Studies in Contemporary Islam

Volume 1 Number 2
Fall 1999

Studies in Contemporary Islam

Editorial Advisory Board

ZAFAR ISHAQ ANSARI
International Islamic University, Islamabad

RALPH BRAIBANTI
Duke University

FREDERICK M. DENNY
University of Colorado, Boulder

JOHN L. ESPOSITO
Georgetown University

AZIZAH Y. AL-HIBRI
University of Richmond

ALI A. MAZRUI
State University of New York, Binghamton

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR
George Washington University

SULAYMAN S. NYANG
Howard University

GABRIEL PALMER-FERNANDEZ
Youngstown State University

WILLIAM B. QUANDT
University of Virginia

ABDULAZIZ SACHEDINA
University of Virginia

ANWAR H. SIDDIQUI
Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

JOHN E. WOODS
University of Chicago

Editors

MUMTAZ AHMAD
Hampton University

MUSTANSIR MIR
Youngstown State University

© 1999 Center for Islamic Studies, Youngstown State University

Contents

Articles

Defining Islam in the Throes of Modernity 1
Abdulkader I. Tayob

Islamist Intellectuals of South Asia:
The Origins and Development of a Tradition of Discourse 16
S. V. R. Nasr

Universal Human Rights vs. Muslim Personal Law:
The Shahbano Begum Case in India 44
Theodore P. Wright, Jr.

The Muslim Community in the United States: Some Issues 57
Sulayman S. Nyang

Democracy in Malaysia:
A Critical Look at Mumtaz Ahmad's Analysis 70
Steven J. Rosenthal

Image, Text, and Form:
Complexities of Aesthetics in an American *Masjid* 73
'Akel Isma'il Kahera

Book Reviews

Ralph Braibanti. *Islam and the West: Common Cause or Clash?* 85
By Joy Hendrickson

Sulayman S. Nyang. *Islam in the United States of America*. 86
By Mohammed Bassiru Sillah

Murad W. Hofmann. *Islam 2000*. 89
By Mustansir Mir

Lee Levine, ed. *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. 94
By Shabbir Akhtar

Studies in Contemporary Islam 1 (1999), 2:1–15

Defining Islam in the Throes of Modernity

Abdulkader I. Tayob[*]

The twentieth century has witnessed tremendous change in how religious traditions like Islam cohere. The issue has been important for those who wish to define and understand Muslims, and also for Muslims themselves, who wish to live by the teachings of their religion in a modern world. For the former, the challenge lies in presenting a precise and succinct picture of a complex human phenomenon; sometimes, they may even dare to predict future trends. For insiders, the major transformation of the twentieth century demands a reorientation and rejuvenation of ideals and principles. This essay argues that, in spite of postmodern criticism, the search for a key Islamic category continues unabated. With all its imperfections, *Islam* affords both observers and insiders an opportunity to search for a core interpretative category or truth. *Islam* remains a coherent social category insofar as it represents a search for meaning and value in a changing world.

Is the Category of Islam Coherent?

Many objections have been raised against the glib and disingenuous use of Islam as a generalized category. Some suggest that one cannot even speak of historical entities that are wholly or predominantly determined by Islam. Islamic leaders, communities, cities, and symbols are merely conceptual categories that unduly privilege the cultural and religious over the social and political. As concepts, they reside properly in the minds of their producers but obscure the nature of historical and social realities. Since the notion of the Islamic City has received considerable attention from Weberian scholars, it provides a useful illustration of this level of criticism. Weberian scholars have tried to form an understanding of the Islamic City in comparison with and as distinct from the European City. As the social foundation of capitalism, industrialization, and modernity, the city has become a compelling category in understanding social formation and development. The judgment, generally, has been that, compared with the European City, the Middle Eastern entity may not be called a city. Bryan Turner, the Weberian interpreter of Islam par excellence, characterized the Islamic City

[*] Abdulkader Tayob is Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

as "aggregates of sub-communities rather than socially unified communities" (Turner 1974: 99). Aside from the negative view evidenced in this statement, the debate about the Islamic City has also produced some interesting ways of understanding the unique "social aggregates" in Islamic civilization. Noticing the non-European character of Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus, scholars of Islam have talked about the unique nature of Islamic cities. Ira M. Lapidus, for example, has produced extensive surveys of the great metropoles of the Islamic Near East, and has shown how the ulama prevented them from disintegrating. The cohesiveness of the Islamic City was not dependent on institutions but on "patterns of social activity and organization which served to create a more broadly based community, and this community was built around the religious elites" (Lapidus 1967: 107). Concurring with this view, Muddathir Abdel-Rahim, from among Muslim scholars, has suggested that the *Shari'ah*, the most prominent activity engaged in by the scholars, acted as a determining social institution for the form of the City (Abdel-Rahim 1980).

More recently, postmodernists have challenged the fundamental assumptions of the search for the elusive Islamic City. In general, they regard with suspicion and skepticism attempts to define a social aggregate by its cultural and religious identity. Islam, in their view, was not a "monolithic force" that shaped manners and customs, much less the nature of a complex city (van Leeuwen 1995: 154–5). Rejecting the perceptive observations of Lapidus, van Leeuwen regards any city to be consisting of "the various statuses of space, the regimentation of space within urban environments, the influence of social relations on spatial organisation, the role of spatial structures in the exertion of power, or the focuses of intertwining networks in spatial organisation." The special case of cities occupied by Muslim peoples are but a measure of the "integration of several urban centres within one system which determines their type, and in this process cultural factors are only one of many causes," with the possibility of "differences and divergent developments" (van Leeuwen 1995: 158). Clearly, from this perspective, it makes no sense to speak of an Islamic City with religion as its most distinctive feature. The religiocultural aspect of social forms is only one of several features, and cannot be used as a point of identification. Calling something an Islamic city, Islamic bank, or Islamic science implies that Islam is its major determining factor. In reality, according to the postmodern critique, such naming only hides and obscures other characteristics like ethnicity, ideology, and historical circumstances that equally determine social formation.

In my view, such a critical deconstructivist approach to social forms is extremely one-sided. While it clearly shows how social scientists and historians impose categories on the subject matter at hand, it fails to consider how the actors themselves work with such symbols. In some postmodernist discourse, therefore, the Islamicity of social forms and actors is completely erased. While the modernist formulation, in its search for a unique European City, presents Islam as the extreme other, postmodernist discourse fails to acknowledge the

way in which indigenous actors create and contribute to the symbolic formation of society. No matter how elusive its character, the Islamic City—much like the Islamic leader, ritual, or court—is one of those compelling symbolic categories by which Muslims create history. The task of the social scientist is to locate these symbols in their broader social context, not to dissolve them, for this would be tantamount to denying social agency. The frustration of Weberian expectations leads to the dissolution of all social agency, and to the resultant neglect of how indigenous actors contribute, positively or negatively, to the creation of social entities. When we consider the example of the Islamic City, for example, we note how Muslim jurists, in their attempt to define Friday worship, debated the meaning of social units. Friday worship was only required when a sufficiently large community was settled in a particular area. This is not to say that power relations between religious and political leaders had no impact on their jurisprudence. Postmodernist discourse would, however, deny the reality of powerful cultural and—in this case, religious—influences.

A second criticism of the generalization and undue universalization of the category of *Islam* comes from those who would rather speak of *islams* rather than *Islam*. In their view, the normative definition of Islam within social formations should be the responsibility of theologians, who set the limits of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Historians and social theorists have no business to determine what individual or group is pure, syncretistic, hybrid, or sectarian. The social scientist that recognizes and acknowledges a true and pure center in comparison with an impure periphery denies the plurality of meanings. When he or she privileges the central and original as orthodox and the peripheral and subsequent as heterodox, he or she takes a role no different from the theologian's. The social scientist must give up this bias toward orthodoxy and reveal the subject as one of many possibilities. "There are as many *Islams* as there are situations that sustain it," declares Aziz al-Azmeh in an apt formulation of this position (1993: 1). At one level, this criticism of Islamic determinism is not too different from the postmodernist critique of Van der Leeuwen. In his book, *Islams and Modernities*, al-Azmeh argues that Islamic cultures must be deconstructed, that critical reflection must "contextualize [them] into the flow of historical and social forces, and thus deculturalize and demystify them." And yet al-Azmeh speaks of *islam* as the identity of a particular type of law, for example. While criticizing the tendency in Western media and academia to portray Islam as a monolithic phenomenon, he does not completely debunk the notion of unique Islamic realities: "Muslim reality in Britain is, rather, composed of many realities, some structural, some organisational and institutional, but which are overall highly fragmentary" (al-Azmeh 1993: 4). In spite of his deconstructivist approach, al-Azmeh can still discern social formations that can be called *islamic*. He does not question the continued use and meaning of *islam*, even in the plural, and fails to spell out clearly what justifies his use of *islam* as such.

While he talks of the unacceptability of the use of *Islam*, he does not convincingly provide a justification for the use of *islam*(*s*).

If the *Islamicity* of social forms remains imprisoned in the mirror of Western categories, it would be better to drop it altogether. Such "imprisonment" is characteristic of some of the Western approaches to Islam, which, one might add, have gained popularity among Muslims as well. The scramble for Islamic science, social sciences, and banks is partly due to the inherently reactionary nature of such Muslims approaches. On the other hand, the term *Islamicity* itself cannot be so easily discarded, as is assumed in some radical postmodernist discourse. In the rest of the paper, I would argue that the use of the term *Islam*(*ic*) is helpful in understanding certain societies and their institutions, and, more important, in understanding the redefinition of a religion by its followers in a changing world. Attempting to understand societies and their institutions is bit hazardous since social scientists run the risk of subsuming a social reality to its cultural or religious root. This subsumption, however, is unavoidable if one is trying to understand a society, community, or group in its cultural or religious dimension. But in trying to understand a group's redefinition of its religion, there is no alternative to the use of the category of *Islam* by Muslims. Combing these two senses of *Islam*, I will try to show the validity of the search for meaning by Muslims and social scientists.

In Search of Modern Islam

As one surveys the discourse on Islam in the second half of the twentieth century, the presence of the terms *Islam* and *islam(s)* in it cannot be overlooked. Cultural categories and symbols are deeply ingrained in both society and academia. Islamic symbols have refused to disappear from Muslim homes, places of worship, and personal lives in the age of modernity or postmodernity. Muslim intellectuals like Fazlur Rahman, Isma'il R. al Faruqi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have tried to make sense of the social and philosophical challenges of modernity. On the other hand, social scientists and historians such as Clifford Geertz, Dale E. Eickelman, and Muhammad Asad have suggested critical indices for understanding the meaning of modern Islam. Both the insiders and the outsiders grapple with the same phenomenon—the presence of religious symbols in a multitude of social contexts of the modern world. This essay examines well-known definitions of Islam in the context of social change. Rahman, al Faruqi, Nasr, and Mohammed Arkoun are prominent Muslim intellectuals who have given expression to their understanding of Islam during the second half of the twentieth century. This essay situates their attempts in light of Ernest Gellner's and Armando Salvatore's analyses of the meaning of Islam in the modern world.

In the 1960s and 1970s, most scholars thought that the end of religion in general and Islam in particular was inevitable. Under the advance of science and

secularization, it was thought that religious traditions like Islam were bound to become either personal-faith orientations or totally irrelevant. But Gellner's close analysis of Muslim social organization and his perception of diversity within Islam led him to a different conclusion. In his collection of essays, *Muslim Society*, he went so far as to say that Islam "alone may maintain its pre-industrial faith in the modern world" (Gellner 1981: 4). He suggested that precisely because of modernity and secularization, the Islam of the literate and urban classes would prosper against the decline of the Islam dominated by holy lineage and its privileges. The hierarchical organization of society based on nearness to the Prophet and saints was unable to resist the egalitarian force of urban Islam. According to Gellner, the Islam of the urban and literate classes, after having remained for centuries at the mercy of autocratic rulers and puritanical Bedouins, would finally triumph.

Taking into consideration the social organization of cities and tribes, and the forms of Islamic life, Gellner proposed a model to explain how "ecology, social organization , and ideology interlock in one highly distinctive civilization." The model "explains *how* their distinctive fusion produced its stabilities and tensions, and continues to influence the various paths along which it is finally entering the modern world" (Gellner 1981: 85; author's emphasis). Gellner's thesis was built on the work of Ibn Khaldun as well as modern sociologists like Max Weber and Talcott Parsons. He drew a sharp distinction between Islam in urban centers and Islam in rural areas. The Islam of the city is literate, trade-dependent, egalitarian, and sober; tribal Islam is based on widespread illiteracy and has a pastoralist lifestyle and a hierarchical understanding of reality (Gellner 1981: 99–100). In Ibn Khaldun's understanding of social organization, the vigor and puritanism of the peripheral rural Islam forces itself onto towns and cities, which are suffering from degeneration in the forms of political weakness and moral decay. The purity of tribal organization, as also the cohesion and moral rectitude of that organization, invigorates urban life. For Gellner, the advent of modernity ushered in a "continuation and completion of an old dialogue between orthodox center and deviant error, of the old struggle between knowledge and ignorance, political order and anarchy" (Gellner 1981: 4). Now, however, the towns were able to centralize more efficiently, and were thus able to stem the tide against tribal Islam and prevent its periodic domination. Furthermore, the legal, rational Islam of urban societies was compatible with modernity and modernization, as contrasted with the mystical and superstitious character and hierarchical organization of rural Islam. According to Gellner, Ibn Khaldun's cyclical view of Islamic history was arrested by modernity. With the rise of literacy, scientific endeavor, and effective transportation, modernization favored urban Islam, giving it a sense of supremacy and moral privilege it had never enjoyed before.

Taking into consideration the complexity of Sufi organizations, ulama guilds, and political authorities, Gellner showed how Islam and its various

interpretations played a vital role in maintaining the social equilibrium. Gellner has been criticized for emphasizing the difference and separation between the urban and the rural (Cornell 1998). As Vincent J. Cornell points out, the forms of Islam in town and rural contexts were more interdependent than Gellner seems to suggest. This means that the debate within Islam will not simply be a battle between town and country, and that knowledge of the social location of Islam is not sufficient for purposes of understanding contemporary change. Conspicuously missing in Gellner's interpretation was the manner in which Muslims were responding to the new political realities of the modern state and to postcolonialism. Gellner was right about the resilience of the Islamic symbols, but mistaken with regard to the triumph of a reformed urban Islam that was compatible with modernity. While urban Muslims have, by and large, adapted to modern life, some of them have become extremely sectarian in their approach. The latter have not emerged from the rural areas, as happened previously, but from the urban centers characterized by widespread unemployment, overcrowded slumps, and a disaffected middle class. The political contest in postcolonial Islam, therefore, is not between a mystical, illiterate, and rural *islam* and an urban *islam* with opposite characteristics, but between competing interpretations of urban *islam*. The insightful comments of Gellner call for another look at the specific details, and particularly at what the religious symbols signify in contemporary Muslim society.

A more recent attempt to understand Islam in the modern political process has been undertaken by Armando Salvatore in his search for modernization in a multicultural world. Even though both Gellner and Salvatore recognize the resilience of Islam in the modern world, Salvatore's conclusions are completely different from those of Gellner. In *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, Salvatore analyzes the meaning of Islam in the public and political discourse of Arab societies. He traces the development of this Arab discourse to the nineteenth century, when scholars first came into direct contact with Europe and began to address the question of the meaning of Islam. He follows this trajectory to the end of the twentieth century, viewing it as a series of hermeneutic circles of public discourse that problematized the meaning of Islam. The circles include nineteenth-century reformists and twentieth-century Islamists (like Yusuf Qaradawi), and also take into account contemporary debates about the relevance of the Islamic heritage for Arab public life. In discussing each of these circles, Salvatore reveals how, at the level of public discourse, scholars were grappling with issues of social and political concerns using the language of religion. Running concurrently with these circles of Arab discourse were, according to Salvatore, Western circles of discourse which tried to make sense of the Arab world. The primary focus of Salvatore's work does not lie in the detailed, substantive arguments for the viability of Islam in the political process. Amidst this welter of debate, he discovers the formulation of a modern political subjectivity:

> It is my claim, however, that the measure of the political, and its consecration as an autonomous hermeneutic factor within the interpretive field of political Islam, is not primarily established by an objective assessment of which political acts are performed in the name of Islam in Muslim societies, but by the way it provides a contrastive image for a redefinition of Western political subjectivity in times of crisis. (Salvatore 1997: 143)

Without going into finer details of modern Islam, Salvatore identifies a level of subjectivity in the discourse that, he says, affords a critical insight into the role of Islam in public life. He believes that such a level of subjectivity implies the presence of an alternative trajectory of modernization to that of the West. His analysis focuses on the emergence of the subjective self that Charles Taylor, among others, identifies as the principle distinction of European modernization (Taylor 1989). Using such a category, Salvatore's analysis breaks through the sensationalized media accounts of medieval barbarism and tradition usually associated with Islam, evaluating the discourse of Arab Islam as public discourse. Unlike Gellner, moreover, he provides a deeper sense of *how* modern Muslims are making sense of their history. Salvatore's analysis of Islam in public life clearly recognizes the potential of religious *discourse* in producing modernization. A comparison may be ventured. Gellner discussed the trajectory of modern Islamic developments from the perspective of secularization theory, which regards modernization as a systematic process of disenchantment. Thus, according to Gellner, the urban institutions of Islam seemed most compatible with modernity. . Salvatore, on the other hand, regards the distinctive trait of modernization to be the emergence of subjectivity. In his approach, therefore, the discourse of Islamization was the product of a shared hermeneutic space and manifested a unique subjectivity in modern Islam.

It seems to me that there are two major criticisms that can be made of Salvatore's analysis. First, the absence of popular Islamic discourse in his analysis leaves us with a partial view of the meaning of Islam among the highly literate, elite section of Arab society. The works of Arkoun, Abu Zayd, Hasan Hanafi and Jabiri treated by Salvatore are of great signification in public discourse. The substantive arguments of Islam in historical, literary, and hermeneutic perspectives may reveal the level of subjectivity in the debate. Modern Islamic public discourse, however, goes beyond the subjectivity displayed by these hermeneutic circles. The shift from public discourse to the religiopolitical discourse of apostasy—a shift that took place in the case of Abu Zayd, for example—seems to remain unaccounted for in Salvatore's analysis. The public discourse of Islam and the Islamic heritage could easily degenerate into a politicization and abuse of religion. And the meaning of Islam in public life is to be found equally in the political hermeneutic of Islam, as well as in the slogans of street politics.

The second criticism against Salvatore's approach concerns the pitfalls he wants to avoid: the details of modern Islam, which is so often caricatured in popular conceptions of Islam. Gellner's analysis provides a social theory for the dominance of urban Islam, while Salvatore's study puts the focus on the emergence of a political process within urban Islam. Salvatore clearly identifies the content of what Gellner expected of urban Islam. What is not so clear, however, is whether such an interpretation of Islam would be compatible with modern, global expectations. In particular, would it be acceptable in a global, pluralist world if Muslims, or any other religious or cultural group, decided that it has a unique understanding of human rights, ecological management, and the like? It seems that such specific details cannot be left out in the attempt to understand Islam in the modern world. In order to answer such questions, we need to go one step further and look at the specific meaning of Islam espoused by Muslims. This examination will complement the analysis of Gellner and Salvatore, who seem to focus, respectively, on the broad social parameters of modern Islam and on modern Islamic discourse. I would like to focus, in light of the social parameters outlined by Gellner and Salvatore, on the modernized discourse of Muslim intellectuals.

Modern Islam

Intense debate and dissension characterize modern Islamic writings. Muslims agree on certain fundamental beliefs, but disagree on the forms of worship, the ways of understanding the Qur'an, and the paths to religious and social reconstruction. Theoretically, a comparison could begin anywhere—with the Islamic approaches to gender, political liberalism, socialism, or civil liberties. Such comparisons have been made with varying degrees of success. I would suggest, however, that we ought to begin by asking how Muslims themselves understand Islam. In addition to Salvatore, Wilfrid Cantwell Smith and Eickelman and James Piscatori have pointed out reification of Islam as a substantive category in Muslim discourse (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Smith 1978). It would be a useful exercise to conduct a survey of how key Muslim intellectuals have defined Islam in recent years. Such a survey is likely to confirm the general conclusions of Gellner and Salvatore in unexpected ways, and also point to ways in which we can continue the debate on the nature of modern Islam.

The books and articles of Fazlur Rahman do not deal with the question of Islam as a descriptive or interpretive category. However, it is clear from his writings, one of which is a book entitled *Islam*, that he sees no problem with the hermeneutic complexities of defining Islam. In his *Islam and Modernity*, Rahman tackles the issue of the hermeneutic of reading by briefly considering the views of the German philosopher Gadamer. Gadamer's approach to reading, history, and literature is marked by the importance he assigns to the role of the

reader and her context, and may be regarded as the forerunner of the deconstructivist and postmodern approaches to philosophy and religion. Rahman rejects Gadamer as hopelessly subjective, and opts for the possibility of reconstructing the past on the basis of the mind's ability to apprehend reality, including the present and the past (Rahman 1982: 8, 9). Rahman seems to have been guided by his study of Islamic philosophy, wherein he investigated the meaning of the intellect and its relation to prophecy (Rahman 1958). Since the intellect was believed to be engaged with abstract entities, which included perceptions both of the past and of the present, the identity of the past and the present was readily assumed. Rahman's idealist position offers him a justification for assuming a fundamental essence of Islam, traced from the beginning to the present.

But Rahman is clearly not interested in history for itself. His hermeneutic is "concerned with an understanding of [Islam's] message that will enable those who have faith in it and want to live by its guidance—in both their individual and collective lives—to do so coherently and meaningfully" (Rahman 1982: 4). Rahman is acutely aware of historical change, and rejects the wholesale duplication of early Islamic social forms in the modern worlds. Thus, as early as 1965, he argued in *Islamic Methodology of History* that the social forms of early Islam were "absolutely irrepeatable" since the earliest Muslims also approached the Qur'an and the *sunnah* in a creative manner:

> if we are able to live as progressive Muslims at all, *viz*., just as those generations met their own situation adequately by freely interpreting the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet—by emphasizing the ideal and the principles and re-embodying them in a fresh texture of their own contemporary history—we must perform the same feat ourselves, with our own effort, for our own contemporary history. (Rahman 1965: 178)

Rahman was careful to exclude religious obligations, but believed quite passionately that it was the responsibility of Muslim scholars to search for the principles and values that lay at the heart of Islamic teachings. For Rahman, the key elements of the "original experience of Muhammad" were the absolute belief in one God and the Last Day, and the implementation of socioeconomic justice. These basic elements led to moral action in the world (Rahman 1982: 13, 14). The "properly moral" was the fundamental basis of Islam—it was that that special quality that corresponded to faith in an extrahistorical and transcendental being (Rahman 1982: 5). It is not surprising, therefore, that Rahman identified the root problem of modernity to be its secularism, which "destroyed the sanctity and universality [transcendence] of all moral values" (Rahman 1982: 15). Moral action, as opposed to secularism, enabled Muslims to transform the world and human society to reflect the values of justice and equity. Rahman rejected the notion that Islam was a remnant of the past. The principles and values of Islam offered hope for modern life.

We now turn to an activist scholar who sought to present Islam as a viable civilizational foundation for Muslims in the modern world. Isma'il Raji al Faruqi seemed at times to reject, but at times to endorse, the modernity of the West. His work on Islam includes an essay on Islam (1974) as a contribution to a volume on world religions, an introduction to *Islam* (1979), and a comprehensive work entitled *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (1986); the last-mentioned book was coauthored with his wife shortly before their brutal, untimely death. In some respects, al Faruqi came close to endorsing the results of Rahman. Speaking of Islamic law, he said:

> The revelation acknowledged, further, that the law is susceptible to change in time and place, conditioned as it must be by the status quo of the addressees. The needs of various societies must determine the nature of the laws they may be expected to observe. The principles of the law and its ends, on the other hand, stand above change and must remain the same throughout creation, since they represent the ultimate purposes of the Creator. (Al Faruqi and al Faruqi 1986: 108)

Like Rahman, al Faruqi stressed the underlying principles of Islam. But while Rahman focused on the combination of religious and socio-political principles of revelation, al Faruqi's principles were more theological and philosophical. Al Faruqi was certainly not opposed to social justice, but social justice did not take center stage in his thought. The essence of Islam, according to al Faruqi, is *tawhid*, affirmation of the oneness of God. This affirmation is not simply a belief in the numeral unity of God, but encompasses "a general view of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time, of human history" (al Faruqi and al Faruqi 1986: 74). Since *tawhid* is the essence of Islam, the principles of *tawhid* are the duality of God and creation; the ability of humankind to understand reality; the basic teleology of reality; the malleability of nature for humankind; and the accountability of humankind's.

From a philosophical point of view, al Faruqi's vision of Islam was far from traditional. In his elaboration of the duality of reality, al Faruqi echoes the sentiment of many an Enlightenment rationalist:

> Through *tawhid*, therefore, nature was separated from the gods and spirits of primitive religion. *Tawhid* for the first time made it possible for the religio-mythopoeic mind to outgrow itself, for the sciences of nature and civilization to develop with the blessing of a religious worldview that renounced once and for all any association of the sacred with nature. *Tawhid* is the opposite of superstition or myth, the enemies of natural science and civilization. (Al Faruqi and al Faruqi 1986: 80)

Here one can clearly see how al Faruqi restated the meaning of Islam for the twentieth century. From a theological point of view, al Faruqi's view of Islam eliminated the magical and mythical dimensions of the religion, and produced a rationalized theology. A word at this point about what al Faruqi saw as the

major problem saw with the modernity of the West. Though he had no problem with Enlightenment rationalism, al Faruqi never tired of pointing to the West's tendency to assign ultimate value to nature and human passion. Cut off from transcendentalism, nature and human passion become the measure of all value:

> Modern western man has little tolerance for any deity as far as metaphysics is concerned. But as far as ethics and conduct are concerned, the "gods" that he creates out of his idealization of human passions and tendencies are the real determinants of his action. (Ibid., 86)

Al Faruqi saw major problems with nineteenth-century romanticism and historicism that would destroy the value of knowledge as truth, replacing it with subjectivism and relativism. In this regard, there is a striking affinity between him and recent critics of postmodernism. For al Faruqi, the human subject viewed as the measure of all truth is the root of all problems. Only the principles of *tawhid* affirm the capacity and ability of humankind: "The humanism of *tawhid* alone is genuine. It alone respects man as man and creature, without either deification or vilification. It alone defines the worth of man in terms of his virtues, and begins its assessment of him with a positive mark for the innate endowment God has given all men in preparation for their noble task" (ibid. 82).

Another prominent Muslim intellectual who has written extensively about Islam in the second half of the twentieth century is Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Unlike Rahman and al Faruqi, Nasr completely rejects modernity and modernization, including the rational foundation of the Enlightenment. He reasserts the relevance of the philosophical and intellectual tradition of premodern Islam. Discussing contemporary art, Nasr, attacks its propensity to see "the origin of the inward in the outward." Contemporary art reduces sacred art with its interiorizing power to simply external, social and, in the Marxist historians, economic conditions" (Nasr 1990: 4). What is true of art is also true of modern philosophy, not to speak of the social sciences and humanities. This characterization of modernity is, to a degree, similar to al Faruqi's analysis of modernity. Nasr, however, rejects Enlightenment rationalism, which both al Faruqi and Rahman accept to a certain extent. For Nasr, the human-centered rationality of the Enlightenment is equally problematic from an Islamic perspective. He does not see the utility of the Enlightenment's practical reason and moral option that both Rahman and al Faruqi endorsed.

It seems that the search for purity and ultimacy within religion has produced various results. Like Rahman and al Faruqi, Nasr also searches for some underlying core of the tradition. For Nasr, the essence of Islam lies in its mystical dimension. Islam is the "direct call of the Absolute to man inviting him to cease his wandering in the labyrinth of the relative and to return to the Absolute and the One; it appeals to what is most permanent and immutable in man" (Nasr 1991: 148). The true purpose of Islam is not establishment of social justice (Rahman), nor establishment of Islam as a civilization (al Faruqi), but

recovery of a person's true, inner, primordial nature. Nasr goes further and evaluates this inner dimension in relation to other religious traditions. Accordingly, absolute Truth is inherent in all religious traditions. Like all other religions, Islam contains both an absolute and a relative dimension. According to Nasr, Islam "contains within itself the Truth and means of attaining the Truth," but, as a historical religion, it "emphasizes a particular aspect of the Truth in conformity with the spiritual and psychological needs of the humanity for whom it is destined and to whom it is addressed" (Nasr 1994 (1966): 15). Each religious tradition "emphasizes a certain aspect of this relationship, while inwardly it contains the Truth as such in its teachings whatever the outward limitations of its forms might be" (Nasr 1994 (1966): 16). The relative dimension of religions does not pertain to practices within the religious tradition. Practices that may have been endorsed in the second century of Islam do not necessarily have to change in the twentieth century, as Rahman and al Faruqi would argue. Prayer would take different forms in Christianity and Islam, but the variations within Islam do not draw the attention of Nasr.

Within each religious tradition, Nasr insists on the efficacy of the forms of religious life as vehicles, or ultimate symbols, through which the absolute may be found and realized. The Qur'an, the *Shari'ah*, and practical conduct of the Prophet are all authentic means, or pure symbols, that enable one to reach inwardness. In his pursuit of inwardness, however, Nasr is not concerned with the issues of social justice and public morality with which Rahman is preoccupied.

