliation among these groups may vary at different historical conjunctures.

The commonality and differentiation embedded in the category of 'Muslim societies' allow for drawing fruitful parallels, and conducting comparative studies across both time and space, as well as between Muslim and non-Muslim societies. For the relentless process of globalization, while it may accentuate differences, also produces similar structures and processes between nations, so that social phenomena in Latin America, for example, may find parallels in Asia. Equally, many common features relating to social structures, consumer cultures and commoditification can be traced between Muslim and non-Muslim societies. Such comparative exercises can greatly enrich our understanding of the social, political and cultural dynamics in different parts of the world.

Some might argue that the fluidity and differentiation embedded in the category 'Muslim societies' could diminish its intended analytical purpose. This might be a valid argument if we assume that comparable categories such as the Middle East, Europe and Latin America enjoy the social, cultural or economic cohesion that is desired, imagined, or intended. But obviously they do not. The latter also represent heterogeneous realities. Of course, the category 'Muslim societies' does not represent a bounded geographic 'area' as in Middle East or East Asia, for the obvious reason that some 59 Muslim majority countries with one billion Muslims are dispersed in pockets of lands that stretch from parts of southern Europe throughout Asia and Africa. But like the 'Middle East', 'South Asia' or Europe, 'Muslim societies' are also internally diverse in terms of languages, national cultures, peoples' religious commitments and economic capacities. The point is not that these categorical 'areas' or regions are not internally varied, but rather that the common concerns shared within these regions are perhaps larger than those shared between them and other regions or areas. While there might be differentiation within Latin America, it is surely less so than the variety one may find between Latin American and, say, Asia. The same goes for the category 'Muslim societies'. The latter holds enough coherence to allow us to pose interesting analytical questions. To what extent, for instance, does Islam play a role in constructing people's identities?

PHOTO: RANDA SHAATH, 2003

Asef Bayat is the ISIM Academic Director and ISIM Chair at Leiden University

An area of study devoted to 'Muslim societies' may enjoy two advantages over conventional area studies. First, area studies have traditionally been associated with western foreign policy interests. The category of 'Muslim societies', however, permits these societies to define and characterize themselves, even if in a contested fashion. Secondly, in academia area studies are counterposed to 'disciplinary' orientations. I am hoping that 'Muslim societies' may offer a fertile scholarly 'field' in which a productive tension between the comparative advantages of area studies and disciplinary frameworks can generate both an empirically rich and theoretically innovative research outcome. The study of 'Muslim societies' becomes a plausible field to interrogate such themes as 'Muslim cultural politics', 'religion and the public sphere', 'production of Islamic knowledge', 'socio-religious movements', or 'religion, society and violence'. Scholarly endeavors of this nature not only help us address crucial empirical questions, they also assist us to contribute to theoretical debates on, for instance, 'public sphere', 'production of knowledge', 'violence', 'cultural politics and representation', 'religion and politics' or 'social movements and social change'. The study of contemporary 'Muslim societies' is, therefore, distinct from the traditional field of 'Islamic studies' which has developed its own particular focus and methodology.

I am grateful to my ISIM colleagues, Martin van Bruinessen, Dick Douwes, Annelies Moors and Abdulkader Tayob for their insightful comments.

Shirin Ebadi
Transcender of Divisive Boundaries

NAZANIN SHAHROKNI

The 2003 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi, signifying the first Muslim woman to receive a Nobel Prize. The international recognition bestowed on Ebadi has re-invigorated the fight for human rights and democracy in Iran and elsewhere. It has also provided a much welcome change in the international image of 'Muslim woman' as victim of tradition to active agent of social and political change.

Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer and human rights activist, was little known outside Iran before being awarded the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize on the 10th of October. Inside her country, however, she is widely recognized for her work around issues of social justice and human rights. As an academic she has written several books[1] and journal articles on human rights in general, and on the rights of children, women and refugees in particular. She is also widely regarded as a civil society activist and was a founding member of the NGO, *Association for Support of Children's Rights in Iran*. As a lawyer Ebadi has been involved in numerous cases related to the violation of children's and women's rights. Her most notorious case involved an eight-year-old girl believed to have been abused and killed by her father and stepmother and led to the revision of the Iranian Child Custody law. She also worked on various political cases relating to a series of 1998 murders of secular intellectuals, and on the case of a student who was killed during student uprisings following raids on dormitories at Tehran University by paramilitary and vigilante groups in July 1999. Her efforts in publicizing those behind the raids on dormitories led to her and her colleague's arrest and imprisonment on charges of forging evidence and spreading lies in June 2000.

The international recognition bestowed on Ebadi has re-invigorated the fight for human rights and democracy in Iran. Since her Nobel Prize was announced activists have convened numerous meetings of every size to discuss 'the next step' towards creating a more open society. Awarding the Peace Prize to this Iranian woman lawyer has implications for human right activists far beyond the borders of Iran.

Being Muslim

In its October announcement, the Nobel Committee expressed pleasure in awarding the Nobel Peace Prize 'to a woman who is part of the Muslim world'. In almost all her interviews Ebadi has underscored her Muslim identity and emphasized that 'you can be Muslim and support democracy'. The fact that the Peace Prize has gone to a Muslim woman, and the fact that Ebadi identifies herself as a Muslim even though she does not don the veil, is highly significant. Firstly, the monolithic image of Muslim women, despite reams of postcolonial writings to the contrary, is, at least momentarily, cracked. Notwithstanding occasional exceptions, 'Western' mass media has continued to portray Muslim women as passive, oppressed and trapped within rigid discriminatory structures assumed to be intrinsic to Islam. Muslim women are largely conceived of as powerless, choice-less victims, who, in order to be emancipated from their painful shackles, need help from a savior—usually in the form of a non-Muslim westerner.[2] By awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to a Muslim woman from the Muslim world, in acknowledgement of her efforts to promote democracy and the rights of women and children in Iran, the world is presented with a new, high profile image of a 'Muslim woman' as an agent of change rather than as a victim of tradition.

> . . . having secular political orientations does not imply hostility towards religion . . .

Yet Ebadi's unveiled appearance at her Paris press conference in conjunction with her own emphasis on her Muslim identity has left many perplexed and asking: 'What kind of a Muslim is she, if not wearing the veil?' In this sense, Ebadi has unsettled the familiar assumption of a unified, fixed, and, at least in the case of Iran, state-defined religious identity. Her brief appearance and statement subtly implied that religious identity is a social construction, and that every member of the community has the right to participate in its definition. She is, therefore, pushing for a more inclusive and pluralistic definition of what it means to be Muslim and implying that the definition of religious identity cannot be monopolized by a government or the religious establishment. The significance of her action was not lost on conservatives in Iran who were, and continue to be, infuriated that Ebadi claimed to be Muslim but did not wear a veil.

Secular orientations

It is not only conservatives who disapprove of Ebadi's approach, for many secular Iranians in and outside Iran have also been annoyed and disappointed by her emphasis on her Muslim identity. Indeed, Ebadi is well known as a secular activist. Against the odds she has defended many secular writers and intellectuals prosecuted for their views and has been an active member of the *Iranian Writers Union* which is well known for its secular orientations. She supports the separation of religion from the state and believes that in a democracy the legitimacy of political power is not sanctioned by sacred texts or official religious beliefs, but by popular consensus. With regard to Iran she has said, 'If the present regime does not reform and evolve into one that reflects the will of the people, it is going to fail, even if it adopts a secularist posture.'[3] However, recognizing the essential role of Islam in Iranian culture and daily life, she tries to promote democratic interpretations of Islam and has said, 'there is no contradiction between fundamentals of Islam and ideals of democracy and human rights.'[4] Ebadi realizes that having secular political orientations does not imply hostility towards religion or the displacement of religious identity from the public sphere. Her short statement speaks volumes in terms of the debates among all those Muslims who wish to legitimize the identity of secular Muslims, just as secular Jews and Christians are recognized. This is important in a context where proponents of political Islam, particularly since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, have redefined the popular meaning of secularism to mean 'anti-religion'. Shirin Ebadi transcends the reductionist dichotomy of religious verses secular; she has breached some of the barriers separating different forces and voices for democracy and freedom of thought. Her nuanced stance has greatly annoyed conservative state officials who were taken aback by the entire situation surrounding Ebadi's Nobel Prize.

Women in Iran

The Western media frequently portrays Iranian women as victims of fathers' strict controls, husbands' harsh treatments and the state's restrictive laws. Rarely do the complexities of gender ideology in Iran get covered. Indeed, being a woman in Iran can be challenging and difficult, however this is only one aspect of an Iranian woman's life. The fate

of Zahra Kazemi, the Iranian-Canadian journalist murdered while in custody, of Afsaneh Noroozi, sentenced to death for killing the man who attempted to rape her, and of thousands of others trapped within the undemocratic and inhumane threads that are part of the fabric of Iranian society are real. But the untold stories of all those women who are agents of change are also real. Shahla Sherkat, editor of the monthly Iranian feminist magazine *Zanan*, Samira Makhmalbaf, a filmmaker who has won numerous international prizes, Elaheh Koolaei, a female MP pushing for bills benefiting women and supporting democratic reform, represent only a few of a large number of culturally, socially and politically engaged women. These stories do not belong solely to well-educated, middle class women. There are many women from less-privileged, more traditional segments of society, even in the rural areas, whose names are not known but who have breached the seemingly impassable through enormous will, determination and innovation.

Zinat Daryaei who is from an isolated village in the south and who obtained only a few years of education, became a health worker and community reformer.[5] Farkhondeh Gohari who lives in a low-income neighborhood in the south of Tehran turned her small hairdressing room into a library for neighborhood women. Sedigheh Sedighi, an elected councilor in a small town, has established a sewing workshop to create jobs for local women and turned her old family home into a girls' elementary school. Such women and many like them also represent the reality of 'being a woman in Iran', yet they are consistently ignored not only by the international community and the media, but also by their own government.

The awarding of the Peace Prize to an Iranian woman has forced the media to recognize that 'being a woman in Iran' is complex and to pay attention to the role of girls and women in public life.[6] Moreover, the fact that Shirin Ebadi is a civil-society activist who has lived her life among 'ordinary' people has another significant impact. As a grass-roots activist she has the ability to connect the different and sometimes contradictory experiences of Iranian women.

Since her Nobel, Ebadi has been attending meetings organized by groups as diverse as *The Iranian Bar Association*, student organizations, the Parliamentary women's caucus, NGOs, local government authorities and the *Iranian Artists Association*. She continues to transcend governmental verses nongovernmental, professional verses nonprofessional and traditional verses modern divides. Her capacity to move between seemingly opposing arenas is helping to form networks which can serve to facilitate the creation and reconstitution of public spaces where diverse groups will be able to interact and engage in meaningful dialogue. Ultimately, this can promote inter-group tolerance and understanding which facilitate a shift from less-than-productive counter-state politics to constructive, practical strategies for supporting the non-violent transition to democracy.

By awarding the Peace Prize to Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel committee has promoted a broader, more inclusive definition of peace-building which includes the recognition of and respect for human rights; the use of non-violent means for resolving political and social disputes; and the substitution of competition with cooperation to promote inter-group tolerance and mutual understanding.

Nazanin Shahrokni is an independent researcher and a journalist working closely with Zanan (a monthly feminist magazine in Iran). She is currently at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, collaborating with Dr. Homa Hoodfar on 'Women and Electoral Politics in the Middle East'.
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Notes

1. Two of Ebadi's books available in English are: *The Rights of the Child, A Study of Legal Aspects of Children's Rights in Iran* (Tehran, 1994 with the support of UNICEF); and *History and Documentation of Human Rights in Iran* (New York, 2000).
2. Lila-Abu-Lughod, 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others', *American Anthropologist*,104(3): (2002) 783–790.
3. Interview with *Gulf News* on Oct. 30, 2003.
4. Ibid.
5. For a detailed discussion see, Nazanin Shahrokni, 'Baa Zinat Dar Salakh', *Zanan*, September 1999 (55) and Homa Hoodfar, 'Volunteer health workers in Iran as social activists: Can 'governmental non-governmental organizations' be agents of democratization?', *WLUML Occasional Paper*, No. 10, December 1998.
6. For example see: *The Economist*, 18 October 2003 and *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 October 2003.

The World Congress of **Philosophy and Islamic Thought**

IBRAHIM KALIN

The 21st World Congress of Philosophy was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 10-17 August 2003 and inaugurated by Turkish President Ahmed Necdet Sezer. An impressive number of philosophers, social scientists and scholars came together from about eighty different countries. The main theme of this year's congress was 'Philosophy Facing World Problems'. Officially founded in 1948, The World Congress of Philosophy which organizes a general meeting every five years, is the largest association of philosophy in the world and has an honored history of over a century.

For the first time in its history the World Congress of Philosophy met in a Muslim majority country. The meeting venue was more than symbolic for it confirmed philosophy's potential to be a universal discourse. Similarly, the choice of this year's theme, 'Philosophy Facing World Problems', points to the desire and potential of philosophy to engage in urgent problems of the world. When analysed carefully, however, neither of these claims can be said to have been realized.

At face value the fact that the Congress's first meeting of the 21st century was held in the Islamic world is more than symbolic. On one hand, it confirms philosophy's appeal as a potential universal discourse. On the other hand, the choice of world problems as this year's theme points to its desire to represent a discourse that has something to say about urgent problems of the world. When analysed carefully, however, neither of these claims can be said to have been realized at the Congress The world problems highlighted at the Congress included poverty, immigration, civil war, terrorism, exploitation of labor, environment, human rights, democratization, civil liberties, multiculturalism and the consequences of globalization. Various analyses were offered from different points of view. Participants called for a collective and global effort to confront world problems and condemned the rise of American unilateralism and hegemonic power relations. There was a palpable sense of anti-American (or rather anti-Bush) sentiment at the Congress. Although at times this sentiment verged on simplistic reductionism whereby most of the present evils of the world were attributed to American power, the speakers were also critical of the deeper causes of world problems faced by both Western and non-Western societies.

The vacuum created by the devastating attack of postmodernism, now waning as a philosophical vogue, forced practitioners of all schools of thought to question their own legitimacy.

Philosophy facing its own legitimacy crisis

Contemporary philosophy's attempt to address world problems can be seen as a response to the legitimacy crisis of modern thought. The vacuum created by the devastating attack of postmodernism, now waning as a philosophical vogue, forced practitioners of all schools of thought to question their own legitimacy. Modern thought has been further rendered dysfunctional and practically meaningless by the uncontrollable power of capitalism, transnational corporations, globalization, hegemonic power politics, genetic engineering, consumerism, the *de facto* culture of nihilism, and the trivialization of all thinking and culture. Philosophy, in the broad sense of the term with a moral vision, has had very little impact on these developments. As many philosophers have admitted, there is no indication that the situation will change in the foreseeable future. In some important ways the World Congress of Philosophy responded to this crisis in philosophy by calling on philosophers to address world problems by both thinking about, *and* taking moral positions on them.

This sincere and earnest desire to address world problems in a global context, however, was marred by the lack of analyses and perspectives that could lead to a global ethics in confronting today's problems. Putting aside sessions on specific topics in philosophy and critical theory, the overwhelming majority of discussions on political issues did not go beyond the East-West and South-North dichotomies. Nor were there any perspectives that interpreted the world from a non-European or non-American point of view. Blaming the West for the misdeeds of the modern world and then taking a condescending approach towards non-Western societies, though well intended, simply reinforces the conception of the world as revolving around a center, i.e. Europe and the United States.

Constructing the world from a non-Western perspective that will allow multiple actors to play a central role in the current system of relations is a real challenge for the oft-repeated multiculturalism of our day. Frankly, one would have hoped that someone would have at least raised this issue at the Congress, but no one did. Perhaps one major reason for this absence is that despite some earnest efforts, the concept of multiculturalism is still used in a primarily Western context. In Europe 'multiculturalism' refers primarily to a mode of religious and cultural coexistence confined to the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the case of the US, it is a matter of internal politics with no real and concrete applications outside *Pax Americana*. In the final analysis, the central actors of world affairs in both the political and intellectual senses of the term are relegated to Europe and the US. Inevitably, this leads to the widespread suspicion that multiculturalism, when it is invoked at all, is an intra-Western rather than inter-cultural concept.

The meaning of multiculturalism

Last May Habermas and Derrida, the two most prominent and celebrated contemporary European philosophers, published a letter condemning American unilateralism and the invasion of Iraq. The letter authored by Habermas and signed by Derrida takes the Iraq issue as

the surfacing of a deeper problem in world affairs. At face value the problem is the limitless ambition of American neo-conservatism and its relentless efforts to subdue any alternative power, be it political, economic, or cultural. But the deeper problem, Habermas and Derrida tell us, is the waning of European civilization as we know it. To counter irresponsible American pragmatism, the philosophers urge Europeans to go back to the ideals of the Enlightenment that gave Europe its present identity and self-consciousness and made it a 'universal system of culture'. What is remarkable about this proposal is that it is not only based on a concept of Europe that is fixed in space and time, but also ignores the present realities of multiculturalism in Europe. In drawing out a roadmap for the future of Europe the two philosophers say nothing about the presence of non-European and primarily Muslim minorities in Europe's midst. There is no indication that Habermas and Derrida want to see Europe as a truly multicultural entity beyond the limits of Judeo-Christian tradition on the one hand, and secular European culture, on the other.

At the Congress, many pointed to the fact that multiple actors are shaping world culture and politics, but we are yet to see a full-fledged analysis that is both cogent and compelling. The Congress represented a unique opportunity for philosophers to develop a discourse that goes beyond pro or anti-Americanism to a context of genuine multiculturalism. The fact that the Congress convened in a Muslim city that boasts of being a meeting place of East and West, tradition and modernity, old and new, did not help the cause because neither European nor American philosophers demonstrated substantial knowledge about the Islamic world. Those participants from the Islamic world had an annoyingly insignificant presence and didn't make their voices heard on a larger scale.

In spite of calls for multiculturalism right and left, the question remains: Is Western philosophy ready to open itself up to a dialogue with non-Western ways of thinking?

So, where is Islamic philosophy?

The virtual absence of Islamic thought at the Congress, made all the more ironic since it was being held for the first time in a Muslim country, was a missed opportunity. There are many reasons why this turned out to be the case, the most notable pertaining to the present state of Islamic philosophy and its study in modern academia. The first problem is related to the question of multiculturalism I referred to above. In spite of many sincere attempts on the part of both Western and non-Western philosophers, the word 'philosophy' by itself still refers to Western philosophy. When we use the term in the context of other traditions, we have to say 'Islamic', 'African', or 'Chinese' philosophy. From a pedagogical point of view, there is nothing wrong with this. But the deeper problem is the hegemony of Western philosophical thought whereby all other philosophical traditions are assessed in relation to, or separation from it. In spite of calls for multiculturalism right and left, the question remains: Is Western philosophy ready to open itself up to a dialogue with non-Western ways of thinking?

The second problem, and I believe this is even more important than the first, has to do with the way Islamic philosophy is studied today. From its inception in Western academia, Islamic philosophy was always studied by historians and philologists as part of Islamic-Near Eastern studies. Classical Orientalism never produced a work on Islamic philosophy or *kalam* for that matter that can claim to be a philosophical work on its own. The issues were always of a historical nature such as the extent to which Islamic philosophy was indebted to Greek philosophy or how Islamic thought came about as a result of translations from Greek. The situation has not changed since then. Islamic philosophy is still studied by scholars who come primarily from history or Middle Eastern studies background rather than philosophy. Courses on Islamic philosophy are offered not in mainstream philosophy departments but in either religious studies or Near Eastern and/or Middle East studies departments. One rarely sees scholars of Islamic philosophy at any of the major philosophical conventions in the US and other places. These obvious facts make the study of Islamic philosophy a parochial enterprise insofar as philosophical thought is concerned. Putting aside the few exceptions to the rule, those who study Western philosophy have no interest in Islamic philosophy because it is mere intellectual history, and those who study Islamic philosophy study it as part of Islamic cultural history because they have no training in philosophy.

From a comparative standpoint we have to ask ourselves if Islamic philosophy has any place in the global philosophical scene today. Furthermore, we have to ask if Islamic philosophers, both intellectuals and professional scholars, are prepared to take Islamic philosophy beyond classrooms and academic meetings. It will be too simplistic to claim that since Islamic philosophy is no longer a living tradition it has to be studied as history, and its relevance, or lack thereof for modern thought, has no bearings on its academic study. There is nothing wrong with studying an intellectual tradition from a historical and cultural point of view. The problem arises when that tradition is construed as only history. This is especially the case in philosophy where pure historical analysis, no matter how successful it is, is not always the best aid to understand a particular philosophical problem. Compared with Hindu or Buddhist philosophy, there is less and less interaction between Islamic and Western philosophy and I believe the current study of Islamic philosophy as a historico-philological field contributes to this problem.

On the other hand, the perception of Western and Islamic philosophy in Muslim countries is saddled with even more acute problems. In Turkey, for instance, Islamic philosophy is studied only at divinity schools, the reasons given for this are clearly more ideological than pedagogical. Those who study Western philosophy in Turkey and other Muslim countries believe that they study philosophy per se, and that all other philosophical traditions are either divergences from, or steps towards, modern European philosophy. Turkish President Sezer expressed this deep-rooted Euro-centrism present even in Muslim majority countries in his opening speech when he proclaimed, to the astonishment of hundreds of philosophers from different corners of the world, that 'philosophy must be modern and secular' as if one can give such a law-like definition of philosophy. Turkey's official state ideology still underlies much of how one studies both Western and Islamic philosophy in Turkey today. Paradoxically, this narrow definition of philosophy as an ideology of secularism excludes not only non-Western ways of thinking but also a good part of Western philosophical tradition. Needless to say, this was very much reflected at the various sessions of the Congress.

It will be a historic moment when Western philosophers open themselves up to other modes of thinking and especially to Islamic philosophy that shares a long history with Western philosophy. The absence of such a possibility at the present time makes the concept of 'world philosophy' a euphemism for 'European' philosophy. In a similar way, the scholars of Islamic philosophy are responsible for taking Islamic philosophy beyond a mere study of intellectual history. This will require training a new generation of philosopher-scholars in both Western academia and the Muslim world. Let us hope that the future conventions of the World Congress of Philosophy will create more impetus for expanding the meaning and relevance of philosophy in the world today.

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Notes

1. The Congress program can be obtained from the Congress website at http://www.wcp2003.org
2. For the letter in German, see *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, May 31, 2003.

Accommodating Muslims in Europe
Opportunities for Minority *Fiqh*[1]

MALEIHA MALIK

The presence of large number of Muslims in Western Europe in the last thirty years has given rise to considerable challenges for Islamic law and Western legal systems. Can the legal rules and institutions of Islamic law be applied to contemporary Western Europe where Muslims are a minority? How should liberal democracies accommodate Muslims who continue to grant authority to Islamic law in their daily lives and social practices? Do the two sources of legal norms conflict, and if so can this conflict be resolved or managed? The satisfactory resolution of these issues depends on developments in a system of Islamic law for Muslim minorities which is often termed minority *fiqh* (*fiqh al-aqalliyat*). It is also dependant on getting the general theory of Islamic law right.

The research agenda for Islamic law has been best encapsulated by Muhammad Khalid Masud: 'In order to gain greater understanding of the working of law in Islam, a twofold effort is necessary. On the one hand, we must examine how Muslim jurists tried to develop a balance between legal and social norms, and how they rooted the normative basis of *shari'a* in social practices. On the other hand, we need to recognize the significance of the public space for the social construction of Islamic law' (1991: 14). The two issues concerning 'public' space and the balance between 'legal' and 'social' norms are related in complex ways and provide an ideal point of entry to a discussion on the development of minority *fiqh* in contemporary Europe.

Public space

The contemporary motivation for making some public space available for the construction, recognition and application of Islamic law for European Muslims lies in the principle that European liberal democracies must be tolerant of minorities. Historically, this principle of tolerance took the form of allowing minorities individual political rights that ensured them a protected private space within which they were free to choose their own social practices. For example, Muslims are free to practice their religion in private. This principle was subsequently given greater force by the non-discrimination principle which ensured that as well as the right to act as they wanted in private, it was important to accommodate minorities, even if in a limited way, in key areas such as employment and education. In some countries there are arrangements which prevent discrimination against Muslim women who wear a headscarf or which allow Muslims to pray and fast whilst at work or at university. Finally, and most recently, the principle of tolerance of minorities has taken the form of multiculturalism which is the idea that minority cultures and practices should be accommodated within the public sphere. Muslims may, for example, be invited to participate in public ceremonies or the State may officially recognize some Islamic religious festivals.

Balancing legal and social norms

Individual member states of the European Union (EU) have responded in different ways to diverse cultural and religious minorities. The UK and the Netherlands, for example, have opted for modest multicultural policies which seek to accommodate (where possible) the most pressing needs of religious minorities such as Muslims. Other legal systems have responded with more assimilationist measures. Space exists for the application of Islamic law in the private sphere such as in realms of family and inheritance. The European constitution (which is in draft form and includes a Charter of Fundamental Rights), which applies to all EU member states, addresses many of these issues. More significantly, there is now also relevant EU 'hard law' including the Race Directive (2000/43/EC) which ensures non-discrimination on the grounds of race in areas such as employment and the provision of private and social goods. The Framework Directive (2000/78/EC) requires non-discrimination on the grounds of religion in employment and training. Both provisions provide some resources and will generate legal rules that recognize and accommodate some of the key religious practices of individual Muslims.

The term 'legal norms' carries different meaning when used in different contexts. First, legal norms refer to the norms of the domestic or EU legal system, such as rules that require the prohibition of religious discrimination in employment. Second, legal norms refer to the rules of Islamic law or minority *fiqh* that individual Muslims treat as authoritative. It is worth noting that issues about the relationship between legal and social norms arise at both levels. An analysis of whether there has been direct or indirect discrimination against Muslims raises a number of issues about the social practices of Muslims. Questions are likely to arise about social practices such as time off for prayers, wearing headscarves in the workplace and in public places, provision of facilities to allow Muslims to break their fast, and whether a beard is obligatory.[2] Muslims will look to Islamic legal rules such as minority *fiqh* as a guide to their religious practices. Those who interpret and apply legal norms (let us call them the 'Muslim community's legal institutions') will in turn be influenced by social norms that prevail within their community by their perception of the priorities and needs of individual Muslims at that time, and by the context in which they are being asked to interpret and apply Islamic legal rules. The two systems—the domestic and European institutions on the one hand, and the Muslim community institutions on the other, are likely to influence each other.

Professor Masud writes: ' […] in order to translate *shari'a* into a working law, even in the form of *fiqh*, it has to dig deep in social norms for its normative bases. Legal norms cannot be realized without their foundations in the social norms' (Masud 2001: 14). This insight is especially important in the context of minority *fiqh* in contemporary Europe where Islamic legal rules are dependant on social acceptance rather than enforcement through state authority or coercion. Local Muslim communities in Europe have and will need to construct imaginative ways to adapt themselves to the inter-face between Islamic legal rules and the majority legal system. Where there is no conflict between the two systems this encounter can be amicable and Islamic legal rules

may be comfortably accommodated. In Britain, for example, the double tax (stamp duty) has been eliminated for those who prefer Islamic mortgages. There are also well known examples of accommodation in areas such as family law. The new EU anti-discrimination legislation will facilitate the process of modest accommodation of Islamic legal rules within European States.

The inter-face between the two systems also provides Muslim communities with an opportunity. Professor Masud has noted: 'At the social level, slaves, women, and non-Muslims suffered most from the inner contradictions between *shari'a* ideals and social norms in Muslim cultures. The ideal of the *shari'a* called for freedom, equality, and justice, but social stratifications in Muslim societies on the basis of status, sex, and religion did not allow these ideals to be fulfilled' (ibid.: 6). The development of minority *fiqh* within a framework of European constitutional values which take freedom, tolerance and equality as their starting point may not be as problematic as some may imagine. It may provide a catalyst for re-discovering the ideals which underpin legal norms within the Islamic tradition.

Tackling conflicts

Not only national and European, but also the institutions of Muslim communities have good reason to avoid conflict between the different levels of social and legal norms. These conflicts are a substantial barrier to Muslim minorities identifying with domestic/EU legal and political institutions. The goal of overcoming the social exclusion of Muslims is a key issue for the majority and the minority. Conflict has the potential to cause harm to individuals and hinder the integration of Muslims into the economic, social and political mainstream in Europe. Ensuring greater access to economic and social goods is also a priority for Muslims who recognize that access to basic resources is a pre-requisite to moral and spiritual excellence. But what happens when there is a conflict? The spectre of a conflict between Islamic legal rules and the requirements of domestic /EU law raises the most profound challenges. The personal anguish of those who are unable to comply with their legal obligations as citizens and their obligations as members of a religious community should not be under-estimated. How should such conflicts be resolved?

First, if the main reason for providing 'public space' or recognition to Islamic law within European states is to facilitate the freedom and equality of minorities then this provides a useful guide for resolving conflicts. One way of resolving any conflict is to take the motivation for providing this 'public space' within which Islamic law can serve as the foundation for analysis. The reason that domestic/EU legal (and non-legal institutions) are interested in Islamic law is purely instrumental: it is part of their aim to ensure freedom, tolerance and equal treatment of a significant minority group within the European Union. This provides a realistic framework for negotiating the inter-face between domestic and EU institutions and the demands of European Muslims to be governed by minority *fiqh*. The principles of freedom and equality (whether in domestic or European constitutional documents) provide the absolute minimum level for protection. Any calls for the accommodation of Islamic legal norms in contemporary Europe must accept these principles as non-negotiable principles of European constitutional values. It may mean that in certain cases where the norms of Islamic law conflict with European values, individual Muslims will not be able to insist on the accommodation of their values. For example, Muslims cannot simultaneously rely on anti-discrimination law to advance their interests and at the same time argue against gender equality or core values such as freedom of expression.

Conflict between the values of European constitutionalism and the demands of the Muslim community needs to be tackled explicitly rather than ignored. Muslims need to undertake a debate within their own communities about their priorities: e.g. what legal rules must be accommodated and how should those rules be interpreted? Most challenging will be questions about how Muslims should react when faced with conflicts between their legal norms and the fundamental non-negotiable principles of domestic and EU law. Successful resolutions of these often intractable conflicts will be a painful process which requires compromise and political maturity. However, this is the inevitable price that Muslims must pay as they move away from social isolation and into participation in the mainstream of European societies. The debate needs to be broad and involve the full diversity of Muslims, some of whom (such as women) have been excluded or marginalized in decision-making. In addition, Muslims must become involved in public debate and mainstream political processes to articulate their demands. This means that they must enter into a much needed discussion with the majority about the exact terms of the their status as citizens in their countries and the European Union. If it is to be viable and stable, any process of accommodation or multiculturalism must pay attention not only to the needs of the minority but also to the views of the majority.

The public space provided by developments in the European Union for the construction of Islamic law may ensure greater coalescence between the social norms of European Muslims and BOTH (a) legal norms of the domestic/EU system; and (b) the legal norms of Islamic law/minority *fiqh*. This has substantial benefits for both systems. The EU is committed to freedom and equality for minorities, as represented in its constitutional values and anti-discrimination law. Accommodation of the key demands of Muslims through a recognition of some aspects of minority *fiqh* could ensure a greater coalescence between the experience of individual Muslims in their daily lives (where they are guided by Islamic legal rules) and their experience of majority normative legal and political institutions. The result may be a higher degree of willing co-operation and identification with these institutions.

If it is to be viable and stable, any process of accommodation or multiculturalism must pay attention not only to the needs of the minority but also to the views of the majority.

In this way domestic and European institutions can recognize Islamic legal norms as important because they provide freely chosen normative guidance in the lives of Muslim citizens. Muslim community institutions need to use this insight as the starting point for their own analysis. Muslims communities in Europe need to develop mechanisms for decision making that allow greater participation by the public and especially by those who have been previously marginalised in decision making. Specialists and scholars of Islam need to understand and respond to the social facts about the people who look to them for guidance—the 'here and now' of the lives of European Muslims.This may have the great benefit of ensuring that the authority of minority *fiqh* within Muslim communities derives from its acceptability to individual Muslims rather than the exercise of coercive power. The contemporary public space for developing minority *fiqh*—within the limits of European constitutionalism—provides European Muslims with some attractive opportunities.

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Notes

1. This paper is an extract from a paper presented at the seminar in honour of Professor Khaled Masud on Minority *Fiqh* at ISIM in Leiden, April 2003. I am grateful to Professor Masud and the participants in the seminar for their thoughtful comments.
2. For an example of the Code of Practice on Religious Discrimination, 'Religion or Belief and the Workplace', see http://www.acas.org.uk/publications/pdf/guide_religionB.pdf (accessed on 19 November 2003)

Settling Disputes in Upper Egypt

HANS CHR. KORSHOLM NIELSEN

Feuds remain a part of the social fabric in Upper Egypt and often get reduced in the press as merely the result of backward 'clan' systems. Yet a wide range of arbitration and reconciliation councils exists to deal with local disputes including 'blood feuds'. Even though the media may not report on their successes, councils frequently resolve conflicts and play a role in curtailing the escalation of feuds and violence. These councils underscore the importance of reconciliation and peaceful solutions, rather than violent ones, in Upper Egyptian culture and tradition.

On the 10th of August 2002, 22 men from the Hashanat family were killed in an ambush in a village in Upper Egypt, an incident which was widely reported in the local Arabic and English press. The attackers were allegedly members of the Abd al-Halim family who had been in a feud with the Hashanats for more than a decade. The feud started in 1990 at a weeding when two children, one from each family, got into a fight. That incident led to the killing by someone from the Halimi family of a member of the Hashanat family and was followed by two retaliatory killings: the first in 1995 of a Hashanati and the second in April 2002 of a Halimi. The cars that were ambushed on the fateful day of August 10th were carrying Hashanat men to a court session where two members of their family were on trial for the April 2002 murder.

The succession of events leading up to the above massacre represent an almost textbook depiction of a feud, though what is unusual is the scale of the last incident with the killing not of a single person, but of a large number of men from the same family. Journalists from the capital largely interpreted the event as the result of the backward 'clan' system which prevails in Upper Egypt. Yet what rarely gets attention is the important role played by a wide range of arbitration and reconciliation institutions in curtailing the escalation of feuds and violence.

Attempts to solve disputes and contain violence take place on a number of different levels. In daily life one may be sure that when a brawl occurs in public, whether in the marketplace or the lanes of a village, somebody will attempt to break it up. The intervention will most often take place before any serious blows are exchanged, or even as soon as the first shouted exchanges of foul language are heard. Oftentimes older men will try to calm down or separate the parties involved. Such spontaneous interventions are also common when disputes erupt between families or spouses; elders in particular often use their influence and authority to try to find a solution to the disagreement. In addition to these informal methods, there is a range of other and more formal ways of settling disputes.

Councils and arbitration

Reconciliation councils are widespread in the southernmost parts of Upper Egypt. These councils are known by different names including *majlis al-sulh* (reconciliation council), *majlis 'urfi* (customary council or a council that depends on tradition) and *majlis al-'arab* (Arab council). Their objectives are to reach an 'amicable settlement' (*sulh*) within the framework of 'tradition' (*'urf*), that is, an Arab-tribal or Bedouin tradition (*'arab*), rather than through interpretations of the *shari'a* or state law. These councils find solutions to disputes concerning land, water

The killer is paraded through the village with his burial shroud.

PHOTO: HANS CHR. KORSHOLM NIELSEN, 2002

PHOTO: HANS CHR. KORSHOLM NIELSEN, 2002

The killer and the brother of the killed embrace.

rights, inheritance and cases where fights or violent acts have reached a certain severity or caused injury to persons or property. Village leaders or other respected local elderly men who have knowledge of the community's traditions organize the councils which may convene up to several times a week. The elders invite and visit the disputing parties and make sure that the necessary documents are present during meetings. The councils have the authority to question the parties and witnesses, determine fines and write documents. Although the work of the arbitrators is done without payment, the councils incur expenses related to meetings and depend on villagers to financially support them. Meetings are most often held in a guesthouse (*khema*) which is either owned by one of the more well off families or by the tribes; owners of the guesthouses cover the expenses stemming from the events. Certain councils deal exclusively with disputes involving killings or 'blood feuds'.

The 'blood feud' councils

If a murder or accidental killing occurs, the accused is dealt with by the state judicial system and is tried and sentenced in the ordinary court. But after he has paid the penalty of his crime there is often a fear that the family of the victim shall demand the death of the accused or, in some cases, the death of one of his relatives. Therefore, both the local communities and the representatives of the official system attempt to contain the anger by trying to make the two families reconcile. The large councils dealing with killings and blood feuds are considered by many Upper Egyptians as the 'real' reconciliation councils, even though they convene as little as twice per year. The council may spend months or even years trying to negotiate a reconciliation between the families. Very few men have the authority and ability to deal in 'blood feud' arbitration, but those who do tend to be sheikhs. These councils receive much attention due, in part, to the fact that they deal with chilling stories of fights and feuds. Another reason for their notoriety is that thousands of spectators, visiting politicians and religious dignitaries gather to witness families being reconciled.

An event of this magnitude has to be arranged with a strict succession of events: When the spectators and dignitaries have gathered in a large tent pitched by the villagers, the leading figures of the councils will leave the tent in order to fetch the murderer who is usually placed in a house in the village. After having reached the house where the murderer is waiting, he is handed his burial shroud (*kafn*) and paraded through the village to the tent where he is then escorted to a place in the front which is kept free of chairs and spectators. The sheikh in charge of the reconciliation will call out that the murderer is present, at which time he arrives carrying his burial shroud. It is now time for the family of the victim to come out and obtain their right (*haqq*): the life of the murderer. At this moment the family, which has been waiting outside the tent, enters and walks in the direction of the murderer. This is usually the first time the family and the murderer meet after the killing, therefore the situation is very tense. The sheikh repeats that it is time for the family to take its right, but fortunately, instead of demanding a life for a life, the two parties embrace. This central moment is followed by speeches from the dignitaries who have been seated at a table at the front of the tent. They thank those having arranged the truce and the reconciliation and those who have been in charge of all the practical arrangements (the villagers) and in general terms about how both religion and tradition support the idea of reconciling and avoiding bloodshed. Other sheikhs will recite Qur'an and in the end all visitors are invited to enjoy lunch with the people who have been in charge of arranging the event. Lunch is served for up to 500 people at the time, or in some cases around in the village's many guesthouses where each larger house or tribal section arranges the lunch.

Councils in Upper Egypt garner great prestige and spend an enormous amount of time and effort to resolve disputes. Unfortunately, the cases which tend to get the most publicity are those in which the councils fail. Yet it is essential to point out that these meetings are much more than a public event in which two families are being reconciled; they are meetings which underscore the importance of reconciliation and peaceful, rather than violent, solutions in Upper Egyptian culture and tradition.

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Women's Portable Habitats

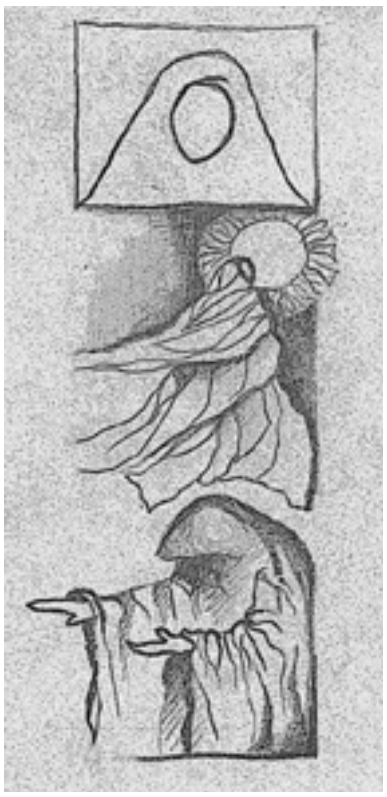
Z. PAMELA KARIMI

Academic studies increasingly examine the relationship between the social organization of space, gender and sexuality in contemporary Muslim societies. Such studies tend to consider historical, socio-political and religious notions associated with the veil, or *chador*, as it is traditionally known in Iran. Whether bound up with the concept of male/female spatial binaries or closely involved with aspects of space that create visual and physical control, studies rarely deal with the veil as an entity that can be understood as a secondary space, or a 'habitat' which clinches women's bodies in public.

Since the development of new institutions in the late Enlightenment, the private/public spatial dichotomy in the West has broken down; as a result, public and private spaces in Western and Westernized cities have acquired similar spatial characteristics and have even become enmeshed. The prevalent dialectic of private and public allows people to define themselves simultaneously as individuals and as public citizens. In contrast, in some contemporary Muslim societies the division of public/private space is still arguably one of the most important features of spatiality and often centers on the female body.