The modernity of these attempts becomes evident when we compare Muhammad Arkoun's attempt to recover the essence of Islam in the symbolic systems that characterize Islam. But Arkoun cautions scholars about the elusiveness of modern religious mobilization:

> This notion [of an Islamic model] constitutes the triumph of a social imaginary that it terms "Islamic" but that in fact sacralizes an irreversible operation of political, economic, social and cultural secularization. Analysts have barely noticed this new role of Islam used at the collective level as an instrument of disguising behavior, institutions, and cultural and scientific activities by the very Western model that has been ideologically rejected. (Arkoun 1994: 13)

But Arkoun does not succumb to crude secularism himself. He makes a distinction between symbols in their original, mysterious quality and their subsequent elaboration and use in social life. For example, Abraham is called a *muslim* in order to "indicate an ideal religious attitude symbolized by Abraham's conduct in conformity with the pact or covenant described in the Bible and the Qur'an" (ibid., 15), Similarly, the Qur'an as *umm al-kitab* refers to the "celestial Book, the archetype containing the inaccessible, mysterious totality of the Word of God" (ibid., 16). In contrast to this ultimate core, Arkoun speaks of the juridical, theological, and political elaboration of symbolic systems, which, in

the elaborated form, are necessarily removed from the true religious core, and must be monitored because of their propensity to masquerade as the core (ibid., 20–21). Unlike Nasr, who, in line with his mysticism, believes in the ultimate efficacy of the received symbols of Islam, Arkoun insists that symbols are themselves subject to change. In fact, he coins new terms—symbolization and transcendentalization of social forms—that deserve study and deconstructive critique. To this end, the whole legacy of social sciences should be brought to bear on understanding this process. Arkoun's understanding of the religious core seems to be rooted in an inexplicable and inexpressible principle that is devoid of any content.

Arkoun posits the value of the inner, religious core. He echoes the sentiments of Rahman, al Faruqi, and Nasr, but does not privilege, for Islam, a set of values or symbols. Social justice, *tawhid*, and absoluteness are not the inner core values of Islam. Arkoun leaves open the possibility of the symbols and symbolic system adopting new forms under the impact of social and psychological forces.

Conclusion

This essay has suggested that the grave doubts about Islam as a coherent explanatory and interpretive category do not imply that it is of no use in understanding certain human societies and certain social agents in them. From a sociological point of view, the religious factor, taken in its broadest sense, will have to be taken into account for purposes of understanding the transformation of a society and community. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that we will get an Islamic city or social science as a counterpart to its European variant. Such discourses will always be self-reflecting mirror images for those who seek the Other in order to complete themselves. On the other hand, one cannot dissociate the meaning of Islam from social contexts and social agents. In this regard, I have illustrated the location of Islam in social change (Gellner) as well as public discourse (Salvatore). More specifically, I have shown, with the help of a small sample, how intellectuals grapple with the question of redefining the meaning of Islam. In their search for the core values of social justice, rational theology, and mysticism, they are able to reintroduce the relevance of Islam in public discourse. The substantive solutions call for greater debate, but there is no mistaking their modern formulation and subjectivist encounter. Thus, for example, the views of Rahman and Nasr on social reconstruction and development become clear in light of their understanding of premodern Islamic social forms. The former is ready to jettison the forms in favor of the fundamental principles of Islam; while the latter regards the forms as effective symbols for relating to the divine.

In spite of these differences, however, there is overwhelming agreement on the need to locate the ultimate meaning of Islam. But the search for the core

meaning of Islam becomes urgent precisely as a result of the effects of modernity on traditions. Modernity does not always lead to secularization, but it does bring into question many of the functions and aspects of traditional religions. The authority of religion in the modern world is, if not completely negated, at least questioned and made doubtful (Beckford 1992; Berger 1970; Wilson 1985). The redefinition, or at least the recovery, of the core of Islam seems to me to occur under conditions determined by modernity. Gellner argues that this pattern has been a recurrent one in Islam and has no necessary link with modernity. He believes, however, that modernity and modernization favor the dominance of urban Islam. The differences between Rahman, al Faruqi, and Nasr indicates that the meaning of urban Islam is itself subject to intense debate. Their approaches to the meaning of Islam suggest that much more is happening than a simple recurrence of the early Islamic patterns. The search for the true principles, the mystical core, or the indefinable essence is part of the search for meaning in modernity. The social and political impact of modernity on Islamic society and discourse, as analyzed by Gellner and Salvatore, is matched by an intense debate among Muslim intellectuals on the true and authentic meaning of Islam.

Bibliography

Abdel-Rahim, Muddathir (1980). "Legal Institutions." In R. B. Sergeant, ed., *The Islamic City*, pp. 41–51. Paris: Unesco.

Arkoun, Mohammed (1987). *Rethinking Islam Today*. Occasional Papers Series. Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

Idem (1992). "Islam Wa-Wahy Wa-Thawrah." *Minbar al-Hiwar* 7 (1992), 26:82–96.

Idem (1994). *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*. Trans. and ed. Robert D. Lee. Boulder: Westview Press.

Azmeh, Aziz al- (1993). *Islams and Modernities*. London: Verso.

Beckford, James (1992). "Religion, Modernity and Post-Modernity." In Bryan Wilson, ed., *Religion: Contemporary Issues*, pp. 11–23. London: Bellew Publishing.

Berger, Morroe (1970). *Islam in Egypt Today: Social and Political Aspects of Popular Religion*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Cornell, Vincent J. (1998) *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Eickelman, Dale E., and James Piscatori (1996). *Muslim Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Faruqi, Isma'il R. al- (1979). *Islam*. Allen, Texas: Argus Communications. Major World Religions Series.

Idem (1974). “Islam.” In Isma‘il R. al Faruqi, ed., with David E. Sopher, map ed., *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World*, pp. 237–81. New York: Macmillan.

Faruqi, Isma‘il R. al-, and Lois Lamya al-Faruqi (1986). *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*. New York: Macmillan.

Gellner, Ernest (1981). *Muslim Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 32.

Lapidus, Ira M. (1967). *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1990). *Islam, Art and Spirituality*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Idem (1991). *Sufi Essays*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Idem (1994 (1966)). *Ideals and Realities of Islam*. London: Harper Collins (Aquarian).

Rahman, Fazlur (1958). *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Midway reprint.

Idem (1965). *Islamic Methodology in History*. Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research.

Idem (1982). *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Salvatore, Armando (1997). *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*. Reading, England: Ithaca Press.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell (1978). *The Meaning and End of Religion*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Taylor, Charles (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Turner, Bryan S. (1974). *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

van Leeuwen, Richard. “The Quest for the Islamic City.” In Inge E. Boer, Annelies Moors, and Toine van Toefellen, eds. *Changing Stories: Postmodernism and the Arab-Islamic World*, pp. 147–162. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Wilson, Bryan (1985). “Secularization: The Inherited Model.” In P. E. Hammond, ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age*, pp. 9–20. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Studies in Contemporary Islam 1 (1999), 2:16–43

Islamist Intellectuals of South Asia: The Origins and Development of a Tradition of Discourse

S. V. R. Nasr[*]

Islamism is perhaps the most elaborate indigenous ideological perspective to have emerged in the Third World in recent decades. It is based on a distinctive worldview that draws on local norms and values, and it is articulated through an engaging cultural discourse with the West. Islamism has been a markedly literary and intellectual movement, relying heavily on the written word in disseminating its ideological perspective and exercising its social control.[1] Islamism owes its rise to the work of thinkers and ideologues that have cast Muslims as a "community of discourse,"[2] produced the key concepts of Islamism, related these to the masses, and given shape to the cultural hegemony that lies at the heart of the Islamist agenda.[3]

It was men like Mawlana Mawdudi (d. 1979), Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949), Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), Ali Shari'ati (d. 1979), and Ayatollah Khomeini (d. 1988) who advanced the formative ideas, spoke to the concerns of various social groups, shaped public debates by determining what ideas would or would not form the subject matter of those debates, and related individual and social experiences to enduring questions and concerns about freedom, justice, good and evil, and salvation. These individuals have served as the ideologues of Islamism, which has, in turn, both spawned and relied on a class of intellectuals to consolidate, regenerate, and disseminate its vision. If Islamism has succeeded in establishing itself as a political force in the Muslim world, then it owes this feat to Islamist intellectuals who have ensconced their ideas in the social life and political discourse of Muslims.

---

[*] S. V. R. Nasr is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of San Diego.

[1] Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27 (1993), 1:229–51.

[2] Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[3] See also in this regard Ibrahim Abu Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

Nowhere is this intellectual force more developed or its impact more pronounced than in South Asia, where Islamism has retained a very strong intellectual dimension, and, as such, has been able to influence the development of Islamic movements from Malaysia to Morocco. Generations of thinkers from Abu'l-Kalam Azad (d. 1958) and Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) to Mawlana Mawdudi, Muhammad Asad, Amin Ahsan Islahi, Khurshid Ahmad, Maryam Jameelah, Israr Ahmad, and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi have fashioned an internally consistent and thoroughgoing Islamist worldview. The force of their ideas has created an intellectual milieu in which social, political, and cultural concerns are debated, analyzed, and understood.

The impact of these figures is felt primarily in intellectual circles, educational institutions, and, generally, the political arena in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Their reach extends further, however. South Asian Islamist intellectuals today are the most prominent group in the transnational network of informal groups and formal institutions that articulate and promote the Islamist discourse. They have made a notable impact on such institutions as the International Islamic Universities of Pakistan, Malaysia, and Uganda, the International Center for Research in Islamic Economics of King Abdu'l-Aziz University in Saudi Arabia, the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Herndon, Virginia, and the Islamic Foundations of Leicester, England, and Nairobi, Kenya. These institutions serve not only as a seedbed for new ideas that subsequently find application in the sphere of public policy, but also as a training ground for a new generation of public servants, professionals, and educators with the Islamist perspective. In addition, they perform the function of creating intellectual networks across the Muslim world through the people they reach and train, and through the literature they produce. Many of those affiliated with these institutions now serve as senior bureaucrats, as well as professors at various universities, all the way from Malaysia to Nigeria. The impact of the graduates and publications of these institutions on defining the context for public debates and deciding the direction of cultural change across the Muslim world has been profound.

This paper seeks to draw a profile of South Asian Islamist intellectuals, identify their social and intellectual roots as well as their sociopolitical function and international role, and examine the nature and direction of their discourse. In so doing, it will focus on four interrelated themes: the historical origins of Islamist intellectuals, their role as national (professional) intellectuals, and their discourses of power and indigenization. These encompass the roots, the pattern of development, the sociopolitical and ideological function, and the essence of the enterprise of South Asian Islamist intellectuals within that region as well as in the larger Islamist Movement.

The Lineage of South Asian Islamist Intellectuals

The origins of an Islamist intellectual discourse in South Asia can be traced to Muslim reactions to colonial rule in India in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following the Great Mutiny of 1857, Muslims responded to colonial rule in a number of ways.[4] One of the most celebrated consisted of the modernist project of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), which culminated in Aligarh University and its curriculum.[5] The Aligarh Movement had a profound impact on Indian Muslims in that it brought many of them into the ambit of the colonial sociopolitical order, and, more important, forced them to confront directly the challenge of modernity. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's own interpretations of the faith sought to reconcile Islam and modernity. Many Muslims remained skeptical of his enterprise, which was disparagingly dubbed *nechari* (naturalist; a reference to the mechanistic view of nature Sayyid Ahmad Khan was believed to espouse). Still, even in rejecting Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muslim thinkers were forced to acknowledge the intellectual challenges of the West and to mobilize themselves in order to defend their faith. More important, the Aligarh Movement placed great emphasis on intellectuals' contribution to politics in that it sought to reverse the gradual occlusion of Islam in India through adoption of new curricula of education and novel approaches to interpretation of the faith. By implication, intellectual battles, and hence intellectuals themselves, were propelled to the forefront of Muslim public debates. Many of Aligarh's ideas found their way into the traditional Islamic circles through thinkers like Shibli Nu'mani (d. 1914), who taught at Aligarh for many years and was instrumental in the Nadwi educational system of the ulama.

The other influence on Islamist intellectuals was the attempts by various Muslim groups and schools of thought to reject the colonial culture and insulate themselves from the British order.[6] The most notable of these attempts was the Deoband Movement, which sought to create a normative order in which Muslims could live and think in accordance with their time-honored traditions.[7] This normative order would remain beyond the reach of the colonial culture, in

[4] Mushirul Hasan, "Resistance and Acquiescence in North India: Muslim Responses to the West," *Rivisti degli Studi Orientali* 67 (1993), 1–2:83–105; and Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857–1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[5] On Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh Movement, see J. M. S. Baljon, *Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1958); Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978); and David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

[6] For an examination of the role of imperialism in the rise of Islamic revivalism, see Nikki Keddie, "The Revolt of Islam, 1700 to 1993: Comparative Considerations and Relations to Imperialism," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36 (1994), 3:463–487.

[7] On Deoband, see Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

defiance of, and in resistance to, which it had been conceived. The notion of opting out of the colonial order resonated with other Islamic schools of thought that emerged during this period—most notably, the Ahl-i Hadith.[8] During the tumult of turn-of-the-century India, the Ahl-i Hadith sought to establish a modicum of stability in their lives by means of a new interpretation of Islam and by cleansing their faith of cultural accretions. The moral rectitude resulting from their separation from the Muslim society at large had convinced them of their superior religious stand in "apocalyptic" times. That notion also found political manifestation in such efforts as the Tahrik-i Hijrat (Migration Movement) of 1920, which encouraged Muslims to leave India, where Islam was not in power, for Afghanistan, which at that time was *daru'l-Islam*.[9]

Over time, this notion of separation from the mainstream to form "genuine" Islamic normative orders became a central feature of the Islamist discourse in South Asia. It led to a proliferation of *jama'at*s (societies/parties) that viewed themselves as model Islamic communities. The Jama'at-i Islami (Islamic Party)—first of India, and later of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—best exemplifies this tendency.[10] In fact, it was through the Jama'at's founder and chief ideologue, Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, that the notion of a holy community, distinguished from society at large, found its way to the Arab world, becoming, through Sayyid Qutb, a central aspect of the radical Islamist ideology—"denunciation and migration" (*takfir wa'l-hijrah*)—of Egyptian Islamists.[11]

Of equal importance to the development of Islamist intellectuals was the rise of Muslim political activism, both independently and under the aegis of the Congress Party, against British rule. Muslim opposition to colonial rule, which escalated greatly during the Khilafat Movement, became an important formative influence on Islamism.[12] Many young activists who would become notable Islamist thinkers were first introduced to politics during this period, in the

---

[8] Ibid., 268–280.

[9] On this movement, see F. S. Briggs, "The Indian Hijrat of 1920," *Muslim World* 20 (1930), 2:167–86. On Mawdudi's role in this movement, see Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi: An Introduction to His Vision of Islam and Islamic Revival," in Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, eds., *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1979), 361.

[10] See, in this regard, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 9–43.

[11] On Mawdudi's arguments in this regard, see Sayyid Vali Reza Nasr, "Communalism and Fundamentalism: A Re-examination of the Origins of Islamic Fundamentalism," *Contention* 4 (1995), 2:121–39. On Mawdudi's impact on Egyptian Islamism in this regard, see Abdel Azim Ramadan, "Fundamentalist Influence in Egypt: The Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Takfir Groups," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appelby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 156, 161.

[12] On the Khilafat movement, see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolisms and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

course of the agitation for India's independence. Such thinkers as Mawdudi were active in the Khilafat Movement.[13]

Furthermore, many of the leading figures of the Khilafat Movement, such as Muhammad Ali (d. 1931), Abu'l-Kalam Azad, and Ubaidullah Sindhi (d. 1944), captured the imagination of young activists, and became their role models. The most important of these figures was Azad.[14] Azad's passionate essays in his journal *al-Hilal* were widely popular with Muslims activists of all hues—so much so that he became a model for Islamist intellectual activism. Although Azad himself would refrain from taking overtly Islamist positions, and would eventually choose to stay within the fold of the Congress Party, remaining loyal to its inclusive and assimilationist political platform, Islamists would continue to revere him as a role model. In many ways, the self-image of the Islamist intellectual was, at least until recently, shaped by Azad. His oratorical, literary, and even sartorial styles—particularly his dark sunglasses—became the calling cards of Islamist intellectuals.

Those who followed in the path of the Azad of *al-Hilal* days sought to emulate the various aspects of his religiopolitical career, and also to draw parallels between their own life-stories and academic lives and those of Azad's. For instance, one often encounters highlights of Azad's life—his conversion experience, his dabbling in Sufism, his love of poetry, his penchant for organizational work, and his commentary on the Qur'an (*Tarjumanu'l-Qur'an*)—as well as his personal traits featured in Islamist intellectuals' biographies and in descriptions of their careers. In many ways, Azad's early career has been a decisive formative influence on Islamist intellectual activism. The renowned Pakistani historian S. M. Ikram is in agreement with the Jama'at-i Islami's Khurshid Ahmad in tracing a direct line of influence from Azad to Mawdudi.[15]

Azad's early writings emphasized the importance of organization in realizing Muslim aims. He wrote extensively on the structure and working of the Hizbu'llah (Party of God), which he intended to form in Calcutta as a Muslim vanguard force. Although the Hizbu'llah never amounted to much, Azad's elaborations upon the idea and objectives of the party left an indelible mark on Islamist thinkers. Since Azad's time, organization has been a central aspect of Islamist political thought in South Asia.[16]

---

[13] On Mawdudi's role in the Khilafat movement, see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16–21.
[14] On Azad's life and works, see Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad; An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, ed. Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[15] S.M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1965), 152–53, and Khurshid Ahmad's lecture at the University of South Florida and World and Islamic Studies Enterprise conference, Tampa, Florida, 15 May 1993.
[16] Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "'Organization' in Islamic Revivalist Movements," in Charles H. Kennedy and Rasul B. Rais, eds., *Pakistan, 1995* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 61–82.

The notion of an organizational solution to Muslim political predicaments reinforced the tendency to separate from general society and form virtuous communities. The concept of organization in the thought of Inayatu'llah Mashriqi (d. 1963) of the Tahrik-i Khaksar (Movement of the Devoted; created in 1931) or in that of Mawlana Mawdudi was at once an organizational weapon to project power in the political arena—a weapon use of which had been advised by Azad—and a virtuous community in which veritable Islam would flourish and eventually shape all social organizations and relations.[17]

Of equal importance to the development of an Islamist intellectual tradition was the work of Muhammad Iqbal. Iqbal's influence was less in shaping the political attitudes of Islamist thinkers, and more in orienting them toward reviving their faith and engaging them in a discourse with the West. Iqbal's impact can be summed up in his identification of the task of reconstruction and reform of Islam central to Islamic intellectual discourse. Iqbal had a deep understanding of Western thought, and yet he was a student of Islamic philosophy and mysticism.[18] His poetry drew on the ideas of Sadru'ddin Shirazi (Mulla Sadra, d. 1641) and Jalalu'ddin Rumi (d. 1273). He wove the several threads of the yearning for the lost grandeur of Islamic civilization, deep-seated notions about Islamic philosophical wisdom, and an appreciation of the progress witnessed in the West, into a coherent worldview. Iqbal was at once a modernist and a proto-revivalist; he was an advocate of Muslim empowerment, but viewed such empowerment as becoming possible only through a reform and revival of the Islamic faith. His views on this subject were far more sophisticated and thoroughgoing than Azad's, and, as such, were instrumental in shaping Islamist attitudes.

Under the influence of Azad and Iqbal, the legacy of Muslim activism at the turn of the century laid the foundations of an Islamist intellectual discourse on society and politics. This discourse would take root in the thought of young Muslims who received religious education at Deobandi, Nadwi, Ahl-i Hadith, Madrasatu'l-Islah, or Barelwi schools. Some of these schools, such as the Nadwatu'l-Ulama and Madrasatu'l-Islah, were formed with those issues in mind that would later be raised by Azad and Iqbal. The Nadwah sought to combine the Islamic and modern systems of education, representing an approach that was also at the heart of Iqbal's plan to reform and revive Islam. The Madrasatu'l-Islah, similarly, sought to incorporate modern ideas in the traditional system of education. The Madrasatu'l-Islah experiment was closely associated with Hamidu'ddin Farahi (d. 1930), a graduate of Aligarh, whose ideas had already helped change the curriculum of the Usmaniyah University of Hyderabad.[19]

[17] See Nasr, *Vanguard*, 21–43.

[18] On Iqbal, see Aziz Ahmad, *Iqbal and the Recent Exposition of Islamic Political Thought* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1950), and Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study Into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963).

[19] On Farahi, see Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Mawlana Hamidu'ddin Farahi* (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, n.d.).

Farahi's great importance, however, lay in his effort to devise new curricula for educating primary- and secondary-level students, who would receive this education in a new network of *daru'l-'ulums* (seminaries).

The graduates of these schools, who often joined the ulama class in India, were acutely aware of the challenges facing Islam. They had received their education, and gained their livelihood, outside the purview of the British order. Their politics were influenced by their religious training and by their position in Muslim society. They constituted the bulk of Azad's audience, and would later come under the influence of Iqbal's revivalism. Many religious thinkers and movements of the turn of the century, and many of those who joined the Khaksar or the Majlis-i Ahrar-i Islam (Society of Free Muslims; created in 1930), emerged from this background.

Mashriqi, the leader of the Khaksar, was perhaps unique among this group in that he received his earlier education in British institutions in India and his advanced education in England. He studied mathematics at Cambridge University, where he won the Foundation Scholar, Bachelor Scholar, and Wrangler awards for his scholarly abilities.[20] Still, the family Mashriqi came from belonged to the class that is being described here, and his discovery of, and interest in, Islamic revival can be explained with reference to the kind of background mentioned above.

The most important of these thinkers, however, was Mawlana Mawdudi, the founder of the Jama'at-i Islami (Islamic Party; created in 1941). Mawdudi has not only served as a link between the earlier and later developments in the Islamist intellectual discourse, but also became an object of emulation for later thinkers. Mawdudi's education and career incorporate, in many ways, elements taken from all the other aforementioned figures. He was educated at home in traditional subjects, but eventually learned English and read a wide array of Western works. He also completed the *dars-i nizami* curriculum of the ulama, thus qualifying as a Deobandi *alim*.[21] In his early years he was greatly impressed with Azad and Muhammad Ali, whose works he had read with great zeal. In fact, it was Muhammad Ali who putatively motivated Mawdudi to write his first major discursive work, *Al-Jihad fi'l-Islam* (Jihad in Islam).[22]

Much like Iqbal and the Nadwis, Mawdudi was a firm believer in reforming and reviving Islam by adopting some aspects of Western thought and educational system. For him, education must have both an Islamizing and a

---

[20] Syed Shabbir Hussain, "Inayat Ullah Khan El-Mashriqi," in *The Muslim Luminaries: Leaders of Religious, Intellectual, and Political Revival in South Asia* (Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1988), 249.
[21] Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 17–18.
[22] Muhammad Salahu'ddin, "Tajziah," *Takbir* (28 September 1989), 31.

modernizing role.[23] He often lauded the Nadwi model as the one closest to his vision.[24]

Mawdudi's religiopolitical mission began in earnest when he moved from Hyderabad (the Deccan) to the Punjab in 1938 in order to participate in an educational project that Iqbal had conceived as a means of developing a new educational curriculum for Muslims—one that would produce the kind of leadership India's Muslims needed.[25] Mawdudi's views on the ultimate direction of the project differed from those of Iqbal's, but the two were in full agreement insofar as both emphasized the role of education in finding a solution to the predicament faced by Muslims, sought to reform Muslim education by incorporating in it modern subjects, and viewed education as an essential tool for training a new elite who would initiate progress.

Mawdudi's discourse on society and politics, reform and revival of Islam, and the status of Islam's relations with the West were far more thoroughgoing and coherent than his predecessors'. In a way, Mawdudi integrated the various trends of thinking that had preceded him, formulating an all-encompassing ideological vision. He wrote at a time when debates about organization, ideology, and the future of Muslims were raging across India. Many of his ideas were shaped in debates with other thinkers like Mashriqi or Muhammad Asad. Asad's work was of particular importance in this regard. His *Islam at the Crossroads* was quite influential;[26] it, for instance, led the renowned Islamist intellectual Maryam Jameelah to convert to Islam[27] and the Jama'at-i Islami leader Khurshid Ahmad to turn to Islamism.[28] Asad's criticism of Western culture and its materialism, and his encouragement of Muslims to embrace their traditions, not only at the social and political but also at the intellectual level and in their everyday lives, reinforced the vision of a distinctive Islamic normative order that was free from Western influence and was rooted in indigenous values.

Still, Mawdudi's impact far exceeds that of Asad's or that of the other Islamist thinkers of his day. In fact, many of those who turned toward Islamism through Asad, such as Maryam Jameelah or Khurshid Ahmad, eventually ended up in the Jama'at-i Islami. Mawdudi's *oeuvre* has, thus, served as the critical link between the religious, political, and cultural developments in the Muslim community before the partition of India on the one hand and the rise of an Islamist intellectual class in the post-partition Indian subcontinent on the other. Thus, Mawdudi's ideology has laid the foundations of the worldview to which

[23] Masudul Hasan, *Sayyid Abul A'ala Maududi and His Thought*, 2 vols. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1984), 2:70–72.
[24] *Tarjumanu'l-Qur'an*, September 1934, 2–9, and Leonard Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 83–89.
[25] Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 33–39.
[26] Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads* (Lahore: S. M. Ashraf, 1941).
[27] Maryam Jameelah, *Why I Embraced Islam* (Lahore: Muhammad Yusuf Khan, n.d.).
[28] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, "Khurshid Ahmad: Muslim Activist-Economist," *Muslim World* 80 (1990), 1:25.

many modern Muslim intellectuals subscribe, and has been the single most important influence in shaping these intellectuals' discourse on the state, society, and the West.

Following the partition of India in 1947, Islamism ceased to be an important factor in India, but it emerged as a powerful force in Pakistan—and, later, in Bangladesh. The role which Islamist intellectuals have played in Pakistan has been quite important for the trajectory of the development of South Asian Islamist intellectuals, and also for determining those intellectuals' place in the Islamist Movement as a whole.

Islamists and Nationalists: Islamism and Intellectuals in Pakistan

Islamists in Pakistan have performed the unique role of serving as national (professional) intellectuals. They make up, that is to say, the main group of thinkers whose ideas relate the *raison d'être* of the state to national consciousness, and who articulate national aspirations and the national will. Why and how this has come about holds intrinsic interest. But more than that, their national role has come to shape the Islamist intellectuals' perception of their social role, and has, in turn, influenced the direction of their ideological formulations.

There is little doubt that secular intellectuals have always been of marginal importance in Pakistan. They do not have a mass following, they contribute little to national debates, and they have little influence with policy-makers, among the significant social strata, or even among such typically sympathetic groups as students. A number of reasons have been put forward for this. Ayesha Jalal has blamed government action, beginning with the cover-up of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case of 1951, for the plight of secular intellectuals.[29] The conspiracy allegedly involved a group of military officers at a garrison in Rawalpindi who were found to be planning a coup with the help of Communist activists and literary figures such as the poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz.[30] Jalal has argued that the cover-up and the witch-hunt that followed turned Pakistan into a "veritable intellectual wasteland."[31] It is generally true that, in Pakistan, the government has not encouraged serious discussion of sensitive issues, and has at times

[29] For a general discussion of the case, see Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 119–24, and Nasr, *Vanguard*, 117.

[30] U.S. Embassy, Karachi, Despatch No. 1671, 29 May 1951, 790D.00/5–1651, and Despatch No. 1394, 28 March 1950, 790D.00/3–2851, National Archives, U.S.A. The British envoy in Pakistan, taking a less drastic view of the Communist threat, attributed the plot largely to frustrations over Kashmir. He explained Faiz's part in the affair as conjectural. See United Kingdom High Commission, Karachi, Telegram No. FL1018/18, 10 March 1951, FO371/92866, Public Records Office, United Kingdom.

[31] Jalal, *State of Martial Rule*, 123.

clamped down on public criticism, especially that by the Left.[32] Still, in comparison with Iran or Egypt, for instance, Pakistan has always been far more open, and has been less severe in dealing with leftist opposition than they Iran or Egypt—even though these two countries have witnessed much more rigorous intellectual activity, in politics as well as in purely cultural and artistic domains.

One may also point to the fact that secular intellectuals have been generally disconnected from the masses. Few secular intellectuals can write in Urdu or choose to do so, and most are closely attached to British culture and its institutions in South Asia. In fact, they feel more at home with Western intellectuals than with those whose aspirations they claim to articulate. In addition, most hail from among the elite, which means that, in a feudal and highly stratified Pakistani society, they are barred by social fault lines from connecting with the masses. It can be argued that secular Pakistani intellectuals have failed to develop a following among the masses, and have not been able to relate to them, and, as a result, have been marginalized. Since Islamist intellectuals use, principally, the medium of Urdu, and are directly and solely concerned with their immediate communities, they have grown roots among the masses. This explanation sheds some light on the matter in question, but is not completely satisfactory since it may overstate the point about the secular Pakistani intellectual's Western orientation and their isolation from the masses. After all, for a brief moment in history—during 1969–72—the secular intellectuals were able to relate to and even lead the mass movement that swept Z. A. Bhutto to power.

Perhaps a more plausible explanation of the matter under discussion is that the plight of the secular Pakistani intellectuals has to do with their role—or, more accurately, the lack thereof—in the creation of Pakistan. Liah Greenfeld writes that the architects of nationalism have generally been intellectuals.[33] The future nation rewards the intellectuals for their contribution by according them a central role in the new sociopolitical order—by transfiguring them into an "aristocracy" that will enjoy "high social status for generations to come."[34] Where intellectuals have not played a role in the articulation of the national consciousness—as in America—they have not enjoyed great prestige and authority.

Greenfeld's explanation throws considerable light on the marginalization of secular Pakistani intellectuals, and, conversely, on why Islamist intellectuals have been able to play the role of national intellectuals and enjoy the prestige and popularity accompanying that role. While a few secular intellectuals were

[32] For instance, in 1995, the journalist and academician Zafaryab Ahmed was charged with treason for criticizing abuse of children in Pakistan's carpet industry. Mr. Ahmed's crime was that he posed a threat to an important export industry. The very fact that the state reacted to Ahmed so severely for taking a position an intellectual might well be expected to take in itself shows how little influence secular intellectuals have with the masses or the state.
[33] Liah Greenfeld, "Transcending the Nation's Worth," in *Dædalus* 122 (1993), 3:53.
[34] Ibid.

affiliated with the Muslim League—the party that led the struggle for Pakistan—more often than not they, and their principal institutions, such as Aligarh University and Jamia Millia, or their earliest forums, such as the Progressive Writers Association, were closely tied to Indian leftist movements and the Congress Party and to the vision these had of Indian history and nationalism. They shunned communalism. Not only did they show no enthusiasm for Pakistan, they were often hostile to it. The idea of Muslim communalism and the thought of alliance with pro-British elite who championed its cause clashed head-on with the sensibilities of these intellectuals. That they ended up in Pakistan was often not due to a choice they had made.[35] Secular intellectuals have continued to be at ill at ease with the very idea of Pakistan.[36] They have been the flag-bearers of the struggle against authoritarianism and economic inequality, but the scope of their dissent goes beyond government policy or regime type. They continue to question Jinnah's wisdom, and also whether or not Pakistan ought to have been created in the first place. Unenthusiastic about Pakistan, the secular intellectuals have little authority and social prestige other than that which comes from their social backgrounds.

On the contrary, the Islamist intellectuals have contributed to the rise of Pakistan as an idea and as a political reality. The intellectual most closely tied to Pakistani national consciousness is Muhammad Iqbal. It is for this very reason that he is greatly revered in Pakistan. It was the Islamist dimension of Iqbal's literary and political writings that encouraged Muslim separatism and lent support to the Pakistan Movement. It is this dimension, again, that is a major fountainhead of Islamist intellectual activity in the country. The Islamist discourse is linked to the revivalist dimension of Iqbal's *oeuvre*, and, through it, to his communalist sentiments.

Furthermore, the Islamist intellectuals have themselves been directly connected with the rise of Pakistani national consciousness. Various Pakistani governments and the secular elite have often accused the Islamists of having been anti-Pakistan. Although this line of argument has found great favor with the elite, it is not completely true, and is not fully accepted by the masses. Some Islamist forces, such as the Majlis-i Ahrar-i Islam, were anti-Pakistan, but others favored a separate Muslim state. Moreover, many among their members and followers supported the Muslim League whole-heartedly and actively

[35] The renowned novelist Ahmed Ali, who wrote *Twilight in Delhi*, ended up in Pakistan unwillingly and only because he was outside India at the time of the partition and was not allowed back into the country; see his Introduction in *Twilight in Delhi*, 5th ed. (New York: New Directions Book, 1994). For a glimpse of Ali's hostility to Pakistan, see his discussion with William Dalrymple in *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 60–65. Another telling example is that of Salman Rushdie, who briefly settled in Pakistan, and whose impressions of the country are captured in his novel *Shame*, especially in its title.

[36] A very instructive example is that of the noted Pakistani scholar and intellectual Ayesha Jalal. See in particular her "Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imagining," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27:1 (1995), 73–89.

participated in its campaigns. Still, the Islamists did not look favorably on Jinnah and the Muslim League, for they were viewed as too secular.[37] They favored a more Islamic Pakistan from the time of its inception; and were not satisfied with a homeland for Indian Muslims, demanding instead the creation of an Islamic state. After the partition, the Muslim League deftly equated support for the League with loyalty to Pakistan. It successfully depicted the League as the only pro-Pakistan Movement, and so anyone who criticized Jinnah or the League was branded anti-Pakistan.

In reality, the Islamists were, directly as well as through the dissemination of their ideas, influential in the development of Pakistani national consciousness. The League based its campaign for Pakistan, especially during the critical period of 1945–47, on the Islamist discourse. Its battle-cry became: *Pakistan ka matlab kiya? La ilaha ila'llah!* ("What does the call for Pakistan mean? There is no god but God!"), and it appealed directly to the ideas, language, and symbols that the Islamists had popularized.[38] Peter Hardy writes that by the mid-1940s the Muslim League resembled "a chiliastic movement rather than a pragmatic party."[39] In this climate the pro-Pakistan secular intellectuals—of whom there were very few—perforce remained close to the Islamists, from whom they borrowed, and with whom they interacted and cooperated.

The League also benefited greatly from the Islamists' rejection of the pro-Congress platform of the ulama—especially the members of the Jam'iat-i Ulama-i Hind (Society of Indian Ulama)—and Muslim leaders such as Zakir Husain (d. 1969) or Azad, who argued that support for Indian nationalism was justified on religious grounds. The Islamists were not swayed by such arguments, and were particularly effective in undermining the religious justification offered in support of the Congress position. The League, which had little support among the ulama—and was, consequently, hard-pressed to challenge their religious wisdom—clearly gained from the Islamist confrontation with the ulama.[40] Thus, the Islamists played a direct role in articulating, defending, and promoting Pakistani national consciousness, and so have enjoyed the authority and prestige that go with their stance. Furthermore, the rise of nationalism bears a relationship to the successful spread of print capitalism,[41] and, in this connection, too, the Islamist intellectuals played an important role, beginning with Iqbal, whose ideas were disseminated widely through print, using the medium of Urdu, which later became the national language of Pakistan. The works of Mawdudi or Inayatu'llah Mashriqi and their followers were read in Urdu and shaped popular attitudes about Islam, communalism, and Pakistan. The two thinkers operated in the same linguistic

---

[37] Nasr, *Vanguard*, 18–20, 103–15.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 239.
[40] Ishtiaq Husain Quraishi, *Ulema in Politics; A Study Relating to the Political Activities of the Ulema in the South Asian Subcontinent from 1566 to 1947* (Karachi, 1974), 352.
[41] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed., (New York: Verso, 1991), 134.

and cultural arena in which the Muslim League was also active. Their ideas no doubt cross-fertilized as their followers worked in unison. Thus, Islamism as an intellectual current was wedded to Pakistani nationalism. Later, Islamism as a political force crossed swords with the Muslim League and its governments in Pakistan. But the political confrontation has, despite the best efforts of the Pakistani elite, not as yet led to the marginalization of Islamist intellectuals.

In Pakistan, the Islamist intellectuals have played a peculiar role. They have not enjoyed the same freedom of action and access to power that Greenfeld believed intellectuals with ties to the rise of nationalism should. In Pakistan, after the partition, the state denied that Islamists had had any role in the creation of the country, depicting them instead as anti-Pakistan. This marred the relations between the Islamists and the state and limited the Islamists' national influence—but did not eliminate it altogether.

Islamist intellectuals continue to have authority and exercise power by mobilizing the masses. Hence, soon after the creation of Pakistan, the Islamists successfully influenced the process of constitution-making in the country, and effectively committed the new state to some form of Islamic existence.[42] In this they were helped by the weakness of the state. The nascent state was severely hampered by the power-play of the provincial and landed elite, by the absence of effective links between the new provinces that made up Pakistan, by a massive refugee problem, by the absence of adequate government machinery, and by the continuing hostilities with India. Its weakness made the new state vulnerable to Islamist activism.[43]

Furthermore, the Muslim League's inability to institutionalize an effective party apparatus in Pakistan led to political decay. National politics became the scene of petty bickering and jockeying for power by various political interest groups, the military, and the landed elite. The political decay proved destabilizing and further weakened the state. As state authority faltered, the powers that be relied on Islamists to provide it with legitimacy and to bolster their own position. The politicians, while they would ridicule Islamist thinkers and activists—increasingly so throughout the 1950s—used the Islamists' arguments to assert the center's claim to authority. The Islamist discourse argued for the primacy of Islam over all parochial loyalties. Maintaining an Islamic veneer was essential to the center in its confrontation with the ethnic forces and in its attempt to consolidate the state. Just as was the case before the partition, the state—which had been built on a communal conception of nationhood—had to draw on the rhetoric, arguments, and symbols of those who glorified religion and encouraged the masses to base their politics on religion.

The importance of the Islamist discourse became most apparent when the state was most vulnerable—that is, at times when the country underwent

---

[42] See Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan*.

[43] See Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Pakistan: Islamic State, Ethnic Polity." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 16 (1992), 2:81–90.

suffering and needed solace. Both during 1965–66 and during 1971–72, when the country was ruled by secular governments but had suffered military defeat, the state overtly appealed to Islam, and the Islamist thinkers occupied center stage in guiding the country in its hours of crisis. In 1965, when the Pakistan army suffered setbacks in its war with India, a shaken General Ayub Khan, previously known for his hostility to Islam, asked Islamic thinkers to talk to the people and to help the country, in the name of Islam, to regroup and overcome its ordeal. In 1971, after the dismemberment of Pakistan, a wide variety of social forces and political groups—most notably, certain elements in the Pakistan armed forces, which had until then been a bastion of secularism—turned to Islam, and Islamic thinkers and forums, such as the journal *Urdu Digest*, became widely popular. This trend would only be reinforced during the Zia years.

From 1977 onwards, the state began to openly align itself with Islamists. The competition between the state and the Islamists, and the uneasy coexistence that had characterized their relations in previous years, was replaced with outright cooperation between the two. The Islamist discourse became the state's vision, and Islamist intellectuals became national intellectuals. The increasing marginalization of the Left since the mid-1970s and the use of government patronage to propagate their ideas since 1977 have made Islamist intellectuals a formidable force. Despite regime changes in Pakistan, the hold of the Islamist discourse on Pakistani politics remains unrivaled and continues to influence political debate and patterns of social change.

The role of the Islamist intellectuals in Pakistan has had a profound effect on their perception of their sociopolitical role and of the trajectory of their ideological development. The Islamists have opposed government policies, but have consciously refrained from undermining state authority or weakening the center. They have, in fact, accepted the legitimacy of the state and joined the political process. They did so as early as 1951, and, in this regard, the pattern of their historical development differs from that of the Islamists of Iran or the Arab world. Because of the Islamists' acceptance of the legitimacy of the state, again, Islamist ideology in Pakistan has been far less radical, and far more conciliatory toward the established order, than is the case elsewhere in the Muslim world—with the exception of Malaysia. In effect, Islamist ideology and patterns of social action have been clearly influenced by the Islamist intellectuals' national role.

The Discourse of Empowerment: The Islamic State

The Islamist intellectuals' importance lies—above and beyond the national role they have performed—in their discourses of power and indigenization. It is their ideas in this regard that have shaped the Islamist ideology and plan of action in the region and beyond it. The Islamist discourse of power is closely associated with Mawdudi's conception of the Islamic state. It was mentioned earlier that

Mawdudi emerged as the single most important influence on the Islamist intellectual discourse during the last years of British India. His views on the state, society, and issues of authority and power—all captured in his arguments for the Islamic state—have set the parameters for the Islamist debate on these matters, and have proved decisive for the orientation of this debate vis-à-vis the secular state and the West.

For Mawdudi, the Islamic state was the *raison d'être* of Islamic activism and the panacea for the sociopolitical problems facing Muslims.[44] The Islamic state, argued Mawdudi, was both the guarantor of the faith and the embodiment of all the ideals of the faith.[45] The Islamic state incorporated and tied up the various elements of his religious and political vision, serving as the focus of his discourse on Islam, society, politics, and the West. As an ideal and a political objective, the Islamic state represented the essence of the intellectual debates that had heretofore formed the Islamist discourse.

The Islamic state was conceived by Mawdudi, and has since been viewed by Islamists everywhere, as a model for organizing social relations and political transactions. Although he discussed this state in detail, Mawdudi was never concerned with the everyday working of the state, or with its relation to societal order. Rather, he—and through him Islamism as a whole—has been concerned with the religious and moral promise of the Islamic state and its symbolism of cultural liberation and veritable political independence from the West.

Despite its claim to novelty, the Islamic state was not conceived in a vacuum, nor is its working all that different from other conceptions of the state. In fact, the Islamic state shares more with the modern state than with the caliphates and monarchies that have existed during most of Islamic history. References to the constitutions of the Mughals, or mirrors of princes written for Muslim sultans over the ages, are conspicuously absent from Mawdudi's writings on politics. This fact is itself a product of the discursive character of the Islamic state. In seeking to bring to the fore an Islamic conception of the state in place of Western models, so as to be able to assert Islam's independence from the West, the Islamist intellectuals, led by Mawdudi, entered into a discourse with the West. This discourse served as a means of borrowing and adapting ideals and practices from the very culture and models that Islamists sought to reject.[46] The primary impetus for the Islamic state was not atavism but what

[44] For a general discussion of the Islamic state see Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Concept of an Islamic State: An Analysis of the Ideological Controversy in Pakistan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

[45] See Charles J. Adams, "The Ideology of Mawlana Mawdudi," in Donald E. Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 371–397; idem, "Mawdudi and the Islamic State," in John L. Esposito, *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford), 99–133; and Mumtaz Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 457–530.

[46] On Foucault's discussion of the other, see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1973); Arleen B. Dallery and Charles E. Scott, eds., *The Question of the Other* (Albany: State University of New York

Nietzsche and Max Scheler have called *ressentiment*—suppressed feelings of envy that have no possibility of satisfaction.[47] For the perceptions of inferiority and superiority that characterized Muslims' encounter with the West perforce focused their discourse on those attributes and institutions of the West that seemed to accord it superiority. The result was an internalization of a great many Western ideas that, regarded as value-neutral, could be used to help Islam alter the balance of power with the West.[48] The result was a peculiar mixture of Islamic idealism and pragmatic institutions and processes borrowed from the West. In the words of Muhammad Mujeeb, such an Islamic state

> has to be theo-democratic, with God as the sovereign, His law as the public and private law, with the individual citizen holding the position of His *khalifah*, and helping equally with all other citizens in the maintenance of the *shariah*. The political ruler will be elected on the ground of his faith being purest and his conduct most righteous. But any canvassing for election will disqualify him. He will be advised by a Consultative Assembly which shall have no parties. It will make laws in matters not covered by the *shariah*, and all matters in which a doubt arises as to whether they are covered by the *shariah* or not will be referred to a sub-committee of the Consultative Assembly which shall consist only of *ulama*. The judges will be appointed by the administration, but as their function will be to decide cases according to the law of God, they will not be subject to any authority after their appointment. Finally, the Islamic state cannot be delimited. It cannot have geographical frontiers. Any Muslim anywhere will be entitled to its citizenship.[49]

The role of the shariah in the affairs of the state and the view that sovereignty belongs to God give to the Islamic state its distinctive character. However, the Islamic state still displays all the requisite features of a modern state, in contradistinction to which it was conceived. In designing the Islamic state, Mawdudi was guided by the desire to demonstrate its superiority to the Western state and to make sure, furthermore, that it would be viable and operable.[50] To achieve these two goals, he designed the Islamic state while closely observing models of the modern state, and also gauged the viability of his own vision of

---

Press, 1989). For a discussion of this issue with regard to Iran, see Daryush Shayegan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une revolution religieuse* (Paris: Les Presses D'Aujourdhui, 1982).

[47] See F. Nietzsche *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1927), 617–809, and Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1961).

[48] A similar line of argument today guides Islamist responses to and uses of the concept of pluralism; see Yvonne Y. Haddad, *Islamists and the Challenge of Pluralism*, Occasional Papers, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1995), 3–6.

[49] M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), 402–403.

[50] Nasr, *Vanguard*, 119.

the state by comparing it with the ones on display in the West.[51] Consequently, the Islamic state remained connected to Western models. The nomenclature used to define the Islamic state—a democratic caliphate or a theodemocracy—betrayed Mawdudi's preoccupation with convincing his audience of the viability of the Islamic state in terms of values of judgment that were drawn from the Western experience and conception of governance, and which would in turn push the Islamic state to approximate to Western models. It is interesting to note that, where the target audience of Islamists was influenced by Marxism, the Islamic state adopted the vision of a totalitarian state organization that would cure the ills of society.[52]

In fact, the Islamic state would, over time, become preoccupied with democracy and administrative efficiency, both of which were measured in terms of values and conceptions prevalent in the West. The fact that the Islamic state never managed to evolve separately from Western conceptions of the state, but became, under the aegis of Mawdudi, a variant of the Western model, made the Islamic state—the much vaunted ideal of South Asian Islamist intellectuals—the primary vehicle for incorporation of Western ideas and values in contemporary Islamist thought. The Islamic state, far from being an atavistic notion, is very much a modern one. Its structure, ideals, mode of operation, and relation with society all part with traditional Islamic norms and increasingly approximate to Western ones. The Islamic character of the state may obfuscate the convergence of these models of state, but in reality the Islamic state has increasingly pushed Islamist intellectuals closer to Western political thought.

As a result, the Islamic state, far from being the harbinger of a separation of Islam from the West, has performed an integrative function. Still, the Islamic state has fulfilled its dissentient role as well. For it has allowed the Islamist intellectuals to float a model of state that, taken at its face value, rejects the established order and promises to resolve sociopolitical crises and put into practice indigenous values and ideals.

The Islamic state has also served the function of consolidating the notion of "Muslimness" in South Asia, which was a principal aim of the Islamists. Islamism had taken shape during the last decades of the British Raj, and was deeply concerned with the implications, for Muslims, of the Empire coming to an end. In fact, the works of Azad, Iqbal, and their immediate predecessors had been directly motivated by the dangers as well as possibilities that the growing independence movement had placed before the Muslims.

The Islamist discourse from Azad and Iqbal on was very much concerned with clarifying and crystallizing Muslim identity. Azad would later abandon this effort in favor of the composite Indian identity upheld by the Congress Party.

---

[51] Said Amir Arjomand, "Religion and Constitutionalism in Western History and in Modern Iran and Pakistan," in Said Amir Arjomand, ed., *The Political Dimensions of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 82–92.
[52] See Haddad, *Islamists*, 4.

Iqbal would continue to push for clarification of the boundaries of Islam in India. This effort to separate Muslims from Hindus, and to formulate Muslim politics separately from Indian nationalism, was at the heart of the Islamist endeavor. Later confrontations between Muhammad Ali Jinnah (d. 1948) and his Muslim League on the one hand and the various Islamist groups on the other has led many observers to view Islamists as opposed to Muslim communalism. Nothing is further from the truth. Islamism as an intellectual discourse was from the beginning directed at strengthening communalism. In many ways, it was, at its core, a communalist endeavor, at times even more than a religious one.[53]

The Islamist discourse emerged in response to problems that were intrinsic to a process of cultural and communal reassertion—first, in the debate with the colonial order, and, eventually, in response to the ineluctable ascendancy of Hinduism in India from the turn of the century onwards. The Islamist discourse addressed political concerns, but it was essentially cultural in orientation and was divorced from socioeconomic considerations. Consequently, Islamist thinkers examined the social reality of India and the problem of imperialism from the angle of culture. The focus of the Islamist polemics was such moral and ethical concerns as women's emancipation, secularism, and nationalism. The undermining of Islamic culture in India had in turn engendered its economic and political marginalization.

The Islamists drew on conflicts in the Indian social context, but gave them meaning in a more general framework—that of relations between Islam and the West. The Islamist response which the twofold problem of imperialism and Hindu ascendancy elicited from such thinkers as Mawdudi was divorced from the kind of economic determinism that is associated with the emergence and unfolding of similar intellectual and social movements elsewhere. Mawdudi and his followers worried less about economic liberation than about preserving dress, language, and customs, for these, in their eyes, were essential to safeguarding Muslim culture. Mawdudi's expositions on Islamic revolution, state, and economics all attest to the central role played in his thought by the drive for cultural authenticity—what he termed "intellectual independence,"[54] and what his long-time follower Khurshid Ahmad calls "intellectual decolonization"[55]—in the face of challenges from the colonial government and the Hindus. Mawdudi was influenced in this regard by his reading of Iqbal. He interpreted Iqbal's concept of *khudi* (selfhood) and his "reconstruction of Islamic thought" as defense and reassertion of Islam against other "isms" and

---

[53] Nasr, "Communalism and Fundamentalism," 121–39.

[54] Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, *'Asr-i Hazir men Ummat-i Muslimah ke Masa'il Awr un ka Hall* (Lahore: Idarah-i Ma'arif-i Islami, 1988), 88–95; idem, *Musalman ka Mazi, Hal, Awr Mustaqbal*, 3 vols. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1962), 1:18–42, 3:.291–94; and Abu Tariq, ed., *Mawlana Mawdudi ki Taqarir*, 2 vols. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1976), 2:.284–331.

[55] Khurshid Ahmad's talk at the University of South Florida and World and Islamic Studies Enterprise conference, Tampa, Florida, 15 May 1993.

against the Western thought that lay behind these.[56] Having identified the problems, he offered a solution that made sense by placing the problems in the context of larger issues and universal concerns.

Mawdudi began by redefining a Muslim, providing him with a new identity that would remove him from the colonial normative order and distinguish him from the emerging Indian one—an approach that had been initiated first by the Deobandis and later found reflection in such endeavors as the Tahrik-i Hijrat. The redefinition was supposed to change Muslim popular values and lead to the kind of Muslim collective action that would preempt the rise of a secular Indian identity and would strengthen Muslim communalist feelings.[57] The need for such redefinition arose from Mawdudi's understanding of the structure of the relations between Islam, Hinduism, and the West, and from his desire to give power and identity to Muslims by reversing the balance of relations between Islam on the one hand and the Hindus and the West on the other.[58] Going even further, Mawdudi defined a Muslim in terms of the latter's differences from Hindus and Westerners, but in doing so Mawdudi borrowed ideas from the intellectual repertoire of the West.

The concept of the Islamic state was the culmination of this process. The Islamic state would organize Muslims in a political order that, being by definition exclusive, would remain closed to British or Hindu overtures. The newly-defined Muslim would thus become the citizen of a political entity that would vouchsafe his cultural purity. The task of constructing and consolidating Muslim communalism was thus complete.

In sum, the Islamist discourse on the individual and the state was no doubt directed at redressing the imbalance in the relations between Islam and the West. This, in fact, would become more true with time. But at its very inception, and at it core, Islamism was only indirectly concerned with the West, its direct and immediate concern being with restoration of Muslim power and creation of a new balance in the relations between Muslims and Hindus. Western culture was seen as the source of Hindu power, and also as a source of Muslim weakness; hence, cultural authenticity was to serve as a source of strength. Later, especially when the partition of the Indian subcontinent rendered the discourse with Hinduism and Indian nationalism problematic, the component of the Islamist

---

[56] Masudul Hasan, *Sayyid Abul A'ala Maududi*, 1:130–132, and Ahmad Munir, *Mawlana Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi* (Lahore: Atashfishan Publications, 1986), 129–132.

[57] On the role of popular culture in shaping collective action in South Asia, see Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[58] Gran and Arjomand find similar intellectual processes at work in new interpretive readings of Islam that were born of the encounter with the West in Iran and Egypt and aimed at rationalizing the amorphous corpus of religious thought with a view to the needs of the times. See Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt 1760–1840* (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1979), and Said Amir Arjomand, "History, Structure, and Revolution in the Shi'ite Tradition in Contemporary Iran," *International Political Science Review* 10 (1989), 2:111–119.

discourse concerned with the West took over.[59] The works of later Islamist intellectuals, such as those of Maryam Jameelah, Khurshid Ahmad, and Israr Ahmad, are more directly concerned with the West, and follow the line of argument more generally associated today with Islamism.[60]

This trend is perhaps most clearly evident in the writings of Mawdudi and his followers on Islamic economics. Mawdudi sought to establish that Islamic economics was an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. Later advocates of Islamic economics have only emphasized this point, and have articulated their views with the clear aim of creating an economic order that would be true to the shariah and defy Western economic principles. Still, this idea had, at its inception, and above and beyond the promise that Islamic economics held for Mawdudi, a communalist function. By prohibiting usury, and especially by identifying Islamic economics so thoroughly with abolition of usury—thus contrasting Islamic economics with any other philosophical or practical ideals or mechanisms—Mawdudi strove to demarcate even more clearly the boundaries of the communalist order that his discourse sought to bring about. When he first discussed the issue of usury, money-lending in India was generally practiced by Hindus. The Islamists then believed that usury was a means of entangling Muslims in an economic order that was controlled by Hindus—that even if it was not designed to enslave Muslims, it would at the least compromise their cultural purity and serve as a gateway to cultural syncretism. Again, with the partition of India, the importance of Islamic economics as a means of reinforcing Muslim communalist boundaries declined, and the anti-Western component of the Islamist discourse on economics came to the fore and struck root.

The Islamist discourse in South Asia is, therefore, concerned with more than just the West. Its principal aim was not Third Worldist liberation but acquisition of power in a competitive multicultural and multireligious environment. It was a product of the politics of identity more than it was a facet of a struggle for independence. Over time, however, this order of priorities was reversed. The result was that the Islamist discourse evolved ultimately into a rhetoric of anti-Westernism. However, since initially the Islamist discourse was concerned with more than just the West, Islamist thinkers showed a great deal of flexibility in accommodating Western ideas and values, and freely borrowed from the West.

---

[59] It is important to note that opposition to the West had roots elsewhere in contemporary Islamic thought, most notably in the thought of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani; see Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

[60] For examples of their works, see Maryam Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1966; 1988 reprint), *Islam and Orientalism* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1971; 1987 reprint), *Islam in Theory and Practice* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1967; 1973 reprint), *Islam versus the West*, reprint (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1962; 1988 reprint), *Is Western Civilization Universal?* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969); and Israr Ahmad, *Minhaj-i Inqilab-i Nabawi* (Path of the Prophetic Revolution) (Lahore: Matbu'at-i Tanzim-i Islami, 1987).

As a result, above and beyond its anti-Westernism, the Islamist discourse has been the agent of wholesale assimilation of Western idea—and hence an agent of modernization of thought and institutions—producing hybrid visions of society and state that hark to values of the past but emulate modern social and political structures.

In the battle to make the Islamic vision of state and society acceptable to educated Muslims—those to whom the Congress Party, and, later, the Muslim League appealed—the Islamists placed a great deal of emphasis on the viability of their models. This emphasis proved to be a slippery slope, leading Islamists to revise their vision of state and society and to approximate to the vision of their main rivals. In the end, only religion—and not how the state was set up or how its administration functioned—separated the Islamist model from its secular rivals. If Islam was the only distinguishing factor, then, concluded the Islamists, Muslims would flock to the Islamic state, which had all the advantages of the Western state and possessed Islamicity to boot. In fact, it is on this point that Mawdudi's claim to the superiority of the Islamic state rests. Hence, the rivalry over Muslim support further encouraged the Islamists to borrow from the West in designing their model of state.

In sum, the discussion of the Islamic state was the fulcrum of a discourse of empowerment, first floated in the context of communal conflict, and later adapted to challenge the secular state in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Above and beyond the promise of Islamicity and efficiency it held, the Islamic state served as a vehicle for challenging the established relations of power.

The Discourse of Indigenization: Islamization of Knowledge

The Islamist discourse in South Asia has undeniably been a formative influence on Islamist ideological formulations across the Muslim world. However, besides helping to shape conceptions of revival and reform of Islam, and of the Islamic state far and wide, South Asian Islamists have been particularly instrumental in giving shape to a discourse on knowledge with the West—the enterprise known today as Islamization of knowledge.

The roots of the idea of "Islamization of knowledge" can be traced to diverse intellectual trends across the Muslim world. The Islamist discourse had no doubt been concerned with this issue for a long time, although it did not conceive it in terms in which it is familiar today. Sayyid Qutb had dealt with the question of knowledge in his works,[61] and, more important for our purposes, Mawdudi's works on Islamic economics were among the very first attempts to Islamize a body of knowledge. Mawdudi introduced the concept of Islamic economics not

---

[61] Ahmad S. Moussalli, "Sayyid Qutb's View of Knowledge," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 7 (1990), 3:315–333. and idem, "Two Models of Islamization of Knowledge: Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Turabi," paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, D.C., December 1995.

as a form of economic policy-making that is conscious of Islam's ethical and legal teachings, but as a new science of economics, one that is free from Western philosophical influence—a new discipline based on radically different assumptions and purporting to equally different outcomes.[62]

Some of Mawdudi's disciples—Maryam Jameelah in particular—have been instrumental in elaborating this aspect of his thought. Jameelah's works were concerned with freeing Muslims from the hold of Western thought. Her direct concern was not political but intellectual liberation. Although she never went so far as to term her approach Islamization of knowledge, there is little doubt that, by questioning the universality of Western thought and the relevance of that thought for Muslim life, she paved the way for the kind of discussion and deliberation that contributed to the rise of the discourse of Islamization of knowledge.[63]

Some non-Islamist attempts made outside South Asia were also influential in this regard. The works of the Iranian thinker S. H. Nasr and other members of the Perennialist School have for long called for a culturally authentic interpretation and usage of the sciences.[64] The Perennialist position has a following in South Asia, and the journals *Riwayat* (Tradition) of Lahore and *Traditional Studies* of Karachi that espouse its views have become influential in debates in Islamic circles. Although the Perennialists have been interested in discovering the essence of Islam's philosophy of knowledge, first, by gaining an understanding of the history of science among Muslims in earlier centuries as well as of Islam's esoteric teachings, and, second, by applying that understanding to modern sciences, their vision did contribute to the discourse on Islamization of knowledge.