The veil as 'habitat'

Architects usually think of 'habitat' as a manmade space or natural environment occupied by a person or a group. A habitat can, however, also refer to a non-architectural entity, such as clothing and veiling. Such entities are directly related to our bodily acts, habits and even ethics. Rosalyn Diprose maintains that the term 'ethics' derives from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning dwelling or habitat. Dwelling is both a noun (a place in which one resides) and a verb (the practice of dwelling). Dwelling is both a habitat and a habitual way of life. This way of life, ethos, or set of habits determines our character (Diprose 1994: 19). In both figurative and literal realms, Diprose's etymological analysis suggests that an understanding of a habitual way of life centers on a constitutive relation between one's habitat and one's embodied nature. This notion identifies the body as the locus of one's ethos where the body is constituted by a relation to its habitat.



Types of images of the female body that appear in typical Iranian women's journals by Z. Pamela Karimi, 2003.

In Iranian cultural contexts some connections exist between conceptions of spatiality and the *chador*. Applying Diprose's analysis to the relationship between Iranian women's habitats, especially in public, reveals how women remain in a secluded space behind the veil. Moreover, women's wrapped bodies—like architectural entities—influence the image of the environment. Indeed, women's bodies have always been central in Iranian political discourse and in the construction of public space. Soon after Reza Shah came to power in the beginning of the twentieth century, he embarked on a quest to modernize the image of Iranian cities by ordering that the streets be rid of the veil which was presumably a sign of backwardness.

In 1983 women were again obligatorily re-veiled, creating a strong Islamic image for Iran. In post-revolutionary Iranian political thought, the distinction between the public and the private spheres has served both to confine women to typically female spheres of activity like housework and to plunge them into the public realm. Despite being allowed in public, women are secluded from the outside world as their bodies are wrapped in the *chador*. The *chador* works like a space for seclusion of the bodily appearance in the eyes of others. The *chador*, thus, functions first as a portable habitat (reflecting the true meaning of *chador*, 'tent'), reduced in size to the bulk of a woman's body. It also works as a stage set for the audience (indicating a secondary meaning of *chador,* 'screen'). Janet Abu-Lughod points out that the rules governing gendered spaces in Islam have traditionally established not only *physically* distinctive regions, but also *visually* distinctive regions. This idea has a long history in the discourse of Islamic architecture. Islamic law has even regulated the placement of windows, the heights of adjacent buildings and the mutual responsibilities of neighbors toward one another to guard visual privacy (Abu-Lughod 1987: 167). The visual features of spatial settings in Islamic architecture are, thus, as important as functional aspects. The notions of visual privacy, as imposed on women's bodies in countries like Iran and Algeria, however, departed from their traditional meanings and carried a decisive political stamp; they shifted from the historical stage to the level of political and institutional frameworks.

Images of women's veiled bodies

In Iran the image of veiled women protesting in mass demonstrations reinforces how images of wrapped bodies of women are mobilized to create a new identity for Iran. Women's veiled bodies appear also in cultural products such as illustrated journals. Contrary to traditional beliefs about Muslim women, women are indeed present in the public sphere. Post-revolutionary Iranian women are not associated solely with the private because they seem to be everywhere in the outside world and because, 'To be outside is to be in the image, to be seen, whether in the press photograph, a magazine, a movie, on television or at your window' (Colomina 1994: 7). Various right-wing women's journals have reproduced images of the faceless *chadori* women, making this image somewhat ubiquitous even now.

In the images from women's journals, women are not only faceless but paradoxically bodiless too (fig. 1). Female readers should assess their bodies according to the 'other,' bodiless, selfless, and ultimately mindless represented women. These images foreclose women from their own desires and prevent them from taking full possession of their own bodies. In contemporary Iranian artistic endeavors, a woman's body becomes, once again, an ideological emblem. In contrast to real life experiences, this emblem contradicts the post-revolutionary definition of women's corporeality and protests against the media's definitions of female corporality that puts women in a bodiless category.

We can find specific evidence in the post-revolutionary period of the interrelations of women's bodies and space in Tehran by looking at the first feminist-conscious enunciations that cautiously appeared in literature, cinema and conceptual art.

Besides political regulations regarding art exhibiting and filmmaking, there can be a great social pressure on women to omit details in order to disguise truths about themselves. They have been drilled in the rules of moral and Islamic discourse, thus internalizing censorship from the outside into a kind of self-policing from within. Talking openly about certain matters-'telling the truth about one's own experiences as a body,' as Virginia Woolf puts it—'is not nice' (Mairs 1995: xiii). The proscriptions placed on Iranian women's speech foster feelings of shame that lead women to trivialize their own experiences and prevent them from discovering the depths of their lives. Given the religious and social constraints on women's self-expression in public, exceptionally few women have been able to break the silence.

In the realm of literature, Shahrnoush Parsipour's novels are among the few feminist-conscious writings that appeared inside Iran in response to limitations imposed on women by state ideology (Talattof 1998: XV).[1] Parsipour looks at the interrelation of body and space from inside a chador! Perhaps she follows her own feelings to express psychological conditions that can apply to most Iranian women. Parsipour is, in fact, in search of a better correlation between space and women's corporeal existence. In her stories she describes the physical aspects of women's bodies, such as their virginity, their hair, their hands and their heads in detail. More importantly, she relates these physical aspects of the body to conceptions of spatiality. In her novel, *Women without Men*, 'The outside' appears merely as a desire in the minds of the female characters.

Conceptions of gendered spatial differentiation that traditionally employed boundaries and walls have, in fact, turned into implicit gendered spatial zones both in residential space and in various public venues of modern-day Iran. For example, women rarely sit in the center of the living room when men are present. Similarly, in public places women occupy the marginal zones. They choose the corner of the sidewalks closer to the walls or sheltered spots in public parks, restaurants and coffee shops. In mosques the women's section typically occupies a corner; when a space is unevenly divided, usually by a curtain, the larger section belongs to men regardless of the number of men and women who are present. In addition, women are forbidden access to some public places such as sports stadiums.

The film director Samira Makhmalbaf finds many ways to illustrate such problematic aspects of space in her movie *The Apple* (2001) as exemplified in a scene when a social worker says in reference to two girls, 'The problem is that they are girls. If they were boys they could have played outside. They could even climb people's walls…' (Dabashi 2001: 271). *The Apple* symbolically shows Iranian women's psychological exile from the public space.

In a somewhat similar manner, several young female Iranian artists such as Shadi Ghadirian[2] illustrate isolation of women from the public. The walls that surround them are many—the walls of their homes (even the walls of domestic objects found in the kitchen as depicted in Ghadirian's works), the walls of their veils, and the walls of their intrinsic fears (fig. 2). In the face of harsh sociopolitical conditions, Iranian artists have challenged many commonly held conceptions about veiling and the *chador*. The *chador* creates a secondary space whose boundaries can be folded and take shape in accordance with the body's movements. A *chador* usually has no resistance to transformation. As the body moves the *chador* transforms and transfigures. The *chador* in contemporary Iranian art becomes an emblem that is, in Marx's words, 'pregnant with its contradictions.' It creates a spatial boundary and folds down a buckled space for women's bodies; it can also metaphorically unfold to function as a stage set filled with contrapolitical messages for the audience. The female body transfigures as its habitat moves, and consequently the ethics of women's 'proper place' shift from a genuine level to the stage of doubt and interrogation.

It is perhaps no accident that the veiled female body is highlighted in various cinematic techniques and in artistic skills used by Iranian filmmakers and artists. Indeed, subtle ideological discourses in recent Iranian artistic endeavors are indissolubly tied to the female body. As such, these works replicate a political consciousness that is, in Trinh T minh-ha's words: 'as much the product of the eye, the finger, or the foot, as it is of the brain.' (Trinh T minh-ha 1989: 39)

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Chador, the Portable Habitat by Z. Pamela Karimi with M.Gonzales.

Notes

1. Parsipour is a prominent novelist who was imprisoned in Iran. She now lives in exile.
2. Shadi Ghadirian's photographs are available from the World Wide Web: http://www.kargah.com/ghadirian/index.php

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Banning Face Veiling
The Boundaries of Liberal Education

LINDA HERRERA &
ANNELIES MOORS

What constitutes liberal education and what are its boundaries? Such questions are perhaps best addressed in moments of tension, when liberal education is perceived as being under threat. The appearance of a small number of students wearing the face-veil or *niqab* at the American University in Cairo (AUC) a foreign private university located in Egypt, and Leiden University (LU) a state university in the Netherlands, has emerged as just such a threat. Despite significant differences in their institutional histories and in the national and legal contexts in which they operate, face covering was banned at AUC and LU. These bans were justified on remarkably similar grounds, at the core of which were arguments that face covering is inherently incompatible with principles and practices of liberal education. Yet the bans speak to issues far larger than pedagogy in liberal educational settings; they get to the core of critical issues relating to integration, liberalism, and the possibly uneasy place of Islam in it all.

The appearance of a small number of students wearing the face-veil or *niqab* at two unrelated universities, The American University in Cairo and Leiden University, led to official bans on face covering. The bans were justified on remarkably similar grounds, at the core of which were arguments that face covering is inherently incompatible with principles and practices of liberal education. Yet the prohibition of face veiling speaks to issues far larger than pedagogy in liberal educational settings; it gets to the core of critical issues relating to integration, liberalism and the possibly uneasy place of Islam in it all.

Comparative cases

During the fall term of 2000 a single Egyptian undergraduate student at AUC majoring in psychology arrived to campus wearing a *niqab*. In the course of 2002-3 two undergraduate students of Moroccan origin in the Department of Arabic, Persian and Turkish Languages and Cultures (TCIMO) at LU did the same. In both cases the appearance of a *niqab* wearer(s), or *munaqqaba(t)* resulted in bans on face veiling. The justifications for the bans were forceful and uncannily similar in both contexts. In the case of AUC senior members of the administration reasoned that the presence of a *munaqqaba* 'disturbed' classes, 'distracted' from group discussions, caused others 'uneasiness' and 'scared' staff and students. In January 2001 AUC issued a formal statement banning face veiling on the dual grounds that it presented security and identification problems and was inimical to liberal arts education since it inhibited 'dialogue and intellectual interaction with colleagues and with other members of the University community.' AUC further justified its ban by invoking a 1994 Ministry of Education order upheld by the Supreme Constitutional Court in 1996 that forbids the *niqab* at national Egyptian educational institutions. AUC's policy forbidding the *niqab* was subsequently included in applications for admission and in its formal regulations regarding student conduct.

At Leiden University a small number of senior faculty members objected to the presence of two *munaqqabat* in their classes on the familiar grounds that face covering 'impeded interactive communication in the classroom' and caused staff and other students to be 'uncomfortable.' They brought the matter to the Dean of the Faculty asking that the University take an official stand on face veiling. The Board of the University decided to officially ban face covering just days before the beginning of the academic year 2003-4. The decision came on the heels of a decision by the Equal Treatment Commission (case no. 2003-40) that ruled that an institution for vocational training and adult education in Amsterdam was entitled to prohibit wearing the *niqab* on the school's grounds.[1]

The subsequent LU ban was inserted in the highest level of university legislation and states, in short, that it is prohibited to wear clothing or attributes that cover the face in educational settings within the university and during examinations. The ban is justified on grounds that 'communication between student and teacher and amongst students (or teachers) is indispensable,' that 'facial expressions are essential in communication,' and that at examinations 'the identity of the person taking the exam needs to be beyond doubt'. The Leiden decision was followed by a preemptive face-covering ban at Utrecht University, since no students to date have worn the *niqab* there. After some struggle, and given the late date of the ban, the two *munaqqabat* students at LU were permitted to finish out the academic year, however they are not allowed to remain at the university until their anticipated graduation in two years time if they continue to wear the *niqab*.

Contrasting legal and political contexts

While the processes leading to face-covering bans at both AUC and LU were remarkably similar, the legal and political contexts in which the bans came about differed in some fundamental ways. In Egypt the legality of the ban was called into question and led to a spate of court cases in which two major questions were addressed: is the *niqab* a requirement in Islam?; and does the *niqab* pose risks to national security? The latter issue relates to regime concerns dating to the 1970s when intensive militant Islamic activities at national universities became widespread. Unlike AUC, a small, private liberal arts university for the elite, Egypt's national universities have been considered a potential security threat and subsequently been under heavy state security surveillance. The *niqab*, due to the fact that it conceals the wearer's identity, obstructs mechanisms of surveillance. In 1996 the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt overturned several lower courts rulings and upheld the *niqab* ban on the grounds that, as stated in Article II of the ruling, 'The *niqab* is not stipulated for under the preemptory provisions of the sharia. And it is in the interest of the society that individuals are identified, in order to control their conduct.'

Despite the court ruling, enforcing the *niqab* ban has proved exceedingly difficult. Scores of students in Egypt's national universities wear the *niqab*. At AUC the number of *munaqqabat* students has actually increased from one to five students since the ban took effect. Technically, the AUC students argue that they're complying with university regulations since they've removed the cloth face cover that makes up the *niqab*, however they replaced it with a piece of blank paper. When that was forbidden, they walked about campus covering their faces with their hands. Last spring the Vice-President for Student Affairs declared in exasperation, 'You are not allowed to put clothes, papers, hands, not even your finger on your face!' [2] Implementing the ban in an environment where even upper class AUC students are increasingly involved in, or sympathetic to, the tenets of the growing pietistic movement remains a challenge.

In the Netherlands legal argumentations around face veiling bans avoid specifically Islamic references, for this would be considered a case of direct discrimination on the basis of religion.[3] Hence, the term 'face coverings' is employed rather than '*niqab*'. Still, in the above mentioned Amsterdam case the Equal Treatment Commission has acknowledged that this phrasing constitutes a case of 'indirect discrimination,' as it disproportionately affects those who adhere to a particular religious conviction (interestingly, the Commission didn't raise the point that the ban can represent a form of gender discrimination as it disproportionately affects female students). Indirect discrimination is, however, allowed if there is an 'objective justification' which makes a ruling necessary. The Commission accepted the school's arguments that face covering impedes communication, that the whole school should be seen as a pedagogical setting (it should be noted that the girls agreed to remove the face cover in classroom settings), that it hinders identification which also poses a security risk and that it strongly diminishes the girls' chances for internships and future employment. This decision was exactly what the Board of Leiden University had been waiting for. However, whereas the Board had wanted to apply the Amsterdam order in its entirety, due to the intervention of student representatives at the University Council, the ban was modified to apply to classroom settings and exams only, rather than to all university buildings and grounds.

Integration and the face

The emphasis on open facial communication as a central value of liberal education, including the importance of student participation, needs some closer scrutiny. One central element in interactive liberal education is precisely that students are to be evaluated on the basis of their ability to partake in rational debate and on the basis of the quality of their arguments. It is then remarkable that students wearing the *niqab*—presumably just as potentially able as others to bring forward their arguments—are a priori disqualified by the sheer fact that their facial features are not visible. Such a perspective goes against the grain of Habermasian notions of the modern public sphere where only the force of arguments is supposed to count; it is rather grounded in long standing assumptions commonly employed in such fields as physiognomy that external appearance, including facial expressions, are a direct reflection of inner states of being. Simultaneously, a highly idealized notion of the workings of the educational regime is employed. Education is not only about the exchange of ideas and the communication of knowledge, it is also about producing certain notions of self and normative behaviors. It is precisely for these reasons that it was deemed necessary in both cases to ban the *niqab*.

The sense of unease and feelings of discomfort some staff members and university administrators at LU expressed when discussing the *niqab* does not, however, only refer to (anticipated) problems of communication. Something else seems to be at stake. They also referred to the idea that by wearing the *niqab* these girls 'set themselves apart' or more explicitly 'show that they do not accept *our* central values.' In other words, wearing *niqab* is not only seen as a challenge to the normative structure of liberal education, but simultaneously as a refusal to integrate in Dutch society.

We need then to place these discussions about the *niqab* within the framework of major shifts in the political landscape, the fall-out of 11 September 2001, of the right-wing anti-Muslim populism of Pim Fortuyn, and of a political climate in which derogatory statements about Arabs and Muslims appear increasingly to be more acceptable. These factors came to the fore very strongly in the public reactions to the Amsterdam case. Prominent politicians belonging to a variety of political parties all made statements against wearing the *niqab*; one even went so far as to argue that if the girls would succeed in their appeal, national legislation ought to be drafted that would forbid wearing *niqab* in all public spaces (in a phone-in radio programme, over 90% of the callers supported this proposal).

That the ban of the *niqab* needs to be seen within the framework of a changed political climate is strongly supported when comparing the ruling of the Equal Treatment Commission on the Amsterdam case in 2003 with a very similar case in 2000, also about regulations prohibiting face coverings at an educational institution. In the latter case (no. 2000-63) the Commission argued that there was no objective justification for indirect discrimination and explicitly stated in its ruling that

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Lecture Hall, Leiden University. Is the *niqab* compatible withliberal pedagogy?

wearing the *niqab* 'leaves sufficient possibilities for communication' (also non-verbal) and that the school should take into consideration that 'in a multicultural society as the Netherlands not all groups in society show their feelings through facial expression.' This is a very different position from that taken up in the abovementioned ruling of 2003. That wearing the *niqab* is seen as a refusal to adapt to Dutch norms and values is further compounded by the way in which the *niqab* is linked to a particular strand of Islam. It appears that the problem is not so much that these students bring a religious symbol into the classroom, for the *hijab*, or headscarf has become more acceptable, but that the *niqab* is linked to radical Islam. Such informally expressed concerns cannot factor into official argumentation in the Dutch political-legal setting, as banning *niqab* for political reasons would constitute direct discrimination. Indeed the Equal Treatment Commission has made it explicit that schools are not allowed to ban dressing styles on the grounds that they express particular political points of view (such as bomber jackets which can represent radical right sympathies), as this would infringe on the principle of freedom of expression.

In the Egyptian context a compelling set of political and security concerns accompanied the policy of banning face veiling at national universities. In the case of the private, foreign AUC, however, security concerns were overridden by arguments about the role of the university in reproducing a particular type of liberal culture and accompanying normative behaviors. The practice of covering the face has been seen to fundamentally contravene the university's mission. Indeed as responses to the *niqab* in both the AUC and LU cases illustrate, the practice of face veiling has seriously tested the boundaries of who can and should participate in liberal educational institutions as well as in liberal societies writ large. The point here is not to make light of the unease and discomfort teachers may experience when confronted with students who cover their face. Rather, the question is whether feelings of discomfort are valid grounds to ban particular forms of dress and, subsequently, specific categories of students from the university? Should the wearing of the *niqab* be understood implicitly or explicitly as a refusal to integrate into the values of liberal universities, and, by extension, liberal societies? Is banning the most suitable way of responding to difference, or might the university be better served by embarking on an openended complex process involving debate, inquiry and dissent in a manner that could lead to the expansion, rather than narrowing, of the boundaries of liberal education?

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Notes

1. The Equal Treatment Commission monitors compliance with the Dutch Equal Treatment Act which prohibits discrimination in education and employment on grounds such as religion, sex, race, and political orientation.
2. The interview was with Mohamed Farouq Al-Hitami and cited in the AUC student newspaper *The Caravan*, Issue no. 17, Vol. 83, March 9, 2003.
3. The Commission does not discuss whether wearing *niqab* is an Islamic requirement. It considers it sufficient that a category of persons believes it to be such.

Muslim Girls in Belgium
Individual Freedom through Religion?

NADIA FADIL

Research on Muslim communities in Europe has recently shifted focus from labor and social policy concerns to issues of 'religion' and 'culture'. In particular, there has been a growing interest in the possible emergence of a specifically 'European Islam'. Through examining the religious attitudes and practices of Muslim girls in Belgium, the author investigates the viability of a 'European Islam' and in so doing poses questions about the nature of secularization, free will and individualization of religious practice and belief.

Studies focusing on Muslims in Europe are growing at a rapid pace. While the subject of study is not new, the perspective is. Long considered guest workers in Flanders, the Netherlands and Germany, Muslims in Europe whose children constitute the 'second generation' are now being studied increasingly from a religious, rather than a migrant labor, point of view. In Belgium research on these communities used to be largely policy-oriented and focused on the community's socio-economic problems. The more recent research is more concerned with 'culture', with the newest trend being to focus on Islam and the possible emergence of a specifically 'European Islam'. The collective hypothesis that seems to be forming is that in coming years Islam will adapt to 'new' European structures in a way that will enable Muslims to consider themselves full European citizens. One advantage of this hypothesis is that it frees both scientists and concerned Muslims from having to choose between over-simplified categories of 'segregation' and 'assimilation'. Scholars no longer have to render Muslims exotic, nor do they have to neglect their specificities. 'Muslims' can 'integrate' themselves in this new European context and call themselves 'full members' without necessarily assimilating themselves into the dominant group. Their differentiating identity is religious and thus transnational and neutral, not ethno-national. The consensus that this model offers both parties accounts in part for the growing scholarly attention paid to 'European Islam'.

A secularized Islam?

Various studies about how Muslims live and organize themselves in Western Europe have been carried out under the rubric of 'European Islam'. Yet these studies have remained mainly outside the field of the sociology of religion despite its well-established tradition of interpreting the different tendencies present in religion. If a 'European Islam' is really developing, a necessary question one might ask is how this Islam interacts with the secularized context in which it has been translated?

Secularization is one of the most-commonly used concepts to typify Western Europe and its relation to religion; for many it refers to the end of religion. Yet secularization, as treated in the sociology of religion, relates to the changing relationship of religion in society as modernization takes place. Religion loses influence in spheres such as politics, economics and education and plays a role mainly in ethical and moral aspects of life. As such, secularization implies neither an end to, nor a disappearance of, religion; it simply refers to the transformation of religion in a 'modern' era.

At the level of the individual 'believer', this change becomes manifest through the process of religious individualization: religious practice is no longer the consequence of prescription, but rather of choice. The term 'religious *bricolage*' has been used to emphasize the centrality of individual choice in this construct (Dobbelaere 1999; Hervieu-Léger 1994). Another characteristic of the secularization process is *compartmentalization* whereby people seek religious answers only for specific fields—mainly moral and ethical issues, while other fields—like politics or economy—are not associated with a religious discourse. Yet do these concepts hold up? Through in-depth interviews with Moroccan girls aged between 16-18 living in Antwerp (Belgium) about their faith and religious engagement, we can test some of the propositions about religious individualization.[1]

Religious individualization

Several authors have recently pointed to an active process of individualization in Islam. Babes argues, for instance, that notions of individualization can be found in the Qur'anic distinction between *niyya*, the one with unselfish faith and pure intention, and the *munafiq*, or hypocrite who practices without faith (1997, 2000). According to Babès this distinction indicates that individual faith, the '*Islam du coeur*' as she calls it, is appreciated much more than social Islam: this dimension of faith, she concludes, is far more important to most Muslims than the question of whether 'they may eat with the left hand or if saving money is forbidden' (author's translation, 2000: 189).

Through interviews with Moroccan girls about what they consider 'begin a good Muslim', we can assess normative attitudes. Nora, for instance, describes a good Muslim as someone who 'follows the rules, all the rules and not just those you like.' She explains that praying regularly and fasting during Ramadan is an obligation, not a choice, and says, 'It's not like I choose praying, Ramadan too, but I don't go to Mecca because it's too expensive. It's no travel brochure, is it?!"

Clearly, the description she gives of a good Muslim is not one in which 'individual choice' plays a central role. To her, Islam cannot be a matter of individual choice and she casts a doubt on the very essence of religious *bricolage*. Rather, to be a good Muslim, she believes that one has to be consistent in religious practices and follow the *entire* story. This emphasis on 'orthopraxis' was not only expressed by Nora, but came up repeatedly by other girls who emphasized the importance of following *all* rules and conveyed the belief that Islam should be applied to *all spheres of life*. They seriously call into question the legitimacy of notions of religious *bricolage* or compartimentalization of religion from other aspects of life. When another girl Amina, for example, evaluates her religious practice, she makes a clear distinction between herself and what she calls *real* Muslims: by noting, '…there are only few people who are real Muslims. There are only few who can say about themselves: 'I'm Muslim, Muslim'. I'm Moroccan, I believe in Islam, but I don't really pray to be a real Muslim. They [the real Muslims] live really strictly according to the rules—and that's really difficult—you really need to have a will for it.' Though Amina says she believes in God and the importance of Islam, she clearly does not seem to be satisfied with the way she practices her religion.

This idea of being a bad or inadequate Muslim is also reflected in the words of Iman who describes the sense of guilt she feels about her poor religious commitment. She says, 'I'm not a good Muslim, I'm everything but a good Muslim.' When pressed about why she considers herself a bad Muslim she explains: 'Sometimes I don't pray out of laziness. … sometimes I have boyfriends, and that's not allowed. Sometimes I lie, that's also not allowed. I don't wear a headscarf, that's also not allowed…. Last week in the Mosque I started to cry. There was an Imam who really gives himself to Islam, he was reading a part from the Qur'an and I started to cry really hard on hearing that part. I'm just a really bad Muslim, I want to be better.' The dimension of practice is so essential to Iman that her failure made her cry during a sermon. Her weakness is lived as guilt, as a sin. What is described here is far from a legitimate *bricolage*. Individual orthopraxis is seen as an essential dimension of faith for individual religiosity.

Though all girls seemed to agree with the fact that being a good Muslim is a matter of total practice, none of them applied Islam properly. As Amina said, 'it's really difficult to be a good Muslim.' For being a good Muslim as they see it involves a *total investment* of oneself into religious life, an investment one may never attain. Yet these same girls conveyed a second version of how to be a good Muslim which seemed to be closer to their personal spiritual quest, in which the notion of the *individual* is more central. As Amina explained, '… if you believe in your heart and as long as you think of yourself as a Muslim, and you believe in God and you find the values of Islam important, then you can call yourself a Muslim. But you don't have to listen to all the others who say "to be a Muslim you have to pray, you have to wear a headscarf" everybody decides it for themselves….' Amina clearly emphasizes the element of faith or what Babès describes as the religious *niyya*. Furthermore, she explicitly criticizes the 'communal' influence in religious practice. This seeming contradiction in describing a 'good Muslim' could be observed in the remarks of several other girls. When asked the question, 'Do you think you're a bad Muslim if you don't agree with some rules?' Nora responded, 'I don't think so. You try, and as long as you try you are Muslim I think. If you don't agree with something, you have the right not to agree.'

On the one hand Nora was convinced that a good Muslim should respect 'all' rules. On the other hand, she insisted on individual choice in faith and both challenges and criticizes the ways in which social pressures surround religious practice. When talking about Islamic religiosity and individualization, what seems to be refuted is the communal influence over religious practice rather than an individualized and 'free' relationship towards religious prescriptions. The girls criticize religious practice when it falls under the supervision of the community. Hence, religiosity is translated as an *exclusive* but *total* sacred relationship between God and the individual (Roy 2002).

Individualization through religious prescription

A way to overcome the seeming tension between the ideal of 'free will' and conformity to religious prescription is simply not to see them as such. Rather than view 'free will' as being jeopardized by acts of religious conformity, we can consider it as being obtained through a *search for religious prescriptions that legitimate individual choices*. To observe whether this process of individualization is happening, it would be interesting to observe to what extent 'new' interpretations are constructed which try to legitimize the 'unlegitimizable'. Selma's views about the prohibition of marriage between a non-Muslim man and a Muslim woman can provide some insight on this point. She notes, 'I read a text a few months ago in which a daughter of a friend of the Prophet was married to someone, of the same kind, but he was an unbeliever, and she loved him until he finally converted. He was an unbeliever, but she married him.' These different observations seem to suggest that—when speaking about Muslims in Western-Europe who *primarily identify themselves through a religious lens*—an important reconsideration of the definition of *individualization* is to be made, namely: its *dissociation from the process of secularization*. Concerning Muslims in Western Europe we seem indeed to observe a process of individualization which is not occurring in a 'secular' way, but precisely through their ability to interpret religious prescriptions.

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Note

1. The data were collected from 2000–2001 and are based on 23 in-depth conversations with Moroccan girls aged between 16 and 18 and living in the city of Antwerp (Belgium).

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Training Imams and the Future of Islam in France

FRANK PETER

There has been a growing political urgency in several Western European countries to institutionalize and create facilities for imam-training. With the formation of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) earlier this year[1] the French government aims to create a uniform training system for imams. This state-sponsored institutionalization of Islam offers more 'traditional' organizations the opportunity to appropriate 'French Islam', possibly at the expense of alternative structures that have emerged in the French Muslim community over the last few decades.

Since the early 1990s, Muslim organizations, activists and French politicians have been discussing the complex issue of how to organize the training of imams in France. These discussions seem to have recently entered a new phase. In connection with the creation of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) earlier this year, it seems the debates might soon be leading to their first tangible results. According to leading French politicians, one of the primary tasks of this national representative body is to reflect on the development of an officially recognized curriculum for imams in France. Various other public bodies, together with the ministry of the interior, are also currently investigating the modalities for the training of imams in France. The issue is being addressed by the newly installed Commission, headed by Bernard Stasi and created by President Chirac, in order to review the current conditions for implementing the principle of *laïcité*. In May, the French minister of education assigned the historian, Daniel Rivet, the task of outlining a possible syllabus for French imams. Everything thus indicates that the current government is continuing along the path France embarked on in the late 1980s when it assumed a much more direct role in the institutionalization of Islam in France in order to accelerate its gallicization.

The State and the gallicization of Islam

How great would the contribution of French-trained imams be to the aim of gallicization? In the speeches of French politicians, particularly in the last months, the creation of training facilities for imams in France has become a kind of necessary condition for the harmonious incorporation of Islam into French society. Imams, 'the foremost representatives' of Islam in France, in the words of the minister of the interior, have to be 'integrated' and trained in France in order for Islam to be fully integrated into the Republic.[2] According to the government, the perceived menace of foreign extremist preachers is to be circumvented by increasing the currently very low percentage of Francophone imams in France (fewer than 50%)—the percentage of French imams not even reaching 10%. Indisputably, this is not an easy task. The above figures show that the creation in the early 1990s of seminaries for the training of imams in France has had a very limited influence on the make-up of this group.

Are imams really the 'foremost representatives' of Islam in France?

Interestingly, the three major Islamic federations have all made attempts to establish training facilities for imams, albeit with varying success. The Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF), for example, is currently involved in the running of two interrelated seminaries, the first of these established in 1991-1992 in the rural area of Château-Chinon. The French convert, Didier Ali Bourg, in cooperation with the Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France (FNMF) and the Islamic World League, founded in 1992 the Institut d'Études Islamiques de Paris, currently called Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur l'Islam. This institute is, however, currently not engaged in the training of imams. The Mosque of Paris has also participated in similar developments and in 1993 set up a seminary that was ridden with problems, almost since its inception.[3] Furthermore, the recently created Institut Français des Études et Sciences Islamiques, as well as the Turkish movement, Milli Görüş, also aim to develop training programmes for imams. The Conseil des Imams de France, founded in 1992, has thus far had only a modest role in this respect, and in the current circumstances, strongly risks to be marginalized by the CFCM, which is not cooperating with the Conseil des imams, according to its secretary general, Dhaou Meskine. This lack of cooperation has, in fact, recently led Meskine to openly contest the competence of the CFCM in dealing with the training of imams, claiming that the CFCM is only an 'administrative organ'. [4]

The Transformation of Islam in France

In order for the CFCM to become a truly efficient partner of the French government in its Islam policy, work must still be done inside the Muslim community. This is, however, only one of several issues raised by the current discussions on the training of imams. More importantly, these discussions make one wonder just how much leverage the reform of the imam system would really offer to Islamic organizations and to the French government. Are imams really the 'foremost representatives' of Islam in France? How would such a reform affect the religious life of French Muslims?

The insistence on the need to gallicize imams is based upon a specific view of Islamic life that accords the 'mosque' a dominant role as the place for prayer and sermon in the life of the average Muslim. Considered mutually reinforcing, the imam is seen as the major agent in the transmission of Islam and the mosque as the centre of Islamic life. In most western European countries, however, the structure of Islamic life differs notably from this perception. As a number of authors have noted, many 'mosques' in Europe serve as multi-functional community centres. Besides being used as gathering places for prayer, these mosques also serve as the focal point for various groups and, more generally, for the social life of the community. This fact can be explained in relation to the near absence of migrant-specific institutions, which thus turns mosques into key elements in the development of a community infrastructure. The fact that subsidies for mosques are often granted based on the incorporation of social and cultural programmes into the scope of the mosques' activities, also contributes to this trend.

However, the impact of migrant-specific factors on the diversification of the mosque's function should not lead one to overlook the parallels between this development within Islam and the general transformation of religious life in Europe or other parts of the world. The function of Christian churches has also undergone important changes in the past decades. Community life, which was once focused on Sunday services, has become decentralized and fragmented, and now takes place

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Congress of French imams, 29 March 2003.

on a variety of levels and in different forms. Nowadays, the church, as Wuthnow puts it, tries to 'provide community in several distinct ways.'[5] The ongoing 'division of labour' inside the churches has manifested itself primarily in the rise of small groups that are particularly well placed to meet the need for belonging in their often transient manifestations. While the institutional set-up of Islamic communities in France is, of course, far less developed than that of the church communities, one can nevertheless see a similar process in motion, which, since the 1990s, has been intricately linked to the 'institutionalization' of Islam. As many authors have noted, the number of age, gender or purpose-specific groups has been constantly increasing in French Muslim communities. Particularly in the 1990s, a host of educational associations and youth or women's groups were founded in France. In the context of a latent intra-generational conflict, these associations are often particularly important for young Muslims who are thus able to create a religious space conform to their specific needs.

This development has important consequences for the role of religious authorities, most notably, for the imam. The imam, as head of the mosque, is no longer necessarily the spiritual reference for all the 'members' of the community. Imams are working inside a complex net of groups and associations, where informal and formal authorities mingle and where the profile of the latter keeps changing. Be it in circumscribed local groups or in the broader based media space, Muslim intellectuals and activists of various forms play an increasingly important role in the life of the community. The emergence of these persons, who have access to a variety of media, further weakens the role of religious institutions in the production and dissemination of religion. Next to the traditional institutions of transmission, audio tapes, books, magazines and websites have become key elements in the teaching and dissemination of Islam. Publishers such as Éditions Tawhid, along with websites like http://www.oumma.com, have demonstrated the possibilities that entirely new organizational forms offer for the communication of religious knowledge within French Islam. With more than 120.000 subscriptions to its list server, oumma.com pursues ambitious projects and attempts to establish cooperative ventures with foreign Islamic institutes of higher learning, thereby indirectly contesting the work of Islamic organizations and their seminaries in France.[6]

Looking at this emerging Islamic mediascape, one wonders if the current debate on the training of imams is well founded. It is based on the assumption that the current state of Islamic religious life and imams in France is 'problematic' and that Muslims have to be assisted in the process of 'organization'. And while the relative lack of funds obviously limits the organizational possibilities of French Muslims, this does not mean that they are simply trapped in a state of stagnation or powerlessness. The new forms of religious community and authority that French Muslims have developed in the last decades are based on decentralized and sometimes temporary structures that often do not need the support of complex and costly institutions. While these developments have, in part, been imposed by necessity, they nevertheless also correspond to the profound transformations that religious life in Western Europe has undergone. The upsurge in small community groups, which could be interpreted as a decline in the imam's position of authority, is not solely attributable to the incapacity of the latter to communicate with young European Muslims, but also to the fact that small groups are often better adapted to new conceptions of community. Likewise, the lack of a more uniform or centralized structure of religious authorities is of course, partly a result of national, ethnic and doctrinal divisions in the Muslim communities. However, the current pluralization of heterogeneous authority structures also corresponds to, and is indirectly supported by, a general trend in Europe's Muslim communities to move away from life-long affiliation with a specific mosque or organization and towards temporary or multiple associations.

Creating religious authorities

Considering these developments, the current attempts in France to create a uniform training system for imams demand the taking into account of at least two interrelated issues. In France, as in other countries, the state's search for representative and powerful interlocutors within Muslim communities has, thanks to the cooperation of Islamic organizations, ultimately resulted in an often unacknowledged attempt to create these representatives. The creation of seminaries and the fostering of a group of French-trained imams will thus not only impact upon the future theological developments in French Islam, as is so often hoped; these developments will also affect the structure of religious life. In order to be truly effective, these institutionalizing attempts will have to initiate a substantial transformation in the basic structure of French Islam by shifting the centre of religious life back to imams and to mosques as dominant places of prayer and sermon. The process of state-sponsored institutionalization that French Islam is currently undergoing thus presents the paradoxical possibility that the present structures of religious life, which have emerged, in part, out of an adaptation to the 'French context', will be remodelled and partly appropriated by more 'traditional' organizational forms, whose functions and adaptation to the current situation can be debated. The ongoing experiments with Islamic seminaries and training programmes for imams will thus not only lead to a definition of the 'desirable' theological and professional profile of imams in France, but, more generally, they will show if it is possible to remodel the historically developed community structures of French Islam by reappraising the role of official religious authorities and unified community structures in the twenty-first century. Both issues are, of course, interdependent, but it is the latter which will decide the future role of institutionalized 'reform movements' in French Islam.

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Notes

1. See Valérie Amiraux, 'CFCM-A French Touch?', *ISIM Newsletter* 12 (June 2003), p.24f.
2. Nicolas Sarkozy, 'The 20th Annual Meeting of the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF)' (speech, Le Bourget, France, 2003). See also (http://www.interieur.gouv.fr), 2003.
3. See Franck Frégosi, *La formation des cadres religieux musulmans en France* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1998).
4. Dhaou Meskine, Conference 'The training of religious personnel', (speech, Paris, 23 October 2003).
5. Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
6. See 'Partenariat entre Oumma.com et la prestigieuse Université Islamique Abou Nour de Damas' (http://www.oumma.com), 2001.

Public institutions and Islam
A New Stigmatization?

LAURENT BONNEFOY

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 Islam has become increasingly associated with intolerance and violence in public debates in Europe. However, in the aftermath of 9/11 'good' images of Islam have also been highlighted in opposition to 'bad' Islam. Governments and political parties in various European countries, including France and the UK, along with the stigmatization and criminalization of 'bad' Islam, have contributed to the elaboration of this more 'positive' imagery. The differences between French and British approaches in this process of 'othering' towards Islam are much less real than they are often believed to be.

The publication of Edward Said's Orientalism in 1978 inspired a long series of critical studies on the representation of Islam and Muslims in 'Western' media and politics. These studies, of varying quality and interest, focused on the way dominant discourses essentialize and stigmatize Islam and the Muslim World. It was to be expected that mainstream reactions in North America and Europe to the September 11th terrorist attacks would constitute an elaboration on those types of depictions. And indeed many popular books, articles and editorials published after 9/11 have insisted on the allegedly intrinsic links between terrorism and Islam. While true that Islamophobia is not new and that it has been transmitted by various media, experts, and political parties and organizations,[1] it appears that, at least in Europe, 9/11 and its aftermath have given rise to much more complex and ambiguous reactions than were initially apparent.

For reasons having mainly to do with the proliferation of anti-discrimination norms and regulations, as well as the growing demographic weight of Muslim citizens, the ministers, members of parliament, and judges in France and Great Britain did not portray Islam or the Muslim community as being responsible for the terrorist attacks of 9/11. A few days after 9/11, Tony Blair stated that, 'Blaming Islam is as ludicrous as blaming Christianity for loyalist attacks on Catholics or nationalist attacks on Protestants in Northern Ireland.'? Lionel Jospin, the then French Prime Minister, similarly asserted that, 'It must be clear that this fight against terrorism is waged neither on Islam nor on Arab or Muslim countries.'? These sorts of statements underscore a specific feature of post-9/11 reactions from public institutions, most notably in both Great Britain and France, which can be called the selective stigmatization of Islam and Muslims.

As Mahmood Mamdani[4] and Jocelyne Cesari[5] observed, the 9/11 attacks created conditions that required a distinction within dominant discourses between what is considered 'good' and 'bad' Islam. Obviously, this type of stigmatization is not new, and therefore 9/11 cannot be considered a total point of rupture with the past. The attempts to explain the 1979 Revolution in Iran and the actions of the Hizbollah in Lebanon, by attributing these to the supposedly divergent nature of the Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, already expressed a similar stigmatizing conception. Yet, with the attacks in New York and Washington, this stigmatization has become much more significant and has been quite systematically used by French and British public bodies to legitimize certain government-adopted policies.

Modalities of stigmatization

The selective stigmatization of Islam and Muslims is based on certain, usually implicit, characteristics that appear in the dominant social discourses. First of all, so-called 'good' Islam (as opposed to 'bad' Islam) is seen as moderate and must therefore explicitly and continuously condemn 'political Islam', stick to dominant views on international and local issues and be vigorously opposed to all forms of terrorism.