The ideas of the Malaysian scholar of Islam, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, who can be credited with coining the term "Islamization of knowledge" at a conference on Islamic education in Jeddah in 1978,[65] have also been important in this connection. This term, however, did not gain currency until 1982, when a conference dedicated to discussing its various attributes was held in Islamabad.

[62] For Mawdudi's views on economics see Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 103–106; for general discussions of Islamic economics, see Timur Kuran, "The Economic Impact of Islamic Fundamentalism," in Martin Marty and R. Scott Appelby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 302–341, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Islamic Economics: Novel Perspectives on Change," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25 (1989), 4:516–530.

[63] See, in particular, her *Islam and Modernism*, *Islam and Orientalism*, *Islam versus the West*, and *Is Western Civilization Universal?*.

[64] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); idem, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longman, 1975); idem, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); and Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research, 1992). For a general discussion of the Perennial School, see Carl Ernst, "Traditionalism, the Perennial Philosophy and Islamic Studies," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 28 (December 1994), 2:176–180.

[65] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism,* 2nd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), xii.

Al-Attas has argued for reviving the tradition of Islamic intellectual inquiry in order to free social and scientific thinking in the Muslim world from Western secularism.

All the above-noted attempts sought to reconstruct the tradition of Islamic learning, and to use Islam's philosophical and mystical perspectives in encountering modern thought. The ideas of the thinkers in question also had, to many readers of the works of those thinkers, a discursive and political dimension since those ideas were seen as aiming at indigenization of the sciences.

The Islamist approach to this issue is closely associated with the works of the Palestinian-American scholar of Islam, Isma'il R. al-Faruqi (d. 1986), and with the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), which al-Faruqi founded in Herndon, Virginia, in 1981.[66] Al-Faruqi's approach was influenced by Mawdudi, especially by the latter's methodology in outlining Islamic economics. For al-Faruqi, Islamization was concerned less with philosophical and epistemological issues than with the practical application of Islam's ethical norms and the shariah's injunctions in the domains of various scientific disciplines.[67] Since its formation, the IIIT has sought to expand the scope of the Islamization of knowledge enterprise, publishing, in this connection, works of numerous thinkers—notably, the work of the Pakistani scholar Akbar S. Ahmed, who was encouraged by al-Faruqi to "Islamize" anthropology.[68] The IIIT has also been instrumental in forming the Association of Muslim Social Scientists and in sponsoring the publication of the *American Journal of the Islamic Social Sciences.* These forums have been important to the Islamization of knowledge debate in the social sciences, and have served as a means both of instituting a methodology for this approach and of expanding the purview of its application.

Most important, al-Faruqi managed to popularize the idea of Islamization of knowledge as a trope. Islamization of knowledge became incorporated in the Islamist political discourse as a form of "intellectual decolonization" and as a means of challenging the West at a more fundamental level.[69] Al-Faruqi's

---

[66] Ismail al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982), and John L. Esposito, "Ismail R. Al-Faruqi: Muslim Scholar-Activist," in Yvonne Y. Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 65–79. See also Akbar S. Ahmed, "Education: Islamization of Knowledge," in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1:425–428.

[67] See, for instance, the institute's publication, *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989).

[68] Akbar S. Ahmed, *Toward Islamic Anthropology: Definition, Dogma, and Directions* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1986).

[69] On this trend in the Third World as a whole, see A. Abdel-Malek and A. N. Pandeya, eds., *Intellectual Creativity in Endogenous Culture* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1981); Y. Atal, "The Call for Indigenization," *International Social Science Journal* 33 (1981), 1:189–97; and Jan Loubser, "The Need for the Indigenisation of the Social Sciences," *International Sociology* 3, (1988), 2:179–187.

approach fits in well with the general thrust of Islamism in that both emphasize the exoteric dimensions of the faith and equate implementation of the teachings of the shariah with Islamization as a whole.[70] The confluence of al-Faruqi's and the Islamists' approaches has manifested itself in the burgeoning field of Islamic economics.

The idea that was first floated by Mawdudi became entrenched in Islamist circles, and, after it had been championed by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, it became a growth industry across the Muslim world. Islamists, and also governments that decided to accommodate their demands, sought to establish interest-free banking, and research institutes of various sorts, from the Institut Kefahiman Islam Malaysia (Institute of Islamic Understanding of Malaysia, IKIM) in Kuala Lumpur to the International Center for Research in Islamic Economics of King Abdu'l-Aziz University in Jeddah to the IIIT, began work on creating feasible Islamic economic theories, mechanisms, and institutions. Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was encouraged by Saudi Arabia to take Islamic economics seriously.[71] While its viability is open to question,[72] Islamic economics has become an important component of the Islamist ideology and of the Islamic discourse with the West. Islamists view it as a form of economics that is true to Islam's teachings, is ethical, and is more efficient than capitalism and socialism. More important, they claim that it is a completely new form of economics.[73] Critics have cut these claims down to size, referring to Islamic economics as an Islamically-conscious variation of Keynesian and neo-classical economic theories.[74] Still, Islamic economics serves Islamist intellectuals by allowing them to claim to be at once modern and Islamic, and also to claim independence from and superiority to the West in the one area of knowledge that governs material welfare, societal order, and, ultimately, political organization.

---

[70] For critiques of Islamization of knowledge, see Fazlur Rahman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Response," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Science* 5 (1988), 1:.3–11; S. Farid Alatas, "The Sacralization of the Social Sciences: A Critique of an Emerging Theme in Academic Discourse," forthcoming in *Archives de Science Sociales des Religions*; Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Critical Overview," Occasional Papers, No. 17 (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992); and Abdu'l-Karim Sorush, "Ma'na va-Mabna-i Sekularism" (Meaning and Basis of Secularism), *Kiyan* 26 (August-September 1995), 4–13.

[71] In the 1970s, the IMF commissioned studies of Islamic economics as a facet of local economic practices, but in the 1980s, it began more direct work on the subject under the supervision of Muhsin Khan of Pakistan and Abbas Mirakhor of Iran; see, for instance, their "The Framework and Practice of Islamic Banking," *Finance and Development* 23 (1986), 3:32–38.

[72] See Timur Kuran, "Behavioral Norms in the Islamic Doctrine of Economics: A Critique," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 4 (1983), 4:353–379, and idem, "The Economic System in Contemporary Islamic Thought," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18 (1986), 2:135–164.

[73] Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Towards a Philosophy of Islamic Economics," *Muslim World* 77 (1987), 3–4:175–196.

[74] Sohrab Behdad, "Islamic Economics: A Utopian-Scholastic-Neoclassical-Keynesian Synthesis! A Review Essay," *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology* 9 (1992), 221–232.

This line of thinking is particularly appealing to those educated Muslims who work in modern economic sectors but are still attached to vestiges of traditional Islamic sociocultural order, as well as to those whom Olivier Roy calls the "lumpenintellegentsia"—the semi-educated products of the failing educational system of many Muslim countries.[75]

It is, therefore, not surprising that various thinkers have sought to extend the logic and methodology of Islamic economics to other disciplines—most notably, to the natural sciences and the social sciences. Over the last decade, much has been written on Islamic science and social sciences. The *MAAS [Muslim Association for the Advancement of Science] Journal of Islamic Science* of Aligarh (India) and the *Ilm ve-Sanat* of Istanbul have become the principal forums for discussions of Islamic science, and a similar position is enjoyed by the *Journal of Islamic Banking and Finance* and the *Journal of Research in Islamic Economics* of Saudi Arabia in the area of Islamic economics, and by the *American Journal of the Islamic Social Sciences* of the United States and the *Islamic Quarterly* of England in the field of social sciences. Muslim governments have shown great interest in Islamic science and social sciences, just as they had shown great interest in Islamic economics—mainly in order to assume an air of Islamicity. In 1995, for instance, the government of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan convened an international conference on Islamic science in Islamabad. The discussion on Islamic science is, however, not completely dominated by Islamists, but is also deeply influenced by Perennialists.

The principal protagonists here are the so-called Ijmalis, led by two European Muslims of Pakistani descent, Ziauddin Sardar and Parvez Manzoor. The Ijmalis do not believe in a philosophy of Islamic science, but wish simply to apply the injunctions of the shariah where and when possible.[76] They, in essence, follow Mawdudi's lead; their approach is best captured by Mawdudi's comment: "even a bulldozer or a computer would be 'Islamic' if used in the path of God."[77] The Ijmalis, in effect, place Islamization of knowledge within the framework of Western thought, and view it as a "sub-branch" of the latter, only more ethical.

Conversely, the Perennialists place emphasis on the philosophy of Islamic science, which, according to them, is a worldview that should condition approaches to scientific inquiry before any discussion of application of the shariah can take place.[78] Debates between the two groups have at times been

---

[75] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 89–106.

[76] See, in this regard, Ziauddin Sardar, *Science, Technology and Development in the Muslim World* (London: Croom Helm, 1977); idem, *Explorations in Islamic Science* (London: Mansell, 1989); and idem, ed., *How We Know: Ilm and the Revival of Knowledge* (London: Grey Seal, 1991).

[77] Cited in Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 52.

[78] For a general treatment of this approach, see S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

quite heated, and their respective positions have been adopted by Islamist and traditional thinkers in their own polemics.

A more recent approach that has gained a following in Islamist circles is "Bucailleism." Its main outline can be found in the works of Maurice Bucaille, a French surgeon who converted to Islam, and his followers—most notably, the South African propagandist, Ahmad Deedat. They have argued for a literal marriage of Islam to science, asserting that many discoveries and beliefs of modern science are prefigured in the text of the Qur'an.[79] They accordingly argue that the validity of the Islamic message is proved by modern science, and that the inherent sanctity of modern science is vouchsafed by the Qur'an. The issue of the possibility of a Muslim society's engagement with, and application of, science while it remains true and loyal to its religion thus becomes moot. But while this approach holds great attraction for Muslims, it has not amounted to anything more than a crude apologetic.

Not only have South Asian Islamists played a central role in the articulation and spread of Islamization of knowledge, they have also been most visibly active in continuing this enterprise.[80] Islamization of knowledge is more important to South Asian Islamism—and, through them, to Southeast Asian Islam—than it is to Islamism in Iran or the Arab world. The staff of many of the research institutes that work on the various issues involved in Islamization of knowledge, some of the main publishing houses, and a good number of the main advocates and thinkers are South Asian. For instance, the most prominent advocates of Islamic economics working in Saudi Arabia, Nejatullah Siddiqui and Umar Chapra, are South Asian. There are more Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi "Islamic economists" than from any other nationality in the Muslim world. Islamization of knowledge continues to be closely tied to South Asia, and constitutes the most active dimension of Islamist intellectual actively there. Finally, the recent phenomenon of metropolitan Islamist intellectuals, who operate in a transnational capacity from the West—and are deeply involved in the discussion on Islamization of knowledge—are South Asian, such as Ziauddin Sardar and Parvez Manzoor.

The impact of South Asians is also pronounced in the educational institutions that have emerged to institutionalize Islamization of knowledge. In recent years, a number of attempts have been made to revive traditional Islamic education. The most successful to date is the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Kuala Lumpur, which was founded by Naquib al-Attas in 1987. Generally, Muslims have not sought to revive traditional education, but have tried to establish institutions of higher learning

---

[79] Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science: The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (Paris: Seghers, 1986).

[80] See, for instance, Tomas Gerholm, "Two Muslim Intellectuals in the Postmodern West: Akbar Ahmed and Ziauddin Sardar," in Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan, eds., *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 190–212.

that, in effect, seek to put Islamization of knowledge into practice by training the next generation of Muslim thinkers in "Islamized" modern subjects. A number of universities in Saudi Arabia, such as Medina University and King Abdu'l-Aziz University of Jeddah work along these lines, at least in some departments. The most notable cases are, however, the International Islamic Universities of Islamabad and Kuala Lumpur.[81] Both of these institutions have been established with Saudi Arabian support, but they are largely staffed with South Asians.

These institutions of higher learning are designed to operationalize Islamization of knowledge. Their curricula emphasize Arabic and Islamic studies, but differ from the curricula of traditional seminaries in that they are presented in a modern format and also stress the need to place Islamist interpretations on the religious sources. These universities have departments such as those of *aqa'id* (belief system) in place of philosophy and theology, and teach the works of Mawdudi or Sayyid Qutb in place of the classics of law, philosophy, and theology. The only exception is the works of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), whom Islamists have claimed as the intellectual forebear of their movement. More important, those universities have departments that teach modern disciplines such as political science, sociology, or economics all the way up to the doctoral level. These disciplines are taught using exclusively the methodology and views that have been elaborated by advocates of Islamization of knowledge.

Students come to these universities from around the Muslim world, and many return to teach at universities or join the bureaucracies in their own countries. They take with them the vision of Islamization of knowledge, which they implement and disseminate further. As such, Islamization of knowledge has become more than just a discursive tool; it has become the mode in which Islamism has spread in the intellectual, academic, and cultural domains to shape the vision of society. In this regard, too, no doubt, it will help the political dimension of Islamism as it changes, to its advantage, the cultural and social context in which Islamism operates.

At a different level, Islamization of knowledge is indicative of the deepening of the modernizing and assimilative character of Islamism; it purports to atavism but seeks to operate in a modern context and, the claims to the contrary notwithstanding, to serve as an ethical variant of modernity. Taken at its face value, Islamization of knowledge appears to be a skewed outlook on modern thought—one that would surely confound the Muslim encounter with modernity. On closer examination, however, it becomes clear that the Islamist approach serves as a gateway for incorporating the methodology and outlook of modern

[81] On these universities, see Anne Sophie Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia* (Lund: Lund University, 1994); see also Jamal Malik, "International Islamic University, Islamabad," and M. Kamal Hassan, "International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur," in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). There also exists now an International Islamic University in Uganda, but it is not yet fully operational.

thought in Islamic thought. One of the main functions of Islamization of knowledge has been to allow the Islamist thinker to operate in the modern intellectual milieu while retaining his claim to Islamicity. It has created a space for intellectual activity that is clearly divorced from traditional institutions of learning in respect of the subjects and ideas it contends with, as well as respect of in the methodology and intellectual assumptions on which its operation is based. The initial results of this approach are perforce incongruous, but the inner logic of the whole enterprise will push for a rationalization of the hybrid vision, which, in turn, will result in a clarification of the aims and objectives of the enterprise.

Studies in Contemporary Islam 1 (1999), 2:44–56

Universal Human Rights vs. Muslim Personal Law: The Shahbano Begum Case in India

Theodore P. Wright, Jr.[*]

In recent decades, the West, led by the United States, has sought to impose its values upon the cultures and peoples of the erstwhile "Third World" through the United Nations' longstanding but long unenforced Universal Code of Human Rights.[1] If "rights" mean anything to a positivist social scientist, they are simply claims made by subjects upon a sovereign state which to some extent affect the behavior of both the claimant and the political authorities because of commonly held values.[2] This foundation for reciprocally acknowledged obligations is apt to be attenuated or lacking across state and, particularly, across cultural boundaries.[3] When this intercultural consensus is lacking, there remains only power expressed in international conflict for the enforcement of such claims. This is so even if, ostensibly, the Western codes or declarations of "rights" have been accepted by non-Western political elites, either out of expediency or because those elites have been alienated from their own cultures during centuries of colonial rule and Western education.

The resulting "clash of civilizations," to use Samuel Huntington's phrase,[4] has been especially acute for Islamic peoples because of their highly gender-differentiated norms of law and behavior. What is more, it comes in an era when the feminist and postmodernist revolutions in the West have undermined the

---

[*] Theodore P. Wright, Jr., is Professor Emeritus, Department of Political Science, Graduate School of Public Affairs, State University of New York at Albany.

[1] This is a revised version of a paper, "The Shahbano Begum Case: Women's Rights vs. Muslim Personal Law in India," which was delivered at the conference on "Human Rights in Developing Countries: Problems and Prospects" held at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1987; it was printed as *Special Studies*, No. 155, of the university's Council on International Studies and Programs, Claude Welch, ed., in 1989.

[2] John F. McCamant, "Social Science and Human Rights," *International Organization* 35 (1981), 3:531–552.

[3] Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Asian Values vs. Post-Modernity: The Media and Human Rights in South Asia," paper delivered at the 14th European Conference on Modern South Asia, Prague, 9–14 September 1998.

[4] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

modern nuclear family and contributed to the social decay of Western societies, as measured by sharp rises in adultery, divorce rates, teenage pregnancy, single parenthood, drug abuse, rape, other violent crime, suicide, and insanity. No satisfactory substitute for the family has been found for the socialization of the young. This perceived failure of modernization is one of the main causes of the Islamic revival among young, educated Muslims in the past generation.[5] It is futile, therefore, for Islamic modernists like Abdullahi Ahmed el Naiem of the Sudan or Asghar Ali Engineer of India[6] to attempt by tortuous reinterpretations of the Qur'an to make Islam consistent with a modern, secular ideal that is no longer functioning adequately even in its place of origin. The appropriate task for Western as well as Islamic scholars now is to ask which Islamic practices we ought to consider adopting because they have stood the test of time better than the residue of our own "Judaeo-Christian" heritage.[7] Already, Islam has proved beneficial for some of the most needy members of the Black minority in the United States.[8]

It is in this context that the present author approaches the controversy over preservation of that remnant of the Shariat (Arabic: *Shari'ah*) called the Muslim Personal Law in India, where Muslims are in a minority. This has been one of the five chief issues agitated by some, but not all, of the Muslim political elite since the country's independence in 1947.[9] The others are prevention of communal riots, preservation of their Urdu language in Arabic script, due representation in the civil service and police, and preservation of the Muslim character of their chief institution of higher education, the Aligarh Muslim University. It is often charged by opponents that these demands are in the interest only of the elite themselves, and that they obscure the "real" (i.e., economic) interests of the "Muslim masses."[10] But the ease with which ordinary Muslims can be mobilized over them in India indicates that they are central to the group identity of the Muslim minority.

Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, one of the "Directive Principles,"

---

[5] R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*, Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1985, 49–50, 106–108.

[6] Abdullahi Ahmed el Naiem, "A Modem Approach to Human Rights in Islam: Foundations and Implications for Africa," in Welch, 75–89; Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Origin and Development of Islam*, Bombay: Orient Longman, 1980, and his "On Developing Liberation Theology in Islam," in Asghar Ali Engineer, ed., *Islam and Revolution*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1984, 13–41.

[7] A good example is Grace Clark's "Pakistan's Zakat and Ushr as a Welfare System" in *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan: The Application of Islamic Laws in a Modem State*, Anita M. Weiss, ed., Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986, 79–95.

[8] Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Inadvertent Modernization of Indian Muslims by Revivalists," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 1 (1979), 1:80–89.

[9] For a list of issues, see Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Effectiveness of Muslim Representation in India," in Donald E. Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, 105–108.

[10] E.g., Irfan Engineer, "Leadership Exploiting Masses," from *The Daily*, 25 December 1985, reproduced in Asghar Ali Engineer, ed., *The Shah Bano Controversy*, London: Sangam Books, 1987, 70–76.

commits the country eventually to a uniform civil code covering the area of family relations (marriage, divorce, and inheritance). In other branches of the law, such as procedural, criminal, and commercial law, the British colonial rulers had already supplanted separate religious codes. Even in the area of personal law, they had abolished the Qazi courts, replacing them with their own system.[11] Orthodox Muslims claim that the constitutional mandate for a uniform civil code contradicts the freedom of religion clauses in the same document since, in Islam, unlike in other religions, the Shariat is an inseparable part of the faith.[12] The same might be argued for Judaism. In fact, it is usually overlooked that the otherwise very modern state of Israel maintains for this reason the separate personal laws and courts of each faith which it inherited from the Ottoman millet system and the British mandate.[13] Proponents of a uniform civil code in India taunt the defenders of Muslim Personal Law with the charge that it is "paving the way for Islamic criminal laws,''[14] which are so abhorrent to Amnesty International and other liberals worldwide. In fact, Sulaiman Sait, President of the Muslim League, in response to criticism of sanctions by a jamaat (Muslim community council) in Kerala, asked for just that.[15] The implications for the sovereignty of the Indian state were, however, too grave for the North Indian Muslim leadership to take up the proposal.

Despite the Directive Principles of the constitution, Muslim bloc votes in marginal constituencies have been important enough in India's democratic system, especially for the once dominant Congress Party,[16] to allow the constitutional mandate for a uniform civil code to remain a dead letter for thirty-five years. The Hindu majority, on the other hand, had its personal laws "modernized" by the Hindu Code Bill soon after the constitution went into

[11] For the history of this process, see Gregory Kozlowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. See also Syed Khurshid, "Islamization of 'Muhammadan Law' in India," *Radiance*, 29 September-5 October 1985, 6–7.
[12] Ghulam A. Khan and Mohammad Shabbir, "Is Muslim Personal Law an Integral Part of Shariah?" *Radiance*, 24–30 November 1985, 3.
[13] Martin Edelman, "The Political Significance of the Israeli Religious Court Systems: A Comparative Assessment," paper prepared for delivery to the Research Committee for Comparative Judicial Studies at the XIIIth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Paris, 15–20 July 1985.
[14] Ashok Rudra, "Paving the Way for Islamic Criminal Laws," *Economic and Political Weekly of India* 21 (10 May 1986), 19:821.
[15] "Stoning is Justified," interview of Sulaiman Sait, M.P., by Venu Menon, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 14 July 1985. This incident involved the alleged adultery of Sulekha Beevi at a time when her husband was working in the Gulf. See "Crime and Punishment," *India Today*, 15 July 1985, 32–33. The local Jamaat condemned her to having her head shaved. Also, "Muslim Youth Body for the Setting up of Sharia Courts," *Radiance*, 20–26 October 1985, 1. An even more drastic attack on the Muslim Personal Law in the courts was launched by Shehanaz Sheikh and supported by Indira Jaising of the Lawyers Collective and the Forum Against Oppression of Women. See Savia Viegas, "A Lone Woman's Fight," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 29 April 1984.
[16] For instance, Mrs. Indira Gandhi's promise to the Shahi Imam, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, before the 1980 election, "not to interfere in Muslim Personal Law." Myron Weiner, *India at the Polls*, 1980, Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1980, 118.

effect. This has occasioned considerable envy and charges of favoritism to the minority on the part of conservative Hindus. It was because of this deadlock that a decision by the Supreme Court of India in May 1985[17] awarding "maintenance" (alimony) to Shahbano Begum, a seventy-year-old Muslim woman divorced from her former husband, Ahmed Khan, under Section 125 of the Criminal Code, brought the issue back to the front rank of interreligious controversies for the first time in a decade.[18]

The 1970s had seen a change of strategy by Muslim reformists and their Hindu allies in India, from a focus on the legislative to the judicial branch. This was parallel to, if not inspired by, a similar shift that was made by liberal American civil rights activists and that had been heralded by Professor Theodore Lowi's book, "The End of Liberalism."[19] In both countries, it was a tacit admission on the part of an elite minority that majority opinion as reflected in democratic elections did not favor the proposed changes. In both countries, civil rights lawyers and judicial activists on the bench, frustrated by legislative deadlock or compromises produced by pluralistic politics, boldly employed a "loose construction" of the respective constitutions in order to usurp the function of popularly elected bodies, aiming to break a perceived logjam of reform measures in the interest of a disproportionately "backward" community, Black in the United States and Muslim in India. Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer of India, author of one of the earlier invasions of Shariat, (Bai Tahira v. Ali Hussain Fissalli Chothia, AIR 1979 S.C. 362) wrote, "Let us tackle the job of modernizing the Islamic Law . . . silent but substantial reforms through judicial activism is an unexploited field in India largely because (the judges) are not militantly committed to the secular mission of the Constitution . . . uninhibited judicial adventure in open areas of Muslim law can be fruitful."[20]

Additional momentum for this trend was supplied by Indian feminist groups that began actively to seek out illiterate and supposedly indigent Muslim divorcees like Shahbano to induce them to file suits for maintenance (for a period beyond the three *iddat*-menstrual cycles mandated in Muslim law) under

---

[17] Mohammed Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, AIR 1985 S.C. 945. My thanks to Owen Crowley for procuring a copy of the decision for me; it is now available in Engineer, *The Shah Bano Controversy*, 23–34.

[18] In the 1973 revision of the Criminal Procedure Code, orthodox Muslims had vehemently opposed the right of the courts to grant maintenance to divorced Muslim women and thought they had won its excision. Jaganmohan Reddy, "Personal Law and Muslim Women's Rights: The Shah Bano Verdict and Muslim Law," *Secular Democracy*, May 1986, 19. A.G. Noorani refuted the bypassing of this agreement through reference to Section 127 in "P.M. and Shah Bano's Case," *Indian Express*, 27 December 1985.

[19] Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, New York: Norton, 1969. Barry Rubin in another paper in this volume, "The Civil Liberties Movement in India," shows that the movement as well as judicial activism in India stemmed from the semi-authoritarian experience of the Emergency in 1975–1977.

[20] Syed Khurshid, "Islamization of 'Muhammadan Law' in India," 4, citing Justice V. R. K. Iyer, "Reform of the Muslim Personal Law," in Tahir Mahmood, ed., *Islamic Law in Modern India* (Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1972) 17.

Section 125 of the Indian Criminal Code ("against vagrancy") rather than through the more lengthy procedures of civil law, which route, it was thought, was in any case blocked by the failure to adopt a uniform civil code. Presumably, as in the United States, such reformist organizations met the legal costs of the suits. There has long been a tiny but articulate number of elite "progressive" Muslim men and women, chiefly located in Bombay and Pune, who have organized in groups like the Muslim Satyashodak Mandal of the late Hamid Dalwai[21] in order to agitate for the "rights" of such Muslim women, no matter that actual incidence of divorce, as of polygamy, among Indian Muslims is not much different from that among Hindus and minuscule compared to ours in the United States.[22] Since an even greater percentage of Muslim women than of Hindu are illiterate and live in seclusion (*pardah*),[23] inevitably Hindus like the late Professor A. B. Shah of the Indian Secular Society[24] have played a prominent role in this movement, thereby giving it unjustifiably a "communal" (i.e., anti-Muslim) coloration and pushing many modernist Muslims, like Syed Shahabuddin,[25] into the arms of the orthodox ulema and revivalist-fundamentalists on this issue.[26]

Clearly, the strategy of the impatient reformists, as well as of Hindu

---

[21] For its founding in 1970, see my "The Muslim Personal Law Issue in India: An Outsider's View," *Indian Journal of Politics*, 4 (1970), 1–2:69–77. Under Professor Shah's auspices, Dalwai published *Muslim Politics in India*, Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1968. The Tyabji clan of Bombay has continued to play an important role in the movement for reform of Muslim Personal Law: e.g., Danial Latifi argued Shahbano's case in the Supreme Court; among the 114 Muslim intellectuals who announced their opposition to the government bill exempting Muslims from Section 125 of the Criminal Code in March 1986, nine are members of this clan: the late Salim Ali, ornithologist and M.P., Professor Irfan Habib of Aligarh and his wife, Sayera Habib, Badruddin Tyabji, retired Ambassador and Vice Chancellor of Aligarh, his sister, Kamila Tyabji, barrister, and his son, Hindal Tyabji, IAS, Danial Latifi, advocate, Laila Tyabji, and Salima Tyabji, editor. See Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Muslim Kinship and Modernization: The Tyabji Clan of Bombay," in Imtiaz Ahmad, ed., *Family Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1976, 217–238.

[22] Shibani Roy in *Status of Muslim Women in North India*, Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1979, 90, found only .99 percent frequency of divorce in her sample of 300 Muslim families in Delhi and Lucknow. On polygamy, a sample survey by the Census of India in 1961 showed a slightly higher rate (5.8 percent) among Hindus than among Muslims (5.7 percent). Extracts from the *1974 Report of the National Commission on Women*, cited in "Polygamy in India: A Comparative Study" in *Muslim India* 3 (1985), 29:209–210.

[23] K. S. Durrany claims that literacy among Muslim women in India is only seven percent. *Organiser*, 23 March 1986.

[24] A. B. Shah, "The Challenge from Muslim Obscurantism," in his *Challenges to Secularism*, Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1968.

[25] Syed Shahabuddin is coauthor with Theodore P. Wright, Jr., of "India: Muslim Minority Politics and Society," in John L. Esposito, ed., *Islam in Asia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 152–176.

[26] I am using here the four categories into which Hamilton Gibb divided Muslims, according to their reaction to the European challenge to Islam: Orthodox, Fundamentalist, Modernist, and Secularist. Practically none of the writers on the Shahbano Begum case make these distinctions, lumping, instead, all Muslims into two categories, "fundamentalists" and "progressives." For another modernist attack on the Shahbano decision, see Salman Khurshid, *At Home in India*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1986, Chapters 10–13.

nationalists[27]—who have more sinister motives—is to split the Muslim community down the middle on the basis of gender following the Soviet model employed in Central Asia.[28] This pits the rights of the religious minority as a whole against the "rights" of its female half. Whatever may be said for improving the position of women in a majority or dominant community, it is a dubious proposition that benefiting the females of a minority community at the expense of its males will enhance the welfare of the whole minority. A minority rises or falls as a unit, not by gender. Black women in the United States have been aware of this throughout the Civil Rights Movement. A black professional woman commented several years ago, "Black women have viewed the women's movement as a diversion from the movement against racism and we have thought some of those feminist issues are really 'powder puff' issues."[29] In India, Hindu-Muslim communal relations have become so polarized over many issues, not just Muslim Personal Law, with the tide of deadly riots rising since the 1960s, that the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board and the Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat[30] can mobilize visibly larger counter-demonstrations of *burqa*-clad orthodox women than the feminists and their allies can rally.[31] Minorities tend to coalesce under external pressure, and India is no exception[32]— hence the otherwise surprising cases of prominent Muslim women

[27] Some of the more provocative titles of articles in *Organiser*, the RSS mouthpiece, are: "Anti-national Antics of Shahabuddin and His Muslim League Friends" (2 June 1985); "Muslim Leaders' Jehad Against Supreme Court" (16 June 1985); "Islam in Danger Cry Again: Muslim Leaders Against the Constitution" (28 July 1985); and "Muslim Women's Struggle Against Oppression" (13 October 1985).

[28] Gregory Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. The *Organiser* reported gleefully (30 May 1985): "Muslim Scholar Warns of Revolutionary Stirrings among Muslim Women." For the Communist role in the effort to split Indian Muslims by gender, see Gautam Navlakha, "Muslim Maintenance Bill: A Postcript," *Economic and Political Weekly of India* 21 (20–27 September 1986), 39–40:1691–1692.

[29] Knickerbocker News, 30 April 1981.

[30] Z. Masood Quraishi reported prematurely the demise of the latter organization in "The Rise and Decline of the Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat," *Political Science Review* X (July 1971), 3–4:1–16. The Muslim Personal Law Board was founded in the late 1960s to coordinate integration of the four schools of Muslim (Sunni) law in specific matters, but I am not aware that they have done so. Rather, it has been a coordinating body for resistance to all change in Muslim Personal Law, particularly to a common civil code. Rafiq Zakaria, "Muslim Personal Law," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 17 September 1977.

[31] Vimal Balasubrahmanyam, "Secular Groups and Maintenance Verdict," *Mainstream*, 7 September 1985, 30–34, reported such demonstrations in Hyderabad and Bombay. Also, the *Organiser's* pessimistic interview with Dalwai's widow, Mehrunnisa Begum (26 August 1985). *Radiance*, 1–7 and 22–28 September and 10 November 1985. The pro-change women did not mobilize their demonstrations until the Spring of 1986, when it was too late to change the government's course. For photos, see Sakina Haider, "Muslim Women's Bill: A Return to the Dark Ages," *Link*, 16 March 1986, 4–7; "Constitution Does not Recognise Any Personal Law, Says Professor Baxi," *Organiser*, 30 March 1986; "Muslim Women Bill: The Gathering Storm," *India Today*, 31 March 1986, 14–16; "'Women in Chains' Protest against the Black Bill," *Organiser*, 18 May 1986, 13.

[32] Richard A. Styskal, "Strategies of Influence of Minority Group Members under Conditions of

like Najma Heptullah and Mohsina Kidwai, who took the anti-feminist side as the debate became hotter.[33] Public opinion surveys may show that "75% of Muslims favour [the] Shabano case judgment,"[34] but when the chips are down, the community rises above gender.

In the meantime, the Hindu "backlash" against Muslim "intransigency" over such issues as the 1981 conversion of Untouchables to Islam, the Muslim resistance to family planning, and the alleged Muslim sympathy for Pakistan,[35] have in turn fostered the "siege mentality" and cohesion of almost all Muslims regardless of age or class, or even gender.[36] The list of 118 Muslim intellectuals published in the socialist journal, *Mainstream*,[37] describing them as opposed to the idea of exempting Muslims from Section 125 of the Criminal Code, consists mostly of the hardcore of secularists and Marxist men and women "with only Muslim names," as their critics would say. In this tense situation, it is fruitless for the reformists to point out the acceptance of changes in the personal law in Muslim majority countries like Egypt and Tunisia, when the Muslim minority in India sees even the smallest alteration as only the first step toward the extinction of its cultural identity through forced assimilation into a largely Hindu-based Indian nation.[38] It is a clear case of a head-on clash between ethnically pluralist

---

Stress: Chinese Businessmen in Manila," presented at the APSA annual meeting, 1969.

[33] Ainslie Embree in a speech at Harvard University (21 February 1987) at a conference on "Muslims as Minorities" charged that most non-Communist Muslim intellectuals and politicians, while privately opposed to the bill exempting Muslims from Section 125 of the Criminal Code, publicly supported it out of respect for Congress party discipline, or cowardice in not wishing to oppose their community.

[34] Report of a sample survey conducted at Sri Venkateswara University in Andhra Pradesh. *Organiser*, 1 June 1986. The section on "surveys" in Engineer, *The Shah Bano Controversey*, 141–163, is impressionistic, not systematic, and is composed mostly of interviews of a few elite Muslims. Similarly, Dr. Tahir Mahmood asserted in an interview with Bombay's *Sunday Observer*, reprinted in *Radiance*, 30 March-5 April 1986, 7, that if the government put the proposed maintenance bill to a referendum, it would be approved by 95 percent of Muslims.

[35] Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Movement to Convert Harijans to Islam in South India," *Muslim World*, 72 (1982), 3–4:239–245; "Muslim Women's Bill Makes Nonsense of Family Planning," Letter to the editor, *Organiser*, 15 June 1986, 12. For the fear of ethnic reversal this creates in Hindus, see my "Ethnic Numbers Game in India: Hindu-Muslim Conflicts over Conversion, Family Planning, Migration and the Census," in William McCready, ed., *Culture, Ethnicity and Identity*, Lanham: Academic Press of America, 1983, 405–427; *Organiser* also repeatedly reports (e.g., 5) the waving of Pakistan's flag by Indian Muslim fans at hockey matches between India and Pakistan. Whether true or not, these rumors are believed by enough Hindus to lead to the kind of reaction exhibited by one M. Varma in a letter to the editor of the *Organiser* (2 March 1986): "Let India become a Hindu State if Muslims want a separate law". On the general problem, see Imtiaz Ahmad, "Pakistan and the Indian Muslims," *Quest* 93 (January-February 1975), 39–47.

[36] See Salman Khurshid, "The Siege Within," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 25 May 1986, 18–21. Swapan Dasgupta in *Statesman*, 27 March 1986, 4, called it bluntly, "A Question of Izzat [Honor]: Community at Expense of Country."

[37] *Mainstream*, 8 March 1986, 28–32. For background, see Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Indian Muslim Politics and the Challenge of Communism," *Asian Thought and Society* VIII (1983), 24:218–224.

[38] See Professor M. Shafi Agwani's perceptive interview in Engineer, *The Shah Bano Controversy*, 160–162.

and integrationist visions for India.[39]

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's handling of the controversy demonstrated the same adroit political skill that he initially displayed in the even more dangerous Assam and Punjab disputes. Pressures on him grew through the summer of 1985 with "Save Shariat" Days staged throughout the country on the initiative of the Indian Union Muslim League, which, unlike its pre-Partition namesake, has its base in Kerala, the southernmost—and relatively riot-free—state.[40] A Muslim League M.P., G.M. Banatwala of Bombay, had introduced a private member bill to exempt Muslims from Section 125 of the Criminal Code.[41] But it had little chance of passage without endorsement by the ruling Congress-I Party. Then three North Indian Muslim leaders took up the hue and cry against the Supreme Court decision. Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of the Jami Masjid in Delhi and a key actor in the switch of the Muslim vote against Indira Gandhi in the post-Emergency election of 1977,[42] denounced the decision. But this reaction was predictable. So, too, was that of Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, president of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board.[43] More seriously, Syed Shahabuddin, retired foreign service officer, M.P., General Secretary of the Janata Party, and editor of *Muslim India*, and a thoroughgoing modernist, got the Board, of which he is a member, to summon a press conference on 16 May at which he declared that the Supreme Court had no authority to interpret the Qur'an in the Shahbano case.[44] In late July, he tried to call a conference of Muslim legislators on the issue to compel Congress Muslims to take a position on the issue, but the meeting was boycotted.[45]

The Law Minister, Asoka Sen, had presented the Government's initial defense of the decision. The young Congress Minister of State for Industry, Arif Mohammed Khan, went out on a limb in August in the same cause.[46] But twenty

---

[39] For R. A. Schermerhorn's useful analysis of the four possibilities of interacting majority and minority perspectives, see his *Comparative Ethnicity*, New York: Random House, 1970, 83.

[40] E.g., 14 June 1985 in Kerala. See *India Today*, 15 July 1985, 32; "Communal rioting in Baroda in Wake of Shariat Bachao (Protection) Conference," *Organiser*, 20 October 1985. For how the party survived in the South, see my "The Muslim League in South India since Independence: A Study of Minority Group Political Strategies," *American Political Science Review* 60 (1966), 579–599.

[41] On the issue of Muslim Personal Law, the All-India Muslim League, a faction of the main Indian Union Muslim League, which had allied itself with the Communist Front in Kerala, deserted that body in August 1985 and merged with its parent body, a member of the Congress-I-led coalition cabinet. *The Hindu Weekly*, 10 August 1985. The polarization of Kerala politics, however, may have cost the latter the next state election in 1987. See "Kerala: Communal Arithmetic," *India Today*, 31 March 1987, 19–22.

[42] Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Muslims and the 1977 Indian Elections: A Watershed?" *Asian Survey* 17 (1977), 12:1207–1220.

[43] "A Guardian of the Islamic Law Comments," *Arabia*, July 1985, 26.

[44] "All India Muslim Personal Law Board: Summary of the Note for the P.M. on the Supreme Court Decision in the Shah Bano Case," *Muslim India* 3 (1985), 35:497–500.

[45] *Organiser*, 2 June 1985. For Shahabuddin's side, "The Inside Story of the Muslim Legislators' Convention," *Muslim India* 3 (1985), 32:349–352.

[46] *Radiance*, 8 September 1985.

other Congress Muslim M.P.s, led by Mrs. Najma Heptullah, Deputy Chair of the Upper House, and, significantly, a granddaughter of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad,[47] Mahatma Gandhi's close coworker, had already gone to the Prime Minister to express their dissent from the Supreme Court's ruling. No matter that appointive officials like the former Supreme Court Justices M. H. Beg and Bahar-ul-Islam came to the defense of their fellow justices.[48] In India, unlike in the United States, public opinion, especially of an incensed minority, has, through elected politicians, an impact that cannot be frustrated by the courts. Even as secular a Muslim as Sikandar Bakht, the former Janata cabinet member, while defending the idea of a uniform civil code, asked why it need be imposed on any section of the nation. "Such an imposition will prove counterproductive, making the attitude of minorities more stubborn and resistant to it. Let . . . the evolution of Muslim society . . . go on [and] Muslims will themselves press for the adoption of worthwhile [reform] laws ultimately."[49] Another modernist Muslim and civil libertarian, A. G. Noorani of Bombay, also criticized the Supreme Court's judgment as "flouting the intent of the legislature, brushing aside precedent and administering gratuitous advice."[50]

After responding ambiguously to delegations from both sides of the Shahbano decision and appointing a committee to study the matter, the Prime Minister, in February 1986, had a bill introduced in Parliament which preempted the Banatwala bill and put the governing party squarely on the side of the Muslim orthodoxy and against the Supreme Court.

Under this "Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce)" Bill, maintenance of indigent Muslim divorcees after the three-month-long *iddat* period was to be the responsibility of their blood kin—fathers, brothers, or sons—and if none of them could afford it, of the Muslim community through its *waqf* (religious endowment) funds. Muslims would hereafter be exempt from Section 125 of the Criminal Code. Some critics have questioned whether *waqf* funds can be diverted to this purpose under Muslim law, while others have charged that this resource has been so largely misappropriated by the trustees (*mutawallis*) that there would not be enough to cover alimony in any case.[51] A report to Parliament in March 1987, saying that no divorced Muslim woman had yet been awarded maintenance by the state *Waqf* Boards, may support the critics of this procedure, at least in the short run, but it may testify only to the notorious

---

[47] "A Community in Turmoil," *India Today*, 31 January 1986.

[48] *Organiser*, 18 August and 3 November 1985; Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Failure of the Indian Minorities Commission, 1977–1981," *The Indian Journal of Politics* XX1 (1986), 2:1–7.

[49] *Organiser*, 18 August 1985.

[50] "A. G. Noorani on the S.C. Judgment in the Shah Bano Case," *Muslim India*, 3 (1985), 35:515–520.

[51] Anjali Deshpande, "Tattered Waqfs No Answer," *Secular Democracy*, May 1986, 23–24. Seventeen Muslim Leaders, meeting with Rajiv Gandhi in December 1985, argued, however, that only six percent of *waqf* funds would be sufficient for the purpose, *Indian Express*, 27 December 1985.

slowness of administration in India.[52]

The feminist/reformist position had already been fatally weakened when, in November 1985, Shahbano herself, after talking with the ulama (Muslim religious savants) from outside of her city, had been persuaded to disavow her suit and the Supreme Court's decision as "against religion."[53]

In the process of bowing to the greater pressure within the Muslim community, which was a critical component of his party's electoral coalition, Rajiv Gandhi had to sacrifice Arif Mohammed Khan, the only Muslim in his cabinet who had defended the Supreme Court's decision in Parliament the previous August, in favor of Z. R. Ansari, an orthodox Muslim member of the ministry and vociferous critic of the Shahbano decision. Congress has, ever since 1919, encompassed some of the most orthodox as well as some of the most secular of Muslim leaders.[54] Khan, a relative, ironically, of the late President of India, Zakir Hussain, who had stopped the previous wave of agitation for a uniform civil code in 1963,[55] resigned from the union cabinet in February 1986 when the government completed its volte-face and introduced the bill. Thereafter, he became increasingly critical of Prime Minister Gandhi's policies, and eventually bolted the Congress.

After Syed Shahabuddin's defeat of a Congress candidate from the orthodox Jamiat-ul-Ulama in the Kishanganj by-election in Bihar in November 1985, together with Congress's loss of Muslim votes in Assam over Rajiv's settlement with separatists there at the expense of illegal Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants, and in view of the communally explosive Ayodhya "Babari Masjid" agitation in Uttar Pradesh, the Prime Minister probably calculated that it was necessary to make a concession to the main body of Muslim opinion.[56] Clearly, he did not anticipate the loss to Congress of any appreciable body of Muslim women's votes as a result of this action. He did seek somewhat to placate the outraged reformists and feminists by intimating that a bill, providing for voluntary acceptance of alimony, would be introduced later in 1986 by the drafting of a voluntary common civil code. Even this token gesture proved to be unacceptable to either Hindu or Muslim fundamentalists.[57] This caused Professor Aloo

[52] Editorial, *Radiance*, 29 March-4 April 1987, 2.

[53] *Radiance*, 24–30 November 1985. She did ask that her *meher* be returned in silver coins, as specified in the 1932 *nikah*, rather than in the inflated 1985 rupees. *Organiser*, 1 December 1985, 15.

[54] *The Hindu Weekly*, 10 October 1986, 16.

[55] M. A. Karandikar, *Islam in India's Transition to Modernity*, Bombay: Orient Longman, 1968, 339–340.

[56] For this explanation, see "A Community in Turmoil"; Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Babari Masjid vs. Ramajanmabhoomi Controversy in India," in Andre Wink, ed., *Islam, Politics and Society in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991), 177–187.

[57] "P.M. Dangles the Carrot of 'Optional' Uniform Civil Code," *Organiser*, 11 May 1986, 15; "Speed Up Work on Common Civil Code: Rajiv Gandhi," *The Hindu Weekly*, 4 October 1986, 1. By February 1987, however, *The Hindu Weekly*, 7 February 1987, was reporting, "Government to Go Slow on Civil Code," apparently because of the fear that agitation against it was reinforcing the

Dastur, a Parsi, a woman, and a former member of the Minorities Commission, to warn:

> Are the minorities too much with us? No discussion on the minorities can ignore the majority and here the majority are Hindus. The overt concern about minorities has caused a backlash among the Hindus. They have begun to feel a threat to their numbers. . . . Racial, religious or linguistic minorities everywhere must accept that they are permanent minorities. This realization is not (one) of doom. On the contrary, the modern, democratic state has come to accept the fact that minorities are as much its citizens as the majority."[58]

One may question her idealism on the latter point without negating the implicit warning in the former, namely, that too strident insistence on constitutional rights, let alone "universal human rights," may provoke the majority to a level of retaliation where no minority rights are accepted.

I do not propose to deal with the intricate and controversial questions of interpretation of Qur'an and *Hadith* regarding maintenance of divorcees, which formed such a large part of the public discourse during the period of 1985–86. The debate was epitomized by the emotional and inflammatory exchange of opinions between Arun Shourie and Rafiq Zakaria in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*.[59] One need not deny, nor do most defenders of Muslim Personal Law deny, that many Indian Muslim husbands have, over the years, taken advantage of the customarily easy and practically unilateral divorce ("triple *talaq*"), permissible polygamy, nominal dowry (*meher* [Arabic: *mahr*]), and limited maintenance during *iddat* (as filtered through centuries of interpreters and decades of British courts), without pausing and asking, amidst all the acrimony of the debate: What is the alternative model of marriage (and divorce) which the coalition of Hindu, Muslim, and Western feminists want to substitute for both the corrupt practice and the Islamic ideal?

Muslim fundamentalists, on their side, simply reiterate their claim, probably a correct one, that the Islamic ideal constituted a liberating change for women at the time of the Prophet and was more egalitarian in its treatment of women both in legal and practical terms than European law until the nineteenth century or

---

violent agitation over the Babari Masjid issue in Uttar Pradesh. For Hindu opposition, see "'Optional' Uniform Civil Code: A Contradiction in Terms," *Organiser*, 9 November 1986, 7; for Muslim opposition, see "Uniform Civil Code will Break the Muslim family," *The Hindu Weekly*, 25 April 1987, 1, and "Cavil Against the Bill on the Anvil," *Radiance*, 4–10 January 1987, 1.

[58] Aloo J. Dastur, "Are the Minorities Too Much with Us?" reprinted from *Freedom First*, January 1987, by *Organiser*, 8 February 1987, 13.

[59] What irked Muslims the most about the Supreme Court's decision was the *obiter dicta*, essaying to reinterpret Muslim Personal Law and urging a common civil code. See the virulent reaction in *Radiance* to Arun Shourie's series on "the Shariat" in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 5 and 12 January 1986; also the rejoinder, "In Defense of the Shariat" by Rafiq Zakaria, a veteran Congressman and modernist Muslim, in the same periodical, 2 and 9 March 1986.

Hindu law until the Hindu Code Bill of 1955.[60]

Thiry years ago, the answer to my question seemed obvious to all modern-thinking people. The alternative proposed to Muslim Personal Law was the monogamous and relatively egalitarian nuclear family of the West. Since then, however, the quasi-Christian institutions of marriage and the family have collapsed in an unprecedented welter of a fifty percent divorce rate, adultery, fornication, promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, abortion, and now lethal venereal diseases, with their concomitants of drug abuse, crime, child abuse, rape, and suicide.[61] Is this the norm for which Indian feminists wish to strive for their own society? If, instead, what they want is only the pre-60s Western family model, what makes them think that, once started, social change can be stabilized at that stage and not proceed ineluctably to the present state of social decay? A feature article in *India Today*,[62] "Divorce Getting Common," shows that the Indian urban middle and upper classes are already far gone in this direction.

To speak in specific terms about our subject: the proponents of alimony always add to their prescription "until the divorcee is remarried". But what if Indian divorcees begin "living in" with other males without benefit of *nikah* (marriage) in order to prolong the period of receiving payment of maintenance from their ex-husbands? What kind of justice is it to compel one man to support another man's concubine?[63] I find the Muslim position much more appealing to my sense of fairness: divorce ends the marriage contract totally. After the dowry (*meher*) and whatever property which is the wife's has been restored to her and a generous lump payment (*mata'un bi l-ma'ruf*) made, if she still does not have enough income to avoid penury, then the responsibility for her support should fall on her blood relatives, or, lacking any, on the welfare institutions of her community, as stipulated in the 1986 Act. If there are minor children from the marriage, then different questions of appropriate custody and child support arise, but such questions are beyond the scope of this paper.

The media accounts of Shahbano Begum always stressed her indigence and the relative wealth of her former husband, a lawyer, in order to make her case fit the purpose of "avoiding vagrancy" of Section 125 of the Criminal Code. Yet, she was shown with her three grown and apparently able-bodied sons, who took her side in the case—and perhaps even instigated the case. Why should they not taken care of her? If we are to believe Saeed Naqvi's account, "Shah Bano Case:

---

[60] For example, Abdul Moghni, "Islam and Womanhood," *Radiance*, 29 September–5 0ctober 1985, 3, 6–12 October 1985, 5.

[61] See "U.S. Report Asserts [Reagan] Administration Halted Liberal 'Anti-Family' Agenda," *The New York Times*, 14 November 1986, 12.

[62] *The New York Times*, 11 November 1986, 40. For India, see "Divorce Getting Common," *India Today*, 11 December 1986, 44–51.

[63] For a polemical tirade against alimony which nevertheless has some examples of injustice to divorced men, see Charles Wilner, *Alimony: The American Tragedy*, New York: Vintage Press, 1952; for more recent examples, see "Men Have Rights Too," *Time*, 24 November 1986, 87.

The Real Truth,"[64] "a sordid family quarrel between stepbrothers and sisters, and between warring Muslim divines looking for an issue, would seem to be at the bottom of the controversy surrounding the case." The sons of the cast-off wife sought revenge on, not maintenance from, their father.

What society, be it Indian or American, needs is less divorce, not more uncollectible alimony. As *The New York Times* reported, citing new Census Bureau statistics, "the majority of divorced, separated and single mothers (in the United States) face a future raising children with no financial help from the fathers."[65] For this reason, I find that much more attractive than the Shahbano decision is the reform of Muslim Personal Law accomplished by the late President Ayub Khan of Pakistan (much reviled by American liberals), which requires marital conciliation before divorce.[66]

Marriage fulfills an essential social function—that of providing for reproduction within a framework that also takes account of the socialization and nurture of children. It is far too important a duty to undermine with the selfish assertions of the so-called rights of the individual.

---

[64] In Engineer, *The Shah Bano Controversy*, 66–70.

[65] *The New York Times*, 16 November 1986, 40. Most Hindu divorcees also return to their paternal homes, but are poorly treated there. (Personal communication from Pauline Kolenda, February 1987.) An Indian Supreme Court decision recently ruled that married daughters as well as sons have a liability to help maintain their fathers or mothers who are unable to do so. *The Hindu Weekly*, 28 February 1987, 7.

[66] Fazlur Rahman, "The Controversy over the Muslim Family Laws," in Donald E. Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion*, 420–423. For a British proposal to pay maintenance of divorcees out of national insurance, see O. R. McGregor, "Maintenance, Separation and Divorce," *The Twentieth Century* 172 (1963–64), 1020:20–32.

Studies in Contemporary Islam 1 (1999), 2:57–69

The Muslim Community: in the United States: Some Issues

Sulayman S. Nyang[*]

Muslims in the United States now number at least five million. The demographic complex of Muslims is very diverse. It includes (alphabetically) Algerians, Afghans, and Albanians, Bengalis, Burmans, Ethiopians, Indians, Indonesians, Malians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Yemenis, and Zambians. In view of the growing Muslim presence in America, and in view of the diversity of the Muslims' national origins and cultural backgrounds, scholars, journalists, and TV news magazines are beginning to pay greater attention to these new citizens of the United States. This increased attention has in turn led to, among other things, an increased attention being paid to the study of the common elements in the migration patterns of Muslims and other faith communities in the country.

This paper examines the Muslim patterns of migration and settlement in America, comparing these with similar Jewish patterns. Starting with the assumption that the experiences of the American Muslim community are similar to those of other faith communities that settled in the United States earlier, and building on the sociological insight that each of the previous religious communities immigrating from the Old World carried with it most, if not all, of the cultural and religious differences that had caused it to become fragmented, the paper argues that one way of indicating that Jewish and Muslim American experiences have points of convergence and divergence is to identify such points within each of the two communities. Another objective of the paper is to show how Muslim leaders and their followers are dealing with differences within their faith community. A third objective is to examine the nature of the challenges facing Muslim organizations and leadership in those parts of the country that have a sizable Muslim presence.

[*] Professor Sulayman S. Nyang teaches in the African Studies Department at Howard University. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Jewish-Muslim Relations conference held at the University of Hartford, Hartford, Connecticut, in November 1997.

The Myth of Return and the Coagulation of the American Muslim Identity:

One of the most pressing issues confronting the American Muslim community is that of the question of identity, which arises for many of the immigrant Muslims who still suffer from the myth-of-return syndrome. Scholars who have looked at immigrants around the world both in contemporary and historical terms have come to the conclusion that this phenomenon has existed since the earliest migrations of humans.[1] The classic example of the migrating agent who knew, on a conscious level, that he was not going to return to his original homeland is that of the Patriarch Abraham, whose life story is central to the three Abrahamic religions. Christian and Muslim immigrants know, from Biblical and Qur'anic accounts, about the decision of Abraham not to return, but that has not deterred recent Muslim and Christian Arab immigrants in the United States and Canada from entertaining the myth of return. Muhammad Anwar, a British scholar of Pakistani origins, captured the spirit of the Pakistani immigrants' life in Britain in the title of his book, *Pakistanis in Britain: The Myth of Return*. How does this psychological and psychocultural state affect the Muslims, and how does it affect the self-definition of the American Muslim community?[2] The data are still sparse; I do not know of any systematic survey that has been conducted, Gallup or Harris style, on this subject. But the growing evidence available in the Muslim press and in Muslim oral exchanges at conferences and symposia does enable one to make some observations on the matter. There is, indeed, a growing realization among Muslims that the myth of return is a psychological wedge separating the second-generation immigrants from the native-born American Muslims. Those immigrants who still entertain the possibility that they are one day going to strike it rich and will then head home delay the necessary cultural and political adjustment of their families in the local communities, and also prevent the inclusion of their interests in the larger American basket of needs and special interests. The inability to resolve this issue spells disaster to an embryonic community, one whose younger generation is trying to secure a foothold in the American landscape and many of whose first-generation immigrants have made significant strides toward greater Americanization.[3] The

[1] Migration is as old as the human experience itself. Groups and individuals have migrated from one part of the world to another. A unique feature of American society is its quest for community and the linkage between this idea with the sense of having been chosen to carry out a mission. For some details on this idea in American thought and history, which suggests a rendezvous with destiny for the immigrants or their descendants, see Robert Nisbet, "American Culture and the Idea of Community," in George N. Atiyeh, ed., *Arab and American Cultures* (Washington, D.C: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1969), 93–105.

[2] M. Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

[3] Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1985); Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham, eds., *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities* (Detroit: Wayne State University, Center for Urban Studies,

myth of return affects the relationship not only between the first-generation immigrants and their children and grandchildren, but also between the immigrant community and the native-born Americans. In a paper presented at a conference, I have argued that "pride and prejudice" have developed among American Muslims because the myth of return allows the first-generation immigrant to hold on to the old ways of his homeland and to make little or no effort to adjust properly and meaningfully in his adopted homeland.[4] This points to a fundamental difference between the Jewish immigrants and the other groups who came to the shores of the United States. As the literature on Jewish immigration clearly shows, the Jews fleeing persecution and pogroms in Western and Eastern Europe had nowhere else to go; America was their final destination.[5]

The American Muslim community's myth of return has created many problems of adjustment and assimilation for many recent immigrants from the Muslim world. While these problems are not peculiar to these immigrants, there are reasons to believe that greater Muslim participation in the American experiment would depend largely on the elimination of this myth. The first problem is attitudinal. Those immigrants who dream of returning home are the least likely to change their nationality, and their children are likely to be subjected to tremendous pressure to keep the cultural robes of distinctiveness. By not making any serious effort to be part and parcel of the larger society, these men and women have created a cultural ghetto for themselves and their children. From within these cultural barricades, they make occasional forays into the larger society to fulfill certain needs. A sense of inadequacy in making contacts with people outside their cultural and religious boundaries militates against their

---

1983); Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham, eds., *The Arab World and Arab Americans: Understanding a Neglected Minority* (Detroit: Wayne State University, Center for Urban Studies, 1981); Baha Abu-Laban and Faith Zeady, eds., *Arabs in America: Myths and Realities* (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1975); Barbara C. Aswad, ed., Arab-Speaking Communities in American Cities (New York: Center for Migration Studies of New York, and Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1974); Elaine C. Hagopian and Ann Paden, eds., *The Arab Americans: Studies in Assimilation* (Wilmette, IL: Medina University International Press, 1969); Michael W. Suleiman and Baha Abu-Laban, eds., *Arab-Americans: Continuity and Change* (Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American Graduates, Inc., 1989).

[4] This lecture was first delivered at a banquet organized at the Muslim Community Center of Montgomery County, Maryland , in 1993.