The current conservative French government makes just such a distinction between 'bad Islam' and the preferred 'openly visible Islam' ('l'Islam au grand jour'), which is strictly opposed to the 'Islam of the caves and garages', and which is supposed to express its attachment to the 'founding values of the Republic' and, for instance, support the ban of the Islamic scarf in state schools and condemn 'communitarianism'. This distinction, used at all levels of French public institutions, becomes a quasi-scientific category that is employed by political leaders, exploited in the media, and that structures mainstream perceptions. It should be noted that the 'moderation' of so-called 'good' Islam is not characterized in entirely the same way in France and Great Britain. Dominant discourses and perceptions on questions regarding the place of religious or secular communities are not held in common. These oppositions and differences in perceptions and founding myths (Republic vs. Multiculturalism) do not however mean, as often thought by mainstream analysis, that France and Great Britain embody contradictory models on the matter of relations with the Muslim 'other'.

Significantly, 'good' Islam is portrayed to be authentic, the one and only 'true' Islam. Simultaneously, 'bad' Islam is not only deemed 'bad' because it promotes social or political practices that are viewed as harmful, but also because it is supposedly wrong at the theological level and thereby opposed to the 'true' teachings of the Qur'an. Public institutions have thus granted themselves the right to determine the authentic nature of Islam. These public institutions do not escape the essentialist approach that considers this religion to exist independently of its followers' divergent social practices.

And while 'good' Islam is 'integrated into the national community', 'bad' Islam is seen as essentially foreign, imported through 'transnational networks', connected with 'international terrorism' and thus not possibly 'French' or 'British'. Nicolas Sarkozy, French Minister of the Interior, once asserted, 'We know that in the garages, in the caves of certain suburbs, hateful and intolerant discourses are still being held in the name of Islam. This Islam of disparity should not be [that of the Muslims of France] since it does not have its place in France.'[6] 'Bad' Muslims thus represent an enemy from within that is directly connected to the international sphere, and to situations of conflict in the Muslim world. In December 2002, the French police arrested members of a so-called 'Chechen network', which was considered to be linked to just such international terrorism. This linkage, highlighted by the official discourse, is meant to de-legitimize non-conforming Islam. Imams in particular, are stigmatized and believed to be the main agents of the process of foreign importation. As Sarkozy put it in an interview, 'It is important that the Republic dialogues with Muslims. It is an issue of appeasement. What I want is precisely an appeased and moderate Islam. I would add that this mutual recognition also gives us more ability to fight the few imams that transgress the law and preach violence and anti-Semitism. These should be expelled.'[7] Notably, Sarkozy refers only to 'foreign' imams, those who can be expelled, as the only ones who preach violence.

Significantly, all the social practices that are considered negative by dominant views are believed to be imported and are said to have nothing to do with local political and social issues. In the framework of the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act (ATCSA), voted into existence by the British Parliament in November 2001, suspects are explicitly con-

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French Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy (at right) with representatives of two French mosques

nected to the outside; thus some sections of this act that concern the deportation and detention of so-called 'suspected international terrorists' (Sections 22 and 23) and exclude any protection under the refugee convention (Sections 33 and 34), apply to foreigners only. The case of Abu Hamza al-Misri, former preacher of the Finsbury Park mosque, reveals the resolve to externalize the so-called 'bad' Muslim. Those, like Labour MP Andrew Dismore who support the act, directly applied section 4 of the new Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act that came into force in April 2003 to Abu Hamza. This act enables the state to revoke the British citizenship of immigrants who are considered to 'seriously prejudice the United Kingdom's interests.' The revoking of Abu Hamza's British nationality and, as a result, his possible deportation, permitted the government to stress even more his supposed foreignness.

Materializing the distinction

Ever since 9/11 governments in both Britain and France have shown themselves to be keen on 'integrating' those considered 'good' Muslims; that is, to institutionalize the relations with the so-called 'good' faction of Islam. The 9/11 events were conveniently used as an opportunity to intensify the relations between the British Labour government and certain Muslim organizations, particularly the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). In France, the victory of the conservative government in June 2002 lead to an acceleration of the process of the formation of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM).[8] The creation of this top-down structured council, basically controlled by the Ministry of the Interior and first initiated (under a different name, and with different methods and organizations) in the beginning of the 1990s, is believed to be an answer to 9/11.

In France, the new debates on laïcité, and the specific law that could be adopted to ban the Islamic scarf from state schools, have surfaced as the direct responses of different groups to the recognition of 'good' Islam as promoted by the CFCM and the levels of government involved in its creation. David Blunkett, Home Office Secretary and author of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill, passed in 2002, underscores the growing need for a critical revaluation of the concept of multiculturalism and the assertion of specific values concerning the 'integration' of 'immigrants'. The institutional determination to include or, to use the more common vocabulary of the Republic, to 'integrate' the 'good' Islamic faction, goes together with the exclusion of what is considered to be the 'bad' one. The struggle against terror and the numerous negaative effects of this on the livelihoods of Muslims, are legitimized by the processes of inclusion regarding 'good' Islam, in the form of the CFCM or the MCB or otherwise, in mainstream discourses.

Contrary to Great Britain, France did not formally adopt a state of exception after 9/11, yet the Labour government did add temporary amendments granting police special powers to the 'Law on Everyday Security', which were unconstitutionally implemented by Parliament in November 2001. The re-enforcement of the 'Plan Vigipirate' (applied in instances of high terrorist threat) took place immediately after 9/11. Its stipulations also grant temporary powers to the police and judiciary in order to wage war against terrorists. The articles in the 'Law on Everyday Security' connected to the new 'global threat', amongst many other things, facilitate deportations from French territory and allow for pre-emptive action against suspected terrorists.[9] The Ministry of the Interior is now able to justify the arrests of Muslim individuals by simply stating, 'The coming days will allow us to see if they are involved in serious affairs.'[10]

The selective perceptions and portrayals of Islam and Muslims, and the ambiguous language and messages that underlie the practices of public bodies today, are important and possibly lasting characteristics of the relations between the body politic and Muslims in the post-9/11 context in France and Britain, and possibly in other European countries as well. The differences between French and British approaches towards Islam are much less real than they are often believed to be. Post-9/11 has brought with it a consensus on the nature of what constitutes the 'other', thus blurring the French republican and the British multicultural models.

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Notes

1. For the reactions to 9/11 in France see Vincent Geisser, *La nouvelle Islamophobie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003), p.122. See also the summary report on *Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001* by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (http://eumc.eu.int/eumc/material/pub/anti-islam/Synthesis-report_en.pdf).
2. Tony Blair article in *The Daily Jang*, 23 September 2001.
3. Speech by Lionel Jospin before Civil Servants, 20 September 2001.
4. Mahmood Mamdani, 'Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: a Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism' in *Critical Views of September 11: Analyses from Around the World*, edited by Eric Hershberg and Kevin W. Moore (New York: New Press, 2002), p. 44–60.
5. Jocelyne Cesari, 'Islam de l'extérieur, musulman de l'intérieur : Deux visions après le 11 septembre 2001', in *Cultures & Conflits* 44, 2001, p. 97–115.
6. Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy before Muslim representatives, 4 May 2003.
7. Interview with Nicolas Sarkozy in Le Parisien, 15 May 2003.
8. See Valérie Amiraux, 'CFCM: A French Touch?', ISIM Newsletter 12 (June 2003), p.24–25.
9. See *Immigration, Asylum and Terrorism: A Changing Dynamic in European Law*, edited by Evelien Brouwer, Petra Catz, Elspeth Guild (Nijmegen: Instituut voor Rechtssociologie, 2003), p. 202.
10. Interview with Nicolas Sarkozy on Europe 1 radio, 8 November 2002

Iraq after the US Invasion

PETER SLUGLETT

In the months leading up to the US invasion of Iraq, I did not believe, and said so in public, that Iraq was in any way directly responsible for 9/11, or that the Iraqi regime had any substantive links with al-Qa'ida, or that it was likely that Iraq was actually able to field weapons of mass destruction. I believed that Iraq had probably tried to obtain weapons-grade plutonium, and I knew that it had actually obtained centrifuges from Germany, as well as the means to manufacture chemical and biological weapons from Germany and the US. I surmised, from a position of total scientific ignorance, that Iraq probably possessed most of the ingredients necessary to manufacture weapons of mass destruction, but that it was some way off from actually doing so.

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I also knew that Iraq had one of the most vicious and unscrupulous regimes in the Middle East, if not the world; that Saddam Husayn and his cronies had between them murdered and imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens, and that any Iraqi who could escape from Iraq (and, given the long and largely unguarded frontiers, this was not too difficult) would do so. There were, in January 2003, some two million Iraqis living in exile in other Middle Eastern countries, in Europe, especially in and around London, and in the United States. I knew that an essential ingredient for peace and stability in the Middle East, apart from a just and permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, would be the removal of this terrible regime. And finally, I knew that, much as they might desire its removal, the people of Iraq were not, and for the foreseeable future would not be, in a position to remove it by themselves. And for that reason, I supported an American invasion whose ostensible objective was to remove this vicious dictatorship, knowing full well, that Saddam Husayn owed his own survival throughout the 1980s to the support of an American administration which included such knights in shining armour as George Bush senior and his good friends Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Perhaps I was naïve, but I could see no other way of removing Saddam Husayn.

However, I pretty well withdrew my general approval of the action taken by the US to remove the regime on 9 April 2003, 21 days after the invasion was launched, the day on which Saddam Husayn's regime fell apart. Every day since then has brought mounting evidence of the almost incredible bungling and incompetence which has attended the American administration of the peace. It is not as if no one in the administration had given any thought to what might happen after an American victory—which, of course, could scarcely have been in doubt. An article in the *New York Times* on October 18 reported at length on a State Department project initiated in April 2002 involving over 200 Iraqi lawyers, engineers and businessmen, divided into working groups 'to study topics ranging from creating a new justice system to reorganizing the military to revamping the economy.' Surprise, surprise, the Pentagon ignored most of the project's findings, which included, for example, a much more dire assessment of the dilapidation of the country's water and electricity supplies than the Pentagon assumed. It's also fascinating that the working groups predicted that a fair amount of looting would take place. It is regrettable, to say the least, that some of the project's cautionary findings were not acted upon much sooner. It will be fascinating for future historians to try to work out 'what went wrong'; tawdry turf wars between the State Department and the Pentagon are presumably at the root of much of the mess.

It is not entirely clear how or why the situation unravelled so quickly, but here are some general pointers. In the first place, the invasion itself lacked the broad legitimacy which a UN mandate would have conferred upon it. Undoubtedly, the reason why the invasion took place when it did was a general sense, on the part of the US administration, that the large body of troops which it had transported to the region could not be kept in place there indefinitely. The Bush administration seems to have simply ignored the importance of taking the international community along with it, as it has discovered at its expense.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack on Iraq, when no weapons of mass destruction were found and went on being not found, it was argued that as Iraq was the size of California, it was not all that surprising that US troops could not find anything—they could not search every nook and cranny over such a wide area. At the same time, Rumsfeld and the US regional and field commanders, to this day, assert that there are ample numbers of troops in Iraq. One cannot have it both ways; if there are not enough troops to find the weapons of mass destruction, then there are not enough to stabilize or pacify the country, period. And then there were the issues of electricity and water. Obviously, the infrastructure had been in a mess since the Iran-Iraq war, but it nonetheless seemed almost incredible to many Iraqis that things took so long to be put right, in spite of sabotage and the difficulty of getting large electric generators into place.

Every day we hear on the news that another US soldier, another group of Iraqi civilians, has been killed by forces still loyal to Saddam Husayn, or by terrorists who have infiltrated the 'porous' borders. Almost all these attacks take place in a relatively small area, the Sunni

rectangle (rather than triangle) bounded by Baghdad, Takrit and Falluja, and al-Anba', the provinces of Diyala and Dulaym. This was and remains the heartland of support for the regime. Although Sunni Arabs only form between 15 and 20 per cent of the population of Iraq, they have nonetheless ruled the state since its foundation under British auspices after the First World War. Under any future regime, it is almost inconceivable that they will continue to do so. This particular form of resistance is probably not the expression of an especially widespread sense of outrage at US occupation, although the inability of the US to maintain order, and get adequate water and electricity up and running again, means that the US is not quite as welcome as it thought itself entitled to be. This resistance is a kind of last stand, an effort on the part of a fairly small group of desperadoes who have no future in a reconstituted Iraq and who feel that they have nothing to lose. Obviously, those behind such incidents are Sunnis, because there are no Shi'is in that part of Iraq. But this is very far from being a 'religious resistance', although there are undoubtedly some *salafis*, or Sunni fundamentalists, among the resisters. More pertinently, Saddam Husayn and his circle came from Takrit, and were all Sunnis. But what is much more important than the fact that they were members of the same religious sect is that they were all from the same area, had gone to school with each other, knew each others' relatives, and so on. So, to speak of 'Sunni opposition' is both misleading and disingenuous.

The US administration has made a large number of serious mistakes. In the first place, as I have already implied, not enough troops were involved in the conquest of the country—or at least, not enough to ensure stability and security after the battle for control had been won. Neither the Iraqi army nor the Republican Guard was properly disarmed, which is why members of both groups have weapons which they are turning against US soldiers. In mid-November, it was reported that American troops killed three Iraqi civilians at an *arms market* ; that such an institution could operate freely under present circumstances suggests an extraordinary lack of perception on the part of the US.

Perhaps the US civil administration's greatest weakness is its apparent lack of sense of direction, and what seems to be the lack of any real expertise among the expatriates who are being employed. For example, I have read several reports on the general topic of 'what should be done'; none of the authors are either country or regional experts. They are worthy people who have worked at putting Bosnia back together again, or in regenerating Kosovo, but they have not had any substantial Middle Eastern experience.

The repressive situation within Iraq over the last thirty years made it impossible to develop a viable opposition to the regime, which meant that opposition forces and groupings had to come together in exile. The US, perforce, relied—far too much, in my opinion—on those who told it what it wanted to hear. Ahmad Chalabi, who had and still has almost no name recognition, let alone popular following, in Iraq, apparently encouraged the US to believe that its soldiers would be 'garlanded with flowers' wherever they went. Chalabi, incidentally, was convicted of embezzling $300 million from a Jordanian Bank in the late 1970s. He alleges that he was framed by the Jordanian government acting under pressure from Baghdad, but whatever the extent of Chalabi's actual dishonesty, his apparent lack of judgement should surely disqualify his candidature for the leadership of Iraq, a project seemingly high on the agenda of the US government and that of Professor Bernard Lewis. The 84 year old Lewis, whose views are often taken quite seriously in Washington, went on record recently as advocating the restoration of the Iraqi monarchy.

In July, the US created the 25 member Iraqi Governing Council, supposedly the first step towards Iraqis taking over control of their country themselves. While it is not intended to be a democratic body, the IGC is supposed to prepare the country for the transition to self-government. Unfortunately its functions are rather hampered by the failure, on the part of the CPA and the US' proconsul Mr Bremer, to give even the vaguest indication of a time frame for this handover. As I said, I do not think this handover should take place, for some time, at least as long as the security situation remains as uncertain as it is. To hand over full responsibility for security to the Iraqis with any speed would most likely result in a version of the kind of war-lordism we are familiar with from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it would be wise to give some indication of the general direction the US envisages things will be moving in, a road map, to use a term devalued from another Middle Eastern context.

. . . the construction, or the encouragement, of democracy is not an unworthy aim. The main problem, in Iraq at the moment, is getting it right, and I am not sure how long either the American people or the more long-suffering people of Iraq can put up with the United States' seemingly unending capacity to get it wrong.

Of course, in an ideal world, one country would not send an army of occupation to another, nor would it seek to compensate for its military expenditure by awarding a number of lucrative post-war and reconstruction contracts to its own nationals, in processes which are obviously far from transparent, to say the least. I am highly critical of the incompetence and sheer stupidity of US policy in Iraq. But willing the US not to be there in the first place is to deny reality, however uncomfortable we may be with this. I do not know whether, in the long term, the US will succeed in what it claims to wish to achieve, that is, bringing democracy to the Middle East. Of course this laudable objective would also signal the end, or the very great modification, of the present regimes in Egypt and Jordan, not to mention those in Saudi Arabia and Syria, or Iran—although there the people may, very painfully, manage that on their own. Arab regimes are almost universally execrated by those who are unfortunate enough to live under them, and they are often still in existence because of the support which they receive from the United States. On the other hand, the construction, or the encouragement, of democracy is not an unworthy aim. The main problem, in Iraq at the moment, is getting it right, and I am not sure how long either the American people or the more long-suffering people of Iraq can put up with the United States' seemingly unending capacity to get it wrong.

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From One War to Another **Iraqi Emigration to Jordan**

GÉRALDINE CHATELARD

Jordan has been a particularly interesting location to observe the trends, patterns and dynamics of long-term emigration from Iraq over the last period of Baathist rule. Between the 1991 Gulf War and the fall of Saddam Hussein, circulation between Iraq and all its other neighbours officially stopped periodically, whereas the flow of people, goods and capital never ceased across the border with Jordan, which remained Iraq's primary economic partner. The Jordanian authorities granted Iraqis almost unconditional entry; they allowed Iraqi international businessmen and cross border traders to skirt the embargo by using Amman as a base, tolerated the presence of the Iraqi intelligence services, and even admitted Iraqi opponents as long as they were not active politically. While airports in Iraq were closed due to the embargo, Jordan was the gateway to the outside world—not only for the Iraqi business and political elite who were travelling internationally, but also for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi exiles who left the Middle East over that period.

Neither in the law, nor in collective representations is there space to consider the Iraqis as refugees.

In Jordan 'refugee' is an extremely loaded term, and a legal, social and political category that is almost exclusively the preserve of Palestinians. Neither in the law, nor in collective representations is there space to consider the Iraqis as refugees, and very few Jordanian civil society structures have undertaken assistance programmes for this group. The country is party to no international legal instrument relating to non-Palestinian refugees and has devised no domestic framework for asylum granting. It is the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) who is locally charged with the task of determining refugee status and the subsequent resettlement of refugees to a third country, usually in the West. In this context, what have been the large Iraqi community members' livelihood strategies in Jordan, and how has the Jordanian non-policy towards them affected their migration trends over the last 12 years?

Patterns of the 1990s

The number of Iraqis who have come to Jordan since 1991 and not returned to Iraq, either staying in the Hashimite Kingdom or transiting it, could be as high as 1,5 million. Before 1996, there were roughly 100,000 Iraqi residents in Jordan; most recently, there were about 350,000. Just before the April 2003 US and British military intervention only 30,000 of them were legally permanent residents, while another 10,000 to 15,000 were temporary circular migrants. This left over 300,000 Iraqi exiles, 5,000 to 7,000 of whom were either asylum seekers or refugees under the mandate of the UNHCR. The rest had mostly overstayed their 6-month temporary visit permits and were remaining clandestinely. Since the Gulf War, this group has been in constant recomposition. New individuals keep arriving from Iraq, while others leave Jordan to immigrate to countries further afield. There is, however, a stable core of legal and long-term illegal residents, the latter having found the connections and protection that allow them to eke out a living in the informal sectors of the economy and to avoid expulsion back to Iraq.

During the early 1990s, mass emigration from Iraq took place mainly in the direction of Iran, in response to the repression that followed the so-called Shiite and Kurdish uprisings of 1991. Iran generally granted Iraqis refugee status in one form or another, if not always the prospects of local integration.[1] Those who came to Amman with a view to staying long-term consciously chose Jordan over Iran, a land with which they had no political and often no religious affinity. Their decision to leave mostly stemmed from a serious feeling of insecurity: a dramatic drop in their standard of living ensuing from the deteriorating economic situation, sometimes coupled with harassment by the authorities. These emigrants were among the most educated, starting the brain drain the regime feared, and against which disincentive measures were soon adopted: passport and exit fees were raised and family members left behind were often harassed. These high costs reinforced the self-selective effects of migration by penalizing the less well off or those who were unable to mobilize cross border and/or transnational social networks.

As a result, one category of migrants came to Jordan with the aim of activating family reunification schemes with the help of foreign embassies and the office of the UNHCR in Amman. Canada, Australia and the USA initially granted a number of immigration visas, as sponsorship schemes for humanitarian refugees existed in most of these countries. All these options favoured those who already had close relatives in Western countries, or who were members of communities long-established in such countries and who could use communal associations as sponsors. This was especially widespread among members of the various Christian denominations.

Another important group was that of professionals who were initially in demand in Jordan. Engineers, doctors, university professors and artists were generally able to find employment in Amman, and were granted residency and work permits. At a time when they could improve their situation by integrating into the existing Jordanian job market, that was the option many selected over attempting a dubious legal or clandestine migration to a Western country, even when considering the good chances of being granted refugee status. Only a marginal number of exiles approached the Amman office of the UNHCR. Most feared its infiltration by the Iraqi intelligence, which would mean insecurity for those left behind. But as early as 1994 it had become almost impossible to find legal employment in Jordan and most Western countries had stopped granting immigration visas, with many having adopted more restrictive measures on family reunification. Until 1998 very limited possibilities for leaving Jordan remained; one could negotiate a work contract with Yemen, Libya or Sudan which were short on professionals, an option that tended to appeal more to Sunnis than to Shiites or Christians. For the majority of Iraqi exiles in Jordan the only alternative to staying was to attempt clandestine migration, mainly to Western Europe. To meet this demand, a market for services to skirt border control policies developed in Amman, the high costs again favouring those who could access financial capital.[2]

Migration networks

Social networks were called upon to help meet the costs of both life in Jordan and of clandestine migration. Iraqi Christians approached the many well-established churches in Jordan. Religious solidarity was mobilized to find housing, work, to receive assistance, to access free

medical services, or to register children in Christian schools. Jordanian parish priests interceded to prevent deportation back to Iraq, and to support visa applications or refugee claims. According to their individual inclinations and the available social identities, other migrants tried to reach out to comrades in the Jordanian Communist Party, to professional associations, to fellow artists, to religious based Sunni charities, or to the few notables of Iraqi origin whose families had become well established in Jordan after the 1958 overthrow of the Hashimite monarchy in Baghdad. These relations provided Iraqis locally unconnected by kinship ties with an entry into the patron-client structure that is one of the driving forces of Jordanian society and through which work and housing could be found. To meet the costs of long-distance emigration, individuals indebted themselves to relatives or close friends scattered all over the world. When the move was planned in advance, part or all of the costs were gathered in Iraq, usually by selling properties. This entailed decision-making involving the whole household, and often even an extended family. Strategic choices were made as to which country to aim for, who should go first, and who should stay in custody of properties. The subsequent reunion of all family members was also carefully planned. Originally, exile migrants to Jordan were mostly working-age males. But as their stays in Jordan were prolonged, many wives joined their husbands together with their children. Later, women came whose husbands were already in the West and who had either asked for family reunification, or had gathered enough money to pay for the rest of the family's clandestine journey.

Shiite exiles

The year 1996 marked a turning point in the patterns of Iraqi exile migration to Jordan. In Iraq, a major wave of repression hit the Shiite religious establishment and any individuals who were suspected of being pro-Iranian. Thousands who would have turned to Iran for asylum were willing to flee Iraq. But crossing into the Islamic Republic had become extremely dangerous now that the state-sponsored drainage of the Southern Marches—the traditional passageway of refugees into Iran—was almost complete and the border area heavily mined. Prospective migrants thus looked to Jordan, albeit aware that they would not be received as refugees, and that their sectarian affiliation and pro-Iranian inclinations would be problematic. Self-asserting Shiites were very much alien to Sunni or Christian Jordanians. No provisions in Jordanian law allowed for the development of Shiite communal institutions such as mosques; the Iranian Revolution was a model for no local political current, and official relations with Iran were cold if not openly tense.

Because of the usual financial constraints, those Iraqi Shiites who finally made it to Jordan were once again members of the educated middle class. They rarely had high financial assets, but expected their educational and professional capital to be negotiable on the official Jordanian job market. They soon found that the professional sectors were saturated, and that, without relations on which to rely, it was extremely difficult to find even petty jobs, cheap and decent housing, and to access a number of basic services. Confronted with what they saw as unacceptable living conditions, the most well off did not stay long in Jordan. They were ready to pay to reach the UK, which hosted the largest Iraqi exile community in the West, and where Shiite institutions were well developed. The rest of these migrants, having exhausted their savings on their exit and on their stay in Jordan within a few months, experienced a sharp social downfall and what they sensed as religious discrimination. Devoid of legal rights, including those of practising their religion collectively or of getting married, divorced or buried according to their rite, many now also lived well below the poverty line in extremely poor housing and unsanitary conditions, when they had once been among the intellectual elite of their communities. They thus deeply resented having to live side by side the lowest strata of Jordanian society. Unable to work legally, many had to compete with unskilled Egyptians on the informal labour market. Within a couple of years, a process similar to the one experienced by the earlier wave of Iraqi exiles took place. Wives and children joined men and specialized travel agents offered their services from Amman to Western countries.

The difference this time around was that pioneer Iraqi Shiites had been being accepted legally in North America, Northern Europe and Australia as resettled refugees since 1992. So those unsatisfied with their lot in Jordan could now contact their kin who had stable legal status and better economic conditions abroad. The latter thus sent funds to the former, and a chain migration and worldwide dispersal of Iraqi Shiites was then fuelled; this was in contrast to the previous waves of Shiite migrants that had largely been absorbed into Iran.

Iraqi Shiites also managed to locally develop their own support networks based on sectarian ties, although these groups never fully recreated a structured community. Small-scale religious gatherings regularly took place, scattered across various neighbourhoods in Amman, each headed by a member of the clergy, often a young theology student able to access resources within the worldwide Shiite community. On a spiritual level, these gatherings gave a religious sense to members' collective experiences as marginalized exiles. On a practical level, they allowed for the exchange of information regarding the situation in Iraq, livelihood opportunities in Jordan, and the possibility of further emigration. Finally, they acted as financial support networks to cover the costs of migration to the West, generally to the UK, which in some cases served as a last step before finally reaching Iran.

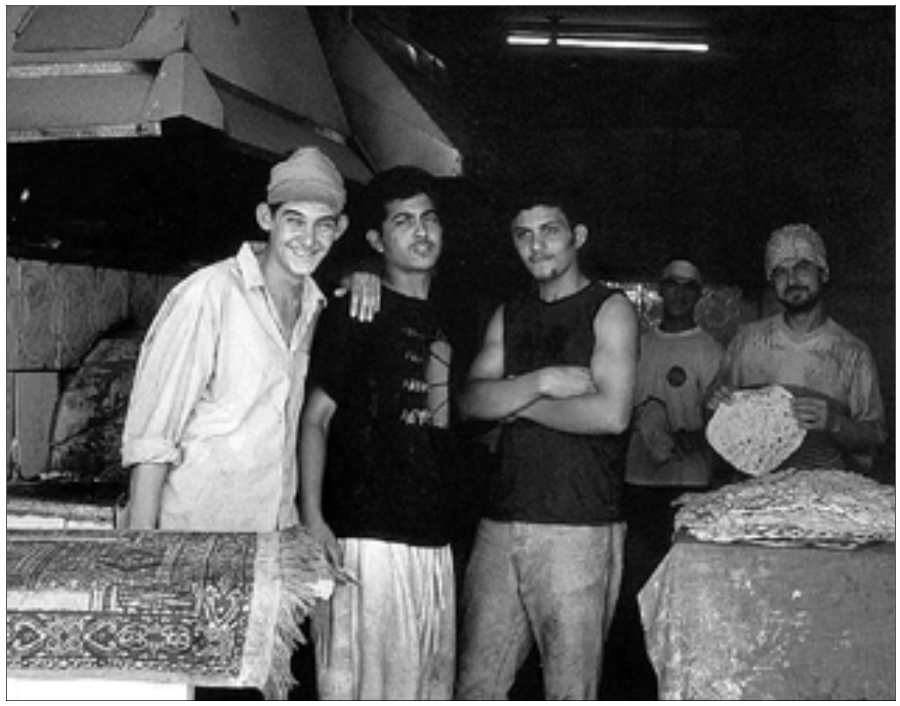

PHOTO: YVES HANOTIAU, HTTP://WWW.SKIOUROS.NET

Iraqi Bakers in Amman, Jordan

The recent regime change in Iraq has prompted a new category of Iraqis to envision their futures abroad, those belonging to the layer of the middle and upper middle class that was associated with the previous regime and which has capital. Jordan is again the main regional pole of this emigration, from where Western Europe—if not post-9/11 North America—remains accessible, and where work contracts can be negotiated again with Libya and Yemen to replace those Iraqis who now think of returning. A limited trend of return migration is already perceptible, in which Jordan is the last step before getting back to Iraq to explore the possibilities of long-term return or the mere re-establishment of economic or social ties. Now that Iraqi migration has had ample time to gain a transnational dimension, it is likely that chain migration through Jordan will continue until families are reconstituted away from the Middle East, or until families reverse the direction of their migration and reunite within Iraq.

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Notes

1. See B. Rajaee, 'The Politics of Refugee Policy in Post-Revolutionary Iran', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 54, n°1 (2000), p. 44–63.
2. For more on clandestine migration see Géraldine Chatelard, 'Jordan as a transit country: Semi-protectionist immigration policies and their effects on Iraqi forced migrants', *New Issues in Refugee Research*, n°61 (2002).

The Revival of Henna Night in Cairo

IKRAN EUM

Henna rituals associated with the marriage celebration have been gradually disappearing in urban Egypt in the past half-century. Yet the art of henna has recently been revived among certain circles of young middle- and upper-class Cairene women who have reincorporated the tradition of henna painting into the pre-nuptial 'henna night' party.

The decorative application of henna has recently become a globalized fad, especially among young people in cosmopolitan cities where tattoo culture has set a trend in body art. Fashionable shops from Europe and America to Korea provide their customers with henna drawings. In Muslim societies the application of henna has a long tradition, dating at least to the time of Prophet Mohammed. It's believed that the Prophet regarded white hairs on the body as ugly and accordingly said, 'change this whiteness of the hair and of the beard with something and avoid blackness… [T]he best way to change whiteness is henna and *katam* (another dying material).'[1]

Apart from its association with the Prophet, henna drawing rituals had been a long-standing tradition in the Middle East, especially on the occasion of the bridal 'shower' which is usually held the night before the wedding. In addition to serving decorative and informative functions, henna also played an important role in the social and festive aspects of the wedding. For instance, henna drawings were seen to prepare the bride's body for her wedding night (a decorative function), and also announced her marriage to others (an informative function). At the same time, henna night represented a time when women—including female relatives and friends—celebrated in a segregated gendered space where professional singers and dancers entertained them (a festive function). The henna party can thus be seen as a time when women bid farewell to the bride before she left her natal home (a social function). It was also commonly believed that henna night brought good luck to a marriage.[2]

With changes in urban middle- and upper-class cultures in the Middle East, the henna ritual began disappearing. Yet based on field research I conducted in Cairo from 2001 to 2002, it became apparent that in some circles the custom has been revived due, in part, to the emerging commercial wedding industry in Cairo.

Henna night in contemporary Cairo

The term 'henna night' can be deceptive as I found when I was invited to the henna party of 25-year-old Iman where henna drawings didn't make up any part of the celebration whatsoever.[3] The henna night, following tradition, was held at the home of the bride's parents. Multicoloured light bulbs were hung in a triangular pattern on their apartment building to signal the event.[4] I entered the party to sounds of loud music and women's *zagharid* (sound made to express a joyous occasion). Iman's mother warmly greeted us with hugs and kisses and after seating us served us small bottles of Pepsi. She told us that Iman had gone to the coiffeur. Soon thereafter Iman entered the house dressed in a long, snug-fitting gold-coloured evening dress signalling the start of the henna night.

For our entertainment taped music of Egyptian pop singers such as Hakim and Amd Diab blared from the loudspeakers. We danced, clapped and sang along to the music. Several other female relatives and neighbours arrived and some of them took off their headscarves, tied them around their hips and danced in the Oriental style swerving their hips adeptly. Some girls changed into party dresses that they had prepared especially for the night. Another guest brought her video camera to record the night's activities. When we tired of dancing, Iman's mother served us chocolates, Pepsi and cakes and several women gathered around Iman to ask her about her experience at the coiffeur. The group then started to sing again, this time folkloric songs about the love between a man and a woman. Some girls improvised rhythms turning anything they could find such as a plastic vessel, a pot and salad forks and spoons into instruments (in place of *table* (drum) and *duff* (tambourine)). Later, the girls presented the bride with some gifts which included a silver ring, a small silver frame carved with Qur'anic verses and expensive foreign perfume. After more *zagharid*, the party came to an end.

I later began investigating why the actual application of henna didn't make up a part in the night's celebrations. According to older Egyptian women whom I interviewed, the drawing of henna patterns in the henna night seems to have been gradually disappearing since the 1950s and 1960s, or even earlier, except in Upper Egypt. Some said its decline occurred when women first started entering the labour force since working urban women and students found it inappropriate for their skin to be stained for up to several weeks with henna drawings (Morgan 1995:36).[5] However, even though the tradition of henna drawing seemed to have become extinct in Cairo, the tradition of women gathering the night before the wedding for the 'henna night' continued. Since the late 1990s, however, some young middle-class and upper-class Cairene women have revived the tradition of the actual henna painting during henna night. Their interest in the art is often attributed to the popularity of Sattouna, a Sudanese *hannana* based in Cairo who draws traditional Sudanese patterns on the body with henna paste. The tradition of hiring professional singers and dancers (as opposed to relying on taped pop music) has also returned to Cairo. The revival of henna night seems to be also attributed to the growing

PHOTO: IKRAN EUM, 2002

Patterns of henna on the bride's hand

wedding industry in Cairo where it can be purchased as part of a wedding package. Henna nights are now organized, directed, and performed by professional groups who supply the musicians, famous singers, dancers, and most critically, a videographer to professionally record the entire event. The current henna rituals seem to have changed from a ritual of 'celebration' to a commodity that can be 'purchased'.

The commercialization of henna night

Interestingly, in the interest of 'the revival of tradition', the programmes of several henna nights that I attended—which were organized by one of Egypt's famous singers—actually followed the rituals of the traditional henna night, with the exception that women and men were no longer segregated. In the new commercialized henna night party, both the bride and the groom are adorned with 'traditional' items supplied by the night's show director. While the bride is entirely covered from head to waist and escorted by several dancers in traditional garments, the groom is adorned in the Turkish style, carries a walking stick and wears a red fez (Turkish-style hat) on his head. The couple's movements are directed and controlled by the director's cues in order to capture the best moments for video recording. Following the performance, the henna drawing ritual takes place.

The commercialized henna night brings about a significant transformation in the traditionally segregated 'feminized' space. Unlike the traditional henna night, the mixing of men and women in the current, commercialized henna night festivities has blurred the divisions between gendered spaces. As a result, women's expressions and movements in the current mixed henna night festivities are more restricted than in the past. The revival of the henna night serves as an example of how 'traditional' and 'authentic' practices get reinvented.

PHOTO: IKRAN EUM, 2002

Sattouna, who is a hannana, is drawing patterns on the bride's skin at the henna night.

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Notes

1. Al-Nasai v. 8 Adornment: 138-140 in Aida S. Kanafani *Aesthetics and Ritual in the United Arab Emirates: The Anthropology of food and personal adornment among Arabian Women.* (Beirut: American University of Beirut.1983), p. 53–7
2. For a description of henna night see Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: Written in Egypt During the Years 1833–1835*. (The Hague and London: East-West Publications, 1989 [1836]),.
3. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms.
4. It is a long-standing tradition for the bride's parents to announce the marriage to the neighbours by lighting up their home or the front of the building in which their flat is located.
5. See, for example, Patti Jones Morgan 'Family Affairs: Weddings in Egypt', Aramco World, September/October, 1995.

The current henna rituals seem to have changed from a ritual of 'celebration' to a commodity that can be 'purchased'.

Islamic Voluntary Welfare Activism in Jordan

EGBERT HARMSEN

During the last two decades the voluntary welfare associations' role in providing social services to the underprivileged in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been significantly enhanced. Important contributing factors to this development have been the process of political liberalization since 1989, increased economic hardship and rising levels of poverty (which were partly due to continuous state withdrawal from the domain of social welfare). Religious revival has also been a key factor and has greatly strengthened the role of voluntary associations with an Islamic background.

On 25 July 2003, one of the Islamic welfare associations in Jordan, Al Afaf, held its tenth collective wedding party in Amman since its establishment ten years ago. Fifty-two couples celebrated their marriage in a mass party attended by thousands of visitors. The party took place in and around the Islamic *Dar ul-Arqam* school in an affluent Amman neighbourhood. The street leading to the school building was packed with cars, buses and invited families. Banners welcomed the visitors. Upon entering the school area, men and women visitors were separated from one another, as men and women celebrate in separate parts of the complex. There was excitement in the air. Men in green uniforms from the Jerusalem Scouting Association walked around to maintain order. An Al Afaf Association spokesman welcomed the visitors, thanked Allah for enabling all those present to attend the party, declared it a joyful occasion and presented the programme. Qur'anic verses regarding marriage and family life were recited. Next, the spokesman rose to the platform again, and spoke of the values of marriage, sharing, solidarity and love. He expressed the wish that 'the fatherland… be a land of love and welfare for everyone.' Several Islamist male singing groups performed throughout the feast. They sang of Allah the Almighty and the merits of marriage, and of the bride and bridegroom. Mostly no musical instruments were used, except for occasional drums. Nonetheless, the performances were rhythmic in character. Many men in the audience started to clap, and some danced. Finally, the fifty-two bridegrooms were led to the schoolyard by a group of men in white *kefiya*'s and traditional robes. Once in the schoolyard, white foam was poured over the bridegrooms and a circle was created in within which they danced. Towards the end of the party, *dabkeh*-dancers bared their fists and sang of liberating Palestine from the 'Zionist enemy'.

Marriage and family

Al Afaf is one of the many associations in Jordan founded and run by people belonging (either formally or informally) to the Jordanian Islamist movement. Al Afaf's president, Dr. Abdul Latif Arabiyat, for example, is a prominent leader of the Islamic Action Front Party, the political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The association's founders were alarmed by the lack of access to marriage for many young Jordanians due to the high financial and material demands of the wedding parties, along with the costs and demands involved in starting a family. In their view, these high demands and the inability of young people to meet them, could easily lead to the spread of sexual immorality. The main activities of Afaf consist, therefore, in the organization of mass weddings, the provision of bridal gifts and contributions, and also of interest-free loans to the newlyweds. Moreover, the association organizes lectures and workshops related to marriage and family issues and publishes books on these topics. Within these domains Al Afaf emphasizes the traditional role of the husband as the family provider, and that of his spouse as housewife and mother. At the same time, the values of harmony, patience, mutual respect and understanding within marriage are stressed. Abuse of the wife, a widespread phenomenon in Jordanian society, is firmly rejected in the name of Islam.

Al Afaf's discourse regarding marriage and family has a strong anti-materialist and anti-consumerist component as well. Mufid Sarhan, general manager of the association, believes Jordanians set their priorities incorrectly if they wait until they have obtained a well-paying job, a spacious home and a beautiful car before they decide to marry. 'According to Islam,' Sarhan argues, 'marital life and love is fundamental for the well being of the human being. One shouldn't cherish too high material expectations in this regard (…) material expectations should be lowered, and a higher priority should be put to the importance, the warmth and the love of marriage.'

Solidarity or *takaful* between the rich and the poor is another vital component of Al Afaf's discourse. Arabiyat explains: 'we see two extremes in our society now. On the one hand, there are many people in Jordan who are so poor that they do not have the means to have a simple wedding party, and on the other hand, there are rich people who spend tens of thousands [of] dinars on wedding parties, and celebrate them with a lot of glamour and with the aim to show off.' According to Arabiyat, it would be better if the rich spent part of their money on helping the poor to marry. Al Afaf's collective weddings, to which wealthy donors and companies contribute financially and in kind, are an expression of this conviction. The wedding-parties are meant to create an atmosphere of shared joy and togetherness, regardless of the social ranking of the participants. The parties are meant to symbolize a 'better Islamic society', characterized by a spirit of modesty, cooperation, and compassion; a society in which rich people spend part of their wealth on the welfare and the social and educational opportunities of the less privileged, rather than on their own social prestige. After all, giving for the sake of the poor and the common good is giving *fi sabeel Allah*, 'for the sake of God'.