[5] For details on the Jewish migration to the United States of America, see the following works: Abraham J. Karp, *Golden Door to America . The Jewish Immigrant Experience* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977); Lenni Brenner, *Jews in America Today* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1986); Marshall Sklare, *American Jews* (New York: Random House, 1971); Max I. Dimont, *The Jews in America: The Roots, History, and Destiny of American Jews* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978); Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jewish Community in America* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1974); Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews From Earliest Times Through the Six Day War*, rev. ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 355–367; Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, *A History of the Jewish People* (New York: Atheneum, 1974); Leonard Fein, *Where Are We? The Inner Life of America's Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

making such encounters—even when those in the mainstream are their kith and kin. The myth of return thus poses a formidable challenge to Muslim political activists who are interested in voter registration.[6] Before you can convince someone to vote or to join a political party, you must get him or her to understand the notion of civic responsibility and to appreciate the benefits of citizenship. But the entertaining of the myth of return has, besides negative political consequences, certain cultural consequences.

The first such consequence is erosion of the second-generation American Muslims' confidence in their new homeland. The constant harangues by parents about the virtues and merits of the Mother Country and their incessant use of electronic props to reinforce feelings of nostalgia for it have often combined to create alienation among second-generation immigrants. In a pioneering study he made almost three decades ago, Professor Abdo El-Kholy observed this phenomenon among Arab-American Muslims.[7] The problem has not disappeared, and the electronic revolution has not made the job of Muslim promoters of assimilation any easier.

The second cultural consequence of the myth of return is the lack of attention paid to the socialization process of children. By hoping to leave eventually for their original homelands, Muslim immigrants do not, for example, attend Parent Teacher Association meetings, and, for this and other related reasons, they are woefully ignorant of the state of affairs in the schools their children attend.[8] These Muslim parents—unlike those Muslims, whether native-born or immigrant, who are cognizant of the dangers facing their children in the public school system—see the public school system, or even the private parochial schools, as convenient childcare facilities where their children can pass time and socialize while they win bread for their households and save money for their eventual return home.

The third cultural consequence of the myth of return is the development of a defensive attitude toward the media and the larger society. Instead of using the democratic means for changing stereotypes about them, as was done by other, assimilated groups, such men and women spend much time lamenting how they are being misrepresented, when they could have used such time-tested mechanisms to improve the situation as writing to their members of Congress and meeting with the politicians of their towns, cities, and districts. Instead of forming coalitions with existing groups and pressing for their issues, these men and women resort to political quietism.[9]

---

[6] For some reflections on Muslim political activism in the United States, see Steve Johnson, "Political Activity of Muslims in America," in Yvonne Y. Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 111–124.

[7] For some discussion on this phenomenon, see Abdo A. Elkholy, *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation* (New Haven, CT: College & University Press Services, 1966).

[8] See my "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism in the United States of America: An American Muslim Perspective," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 34 (1997), 3: 402–417.

[9] See my *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1999).

For community builders and leaders, the myth of return has another negative consequence. At a time when Muslims are trying to register their presence in the Public Square of American society, some members of their community continue to create conditions that are likely to be detrimental to the integration of their group in the larger society. How is this behavior manifested in the American Public Square? The decision by many of these individuals to adjust to their cultural realities prevents them from mingling and mixing with their coreligionists and others in society, who are both ignorant of their cultural backgrounds and their languages. Unwilling to widen the circle of brotherhood and fellowship in such a way as to include in it the native-born American Muslims, such men and women reify their cultural and linguistic boundaries by deliberately shutting out others through their constant use of ethnic languages. This negative consequence of the myth of return is beginning to receive attention in certain Muslim circles. This author, too, has sounded the alarm in many lectures and speeches given at Muslim community centers in America. Drawing upon his research on the earlier immigration of other religious groups to the United States, he has pointed to the example of the German-American Catholics and the consequences of their linguistic chauvinism for the Catholic Church in America.[10] Learning from the record of past religious immigrants, many Muslim community leaders have joined the cause to tear down the barricades. This task is not easily accomplished, for many of these immigrants have created around themselves a security net through elaborate mechanisms of cultural separation. A simple principle to keep in mind is that whenever two Muslims from different parts of the world meet at a *masjid* (mosque) in the United States or Canada and neither knows Arabic, English should be used as the medium of conversation between them. This principle applies to all interactions that take place between those Muslims who speak a common language and those who do not. Muslims are, it seems, beginning to see the logic of accommodation and to understand the disruptive nature of cultural segregation.

B. American Muslims and the American Racial Dilemma:

Muslims became more visible in American society after the success of the Civil Rights Movement in bringing about significant changes in American political, social, and economic life. Unlike the Jews and Catholics, who had joined the Civil Rights Movement and the Labor Movement in the battle for social justice in the decades before and after the Second World War, American Muslims came

[10] For an account of this phenomenon among the German immigrants in America, see Jay P. Dolan, “Philadelphia and the German Catholic Community,” in Randall M. Miller and Thomas D. Marzik, ed., *Immigrants and Religion in Urban America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), Chapter 4.

to the limelight after Vietnam and the protest against the Vietnam War. Even though the American Muslims joined the mainstream in the 1970s and 1980s—that is, after the days of Jim Crowism were over—they cannot deny the continued existence of racism in American society. If there is any religious community whose ethos and ethnic make-up qualify it to contribute to interracial reconciliation and cooperation, it is the Muslim community. No doubt, the Jewish community and the Catholic Church have diverse ethnic memberships, but the Muslims are increasingly challenging these sister religions in the area of moral accountability in the context of American race relations. This is particularly true in the context of the developing relationships between the African-American community and the three Abrahamic religions. It is to this and other, related issues that we now turn.

A principal virtue of Islam that the earliest propagator of this religion sought to present before the American people was Islam's allergy to racism. A white American advocate of Islam made this claim a long time ago in his *Islam in America* (1893). Writing toward the end of the last century, Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb, the founding father of the American Muslim press and the first known native-born American Muslim, presented the non-racist message of Islam at a time when certain segments of American society were offering both theological and scientific justification for racism.[11] Although the historical record shows that Webb had little or no effect on his contemporaries, the fact that he saw in Islam a solution to what the Scandinavian social scientist Gunnar Myrdal called the "American Dilemma" has spotlighted the subject for our generation. Living at the turn of the century and the millennium, and writing from the vantage point of an American Muslim immigrant whose research on the American Muslim community has deepened his understanding of the Webbian legacy, I am struck by the existence, within the Muslim community, of "pride and prejudice," manifestations of which are linked to several factors that deserve our analytical attention.[12]

The first factor has to do with the Muslims' adjustment to the American realities. Coming to a society that prides itself on individual freedom and equality, and condemned to wear the badge of racial consciousness, the immigrant, whether he or she is a Muslim or not, struggles to adjust to the racial climate of his or her adopted society.[13] No matter how he or she defines his or

---

[11] For details on Webb, see Emory H. Tunison, "Mohammed Webb: First American Muslim," *The Arab World* 1 (1945), 3:13–18.

[12] See my editorial in the inaugural issue of *The American Journal of Islamic Studies* (now renamed *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*) 1 (1984), 1.

[13] The literature on race and racism in the United States is extensive. For some sample analyses and syntheses, see the following works: Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); C. Van Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Bernard M. Magubane, *The Ties That Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987); Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, eds., *The Slave's Narratives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kenneth Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Negro Slavery in the American South* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd., 1964); Eugene D.

her racial and ethnic identity, he or she must come to terms with the psychology and sociology of the host culture. The average Muslim immigrant, as I have stated elsewhere, is looked upon by his fellow Americans as a member of a racial group and is further classified culturally and religiously as a member of several cultural and religious groups in America:

> If he is not mindful of the nonracial nature of Islam in its ideal form, the American Muslim, by virtue of his early conditioning in a racially-conscious society, could easily trap himself in a world of racial consciousness that cuts him off from other Muslims in different racial groups. This is a major challenge to the emerging Muslim ummah. It should be pointed out that other American religions are still grappling with this racial problem.[14]

Because of the racial, ethnic, and linguistic heterogeneity of the Muslim communities of America, one persistent challenge Muslims will face in this country is that of building bridges between the variegated islands of Muslims scattered around the country.

What makes the race issue explosive and potentially divisive for the American Muslim community is the emerging class differences between the immigrant Muslim families and the Muslim segment of the Black underclass that has seized upon Islam as a moral, psychological, and spiritual life jacket in the stormy sea of American racism. This racial and ethnic divide, which is obvious to most Muslims and has received comments in the Muslim press, did not exist prior to the transformation of the Nation of Islam of the late Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the popularization of the Sunni Islam of Malcolm X (Alhajj Malik Shabazz) among many African-Americans.[15] Before the elevation of Imam W. D. Mohammed to the supreme position within the old Nation of Islam, most American Muslim immigrants and most Black Christians saw the Nation of Islam as a peculiar religious group whose teachings were neither orthodox Christianity nor orthodox Islam. In the American imagination of the fifties and sixties, these "Black Muslims," as C. Eric Lincoln called them in his classic study, was an American invention. Both Lincoln and his Nigerian counterpart, Essen Udom, described the Nation of Islam as a Black Nationalist Movement with a theology that centers on some form of Black racism.[16]

Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975); Cornel West, *Prophetic Reflections: Notes on Race and Power in America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1993), especially Part 3.

[14] See my "Convergence and Divergence in an Emergent Community: A Study of Challenges Facing U.S. Muslims," in Yvonnne Y. Haddad, *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 236–249.

[15] See the recent cover story on "Muslim Tribalism," published in the March 1996 issue of *The Message International*.

[16] The first major scholarly treatments of the Nation of Islam were doctoral dissertation that were later published as books. See C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (New York: Beacon Press, 1961); Essien Udosen Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America*

However, since 25 February 1975, the date of death of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the American Muslim community has witnessed a major increase in its numbers. Not only has Imam W. D. Mohammed brought hundreds of thousands of his father's followers into the fold of Sunni Islam, but many other groups, independent of Nation of Islam, have also surfaced and developed within the African-American community. Movements such as the Darul Islam, the Islamic Party of North America, the Islamic Brotherhood, Inc., and the Hanafi and Sufi groups that have taken hold in certain segments of the Black community in America, are now taken into account by scholars and journalists when they talk about Islam in Afro-America.[17] The numbers of Muslims thus increasing within the Black communities of America, the American Muslims in general and the immigrant Muslims in particular are challenged to address simultaneously the two issues of race and class. In order for the emerging Muslim community to remain united and cohesive, both its leaders and followers must identify and understand the pitfalls of interracial and interethnic strife within the American Muslim community. At the elite level, certain measures have been taken to address the problem. It is, however, too early to predict whether these efforts will prove effective or not. One recent development that may hold a key to the future is the reorganization of the top leadership of the American Muslim Council (AMC). This development has implications for both immigrant–native-born American relations and Jewish-Muslim relations. Some recent changes at the AMC have implications for the relationship between the two main branches of the American Muslim community. One of them has to do with the selection of two prominent American Blacks to serve as the Council's president and executive director. Their appointment has created goodwill among African-American Muslims. Only time will tell whether such developments will lead to greater cooperation and collaboration between the two main branches of the American Muslim community. But, even without looking into a crystal ball, we can say that the future of race relations within the Muslim community and outside it will be decided by the closeness not only of inter-Muslim relations but also of the Muslim interaction with the larger society and by the demonstration effect of American Muslim life in the United States. Until and unless immigrant Muslims abandon the myth of return and participate increasingly in the political and other spheres of life, the obstacles to greater Muslim visibility and greater Muslim impact on the moral structures of

---

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). For a recent addition to this series of quality scholarly works, see *Richard Brent Turner: Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington, IN: Indian University Press, 1997).

[17] For some discussion on these African American groups, see Aminah McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Chapter 2; C. E. Marsh, *The World Community of Islam in the West: From Black Muslim to Muslim* (1931–1977) (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), Chapters 1 and 2; Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *Competing Visions of Islam in the United States: A Study of Los Angeles* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 142–182.

American life will remain. The leaders of one organization or another may create a healthy and favorable climate for mutual understanding and cooperation among Muslim elites, but as long as the Muslim members of the American underclass remain isolated and uncared for, the American Muslims will not be in any different position than that of the other religious groups in the country.[18] The principal challenge for the American Muslims in the new century will be whether the teachings of Islam will influence the moral sensitivities of the American people.

Related to, but different from, the issue of inter-Muslim relations and the impact of the compound problem of race and class on Muslim community life in America, is that of Jewish-Muslim relations, seen in light of the phenomenon of growing Black leadership in the Muslim community. As stated above, the rise of new Black leadership in the American Muslim Council has implications for the Jewish community. As known to observers of the American religious scene, the Jewish community is engaged in some form of interreligious dialogue with a small number of Muslim groups and communities around the United.[19] The American Muslim Council tries to build bridges to the Christian and Jewish communities from the vantage point of political activism on Capitol Hill. This has led to several conflicts between the old leadership of the AMC and some Jewish leaders operating out of Washington, D.C. What muddied the waters was a *Wall Street Journal* article written by Steve Emerson.[20] This American Jewish writer some time ago charged that the Clinton administration was in bed with Hamas sympathizers who were working from within the AMC. His allegations were directed against the old AMC leadership, especially the former Executive Director of the AMC, Abdulrahman al-Amoudi. Although few Americans give credence to such accusations penned by Steve Emerson, the allegations in question did considerable damage to any existing bridges of cooperation between the AMC and the Jewish community.

The appointment of an African-American as the new executive director of the American Muslim Council and the election of another to the presidency of the organization could open up new opportunities for Jewish-Muslim relations and Black-Jewish relations. Since, for many Black Americans, Black-Jewish

---

[18] The racialization of American religion has received scholarly attention. For some opinions on the matter, see C. Eric Lincoln, *Race, Religion, and the Continuing American Dilemma* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1984); Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History* (Beltsville, Maryland: Writers' Inc., 1995).

[19] For some reflections on Jewish-Muslim relations, see Marilyn Robinson Waldman, ed., *Muslims and Christians, Muslims and Jews: A Common Past, A Hopeful Future* (Columbus, Ohio: The Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio in association with the Catholic Diocese of Columbus and Congregation Tifereth Israel, 1992); Gary M. Bretton-Granatoor and Andrea L. Weiss, eds., *Shalom/Salaam. A Resource for Jewish-Muslim Dialogue* (New York: UAHC Press, 1993).

[20] Steve Emerson became a *persona non grata* among American Muslims after he produced a television video entitled "Jihad in America." Muslim organizations and their allies in several interfaith groups around the United States protested against the broadcast. The charge against the Clintons came several months after the showing of this video.

relations are Jewish-Muslim relations in another form, it is imperative that Black American Muslims are present at the table whenever Jews and Blacks are engaged in any serious dialogue. Events over the last twenty years point to some progress made in this arena of human relations between certain African-American Muslims and the local Jewish communities across the country. The chief promoter of Black-Jewish and Jewish-Muslim dialogue has been Imam W. D. Mohammed. Many conferences and meetings between this Muslim leader and members of Jewish communities have taken place since he assumed leadership of the large Black community after his father's death. His example has been followed by several local leaders, and the *Muslim Journal* and its predecessor publications have all documented his attempts to build bridges between Jews and African-American Muslims.

In light of the above, it is evident that some progress has indeed been made in the area of Jewish-Muslim relations, even though many rough edges still exist. But while noting the gains made in intercommunal relations, we must not forget the divisive potential of certain issues. For example, whereas Imam W. D. Mohammed is perceived in many Jewish circles as the voice of moderation and cooperation among the successors of the late Honorable Elijah Muhammad, his rival and former associate, Minister Louis Farrakhan, has become the *bête noire* of the Jewish community.[21] The animosity between the Farrakhan supporters and the members of the Jewish community is widely known. Suggestions of dialogue between Jews and Muslims are often rejected by two types of Muslims—those whom I have described elsewhere as "oysters,"[22] and those who are politically sensitive to the Arab-Israeli problem in the Middle East. The first group dismisses any call for dialogue because it holds conservative views about Jews and about their role as custodians of divine scriptures. The second group subscribes to the ideological perspective that no Jewish-Muslim dialogue can take place because the Palestinians are suffering under Israeli occupation. Minister Louis Farrakhan appeals to some of these elements. For this and related reasons, the American Jewish community has continued to view and treat him with suspicion.

C. American Muslims and the Sectarian Divide

All religious groups in history have suffered from the slings and arrows of sectarianism. Sectarianism has deep roots in the human psyche. Sociologists of religion have written treatises, trying to demonstrate how and why human

[21] For some American and foreign scholarly assessments of Minister Louis Farrakhan, see the following: Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), Chapter 3; Richard Brent Turner, Chapter 6; Lawrence H. Mamiya, "Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Final Call: Schism in the Muslim Movement," in Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu Laban, and Regula B. Qureshi, eds., *The Muslim Community in North America* (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 234–258.

[22] See my "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism."

motivations have, since ancient times, played themselves out in the context of religious schism. Here we will not engage in any detailed philosophical and sociological discussion of the psychological causes of the phenomenon among the American Muslims. Rather, we are interested in the impact of sectarianism on the adjustment and assimilation of Muslims in the United States. When we look at Muslim communities across America, we find that the divisions carried over from the Old World are replicated in the communities through human intrigue and machination. The old Shi'ite-Sunnite division has accompanied the South Asians, Iranians, and Arabs inhabiting both the East Coast and the West Coast. It is true that the intensity of sectarianism in the Old World has diminished considerably in the United States—and there are several reasons for that. First, the sense of individualism in America has instilled, in both the American Sunnite and the American Shi'ite, a greater sense of self-importance. While living in Iran or Pakistan, Shi'ite or Sunnite Muslims may have the feeling of belonging to the dominant group, but, living in the United States, both of them find themselves to be among the minorities. Another reason lies in the impact of secular culture on American society. As Stephen Carter points out in his *Culture of Disbelief*, Americans generally tend to take religion as a hobby.[23] In a culture like the American, then, it is impolitic and provocative to insist on making one's sectarian preferences known. The doctrine of the separation of church and state, which has gained acceptance at all levels in society, has also made it difficult for sectarian Muslims to succeed in any war of words against their rivals within the Muslim community

If sectarianism in America has not reached a level of intensity that it has in the Old World, then this does not mean that it does not exist, or that its presence is not felt anywhere in the American religious landscape. The sectarian divide among the American Muslims became manifest after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Before this explosion in the Pahlevi kingdom, most Iranian Muslims were secular. Most of the Iranian students on American campuses, for example, did not show any striking signs of religiosity. Although some of them had deeply religious backgrounds, the "Passing of Traditional Society" approach to modernization—as described in the writings of Daniel Lerner and his colleagues in the sixties—was gaining ground among most. When the Muslim Student Association (MSA) was formed in 1963, most of the Iranians who joined the bandwagon were religiously inclined students. A significant portion of this student body came from the followers of Ayatollah Khoui of Najaf in Iraq. The first leaders of the MSA included several Iranian Shi'ites. The MSA, it can be stated categorically, was not a sectarian organization, nor did those who were the moving spirit in the MSA see themselves as members of a sectarian organization. However, the unity that marked the organization in the first fifteen years of its life was shattered with the eruption of the Iranian Revolution. The coming to power of Imam Khomeini greatly boosted Shi'ite self-confidence, and

[23] Stephen Carter, *Culture of Disbelief* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

many a Shi'ite Muslim student who had joined the MSA without showing any sign of sectarian consciousness now became assertively sectarian. Such acts of self-assertion soon led to conflicts and confrontations between the Sunnites and the Shi'ites. It is against this background that the MSA split into two; most of its Sunnite members regrouped under the MSA logo, while a much smaller number of students formed a new organization called the Muslim Student Association (Persian-Speaking Group). This division has not healed, even though the Iranian government has mended its fences with neighboring Islamic countries.[24]

Besides the classical Sunnite-Shi'ite split among the Muslims, there are also the splits based on *tariqa* affiliation. The divisions within Sufism—the mystical dimension of Islam—and other, more conservative and legalistic divisions have also been imported into America from the Muslim world. Thus, there are today many Sufi orders in America, and they include the Naqshbandiyyah, the Qadiriyyah, the Jerrahiyyah, the Muridiyyah, the Tijaniyyah, the Chistiyyah, the Suhrawardiyyah, and countless others. What is the basis of disagreement between the Sufis and their opponents? The Sufis are Muslim mystics who strongly believe that their approach to the worship of the Creator is not only based on the noble example of the Prophet, but is also grounded in the purification of the soul through an elaborate exercise of *dhikr* (remembrance of the Names of Allah). The Sufis are usually derided by the more legalistic groups of Muslims, whose Islam is built around the explicit commandments of the *Shari'ah* and on a rejection of the veneration of saints or leaders of the religious community. It is because of this conflict that American Muslims now come across propaganda tracts from Wahhabi and Salafi groups, which lambaste Sufis around the country. Although the Sufi groups have not been as aggressive in the war of words as their rivals, there is reason to believe that their growing visibility is going to increase the tension between them and their rivals.[25] This assumption is based on the fact of the struggle for leadership within both camps. Still, while this potential source of tension between the Sufis and their detractors exists, the majority of the American Muslims are not likely to be swayed one way or the other. The average American's sense of individual freedom is too strong to allow any single religious group to take over the majority of American Muslims. Furthermore, there a growing realization among Muslims on both side of the sectarian fence that the greatest threat to their common faith of orthodox Islam is the political Islam of the extreme right and the left-leaning New Age Islam of the Popcorn Sufi.[26] Like the American Jews and Christians, the

---

[24] See my "Islam in the United States of America: A Review of the Sources," in Micheal A. Koszegi and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Islam in America. A Source Book* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 3–24.

[25] The publication of a glossy and impressive magazine by the Naqshbandiyyah order has given it high profile among a good cross section of the American Muslim communities.

[26] I coined the term "Popcorn Sufi" sometime in 1980 when a friend of mine told me that her sister was a Sufi but was not practicing Islam. In response to the report that members of her group form

American Muslims will increasingly come to appreciate the benefits of the American civil society and the dangers of religious sectarianism. Sectarianism will continue to serve as a great divider among the believers, but, having made its transatlantic journey to America, it will eventually lose its sting.

D. Conclusions

In concluding this chapter a number of points come to mind. First, this study has shown that a major challenge facing the Muslim community in the United States is the myth of return. In order for the American Muslim community to take its rightful place in the American experiment, its leaders and members must begin to address this issue. Because of the differences between the Jewish and Muslim experiences, the two communities have evolved differently in American society. The Jews, when they came to America, had no intention of returning to the pogrom-sponsoring Russia or genocidal Nazi Germany; they arrived in America in order to settle here permanently. The American Muslims may not have had experiences similar to the Jewish, but they must remember the Qur'anic verse that says that the whole world is home to the human race.

The second conclusion is that the American Muslims cannot be perceived as a role model and a success story unless they solve the emerging race-class divide within their ranks. It is only by living up to the original teachings of Islam about social justice and the equality of the human race that the American Muslims can stake any claim to moral leadership at the table of American decision-making.

The third conclusion is that sectarianism is an old problem. Neither Christianity nor Judaism, two Abrahamic sister religions that preceded Islam in history, could escape the sting of sectarianism. One should add, though, that sectarianism among American Muslims is unlikely to become a serious problem. The sense of personal freedom, and the growing realization that sectarianism does not pay, will eventually make sectarianism "unprofitable"—and hence unacceptable. The American Muslims are among the most recent arrivals on the country's religious scene. Their future status and their social impact on the larger American society are going to depend heavily on how they deal with sectarianism.

---

circles and sing "Allah, Allah. . . ," I told my friend that her sister was what I would call a "Popcorn Sufi."

Studies in Contemporary Islam 1 (1999), 2:70–72

Democracy in Malaysia: A Critical Look at Mumtaz Ahmad's Analysis

Steven J. Rosenthal[*]

In "Democracy on Trial in Malaysia," which appeared in the inaugural issue of *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, Professor Mumtaz Ahmad presents a well-informed and courageous analysis of the arrest and imprisonment of Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. I would like to take a critical look at his article.

Ahmad writes, "The real cause of the split between the 'father' and the 'son' is the difference in style, emphasis, and views on such issues as the nature of the state, democracy, civil liberties, tolerance of dissent, and the autonomy of civil society. In other words: two different generations and two different visions of Malaysia in the twenty-first century" (75). This analysis implies that Anwar Ibrahim represents a more progressive and democratic alternative to the "'political corruption,' 'nepotism,' and 'cronyism'" of Mahathir Mohammad (76). While I fully agree with Ahmad's indictment of Mahathir Mohammad and his regime, I do not agree that Anwar Ibrahim represents a progressive alternative. Indeed, the salient facts about Anwar Ibrahim presented by Ahmad point toward a different analysis.

Ahmad notes "Anwar's personal rapport with some Western leaders (Lady Thatcher, Madeline Albright) and his dignified handling of negotiations with international financial institutions" (78). He observes that "the East Asian financial crisis" exacerbated the conflict between Anwar and Mahathir because Anwar "was inclined to follow the traditional World Bank–International Monetary Fund (IMF) recipe" of dealing with the economic crisis through "structural adjustments" (78). Anwar's support for the U.S. and British controlled IMF meant that he opposed the rescue of businesses that were at the heart of the "interlocking relationship that had long existed between the corporate sector and the state and that was dominated by the ruling UMNO coalition" (79). If Ahmad's analysis is correct, then the difference between Mahathir and Anwar is that Anwar was committed to helping U.S. and British capital use the East Asian economic crisis to gain a more dominant position in the Malaysian economy at the expense of Malaysian capital tied to Mahathir.

---

[*] Professor Steven J. Rosenthal teaches in the Department of Sociology at Hampton University.

But that is a more progressive and democratic alternative *only* from the standpoint of U.S. and British capital. From the point of view of Malaysian workers and students, it is merely a shift in the relative power of their domestic and international exploiters. This is made particularly clear by William Greider in his 1997 work, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*.[1] Greider visited Malaysia and described in detail the country's U.S. and Japanese owned electronics industry, the core of the new Malaysian economy, which employs more than 150,000 workers, most of them young women. Malaysia attracted the electronics industry by promising a long tax holiday and a guarantee that electronics workers would be prohibited from organizing independent unions, and has continued to enforce these arrangements to this day (Greider 1997: 81–99).

While in Malaysia, Greider discussed these matters with Anwar Ibrahim, who told him that workers "should have a vehicle to express themselves, but not the aggressive unions that might upset the companies or disrupt political unity. If we start playing that kind of game, then we will soon be in trouble, because nobody will come to invest here." Anwar added: "In my youth, I was detained because of my fight for the poor. But you mature in the process. You don't abdicate your ideals, but you learn to face reality. There is no equity without growth, and so we are pro-growth" (Greider 1997: 100–101).

For the Malay, Chinese, and Indian workers, Anwar Ibrahim would not provide a progressive alternative to the conditions that Mahathir has inflicted on them. Anwar offered them an opportunity to "express themselves," if they would support his efforts to obtain for U.S. and British capital a more dominant position in the Malaysian economy and the global electronics industry.

According to Ahmad, "the role of the Malay middle class and the emerging Malay bourgeoisie is critical to the success of any movement of political reform in Malaysia" (80). He concludes: "The only hope for change lies with the younger constituency of Anwar Ibrahim, the college and university students who are inspired by his ideas and share his vision of Malaysia as a free, prosperous, democratic, pluralistic, and moral society" (81). This may be Anwar's rhetoric, but his vision of a future Malaysia is that of a country in which workers continue to be exploited as cheap labor by international capital that is even more dominated by the United States. That is the objective of reforms encouraged by the United States through non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and other channels of U.S. influence.

The hope for a better future for Malaysian workers and peasants, who make up the vast majority of the population of Malaysia, does not lie with Mahathir or with Anwar, both of whom represent different factions of exploiters. Neither rulers such as Mahathir, who claim to be protecting their people from the hegemonic pretensions of Western capital, nor critics like Anwar, who claim to offer a more democratic alternative to "crony capitalism," offer a better future

[1] Published by Simon and Schuster, New York.

for exploited workers. The conflict between Mahathir and Anwar has certain broad similarities to the recent battles within the U.S. ruling class. The impeachment of President Clinton was carried out under the banner of a moral crusade against Clinton's sexual escapades. Mahathir followed a similar course against Anwar. In both cases, the crusade was merely a smoke screen for the economic and political divisions among various factions of the capitalist class in both countries.

The hope for a better future lies with Malaysian workers and peasants and with those students and middle-class people who ally with them. It is the exploited workers themselves who must, despite the repression they face from all directions, find the means to organize against the global capitalist system. As the East Asian economic crisis spreads to Russia, Brazil, and, perhaps, to the rest of the world, the competition among North American, Asian, and European capitalists for control of cheap labor, markets, and raw materials will continue to intensify. It will spawn more wars like those in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Chechnya, and East Timor. If the working and middle classes line up behind the Anwars or Clintons of this world, they will become pawns in larger imperialist wars of the future.

Farhang Rajaee, in "Paradigm Shifts in Muslim International Relations Discourse," in the same issue of *Studies in Contemporary Islam,* discusses the challenge of developing a new international relations theory. I believe it is necessary to draw on an older theory developed by Marxists earlier in the twentieth century. When the rulers of Europe started World War I, those who were committed to the welfare of the masses denounced the war and refused to be drawn in on either side. Two decades later, when Japanese fascists proclaimed their pan-Asian slogan "Asia for the Asians," those committed to the welfare of the masses denounced the Japanese along with the European and North American imperialists. Today those committed to the interests of the workers must not ask the masses to choose between two camps of exploiters. Anwar Ibrahim may have decided that such a choice is "realistic," but he is wrong. Such a strategy will make all of us pawns in future inter-imperialist wars.

Studies in Contemporary Islam 1 (1999), 2:73–84

Image, Text, and Form : Complexities of Aesthetics in an American *Masjid*

‘Akel Isma‘il Kahera[*]

The Debate

The aesthetic features of the American *masjid* can be codified under the rubrics of *image*, *text*, and *form.*[1] These three features suggest an anachronistic language corresponding to the use of ornament, inscription, and architectural form. The occurrence of *image*, *text*, *and form*, therefore, prompts an inquiry that must address two pivotal thematic assumptions:

1. The primacy of prayer (*salat*) is a necessary criterion in determining the characteristics of a liturgical space suited for the American environment.[2]

2. The embellishment of a space for *salat* is a contingent matter. Although ornament, inscription, and architectural form have been nuanced as an integral aspect of the aesthetic language of a *masjid,* these features are essentially independent of any ritual demands.

Both assumptions provide the scope to study the aesthetic language of the American *masjid* apropos of the complexities of ornament, inscription, and architectural form. But we encounter, with regard to the second assumption, a

---

[*] Architect/historian ‘Akel Isma‘il Kahera is Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of Texas at Austin. His areas of specialization are Art, Architecture, and Urbanism. This essay is an excerpt from a forthcoming book. It is dedicated to the late Al-Hajj ‘Akel Karam and Al-Hajjah Khaledah Karam of Newark, NJ, Professor Muhammad ‘Izz-al-Dın, Al-Hajj Awad Isma‘ıl and Farouq ‘Abd al-Quddus.

[1] The discussion in this paper concerns the *masajid* (sing. *masjid*) built in America during a period of fifty years, 1950–90.

[2] The word *masjid* is derived from the Arabic verb *sajada*, to prostrate oneself (literally: he prostrated himself). The noun *masjid* bears a semantic connection to both the act of prostration and the place where one performs prostration. This is significant since, in Islam, the kernel of worship (*‘ibadah*) is *salat*, performance of which is rigidly tied not to a particular place or space but rather to a prescribed time. In conventional usage, the word *masjid* can be further specified with reference to function, for example, in the expressions *al-masjid al-jami’* (congregational mosque), *al-masjid al-mahalli* (local or neighborhood mosque), *masjid al-‘Id* or the *musalla* (a large open space used on the occasion of the *‘Id* prayer following Ramadan or the Hajj. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1960– (hereafter *EI*²), s.v. *masjid, musalla.* In the United States, the term *al-markaz al-Islami* (Islamic center) has been adopted since the American *masjid* incorporates an expanded use of all of these functions in addition to many other civic functions.

recurring use of an extant aesthetic precedent. In the history of Muslim architecture, we come upon instances in which the aesthetic features of an extant *masjid* has influenced a succeeding structure. There are exceptions to the foregoing premise, and the question of the degree to which an extant *masjid* can be considered in the classification of the American *masjid* is further complicated by the absence of documented history.[3] In addition, the features of the American *masjid* appear to be directly related to the phenomenon of a Muslim Diaspora. When building a *masjid*, the Diaspora community ascribes emotional value to the utilization of a well-known convention or an influencing custom from the Muslim world. The history of Muslim architecture is, therefore, a key consideration for an architect who aims to gratify a Muslim client. There are problems with the indiscriminate use of a well-known convention or an influencing custom. In attempting to replicate extant features from the past, the architect invariably produces a de facto facsimile whose aesthetics are severely compromised. For example, truckers were overheard commenting on their short wave radios as they drove past the *masjid* in Toledo, Ohio, which was under construction at the time. One trucker, responding to his friend who had asked him about the structure of the *masjid*, remarked that "it must be a new Mexican restaurant or something!"[4]

We may forgive the naïveté of the trucker inasmuch as he is not expected to recognize the appearance of a *masjid*. His comment, however, reinforces the following point: In our inquiry, the aesthetic features of an American *masjid* must be thoughtfully examined with respect to the idiosyncratic usage of *image, text*, *and form.* In the discourse that follows, these features will be examined, with particular attention given to the idiosyncratic treatment and the usage of *image, text*, *and form.*

---

[3] For example, early, modest structures were built or established by immigrant communities at Ross, North Dakota in 1929; and at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in the 1930s. See Yvonne Y. Haddad, *A Century of Islam In America,* Occasional Paper No.4, The Middle East Institute, Washington, DC, 1986. An indigenous African-American Muslim community existed in Allegheny County, Pittsburgh, in the 1940s. See Jameela A. Hakim, *History of the First Muslim Mosque of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,* n.p., n.d. Undoubtedly, early African American communities predate the immigrant communities, but they have so far been inadequately researched. Allan Austin provides us with an excellent study on African Muslims in antebellum America. See his seminal work, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, Garland Publishing, Inc. , New York, 1984.

[4] The anecdote was reported by the Imam of the *masjid*, who overheard the truckers' conversation. The mosque of Toledo, Ohio (completed in 1983), and that of Cleveland, Ohio (completed in 1995), both attempt to replicate a fifteenth-century Ottoman structure. The double minaret which both buildings employ had distinct political meaning in the Ottoman world from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries; the patron of a double minaret building was often a government minister (*wazır*) or a prince or princess. For a concise discussion of Ottoman architecture, see Ulya Vogt-Göknil, *Living Architecture: Ottoman,* London and Fribourg, 1966; Aptullah Kuran, *Sinan,* Institute of Turkish Studies, Washington, DC, and ADA Press, Istanbul, 1987; D. Kuban, art. *Sinan* in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Macmillan, New York, 1982, 4: 62–72.

The first debate examines the heterogeneous use of *image*. In the American *masjid, image* is appropriated in an anachronistic manner; it is used as a display of ornament without regard to time or context. *Image* is essentially concerned with satisfying an "emotional" condition that has historical efficacy to the immigrant Muslim community. The appropriation of a familiar *image* vividly evokes a mental picture or an apparition that closely resembles an extant form, object, or likeness emanating from the past.[5]

The second debate examines the appropriation of *form.* Architects have re-interpreted multiple geometric forms and spatial elements found in various extant models and decorative conventions. The intent is to produce a new aesthetic language that will be appropriate to the American environment. Inasmuch as the interpretation of *form* falls under the purview of the architect, the divergent ways in which architects have interpreted the architectural features of an extant model or decorative convention make an intriguing study. It should be noted that the attributes of *form* are distinct from those associated with *image.* Unlike *image*, *form* is concerned with the "ordering" of a design program for a *masjid*, and the production of a 'coherent' site condition. The interpretation of *form* is further complicated by the nuances of American architectural practice. For instance, architectural pedagogy considers *form* to be the shape, structure, and pattern of an object or the "secular" mode in which an object exists, acts, and manifests itself by derivation and by composition.[6]

The third debate examines the use of epigraphy; it concerns the treatment of textual inscriptions in a *masjid.* Because textual inscriptions have customarily been sanctioned in religious buildings in the Muslim world, it is an aesthetic convention that appeals to the Diaspora community as well. The use of epigraphy is further complicated by the fact that the linguistic makeup of the American congregation is very different; most American Muslims are non-Arabic speaking. Hence, the utilization of Arabic inscriptions in an American *masjid* raises several issues: Is the purpose of a pious inscription simply to evoke a "symbolic charge"—a term I borrow from Professor Oleg Grabar—or is it intended to be decorative, and a means to enhance the *image* of a structure or merely to adorn a wall?. Who reads the text of the inscription? Would a *masjid* with a pious inscription be more "reverent" than a *masjid* lacking an inscription?

---

[5] On the question of *image*, see T. Breitinger, *Critische Abhandlung von der Natur, den Absichten und dem Gebrauch der Gleichnisse* (Critical Treatise on the Nature, Purpose, and Use of Imagery) Zurich, 1740. Oleg Grabar describes image as "seeing" and "showing." See his "Islam and Iconoclasm," in Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin eds., *Iconoclasm*, Center for Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 1975, 44–50; Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word,* American University of Beirut Press, Beirut, 1981.

[6] For two contrasting analyses of *form*—one in religious and the other in secular terms—see Abraham Edel and Jean Francksen, "Form: A Philosophical Idea and Some of its Problems," *VIA* 5 (1982), 6–16, and Jan Holt, "Architecture and the Wall Facing Mecca," ibid., 24–28.

These issues are all equally provocative and deserve further discussion, for they are relevant to the ensuing discourse. I will return to them.

An overriding debate deals with the production of an *image*. Within a climate of uncommon architectural language, where extremes of architectural diversity exist, the meaning of an *image* can only be fostered only through use of one or more aspects of a "known" architectural convention. Since the immigrant community views Muslim "religious" architecture to be clearly more homogeneous than Western architecture, the use of a "known" architectural convention takes precedent. I would, however, hasten to add that the study of art and architecture anywhere, or indigenous to any culture, is cognizant of internal variations and aesthetic complexities.[7]

By reanimating an *image* from the past, the first generation of Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, have held firmly to the production of a recognizable religious *image*.[8] The utilization of a "religious *image*" gives outward expression and meaning to the presence of an Islamic practice in North America.[9] A recognizable *image* imparts, beyond the aspect of a place for communal worship, identity, and also produces an emotional charge. Emotions and sentiments are, therefore, evoked through the agency of memory; despite geographical, historical, and chronological nuances, the features of an extant image, when reanimated, become a common aesthetic ethos and is happily embraced by the community.[10] By recalling an *image* from the past, one no longer remains in an alien environment, but becomes part of an environment where belief and emotions are nourished by familiar aesthetic themes.

---

[7] For an analytical treatment of the homogenous nature of Muslim art and architecture, see Muhsin S. Mahdi, "Islamic Philosophy and the Fine Arts," in Proceedings of Seminar Four, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, held at Fez, Morocco, 9–12 October 1979.

[8] For an extensive discussion of this point, see Franco Ferrarotti, *Time, Memory and Society,* Greenwood Press, New York, 1990; especially his treatment of "Memory, Context and Tradition," 63–81. Ferrarotti suggests that "there is no possibility of memory without tradition." His argument was adumbrated by Alexander, who had dealt with the problem earlier. See S. Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity,* vols. 1 and 2, Dover Publications, New York, 1966, especially, 1:208–262

[9] The symbolic elements of church and synagogue architecture also render visual identity to the adherents of those faiths. The problem of Christian aesthetics and the contemporary church as a design problem also presents us with an interesting discussion. See Botond Bognar, "The Church and its Spirit of Place," *Architecture and Urbanism 8401*, 107–108; "Inquiry: Religious Buildings," *Progressive Architecture,* No. 12, 1990, 78–85; Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1989; James Alferd Martin, Jr., *Beauty and Holiness,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1990.

[10] For further discussion of the Diaspora Muslim community, see Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States*, Oxford University Press, England, 1987; E. Allen Richardson, *Islamic Cultures in North America*, The Pilgrim Press, NY, 1981; Kathleen M. Moore, *Al-Mughtaribun,* State University of New York, NY, 1995.

The Problem of Image

Familiar aesthetic themes, are evident in the first major congregational *masjid* constructed in North America, in Washington DC.[11] In selecting the "prototype" and aesthetic *image* of the *masjid*, the client turned toward fifteenth-century Mamluk Egypt[12] The *masjid* was designed by Mario Rossi, an Italian architect, who had designed several buildings of this type in Alexandria and Cairo between 1940 and 1950.[13] He designed the Washington *masjid* using what can be called a neo-Mamluk vocabulary. The resulting *image* discloses the geographical origins of Rossi's clients. The principal client was a Palestinian Muslim, but the financial sponsors of the building were several Muslim ambassadors from the Middle East, Turkey, and the Indian subcontinent, who were assigned to Washington, DC.

By recalling the past, Rossi's design for the *masjid* makes a statement about "memory" and *image* in two principal ways. First, it ignores the American architectural context, it makes no effort to address the prevailing architectural language or the "sense of place". Secondly, it reinforces "memory" by using traditional crafts and calligraphy that were imported from Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, along with the craftsmen whose skills were engaged in the decoration of the *masjid*.[14]

The plan of the building is a three-*iwan* hall framed by an exterior double *riwaq* arcade, which serves as an *extra muros* space or *ziyadah*. The orthogonal arcade remains perpendicular to the street, but the *masjid* is set out at a tangent to conform to the *qiblah* axis, which was calculated by using the Great Circle or the shortest distance when facing Makkah.[15] In Mamluk buildings, there would

[11] Conceived in 1949, the building was inaugurated by President Eisenhower in 1957. Chronologically, the Islamic center and *masjid* in Washington, DC, is not the first *masjid* or the oldest to be established in America. It was, however, the first in a major American city. Earlier, modest structures existed (see note 3, above). With the inauguration of the Washington *masjid*, the year 1957 signaled a major turning point in the development of *masjid* architecture in America. See Muhammad Abdul Rauf, *Al-Markaz al-Islami bi-Washington* (The Islamic Center of Washington) Colortone Press, Washington, DC, 1978.

[12] The Mamluks were a military dynasty who ruled Egypt from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries CE. They were prolific builders. See *EI*[2], s.v. *Mamluk*.

[13] The architect, Mario Rossi (also known as Muhammad or 'Abdur Rahman Rossi?), an Italian Muslim, was at that time employed by the Ministry of *Awqaf* (Religious Endowments) in Cairo. He designed similar buildings in Alexandria and Cairo, using the same design theme.

[14] The tile work pattern using decorative tiles from Turkey was secured to the walls of the prayer hall.

[15] There is an ongoing debate among American Muslims as to the most accurate method for calculating the *qiblah* direction. See, Al-Hajj Riad Nachef and Al-Shaykh Samir Kadi, *The Substantiation of The People of Truth That The Direction of Al-Qiblah In The United States And Canada is to The Southeast,* Islamic Studies and Research Division, The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects, Philadelphia, 1410/1990. The *qiblah* of the *masjid* in Washington, DC, was determined by reference to the Great Circle (Northeast) or the shortest distance.

be a *sahn* or courtyard open to the sky, which shares a contiguous space with the *iwans,* but, owing to climatic reasons, the whole central space of the *masjid* is covered with a modest clerestory dome. A *riwaq*, consisting of five contiguous Andalusian arches (perhaps symbolic of the five pillars of faith), is slightly proud of the façade, and serves as an entry portal. The *riwaq* is yet another anomaly. Andalusian arches are not to be found in Mamluk buildings.

The entry portal runs parallel to the street and for added emphasis it is recognized by an inscription band of neo-Kufic script at the upper part of the façade, which reads, "In houses of worship which Allah has permitted to be raised so that His name be remembered, in them, there [are such as] extol His limitless glory at morning and evening," (*An-Nur* 24:36). Several verses of the Qur'an have been arranged in a symmetrical configuration and in various patterns on the interior walls and ceilings of the *masjid*. The Divine Names of Allah (*asma' Allah al-husna*) and several familiar and often-quoted verses from the Qur'an such as (*Al-'Alaq* 96:1–5), are inscribed in large framed borders of *Thuluth* script along with smaller framed panels of ornamental Kufic script.[16]

Two inscription bands run horizontally across the face of the *mihrab*. The one at the top reads, "Verily we have seen the turning of your face to the heaven . . . ," and the lower band, just slightly higher than a man's height, continues, ". . . surely we shall turn you to a *qiblah* that shall please you." (*Al-Baqarah* 2:144). The *mihrab* is a hybrid element: its decorative treatment follows the Iznik and Bursa tradition of using glazed tiles—blue, red, and green—which are commonly found in Ottoman buildings.

The *masjid's* composition epitomizes an array of Muslim aesthetic themes; the overall *image* the inscriptions evoke is, in regard to the use of epigraphy, significant in two ways: first as a devotional theme and secondly as an emotional device. While the symbolic meaning of the inscriptions would satisfy one with a quiet, devotional disposition, the *masjid's form* evokes the *image* of a "religious prototype" that has been reanimated from the fifteenth century CE.

---

[16] *'Alaq* 96:1–5 is, chronologically, the first passage revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. In translation it is as follows:

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
Read! (or: *Recite!)*
In the Name of Thy Lord and Cherisher
Who Created—
Created man out of
A mere clot
Of congealed blood:
Proclaim! And thy Lord
Is Most Bountiful—
He who taught
With the pen,
Taught man that
Which he knew not.

Tradition versus Modernity

The production of an extant prototype demands traditional workmanship, materials, and skills, all of which are not readily available in the United States. Moving away from a strictly traditional approach, the designers of the Manhattan *masjid* have explored the use of modern technology as a compositional device without limitation. The Manhattan *masjid* confronts the issue of tradition and modernity by seeking to reinterpret various aesthetic themes associated with an extant model found in the Muslim world.[17] There are several observations to be made in this regard. First, the surface motifs reflect geometric themes which are employed as a unifying element throughout the *masjid's* interior and exterior. The geometric motifs bear a close resemblance to Mondrian's paintings, particularly his work entitled "Boogie Woogie Broadway." These motifs can be seen primarily on the carpet where worshippers assemble for prayer in horizontal and parallel rows facing the *qiblah*. They also appear in the surface treatment of the *minbar*, the exterior façade and in several other interior elements as well. Geometry is a fundamental theme in Muslim cosmology, but in this case it comes closer to a modernist, secular rather than to a traditional, cosmological, interpretation.

The inscriptions included in the decorative features of the *masjid's* interior are rendered in a geometric Kufic style. They are set in straight, horizontal, and vertical arrangements, which accommodate a modernist concept of order. For instance, around the *mihrab,* the geometric Kufic script reads, "Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth." The text is composed so as not to "corrupt" the *mihrab's* geometric themes, to which a stylized script such as *Thuluth* would have given a "frenzied" look.[18] A stylized *Thuluth* or a floral Kufic script would have been in disharmony with the overall modernist composition and surface treatment. The modernist interpretation and its resulting aesthetic *image* raises the question whether the *masjid's* composition has positively achieve a desired aesthetic balance using epigraphic and geometric themes.

Admittedly, the use of traditional inscriptions as a decorative element is in some respects incongruent with the idea of a secular, modernist interpretation of surface treatment. Using geometry as a spatial theme, aided by a corresponding

---

[17] Skidmore, Owens & Merrill, the designers of the $20-million *masjid* in New York (completed in 1990), explained that the client's design parameters for the building were dictated by two camps:

1. Camp A: the traditionalist, who demanded faithful adherence to a predetermined concept of the building dictated by historical models.

2. Camp B: the non-traditionalist, who allowed absolute freedom in the design vocabulary, but were rigidly conscious of the need not to violate any religious principles [such as the blatant use of imagery] even in a minute detail. See *Architectural Record*, 1992, 92-97.

[18] The six major scripts of Islamic calligraphy are *Diwani*, *Farsi*, *Nasta'liq*, *Kufi*, *Naskh*, *Ruq'ah*, and *Thuluth*. For further discussion, see Y. H. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, Shambhala, Boulder, 1979; Martin Lings, Yasin Hamid Safadi, *The Qur'an*, World of Islam Publishing Company Ltd., London, 1976.

angular Kufic inscription, produces a visual affinity; a less complementary script would have put the theme of composition and "order" at risk. The aesthetic treatment of the interior of the dome over the central prayer hall further illustrates this last point. The dome's structural ribs have been left bare and rudimentary, providing a bold geometric texture to the dome's inner face when seen from below. The inner drum of the dome is covered with a band of angular Kufic inscription, but the pattern of concentric ribs clearly dominates the composition, especially since the text of the band is largely unreadable from the main prayer hall below. Both compositional elements—epigraphy and geometry—were clearly intended by the architect to be an operative aesthetic device, and to have, besides, a specific religious character and *image,* connected to *text and form.*

Can an American *masjid* redefine the geometric themes found in Islamic cosmological patterns such as trajectory (*ramy*), line (*khatt*), balance (*ilmam*) and posture (*ashbah*)? In the final design of the mosque of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the architect's interpretation represents an introspective (*batin*) definition of the essence of geometry that aims to obtain a rich set of aesthetic ideas that are thematic, cosmological, and non-decorative. The ISNA *masjid* at Plainfield, Indiana, was designed by Professor Gulzar Haider.[19] The operational scheme of the edifice reinterprets the square, which is repeatedly rotated along the longitudinal trajectory (*ramy*) of the plan. The rotated square is anchored to one end of the plan in the *form* of a *masjid*. The *masjid* itself is a set of vertically juxtaposed squares. On the opposite end of the plan, a much larger pattern of the same theme assumes the purpose of administrative and ancillary services. When geometric elements of the square are juxtaposed, a set of very interesting additive and repetitive spatial cores are created. In this scheme, the multi-unit geometric themes employed have to do with a two-tiered order: first, their essence and esoteric (*batinı*) structure, and, second, their external (*zahiri*) appearance. There is no attempt to diffuse the hierarchies of spaces that emerge as a result of juxtaposition. Geometry is central to the design of the building, to the extent that Qur'anic inscriptions have been de-emphasized. Unlike the Manhattan *masjid*, where the inscriptions can be considered as simply a decorative agent, in Professor Haider's scheme, decoration is disassociated in order to allow the essence and primacy of geometry to dominate. By emphasizing the elements of a cosmological geometric *form* and de-emphasizing *text*, the architect has achieved a desired balance that considers the use of technology suited to the efficacy of American construction methods. The

[19] For a brief discussion of the architect's principles of designing, see *Places of Public Gathering in Islam*, Seminar Five, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980, 123–125. The building was completed in 1983, Professor Haider collaborated with Moktar Khalil AIA, of Dana Associates as the architect of record for the design of the project. Haider discusses the formative themes of Muslim aesthetics and the cosmological basis of belief in a very poignant essay entitled , "Faith is the Architect: Reflections on the Mosque," *Architecture and Comportment,* Nos. 3–4, 1995, 67–73.

scheme achieves this balance without having to compromise the spirit of the extant tradition of using geometry as an ordering principle[20]

The Meaning of Text

The decision to use or not to use inscription as part of the design vocabulary of an American *masjid* raises several unique problems. First of all, one must evaluate the symbolic value of an inscription. Secondly, the functional intent within the overall design concept of a *masjid* is equally to be considered. *Masajid* in America have de-emphasized the use of inscriptions, but perhaps for a very practical reason. Skilled calligraphers are not easily found within the American Muslim community, but the use of inscriptions raises several concerns: Would a worshipper—who may not be able to read the text—be more concerned with the decorative quality of the inscription or with the spiritual charge it emits? Would the space for prayer be enhanced by the presence of an inscription? The fact that such a large community of non-Arabic speaking Muslims reside in America raises the question whether inscriptions are necessary at all. Whether to use inscriptions or not is a matter that, in the end, each individual community must decide for itself. If we consider the premise of a precedent as a decisive criterion, we could argue that inscriptions are not used in many instances[21] Both the designer and the client may be persuaded by an imitative approach, in which case inscriptions are significant for the purpose of satisfying an "emotional" condition. On the other hand, the designer who takes an entirely rational approach would find that inscriptions are less significant and may even be viewed as being extraneous to a *masjid's* overall aesthetic condition.

Three crucial questions remain unanswered with respect to the composite use of aesthetics found in extant models.

1. Can a contemporary architect design a *masjid* that expresses the idiomatic qualities inherent in the composite features of an extant model?

---

[20] Geometry is common to Muslim cosmology, and its many manifestations, such as *ramy*, *khatt*, *ashbah*, and *ilmam*, can be seen in many extant examples of Muslim art and architecture. For a discussion of geometry and Muslim cosmology, see Nader Ardalan and Laila Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973; Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns*, Thames and Hudson, 1976.

[21] Arabic sources tell of no inscriptions in the Prophet's *masjid* at Madına during his lifetime or in the period of the four righteous caliphs. See Gazeh Bisheh, "The Mosque of the Prophet at Madınah throughout the First Century A.H.," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1979. Many West African *masajid* follow the principle employed at Madinah owing to their similarity in construction. For an analysis of the West African mosque, see Labelle Prussin, *Hatumere: Islamic Design in West Africa,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986; Akel Kahera, "The Architecture of the West African Mosque: An Exegesis of The Hausa and Fulani Model," M.Arch. thesis, MIT, 1987; Fabrizio Ago, *Moschee in Adobe*, Edizioni Kappa, Rome, 1982.

2. How does the architect define what the expressive qualities of an extant model actually are?[22]

3. Is it possible to achieve visual affinity with an extant model without using hyper-rationality or blatant mediocrity ?[23]

The Meaning of Form

In framing these three questions in a discourse, and in regard to *image, text and form,* it becomes evident that the aesthetic language of the American *masjid* remains an enigma. I would like to conclude with some tentative considerations about the complexities of the enigma apropos of the subject of historical continuity and the primacy of *'ibadah*. In taking into account the complexities of the enigma, we must consider the two assumptions made at the beginning of this essay. The first assumption postulates the primacy of *salat* as a necessary criterion in studying the characteristics of a devotional space. It regards *salat* as the essence of *'ibadah*, which has been summed up in a much-quoted advice of the Prophet Muhammad: "The whole earth is a *masjid* for you, so wherever you are at the time of prayer, make your prostration there."

Even in a most rudimentary setting, the place of prostration (*sujud*) retains an association with the ontological axis, the *qiblah*, which orients a worshipper or an edifice in the direction of the Ka'bah at Makkah.[24] *Masajid* everywhere in the world adhere to this ontological rule; it is both an esoteric affirmation and a universal expression of belief.[25] The indicator of the *qiblah,* the *mihrab*, may be expressed in two principal modes: as a simple, demarcated niche on the ground indicating the *qiblah,* or as an embellished vertical element in the *qiblah* wall of a religious edifice. But, constituting as they do an ontological axis, both the *qiblah* and its *mihrab* are understood by the community of believers (*ummah*) to be a liturgical prescription.[26] The *mihrab* symbolizes an aesthetic expression which endorses the adherence to a prescribed mode of devotion. A further

[22] For two opposing analyses of the expressive qualities of a contemporary *masjid* and the use of precedent, see architect Abdul Wahid al-Wakil's discussion of the problem in *Al-Muhandis* 5 (1412/1992), 2:78–79; see also the discussion by the Italian architect of the Rome *masjid* Paulo Portugesi in *Al-Benaa* 12 (1413/1993), 7:70–75.

[23] These and other questions have been investigated in Yasir Sakr, "The Mosque Between Modernity and Tradition: A Study of Recent Designs of Mosque Architecture in the Muslim World," M.Arch thesis, MIT, 1987; see also Martin Frishman and Hasan Uddin Khan, *The Mosque: History, Architectural Development and Regional Diversity,* Thames and Hudson, New York, 1994.

[24] The *qiblah* is universally recognized by its *mihrab,* which signifies the point where, facing Makkah, the *imam* stands, leading the faithful in prayer.

[25] An individual worshipper in an outdoor open field must also face Makkah. The act and the intention are *prima facie* states of belief and devotion.

[26] Iconography is consciously absent from the aesthetic features of *masjid* architecture since it constitute a principal agent of polytheism (*shirk*), which is a gross violation of the principle of the unity and oneness of Allah (*tawhid*). *Masajid* throughout the world adhere to this aesthetic principle.

manifestation of various indigenous expressions of the *mihrab* is also evident in myriads of regional and ethnic architectural idioms.

Viewed in terms of historical continuity, the *masjid* finds its expression in a valued origin with an affinity to the first *masjid* built at Madinah (622 CE). The development of the first prototype and its later aesthetic expressions were sustained via a commonly understood cosmological order.[27] The Muslim cosmological order can be defined by five ordering themes: *belief, order, space, materials, and symbols.*[28] These ordering themes find their primordial origin in the Madinan *masjid* (built in 622), which originally was a simple, demarcated orthogonal walled space, with an open court yard with two or three doors and, at one end, a shaded rectangular portico (*musalla*) facing Makkah[29] The portico was supported by columns which were spaced at regular intervals to support the roof structure. This simple structure became the paradigm for future *masajid*, which were built following the spread of Islam in the first century after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Later *masajid* demonstrate a regional development and refinement of the Madinan prototype. Extant regional building traditions outside Madinah had a direct influence on the seminal plan of the city's mosque. An aesthetic dimension evolved from The innovative use made of local building traditions in conjunction with the use of features conventionally perceived to be typical of the Madinan mosque led to the emergence of a distinctive aesthetic dimension. The Madinan prototype was thus conveniently modified to include idiosyncratic aesthetic themes found in later regional models.

Rational sciences were engaged as means of expressing the idiosyncratic aesthetic themes and a holistic architectural expression, in view of *belief*, *order*, *space*, *materials*, *and symbols*.[30] In the development of the American *masjid,* the use of rational sciences as an ordering device does not appear to be an end in itself inasmuch as one can determine from a consideration of the driving force of historical continuity in terms of *image*, *text*, and *form*.

---

[27] For an excellent discussion of the cosmological order, see Titus Burckhardt, *The Art of Islam: Language and Meaning*, World of Islam Festival Publishing Company Ltd. London, 1976, especially 56–76; Issam El-Said, *Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design*, ed. Tarek El-Bouri, Keith Crithchlow, and Salma Samar Damluji, Garnet Publishing Limited, Reading, England, 1993.

[28] For an extensive discussion of the question of perception, see Oleg Grabar's, "Symbols and Signs in Islamic Architecture," in Proceedings of Seminar Four, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1979.

[29] The Prophet's *masjid* originally faced Jerusalem, but a divine injunction in the second year of the migration to Madinah changed the direction to Makkah. See Qur'an 2:142–145, 149–150, trans., Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, The Muslim World League, New York, 1977; see also *EI*^{2}, s.v. *qiblah*.