Helping the poor, orphans, widows and the needy in general, *fi sabeel Allah,* could be considered the most basic tenet in the discourse surrounding the social work of Islamic voluntary welfare associations in Jordan. All kinds of services to the underprivileged groups just mentioned, whether they consist of monthly payments of financial benefits, distributions of food, clothes and blankets, *iftar*-meals during *Ramadan*, helping poor families to cope with social problems, providing vocational training in areas ranging from sewing to basic computer-skills and income-generating projects, ought to be given without expecting anything in return. Members and donors of the associations attribute selfless human compassion towards others to *taqwa* or fear of God, and any activity emanating from that principle is considered to be done for Him. Such activity is thus considered part of the *'ibadat*, as much as as an observance of the *salat* or the *hajj*, for instance. In this connection, concern with the after-life is often expressed as a central element of the motivation for a Muslim to do social work.

Brides pose for a picture with their grooms at mass wedding organized by Jordan's Islamic society, al-Afaf, Amman, 25 July 2003.

Apart from the question of motivation, Islamic faith and discourse also play a role in the *tarbiya* or educational programmes that these associations provide for the poor and orphaned, and for the wider public. The centres for orphans and the poor belonging to the Islamic Charity Centre Society, a nationwide welfare society widely considered as the 'social wing' of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, claim to have a 'comprehensive' approach towards the problems of the poor and orphaned. They provide lessons in Qur'anic recitation, *tafsir*, and rituals; they help poor and orphaned children with problems related to learning at school; and they teach them *adab* or good manners and morals in dealing with others in society and about various other health and social issues. Apart from that, they teach the mothers to bring-up their children in a patient and friendly way and urge the client-families to stick together. Older brothers or sisters are admonished to take responsibility for their younger siblings, and the latter are told to obey the former. Working at achieving harmonious relations within family and community is regarded as an essential Islamic duty. Preaching Islamic values, like patience and thankfulness for what is provided by Allah, is also regarded as part of the *da'wa* carried out by these centres and associations. The objective of this mission is instilling a combined sense of piety and dignity into orphans and the poor, and to prevent at all cost the dreadful prospects of family-disintegration, addiction, crime and immorality.

Politics of welfare

Are Islamic voluntary welfare associations vehicles for the political aims of the Jordanian Islamist movement? Representatives of these associations vehemently deny any such political involvement. They stress that they work under the authority of the Ministry for Social Development and the Jordanian Law on Societies and Social Bodies, which stipulate that voluntary associations are prohibited from working for any personal or political gain. There are actually religiously inspired Muslim welfare associations in Jordan without any links to the movement. Dr. Musa Shteiwi, a sociologist at Jordan University, insists, however, that at least those associations affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood clearly play a political role in, and mobilize support for, this mainstream Islamist movement through their social work. This view appears to be supported, for example, by the active involvement of workers of centres belonging to the Islamic Charity Centre Society in the election-campaigns of the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF). The director of one of the centres for aiding orphans and the poor in Amman, for instance, figured as an IAF-candidate during the campaign for the municipal elections held on 17 July 2003. That the public sympathy and respect Islamists enjoy in several local communities through their social work is closely related to their political mobilization efforts, is highly probable. It is the—often multiple—roles of the people within and around these associations, with all their social networks at their disposal, which shed light on topics like the relationship between voluntary welfare associations and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Action Front Party, the government-sponsored *zakat*-comittees, other political and social institutions, and the general public.

There might be other reasons why representatives and members of Islamic voluntary welfare associations do not like to be identified with a particular movement or organization such as the Muslim Brotherhood. They want to stress that their services and/or messages are available and addressed to all members of the community, regardless of their political or organizational affiliation. This seems to conform to the populist message of Islamists who stress that Islam as a total way of life, and as a social and political order, represents the true desires, aspirations and needs of 'the people' as a whole, regardless of class, gender and social standing. Their ideology claims to represent a 'religious core' among all Muslims (and among Christians) rather than just one version of (political) Islamic discourse. As Mufid Sarhan, general manager of Al Afaf stated: '… there isn't such a thing in Jordan as an "Islamic association." Of course, we give expression to Islamic norms, morals and values in our work and our publications, but how could you expect otherwise? After all, the overwhelming majority of the people here are Muslims!'

Religion plays a dominant symbolic role in Jordanian civil society and the public sphere, and this role has only strengthened since the events of 11 September 2001. Dr. Abdallah Khateeb, the president of the General Union of Voluntary Societies in Jordan, certainly not an Islamist himself, is sceptical about the concept of Islamic voluntary welfare associations, and stresses that all voluntary societies work on the basis of religious principles related to compassion and solidarity with the poor. Evidently, radical secularist voices in Jordan, which are explicitly questioning of the role of religion in political and social life, are marginal. And while Islamist opinions on concrete issues might be countered in the public sphere, this also often happens in the name of Islam. For instance, in August 2003, when Islamist deputies contested the new divorce (*khulu*) law giving women the right to divorce their husbands without the latter's consent, arguing that the law would pave the way for the disintegration of families, demonstrations were held in defence of the new legislation. The demonstrators asserted that a harmonious family-life could only be based upon the voluntary commitment of wife and husband, and that the new interpretation of *khulu* was therefore in agreement with the principles of the *shari'a*. Government figures usually support the more liberal interpretations within Islamic discourse and since the regime has managed, so far, to determine the rules governing public debates, Islamists are compelled to spread their *da'wa,* to a large extent, through their social networks.

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Edward Said and Islam

FERIAL J. GHAZOUL

Edward Said was thoroughly secular; his secularism was not anti-religious as much as a-religious. His interest in Vico is indicative of his own position. Giambattista Vico, in his *New Science* (1725), separated the domain of the divine from the domain of the human, concentrating on the latter in his analysis and using the terminology and concepts of his time. He was interested in the history of the gentiles, a history made by people and not the history ordained by God. Likewise Said was interested in human endeavor and history, in all that was made by human beings, not by supernatural forces, and thus in what can be changed by human beings. For Said, it is futile to discuss God's ways partly because he had no taste for it, and partly because what can anyone say to someone who tells you God is on his side? How can one have dialogue and exchange with such 'holiness' and 'fundamentalism'? Once you are one of the elect, or once you are convinced that your people are the 'chosen people'—and chosen by no less than God Himself—then there is no room for human intervention, no place for human agency or endeavor.

Colonial hegemony, as Said shows in his *Orientalism* (1978), was not simply military and political, but also cultural. The debasement of the Other –the colonized –was a necessary task to justify domination. Wittingly or unwittingly, European culture caved in under pressures of racism in whose frontlines stood colonial administrators and Orientalists. Whatever humanistic vision Europe had during the Enlightenment was subordinated to the colonial discourse. It was easy to call on the medieval hostility between Christendom and Islam (not withstanding areas of coexistence between them) and raise the specter of wicked and dangerous Muslims. Islam and Muslims were then classified as both false and evil. Even though such a worldview is essentially motivated by political considerations, the religious zeal of missionaries and other Christian and Jewish fundamentalists made use of it and disseminated a lop-sided view of Islam and Muslims. Fair-minded as Said was, he could not tolerate this smearing of the Muslim's image, this wholesale condemnation of a religious faith and its adherents, thus he wrote *Covering Islam* (1981). The title itself has a double meaning, for 'to cover' indicates 'to know fully' and 'to conceal'. The book uncovered how Islam and Muslim countries are misrepresented in American media. Frances Fitzgerald noted that 'every foreign correspondent and every editor of foreign news' should read it.

Said went further than revealing prejudices against Islam and Muslims. He strove to learn from Islamic thought, and to use the insights of Islamic culture in his view of, and concern for, the relation between humanism and knowledge. In 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power' (1986), Said throws light on Foucault through reference to the Muslim philosopher of history Ibn Khaldun, sometimes known as the 'father of sociology'. Without reductiveness, Said shows affinities while at the same time points to differences between the two. This analogical and contrastive approach not only puts those two minds on the same horizon, but also uses each to elucidate the other.

> Said was interested in human endeavor and history, in all that was made by human beings, not by supernatural forces, and thus in what can be changed by human beings.

One of the main paradoxes that Said as a critic tried to solve was how the literary text is both timeless and time-bound. It is timeless in the sense that we can read it, enjoy it, and learn from it even though it was produced in a different age whose worldview is no more relevant to us. It is time-bound as the text itself is very much a product of its context and has strong bonds with the cultural environment that shaped it, including the socio-aesthetic cross-currents of the time. Said is not the first person to try to solve this seeming contradiction. Marx before him in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1904) wondered how man in an industrial world can enjoy Greek myths. His explanation was that such a pleasure is a sort of nostalgia for mankind's childhood, a recollection of an earlier mode of production. Said's interpretation, on the other hand, makes use of Islamic hermeneutics and exegesis to explain this Janus-faced textual phenomenon—the text being both historically anchored and trans-historical. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), Said refers to the medieval Andalusian theologian, Ibn Hazm, who solved the problem of actuality versus textuality. He and other Zahirites saw the interplay between the holy text and its circumstantiality (embodied in *asbab al-nuzul*, the study of the causes and contexts of the revelations). Their view of language as both immutable and an instrument of contingency provided them with a view of the Qur'an as both divine and worldly.

Said's distinction between filiation and affiliation made elegantly and powerfully in the introductory chapter of this book, entitled 'Secular Criticism', reproduces for those familiar with Islamic values the distinction made in the Qur'an between tribal '*asabiyya*, where solidarity is based on kinship, and the spiritual solidarity Islam preaches among fellow believers (Repentence IX: 24; The Disputer LVII: 22; Apartments XLIX: 10). Though the context in which Said is using these terms is unquestionably secular, his binary opposition parallels the distinction between blood solidarity of *Jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic period) and solidarity which goes beyond blood to the bonding of conviction and belief in post-Islamic society.

What Said was interested in when writing about criticism was to put critical thought before solidarity. He was against secular cliques and partisan loyalty, against sectarian politics and confessional identity. He fought against blind adherence and mystification—be it for a secular creed or a religious dogma. Like a *mujtahid* par excellence, Said always strove for critical thinking and innovative interpretation.

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Edward Said in the Netherlands

PETER VAN DER VEER

Edward Said's death was front-page news in the Netherlands and a Dutch journalist's interview with him in 1999 was broadcast on national television. This is the kind of attention given only to intellectuals of the stature of Sartre or Foucault. When he saw the interview on television, Pierre Audi, the artistic director of The Netherlands Opera, said that he had felt touched as though by the Allegro of Beethoven's great symphonies. Audi dedicated his production of Berlioz' Les Troyens, which had its premiere that same week, to his friend. Said was a great music lover; he wrote on classical music for the nation, and was a close friend of the conductor, Daniel Barenboim. According to Said, Les Troyens is not only Berlioz' greatest work, but also a good example of orientalism in its references to France's new domination of northern Africa in the 1850s and 1860s. Audi's was a pleasantly cosmopolitan gesture in an otherwise quite predictable set of responses from the Dutch cultural and intellectual communities. For scholarly and political reasons, Said has always been at least as controversial in the Netherlands as elsewhere, if not more so. His famous *Orientalism* (1978) has been translated into thirty-six languages, but not into Dutch. Many years ago, Said told me that a Dutch publisher bought the translation rights, but then followed the advice of an Indonesian history specialist to not publish it. His *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) was translated into Dutch, but received negative reviews from, among others, the then leading Dutch liberal politician and later European commissioner, Frits Bolkestein, who negatively compared Said's scholarship to the superior work of Princeton's Islamologist, Bernard Lewis. Some years before, the comparison to Bernard Lewis had already come up in a scandal at Leiden University. Both Said and Lewis had been invited to the opening of the Centre for Non-Western Studies in 1988, but after much quarrelling (including Parliamentary debate), Said's invitation was withdrawn.

The generally negative attitude towards Said in the Netherlands is the result of a combination of factors. In the Dutch Academy, orientalists dominate the study of the Middle East and these scholars feel very offended by Said's work because they see it as almost a personal attack on their integrity. The scholarship in these circles is by and large empiricist and positivist, while the impact of Foucault's *Knowledge and Power* has been rather limited. It remains puzzling, however, how little real attention specialists in the Netherlands have given to Said's work, given the fact that it is firmly rooted in the German historical tradition of Curtius, Panofsky and, of course, Auerbach, whose *Mimesis* has recently been re-published with a new introduction by Said. Contrary to what people who have not read his work often think, Said is not a radical iconoclast, but, in fact, a great lover of Western cultural and scholarly traditions. The other factor, obviously, is Said's Palestinian nationalism. Dutch politics is, in general, pro-Israel, and criticism of Israel is easily interpreted as anti-Semitism. This has its origins in Dutch guilt feelings about the Holocaust and post-war Protestant sympathies towards the Jewish inhabitants of the Holy Land. Against this background it was remarkable that Said was the first recipient of the International Spinoza Prize, awarded in The Hague in 1999. He was very moved by the event because he felt a strong affinity for the secular cosmopolitan, Baruch de Spinoza, who was born in Amsterdam in 1632. Spinoza and Said were humanists who distanced themselves from the radical religious politics of their times. They were independent secular thinkers with a strong ethical belief in tolerance and human rights. And both of them belonged to exile communities.

Said's work has been taken up by new generations of postcolonial scholars who have, like Said, migrated to the US. Many of them, like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Gauri Viswanathan, are from the Indian subcontinent and teach in English departments at Ivy League universities such as Columbia and Harvard. That kind of impact is hardly to be expected in the Netherlands, partly because the Dutch colonialists in Indonesia promoted Malay, not Dutch, and partly because Dutch is not a world language. In the Netherlands the impact of Said's work has been primarily on debates about Dutch colonialism and quite limited in its reach. Nevertheless, an increase in the importance of Said's work, in the Dutch academy and elsewhere, seems likely to grow with the rising demand for a renewed imperialism which can be seen in the new historical writing of Ferguson in Britain and Emmer in the Netherlands, for example, and which can be witnessed even more directly in current US foreign politics. As long as imperialism does not disappear, Said's work is sure to retain its topical importance.

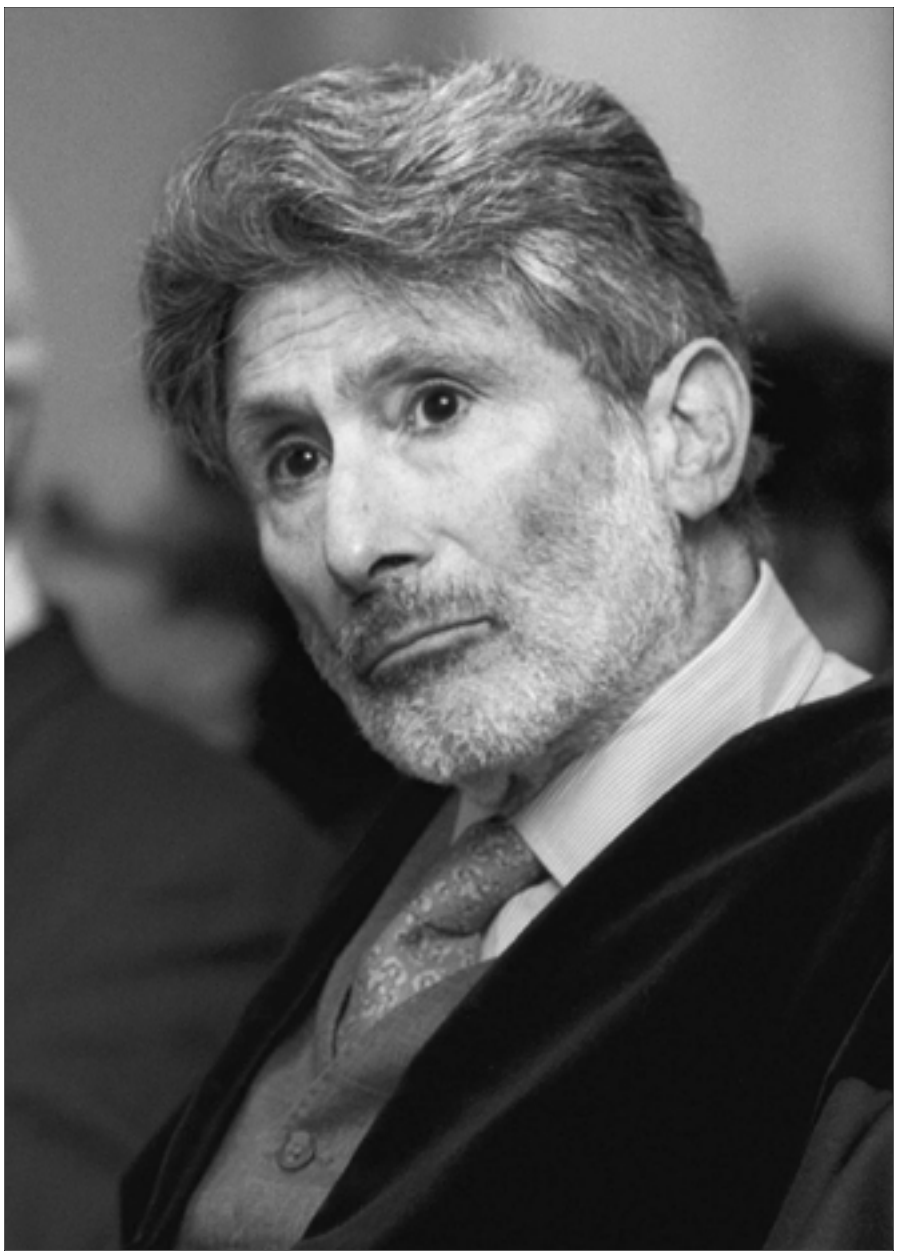

PHOTO: DICK DE JAGER, 2003

Said receiving an honorary doctorate at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), TheHague.

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Edward Said and Palestine

MOUIN RABBANI

Edward W. Said played a unique role in the contemporary Palestinian national movement. It is difficult to imagine it being reproduced by another individual Palestinian, a judgement that reflects both Said's extraordinary qualities and the fundamental transformation of the environment in which he operated during the past three decades.

Said's involvement with the Palestinian struggle was by his own admission more a matter of coincidence than inevitability. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he was not spurred to a life of activism by the Palestinian *nakba* ('catastrophe') of 1948; born in Jerusalem to an entrepreneurial family with ties to both Egypt and Lebanon—ties that helped it avoid the worst depredations visited upon the Palestinian people by war and dispossession—Said spent the next two decades pursuing his education in Cairo and the United States. On the eve of the1967 June War, which he would subsequently define as an event of transformative significance, the young Said was a rising and contentedly assimilated star in the English Literature department of New York's prestigious Columbia University. Retaining only tangential connections with the Arab world (and then largely with the elite, cosmopolitan milieu of his youth beautifully memorialized in his autobiographical *Out of Place*), his promising academic career appeared to form the limit of his political horizon.

Israel's overwhelming defeat of the Arab states and occupation of the remaining areas of Palestine in 1967, the overtly triumphalist and crass anti-Arab reception accorded Israel's victory in the United States, and the rise of the Palestinian nationalist movement shortly thereafter—all against the background of an increasingly turbulent world exemplified by the Vietnam War and the gathering revolt on university campuses—had a profound effect on Said. He actively sought out the emerging Palestinian leadership in a series of visits to Jordan and Lebanon during the late 1960s, and became an increasingly visible and prolific public advocate for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

Relentlessly energetic, supremely eloquent, consistently rigorous and witty, always dapper in dress and appearance, Said combined unconcealed moral and political commitment with an indefatigable relish for intellectual and polemical combat, and did so to unparalleled effect. By the late 1970s he had become the leading spokesperson and campaigner for Palestinian rights in the Western world, directly and indirectly responsible for an openness towards the Palestinian narrative among opinion makers, intellectuals, and activists in Europe and North America that would have been inconceivable only a decade earlier. Only PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat and a handful of other Palestinian political leaders maintained greater public recognition outside the Middle East.

Said and Palestinian politics

Said's relationship with the Palestinian leadership was complex and went through various stages. A lifelong independent with a profound distaste for the imposed discipline inherent in political organization, he never joined a political movement although he served as a member of the PLO's Palestine National Council between 1977 and 1991, and was on several occasions nominated as a negotiator on its behalf. Along with kindred spirits such as the late Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and the PLO's Lebanon representative Shafiq al-Hut, emerging leaders such as Azmi Bishara and Mustafa Barghouthi, and international comrades like Eqbal Ahmad and Noam Chomsky, Said promoted strategies that sought to reconcile principle with pragmatism, along with tactics that would maximize their potential by achieving support in the crucial battlegrounds of European and American public opinion.

Reflecting this agenda, Said was during the 1970s a pioneering advocate of a two-state settlement and worked closely with Arafat, whom he—correctly—viewed as the only leader capable of persuading both the PLO and the international community to adopt partition as the basis for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *The Question of Palestine* (1978), although primarily intended to expose a Western audience to the realities of Palestinian history and the legitimacy of Palestinian national aspirations, remains the most powerful statement produced on behalf of a two-state settlement to this day. It not only led to its author's vilification by Palestinian radicals, but also unleashed a concerted and increasingly vulgar campaign against his scholarship and character by pro-Israel intellectuals and activists that continues even after his death. For Arab intellectuals seeking approval in Washington's corridors of power, furthermore, shrill denunciations of Said's 'pernicious influence' became *de rigeur*. Threats against his life, emanating from both Arab and (primarily) Zionist quarters, became routine but were blithely ignored.

Although Said supported Palestinian participation in the 1991 Madrid Middle East Peace Conference, he was by then increasingly estranged from Arafat and the Tunis-based PLO leadership, and offered a blistering farewell when he resigned from the PNC that same year. According to Said, the Palestinian leadership had squandered too many opportunities, failed to mobilize Palestinian capabilities and resources, neglected the crucial struggle for global (and especially Western) public opinion, limited its energies to a largely futile search for friends in high places, institutionalized malfeasance and mediocrity, and—in the logical culmination of this collection of failures—grievously mismanaged the Palestinian response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The 1993 Oslo accords ensured that the break became definitive as well as increasingly acrimonious. Said accused Arafat of a grand sell-out—signing a 'Versailles' that transformed the PLO into a 'Palestinian Vichy'—in order to perpetuate his failed leadership and the political relevance of his organization. Oslo, he consistently argued, would provide only cosmetic changes to the occupation, and deliver a Middle Eastern version of *apartheid* rather than self-determination. The Palestinian Authority reciprocated by banning his books and attacking him on its airwaves.

Oslo, he consistently argued, would provide only cosmetic changes to the occupation, and deliver a Middle Eastern version of apartheid rather than self-determination.

As Israeli settlement expansion continued at an accelerated pace during the 1990s and his predictions about Oslo were realized, Said—no doubt inspired by the new South Africa which he had occasion to visit—concluded that a two-state settlement was no longer feasible, and could only function as a transitional phase towards a unitary, democratic state encompassing Israel and the occupied territories. Unlike most of his predecessors and

contemporaries in this respect, his vision was however devoid of crass nationalism. He consistently advocated the need for reconciliation based on equality, whose preconditions he identified as Israeli recognition of its responsibility for the historic injustices committed against the Palestinian people, and Palestinian and Arab understanding of the legacy of Jewish suffering culminating in the Nazi holocaust. *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994), *Peace and its Discontents* (1996), and *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (2000) collected the passionate and prolific output of commentary and advocacy produced by Said during this period, each installment additionally forming a direct and successful challenge to an increasingly debilitating disease. Given that he continued writing until his final days, a further compendium is doubtlessly in the making.

His pioneering role in the development of post-colonial theory … both informed the manner in which he understood and advocated Palestinian self-determination, and immeasurably enhanced his ability to do so.

Said and the Palestinian cause

Many have commented on the cosmopolitan and consciously progressive humanism that formed the core of Said's being and politics—and the contradiction presented by his simultaneous embrace of the nationalist struggle of the Palestinians. It was an irony Said both recognized and rejected, and ultimately resolved by spirited opposition to sectarianism of any sort—most obviously the concept of an exclusivist Jewish state in the 21st century Middle East, but unhesitatingly encompassing public denunciations of growing Palestinian religious extremism and indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians as well. Indeed, his unrelenting assault on Israeli and US policies was consistently accompanied by withering criticism of the decrepit state of the contemporary Arab world.

As an activist for the Palestinian cause Said displayed those same traits that characterized the other aspects of his life: a level of commitment that translated into an extraordinary capacity for hard work; an insatiable determination to acquire and impart knowledge; an openness to and active sponsorship of innovative thought; selfless encouragement and promotion of new talent; and an incurable addiction to travel, people, and gossip. A zest for life, in short, that seemed to be lived beyond its known limitations. And above this all stood his sheer eloquence and capacity for representation. To many these qualities achieved their zenith in his *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986), an extended mediation on Palestinian identity and exile that was enhanced while being enriched by the accompanying photography of Jean Mohr.

For Palestinians who could neither reconcile themselves to the existing realities of the Oslo era, nor embrace the constricting alternatives on offer in the Palestinian and wider Arab worlds, Said and his always dependable output functioned as a moral and political compass. Yet he also had an unforgiving attitude towards criticism, which however slight never passed without response and often resulted in severed relationships. Like Arafat—who by contrast remains largely impervious to insult and condemnation—Said tended to view attacks on his work and person (attacks he needless to say also rejected on their own terms) as overt or concealed political assaults on the Palestinian cause he so visibly represented. He thus felt obliged to always give at least as good as he got, and—entering any number of simultaneous battles others would consider superfluous with unrestrained relish and zeal—typically came out ahead.

Given his extraordinary career and the breadth of his accomplishments, it is perhaps tempting to assess the Palestinian aspect of Said's life in isolation from his intellectual, scholarly, and broader cultural roles. To do so is however to neglect the organic and vital connections between these seemingly separate personas—connections that not only existed clearly in Said's own mind (see his *Representations of the Intellectual,* 1994), but are crucial to understanding the influence of his Palestinian activism. His pioneering role in the development of post-colonial theory, for example, both informed the manner in which he understood and advocated Palestinian self-determination, and immeasurably enhanced his ability to do so. Conversely, his experiences as an Arab at Cairo's Victoria College and later as a Palestinian in the West doubtlessly contributed to his analysis of the relationship between imperialism, scholarship, and culture—and his insistence that one must first of all unlearn essential categories such as East and West.

It would be no exaggeration to observe that national movements produce or recruit individuals of Said's calibre only once if at all; individuals of independent global standing who personify and express the justice of their cause in multiple environments with moral clarity and political consistency, world citizens whose impact within these varied environments derives from their determination to appeal to a shared humanity and universal values—our fundamental equality as peoples and individual human beings– rather than to sympathy for a strange people in a foreign land. Although Edward W. Said's legacy will endure for many years to come, he unfortunately cannot and will not be replaced.

Edward Said with Daniel Barenboim and Saleem Abboud-Ashkar, Birzeit, January 1999.

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Edward Said and Eqbal Ahmad
Anti-Imperialist Struggles in a Post-Colonial World

VAZIRA FAZILA-YACOOBALI

In a series of interviews with David Barsamian when Eqbal Ahmad was asked to comment on Edward Said's intellectual contributions, he summed it up as follows: 'I think the singular achievement of Said, as a literary critic, beginning with *Orientalism*, has been to put imperialism at the center of Western civilization…. He put therefore the whole issue of Western expansion, domination and imperialism as central forces in defining the nature of civilization itself.'[1] Reflecting, in turn, on why he dedicated his book *Culture and Imperialism* to Eqbal Ahmad, Edward Said wrote that 'it was because in his activity, life and thinking Eqbal embodied not just the politics of empire but that whole fabric of experience expressed in human life itself, rather than in economic rules and reductive formulas. What Eqbal understood about the experience of empire was the domination of empire in all its forms, but also the creativity, originality, and vision created in resistance to it. Those words—"creativity", "originality", "vision"—were central to his attitudes on politics and history.'[2] The relationship between these two men was an important one—a Palestinian scholar extraordinaire and a charismatic activist intellectual from Pakistan—for they came to share a profound understanding of the relationship between knowledge, power and resistance, and leave us a legacy of challenges for drafting an anti-imperialist politics.

End of colonialism

They were born around the same time (Ahmad in 1933/4 and Said in 1935) in two parts of the world which were under British colonial rule (India and Palestine), and both experienced the violence of decolonization as a formative experience of their childhoods. In a BBC documentary on his life,[3] Ahmad traveled along the historic Grand Trunk Road which once stretched the breadth of the Indian-subcontinent from Calcutta to the threshold of Afghanistan. On the way he revisited the village in Bihar where he grew up, recounting his father's murder because of his pro-Congress leanings, the decision of his elder brothers to migrate to Pakistan because of their pro-Muslim League leanings, and his mother's refusal to leave their familial home. Torn asunder, the 'moment of arrival', independence from colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent was constituted by the very experience of Partition. Almost thirty million people were displaced in the violence that ensued, one of the largest forced migrations of modern times, and Eqbal and his brothers walked with the massive caravans of the uprooted along the G.T. Road into what had become the state of Pakistan.

Said also experienced a series of displacements as the state of Israel was carved out of British Mandate Palestine. He moved from Jerusalem to Egypt, and then, alone, to the United States while the rest of his family went to Lebanon. After being diagnosed with cancer, Said wrote a memoir, 'Out of Place' (1999) in which he reflects on what the loss of 'place' meant to him and his family. However, it was not the personal losses associated with displacement, but rather the profound and shared dispossession of a people from both their land and from history that moved him to write as an act of resistance.

On hearing statements by the likes of Golda Meir who, in 1969, declared that there are no Palestinians, Said felt compelled 'to articulate a history of loss and dispossession that had to be extricated, minute by minute, word by word, inch by inch, from the very real history of Israel's establishment, existence and achievements… This was the world of power and representations, a world that came into being as a series of decisions made by writers, politicians, philosophers to suggest or adumbrate one reality and at the same time efface others.'[4]

The 1967 war drew Said into Palestinian politics. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod asked Said to write an article on the war for *Arab Affairs* and that article, 'The Arab Portrayed', became the starting point for his path-breaking book *Orientalism* (1978).[5] The article so impressed Ahmad that he asked Abu-Lughod to convey his appreciation to Said. The two men met each other in 1968 at a meeting of Arabs in the United States where Ahmad was a keynote speaker. Ahmad had already earned a reputation for fighting against French colonial rule with the National Liberation Front in Algeria. He was also an eloquent civil rights and anti-Vietnam war campaigner in the United States. In his address Ahmad argued, as a veteran of guerilla warfare in Algeria, that the success of an armed struggle lay not in its ability to 'out-fight' the adversary, but rather to 'out-legitimize' or morally isolate it. He thus concluded that armed struggle would not work for the Palestinian cause because it would simply reinforce the Israeli state's proclaimed legitimacy as a homeland for those who had suffered, for it would allow Zionists to continue to portray Jews as victims of Arab violence instead of confronting the dispossession and suffering of Palestinians.[6] Although Ahmad's advice against armed struggle disappointed most Palestinians there, particularly as their hopes came to be tied to the emergent PLO's armed struggle for liberation, Said was so impressed that he introduced himself to Ahmed after the lecture. Of their initial meeting Ahmad said, 'I knew from his article that I was meeting someone who had a very fresh and original mind. Since then we have been very close friends'.

Comrades-in-arms

Through the ensuing years Said saw Ahmad as a comrade-in-arms, and turned to him for advice and help in negotiating the challenges of advocating the Palestinian right to national self-determination. When in the late 1970s Said served as a member of the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian parliament in exile, he invited Ahmad to Beirut to meet Yasir Arafat and other Palestinian leaders. He noted that '[t]hose leaders sensed about Eqbal that he was a real friend in the struggle and his sincerity and commitment could not be gainsaid, despite the fact that he wasn't a native'.[7] Ahmad notes that he repeatedly advised Arafat to engage in non-violent strategies of civil disobedience, of the Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King kind, rather than armed struggle. Although Arafat often took notes, his advice went unheeded.[8] Said too, in *The Question of Palestine* (1979), questioned the PLO's use of violence, and later both became critics of the PLO and the Oslo Accords.

Politics and poetry

For Ahmad, a poem by the communist Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, 'Dawn of Freedom', captured the bathos of decolonization. In 1980 Ahmad introduced Said to Faiz who was in exile in Beirut, and

their oft-recalled evening of poetry recitation inspired Said's essay, 'The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile'.[9] In politics and poetry the two men developed their critiques of power and expressed their faith in people's capacity to resist through creativity. Yet, although they shared a great deal, the two men's contributions differed enormously in substance.

Said was a professor of English Literature at Columbia University and wrote a large number of books in literary criticism, music, the Middle East and Palestine. Certainly the impact of *Orientalism* has gone far beyond the study of the Middle East, so much so that some have claimed that he founded the very field of 'post-colonial studies'. He also regularly wrote articles on contemporary politics as they pertained to the representation of Islam, the Middle East and Palestine. Although he also participated in political discussions, his pen was his most vital sword. In comparison, and although Ahmad was a professor of politics at New Hampshire College, he left his mark wherever he went through his very person—his 'supernally accurate analysis',[10] perceptiveness, compassion and oratory—and became a friend of people's struggles in many different parts of the world. Said described Ahmad's contributions as 'essentially performative achievements,' 'stylists of the uttered word, pluri-lingual, generous with ideas and stories.'[11] On his retirement from New Hampshire College, Said urged his friend to publish his ideas, telling him, 'you shouldn't leave your words scattered to the winds or even recorded on tape, but they should be collected and published in several volumes for everyone to read.' Unfortunately, Ahmad died on 11 May 1999, before compiling such works. While Said leaves us a legacy of written words, their friendship offers reminders of some of the challenges that lie ahead.

> They were born around the same time (Ahmad in 1933/4 and Said in 1935) in two parts of the world which were under British colonial rule (India and Palestine), and both experienced the violence of decolonization as a formative experience of their childhoods.

Pluralizing and humanizing

Ahmad conceded that '[i]n literary criticism and historical writing there [we]re two times: before *Orientalism* and after *Orientalism*', yet he felt the work's impact, although centered on the Middle East, didn't have enough influence on the study of Islam. He argued that the book had had a far more decisive impact on histories of other parts of the world, particularly on writings of colonial Western expansion. As far as the study of Islam was concerned, the outcome was two-fold: there were writings that had absorbed and deepened some of *Orientalism*'s insights, but there were also established Orientalists like Bernard Lewis and polemicists like Harold Bloom who continued to demonize Islam and Muslims.[12] Certainly since post-11 September 2001 a large number of books and articles have reproduced a threatening and monolithic Islam for public and political consumption. As Joseph Massad pointed out at *Orientalism*'s Silver Jubilee meeting in New York, the conditions for the production of an abstract 'Orient' remain unchanged. Said, although battling his own illness, repeatedly took the now best-selling author Bernard Lewis and others to task, and argued that '[t]o understand anything about human history, it is necessary to see it from the point of view of those who made it, not to treat it as a packaged commodity or as an instrument of aggression. Why should the world of Islam be any different?'[13] With the passing of Said, this task of pluralizing and humanizing the diverse parts of the Muslim world now takes on a certain urgency.

Further, Said reminded us through Joseph Conrad that the distinctions between civilized London and 'the heart of darkness' quickly collapsed in extreme situations, and that the heights of European civilization could instantaneously fall into the most barbarous practices without preparation or transition.[14] Ahmad also quoted Conrad's statement, in a lecture entitled 'Culture of Imperialism' that self-evidently drew upon Said 's work, that '[t]he conquest of the earth, which means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.' Ahmad went on to argue that 'an enlightened civilization' could engage in 'not a pretty thing' only on the condition that it did not 'look into it too much'.[15] This 'not look[ing] into it *too much*' requires an abdication of rigorous enquiry, and the complicity of intellectuals, which in turn provides the foundations of actual violence and aggression. It was with this awful awareness of the implications of scholarship that Ahmad proposed taking Karl Marx's statement seriously, that the function of knowledge is to comprehend in order to change—'think critically and take risks' to question the cultural, social and political norms that we live with.[16]

Said was often attacked by his detractors who argued that by focusing on the complicity of Western knowledge and power he provided an easy escape for Muslims who could place all the blame for their problems on Western shoulders. However, Said wrote regularly for the Egyptian Weekly *Al-Ahram* and the internet based *Palestine Chronicle*, and Ahmad for the Pakistani *Dawn,* in which they criticized the leaders and their abuse of power in the Muslim world and their repeated betrayal of the aspirations and needs of ordinary people. Particularly since the end of the Cold War, a recurring theme of Ahmad's lectures to Muslim audiences was the failure of education in the Muslim world in promoting creative and humanist thinking. 'This is the dark age of Muslim history', he wrote to his Pakistani readers, 'the age of surrender and collaboration, punctuated by madness. The decline of our civilization began in the eighteenth century when, in the intellectual embrace of orthodoxy, we skipped the age of enlightenment and the scientific revolution. In the second half of the twentieth century, it has fallen.'[17] Rhetorical, scholarly, incisive, thoughtful, they used their critical arsenal strategically in addressing different audiences, but remained clear in delineating the power of the powerful and the struggle of the disempowered. At the Silver Jubilee of *Orientalism*, arguing against a simple reading of the book as about the West versus Others, Said emphasized that 'All great civilizations are plural civilizations. The terms "Orient" and "the West" have no ontological stability.' In a time when such dichotomized abstractions are gaining discursive hegemony in not just Europe and the United States, but also in the increasingly angry Muslim world, the challenge to speak to multiple fronts becomes more and more difficult and necessary. As Said reminded us, 'there is no real Orient to argue for, only the gifts of people of that region for the struggle to survive.'

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Notes

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13. Edward Said, 'Impossible Histories: Why the Many Islams Cannot Be Simplified', *Harpers*, July 2002. In this essay Said particularly attacked Bernard Lewis' *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response.*
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Salafi in Virtual and Physical Reality

PHILIP HALLDÉN

Many of the people who have been arrested around the world during the past two years suspected of being members of al-Qa'ida or affiliated organizations, have taken pride in belonging to the so-called Salafi movement. The designation may cause some confusion in view of the fact that the term 'Salafi' is also known, in older academic parlance, to denote a school of thought associated with 'modernist' reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). These reformers, if ever mentioned at all, are likely to be shunned by the contemporary Salafist. Today, 'Salafism' is more often used in reference to a quite different brand of Islamic thought and practice, a brand that is practically identical to what has otherwise been known as 'Wahhabism', i.e. the form of Sunni Islam that constitutes the 'state religion' of Saudi Arabia. A second source of confusion is that while the adherents of this variety of Salafism are united in their respect for Ibn Hanbal (d. 855), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Muhammad Ibn abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), they have come to disagree on important points and issues, particularly on the issue of jihad. The Salafi 'movement' is comprised of several more or less contradictory wings and tendencies, even within the borders of Saudi Arabia. To put it simply, a distinction should be made between a jihad-oriented wing and other more 'moderate' wings. Al-Qa'ida and its supporters represent the former tendency, while various groups that advocate order and stability instead of revolutionary jihad—although they may vary in their position towards the Saudi regime—make up the latter tendency.

http://www.alneda.com, viewed 17 July 2002

The differences and disagreements within Salafism have come to the fore during the last two years and more acutely than ever after the suicide attacks in Riyadh on 12 May 2003 which killed more than thirty people including eight Americans, and the attack that devastated the Muhaya compound in Riyadh on 9 November 2003. Deep rifts within Saudi society have come to the surface. The May attack revealed, not surprisingly, the existence of an active jihad-oriented network within the borders of Saudi Arabia. Many of those suspected of being involved were arrested or killed in clashes with Saudi police and security forces during the summer. The campaign also affected intellectuals who provided the jihadists with ideological support, including some rather prominent ulama. Two of the most well-known among those arrested were sheikh Ali bin Khudayr al-Khudayr (b. ca. 1955) and sheikh Nasir bin Hamad al-Fahd (b. 1968), both disciples of the late sheikh Hamoud bin Uqla al-Shuaybi, the most famous and uncompromising supporter of Taliban and al-Qa'ida in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia until his death in January 2002.

The campaign also had repercussions on the Internet. Both al-Khudayr and al-Fahd had until May 2003 maintained their own personal websites where their articles and *fatwa*s were available (http://www.alkhoder.com and http://www.al-fhd.com). Since May neither has functioned properly and has obviously not been updated.[1] But perhaps more important to the internet based al-Qa'ida-supporters was when a hitherto unknown man called Yusuf al-Ayyiri was shot dead in the northern region of Hail after trying to escape from a security checkpoint by car. The incident was reported by international media where there was much speculation that al-Ayyiri was carrying a letter from Usama bin Laden on his dead body. Al-Ayyiri's 'martyrdom' was widely discussed on Arabic mailing lists (*muntadayat*) on the internet.[2] An audio recording of what amounts to his 'famous last words', speaking about the duty of jihad and comparing the present-day situation with the era of the crusades and the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, was also available on some of these lists.[3] The case in point is that Yusuf al-Ayyiri was subsequently identified as the secret webmaster of 'Alneda.com' or *Markaz al-Dirasat wa al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya* (The Center for Islamic Studies and Research). If true, the incident marks a turning point in the history of 'al-Qa'ida' on the Web. The website formerly known as 'Alneda.com' has been one—if not the most—sought-after of all the sites believed to be 'affiliated' with al-Qa'ida. The original domain (http://www.alneda.com) was lost already in July 2002 and it has sometimes been assumed that it disappeared. The site, which constantly changed its web addresses, continued to function until May 2003. Its webmaster was able to keep the site alive by 'hijacking' subdirectories on other websites. However, the physical death of Yusuf al-Ayyiri at the end of May coincided with what now seems to have been the final 'virtual death' of the website. One cannot be completely certain about the matter; disinformation and rumours are easily planted and spread in the ongoing 'netwar'. The important thing so far is that the website formerly known as 'Alneda.com' has not resurfaced since its disappearance in May. What happened in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the bombings in May most certainly amounts to serious losses for the jihad-oriented Salafi network in the Arabian Peninsula as well as on the Internet.

The more recent November attack as well as the clashes in Mecca and other places between security forces and suspected militants prior to this attack are evidence that the battle against terror in the land of Islam's holiest places is not over.[4]

Notes

1. Most of the material that was available at http://www.alkhoder.com before the arrests in May was filed electronically by the author.
2. Filed material from http://forum.fwaed.net, http://www.palsm.com, http://alsaha2.fares.net, http://www.qal3ah.biz etc. at the beginning of June, 2003.
3. Realplayer-files downloaded from http://alsaha2.fares.net and http://www.qal3ah.biz on June 12, 2003.
4. There are indications that the perpetrators of the 9 November attack may be losing supporters, even among hardliners such as sheikh Ali bin Khudayr al-Khudayr. One week after the attack the sheikh, who has been in detention since late May, suddenly appeared in person on Saudi television apologizing for some of the fatwas which supposedly incited violence in the past. The matter immediately spurred lively discussions among the sheikh's fans and followers on the web. Nasir al-Fahd has also recanted previous statements (see (http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=35473&d=23&m=11&y=2003 (in English); http://www.alwatan.com.sa/daily/2003-11-23/first_page/first_page01.htm (in Arabic)).

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Living in the Satellite Bubble

Palestinian-Americans in Chicago

DWAN KAOUKJI

Many Palestinian-Americans in Chicago feel that the American media rarely offer a Palestinian perspective and turn to Arabic news channels, most notably Al Jazeera, for news that they feel accurately portrays and reflects their views. Until an Arab perspective is regularly included in the mainstream American media, Palestinian-Americans will continue to exclude American news channels from their daily television habits.

Despite the more than one hundred US channels available to them, Palestinian-Americans in Chicago are choosing to beam in their news via satellite. Over the past few years, Arabic satellite networks have become increasingly popular among the Palestinian immigrant population in the US and have even been considered to be virtual portals to daily life in the Middle East, keeping immigrants updated with the latest news broadcasts in the Palestinian territories and Israel. Moreover, the satellite dish has become relatively affordable and is available through most local satellite providers. A brief ethnographic survey carried out in 2001 among the Palestinian-American community in Chicago showed that there was a clear preference for Arabic satellite news channels over American channels. The most popular satellite channel among the community was the Al Jazeera news network for its continuous coverage of the second *intifada* and for the latest news on the Middle East. Given these findings, how do Arabic satellite news channels such as Al Jazeera shape the way Palestinians in Chicago stay informed on news in the Middle East? And are Arabic satellite news channels regarded as superior substitutes for mainstream American news channels by Palestinians in Chicago?

For many Arabs living in North America, Al Jazeera is an important news source for issues in the Middle East and is tuned into regularly. According to Al Jazeera's managing director, Jasim Al-Ali, the network's list of 200,000 subscribers in 2002 in the United States and Canada was growing by 2,500 weekly.[1] For Palestinians in the United States, Al Jazeera is one of many Arabic satellite channels that provides them with news on the current situation in Palestine and Israel. In Chicago, where the number of Palestinian-Americans living in the metropolitan area in the year 2000 totaled 5,602[2] (17% of the total Arab population in Chicago), the number of satellite subscribers is also high. In opting for Arabic news sources, Palestinian-Americans feel that they are able to avoid the disturbingly common misrepresentations of Palestinians and of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that are conveyed in mainstream American news broadcasts. And in effect, these immigrants have created a protective 'bubble' to shield themselves from the distortions in the American media, relying solely on satellite networks for accurate accounts of the *intifada*. The abundance of channels helps keep the Palestinian-American viewer tuned in to the various perspectives and public opinions in the Arab world, and offers a large selection. At the same time however, it is clear that Arabic satellite networks alone offer a limited perspective and constitute only one viewpoint on issues in the Middle East.

In the ethnographic survey of 2001, thirty interviews were held with Palestinian-American families of varying religious groups and class backgrounds in Chicago to assess their television habits and viewing preferences. During this period, an effort was made to regularly monitor the reliability of the alternative media sources that were being commonly used by the Palestinian-American community (channels were monitored as often as possible throughout the course of the research). This permitted the monitoring of specific programmes referred to by the interviewees. The majority of Palestinian-American families interviewed were bilingual and were comfortable watching the news in both English and Arabic, but nonetheless preferred watching the Arabic news channels. From the interviewees' responses it appeared that Palestinian-Americans occasionally watch American television channels for entertainment purposes but rarely for the news. They relied primarily on Al Jazeera for news on the Middle East and the *intifada*. They felt that Al Jazeera played a unique role in keeping the community up to date with the intifada through its daily reports, and liked the fact that the station also hosts heated talk shows and programmes that encourage international audience participation and involvement by phone, fax or e-mail. The interviewees did indeed find it necessary to refer to additional international news sources, in both Arabic and English, to keep themselves updated on international news broadcasts. The American news channels, such as CNN or Fox News, were occasionally viewed but seldom regarded as reliable sources of news. The interviewees felt that the American media was generally biased in favor of Israel and that it rarely offered a Palestinian perspective. They find it frustrating to watch the mainstream American news and as a result turn to Arabic news channels for news that they feel accurately portrays and reflects the views of Palestinians.

For the Palestinian-American viewers in Chicago, having both western and Arab news broadcasts available to them at the click of a button appears to be greatly beneficial, but this is not the case. Palestinian-Americans in Chicago are growing less tolerant of American mainstream news, and are beginning to increasingly isolate themselves and their political opinions from the surrounding mainstream. In essence, these immigrants are refraining from publicly voicing their disagreement with the interpretations of the American mainstream on issues in the Middle East, thus preventing themselves from becoming a collective voice capable of effecting any change. Until an Arab perspective is regularly included in the mainstream American media, Palestinian-Americans in Chicago will continue to exclude American news channels from their daily television habits. Both Palestinian-Americans and the American mainstream media need to make an effort to bridge the gap that exists between them and to engender a much-needed environment for more representative global communication.

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Notes

1. El-Nawawy & Iskander Farag, *Al Jazeera: How the Free Arab News Network Scooped the World and Changed the Middle East* (Washington D.C: Westview Press, 2002)
2. US Census Data 2000.

Is There a Church in Islam?

MARK SEDGWICK

Each religion constitutes a distinct system. Failure to recognize this once led many observers of Islam into error, and scholars have therefore tended to move towards purely Islamic categories. Universal categories, however, are needed in order for scholars to transcend boundaries between scholarly disciplines and to communicate effectively with the wider public. This is also true with respect to issues such as 'church' and 'mosque' in current debates on authority within Islam, and more precisely, on institutional authority.

At first sight, the term Church seems not universal, but rather specifically Christian. 'Church' is, however, simply the English translation of the Greek word *ekklēsia*, a word which initially meant 'an assembly of the select', but which was then also used to translate the Hebrew *qāhāl*, meaning 'the congregation of the faithful'. Both the Greek and the Hebrew terms are pre-Christian, and the two senses of Church that derive from them denote two universal categories: the community, and the institutional authority within it.[1] It is in institutional terms that Islam most differs from Christianity. An institution may be formal or informal, and while the overarching institutions of Christianity are formal, those of Islam are informal.

> . . . the most important producers of religious knowledge in the Sunni Arab world today are the media, the state, and the ulama probably in that order.

Islam has evolved formal institutions only for the performance of specific functions. The madrasa (religious college) and the *shari'a* court, to take two examples, are thus institutions within the religion of Islam, but not institutions of the religion. Sunni Islam lacks any overarching, formal, corporate institution that might be identified as a Church. Instead, there is the body of ulama—a word current in non-specialist English, though often misused. The ulama are not in any sense priests, but rather scholars, akin to the New Testament's 'doctors of the law.'

Although Sunni ulama have no rigid hierarchical organization, we know that—as seen in other contexts—a class may still act effectively without being organized into a rigid hierarchy. In fact, a Marxist would see class as more important than the institution or institutions of that class, and even non-Marxists concede that such an approach has merits. For a class to act effectively and to be an actual class—rather than a potential or virtual one—it must be conscious of its existence as such, and must be in agreement on its common interests. The extent to which the ulama have been in agreement on common interests has varied from time to time and place to place, but the ulama have almost always been aware of their existence as a class. And the ulama class certainly constitutes the only possible 'assembly of the select' of Islam. There are other important groups, notably Sufi sheikhs, and there are formal institutions, but, again, all these other groups and institutions are within Islam, not of Islam. Two hundred years ago the ulama held most of the religious authority in Islam, confirming the possible identification of the ulama as the Church of Islam. The situation today, however, is very different.

Religious authority

Authority in any religious system may be analyzed according to its many varieties. There is material authority (over physical assets), doctrinal authority, spiritual (or charismatic) authority, ritual authority, and moral authority. The groups that produce knowledge have, de facto, doctrinal authority. For Islam, the three most important varieties of authority are material, doctrinal, and spiritual. Moral authority can be assumed to flow from other varieties of authority. Ritual authority is of little importance in Islam, contrary to Christianity. The Christian Churches have considerable ritual authority, since in most cases many of the important forms of Christian worship are impossible to perform without the presence of a priest or minister. In contrast, there are almost no ritual actions in Islam that cannot be carried out by any sane adult Muslim.

Material authority in Islam might fall into two categories of assets. On the one hand, there are places of worship, places of learning and instruction madrasas, and places of pilgrimage. On the other hand, there is *waqf* (endowed property), dedicated to the maintenance of the first category of asset. The key to material authority in Islam is control of *waqf*. This control also grants a measure of authority in other spheres. *Waqf* deeds for madrasas, for example, often stipulated what should be taught and how—an indirect exercise of doctrinal authority. *Waqf* deeds for mosques normally contained stipulations concerning the appointment of preachers and imams, also an indirect exercise of doctrinal authority, and in a sense an exercise of ritual authority. In theory, an imam has authority only over the pace of the particular prayer that he has been chosen to lead, and this theoretical point is observed still today, when prayers are performed at a workplace or in a private house. In more general practice, however, once a single individual has been designated as the imam for a particular mosque, other varieties of authority begin to attach to him, though these are hard to define and have never been recognized by doctrine. Since donors who were rarely ulama originally determined the contents of *waqf* deeds, at a *waqf*'s establishment material authority lay with the wealthy. However, once the donor was dead, responsibility for interpreting and implementing the original deeds passed to the ulama, since the overseers (trustees) of *waqf* were almost always of this rank. Small mosques—typically in villages—for which there was often no *waqf*, were generally controlled by the individuals who built the mosque, sometimes Sufi sheikhs, and then by the local community or Sufi *tariqa* (brotherhood or order). Most material authority, though, lay with the ulama, and no other body or group rivalled this authority.

Doctrinal authority also lay mostly with the ulama. It can be safely assumed that Islamic knowledge was produced only by the ulama, because there were few, if any, alternative producers of knowledge of any sort. Major Sufi sheikhs were often also ulama and those who were not, rarely produced written work. There were certain areas of intellectual life that lay outside the ulama's realm, but these were few and far between. Charisma, however, was the accepted specialty of the Sufi orders. Most Sufi sheikhs had at least hereditary charisma, and great sheikhs were almost universally accepted as *awliya* (saints). Spiritual authority, therefore, was not exclusively the dominion of the ulama. But though the Sufi sheikhs had more spiritual authority than the ulama, they never challenged the ulama's material authority, and generally accepted the authority of the ulama in doctrinal matters. If any group in Islam could have rivalled the ulama, it was the Sufis, but—with rare exceptions—Sufism was integrated into a system over which the ulama presided, not one which was in opposition to them. Despite the complication presented by Sufism then, the location of religious authority two hundred years ago indicates that there was a Church in Islam, and that that Church was the body of ulama. Today, this is no longer the case.

Authority today

In the Sunni world, control of *waqf* is now generally in the hands of the state, this control having been assumed between 1826 and the 1960s as one of various measures aimed at producing strong, centralized states. With control of *waqf* came the control of the mosques and madrasas they supported. Turkey has a Ministry of Religious Affairs, but most Arab countries simply have ministries of *waqf* instead. State control of places of learning and instruction arose partly as a result of the state takeover of *waqf*, and partly as a result of the state's simultaneous foundation of new schools and colleges. Although not officially religious institutions, state schools include religion in their curricula and are thus institutions of religious significance, especially when it comes to teaching doctrine, discussed below. By the early twentieth century, the state's institutions of learning had everywhere become more important than those few still controlled by the ulama. Despite these facts, the Arab Sunni state's material authority is not absolute. Countless small *zawiya*s (prayer places) and private mosques still remain outside of state control. These mosques are in private hands, albeit not in the hands of the ulama. In the West, mosques are mostly private, controlled by local mosque associations. Some, remarkably, are controlled by states—and not by Western states, but by states in the Islamic world such as Turkey and Morocco. Very few mosques, however, are controlled by ulama.

The location of doctrinal authority two centuries ago was clear, since no group other than the ulama could have possibly held it. Today, however, there are as many milieus in the Islamic world in which knowledge is produced as there are in the West. And the basic divisions in these many milieus in the Islamic world are also little different from those in the West, relating less to the production of knowledge than to its marketing and distribution—that is, to preaching, teaching, and the media. The most influential media are, of course, the mass media—primarily television, but also radio and newspapers. The mosque sermon (*khutba*) should perhaps also be classed within the mass media, as it too reaches a mass audience. The *khutba* professionals today are ulama, as they have always been, though many *khutba*s in private mosques are delivered by laymen, as has probably also always been the case. But like the physical assets of Islam, the distribution of Islamic knowledge is generally firmly under state control. Many newspapers and nearly all radio and TV stations are owned by the state, and 'independent' newspapers are usually subject to some form of state censorship. Most mosques are also owned by the state, as are the schools. This material authority over distribution has an influence over production, but is not the same as having authority over production. Only in schools, where the state not only sets and polices the curriculum but also usually writes and prints the textbooks, is the state the actual producer of knowledge and therefore, the chief location of doctrinal authority. In other areas, the state shares doctrinal authority with others, usually only setting the outer limits to discourse. A recent study of textbooks used in Egyptian schools suggests an understanding of Islam broadly in line with that of the state. Many Egyptians, however, discard much of what they are taught at school. Dr. Gregory Starett concluded that 'the textbook provides the liturgy for ritual dramatization of the moral authority of the state.'[2] This may be one reason why it is ultimately rejected.

The mass media are now probably more important than schools as channels for the dissemination of religious knowledge. Senior ulama have some access to these media, but this access is affected by a variety of forces, including the state, the nature of the medium itself, and the context in which the ulama appear. Ulama sometimes appear in the media in their own right, but much more important are the occasions on which they appear in the context of a major 'story'. A national debate on a topic such as circumcision, divorce, or suicide bombing has a much higher profile than a Friday-noon mosque broadcast. And in these cases, the voice of the ulama is just one voice among many, just as the voice of Christian figures is one voice among many in a national debate in a Western country. To the extent that knowledge is being produced, it is produced as much or even more by the debate itself than by any individual participant, and the media professionals who manage the debate may ultimately be more important actors than the ulama who participate in it.

On the whole, the most important producers of religious knowledge in the Sunni Arab world today are the media, the state, and the ulama—probably in that order. The ulama are in no way dominant, and certainly have no monopoly.

PHOTO: ALBRECHT HOFHEINZ, 2002

Al-Azhar by night.

Just as doctrinal authority has passed out of the hands of the ulama, so charisma has passed out of the hands of the Sufis. For those who still follow Sufi sheikhs, charisma and spiritual authority are where they always were, but in general, the percentage of the Arab Muslim population that follows Sufi sheikhs is far smaller today than it once was. The reasons for the virtual disappearance of Sufism among educated urban Arab Muslims fall beyond the scope of this article, but its result is that the old association between Sufism and charisma is today broadly limited to rural areas. Consequently, charisma is less prominent in Arab society as a whole than it once was, and pilgrimage sites are correspondingly less important. Spiritual authority, though similarly less prominent now than it was once, still exists. But this charisma is now often attributed to figures who have doctrinal authority, especially to religious media personalities.[3] There are, of course, exceptions to these general trends and patterns. The system in Saudi Arabia is quite different; but then again, Saudi Arabia is an exception to the Arab norm in many ways. An overview of the matter points to the fact that while there was a Church in Islam two centuries ago, that Church has now disintegrated. The same might be said on a similar basis of the Christian Churches in the West, thus indicating corresponding patterns between the two. This correspondence is not surprising given the fact that the Islamic world today is part of a global civilization.

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Notes

1. The applicability of Church to Islam in the sense of 'community' has been discussed elsewhere by the author: Mark Sedgwick, 'Establishments and Sects in the Islamic World', in *NRMs: The Future of New Religions in the 21st Century*, edited by Phillip Lucas and Thomas Robbins (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 283–312.
2. Gregory Starrett, 'The Margins of Print: Children's Religious Literature in Egypt', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2 (1996), p. 127.
3. See Rachida Chih and C. Mayeur-Jaouen, 'Le cheikh Sha'râwî, le pouvoir et la télévision: l'homme qui a donné un visage au Coran', in Saints et héros du Moyen-Orient contemporain, edited by C. Mayeur-Jaouen (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002), p. 189–209.

The Tablighi Jama'at and Politics

YOGINDER SIKAND

The Tablighi Jama'at (TJ) is the largest Islamic movement in the world today. Its founder, Muhammad Ilyas, believed that Muslims had strayed far from the teachings of Islam. Hence, he stressed that Muslims should go back to their faith, which alone, he argued, would move God to grant them 'success' in this world and in the hereafter. Ilyas's political views have been the subject of considerable debate. Most writers on the TJ tend to see it as 'apolitical', taking its aloofness from involvement in party politics as proof of this. TJ activists also insist that they have nothing to do with politics. While some scholars have questioned their claim to being apolitical, no detailed analysis of what Masud calls the TJ's 'political vision'[1] has as yet been undertaken.

Contrary to what Tablighi Jama'at activists insist, the movement does have a political vision, and is, through the various political roles that it plays, deeply engaged in questions of power and authority. While the movement's immediate focus has been on the reform of the individual, this does not mean that the TJ has nothing at all to do with politics. If we shift our attention from the affairs of the state and see politics in comprehensive terms, as the dynamics of power in society, the notion that anything can be apolitical in a political world strikes one as absurd. In this sense, the TJ can hardly be said to be apolitical.

Ilyas's approach to politics

Maulana Ilyas was born in 1885 at Kandhla in northern India. In 1908, he enrolled at the Dar-ul 'Ulum madrasa in Deoband, where he took an oath of jihad against the British. Ilyas believed that the Muslims' loss of political power owed entirely to their having abandoned the path of Islam. Muslims were promised that if they faithfully followed the example of the Prophet they would 'dominate over non-believers' and would be 'destined to be the masters of everything on this earth'. 'Political power', Ilyas declared, 'can never be' the objective of a Muslim. However, 'walking in the path of the Prophet', he said, 'if we attain political power then we should not shirk the responsibility'. Hence, political power was not to be shunned, but neither was it to be directly pursued. Rather, it would be granted as a blessing by God to the Muslims once they became 'true' believers, after which the Islamic state would be established.

TJ's concern with Muslim identity and faith have had a crucial bearing on how Muslims relate to the wider society.

In this regard, Ilyas did not differ from Islamist activists as to the final goal. Where he departed from them was on the appropriate means of attaining an Islamic state in the specific Indian context. In contrast to the Islamists, who called for the capture of political power to establish Islamic rule, Ilyas advocated working in a gradual manner, encouraging the reform of individual Muslims in the belief that ultimately an Islamic society, crowned with an Islamic state, would be established.

That the ultimate acquisition of political power in the future was of central importance to Ilyas's own vision of Islam is evident in the reports of his association with the Islamic leaders of his time. While Ilyas saw his movement as geared particularly towards ordinary Muslims, he was not opposed to other contemporary movements struggling for Muslim political power. He believed that the TJ and such Muslim movements were complimentary to each other. 'There should be no competition or rivalry between them', Ilyas insisted. This suggests that Ilyas's understanding of individual reform and his distance from matters related to the state can be read as reflecting an underlying division of labour—the TJ focusing on the individual, and other Muslim groups working in the political sphere. This point is acknowledged by an Indian Muslim *'alim*, who claims that the TJ's aloofness from overt political involvement is simply a temporary 'pious pragmatic policy' to enable it to promote 'Islamic consciousness' even in situations where governments may place Islamist groups under strict control.[2]

TJ and politics after Ilyas

A distinct shift seems to have been witnessed in the TJ after Ilyas's death in 1944, a trend that became particularly noticeable in the aftermath of the Partition of India in 1947. In post-1947 India, with Muslims now a beleaguered minority, the aggressive communal politics of groups such as the Muslim League were no longer a feasible option. Thus, the TJ began presenting itself as completely apolitical—in itself probably a well thought out political strategy to accommodate itself to the new context. The TJ, under Ilyas's son, Muhammad Yusuf, believed that this was the only way in which the movement could carry on with its activities without provoking the state and aggressive Hindu forces. Yet, the TJ's activities continued to have serious political implications. Indeed, there was no way in which they could not, for the TJ's concern with Muslim identity and faith have had a crucial bearing on how Muslims relate to the wider society.

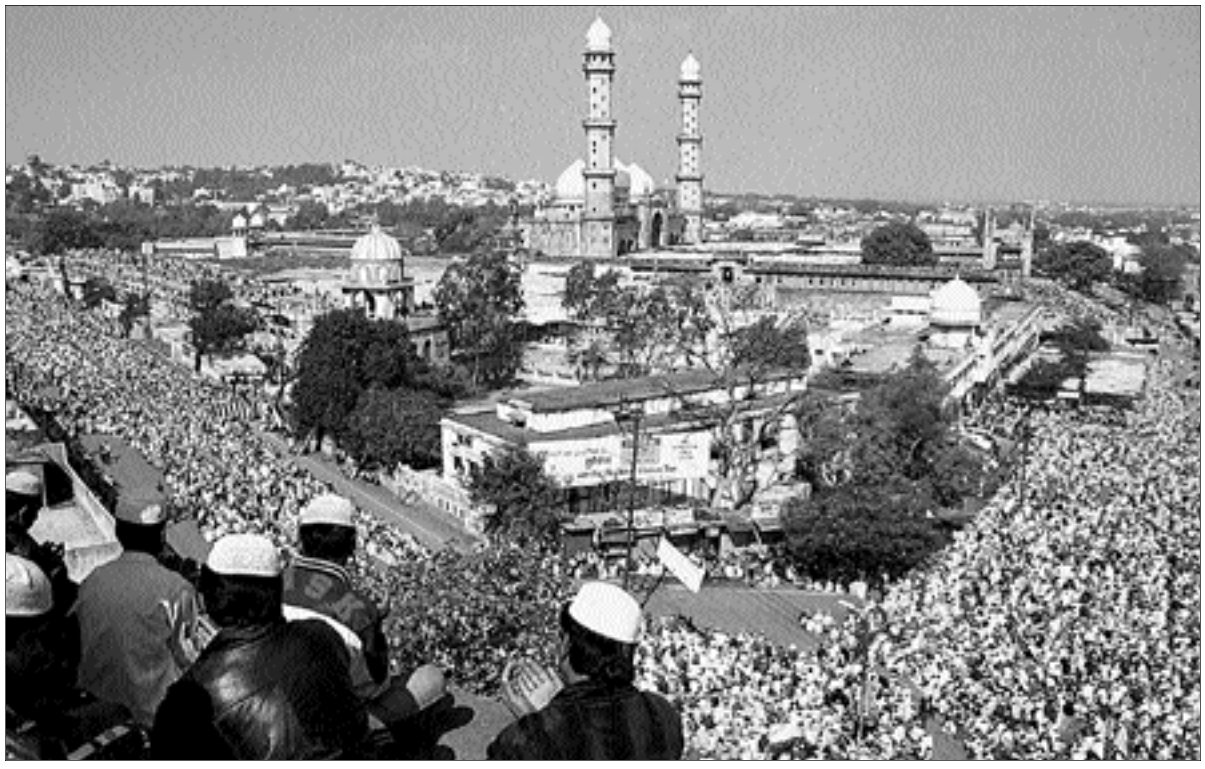
The adjustment to the reality of the absence of an Islamic political order enabled Muslims active in the TJ to come to terms with the existence of non-Islamic regimes. For Indian Muslims this meant that they could adjust to a system of non-Islamic rule, and to what was, at least in theory, a secular political system, while hoping that by abiding by the dictates of their faith, the day might dawn when God would grant Muslims political power.

The movement's growing aloofness from direct involvement in political affairs in post-1947 India has helped the TJ flourish in an environment characterized by considerable anti-Muslim hostility. Thus, for instance, in the period 1975–1977, when the Indian government declared a state of emergency and banned several religious organizations, the TJ was spared and was allowed to carry on its activities unhindered. It is a mark of the politically quiescent theology of the TJ, which is quite acceptable to the Indian state, that the TJ continues to have its global headquarters in the very heart of Delhi. As the movement has expanded to other countries where Muslims live as minorities, the TJ's disavowal of any political aims has enabled it to function relatively free of state control. In this way, the TJ enabled its followers to come to terms with the secular state by personalizing Islam, making a de facto distinction between religion and politics.

The TJ sees present-day Muslims living in a situation similar to that of what it calls the Prophet's 'Meccan period', when the Prophet's followers in Mecca were still learning about their faith. This is contrasted with the later 'Medinan period' when the Prophet established an Islamic state. In this way, while not denying the centrality of the Islamic state, the TJ effectively postpones its establishment into the indefinite future, when Muslims would become 'so firm in their faith as to bring back to life the days of the Companions of the Prophet in Medina'. For the present, however, it allows for Muslims to adjust themselves to a situation of non-Islamic rule while remaining committed to their faith. This accommodation to secularism is, however, ambiguous and not free from tension. On the one hand, the TJ's advocacy of global Muslim unity represents an implicit critique of the nation-state system. Likewise, its efforts at building a sense of Muslim identity, bringing Muslims all over the world together in a common mission, maintaining a strong sense of separate cultural identity and superiority, and condemning the popular culture that Muslims in local contexts share with others, has important political consequences in religiously plural societies. On the other hand,

the politically quiescent nature of the TJ has won for it sharp criticism in some Muslim circles, who see this posture as calculated to serve the political interests of what are described as the 'enemies of Islam'. Some Muslims see the TJ as a tool in the hands of 'anti-Islamic' forces by helping to de-politicize Muslims by preaching otherworldliness and disdain for power.

In some cases the TJ has acted to counter the influence of Islamist groups and enable Muslims to come to adjust to non-Islamic state structures, while in others it has lent support to Islamist groups, indirectly, by promoting an environment in which Islamist groups can flourish, as well as more directly. In such cases, participation in the TJ can be seen as a critique of existing political systems. It also represents an implicit questioning of the legitimacy of corrupt ruling élites with their 'un-Islamic' ways.



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The Taj ul Masjid mosque, 'Tablighi Ijtema' gathering, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh state.

TJ and politics in Muslim majority countries

The diverse political roles that the TJ has played can be seen in the dynamics of its relations with the state and with Islamist forces in several Muslim countries. In Pakistan, where it has strong presence, the TJ has been encouraged by the authorities as a counter to the Islamist Jama'at-i-Islami, which, with its campaign for an Islamic political order, poses an increasingly powerful political challenge to ruling élites. On the other hand, the TJ has helped promote commitment to an activist vision of Islam conducive to the growth of Islamist movements. Thus, for instance, in Bangladesh, following the suppression of pro-Pakistan Islamist groups in the wake of the country's liberation struggle, the TJ helped keep 'Islamic sentiment alive' and 'created conditions for the underground Islamic leaders to appear on the surface'. Numerous Islamist activists were able to escape state repression by joining the TJ. Recognizing the supportive role that the TJ might play vis-à-vis Islamist movements, one sympathizer writes that the TJ is silently preparing Muslims all over the world for a goal that he sees it as sharing with Islamist groups—to engage in the 'lesser jihad' or physical warfare against the 'enemies of Islam', if required, by training its activists to sacrifice their money and time for missionary work. However, he says, 'if occasion arises and if the policy is changed ... Tabligh is the Islamic movement which can call upon its dedicated followers not only to donate their time and money but also their lives to the cause of Islam'.[3] Similarly, another TJ supporter writes that the TJ has been 'merely laying the groundwork for a much greater mission', which includes physical jihad, if necessary, and the struggle for the establishment of an Islamic polity. In both *tabligh* and jihad, he says, one can 'perceive a congruence of aims and objectives', both being 'manifestations of the same impulse'.[4]

Several individuals originally associated with the TJ have been inspired by the movement to assume more assertive political positions in other Islamist organizations. Some leading Islamist activists have had their first exposure to Islamic revival in the TJ. These include Ghulam 'Azam, *amir* of Bangladesh's Jama'at-i Islami, Rachid Ghannoushi of the Tunisian Islamic Tendency Movement, and Farid Kassim of the Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain. Islamists, thus, enjoy an ambiguous relationship with the TJ. While some condemn it for allegedly being apolitical and thus helping the 'enemies of Islam', others welcome its role in promoting Islamic awareness among Muslims and so helping the cause of Islamist movements. Thus, for instance, some Muslims associated with the Taliban in Afghanistan, which, like the TJ, has its roots in the Deobandi reformist tradition, see the TJ as playing a complimentary role. A pro-Taliban website (http://www.almadinah.org) also supports the TJ. Such coordination between militants and Tablighi preachers is not limited to cyberspace. Reports speak of involvement in the work of the TJ of the militant Pakistan-based Islamist Harkat ul-Mujahidin. A spokesman of the latter claims that '[o]ur people are mostly impressed by the TJ. Most of our workers come from the TJ.'[5]

In some Muslim countries, the TJ counts among its activists several government officials, who play an important role in furthering the aims of the movement and promoting a gradual Islamization of state structures and civil society. In this way, too, the TJ has served important political functions. Thus, in Bangladesh the TJ is active among the country's armed forces. In Pakistan, Rafiq Tarar, a TJ activist, served as president for a considerable period until he was deposed in June 2001. Mufti Mahmud, *khalifa* of the leading Tablighi ideologue, Muhammad Zakariya, was elected chief minister of Pakistan's Frontier Province, playing a leading role in the agitation for the 'prophetic system', which led to the toppling of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Another senior TJ activist, Javed Nasir, served as the head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, being responsible for the formulation of Pakistan's policy in the Afghan war. The former prime minister of the country, Nawaz Sharif, once arranged for Tariq Jamil, senior Tablighi leader, to address his cabinet on 'the responsibilities of rulers in the light of Islamic teachings'. In his lecture, Jamil appealed to Sharif to 'enforce an Islamic system' similar to that in Afghanistan under the Taliban. In this way, TJ activists have not desisted from occupying important political posts and using access to power to further the cause of their movement.

As this survey suggests, the ways in which TJ activists have been implicated in politics demands a reconsideration of Tablighi apoliticalness. A more nuanced understanding, that goes beyond the level of verbal TJ discourse to reveal the political roles that it has played, shows that the TJ might well be impelled by a long-term political agenda.

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Notes

1. Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 97. See also Marc Gaborieau, 'Tablighi Jama'at in Politics? ', *ISIM Newsletter* 3, p. 24.
2. Ashfaq Ahmad Hussain, *Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Ki Fikri Kalabaziyan,* Majlis-i Ihya-i (Hyderabad: Tauhid-o Sunnat, n.d.), p.115–34.
3. A.Z.M. Shamsul 'Alam, *The Message of Tableeg and Da'wa* (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1985), p. 1324.
4. http://fx.nu/quest/movements/tabligh.html
5. *Daghestan: Focus on Pakistan's Tablighi Jama'at—Background of Tablighi Jama'at* (http://www.saag.org/papers/paper80.html).

Ascendance of Jama'at-e-Islami in Bangladesh

SREERADHA DATTA

As a coalition partner in the ruling coalition, Jama'at-e-Islami (JI) occupies an important place in Bangladeshi politics. The party has come a long way since its opposition to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, and has gradually established itself as a key player in national politics. Over the years, it has adopted moderate right wing positions, focused itself on social welfare activities, consolidated its political base through skillful manoeuvres, and forged successful electoral alliances. In so doing, it has expanded its influence and emerged as a key player in determining the ruling composition in Bangladeshi politics.

The gradual Islamization process and the increasing accentuation of the Islamic identity of Bangladesh has significantly facilitated the growth and development of Jama'at-e-Islami (JI). Even though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first leader of Bangladesh known for his secular moorings and commitments, initially banned all religious parties and groups, he was eventually compelled to recognize the importance of religious identity and started using Islamic symbolism. The entry of the military into the political arena following the assassination of Mujib in 1975 furthered the Islamization process which was a prime supporter of military rule since its conservative elements supported the religious agenda. As a result, in 1976 Islamic parties were legalized and allowed to participate in local and national elections. The new constitution, introduced in 1977, replaced secularism with 'absolute trust and faith in the almighty Allah.' Two years later, Gen. Ziaur Rahman amended the preamble and introduced a salutation to Allah. JI became the principal beneficiary of the de-secularization process. A statement by JI's current leader, Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, aptly sums up the party's political strategic outlook. In his view, JI's aim 'is to establish a modern and progressive Islamic welfare state by mobilizing public opinion through constructive programmes and a systematic and peaceful movement.'[1]

Electoral politics

Initially JI competed in the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliamentary) elections as part of a joint platform with the Muslim League, and then in 1986, having gained confidence, opted to participate in the elections on its own and secured ten seats. By the time the first truly multiparty elections were held in 1991, the Islamization process was firmly in place, and the rehabilitation of JI was complete since its previous opposition to the liberation of East Pakistan in 1971 had ceased being a political liability. In 1991 it secured 6 percent of the popular vote and eighteen seats in the 300-member Jatiya Sangsad. Its strength dwindled to three seats in 1996 but rose to seventeen seats five years later.

Parliamentary elections do not alone portray the growing influence of JI. The pressures of electoral arithmetic compelled both the secularly oriented Awami League, led by Mujib's daughter Hasina, and the right wing Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Gen. Zia's widow Khaleda, to seek JI's support. In the bargain the Islamic party has emerged as a major player in coalition-building. Its strength lies in its ability to forge issue-based partnerships with diverse groups even while retaining its Islamic credentials. JI is not averse to uniting in common cause with the two principal forces in Bangladesh and has actually capitalized on the mutual antagonism and animosity between Hasina and Khaleda.

Thus in some form or another, JI has been instrumental in the formation of all three governments since 1991. The alliance with JI largely enabled the BNP to secure absolute majority victories in 1991 and 2001. Dissolution of this alliance proved costly in 1996 when the Awami League secured the largest number of seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. Although the BNP is seen as the natural ally of JI, even the Awami League was not averse to reaching tactical understandings with the Islamic group. Attempts by Hasina (1996-2001) with her secular credentials, to co-opt JI during the opposition's boycott of parliament, considerably enhanced the political acceptability of JI.

The Islamization of Bangladesh and the growth of JI are manifestations of the far-reaching changes taking place in Bangladesh. Despite its vowed commitment to secularism, for example, the Awami has adopted a number of overtly religious policies to win over mainstream voters. During the recent elections, it promised in its manifesto not to enact any legislation running contrary to the Qur'an and pledged to establish a *shari'a* bench in the Supreme Court. JI, which competed in the election as an ally of BNP, sought to regulate and institutionalize 'mosque-based education.' Other parties have also adopted overtly religious standpoints and policies in their manifestoes.

Contrary to initial expectations, the September 11 attacks in the US did not neutralize the growing power of the Islamic parties in Bangladesh. JI went on to secure more seats in Jatiya Sangsad than at any previous time. If one includes the seats won by other religious parties in the total, the Islamists secured thirty-three seats.[2]

Having managed to influence—and also to highly benefit from—the Islamization process, JI has opted for gradualism as its electoral strategy. The party has recognized the difficulties of securing power in a personality-dominated society through the religious agenda alone. With a long-term approach in mind it looks to students and women as its prime constituents. The two portfolios that JI currently holds in the BNP-led government underscore the rural focus of the party. While the JI leader, Motiur Rahman Nizami, was the minister of agriculture, his colleague Ali Ahsan Mohammad holds the social welfare portfolio. And in a country that is almost entirely agro-based, the importance of an agricultural portfolio is obvious, and likewise much of the Bangladeshi population depends upon the state for its welfare. This perhaps explains Nizami's shunting out to a less significant industry portfolio during the May 2003 cabinet reshuffling.

Jama'at as an alternative

Neither the BNP nor the Awami could afford to ignore JI in any future coalition-making. By contributing to Khaleda's spectacular victory in 2001 JI has acquired significant leverage vis-à-vis the BNP. Therefore, the success of any attempts by Hasina to unseat Khaleda, either at the next Jatiya Sangsad elections or through the time-tested strategy of street protests, would depend upon Hasina's ability to wean JI away from the BNP. In short, both Khaleda and Hasina would be wise to enlist the support of JI before facing the electorate, thereby further enhancing JI's bargaining powers.

Moreover, the power base of the country's main protagonists also favours JI. While the BNP is seen as an elitist party with an urban following, comprised mainly of professionals and the military, the ▶

Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures

SUAD JOSEPH

The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC) is an interdisciplinary, transhistorical, global project covering women and Islamic cultures. EWIC entries span the period just before the rise of Islam to the present. EWIC takes on cutting edge issues to stimulate new research and advance the frontiers of knowledge and covers a broad sweep of topics to inform a general audience. The goal of EWIC is to survey numerous facets of women's lives in areas such as society, economy, politics, religion, the arts, popular culture, sports, health, science and environment where Islam has made significant contributions.

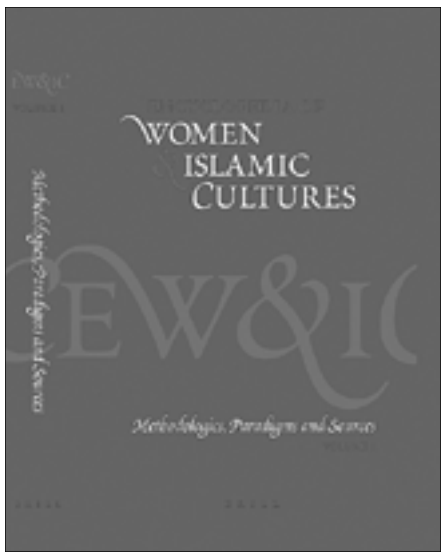
With five Associate Editors (Afsaneh Najmabadi, Harvard University; Julie Peteet, University of Louisville; Seteney Shami, Social Science Research Council; Jacqueline Siapno, University of Melbourne; and Jane I. Smith, Hartford Seminary) and a board of 41 International Advisory Editors, the EWIC project is a multiple year effort to bring together upwards of one thousand scholars world-wide to write critical essays on women and Islamic cultures. EWIC has grown from the originally conceived three volumes and 1,500,000 words to 4,000,000 words to be published in a staggered fashion starting with Volume I in the fall of 2003. With research on women and Islamic cultures burgeoning, online, CD and paperback versions are distinct possibilities.

Guiding vision of EWIC

Encyclopedias aim to be authorities, often definitive authorities on their subject matter, a notion the editors are also problemetizing. From its first meeting in June 1999 the Editorial Board of EWIC shared an acute appreciation of the situatedness and historicity of knowledge production. At every step we reflected and evaluated the choices before us in terms of the impact our decisions would have on the kind of 'knowledge' EWIC would present and represent. The Editors did not always agree on all issues, but we all recognized that the EWIC project was an opportunity to define a field of knowledge. We choose the title Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures because it conveys an approach to a civilizational history. By using the term 'Islamic cultures' we meant to veer away from the notion that EWIC would focus on religious texts (although it does cover them) and to direct attention to the broad panoply of issues that are embraced within the arms of 'culture'.

We were committed to deessentializing Islam. To do this, we needed to contextualize, historicize and regionalize the experiences of women and Islamic cultures. We designed entries which situated issues of relevance to women within specific historical periods, political regimes and localities. As the production of knowledge is conditioned by the socio-political environments in which it is produced, this historical approach allowed us to identify critical changes in methodologies, resources and paradigms. EWIC worked to decenter the common 'Middle East' focus of research dealing with women and Islamic cultures by recruiting editors, advisory editors, entries and authors from all over the world. As news spread about the EWIC project, scholars and writers began contacting us. The database has grown to over nine hundred self-volunteered potential authors.

The literature in the many fields encompassed by EWIC is rapidly expanding. Research on women and Islamic cultures is theoretically and empirically at the frontiers of many disciplines. At the same time the idea of the 'Muslim woman' or the 'woman and Islam' has come to have a political and historical salience, particularly in Western media and scholarship, but also on a global scale, that is often fabricated for these women, often out of cloth that is not of their weaving. The goal of EWIC is to capture knowledge in the frame of history, to historicize knowledge in the context of place and to place knowledge at the service of those who may be enriched by understanding its processes of production.



For further information about The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures, and for writers interested in contributing to future EWIC volumes and editions, please see http://sjoseph.ucdavis.edu/ewic or the Brill website http://www.brill.nl/.

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Awami's strength lies in the middle classes of rural Bangladesh, comprised of teachers, shopkeepers and other literates. The lower strata of rural Bangladesh, which is largely comprised of agricultural labourers, provide a fertile ground for JI and its Islamization campaign. The *madrasa*-based education system, which is dominant in the rural areas, also works in favour of JI. In short, since much of the Bangladeshi population is rural, economically backward, and illiterate, neither the BNP nor the Awami League would be able to stem—let alone reverse—the growth of JI.

The growth of JI is also facilitated by the absence of any ideological divide between the Awami League and the BNP; both of these parties embrace extremely personalized ideologies centred completely on the two leading ladies themselves. JI on the contrary, does not suffer from any of these negative associations and instead enjoys the reputation of being a clean, ideologically firm and corruption-free party. Because it is cadre-based, JI is more disciplined than the mass-based Awami League and BNP parties. As the most well organized and tightly knit party, as well as possessing such a well defined and disciplined cadre, JI is able to attract a wide section of support through a host of local networks and social welfare programmes. Calculatedly, JI knows—and exploits the fact—that the goodwill and popularity it generates through various welfare activities in the community will transform into political support and electoral gains. This mass appeal enables JI to easily mobilize financial resources without resorting to corrupt practices. Given these circumstances, it is likely that JI could prove to be a credible and corruption-free alternative to the BNP and Awami League.

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Notes

1. Speech by Ameer Nizami in September 2003. Full text can be found at http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org
2. The seats won by the religious parties are as follows: JI 17; Islamic Oikye Jote (IOJ) 2; and Islami Jatiya Oikya Front (IOJF) 14. The first two parties competed in the 2001 elections under the four-party alliance led by the BNP.

From Apartheid to Democracy
Islam in South Africa

URSULA GÜNTHER

Islam in South Africa is characterized by an exceptional diversity that might be compared to that of the Muslim world in general. Despite the relatively low number of Muslims in South Africa (approximately 550000 Muslim inhabitants, or 1.36 per cent of the entire population[1]—one of the smallest minorities in the country—they form an integral and visible part of the society. This is especially true in the urban areas of the Western Cape, Natal, and Transvaal regions.

The marked diversity and heterogeneity of Islam in South Africa originate in the history of migration. During different historical periods, various ethnicities bearing witness to Islam immigrated to the most southern part of Africa either voluntarily or by force, thus shaping the readings of Islam in the country. The different phases of migration correspond to the regional concentration of Muslims of Indonesian or Malay origin and cultural background in the Western Cape, and Muslims of Indian or Indo-Pakistani origin and culture in Natal and Transvaal. Despite increasing mobility, this concentration is obvious even nowadays. Islam in Natal and Transvaal reflects Indian and Indo-Pakistani features, whereas in the Western Cape it corresponds to a cultural synthesis combining elements of Southeast Asian Islam with elements of both the indigenous and African cultures.

Cartoon by Tony Grogan

The visibility of the Muslim community in South Africa and its political and societal participation may be seen as a post-apartheid phenomenon since numerous ministerial offices and other significant positions and professions are held and practised by Muslims. However, even since the nineteenth century many Muslim institutions such as mosques and Qur'anic schools (and also modern Muslim schools and colleges) have been established in the Western Cape, Natal, and Transvaal and contributed to the integration of Muslims in South African society. Ironically the ideology of apartheid reinforced the differences amongst the various groups and simultaneously gave the impulse for changes in organization and discourse. The latter were initiated particularly from the mid-1970s on with the crisis and gradual decline of the political system. Muslims then entered the political arena, offering an Islam-motivated resistance to apartheid.

After political liberation and the relatively peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy, South Africa's Muslims found themselves needing to deal with several challenges in the context of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society. The new socio-political context is accompanied by a resurgence of differences within and between the various Muslim communities, even more so because alliances linked to the common struggle against the oppressive system became obsolete. Post-apartheid South Africa requires forms of contextualization concerning the readings of Islam that differ from those of the last decades under apartheid. National interests need to be brought into line with the demands of the different Muslim communities, while at the same time mediating in the controversies between them. The current debates with regard to Muslim Personal Law, which needs to be modified according the demands of the constitution (in terms of gender equality notably) in order to be implemented, are but one example that illustrates the tensions between the different communities. They reveal the fragility of the achievements concerning progressive and contextualized readings of Islam during the struggle for democracy. A deeper understanding of contemporary developments must take into consideration the complex structures and fundamental changes in discourse during the last period of the apartheid system as well as the underlying dynamics both within and between the Muslim communities and with the broader society.

Muslim communities under apartheid

Apartheid divided the entire society, artificially segregating groups according to 'racial' classification while referring to already existing ethnic and cultural differences. The specific hierarchy established by this ideology either created cultural entities or fostered those prevailing for the time being and made them permanent. Those originating from the islands of Indonesia and Southeast Asia more generally were classified as 'Coloured', in contrast to those of Indian or Indo-Pakistani origin, who were classified as 'Indians' or 'Asians'. On top of the social pyramid were 'Whites', followed by 'Indians'/'Asians', enjoying numerous privileges in comparison with the 'Coloured' population, whose status was in turn superior to that of 'Blacks'.[2] Unlike the latter, 'Coloured' and 'Indians/Asians' had access to good education and therefore to socially

respected professions in fields such as medicine, law, and business. Religious practices were not affected by apartheid.

At a first glance, the differences between the communities of the Western Cape and those of Natal and Transvaal seem to be cultural, ethnic, and linguistic. However, on closer examination we find considerable differences with regard to questions of theology and religious practices. Both the cultural background and the historically rooted different social statuses shaped—and continue to shape—the corresponding religious institutions, rituals, and symbols.

Three hundred years of coexistence of 'Coloured' Muslims with other communities—both religious and cultural ones—led to the creation of a unique culture with a particular cultural flexibility. The common language, Afrikaans, strengthened the sense of belonging. The communities in the Cape province were also called 'Cape Malays', a term dating back to an ethnic classification by the British in the early nineteenth century and whose meaning, over the course of time, came to correspond to an exclusive identity. 'Cape Malays' were considered to be peaceful and loyal, and were known for their religious parochialism and their unquestioned acceptance of white dominance. This 'Malayism' was characterized as something that '[set] them apart, but also above the other people of colour in their common environment. And though they were subjected to the same forces of oppression they were made to believe that they were the "elite of the coloured" people. This exclusivity and false superiority made it difficult for them to fuse with the other sections of the oppressed, and to develop a common united struggle against oppression' (Davids 1985:6).

With regard to the communities of Indian or Indo-Pakistani origin a fusion with elements of pre-existing local cultures never took place. On the contrary, cultural particularism prevented processes of acculturation. In comparison to the communities of the Western Cape, Indo-Pakistani communities were culturally rigid and fostered conservative positions regarding the relations to non-Muslim communities and the variety of competing approaches to Islam existing in India that came through migration to South Africa.[3] In addition to the regional, cultural, and linguistic differences that discouraged any exchange between the communities, different approaches concerning religious practices and theology contributed to deepening the rifts rather than overcoming them.

Nevertheless the established orthodoxy, i.e. the ulama, of all communities shared two attitudes: they generally were conservative and showed little preparedness for change, and they declared considerable loyalty to the government in power, being responsive to co-optation. For many Muslims there was neither the need nor the capacity to change the status quo or to initiate resistance against apartheid, even more so because religious practice was not restricted. Almost all ulama—and this is true for the Western Cape, Natal, and Transvaal alike—were complacent, silent, even apolitical with regard to the political landscape, especially in the course of the 1960s and 1970s.[4]

Muslim awakening

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a general trend towards an increasing political consciousness and therefore a constantly growing resistance movement against apartheid, especially after the Soweto uprisings of 1976. This also affected the Muslim communities and the organizations that had been established during the 1970s or had emerged as offshoots and transformations of already existing organizations that reshaped their aims and perspectives.[5] In view of the extremely dominant clergy and in the absence of an alternative leadership during their formative years, the new organizations were moulded by the emergence of a progressive counterpart to the traditional ulama. The monopoly of the latter in the area of interpretation and the religious parochialism was called into question. Thus the organizations started as purely religio-cultural movements that were trying to reformulate a Muslim identity that differed from the ulama's version. This process of emancipation of the established religious leadership seemed to lay the foundation that was necessary to examine the possibility and the nature of a cultural, social, and political commitment for Muslims within the broader South African context. The coincidence of such internal development with the unfolding struggle in general and the social crisis of the 1980s created a climate in which practical action and political commitment became absolutely imperative. The organizations underwent a shift of paradigm that can be described as a process consisting of three phases: the propagation of Islam as a way of life, i.e. a purely religio-cultural approach; the replacement of the latter by the ideology of Islamism, the approach being transformed into one shaped by the particular socio-political context of the country; and finally the development of a particular hermeneutics of resistance against oppressive systems like apartheid ideology. Muslim organizations entered the political scene while contributing to the anti-apartheid struggle motivated by a contextualized approach of Islam.

Post-apartheid challenges

Political liberation raised new questions with regard to the identity of South African Muslims. The unifying elements in the course of the common struggle against apartheid do not persist any longer. On the contrary, the relative unanimity during the last two decades of apartheid was not sustainable enough to continue in a different socio-political context. On the one hand, many of the former active organizations nowadays are paper tigers rather than contributors to societal debates. On the other hand, numerous leaders standing for a progressive and contextualized reading of Islam either left the organizations and took other responsibilities or left the country. This explains why rather conservative groups and organizations, such as the ulama umbrella organizations Muslim Judicial Council in the Western Cape, Jami'at ul-Ulema Natal, and Jami'at ul-Ulema Transvaal, could regain considerable influence.

Taking into consideration that progressive theology is a very recent phenomenon in South Africa and particularly linked to the socio-political context of apartheid, it should not be surprising that with the political transformation and the societal and social uncertainties, conservative and traditional forces, i.e. the established ulama, resurge. This is even more so because they enjoy a certain social consolidation for historical reasons and had established a solid infrastructure in contrast to their progressive counterpart. What is striking is that they also enjoy considerable support from the government, e.g. concerning the implementation of Muslim Personal Law, despite massive protestations. The ANC preferred to cooperate with conservative groups and ulama bodies than with what was the new élite of political leaders and thinkers.

South Africa is an important example of the undeniable impact of socio-political circumstances on the renewal of Islam in the context of contemporary societies, both in the course of apartheid and in the post-apartheid past, present, and future. The challenges of a contextualized Islam still continue.

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Notes

1. Haferburg 2000:33, referring to the 1996 Census Database.
2. Although it seems to be problematic to use these apartheid terms, it is important to mention that they have not been substituted by other terms. On the contrary, South Africans appropriated them while changing their racist connotations. See also Erasmus 2001.
3. For further details on the different approaches see Günther 2002a.
4. The reactions concerning the death in detention of the activist Imam Haron in 1969 provide but one example of the complacent attitude of the ulama and their influence on the community. See Günther 2002b.
5. Like the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), founded in 1970; the Muslim Students Association (MSA), founded in 1974; Qibla, founded in 1980' and Call of Islam, founded in 1984. The latter is an offshoot of the MYM for reasons of dissent concerning the political commitment and the issue of affiliation to non-Muslim anti-apartheid organizations. Qibla is not an offshoot of a former organization, despite its having recruited many members from both the MYM and the MSA.

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What is Progressive Islam?

OMID SAFI

Progressive Islam encompasses a number of themes: striving to realize a just and pluralistic society through a critical engagement with Islam, a relentless pursuit of social justice, an emphasis on gender equality as a foundation of human rights, and a vision of religious and ethnic pluralism.

The various understandings of Islam which fall under the rubric of 'progressive' are both continuations of, and radical departures from, the hundred and fifty year old tradition of liberal Islam.[1] Liberal advocates of Islam generally display an uncritical, almost devotional identification with modernity, and often (but do not always) by-pass discussions of colonialism and imperialism. Progressive advocates of Islam, on the other hand, are almost uniformly critical of colonialism, both of its nineteenth century manifestation and its current variety. Progressive Muslims espouse a critical and non-apologetic 'multiple critique' with respect to both Islam and modernity. They are undoubtedly post-modern in the sense of their critical approach to modernity. That double engagement with the varieties of Islam and modernity, plus an emphasis on concrete social action and transformation, is the defining characteristic of progressive Islam today.

Muslim libera(c)tion:

Progressive Muslims perceive themselves as the advocates of human beings all over the world who, through no fault of their own, live in situations of perpetual poverty, pollution, oppression, and marginalization. Their task is to give voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless, and confront the 'powers that be' who disregard the God-given human dignity of the *mustad'afun* all over this Earth. Muslim progressives draw on the strong tradition of social justice from within Islam from sources as diverse as the Qur'an and *hadith* to more recent authorities and spokespersons such as Shari'ati. Their methodological fluidity is apparent in their pluralistic epistemology, which freely and openly draws from sources outside of Islamic tradition which can serve as useful tools in the global pursuit of justice. These external sources include the liberation theology of Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Rebecca S. Chopp, as well as the secular humanism of Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, etc. Progressive Muslims are likely to combine a Qur'anic call for serving as 'witnesses for God in justice' (Qur'an 42:15), with an Edward Said-ian call to 'speak truth to the powers.'

Gender equality is a measuring stick for the broader concerns of social justice and pluralism.

The question, asked by Peter Mandaville,[2] whether progressive Muslims reflect or initiate larger social processes of transformations, is a non-starter as it is premised on an initial dichotomy between intellectual pursuit and activism that progressives do not accept. Whereas many (though not all) of the previous generations of 'liberal' Muslims were at times defined by a purely academic approach that reflected their elite status, progressive Muslims fully realize that the social injustices around them are reflected in, connected to, and justified in terms of intellectual discourses. They are, in this respect, fully indebted to the majestic criticism of Edward Said. Progressive Muslims are concerned not simply with laying out a fantastic, beatific vision of social justice and peace, but also with transforming hearts and societies alike. A progressive commitment implies by necessity the willingness to remain engaged with the issues of social justice as they unfold on the ground level, in the lived realities of Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Progressive Muslims follow squarely in the footsteps of liberation theologians such as Leonardo Boff, who deemed a purely conceptual criticism of theology, devoid of any real commitment to the oppressed, as 'radically irrelevant.'[3] Boff recognized that *liberação* (liberation) links the concepts *liber* (free) and *ação* (action):[4] There is no liberation without action. In drawing on both Boff as well as Rebecca Chopp, I have before stated that: 'Vision and activism are both necessary. Activism without vision is doomed from the start. Vision without activism quickly becomes irrelevant.'[5] This informed social activism is visible in many progressive Muslim organizations and movements ranging from the work of Chandra Muzaffar with the International Movement for a Just World in Malaysia,[6] the efforts of Farid Esack with HIV-positive Muslims in South Africa,[7] to the work of the recent Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Shirin Ebadi[8] with groups such as the Iranian Children's Rights Society.[9] It is thus not the case that only certain 'superstars' among progressive Muslims occupy themselves with activist approaches. One only need spend some time talking with the many individuals who are active in the various progressive Muslim organizations to witness the astonishing array of peace and social justice movements, grassroots organizations, human rights efforts, etc., that they are involved in.

Progressive Islam as an Islamic humanism

At the heart of a progressive Muslim interpretation is a simple yet radical idea: every human individual, female or male, Muslim or non-Muslim, rich or poor, northerner or southerner, has exactly the same intrinsic worth. The essential value of human life is God-given, and is in no way connected to culture, geography, or privilege. A progressive Muslim is one who is committed to the strangely controversial idea that the true measure of a human being's worth is a person's character, and not the oil under their soil or their particular flag. A progressive Muslim agenda is concerned with the ramifications of the premise that all members of the human race have this same intrinsic worth because each of us has the breath of God breathed into our being: *wa nafakhtu fihi min ruhi*. (Qur'an 15:29 and 38:72). This identification with the full humanity of all human beings amounts to nothing short of an Islamic Humanism.

An increasing number of those who advocate such a humanistic framework within the context of Islam have self-labelled themselves progressive Muslims. 'Progressive' refers to a relentless striving towards a universal notion of justice in which no single community's prosperity, righteousness, and dignity come at the expense of another's. Adherents of progressive Islam conceive of a way of being Muslim that engages and affirms the humanity of all human beings, that actively holds all of us responsible for a fair and just distribution of our God-given natural resources, and that seeks to live in harmony with the natural world.

Engaging tradition

Progressive Muslims insist on a serious engagement with the full spectrum of Islamic thought and practices. There can be no progressive Muslim movement that does not engage the very 'stuff' (textual and material sources) of the Islamic tradition, even if some wish to debate what 'stuff' this should be and how it ought to be interpreted. Progressives generally maintain that it is imperative to work through the inherited traditions of thought and practice. In particular cases, they might conclude that certain pre-existing interpretations fail to offer us sufficient guidance today. However, they can only faithfully claim that position after—and not before—a serious engagement with the tradition. To move beyond problematic past and present interpretations of Islam, progressive Muslims have to pass critically through them and experience them first-hand.

Welcome for Shirin Ebadi upon her arrival to Tehran's Mehr-Abad airport, 14 October 2003.

Justice lies at the heart of Islamic social ethics. Time and again the Qur'an talks about providing for the marginalized members of society: the poor, the orphaned, the downtrodden, the wayfaring, the hungry, etc. Progressive Muslims believe that it is time to 'translate' the social ideals in the Qur'an and Islamic teachings into a way of action that those committed to social justice today can relate to and understand. For all Muslims, there is the vibrant memory of the Prophet repeatedly talking about a real believer as one whose neighbour does not go to bed hungry. Progressives hold that in today's global village it is time to consider all of humanity as our neighbor. The time has come for Muslims who wish to be true believers to be responsible for the well-being and dignity of all human beings.

Progressive Muslims begin with a simple yet radical stance: that the Muslim community as a whole cannot achieve justice unless justice is guaranteed for Muslim women. In short, there can be no progressive interpretation of Islam without gender justice. Gender justice is crucial, indispensable, and essential. In the long run, any progressive Muslim interpretation will be judged based on the amount of change in gender equality it is able to produce in small and large communities. Gender equality is a measuring stick for the broader concerns of social justice and pluralism. As Shirin Ebadi has stated, it is imperative to conceive of women's rights as human rights. Progressive Muslims strive for pluralism both inside and outside of the *umma*. They seek to open up a wider spectrum of interpretations and practices considered Muslim, and epistemologically follow a pluralistic approach to the pursuit of knowledge and truth. In their interactions with other religious and ethnic communities, they seek to transcend the arcane notions of 'tolerance', and instead strive for a profound engagement through both existing commonalities and differences.

Is this an 'Islamic Reformation'?

Progressive Muslims are often asked whether their project constitutes an 'Islamic reformation.' The answer is both yes and no. It is undeniably true that there are serious economic, social, and political issues in the Muslim world that need urgent remedying. Much of the Muslim world is bound to a deeply disturbing economic structure in which it provides natural resources for the global market, while at the same time remaining dependent on Western labour, technological know-how, and staple goods. This deplorable economic situation is exacerbated in many parts of the modern Muslim world by atrocious human rights situations, crumbling educational systems, and worn-out economies. Most progressive Muslims would readily support the reform of all those institutions. However, the term 'reformation' carries considerably more baggage than that. In speaking of the 'Islamic reformation', many people have in mind the Protestant Reformation. It is this understanding that leaves many progressive Muslims feeling uneasy, for theirs is not a project of developing a 'Protestant' Islam distinct from a 'Catholic' Islam. Most insist that they are not looking to create a further split within the Muslim community so much as to heal this split and to urge it along.

A global phenomenon or an American Islam?

It would be a clear mistake to somehow reduce the emergence of progressive Islam to being a new 'American Islam.' Progressive Muslims are found everywhere in the global Muslim *umma*. When it comes to actually implementing a progressive understanding of Islam in Muslim communities, particular communities in Iran, Malaysia, and South Africa are *leading*, not following, the United States. Many American Muslim communities—and much of the leadership represented by groups such as the Islamic Circle of North America,[10] the Islamic Society of North America,[11] and the Council on American-Islamic Relations[12]—are far too uncritical of Salafi and Wahhabi tendencies that progressives oppose. Lastly, almost all progressive Muslims are profoundly skeptical of nationalism, whether American, Arab, Iranian, or otherwise. As such, they instinctively and deliberately reject the appropriation of this fluid global movement by those who espouse it in order to transform it into an 'American Islam' commodity to be exported all over the world. The progressives' firm critique of neo-colonialism is also a way to avoid their appropriation by the United States' administration, which has used the language of reforming Islam to justify its invasion of Muslim countries such as Iraq.

Progressive Muslim Networks

Perhaps the most exciting part of the new emerging global Muslim progressive identity is that progressives everywhere are seeking one another out, reading each other's work, collaborating with one another's organizations. This is a fruitful process of cross-pollination. One can point to the impact that Shari'ati has had on South African Muslims, or the impact the Palestinian struggle has had on South East Asian progressives. Much of this contact is taking place via e-mail. We are clearly in the initial stages of this formulation, and it is an exciting process which has the promise of ushering in a real paradigm shift in the relationship of Muslims to both Islam and modernity.

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This essay is humbly dedicated to Edward Said's challenge to all of us.
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Notes

1. See Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
2. See *ISIM Newsletter* 12 (June 2003), p.24–25
3. Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, (1987; reprint, Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), p.9.
4. Boff, p.10.
5. Omid Safi, 'The Times They are a-Changin': A Muslim Quest for Justice, Gender Equality, and Pluralism', in *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, edited by Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), p. 6–7.
6. http://www.just-international.org
7. http://www.positivemuslims.org.za, see also *ISIM Newsletter 12* (June 2003), p.40–41
8. http://www.muslimwakeup.com mainarchive/000242.php
9. http://www.iranianchildren.org/index.html
10. http://www.icna.com
11. http://www.isna.net
12. http://www.cair-net.org

Field Research, Research Design and the Tehran Bazaar

ARANG KESHAVARZIAN

With the gradual opening of Iranian society in the second decade after the Islamic Revolution, a number of research centers and networks have been established. Scholarly interest in Iran has also been shifting from examining the causes of the Revolution to investigating its consequences. Scholars are increasingly conducting research based on archival analysis, in-depth interviewing, participant observation and survey analysis to investigate social transformations that have taken place in Iran.

While it would be incorrect to say that scholarly interest in Iran has waned since the Islamic Revolution, due to real and perceived logistical difficulties in conducting long-term field research, studies have been limited in terms of topics and approaches.

Much of the early scholarship addressed macro-level research questions regarding the causes of the Revolution, elite politics and the ideological bases for post-revolutionary developments; the principle sources for these analyses were newspapers, official proclamations, memories and national statistics. With the gradual opening of Iranian society in the second decade after the Revolution, several research centers and networks have been established. Scholarly interest in Iran has also gradually shifted from examining the causes of the Revolution to investigating its consequences, and scholars are increasingly conducting research based on archival analysis, in-depth interviewing, participant observation and survey analysis.[1]

The emerging narratives highlight the disparities between state rhetoric, official policies and actual social reality. These studies have begun to map a new configuration of social and political forces that weave together continuities and ruptures with the Pahlavi era. It is an important moment for the academic community to self-consciously ponder how and why extensive and fine-tuned field research can contribute to our understanding of both contemporary Iran and social dynamics more broadly.

Field research should play a particularly privileged role in our study of contemporary Iran. Conducting empirically grounded research will help us formulate pertinent research questions, investigate assumptions about Iranian society and lead to the re-conceptualization of analytical constructs. Finally, field research can allow us to assess and analyze the extent to which the Islamic Revolution was a *social* revolution; that is, how changes in the state altered patterns of social relations. I present these arguments by making reference to research I carried out on the Tehran Bazaar.

The Tehran Bazaar

PHOTO: ARANG KESHAVARZIAN, 2002

Empirically based field research is not always an integral part of research design. For instance, most political scientists derive research questions from theory in the pursuit of theory testing. Hence, there is a tendency to view field research as simply a mode of data collection to measure concepts and variables, test hypotheses and lend credence to theoretical perspectives. However, given that in Iranian and Middle Eastern studies more broadly we continue to have little information on how societies and polities are organized and develop, there exists a need to systematically generate an empirical base of knowledge which can enhance concept formation. If our goal is to better understand Iran, then field research should be as much an epistemological tool as a methodological one.

Field research as research formulation

I came to appreciate the salience of field research while conducing comparative research on the social structure of the Tehran Bazaar and the central bazaars (*aswaq*) in Cairo in the post-World War II era. I believed that contrasting these cases would illuminate the reasons why the Tehran Bazaar has enjoyed a central role in Iran's economy and a number of social movements, while its counterpart in Cairo has had a far less prominent role.

While conducting preliminary research in Tehran it became quickly apparent that since the Revolution the Bazaar's basic institutions, internal relations and position in the political economy had radically changed. For instance, promissory notes, which through the 1970s were a critical instrument of exchange and a means of tying together various levels of the value chain, had become almost completely obsolete and were replaced by cash and checks. Also, the literature from the pre-revolutionary era claimed that *bazaaris* actively attended religious events in the Bazaar and religious meetings (or *hayats*) that were based on guild membership.[2] However, two decades after the Revolution, many *bazaaris* explained that if they did attend communal religious events, they were ones in their neighborhoods outside central Tehran and not necessarily connected to the Bazaar. Finally, and most fundamentally in many senses, the interlocking and long-term networks of

importers, wholesalers, brokers and retailers that prevailed through much of the twentieth century are currently almost non-existent; they have been replaced by fragmented clientalistic ties to the regime and more precarious smuggling networks. In short, our understanding of the Tehran Bazaar must be sensitive to historical variations, or more specifically, changes that have occurred since the Islamic Revolution. Thus, I reformulated my research question to ask how and why the structure of the Bazaar and state-bazaar relations changed over the last four decades.

As my research evolved it became apparent that changes in the Bazaar were not simply related to incremental changes in the socioeconomic fabric (e.g. urbanization, industrialization, or improved transportation), but were created and mediated by the interaction between state policies and the *bazaaris*' negotiation of these policies. Thus, we arrive at an empirical puzzle: why did the organizational structure of the Tehran Bazaar persist under the anti-traditional Pahlavi regime and radically alter under the Islamic Republic that sought to preserve it? It was only through conducting initial field research that I was able to develop this central research question. Had I not visited Iran it is unlikely that I would have understood that the Bazaar's organization and position in the political economy had undergone transformations. The secondary literature made little or no reference to the transformation of bazaars, and prominent figures in the Islamic Republic had identified the *bazaaris* as a revolutionary group and ally, with the Bazaar represented as an 'authentic' and 'Islamic' institution that was to be preserved. Yet my exploratory field research generated and framed the research questions by identifying outcomes and processes that contradicted these expectations and claims.

Even the most rudimentary field research can uncover new questions and challenge accepted notions. For example, most Iran experts describe the *Resalat* daily newspaper and *Shoma* weekly as the voice of the ultra conservative factions (such as the Islamic Coalition Association and Society of the Islamic Associations of Tehran's Guilds and Bazaar) that allegedly represent and receive support from the *bazaaris*.[3] Yet there is little evidence of actual *bazaari* readership of these papers. If one walks through the Bazaar and pays attention to the newspapers present in their stores, it becomes evident that they almost unanimously read *Hamshahri* and *Iran*, the two most mainstream and commonly read newspapers in Tehran. Moreover, when interviewed, *bazaaris* rarely, if ever, made reference to *Resalat*. To lend some credibility to these observations I asked the newspaper peddlers in the Bazaar what newspapers sold the most copies. Without exception peddlers responded that *Hamshahri* and *Iran* were the best sellers and some even said that they stopped carrying other broadsheets. Next, I investigated the newspaper kiosks surrounding the Bazaar that have a wide selection of papers ranging from the continually changing collection of reformist papers to arch conservative papers, such as *Jam-e Jam*, *Resalat*, and the afternoon *Kayhan*. I noticed that at the end of the day their heaping stacks of *Hamshahri* and *Iran* were generally sold out, and the reformist selections were well on their way to being sold out. Meanwhile, a large number of issues of *Resalat* and other conservative papers, in small supply to begin with, remained unsold.

The point here is that there is plenty of 'data' available if one is willing to use some creative, even if imprecise measurement and data collection techniques. Researchers will almost inevitably have to adjust their conceptions and develop new questions once they start gathering even the most cursory data. In terms of the Bazaar, the evidence of newspaper readership, along with other observations, indicated significant disparities between state-recognized associations that are said to represent 'the bazaar' or 'the *bazaaris*' and the practices and sentiments of traders within the historic marketplace.

Field research and concept formation

Close range field research (e.g. archival analysis, in-depth interviewing and participant observation) tends to highlight complexities of social life by illustrating inconsistencies in human behavior, the prevalence of subjective categories, discrepancies between institutional designs and actual outcomes, or the simultaneous nature of change and continuity. In the context of the Tehran Bazaar, the above discussions suggest that our concept of the Bazaar must account for temporal shifts and scrutinize the view of the Bazaar as a single corporate entity.

To account for these issues exposed during research, I have built on scholarship in new economic sociology that views networks as the basic building block of organizations.[4] I propose that bazaars should be studied as bounded spaces containing a series of socially embedded networks that are the mechanism for the exchange of specific commodities, credit and information about market conditions and potential transaction partners. Economic relations that are in various degrees embedded in religious, familial and ethnic relations capture a dynamic process that continually produces and structures the culture of exchange relations. Consequently, what is termed as the bazaar's 'traditionalism', 'informality', and 'mentality' is not a product of internalized, essential, and unvarying structures, or a functional response to meet economic necessity, but a logic that emerges out of patterns of relations enforcing and molding actions. Moreover, these networks themselves are subject to transformation as the political economy changes.

The process of conducting initial field research forced me to critically evaluate the literature and re-conceptualize long held notions of the Bazaar. I then turned to secondary sources to address unasked questions and refine existing categories used to analyze Iranian society. Thus, field research was the critical first step in interrogating existing modes of thought.

The Islamic revolution as a 'natural experiment'

Once we begin to study Iran from a more empirically grounded perspective, we can systematically explore the Islamic Revolution and ask whether it constitutes a social revolution. If the Revolution is treated as an exogenous shock, the Iranian case lends itself to interesting studies of change and continuity in order to explicitly investigate the consequences of the Revolution. The change in regimes acts as a sort of 'natural experiment' through which we can access the impact of changes in state institutions on society. By carefully and systematically comparing Iranian society before and after the Revolution we can assess the relevance of continuities such as Iran's position in the world economy, or the continued lack of liberal individual rights and absence of institutionalized parties. For example, while the main components of 'modernization', such as urbanization, industrialization, and expansion of education, all existed since the 1940s, it was only after the Islamic Revolution that a radical transformation of the Bazaar's networks can be detected. Also, comparisons across the revolutionary epoch can be bolstered by comparisons across cases within Iranian society. A whole host of creative comparative projects can be devised to study variations across cities, regions, ethnicities or economic sectors. Through evaluating the change in regime we can consider the relevance of socioeconomic, ideological and political factors in precipitating transformations. It is incumbent upon researchers to spend time in Iran to identify dissimilarities and appropriate comparisons, and field research must play a fundamental role in project design as much as in deriving findings.

In order to encourage research projects that tackle new issues, develop more powerful concepts and uncover new sources, the academic community must encourage early and regular visits to Iran. Unfortunately at this time there is little institutional and financial support for exploratory research. I would encourage research institutions to direct their limited funds to sponsor students in their first few years of study to make even brief visits to Iran to meet researchers, interview people, peruse archives and review dissertations and journals published in Iran in order to simultaneously diversify their research sources and lines of enquiry. Exploratory and preparatory research is a crucial, although often slighted, component of the preliminary stage of social inquiry, a stage that is particularly lacking in much North American and European scholarship on Iran. It is time to consciously support and privilege research projects that are constructed through, as well as by, field research; they will go a long way in enriching our understanding of Iran and social processes more generally.

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Notes

1. Two noteworthy examples are Fariba Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran* (trans. Jonathan Derrick), (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) and Asef Bayat, *Street Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
2. Gustav Thaiss, 'The Bazaar as a Case Study of Religion and Social Change', in *Iran Faces from the Seventies*, ed. Yar-Shater (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).
3. *Inter alia* Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002) and Hojjat Mortaji, *Jenah-haye Siyasi dar Iran-e Emrooz* (Tehran: Naqsh va Negar, 1378).
4. Walter W. Powell and Laurel Smith-Doerr, 'Networks and Economic Life', in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, eds. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

The Public Sphere and Public Islam

ARMANDO SALVATORE &
DALE F. EICKELMAN

A summer institute on *Public Spheres and Muslim Identities* took place in Berlin in July 2001 and at Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H., in August 2002. It was funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Bonn) and administered by the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, on behalf of an international consortium of institutes for advanced study in Europe and the United States. The projects engendered by the summer institute facilitated discussions on theory and method across disciplinary lines, geographical regions, and historical periods. A follow-up meeting of two of the institute's working groups convened in Florence in September 2003.

Public reasoning has had a long tradition in Islamic jurisprudence, both Sunni and Shiah, and has inspired modern Islamic reform since the nineteenth century. Until recently, however, the concept of the public sphere, a key concept in social thought and social science, has been elaborated primarily on the basis of the European and American experiences, and has consequently been criticized for not adequately representing the complexity and nuances of developments elsewhere. By focusing on the role of the public sphere in Muslim majority societies, we developed a project to explore how conceptualizations of the public sphere can be enhanced by encompassing the evolution of non-Western societies in which religion plays an important role.

Secularism and the public sphere

Most conceptions of the public sphere, including that of Habermas, consider secularly oriented rationality to be the normative terrain on which public life flourishes. Therefore, it was critical to explore the different means through which social practices inspired by Islam, including Sufi disciplines and collective rituals, interact and sometimes clash with different forms of secularism as incorporated in the ideologies and practices of most states within Muslim majority societies or where Muslim minorities live. In the various contexts where a public sphere emerges, it is marked by the opening up of circles of reciprocity and mutual obligations. Important factors in this development include how state authority gets legitimized, the emergence of new middle classes that support and challenge this authority, and changes in the social prestige of groups that have traditionally controlled the production of religious knowledge and institutions, including the ulama and the waqf. The approach developed at the summer institute suggested ways to avoid predefining the conditions for the emergence of the public sphere (for example, on the basis of explicit or implicit notions of secularization), and opted instead to focus on various accounts of the practices, discourses, and debates not only of the ulama and their direct challengers, but of a vast spectrum of social actors.

Who speaks for Islam?

Such historically known and contemporary debates thus became our heuristic device. Disputes about what 'good' or 'true' Islam entails, including collective and individual obligations, throw into relief competing claims to speak both for and to the public. Most importantly, these controversies demonstrate that in spite of the authoritarian shell of most states, the public sphere in the Muslim majority world is not monolithic, and its boundaries—if not its topics—are probably more contested than those in Western societies. Novel authorities or speakers emerge in the space between the state and more traditional religious authorities, and thus come to represent alternative points of power.

The summer institute dealt at length with the issue of religious authority, showing how it is connected to the construction and public display of religious identities. For example, the participation of Sufis in public religious debate, as in Syria, combines modern forms of presenting religious arguments with belonging to a hierarchical and personalized religious framework. This is made possible by a textual rhetoric organized around doctrinal arguments partly disconnected from their performative dimensions. Participants cautioned against a simplistic polarization between 'official' and 'popular' Islam. Even in places where there is a state-sponsored Islamic ideology, as in Pakistan and Iran, individuals, groups and communities often appropriate this ideology to reinforce their position in public contentions.

Consumption and commodification

One working group explored consumption and commodification as possible 'pathways into the public', but without reifying religion or implying that there are particular Islamic patterns of consumption. Participants also questioned the assumption that consumption should necessarily be seen as a way of forming and expressing identities or that identities become more flexible and negotiable through consumption and commodification. Religious and cultural identities often restrict and shape religious and consumptive patterns. Among the issues that some participants selected for future co-operative work were entertainment (including some religious events and practices and the popularity of 'religious celebrities'), exclusion and resistance (such as consumer boycotts), the limits of participation (the economic, political, and cultural shaping of aesthetic preferences and sumptuary laws), social and economic networks tied to religious 'nodes' (e.g. hajj-organizing business enterprises), and the cultural and economic politics of religious space. These approaches show the role of consumption and goods in shaping discursive and non-discursive public participation, and resituate the notion of the public firmly in the realm of social practice.

The widening scope of public Islam

It is important for present and future research to incorporate historical and contextual accounts of shifting notions and practices of public life and social exchange, rather than to assume, as has often been the case, that there is a single ideal form of the public sphere for all contexts and times. In other words, the idea of the public is culturally embedded. The way a sense of the public is built into social interactions varies considerably depending on context, and on notions of personality, responsibility, and justice. In the context of the contemporary state, modern techniques of authority, persuasion, and control must be taken into account. The notion of public Islam thus joins several streams of discussion, many of which are included in the edited volume *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden: Brill, in press), based on contributions from the summer institute.

'Public Islam' refers to the highly diverse invocations of Islam as ideas and practices that religious scholars, self-ascribed religious authorities, secular intellectuals, Sufi orders, mothers, students, workers, engineers, consumers, and many others make in civic debate and public life. In this public capacity, Islam plays a considerable role in configuring the politics and social life of large parts of the globe. This role is thus not only a template for ideas and practices but is also a way of envisioning alternative political realities and, increasingly, a way of acting on both global and local stages, thereby reconfiguring the established boundaries of civil and social life.

Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman edited Public Islam and the Common Good (Leiden: E.J. Brill, in press).
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Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future

The workshop *Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future* will take place in Leiden and Amsterdam from 20 to 22 February 2004. It is organized by Paul Aarts (University of Amsterdam) and Gerd Nonneman (Lancaster University, UK). The project is sponsored by the ISIM, the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Lancaster University and benefits from close support by the European University Institute's Robert Schuman Centre (Prof. Giacomo Luciani).

In the aftermath of 'September 11', much commentary was directed at the alleged clash between Islam and the West. As a long-time ally of the United States and a figure-head of Islamic politics, Saudi Arabia was caught in the middle. As fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were of Saudi origin, and with accusations of Saudi co-responsibility for the direction radicalized Islam had taken, the royal family was placed in the awkward situation of being called to account for the behaviour of a few Saudi citizens who were in fact simultaneously targeting the Al Saud themselves. Indeed, after 9/11 Saudi Arabia came to be seen, in some quarters, not so much as a victim but rather as a source of the problem. At the same time existing issues of concern relating to Saudi Arabia's economy, its 'social contract', and its place in the region and the world, were further highlighted.

Combining the roles of perhaps the world's key oil exporter, the guardian of the holiest places of Islam, and a crucial ally of the West in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia has acquired a high international profile involving inevitable tensions. Yet its internal affairs remain opaque to most outside observers. Moreover, the tensions between the Kingdom's roles at the regional and global levels in a changing international system intertwine with the dilemmas being faced at the domestic level. There is a need, therefore, to address these interlocking issues systematically, by drawing on the insights of a variety of Saudi and specialist outside observers. The workshop (and the associated book project) will attempt to do just that. This is particularly timely since many Saudis themselves—both among the leadership and elsewhere—are currently increasingly debating and acting on these questions.

The workshop (Leiden/Amsterdam, 20-22 February 2004) will bring together scholars and practitioners from Europe, the US and the Middle East—including Saudi Arabia. In two days of open discussions among commentators from a variety of perspectives, contemporary trends in Saudi politics, society, economy and international relations will be examined, exploring their roots as well as likely future developments. The focus will be at once domestic and international—seeing regional and global developments through the Saudi lens, while examining Saudi developments in the light of 'September 11,' the Iraq crisis, and changing global politics. Emphatically not an exercise in either accusation or in justification, the multiplicity of perspectives and areas of expertise brought to bear on these questions should allow a balanced understanding to emerge of Saudi Arabia's dynamics, challenges, and responses.

More information can be obtained from Paul Aarts, Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Middle East Politics at the University of Amsterdam, p.w.h.aarts@uva.nl or Gerd Nonneman, Reader in International Relations and Middle East Politcs at Lancaster University, g.nonneman@lancaster.ac.uk.

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

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Venue: Felix Meritis, Keizersgracht 324, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Workshop:
The Islamic Community of Milli Görüş in Europe Today:
Some Possible Avenues for Common Research
Organizers: Martin van Bruinessen (ISIM), Gerdien Jonker
Date: 9 January 2004
Venue: Leiden, The Netherlands

Conference:
The Role of Religion in the Socio-Cultural Transformation of West Africa
African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) Conference and International Association for the History of Religions Regional Conference
Organizers: Elom Dovlo, Abdelkader Tayob (ISIM), Matthews A. Ojo
Date: 5-8 February 2004
Venue: Legon, Ghana

Workshop:
Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future
Organizers: Paul Aarts, University of Amsterdam, Gerd Nonneman, Lancaster University
Sponsors: ISIM, the Dutch Foreign Ministry and the University of Lancaster (UK)
Date: 20-22 February 2004
Venue: Leiden / Amsterdam, The Netherlands

For more information on these and other ISIM Events please consult the ISIM website or contact the ISIM Secretariat:
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The Role of Religion in the Socio-Cultural Transformation of West Africa

The three-day conference of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) will be held from February 5-8 2004, and hosted by the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, at Legon. It will be an important forerunner of the next International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) Congress planned for March 24-30 2005, in Tokyo. The conference is sponsored by the IAHR and the ISIM.

A regional conference for religious scholars of the subregion of West Africa will explore the relationship between social and cultural institutions and religious practices in contemporary West African societies. The ongoing wars, civil disturbances and turmoil in West African nations provide a unique opportunity to investigate the role of religion in the social and cultural transformation of the region. The conference will offer a multidimensional analysis of these issues and thereby revitalize the discussion of the place of religion in the social and cultural development of Africa.

Religion and the state have had a checkered relationship since independence. In one respect, the separation between religion and state has been the dominant discourse. At the same time, the state has tried to control religious discourse or to guide it in one way or another. For example, it has often been involved in the application of customary law and Islamic law. The conference will try to ask questions about all aspects of state relations (legal, constitutional and political) with religious institutions. What does religion tell us about the state in West Africa, and vice versa?

Another theme that will be addressed by the conference is the nature and role of voluntary organizations (NGOs) in the development and articulation of religions: a comparison of youth organizations, women's movements, self-help schemes that have developed, sometimes as a direct outcome of secularization, or the collapse of the state. What is the texture of religion under the impact of NGOs, local and international, and other voluntary organizations?

West Africa has also been affected by international developments. It has contributed to and been affected by globalization. How have West African religious developments been influenced by global and regional networks: West African based trading networks, human rights organizations, Islamic and Christian networks, geo-political interests, criminal syndicates, etc? Case studies or comparative studies can highlight and reflect on the globalizing effects on religions and religious developments.

More information can be obtained from the three co-organizers: Elom Dovlo at edovlo@ug.edu.gh in Ghana, Abdelkader Tayob at a.tayob@let.kun.nl in the Netherlands, or Matthews A. Ojo at matthews_ojo@yahoo.com in Nigeria.

NEW FELLOWS

The ISIM welcomes the following new fellows:

Ph.D. Fellows

- **Alexandre Caeiro, M.A.:** 'The Construction of Islamic Authority in Western Europe: an Analysis of the Production and Consumption of Fatwas'

- **Yuniyanti Chuzaifah, M.A.:** 'Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers in the Gulf: Transnational Relations, the Dynamics of Religion, and the Construction of Identities'

Post-doctoral Fellows

- **Dr Roel Meijer:** 'Islam and Violence; The National and Transnational Islamist Debate on the Legitimacy and Strategic Value of Violence'.

Visiting Fellow

- **Dr Morad Saghafi:** 'A Century of Political Involvement: Iran's Islamic Movement Revisited'

ISIM POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) invites applications for ISIM post-doctoral fellowships. The fellowships are available to scholars who have recently (within 5 years) obtained a Ph.D. degree in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, cultural studies and political science.

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

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

ISIM post-doctoral fellowships at a glance:

- granted for a period of up to two years
- monthly stipend
- office space, a personal computer, telephone on the premises of the ISIM in Leiden
- travel expenses to and from the country in which fieldwork will be carried out
- research facilities including library and photocopy privileges, normal stationery and office material

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

For details on ISIM post-doctoral fellowships and to download an application form, please refer to the ISIM web site (www.isim.nl) under the link 'Fellowships' or contact the ISIM office at:

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Changes in the ISIM Directorate

Prof. Dr Peter van der Veer, chair of Comparative Religion at the University of Amsterdam, stepped down as co-Director of the ISIM, a function that he had fulfilled since February 2001. In collaboration with Professor Dr Muhammad Khalid Masud (ISIM's first Academic Director, see ISIM Newsletter 12, p. 14-19), Van der Veer focused his activities on institutional development of the ISIM, including the expansion of relations with the ISIM participating universities and with other national and international institutions. He headed the search for the ISIM Chair at the University of Nijmegen and that for the new Academic Director and ISIM Chair at Leiden University. Furthermore, Van der Veer enhanced the visibility of the ISIM in the Netherlands by engaging in public debates. At present Van der Veer is an ISIM sabbatical fellow.

In conjunction with the appointment of Prof. Dr Asef Bayat as Academic Director of the ISIM (see ISIM Newsletter 12, p. 1) Dr Dick Douwes was appointed Executive Director of the ISIM. Dick Douwes has been involved in the ISIM from its foundation and was in charge of Academic Affairs and the ISIM Newsletter. Dick Douwes is lecturer in Middle Eastern History at the University of Nijmegen.

ISIM PUBLICATIONS

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

Publications in the ISIM Papers Series include:
- *Islam, Islamists, and the Electoral Principle in the Middle East* (ISIM Papers 1) by James Piscatori
- *Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt* (ISIM Papers 2) by Talal Asad
- *Shar'ia, State, and Social Norms in France and Indonesia* (ISIM Papers 3) by John R. Bowen
- *'Traditionalist' Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs* (ISIM Papers 4) by Barbara D. Metcalf

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

Debate on Arab Human Development Reports

In cooperation with the Prince Claus Fund, the ISIM organized a debate entitled 'Bridging the Deficits' on the 2002 and 2003 Arab Human Development Reports on 9 December 2003 in Amsterdam. The keynote speech was delivered by the main author of the reports, Nader Fergany (Director Almishkat Centre for Research and Training, Egypt). Asef Bayat (Academic Director of the ISIM) and Sadik al-Azm (Philosopher and Human Rights Activist, Member of the Prince Claus Awards Committee, Syria) opened the debate. The meeting was chaired by Paul Aarts, Senior Lecturer, International Relations, Universiteit van Amsterdam. The event was organized on the occasion of the granting of a 2003 Prince Claus Award to the Arab Human Development Report 2002 (see http://www.princeclausfund.nl).

ISIM PH.D. FELLOWSHIPS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) invites applications for ISIM Ph.D. fellowships. ISIM Ph.D. fellowships are available to candidates with an M.A. degree or equivalent in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, cultural studies and political science. The medium of instruction is English, and PhD degrees are granted from one of the four participating Universities in the ISIM: University of Amsterdam, University of Nijmegen, Leiden University, and Utrecht University.

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

ISIM Ph.D. fellowships are awarded twice per year. The deadlines for applications are 1 March and 1 September of each year.

ISIM Ph.D. fellowships at a glance:
- tenable for a period of up to four years
- monthly stipend
- office space, a personal computer, telephone on the premises of the ISIM in Leiden
- travel expenses for fieldwork
- no tuition fees

PhD Fellows are located in the historic city of Leiden with easy convenient links to the coast, airport, and major European cities. Fellows have full access to fine libraries, research centers, and the facilities of the participating Universities.

For details on ISIM Ph.D. fellowships and to download an application form, please refer to the ISIM web site (www.isim.nl) under the link 'Fellowships' or contact the ISIM Office at:

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5th ISIM Annual Lecture

On 8 December 2003, the fifth ISIM Annual Lecture was delivered by Prof. Dr Abdulaziz Sachedina, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Professor Sachedina's lecture was entitled 'Religion in the Public Square: Islam and Democracy'. He spoke about the role of religion in the development of democratic institutions in light of the American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. With these interventions, debates have as yet to tackle the role of religious convictions and values in the development of emerging democratic institutions to guarantee basic freedoms and rights. The major stumbling block to democratization, Sachedina argued, appears to be the way the role of religious values is defined in developing an inclusive sense of citizenship without insisting upon doctrinal/theological uniformity.

The text of the lecture will be made available on the ISIM Website and published in the ISIM Paper series.

Capacity Building Workshops in Yemen & Tanzania

The ISIM project 'Rights at Home: An Approach to the Internalization of Human Rights in Family Relations in Islamic Communities' organized four Capacity Building Workshops in Yemen and Tanzania in the summer of 2003. In close cooperation with the local counterparts, the Yemeni Forum for Civil Society and the Tanzanian Sahiba☆Sisters Foundation a total of 150 participants were invited to come to San'a (21–24 July), Taiz (26–29 July), Aden (31 July–4 August) and Mwanza (9–17 August) respectively to enhance their knowledge and practical implementation of human rights issues within the local family.

The men and women who participated in the workshops represented very diverse regions and socio-economic strata. They had been selected for the training on the basis of two criteria: their impact on local family life based on their social or religious position, professional or other activities, and their open-mindedness to reforms.

Yemen

In Yemen participants were representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) dealing with the human rights of women and children, as well as teachers, social workers, psychologists, tribal leaders, imams, preachers (*wu'az*), advisers in religious issues (*murshidun*), politicians, lawyers, writers, journalists and others involved in the public media.

The workshops began with a discussion on human rights according to international standards. Local trainer Abdelkarim Kassim remarked that many Muslims consider the issue of human rights an issue that can be disregarded because of its assumed Western origin. The example of the former ruler of Yemen, Imam Yahya, who as the Yemeni representative in the United Nations, recognized the Declaration of Human Rights even before the United States, shows that they are mistaken. The Imam was convinced that human rights were inherent to his own Islamic religion and culture. A foundation can be found in the Qur'an and the *hadith*, an interpretation that is confirmed by great Muslim thinkers like Ibn Rushd, al-Farabi and al-Ghazali, to name but a few. Against this background the actual situation of neglect and violation of human rights in the Islamic world can to a large extent be explained by political, not by religious causes.

The actual situation in Yemen gives a similar impression. The rights of women and children seem well described in the Yemeni legislation, but are not implemented in actual practice. It was remarkable that, despite the very different backgrounds of the participants to the workshops, people agreed widely upon the obstacles for the actual implementation of human rights of women and children. Most of the activists held the view that the causes of the problems should be ascribed to the prevailing culture rather than to religion. Traditional society offers many ways to discriminate between the sexes, and to depreciate the position of both women and children. The impact of tradition and custom is often stronger in Yemen than religious prescriptions.

Confusion arose during the discussions about the differences between what Islam prescribes and what traditions says. Both Islam and tradition can be characterized by diversity. On the one hand, participants said that some Yemeni traditions actually enhance the cause of rights of women and children. An example of a tribe in Ma'rib in which women hold very strong positions was received with laughter among all present. On the other hand, trainer Abdullahi an-Na'im (former Director, Rights at Home) stressed that the very existence of the four schools of Islamic law (*madhhab's*) shows that within Islam there has always been room for discussion and other opinions. The fact that many Muslims have no knowledge of the diversity of thought within Islam causes them to miss opportunities to learn and profit from divergent ideas.

Next to tradition and 'religious illiteracy' (*ummiya diniya*), the participants mentioned several other factors, like the poor economic conditions, poverty and unemployment, widespread illiteracy, especially among women, that negatively influence the condition of human rights in Yemen.

When it finally came to finding solutions for all the above mentioned problems, it was remarkable that the majority of the participants argued that it is mainly the responsibility of the Yemeni government to solve them. It is exactly this idea that the training hoped to change: the participants should be convinced that they, as 'advocates of change' must make the difference themselves. In fact, during the training they were becoming more and more aware that, for example, the Yemeni legislation already offers many possibilities and solutions for the violation of women's and children's rights, but that in practice lobbying from the people and strong local organizations are needed to actually implement this legislation.

The workshop trainer Laila al-Zwaini (primary consultant, Rights at Home) was enthusiastically received when she presented the marriage contract as a strategy for the enhancement of human rights within the family. Examples from elsewhere in the Islamic past and present showed that it is allowed to include additional stipulations or conditions in the marriage contract. The official marriage contract that is used in Yemen nowadays was analyzed in separate working groups, with a proposal to develop new models of the contract. The participants came up with models that all contained conditions that better secured respect of human rights within the family such as: witnesses should confirm the mutual consent of the couple concerned so that the chance of a forced marriage is reduced, women may stipulate the right to study or work after marriage, and the right to divorce.

While an improved marriage contract can provide a basis for more equal relations between spouses, the organizational structure of Yemeni family life also needs critical analysis. Trainer Suaad al-Qadasi (The Women's Forum for Research and Training) pointed out how this structure determines how parents treat their children, and how many choices are made without consulting them. Girls rather than boys are assigned tasks in the household, and boys rather than girls are enabled to follow higher education. Similar structures with huge impact on the development of both sexes can be found in schools. In general, adults don't listen very well to children, and they are often treated with violence or neglect.

The Minister of Human Rights, Ms Amat al-Alim al-Susuwa, who held the opening address of the workshop in San'a, stated that improvements in the human rights' situation in Yemen can only to some extent be the result of initiatives of the government or cooperation projects. Changes should start with the people themselves, within their own consciousness, within their families and communities. Human rights start at home, and come about through loving and respectful interactions between husband, wife and children.

Tanzania

After Yemen the Rights at Home project team went to Mwanza in Tanzania. Mwanza was chosen as the location for the workshop because of its peripheral position and its vigorous Muslim community.

The geographical concept that underlies the Rights at Home Project is the cultural sphere of the Indian Ocean, with a special interest in neglected areas. Moreover, local NGO's play a key role in providing the people of Mwanza with social security. It was due to their help that the workshop could successfully be held.

Some sixty Tanzanian professionals working in the public service and with NGO's, coming from the coast, the interior as well as from the islands Zanzibar and Pemba, took part in the seminar. Although many trainers were Tanzanians, the tutors from abroad also made a great contribution. Among the staff were Abdullahi an-Na'im, Muhammad Khalid Masud (the former Academic Director of ISIM), Yasmin Busran-Lao (al-Mujadila Development Foundation, the Philippines), Abdulkader Tayob (ISIM), Zainah Anwar and Pia Zain (Sisters in Islam, Malaysia). By sharing their experiences of living in very different locations it became self-evident that there doesn't exist only one comprehensive Islamic lifestyle. Various trainers refuted the idea that Islam is frozen in time and does not permit up-to-date interpretations; or that a state or another institution has the exclusive right of interpretation. Khalid Masud put this aptly when he explored the notion of *shari'a* which when translated literally means a path or road. He argued that some think that once they introduce *shari'a* they can unroll their mats and sit on the road. But the road needs maintenance and a destination otherwise it will fall into ruin through neglect and it will lead to nowhere. One of the major goals (*maqasid*) of *shari'a* is respect for human rights.

The cases that were presented during the workshop exemplified the problems that social activists in Tanzania are dealing with. Salma Maoulidi (Sahiba☆Sisters Foundation) presented the case of a woman in her forties who was trained as a nurse but was not allowed by her husband to work after marriage. When she became infected with HIV her husband divorced her. Without hearing from the woman the religious establishment granted the divorce with a small compensation, leaving her destitute.

Another case that caused a lot of concern was the *Husna case* that participants encountered during the course of a field study. A young girl was seriously injured after she was raped by a *madrasa* teacher. The influential social position of the suspect prevented him from being put on trial. Another case was taken from the host town Mwanza and used for a role play exercise during the course 'Development of advocacy skills' facilitated by a local human rights organization, Kivulini. The case involved Hawa, the second wife of Juma, who was pregnant and the mother of two children. She was expelled by Juma from the house after he found out she was HIV positive. The magistrate court ruled that the husband had to pay her a maintenance fee, however he lodged an appeal against the ruling. As the court proceedings dragged on Hawa's health condition weakened while Juma married another woman.

The nine days in Mwanza which are further described in Salma Maoulidi's text (see page 58) were characterized by ideological and practice challenges as participants tried to make meaning of the 'new truths' revealed in the workshop. Many weathered the challenge by remaining open-minded and dialoguing. This often demanded long working days, which participants braved with extreme show of commitment and it is this dedication that made the workshop an enjoyable and valuable learning experience for both trainees and trainers.

The next phase of the Rights at Home project will bring 45 participants from Yemen, Tanzania and Southeast Asia in a joint Advanced Training scheduled in Spring 2004. One of the objectives will be the further translation of the theoretical underpinnings of human rights in practice based on Islamic *fiqh* and tradition.

The following personnel changes occurred in the Rights at Home project team. For health reasons Abdullahi an-Na'im (Emory University, Atlanta) stepped back as Project Director. Abdulkader Tayob (ISIM Chair of the University of Nijmegen) succeeds him in this position. Ebrahim Moosa (Duke University, Durham), Cassandra Balchin (Women Living under Muslim Laws, WLUML, London), Muhammad Khalid Masud (Islamabad), Abdullahi an-Na'im and Nasr Abu Zayd (former resource person of the project, University for Humanistics, Utrecht) now act as external advisors for Rights at Home.

More information about the project can be found on the project section of the ISIM website.

This report was prepared by:
Mariëtte van Beek, Administrative Coordinator of the Rights at Home project.
Salma Maoulidi, Executive Director of Sahiba☆Sisters Foundation.
Paul Schrijver, former Project Assistant of Rights at Home
Faisal al-Sufi, former co-editor of al-Qistas, the journal of Forum for Civil Society.

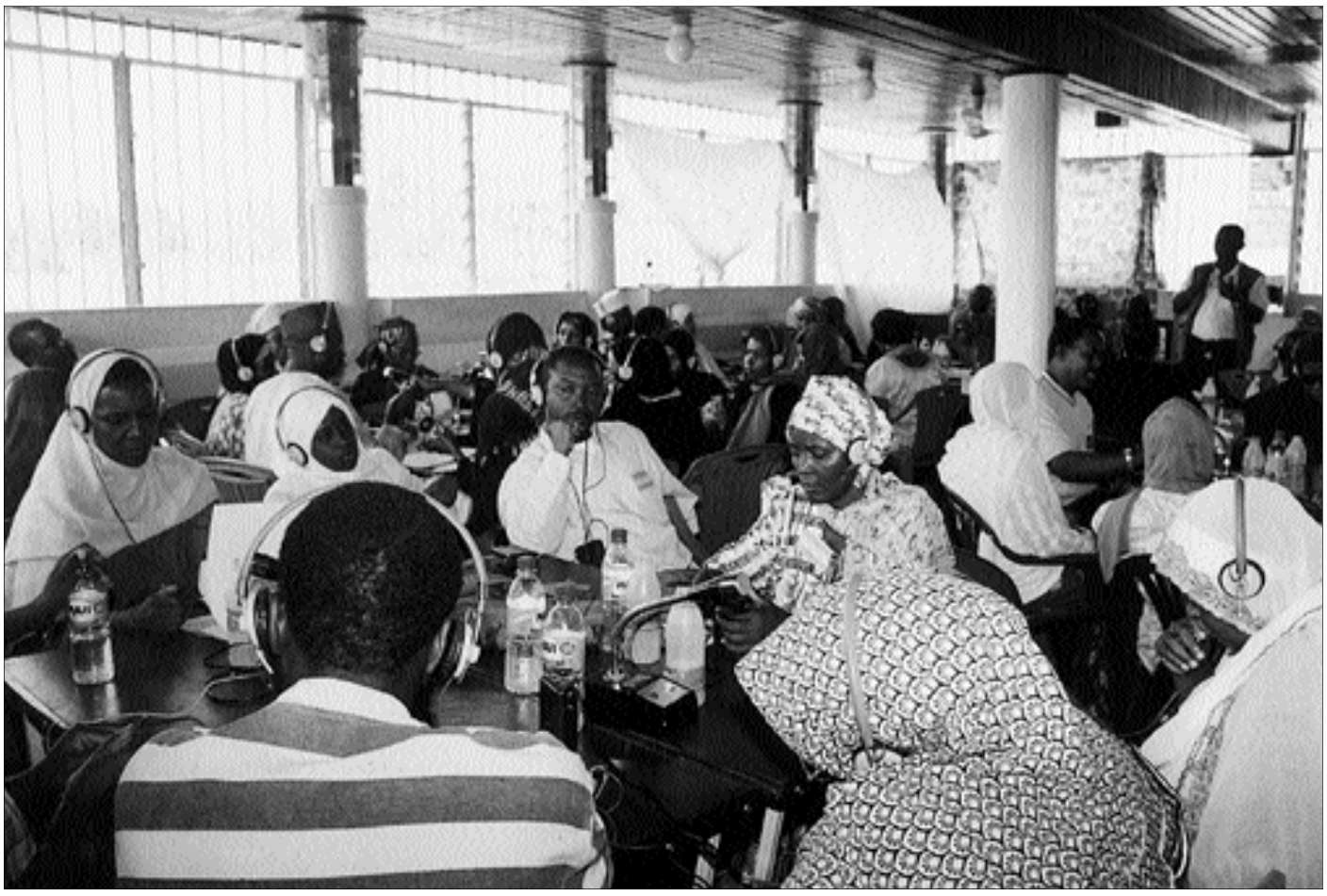

PHOTO:MARIËTTE VAN BEEK, 2003

Training workshop in Tanzania where simultaneous translation was provided.

Small Ripples in Tanzania

SALMA MAOULIDI

Sahiba☆Sisters Foundation, an activist organization foremost preoccupied with Muslim women's realities, was invited to participate in the Rights at Home Project in early 2002. Initially there was a level of apprehension about working with an institution that was primarily an academic institution, with academics who mastered theories but may not have hands on experience with complex situations on the ground. Also worrisome was the prospect of putting too much energy in empirical issues and methodological frameworks rather than on developing flexible responses to the needs of people on the ground. But the idea of working towards societal transformation using local knowledge and capacities was attractive to Sahiba. Indeed the Rights at Home approach filled a gap in local advocacy strategies since it went beyond idealistic notions of social justice and rights. Rather, Rights at Home promised to demystify and authenticate juridical positions and interpretations that were impacting the Islamic community in the area of family relations. More importantly, it resolved to do this from within Islamic laws and traditions. Muslim communities are overwhelmingly concerned that human rights arguments are substantiated by 'Islamic' texts so as to legitimize engagement or non-engagement with it.

The initial sounding board meetings with various stakeholders were held in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar in May 2002. They aimed at unearthing issues for advocacy in Tanzania where rights issues are invariably discussed within a context of political repression and perceived or real marginalization. Most participants perceived their religion as being under attack from not only the West, but also some Muslims who have been co-opted into un-Islamic ideologies, and wanted to protect the purity and beauty of their religion.

Such suspicions did not negate the sense of appreciation for Rights at Home. Certainly, Rights at Home provided a space to air views and to critically examine the situation, something local religious gatherings fail to do. The initial meeting represented a beginning to challenging the comfort zone about what it means to be Muslim and to reflect what it means in actual practice. Additionally, the presence of a female scholar was eye rising just as was the presence of non-bearded turban-tying scholars.

Hence, already with this seemingly routine stage of the project, the waves for a rights revolution had begun to be formed and gained momentum this August with the advocacy training for some 60 advocates of change in Mwanza. Indeed, more ripples were created in Mwanza, some of which may collect into a significant mass while others may dissipate in obscurity. Either way, we cannot miss the ruffles in the landscape Mwanza created.

The training was located in a real setting, devoid of the luxuries that a four star venue would avail. In Mwanza the focus was on real people and real issues, not on impersonal rhetoric which an unfamiliar setting often emphasizes. The participation was also unique. Perhaps for the first time, different levels of human rights advocates and gatekeepers from both the government and non-governmental sector were brought together in one setting to dialogue on aspects of human rights violations and advocacy in Muslim families and communities. Moreover, non- Muslims were invited to the workshop. This is a departure from the initial approach of only involving Muslims since in reality non- Muslims are part of the social groups that may be called upon to support local initiatives aimed to promote human rights values in families and communities. In actual fact, many already do so in the legal arena providing legal aid services to Muslim women and men. Rights at Home enabled them to interact with the Muslim community on an equal basis, not only as victims. It also demystified the sharia for them. Thus, faced with increased religious tension, the training in Mwanza facilitated the beginnings of an interfaith collaboration beyond the institutional: rather it involved the personal with the professional as was evidenced in the case of Husna (see Beek Van, p. 56). And these were the minor victories, milestones of sorts as Sahiba tries to bring greater visibility to the plight of Muslim women. This cannot be effectively done without challenging power dynamics not only at the family level, but also at the ideological and institutional level. In Mwanza we facilitated a process with Muslim women claiming sole responsibility in challenging power centers and power relations impacting on their status.

It is common knowledge that Islamic institutions, as religious rhetoric and space, are largely male. Women are hardly present in such forums, just as they are absent from authoritative legal sources. Thus, women lack both a voice and visibility in religious discourse and spaces. This was not to be at the training, which involved men and women in almost equal numbers. The active participation of women more than refuted claims shared by Muslim men and non-Muslims alike that Muslim women are passive spectators in community affairs and more so in issues that affect them. They dominated the discussions. Thus, here too, the relationship was being renegotiated. Muslim men who are considered authorities in religious matters no longer enjoyed exclusive right to religious discourse. They found themselves in the company of equally informed women, who in most instances showed a sharper ability to analyze and question not only the theory but also the practice, the obvious and the obscured.

Indubitably, the men were stunned by the level of participation and the challenge the women posed and it may have dawned on them that they no longer hold exclusive rights to text interpretations. Some may have even realized that the training went beyond the dicta of human rights for it challenged the values their positions and practice espoused. Necessarily this demanded a renegotiation of the benefits and privileges they enjoyed as individuals or as parts of institutions because of the continued tolerance to the status quo. This renegotiation was almost immediate. The defensive posture of some of the participants in Mwanza was to be expected as they sought to justify the status quo by hazy reference to Qur'anic injunctions which was repeatedly challenged by not only professors Muhammad Khalid Masud, Abdulkader Tayob and Abdullahi An-Na'im, but also by fellow participants who were uncompromising in excusing human rights violations on account of divine ruling without contextualizing the particular edict.

Likewise, Zainah Anwar from Sisters in Islam and Yasmin Buran Lao from Mujadillah through her lively presentation, shared their own struggles to assert themselves in their communities. Our colleague Pia also generated discussion by addressing on the array of possibilities present in doing advocacy work.

Sahiba's local network experienced some tension in renegotiating power among the membership and with the religious establishment. Unhappy with the outcome of the training, some participants from Mwanza acting with the local religious establishment decided to smear the unprecedented initiative by invoking on people a sense of guilt and fear. They accused Sahiba and her collaborators of turning the Qur'an 'upside down' and questioning the basis of Islamic reasoning and way of life. They went on to denounce those who attended the training and wanted, in particular, the women from Mwanza to publicly condemn Sahiba. But the women, no longer easily intimidated, stood firm. They refused to attribute to Sahiba or to the training what they clearly saw as political concoction. They acknowledged the empowering aspect of the training and they resolved to pull away from a body they saw as undemocratic and stagnant. Instead, they formed a new group called *Jitambue* (be aware/conscious) and intensified collaboration with local partners acquainted during the training more in tune with their vision of social justice. Indeed a social revolution is underway among women's groups in Tanzania, a revolution that is a natural consequence of revolutionary activist approaches as they are of a deep conviction in the potential of the human spirit to reclaim their dignity. The challenge for Sahiba and others is to nurture these processes to their natural conclusion.

Salma Maoulidi is Executive Director, Sahiba☆Sisters Foundation.
She wishes to acknowledge Ayesha Yahya, Ayesha Juma and Abubakar Karsan, all from Mwanza, for their input towards writing this article.
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What Happened: **Telling Stories about Law in Muslim Societies**

LÉON BUSKENS &
ANNELIES MOORS

From 24 to 26 October 2003 an international workshop was held in Cairo under the title 'What Happened: Telling Stories about Law in Muslim Societies'. Representing the third event in the ISIM programme on the anthropology of Islamic law, the workshop was organized with the Centre d'Études et de Documentation Économique, Juridique et Sociale (CEDEJ), the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO), and the Dutch-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC), all based in Cairo. The convenors were Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, Léon Buskens, Barbara Drieskens, Baudouin Dupret, and Annelies Moors.

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together social scientists and historians to study how people tell stories in and about law in Muslim societies. One of the main concerns was to understand how experts, the parties concerned and the public at large construct 'the truth' in law. For instance, the version of a story that is accepted by both parties in a settlement, rather than reflecting what happened in actuality, may more productively be seen as a compromise between the parties concerned. Different genres of legal documents such as *fatwa*s, letters to saints, marriage contracts, court records, *waqf* deeds, and police, newspaper, radio and human rights reports were extensively discussed. There was particular attention to the ways in which various genres of legal texts can only be understood by contextualizing them in particular historical moments and locations.

The contributions dealing with 'stories in the law' focused on the multiple ways texts (whether oral, written, or a combination of both) are produced. Some texts are highly complex, such as 'translations' from oral to written forms. There is a need for more scholarly attention to the impact of those involved in the production of particular texts, such as scribes, judges, and professional witnesses, as well as the ways in which these legal specialists allow for or exclude particular voices. In this regard, it is important to not only trace the training trajectories and positioning in the legal system of text producers, but also to understand how the public at large turns to them in order to 'translate' their cases in terms that make sense within the legal system. Amalia Zomeño addressed these phenomena through a discussion of the process of *fatwa*-giving, whereas Brinkley Messick, Khaled Fahmy and Rudolph Peters focused on the production of court records and legal judgments. Baudouin Dupret gave an ethnographer's report of how the records of the police and the public prosecutor come into being in present-day Egypt. Emad Adly analyzed the letters written to Imam Al-Shafi'i as requests for retribution, formulated as *shakwa*s ('complaints'). Annelies Moors and Léon Buskens looked at the ways in which marriage contracts were written down in Palestine and Morocco, respectively.

Turning from the producers of texts to their readers and audiences, one central question focused on the intended publics of these texts, especially of 'stories about the law'. Whereas some documents are only meant to be consulted in specific circumstances by a highly restricted number of people, other texts are intended for a specialized or general public. This calls for an investigation of how particular publics are addressed in texts and the impact of the use of various media. Subsequently, workshop participants raised the question of how differently positioned publics interpret particular texts (such as newspaper articles), and how publicity—in its various forms –works in specific settings (such as in human rights issues). Barbara Drieskens and Anna Wuerth analyzed the way contemporary Egyptian newspapers writers report about respectively healers who deal with djinns, about police abuse, and how different parts of the public react to these stories. Dorothea Schulz focused on the production of a radio report on domestic violence in urban Mali. Lynn Welchman reflected on her role as an observer in the courts of Tunis to report on human rights issues. Marie-Claire Foblets and Mustapha El Karouni discussed how Belgian judges evaluate and use legal documents from Morocco in order to establish an authoritative version of the truth. Michael Gilsenan presented his research on Arab communities in Southeast-Asia in which the institution of the *waqf* constructed as a family trust played an important role in those communities. In all these cases the use of publicity proved to be of vital importance, sometimes resulting in an extra-judicial settlement.

Theoretical and methodological issues discussed include the role of ethnographers and historians as tellers of stories and the extent to which legal documents can be used as sources for social history. Only by considering these sources in their appropriate contexts (such as various legal systems, political systems, social and cultural notions) and by analyzing the processes of their production and consumption, can we understand their various meanings. In that sense legal history is a precondition for social history.

The conveners hope to publish revised versions of the papers as an edited volume.

Léon Buskens (Leiden University/Utrecht University) &
Annelies Moors (ISIM/University of Amsterdam)

PAPERS PRESENTED

- **E. Adly:** 'Le saint, le cheikh et la femme adultère: courrier du coeur adressé a l'imam al-Shafi'i au Caire.'
- **L. Buskens:** 'Tales According to the Book: Professional Witnesses as Cultural Brokers in Morocco.'
- **B. Drieskens:** 'What to do with Djinns in Stories about Law?'
- **B. Dupret:** 'The Categories of Morality: Homosexuality between Perversion and Debauchery.'
- **K. Fahmy:** 'A Murder Case in upper Egypt.'
- **M.C. Foblets And M. Karouni:** 'Mobile Muslims. Judges in Europe Confronted with the Thorny Question 'Which Law Applies?'
- **M. Gilsenan:** 'A Trust in the Family, an Interest in Kinship: English Law, Mohammedan Intentions and Arab Genealogies in Colonial Singapore.'
- **B. Messick:** 'Legal Narratives from *Shari'a* Courts.'
- **A. Moors:** 'Marriage Contracts: Registrating a Token Dower, Constructing Multiple Modernities.'
- **R. Peters:** 'The Violent Schoolmaster: The 'Normalization' of the Dossier of a Nineteenth Century Egyptian Legal Case.'
- **D. Schultz:** 'Publicizing Propriety, "Telling The Truth". Extra-Court Constructions of Legal Storiesin Urban Mali.'
- **L. Welchman:** 'Trying Times in Tunis: Notes From a Purposeful Observer.'
- **A. Wuerth:** 'Prosecuting Police Abuse in Egypt.'
- **A. Zomeno:** 'The Story in the Fatwa and the Fatwa as History.'

Migrant Domestic Workers

Becoming Visible in the Public Sphere?

ANNELIES MOORS

The geographic mobility of domestic workers is certainly not new. However, contemporary globalization has dramatically stimulated and facilitated the international migration of domestic workers. In many areas of the world, paid domestic labour is a growth sector in which new groups of women are becoming involved. Increasing economic inequalities on a global scale, shifts in family relations and household composition, as well as the changing patterns and evaluations of women's employment and domestic work, are increasingly drawing migrant women into this field of employment.

The Social Science Research Council's Programme on the Middle East & North Africa has selected the project 'Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East: Becoming Visible in the Public Sphere?' to receive an International Collaborative Research Grant to support the joint research by Ray Jureidini (American University Beirut), Annelies Moors (ISIM/University of Amsterdam), Ferhunde Özbay, (Boğaziçi University, Istanbul) and Rima Sabban (Dubai University College) for the period 1 July 2003 to 31 December 2004. This research project is linked to the ISIM research programme, Migrant Domestic Work: Transnational Spaces, Families, and Identities (see www.isim.nl).

Although at first glace domestic workers (especially if female) may be seen as relegated to the private, domestic sphere, there are good reasons to address their presence 'in the public'. For if the house is the private sphere of the employer, it is simultaneously the work setting of the domestic worker. This in itself invites revisiting the private-public dichotomy and is precisely the kind of issue that the project is concerned with. The project addresses the publicness of migrant domestic labour through three sets of questions.

Historical trajectories

The first and most general field of research addresses how the historical trajectories of migrant domestic work relate to the development of specific notions of the public-private nexus in the Middle East. Using the empirical question, 'who is the domestic worker replacing?' as its point of departure, the project investigates how the labour and family relations of earlier categories of domestics (such as domestic slaves and 'adopted daughters') differ from those employed under conditions of contemporary globalization (such as migrant contract labour and systems of sponsorship). These transformations are investigated within the context of the development of the nation-state as well as the growing importance of transnational relations that tie in with changes in family relations and household composition, and, more generally, with the development of new notions of publicness. This raises such questions as, how different is the private–public nexus in the case of earlier forms of domestic work from that of present-day employment? What has been the impact of particular forms of nation-state formation and concepts of citizenship? And what sorts of legal regimes and concepts (varying from Islamic law to international human rights) are at stake?

Public Space

Second, this project deals with the transformations of public space and the ways in which (migrant) domestic workers are included or excluded in this process. Access to public space is an obvious area of contestation between employers and domestic workers, with the former often supported through state regulations. In such discussions, the impact of systems of gender-segregation is also a critical factor to consider. In what ways are migrant domestic workers visible in public spaces and how is their visibility in public spaces assessed? Are migrant domestic workers able to participate in hetero-social public spaces or do they have access to gender-segregated public spaces? And what sorts of positions are they able to take up within such gendered public spaces? Are migrant domestic workers able to (or perhaps forced to) produce 'their own' public spaces, and on what identity markers (such as nationality, language, or religion) are these areas of interaction based? This historical perspective raises the issue of how such visibility in public spaces compares with that of earlier forms of domestic labour.

Public debates

The third field of investigation addresses public debates on (migrant) domestic workers (such as the impact of Asian domestics on the socialization of children in terms of language and religion) and the ways in which these are mass mediated. In contrast to the notion of 'the public' in the sense of a bounded space of face-to-face interaction and dialogue, the development of the mass media has engendered a qualitative change in the conditions for participating in 'public debate'. In investigating public debates about migrant domestic work, the central questions are not simply, who are the participants (state institutions, politico-religious movements, associations of/for migrant domestic workers, human rights organizations, women's groups and so on), which issues are at stake, and what styles of argumentation have been employed, but especially, who has the authority and the defining power to frame these debates. The fact that such debates are mass mediated further raises questions about how different genres have represented migrant domestic workers, and what media and forms of representation migrant domestic workers themselves have employed.

These questions will be discussed in the course of five seminars in Istanbul, Dubai, Beirut and Amman, where participants in this project have been involved in empirical research on migrant domestic labour, with a concluding session to be held in one of the participating countries.

Annelies Moors is an anthropologist and holds the ISIM chair at the University of Amsterdam.

(Inter)textuality: Interactive Cultural Practices

NASR ABU ZAYD

ISIM and The Working Group Modernity and Islam of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin collaborated for the third workshop of the project 'Jewish and Islamic Hermeneutics as Historical Critique'. The latest workshop was held in Leiden from 23-26 October 2003 under the title, 'Textuality, Intertextuality: Interactive Cultural Practices in Judaism and Islam'.

Starting from the theoretical framework of 'intertextuality', the aim of the workshop 'Textuality, Intertextuality: Interactive Cultural Practices in Judaism and Islam' was to strive to transcend conventionally accepted identity boundaries in order to replace linear and hierarchical paradigms of influence with a model of mutual interaction that allows for a more nuanced analysis of the dynamics of textual and intertextual practices. Scholars from various countries and different disciplines were invited for the interactive reading and discussion of texts. These texts, basically rooted in the Torah and the Qur'an, were extended to later related texts, exegetical, theological, and philosophical as well as literary texts.

In the first session 'Between Initiation and Recitation' Galit Hasan-Rokem and Nasr Abu Zayd presented two sets of texts related to the usage of the root 'Qr' and its derivations in the Bible and the Qur'an. The basic issue was how to correlate the meanings that the word coveys in various Biblical contexts, such as 'to call', 'to communicate', 'to name' to 'invoke' or 'to convoke' with the same root in the Qur'an; the imperative form *iqra'* presents the actual enunciation of Muhammad's prophet-hood by invoking the name of his Lord. During the discussion Abu Zayd presented his newly developed conviction that to deal with the Qu'ran as only a text is reductionist since oral 'recitation', not 'reading' from the *mushaf*, is the prevailing practice among Muslims, not to mention that Qur'anic verses get appropriated and re-appropriated as verbal quotations on a daily basis.

The second session was devoted to the 'Risks and Chances of Narrative Interpretation' thus moving from the foundational text to exegesis. Dina Stein and Nicolai Sinai presented two types of exegetical texts. The first text belongs to the Babylonian Talmud, while the second is taken from Muqatil and al-Tabari's *tafsir*s. The relation between the canonized text and its interpretation was the focus of the discussion in this session. It became obvious during the discussion that the Babylonian Talmud is to a great extent a narrative structure while the canonized text enjoys a superior position in Islamic exegesis due to the doctrine of *i'jaz*. The question about the 'original' meaning and the 'constructed' exegetical narrative turned the discussion back to what constitutes the original canonized text: is it so fixed and stable with its own boundaries, or is it reconstructed by later narratives? Does the commentator over-mystify the text or sometimes tries to demystify it?

With such open questions the third session 'Back to the Bare Text' problematized the definition of the text. Sarah Stroumsa presented a text in which Sa'adyal Fayyumi refutes the Karaite use of logical reasoning, *qiyas*, thus directing the discussion to compare and seek the influence between the two traditions. Claiming the independence of the text, or the concept of a bare text, implied an extension of its domain by integrating tradition, the sayings of the Fathers in Judaism and both the *sunna* and *ijma'* in Islam. Khalid Masud presented a text from Al-Mawdudi's *tafsir* of the verses 41-54 of *sura* 5 in which he emphasized the boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims, not only in terms of religious practice but also in social interaction. Claiming the returning back to the bare text, or 'textual mentality', as Galit puts it, seems to be a common practice shared by both the literalists and the modernists. But is bare text void of tradition, whether canonized or not, meaningful?

The fourth session 'Philosophical and Mystical Contacts' shifted the discussion to the issue of intertextuality beyond the canonized texts and their exegesis. Sabine Schmidtke presented an Arabic text written in Hebrew letters by the Jewish author Yusuf al-Basir. In this text the author elaborates his refutation of the Mu'tazili Abu 'l-Husayn al-Basri's treatise *Tasaffuh al-Adilla* (examining the evidences) and raised questions about whom this text addressed, why it was written in Hebrew letters, and whether it is possible to identify the author as a Jew or Muslim? The mystical text of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi Badw al-Sha'n (The Beginning of the Matter) presented by Sara Sviri developed the discussion towards the shared cultural symbols that are employed in the mystical literature in the two traditions. Again, the question of linear and hierarchical paradigms of influence was eliminated in favor of shared cultural background.

The fifth session, 'Poetry in Andalusia, Andalusia in Poetry', made it possible to reconsider the issue of influence. Haviva Ishay presented two poetry texts, one in Hebrew by Samuel Hanagid and the other in Arabic by 'Urwa bin Hazm where the influence and the competition are obvious. Was the competition to prove that Hebrew is as sacred as Arabic? Was the differentiation between religious and non-religious poetry in the Hebrew tradition directed toward eliminating the Arabic influence? Again, the text of the Palestinian Poet Mahmud Darwish presented by Abdul-Rahman al-Shaikh emphasized the notion of the shared symbols; Andalusia is the symbol of loss shared by Jews and Muslims though the meaning conveyed is not the same.

For more information about the project including detailed information about the previous two workshops please see: http://www.wikoberlin.de/kolleg/projekte/AKMI/ hermeneutik?hpl=2

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Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam

MARTIN VAN BRUINESSEN

The conference 'Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam' was held in Bogor, Indonesia, on 4-6 September 2003 and was a collaborative effort of the ISIM, Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia) and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) of Jakarta's State Islamic University. The aim of the conference was to explore current developments in Sufism and related movements over the globe.

The Islamic resurgence, the onset of which may be traced back to the 1967 Middle East war and which has received a strong impetus from the Iranian revolution, has not only brought a wide range of Islamist and neo-fundamentalist movements into the public sphere of the Muslim world, but also appears to have occasioned a revival of Sufism and related devotional movements. In countries as far apart as Turkey and Indonesia, 'classical' Sufi orders such as the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriyya remain influential and appear even to find new adherents in circles that previously appeared highly secularized. Besides, various religious movements that are not Sufi orders in the strict sense but share certain characteristics with them and have distinctive devotional and disciplining practices have been experiencing significant growth. As examples one may mention the Nurcu movement of Turkey, Malaysia's Darul Arqam (surviving despite an official ban), and the Tablighi Jama'at, which is of Indian origin but presently one of the most truly transnational religious movements.

Many individual believers who do not themselves follow a specific spiritual discipline, moreover, have taken an intellectual interest in the mystical tradition of Islam, which they believe to be more open, inclusive and tolerant of difference, and which they contrast favourably with 'fundamentalist' versions of their religion. Discussion circles, journals and books disseminate Sufi ideas to larger audiences than ever before. Sufi groups cover the entire spectrum from the strictly *shari'a*-oriented to the latitudinarian, from Muslim puritan to perennialist. There is no strict boundary separating Sufi groups from New Age-type movements—which raises questions of conceptualization as well as sociological explanation.

These and related issues were discussed at the conference 'Sufism and the 'Modern'' in Bogor, Indonesia on 4-6 September 2003. Some of the papers discussed 'classical' Sufi orders in modern contexts: the Naqshbandiyya in Republican Turkey (Brian Silverstein), Pakistan and England (Pnina Werbner), the Khalwatiyya in Mubarak's Egypt (Rachida Chih), the Mouridiyya in Senegal (Leonardo Villalón), the Ne'matollahiyya in post-revolutionary Iran (Matthijs van den Bos), and the Qadiriyya wa'n-Naqshbandiyya in Indonesia (Sri Mulyati, Asep Usman Ismail). Others dealt more specifically with the social, political and economic roles played by saints and Sufi sheikhs in Gambia (Benjamin Soares) and Indonesia (Martin van Bruinessen), where apparently traditional roles appear to be highly functional in modern contexts. Reformist Sufism was the subject of papers concerning the da'wa of Tablighi Jama'at among the lower-caste Meos in Mewat, North-West India (Yoginder Sikand) and the thought of Sa'id Nursi, the progenitor of the Nurcu movement (Redha Ameur). That Sufism and puritan reform have not always been such polar opposites as has often been claimed was shown in an analysis of Syrian Naqshbandi and Muslim Brotherhood authors (Itzchak Weismann). Contemporary Sufi and Salafi journals in Indonesia (analyzed by Michael Laffan) have indubitably different concerns but ignore rather than oppose one another. From Casablanca to Jakarta, it is among the highly educated that we find an eager interest in 'spiritual' matters that may accommodate Sufism with other religious traditions and disciplines such as Zen and yoga in the Moroccan case (Patrick Haenni on Morocco), *kebatinan*, perennialism and New Age in Jakarta (Julia Howell, Ahmad Syafi'i Mufid and Adlin Sila). The relationship of Sufi movements with the state is in theory problematical, but surprising accommodations occur. Neither the secular Republic of Turkey nor the Islamic Republic of Iran look favourably upon Sufism, but in both countries Sufi orders have found ways to accommodate with the state. In Turkey, where all orders are formally banned, Naqshbandis have remained influential by transforming their organization (from *tarikat* to *cemaat* and *vakif*) and practices (from traditional *merles* to seminar). The relationship between Sufi orders and the Islamic regime has been complicated but never overtly antagonistic. Elsewhere, Sufis have often been close to the centres of economic and political power. The highest-ranking official ulama of Egypt, as shown by Rachida Chih, tend to be affiliated with the Khalwatiyya order. Living saints, from Indonesia to Senegal and Gambia, are favourite companions of the rich and powerful and have considerable influence in the political process.

The 'classical' orders had always been transnational in the sense that their networks spread across language and state boundaries. Many Sufi teachers attracted disciples from places far apart, who later established branches of the master's order in their regions of origin. However, direct contact and communication between different clusters in these networks were rare. The massive movement of people across state boundaries and the emergence of new diasporas have resulted in new patterns of transnational relations. Perhaps the most spectacular example is that of the Mouride movement, which besides being a major factor in the political and economic life of Senegal is at the same time a remarkably successful network of émigré communities all over the world, in which trade and religious practices are intimately connected. Although spread across Europe and North America, the network consists exclusively of Senegalese Mourides. In this respect, it is similar to the networks of South Asian Naqshbandis in Manchester studied by Pnina Werbner, which remain Urdu-speaking and oriented towards Pakistan (mostly Punjab and NWFP). Somewhat similar, both the Malaysian Darul Arqam movement and the Indonesian sheikh Abah Anom's Qadiriyya wa'n-Naqshbandiyya successfully expanded across state borders but never beyond Malay-speaking communities. The Tablighi Jama'at and Sheikh Nazim's Haqqaniyya Naqshbandiyya have become have gone a step further in shedding their vernacular roots and drawing followers of highly diverse origins. These global movements find their counterparts in others, especially prominent in Indonesia, that celebrate their local character.

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Veiled Politics

Rethinking the Debate on *Hijab*

VAZIRA FAZILA-YACOOBALI

The ISIM roundtable Veiled Politics (30 October 2003) aimed at rethinking the politics of veiling practices in the Islamic world and in Europe. The roundtable included presentations by Annelies Moors (ISIM), Linda Herrera (Population Council, Cairo), Saba Mahmood (University of California, Berkeley and ISIM Visiting Fellow), and Mayanthi Fernando (University of Chicago). The convenor was Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali (ISIM).[1]

The ISIM roundtable on the politics of veiling practices came on the heels of the expulsion of two French school girls, Lila and Alma Levy, because of their decision to wear a headscarf that covered their ears, hairline and neck, followed by a photographic coverage in the Dutch *Volkskrant* Magazine of three young women in the Netherlands wearing a complete face veil, in addition to Europe-wide unease and debate on forming a policy regarding practices of veiling in public institutions. Given this heightened context, all presenters—sometimes drawing upon their research and comparative reflections from Muslim states and societies—focused primarily on the debate in Europe.

The presentations made by Annelies Moors and Linda Herrera focused on legal and educational debates concerning the (in)compatibility of face covering with notions of liberalism. Mayanthi Fernando, currently engaged in research on the Islamic revival in France, contextualized the French ruling on the Levy sisters, while Saba Mahmood presented her rethinking of embodied practices (such as veiling) amongst women in the *da'wa* movement in Egypt to raise issues for consideration in the European context. Drawing largely on Fernando and Mahmood's presentations, (see p.16 for an elaboration of the presentations by Moors and Herrera) I want to delineate three questions that emerged for rethinking the debate.

1) Can we understand the 'problem' posed by veiling practices in European liberal democracies as one emerging because of the secular character of the state, built upon a separation of state and church, a divide of public/secular and private/religious domains? Often in the media the contentions are represented in such a framework, and the Levy sisters were banned from school on the basis of a 1989 Conseil d'État ruling that their headscarves constituted religious insignia that was 'ostentatious' and 'proselytizing', and thus disruptive of the public/secular and private/religious divide. Fernando historicized the *laïcité* principle concerning the religious neutrality of the French state, arguing that the 1905 law, the basis for *laïcité,* followed a series of compromises between the French state and the Catholic Church. As most Muslim immigrants arrived in France after 1905, they were excluded from the kind of state concessions given to the Catholic Church. Fernando's description of the imbricated relationship between the 'secular' state and 'religion' is certainly not unique to France. Mahmood pointed out that Muslims are repeatedly singled out in liberal discourse for not respecting the separation of public/secular and private/religious domains, although the very articulation of public and private is built on history and relationships of power in Western liberal democracies, and in general remains porous to this day. Thus, in order to rethink the debate on the veil, why it emerges as a 'problem' at all, it is necessary to historically and critically understand this framing of state and society as well.

2) What are the gendered dimensions of this debate that challenge both feminist and liberal ideologies? All presenters emphasized that it has gone largely unremarked in the debates that legal rulings restricting veiling practices specifically harm women, for they then get excluded from education and employment. The veil has become so entrenched as a sign of Muslim women's oppression and subjugation to patriarchy that the very European feminists who have over the last decades critiqued the objectification of women's bodies for national symbolism and capitalist consumption, fail to question this view of the veil. It is after all no coincidence that it is women's bodies that have become the site of contestation over the place of Muslims in European society. One of the consequences of framing the veil as oppressive is that liberals also have been reluctant to support Muslim women's right to veil as a matter of freedom of religious expression. Constructed as subordinated, imposed religious beliefs, women who veil are therefore considered incapable of independent and rational thinking necessary to the making of a citizen-subject. While Mahmood challenged the table to think outside the subordination/liberation framing of the veil, Fernando and Moors emphasized that it is patronizing to tell articulate and intelligent young women who have chosen to wear the veil that they are being oppressed, that it is being imposed upon them. This also makes it imperative to understand the decision of women who have chosen to wear some form of the veil in different ways.

3) Should religious subjectivity be analyzed in the same way as racial, ethnic or national identity? This is in some respects the most challenging question. Mahmood argued that although it was common to present functional and symbolic reasons for espousing the veil, such reasons were inadequate in explaining the meaning they had for women themselves in Islamic revival movements like the one she had studied in Egypt. When interpreted as a mere symbol of Muslim identity, the veil could be viewed as a dispensible practice, and not crucial to religious beliefs. In ethnic/national identity different symbols can embody an identity, such that a sari could be worn interchangeably with another dress—but the veil was not necessarily such an interchangeable symbol. Instead, she suggested that it be understood as not merely an expression of identity but rather an embodied practice meant to realize a virtuous life and interiority, and therefore both a necessary end and means to the making of religious subjectivity. Fernando drew upon Mahmood's proposition that we understand religious subjectivity in a fundamentally different way than identity politics to explain why French Muslims do not see any conflict between being a Muslim and a French citizen. Because identifying oneself as a Muslim is generally perceived as identifying with a subnational or post-national identity, it is considered dangerous to the cohesion of the nation as the foremost horizon of belonging. But if religiosity could be understood and conceived as different from and enmeshed in complicated ways with national identity, then the expression of Muslim beliefs in Europe could have a different social and political meaning in the debate at large.

Finally, underwriting much of the debate on veils has been the fear of radical Islam, and a growing equation of Islam with the oppression of women on the one hand and terrorism on the other hand. Rethinking the debate on veiling is one means of confronting this fear in an increasingly shared world.[4]

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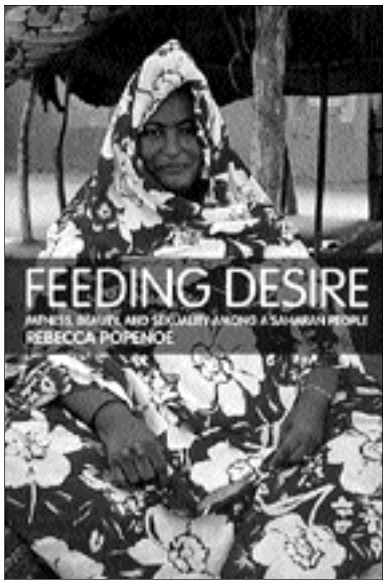
Notes

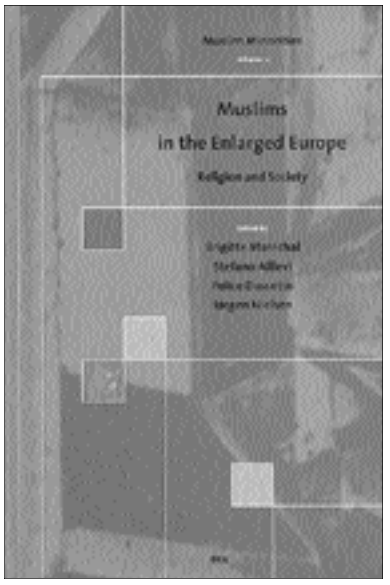
1. I would like to thank Anouk de Koning, Marina de Regt, and M. Amer for keeping notes of the discussion.
2. *Volkskrant Magazine*, 25 October 2003.
3. See for instance, *The Economist*, 25 October 2003, p.26.
4. For a reading list on the subject, please consult the ISIM website.

Feeding Desire
Fatness, Beauty and Sexuality among a Saharan People
by Rebecca Popenoe
London: Routledge, 2004

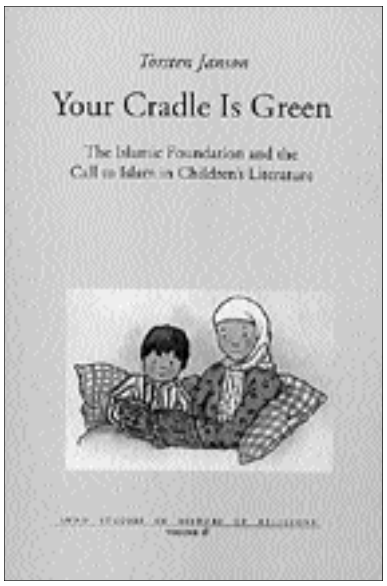


Based on fieldwork in an Arab village in Niger, *Feeding Desire* analyzes the meanings of women's fatness as constituted by desire, kinship, concepts of health, Islam, and the crucial social need to manage sexuality. By demonstrating how a particular beauty ideal can only be understood within wider social structures and cultural logics, the book implicitly provides a new way of thinking about the ideal of slimness in late Western capitalism.

Muslims in the Enlarged Europe
Religion and Society
by Brigitte Maréchal, Stefano Allievi, Felice Dassetto & Jørgen Nielsen (Editors)
Leiden: Brill, 2003



This volume describes the main characteristics of contemporary European Islam. The process of the development of Islam in Europe is analyzed through religious instruction in educational systems, organizational structures and the forms of political participation by Muslims. In addition to a description of the relationship between European states and Islam in judicial terms, the different types of the integration of Islam in European society is studied by looking at the media, the relations between religions, economic and international dimensions, and the manner in which views have changed following the events of September 11.



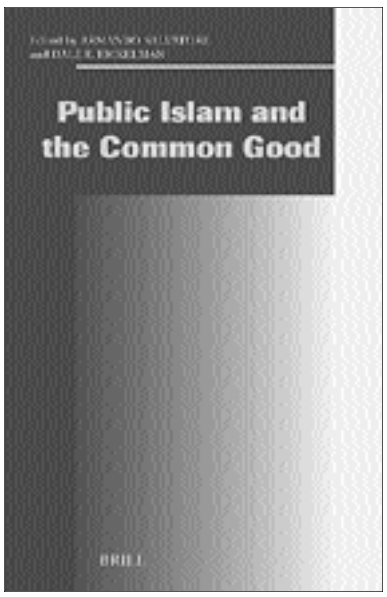
Your Cradle is Green
The Islamic Foundation and the Call to Islam in Children's Literature
by Torsten Janson
Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003

How is *da'wa* mediated in picture books? How is Islamic revivalism converted into crash courses in 'Cultural Awareness'? This study deals with the Islamic Foundation, and focuses its 25 years of publication of Islamic-English children's literature. In order to analyse the implications of such new modalities, it surveys the discursive order of *da'wa* in history.

La voile et la banni re
L'avant-garde féministe au Pakistan
by Christèle Debedant
Paris: CNRS éditions, 2003

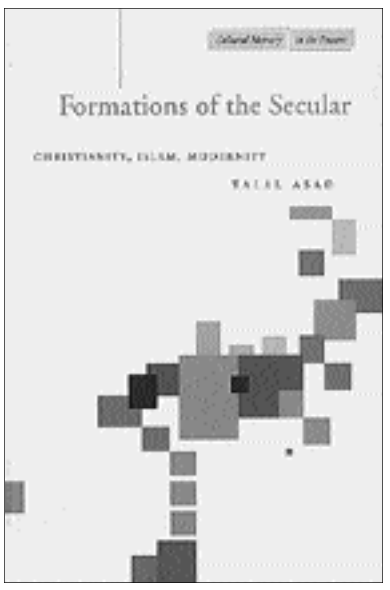
Christèle Debedant approaches Pakistan's society through the prism of women activism in particular and women issues in general. Her study is based on a vast experience of the field, on interviews and on the analysis of academic and activist literature.
It offers an innovative perspective on the development of women movements, which have been—as well as Pakistan itself– caricaturised too often.

Public Islam and the Common Good
by Armando Salvatore & Dale F. Eickelman (Editors)
Leiden: Brill, 2003



'Public Islam' refers to the diverse invocations and struggles over Islamic ideas and practices that increasingly influence the politics and social life of large parts of the globe. This book explores the public role of Islam in contemporary world politics.
It shows how competing Islamic ideas and practices create alternative political and social realities in the Muslim majority regions of the Arab Middle East, Iran, South Asia, Africa, and elsewhere in ways that differ from the emergence of the public sphere in Europe.

Formations of the Secular
Christianity, Islam, Modernity
by Talal Asad
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003



Opening with the provocative query '[w]hat might an anthopology of the secular look like?' Talal Asad explores the concepts, practices and political formations of secularism, with emphasis on the major historical shifts that have shaped secular sensibilities and attitudes in the modern West and Middle East.

Waanzee! When Religion Becomes Merciless

MARIA SOAAD BOUANANI

The play *Waanzee* (*Mad See*) recently toured through the Netherlands. Based on the novel *Waanzee* by Robert Haasnoot, the play is a reconstruction of events in a small Dutch Protestant fishing community in 1915 and centers around the character of Arend Falkenier, a deeply religious man. Out at open sea he seeks to convince the captain and the crew that he received a divine message revealing that the end of time had come and that they were the only survivors and should head for the Eternal City of Jerusalem. To prove this prophecy he breaks his compass and cuts off the sails, claiming that God alone can lead them through him. He has three reluctant fishermen killed. A Norwegian freighter eventually finds the vessel and returns the surviving crew to safety. The stage version of *Waanzee* was performed in Arabic with actors from Morocco with supertitles in Dutch.

Below is an interview with the play's director, Gerrit Timmers.

Waanzee is a story situated in a Dutch Calvinistic community during the First World War. Why did you bring in actors from Morocco?

The inspiration was *The Battle for God* by Karen Armstrong. It concerns fundamentalism in the monotheistic religions. When I read the book by Haasnoot, I thought: "This is the story that I want to tell about fundamentalism in general!" An aspect that all these religions share is that charismatic individuals can appear on the scene in times of hardship or rapid change; this may end in upheaval, chaos, or even madness. This process is given a human face in the play *Waanzee*!

It could have been performed by Dutch actors, but then the play might have been strongly associated with renowned Dutch playwright Heijermans (1864-1924) who wrote fishermen dramas. With Moroccan actors the play becomes something for today.

Falkenier is a charismatic figure who tries to convince his crew of his apocalyptic vision. This theme reminds me of the tumult surrounding 11/9 and Bin Laden.

Bin Laden is timeless. A while ago I saw a documentary about Afghanistan when the Taliban were still in power. The superintendent of a football stadium that had been sponsored by Europe talked about the executions that were carried out there: "It is such a pleasure to see the sinners punished! Let the Europeans sponsor our executions!" The Calvinist Falkenier is just like that. His religion has become de-humanized. The essence of religion is mercy. With this play I want to show what happens when people become merciless. It always ends in tragedy.

What type of public do you want to reach?

I am trying to reach both an Arabic-speaking and Dutch-speaking public. I try to select topics that are interesting for both audiences. This play has mainly attracted a Dutch-speaking public, maybe because *Waanzee* is considered a 'serious' play in Moroccan circles. They prefer something light. They want to laugh. But there is humor in the play. The two youngest—originally male—crew members are played by two actresses who provide comic relief. They side with Falkenier and do this quite innocently until they become victims themselves.

Waanzee! is not the first play in which you engage Moroccan actors. Earlier such productions included Henrik Ibsen's play Nora. You also attempted to stage the opera Aisha two years ago when it was suddenly cancelled, seemingly following protests against portraying the Prophet and those close to him.

Putting the Prophet on stage is something we never tried. Muhammad always said that believers must not worship him, but Allah. If we forget that he was just a man, we are de-humanizing religion. My aim was to tell this story through the opera *Aisha*. According to Nasr Abu Zaid it would have been possible to put on *Aisha* in the 1950s in the Arab world because at that time people were convinced that it would contribute to modernity.

I did not hide the fact that Abu Bakr, Fatima and Aisha would be on stage. This did not cause us any difficulties when recruiting musicians, apart from the singer who was to play the role of Abu Bakr who I decided not to put on stage. The female singers did not object to being on stage.

Assia Djebar wrote the libretto. Both she and Abu Zaid are controversial in the Islamic world. Did you consult only these two people?

We did consult others. Moreover, the actors had already seen the script in French. It was only when the Arabic translation arrived that some began to consider seriously what the play was about. A week before rehearsals started Saida Baadi, one of the actresses, expressed that she had grave doubts about the play and suggested performing from off-stage. But that was impossible; Aisha belongs on the stage, her story must be told and sung. At about that time an article appeared in the Moroccan press suggesting that the play was a blasphemy.

Saida Baadi told the Dutch journalists who contacted her about that article that Salman Rushdie's fate would be ours. Meanwhile, the Dutch press reported that the play was being cancelled because of threats. I stated over and over again that we had not received a single threat. But, of course, journalists only want to hear that there is an Islamic danger in the Netherlands. Questions were even asked in Parliament! In actual fact, the Moroccan newspaper article had stated that if the production were to be continued a rumour would spread like that surrounding Salman Rushdie. That is very different from getting actual death threats.

Why was the opera performed in Italy but not in the Netherlands?

In Italy the play was staged by non-Muslim actors in Italian. I wanted to attract a more mixed public. It is important to address a mixed audience, in particular after 11/9. Perhaps, the increasing number of actors in the Netherlands of Moroccan background have a role to play in realizing this endeavor.

Maria Soaad Bouanani is an independent journalist in 'sHertogenbosch, TheNetherlands

For more information, please contact Onafhankelijk Toneel at: ot@ot-rotterdam.nl.

Scene from *Waanzee*

PHOTO: LEO VAN VELZEN, 2003

Under the Same Sky: Cairo

RANDA SHAATH

I lived for ten years on the 14th floor of a high-rise in Cairo. I was amazed to discover the vast variety of life on the rooftops that lay beneath me. I took photos, excited by the different scenes of daily life that I witnessed. The people who live on the rooftops have a different and separate life from the people who live in the buildings themselves; those residents as well as the pedestrians on the street below have no idea what goes on above them. My discovery led me to try and document this unique phenomenon, one extra detail in the complexities of the city of 16 million people. Some rooftop dwellers were hesitant to be photographed or to speak of their experience. They feared being evicted and losing their small place in the heart of the city. Others were embarrassed by the stigma that assumed that people living on the roof were servants. I met artists and writers who had transformed rooftops to studios and living space and men and boys who escaped the din of the city to fly their pigeons.

The lives of rooftop dwellers in Cairo today bear little relation to the family roof activities of the 1920's. The roof is no longer an area of privacy, rooftop dwellers today share bathrooms and public areas. No secrets can be hidden. The ubiquitous satellite dishes bring a version of the world far beyond the view. The rooftop has become a new kind of community.

PHOTO: RANDA SHAATH

▲
First day of war on Iraq. Cairo, 20 March 2003

Under the Same Sky: Rooftops of Cairo
The book is part of the series of publications being developed parallel to the project 'Contemporary Arab Representations', initiated by Witte de With, center for contemporary art, Rotterdam and Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona. Publisher Arab/English edition: Witte de With, Rotterdam, ISBN 90-73362-601.

PHOTO: RANDA SHAATH

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***Under the Same Sky: Rooftops of Cairo* 2002–2003**

PHOTO: RANDA SHAATH

Witte de With

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please contact
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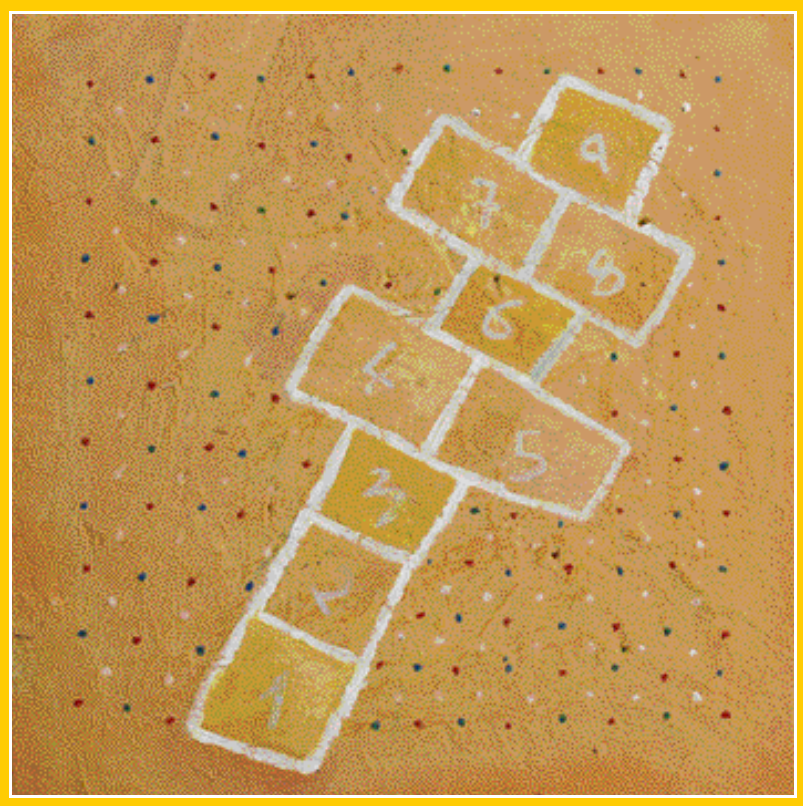
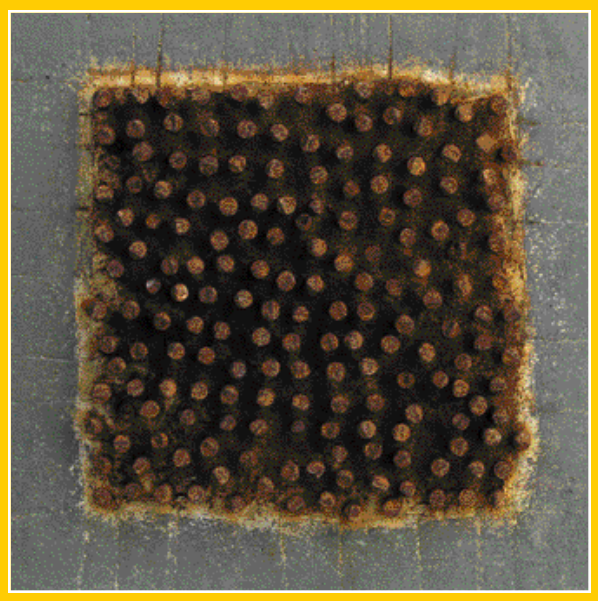
center for contemporary art at:
info@wdw.nl

Last Summer in Baghdad

Last Summer in Baghdad, assemblages by Qassim Alsaedy, 2003

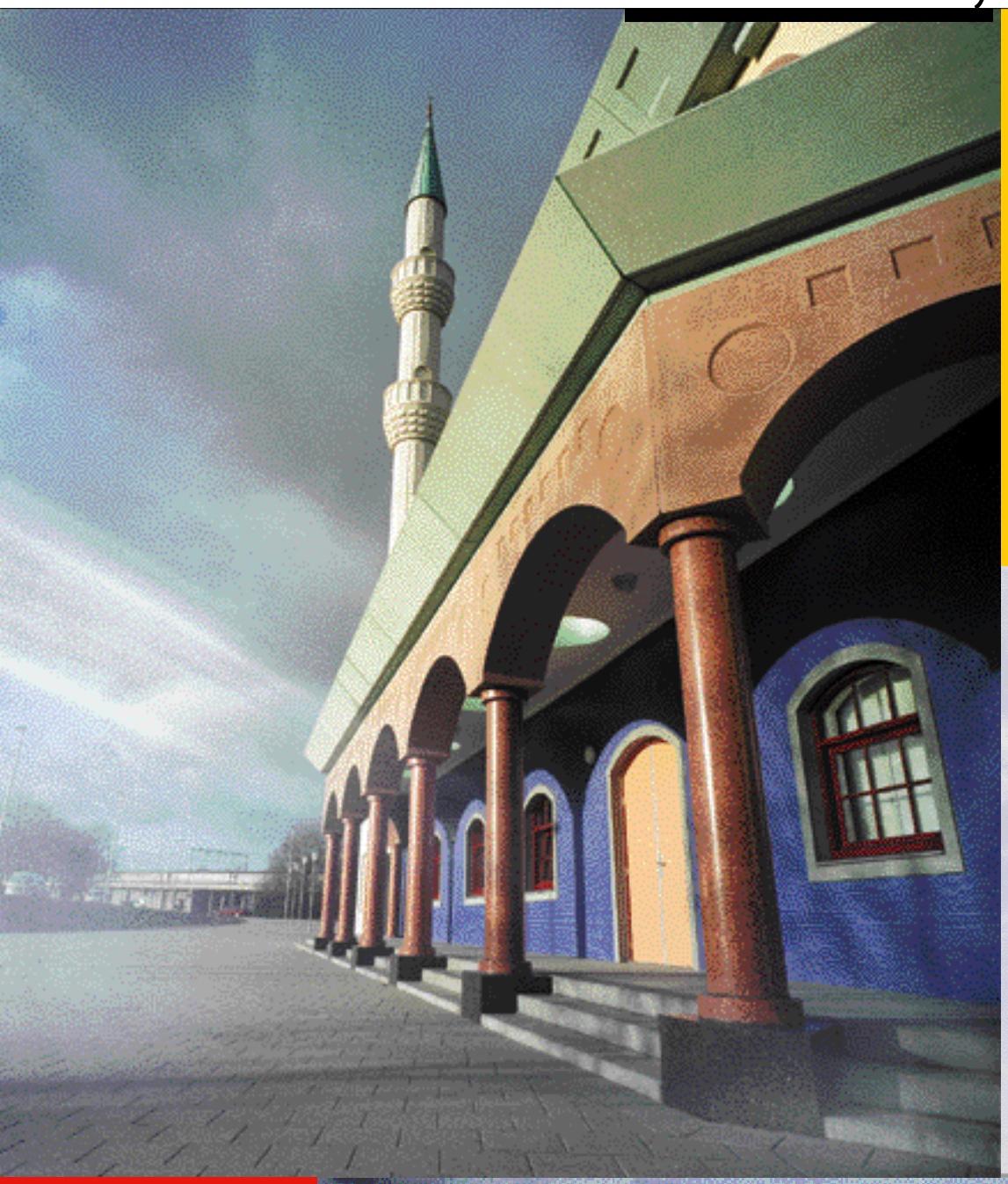




The Dutch-Iraqi artist, Qassim Alsaedy (Baghdad, 1949), is highly interested in the traces of history left on ancient walls. Now living in exile far from his birthplace in the area of ancient Mesopotamia, he is engaged in an artistic dialogue that reaches beyond time and space and which expresses his deep connection with history—both its beauty and its sadness. In his paintings and assemblages Alsaedy expresses his sense of ancient and recent history. And although he paints the burned fields of Kurdistan (where he once lived and worked as a peshmerga and artist holding exhibits in tents for refugees and guerilla fighters), his paintings and mixed media works always contain a deep sense of hope. There is, in his work, a slight thematic parallel with the famous Dutch artist, Armando, who painted the well known series of 'guilty landscapes', which alluded to the eternally doomed grounds of Auschwitz. But there is one important difference between the two artists. Armando, through his art, displays a deep sense of the tragedy of one specific place whose traces will probably never heal. Qassim Alsaedy, on the other hand, who saw the burned and poisoned fields of Kurdistan himself (among the world's guiltiest landscapes), always conveys through his art the message that history will eventually heal and redeem. Last summer, Qassim Alsaedy visited Baghdad after 25 years. His impressions of this visit were shown at the fourth edition of the Biennale Internazionale dell' Arte Contemporanea di Firenze, from 6 till 14 December, 2003.

For more information on Qassim Alsaedy, please contact Floris Schreve at: florisschreve@hotmail.com

Photo Commentary



Until recently the number of newly built mosques in the Netherlands was marginal, but over the last few years several larger mosques have been built while others are in process. The architectural styles of these new mosques have provoked public debate about whether architects should fall back on traditional designs typical of those in Dutch Muslims' countries of origin or whether their designs should be more innovative and in concert with the local environment.

◀ Mevlana Mosque

PHOTO: HANS VAN DEN BOGAARD, 2003

▼ Essalam Mosque

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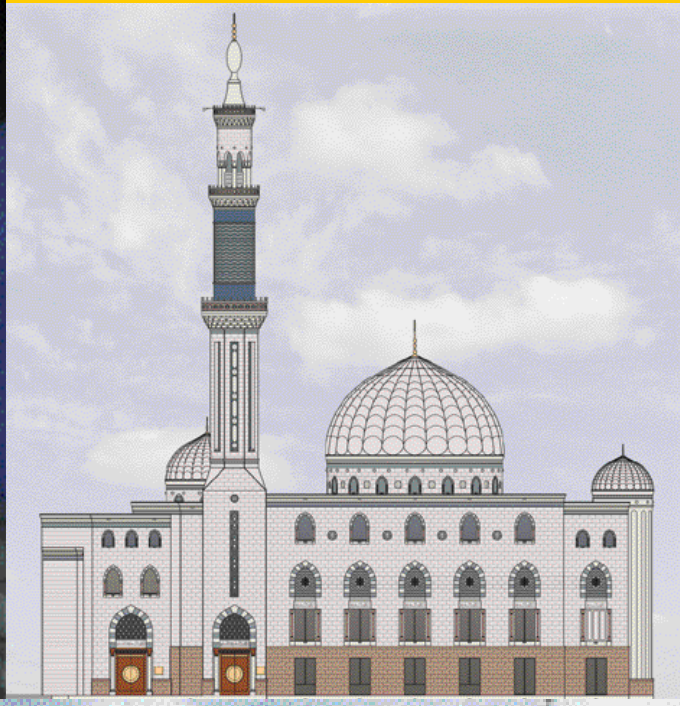
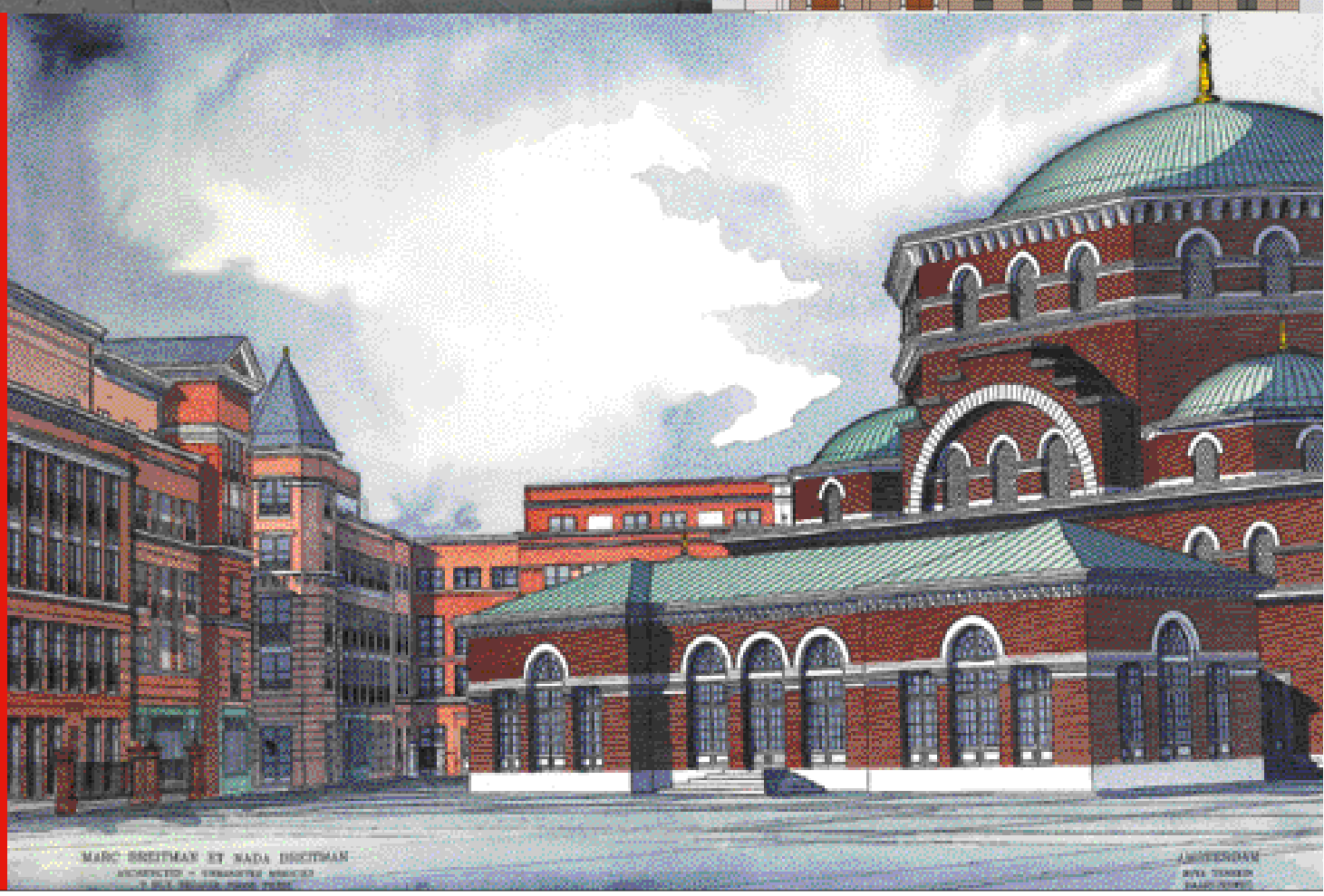


The three cases presented here concern the major examples of modern mosque architecture in the Netherlands and have all been designed by European non-Muslim architects in close consultation with Dutch-Turkish mosque foundations.



Wester Mosque ▶

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