[30] The formative principles of *belief*, *order*, *space*, *materials*, and *symbol*, described above, are unrelated to the Vitruvian principles of *firmness*, *commodity*, *and delight* (*firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas*), spelled out by Vitruvius in his *Ten Books on Architecture,* trans., Morris Hicky Morgan, Dover Publications, NY, 1960.

Summary

I have attempted to illustrate an overriding problem of aesthetic complexity apropos of the ordering of an American *masjid*. Owing to the importance attached by the community to the use of an extant aesthetic precedent, two idiosyncratic aspects of *image*, *text*, *and form* emerge: A "collective memory" imposes itself as an operative aesthetic device along with a corresponding sense of historical continuity.

The American *masjid* is an edifice in evolution. In the very act of attempting to define its ordering principle, we are searching for a definition of a new but enduring regional identity—an identity with a sense of historical continuity. Art historians can contribute to the inquiry by aiding in a discourse that interprets the exigencies of meaning and the usage of an extant precedent. Allowing the embodiment of an intrinsic aesthetic meaning to become an objective component in the idiom and in the ordering of a new regional expression would help define more clearly the complexities of *image*, *text*, *and form*.[31]

More specifically and to the point: art historians, architects, and their Muslim clientele have much to share with one another in the discourse. An acute reading of the history of Muslim art and architecture can cultivate and direct the evolution of a set of aesthetic conditions for the American *masjid*.[32] Ultimately, these conditions would enhance the aesthetics of the American *masjid*, thereby allowing it to acquire an unconstrained regional character. The aesthetic disposition of the American *masjid* must recognize the element of historical continuity, but it must also exclude the use of aesthetic anomalies apropos of the idiosyncrasies of *image*, *text*, and *form.*

---

[31] For further discussion of this point, see Sibel Bozdogan, "Journey to the East: Ways of looking at the Orient and the question of representation," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 41 (1988), 38–45; 43 (1989), 63–64; Ivan Zaknic on Le Corbusier's comments on the Blue Mosque of Istanbul in *La Voyage d'Orient,* trans. of Le Corbusier's Eastern Journey, *Oppositions,* 18 (1979), 87–99; Christopher Alexander, "Battle: The History of a Crucial Clash between World-System A and World-System B," *Japan Architect*, 8508, 15–36. I have discussed the question of the search for aesthetic truth while building a contemporary building in a traditional context. See my discussion of the design for "The ENPPI Headquarters Building, Cairo," *Mimar,* 38 (1991), 68–76.

[32] One text that could provide an interesting discourse is Manuel Toussaint's *El Arte Mudejar en America*, Editorial Porrua, Impreso en Mexico, 1946.

Book Reviews

Ralph Braibanti. *Islam and the West: Common Cause or Clash?* Washington, D.C.: Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding: History and International Affairs, 1999. 56 pages. Occasional Paper Series 15.

Written by the distinguished scholar Ralph Braibanti, this essay, which is published concurrently in the *American Journal of lslamic Social Sciences,* 16 (1999), 1, confronts the anti-Islamic sentiment that has infected the West. It does so by emphasizing the views which Muslims share with many Christians. The author's main argument is that Muslims and Christians have enough in common to launch joint action programs to attempt to reverse the trend toward the complete secularization of society. The monolithic view of a homogeneous Western world which is spreading its decadent culture through contemporary globalization leaves out of account the numerous Christians who would sympathize with Muslim ideas regarding the need to reestablish a moral universe. Various examples of cooperation are cited as proof of the possibility of a new partnership: not Islam against the West, but Islam *and* the West against the decline of civilization.

The recognition of a "common cause" between Muslims and Christians of "safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom" is traced back to the 1965 ecumenical decree of Vatican II. Also, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is seen as a point of doctrinal commonality between Islam and Catholicism since Muslims believe in the annunciation and virgin birth of Christ. While Muslims are not Christians, the miracles ascribed to Christ in the Gospels as well as those related to his birth are accepted as literal truth. These beliefs of Muslims sometimes lead Muslims to protest when the Western media do not treat the person of Christ with due reverence. It is suggested that present-day Christians might learn from the example of Muslims, who will not tolerate blasphemy.

These commonalities lay a foundation for possible joint action on social values. Rather than competing for converts to either Islam or Christianity, both groups would do well to cooperate to halt the moral and ethical decline of societies the world over. Muslims in Western countries like the United States, Britain, Canada, and France are encouraged to participate fully in the political life of these democratic societies by voting, organizing interest groups, and getting elected to public office. The author suggests that Christians and Muslims

can work together on a variety of social issues such as those of drugs and crime and the promotion of the sanctity of the family, protection of the environment, and solidarity of the community—to name only a few points of common concern.

Although some of the public policy issues pinpointed by the author sound like a litany exclusively proposed by the religious right in America, and many American women will take exception to the uncritical support of many of the Vatican's less popular positions, there are still many undeniable "Christian" values promoted. Muslim ideas of social justice based on compassion and equality which necessitate a more equitable distribution of social goods mirror Christian ideas. Many Christians are also aware of the social "deficiencies" of contemporary society, which fails to guarantee our children an adequate education, or even a safe and healthy environment in which to thrive. Christians need to be concerned with the undeniable fact referred to by the author—namely, that it has become "fashionable" to present oneself as an atheist or agnostic. The threat to the way of life of all those who believe in an "inner life" is real.

This book provides a much-needed corrective to distortions of Islam perpetrated by the media, which define the religion in terms of its fanatical fringe element. Even further information—about the resemblance of Islamic values to Christian values—is needed for the American public to see the virtue of interfaith dialogue, which can lead to common action that can contribute to the building of a better America. This is a book well worth reading and its advice is well worth taking.

Joy Hendrickson
Hampton University

Sulayman S. Nyang. *Islam in the United States of America*. Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1999. 165 pages. PB $14.95. ISBN 1-87103-69-9.

The book under review examines the history of the introduction and evolutionary growth of Islam in the United States. Although Islam is the youngest of the Abrahamic faiths, it is the world's fastest growing religion. Its presence in rich industrialized nations like the United States is a recognized fact. As the author says in his brief Introduction to the book, Islam is here to stay in the United States, side by side with Christianity and Judaism.

The discovery of the New World by Columbus resulted in the transplantation of millions of African slaves to America, where they would work on the farms of white settlers. A large number of slaves were captured in West Africa, a region where Islam had already struck deep roots after its birth in Arabia. Raising such issues in the opening chapter, Professor Nyang succinctly narrates

the story of African Muslim slaves in North America. But the nature of slavery itself (as it was practiced in America), coupled with the separation of children from their enslaved African Muslim mothers and fathers, proved to be a great impediment to the rise of Islam in North America. For one thing, the operation of the institution of slavery in the United States prevented the African Muslim slaves from freely practicing their religion. This lack of religious tolerance caused many African Muslim slaves to convert to Christianity, the preferred faith of the slave "masters." In the midst of this religious uncertainty and dilemma experienced by the Muslim slaves in the New World, "the Futa Jallon, a [West African] region of expert traders who practiced a strident form of Islam," according to Edward Ball's *Slaves in the Family* (1999), ". . . banned the capture and sale of Muslims" as slaves. In the same chapter, the author talks about the new wave of Muslim immigrants that came to the United States during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Among these were Muslims from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Southern and Central Europe, as well as Central Asia. Some of the Muslim immigrants went back home, but many decided to stay, hoping to realize the American Dream. The perception of Islam took a turning point with the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979; the impact of the revolution was felt deeply in the United States because of its close alliance with the ousted shah.

Some of the points highlighted in Chapter 1 overlap with the points made in Chapter 2, in which the author talks about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent creation of new states such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. He also discusses the involvement of Muslims in the building of institutions and organizations in order to consolidate Islam in North America.

Chapter 3 discusses the professions and occupations of the Muslim immigrants in America. Those immigrants who could not communicate fluently in English became merchants, petty traders, and peddlers. Marriages between Muslim immigrants and their American hosts contributed to the spread of Islam in the United States. In order to protect the values and principles of Islam in a predominantly Christian America, the Muslims decided to establish a system which the author calls "intergroup cooperation." But social activities like dancing, drinking, and "dating American style" were not allowed to prevail within the confines of Muslim families in America.

In Chapter 4, Nyang informs the reader that "black Africans came to the New World before Christopher Columbus," but adds the caveat that there is not enough evidence to substantiate such claims, notwithstanding the fact that the original sources in this regard had come from such credible scholars as Ivan van Sertima and Basil Davidson. The author raises some interesting points when he cites President Lyndon Johnson's immigration reform laws of the 1960s, which led to an increase in the number of Muslim immigrants in the United States. In the Cold War period, both the United States and the Soviet Union catered to clients from the developing regions. When the Soviets opened the doors of

higher learning to students from the developing countries, America with its enormous wealth counterbalanced the Soviet initiative by launching scholarship programs. Muslim students from poor countries benefited from this Cold War rivalry. Despite the successful penetration of Islam in American society, however, institution-building by the Muslims for "greater Islamization" in America did not pick up enough momentum in this phase. This was due to sectarianism and the differences in approach among Muslims, whether conservative or liberal. In other words, the Islam *Ummah*, while theoretically a single entity, has forces of schism and division present in it.

In Chapter 5, Nyang identifies two major indigenous Muslim communities in the United States—namely, the Elijahian group, which consists of those African Americans who follow the teachings of the late Honorable Elijah Muhammad, who, during his leadership of the Nation of Islam, advocated a "rigid separation of races," and the Webbian group, which consists of those who followed Alexander Russell Webb, a white American diplomat who converted to Islam when he served as U.S. Consul in Manila in the early 1890s. Webb preached an Islam that was "color blind" and could be embraced by any human being. While some African Americans accepted Islam, intending to change their lives in accordance with its teachings, others perceived the religion "as an ideological weapon in the fight against white racism."

Chapter 6 also raises the significant issue of identity—which became a major challenge for Muslims in North America. Indeed, as the African scholar Ali A. Mazrui notes in his "African Series," "[T]o know who you are is the beginning of wisdom." Since Islam is a way of life, Nyang argues, Muslims want to live in America with their own identity, and to see their Muslim communities nationwide as an integrated part of the American political life. Today, Muslims are part of mainstream American society, and even serve in the U.S. military.

The author discusses the role of the Islamic press in the United States in Chapter 7, where he talks about Muslim magazines, newspapers, and refereed journals produced in the United States. Though some works have folded, more and more publications continue to appear. In Chapter 8, Nyang gives a statistical analysis of Islamic centers in Canada and the United States. For instance, there are 250 mosques and centers in Canada and more than 1,000 mosques and centers in the United States.

Despite these impressive figures, the author shows his dissatisfaction about the negative reports Islam receives from the American print and electronic media. Some non-Muslim American journalists, intellectuals, and priests or preachers are disinclined to find out about and understand the true nature of Islam. The situation was further exacerbated with the eruption of the Iranian Islamic Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini. The media gave a fabricated version of Islamic fundamentalism. The majority of American intellectuals, preachers, journalists, and students do not know the difference between an Islamic state and a Muslim country. They are not aware that many Muslim

countries are not true Islamic states. The American media "confuses Islam with Arab nationalism" and the struggle for freedom with terrorism.

In the final chapters, the author speaks about "televillage," and considers the role of science and technology in bringing human beings closer to one another than ever before. Televillage has indeed reinforced human interdependence, which underscores the need for Muslims and other religious adherents "to live together and to spend greater time trying to understand one another." In America, Muslims are aware of what their religion permits (*halal*) and what it forbids (*haram*). With this in mind, Muslims can coexist peacefully and harmoniously with the other People of the Book and with atheists alike. This stance on the part of Muslims does not, however, imply that Muslims will compromise their unequivocal belief in the unseen (God and His angels) and life beyond the grave (eternal world).

Professor Nyang's book is a well-written work, though part of the weakness of the study lies in the repetitions the reader will come across. The repetitions are understandable, since the volume is a collection of essays written for and presented at conferences during the past several years. The strength of the book is the clarity of vision presented in it and the powerful message it conveys. The book is well documented, citing as it does a variety of both primary and secondary sources; it also has a select bibliography and a general index. One would recommend this book to students in Islamic studies, American government, and even to political decision-makers, as it will enlighten them about the active role Muslims will continue to play in nation-building in the United States of America.

Mohammed-Bassiru Sillah
Hampton University

Murad W. Hofmann. *Islam 2000*. 2nd rev. ed. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1418/1997. 72 pages. PB $6.95. ISBN 0-915957-70-1.

Murad Hofmann is a German convert to Islam. He has had a distinguished career as an scholar-diplomat. He has graduate degrees in law from Munich and Harvard, and has served for over thirty years in the German foreign service; for several years he was Germany's ambassador to Algeria and Morocco. He embraced Islam in 1980. He is retired, and makes his home in Istanbul. *Islam 2000* is one of his several works on Islam.

In the Preface, the author states the thesis and approach of his book: He intends to describe "where the Muslim world is at the threshold of the twenty-first century and what it takes to make Islam the relevant religion for that century—worldwide," and to this end he has had "to be severely critical of both the Occident and the Muslim world." Seven pithy chapters follow. The first,

entitled "A Bit of Muslim Futurology," outlines three Muslim views of Islamic history: one pessimistic (Islam has constantly been declining since the Prophet's period), one optimistic (Islam has constantly been progressing), and one middle-of-the-road (there have been ups and downs). Each view, he says, can be supported with reference to the fundamental sources of Islam. Hofmann himself leans toward the optimistic view, for the next chapter is entitled "A Bit of Optimism," in which he cites several facts to show that Islam, whose viability as a religion was doubted by nineteenth-century Western thinkers, has in the twentieth century become "the most topical media subject of the last quarter of this century" (7). In contrast to Islam, "Christianity is going through a virtual change of paradigm, and the so-called 'project of modernism' is failing under own very eyes" (9).

In Chapter 3, "Christology Revisited," Hofmann holds Christianity responsible for the rise of atheism and agnosticism in the West, and, citing the radical interpretations of the status of Jesus by several modern Christian thinkers—Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Karl Rahner—speculates that "For the first time in fourteen centuries there is a very real chance that Christian teaching will conform to the Jewish, Christian, and Qur'anic images of Jesus" (15–16).

Chapter 4, "What Islam is Up Against," opens with the statement that it is "likely that the imminent collapse of the established Christian churches will increase, in our multireligious supermarkets, the demand for esoteric experiences" (17). This possibility leads him to think that "Islam in the United States and in Europe . . . will most likely have to face in the twenty-first century the very mixture of attitudes so typical of Makkah at the time of our Prophet: neopaganism, agnosticism, atheism, neopolytheism, and ethnocentrism (*'asabiyyah*), namely, people who worship idols like cocaine, astronomy, Boris Becker, or Claudia Schiffer" (ibid.). The new battle line will be between "a minority of God-believing people—Muslims in the original sense of the word—[and] the majority of people for whom the notion of God has increasingly become irrelevant and meaningless" (ibid.). After the collapse of communism around 1990, we are witnessing the rise of a monoculture—Western in origin. "If the Islamic world does not want to live in such a monoculture, it must make a monumental effort to realize, against so many odds, a twenty-first century *dar al-Islam*, i.e., a theocentric—not Eurocentric—society in which God's word is law and Islamic civilization can again be brought to a flowering" (20). Muslims can accomplish this goal by reconstructing Islamic thought and practice "to a point where the Muslim world can withstand the tide of postmodernism on all fronts: education, communications, political science, law, economy, and technology" (ibid.). Hofmann dismisses the notion that the West wants a dialogue with Islam: "Why should the West be interested in reopening questions of transcendental character with Muslims after it has succeeded so splendidly in banishing such questions from its own agenda?" (21.). Hofmann develops this

view further in Chapter 5, "Islam and the West: Another Showdown?" Here he observes that, in the West, "*Islam is the only religion that cannot count on benign neglect or sincere toleration*" (27; author's emphasis). The West, he says, continues to be implacably hostile to Islam and Muslims. "Bosnia," he says, "is not the last but only the most recent crusade . . . In fact, *the age of the Crusades never ended*" (31; author's emphasis).

In Chapter 6, "How to Avoid Catastrophe and Serve Islam," the author outlines his program of reform for the Muslim world. Reform effort needs to be made in the following areas: "education technology, women's emancipation, human rights, theory of state and economy, magic and superstitious practices, and communication" (41). The reforms are predicated upon a clear distinction between "Islam as a religion and Islam as a civilization," between "sound and fabricated *ahadith*," between Shariah and *fiqh*, and between "Qur'an and Sunnah" (ibid.). Among the issues that are harming the Islamic cause in the West are the issue of women's status and rights in Islam and the issue of human rights. Hofmann writes several pages to discuss these issues (44–51). He also touches upon aspects of the Islamic political and economic doctrines (51–56), and takes a critical look at Sufi cultic practices and divination among Muslims (57–59). He makes a call for Muslim unity, but adds that he is not calling for Muslim uniformity (61). He allows different interpretations of Islam that might be offered by Muslims of various geographical regions, but he warns that there can be no German or American Islam, even though one may speak of an Islam in Germany or the United States (62). He concludes the chapter by observing that "the Muslim world seems to be particularly inept to portray itself attractively. An unshaven Yasir Arafat with a pistol on his belt on television is about the best propaganda anti-Arab forces could wish to have, and that for free" (63). He thinks that only Muslims who have been raised in the West can competently engage the Western audience in conversation (64).

Chapter 7 is entitled "The Task ahead of Us: What a Task!" Here Hofmann stresses the need to distinguish between the essential and the marginal in Islam (66), "to distinguish between the small number of eternal and unchangeable divine decrees found in the indisputable text of the Qur'an from the bulk of rules and ordinances, man-made and based on less secure textual material, found in the legal treatises of the venerable fuqaha'" (70). He is of the view that the most important work for the rejuvenation of Islam in the twenty-first century will be done by Muslims living in the West (71–72).

I have provided a rather detailed summary of the book because I consider it an important work. The book contains a valuable analysis of the religious and intellectual scene of the Muslim world. The author seems to have a sound command of the traditional Islamic sources, and he is obviously at home in the Western intellectual tradition. Not everything he says is new; and he himself acknowledges his deep debt to Muhammad Asad (the Austrian convert to Islam, formerly Leopold Weiss, who distinguished himself as a Muslim scholar) and

others. But Hofmann has a gift for aptly summing up religious trends and intellectual movements, and his comments on a number of subjects—such as issues in Christology and modernity—are worth pondering, just as his program of reform for the Muslim world powerfully reinforces similar programs proposed by other modern Muslim thinkers. True to the promise he makes in the Preface, he is unsparing in his critique of both the West and the Islamic world. His observations, which are often perceptive and trenchant, are made with a candor that must evoke the reader's admiration. A few criticisms are offered below.

1. Hofmann represents those Muslims who believe that the possibility of genuine dialogue between Islam and the West does not exist—not because Islam is unwilling to hold such a dialogue, but because a secular West, having already gotten the better of one religion—Christianity—would be least interested in discussing with Islam issues of a transcendental nature. But here one might ask whether such issues are the only possible subject matter of such a dialogue. Is it not possible for Muslim civilization (assuming that such an entity exists and can be identified as such) to interact with Western civilization on other grounds and work for a common cause? Second, If Western culture is unwilling to take the initiative and meet Islam half way, can Islam take the initiative and meet the West half way? Must Islam be reactive? Does it have, or can it evolve, a creative or proactive agenda of its own? Third, even though Western culture today is the dominant culture in the world, it is not the only culture Islam has to contend with. How does Islam propose to deal with such non-Western cultures as Buddhist or Hindu? One might argue that what Muslims need is a "general theory" of non-Muslim civilization—a theory whose factual base does not consist solely of data gathered from the study of a single—Western—civilization.

2. The category of the West is problematic. In reading *Islam 2000*, one cannot escape the impression that Hofmann regards the West as monolithic. But if Islam may not be stereotyped as a monolithic entity, the West may not be stereotyped as such either. For one thing, there is a noticeably strong movement, in the West, of conversion to Islam—as Hofmann himself is proof. For another, one might ask, Which civilization in history has always taken a thoroughly compassionate and conscientious view of others? Put differently, whose responsibility is it to present a favorable image of a civilization? The West may be responsible for stereotyping Islam, but have not Muslims, through their apathy and inaction, aided and abetted that stereotyping? And, incidentally, have Muslims not stereotyped the West? If stereotyping stands in the way of true understanding between the West and Muslims, then perhaps more than one party is responsible for creating the problem.

3. Equally problematic, at least in the context of this book, is the category of Islam—or, rather, of the Islamic world. Hofmann seems to pit the abstract theory of Islamic religion against the empirically lived reality of the Western

system of life. Needless to say, any such confrontation—or comparison—can be manipulated to the advantage of theory, which can be presented as a coherent whole as opposed to a system in operation that can be shown to be contradiction-ridden. But, quite apart from the fact that the lived reality of Islam in different parts of the Muslim world is not exactly marked by a high degree of coherence or consistency, one can say that the Islamic and Western worlds do not, perhaps, exist as discrete entities. Westernism does not flourish somewhere beyond the borders of the Islamic world; it exists right in the midst of the Muslim world, and Western technological models and intellectual systems have, whether we like it or not, becomes part and parcel of the life of hundreds of millions of Muslims. An important part of the homework for all Muslim thinkers is to figure out how Western modes of thought and culture penetrated the Muslim world in the first place. The West would not have become dominant had it not been stronger, but, conversely, the Islamic world would not have come in last had it not had a few chinks in its armor.

4. Hofmann speaks of radical developments within Christianity—developments that, according to him, have undermined the very foundation of Christianity. The implication is that Islam has stood its ground against the winds of modernity. But if Christianity has been battered by modernity, then it may be because it was this religion that bore the brunt of the onslaught of modernity. What are the grounds for predicting that Islam will emerge unscathed from a full-scale war with modernity? It would be unfair to charge a serious thinker like Hofmann with triumphalism, but it may be a little early to reach definitive conclusions about the relationship between religion and science. Twentieth-century physics may be different from nineteenth-century physics, but it is a moot point whether modern science has, to use Hofmann's words, "reopened the door for the entry of religion into science" (23). Anthony Giddens, author of *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, 1990), powerfully argues that "we are moving into [a period] in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalised and universalised than before" (3; see also 47 ff.). As a side note, one may say that Christianity, in its conflict with science, may appear to be down, but it is certainly not out, as can be witnessed by the enormous amount of literature that is continually being produced by deeply committed Christian scholars on issues arising from that conflict.

In spite of the above criticisms to which it may be subject, the book is a worthy contribution to the still small body of what may be called the Muslim literature of self-reflection. Hofmann raises a number of important issues, and a candid debate on these issues, both inside the Muslim community and between Muslims and non-Muslims, can only help to clarify the vision of Muslims as they move into the new millennium.

Mustansir Mir
Youngstown State University

Lee Levine, ed. *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Continuum, 1999. 516 pages. £50 HB. ISBN: 0 8264 1024 3

I

Exactly nine hundred years ago, Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders and temporarily became part of Latin Christendom, only to be recaptured by Salahuddin a century later. The Muslims had conquered it, without bloodshed, in 638 from the Christian Byzantines. The history of Jewish Jerusalem began with King David about a thousand years before Christ. In the words of II Samuel: "The king and his men set out for Jerusalem against the Jebusites who lived there . . . David captured the stronghold of Zion; it is now the city of David." After conquering the city, David restored and rebuilt it, making it his capital; he brought the Ark of the Lord up to Jerusalem where it was housed temporarily until an appropriately splendid Temple could be built.

This volume, based on papers delivered at a conference held in Jerusalem, explores the history and significance of Jerusalem from its foundation until today—three millennia in which the city has aroused and witnessed phenomenal religious enthusiasm and unprecedented bloodshed. Thirty-three scholars attempt to locate the chosen city in the dogmatic belief and liturgical practice of Judaism and her two sister faiths. As with most conference proceedings, the material is often disjointed, and some issues are explored repetitively while others are completely overlooked. Much linguistic competence is required and one can only praise the scholars invited. Original literature on Jerusalem is in nine languages with a further six for major secondary sources. Moreover, we have inscriptions in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Aramaic; fragments in Arabic but written in Hebrew characters; travel books by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim pilgrims to Jerusalem; court documents in Arabic and Latin; and pious literature in praise of Jerusalem in several languages—not to mention the extensive archaeological data for the holy city. It is not in vain that Jerusalem is sacred to three religions.

The book is in six parts; the first two explore Jewish Jerusalem and contain nine pieces, two translated from the Hebrew. Surprisingly, Jerusalem's sanctity was established late in the day: the city is not mentioned in the Torah where places such as Shechem and Bethel, associated with the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, were consecrated. It was David, the adulterous king of Israel, who single-handedly created the city's sanctity. He acquired the 20-acre Canaanite village from the Jebusites and fortified and expanded it. His son Solomon actually built the temple envisaged by his father, a man of war. But God had already signaled his pleasure at the choice of Jerusalem: David had built an altar there and placed on it burnt offerings and Yahweh answered him with fire from heaven.

It was under King Josiah (640–609 BC) that Jerusalem attained total cultic

centrality as the place where the sanctuary stood and thus the only place where sacrifices were acceptable to God. Despite the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Babylonians in 587 BCE and the exile of the Jews, the city was constantly in the minds of Israel's prophets. Ezekiel, notwithstanding the destruction of the city, defiantly calls her the center of the world and names her "The Lord is there." The Temple was rebuilt by the returning exiles with the permission of King Cyrus of Persia when Judah had become part of the Persian Empire.

Part 3 deals in great detail with the Christian Byzantine city of Jerusalem from 324 to 638, while Part 5 contains eight articles about Jerusalem in Jewish and Christian perspective during the medieval millennium, the fourth to 15th centuries. This is a total of 17 papers, over half the book The city had been destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE when the new Christian movement was still struggling in its infancy. The Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, built on the ruins of Jewish Jerusalem in the early second century, was essentially a pagan city.

Christianity had become theologically the verus Israel and as such Jerusalem no longer mattered. The city of David and Solomon, of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, the city of the first and second Temples, was no more. For many Christians, it had been justly destroyed for rejecting Jesus the Risen Savior who had predicted its downfall.

After the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine, Christianity became an imperial power and, to mark Christ's victory over paganism, Constantine in the autumn of 335 built the Church of the Resurrection on the actual ruins of the Temple of Aphrodite. The city remained a Christian city, except for a brief lapse into idolatry under Julian the Apostate, until the Muslim conquest in the seventh century.

What emerges clearly from these papers is that while Judaism has always had a consistent attitude toward Jerusalem, the Christian attitude is confused and inconsistent. For example, Augustine follows St. Paul in rejecting altogether the earthly and sinful Jerusalem in favor of the heavenly version of the city. The author of Revelation too has set his heart on the heavenly Jerusalem. But, equally, many other Christians, mindful of the city's spiritual centrality in the life and ministry of Jesus, hesitate to dismiss it. In Paul's day, Jerusalem was still the mother Church whose approval was required for converting the Gentiles. Moreover, the Holy Spirit was initially received by Christians in Jerusalem.

One contributor quotes the fourth century St Gregory of Nyssa as saying: "We believed in the resurrection before we saw the tomb." There is, of course, no New Testament authority for pilgrimage to Jerusalem; Jews, however, are required by law to visit its holy sites. After the loss of Jerusalem to the Muslims in 638, Christians increasingly attached more significance to the heavenly or mystical Jerusalem, an attitude for which there was ready scriptural support. A Christian contributor sums it up perceptively: "An indication of the permanence

of this ambivalence of Jerusalem in Christian consciousness perhaps is reflected by the fact that although there are at least five Bethlehems in the U.S.A., the only other Jerusalem I could find in the atlas is located in Olutanga, a small, remote island in the southern Philippines'.

II

Part 4 explores Jerusalem in the early Middle Ages when the city was ruled by Muslim caliphs. There are no Muslim contributors. However, the material is objectively written. Israel produces some of the world's finest scholarship on Arab Islam, especially on themes unconnected with narrowly political anxieties about the survival of the Zionist state. There is an exceptionally learned piece on "Jerusalem and Mecca" by the late Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, to whom the volume is dedicated.

Two scholars note the destruction of the Church of the Resurrection, popularly known as the Holy Sepulcher, by order of the Caliph al-Hakim in 1009. To this bald claim, one contributor adds that there were expensive cultic objects in it. This is misleading as it stands implying that official Islam sanctioned this act of sacrilege. In fact, al-Hakim, a Fatimid Ismaili caliph, had started a general campaign against all Jews and Christians, the so-called People of the Book. His measures opposed the Qur'an which acknowledged the partial truth of Judaism and Christianity and ordained the judicial principle of responsibility (*dhimmah*): Jews and Christians were granted formal protection under the political wing of Islam in exchange for a nominal tax. Since the caliphal action was against Islam's holy law, orthodox Muslim clerics condemned al-Hakim as an apostate. He also persecuted the Sunni Muslim population in neighboring Egypt and disappeared mysteriously in 1021, probably assassinated by a Muslim. His followers, the Druze of Lebanon and Syria, to this day consider him to be an incarnation of God and to be alive and in hiding.

None of the contributors quotes the Qur'an's account of the temporary loss of Jerusalem to the Persian Sasanids in the early seventh century. In a rare notice of secular history, the Qur'anic chapter entitled The Romans, revealed in 615, makes a brief comment on the hostility between Persia and the Christian Roman Empire, at a time when the tide of pagan Persian conquest over the Christian Romans was running strong. Beginning in 603, these two powers fought to the death for twenty-five years, both already greatly enervated by their age-old conflict. The Qur'an predicted a reversal of fortunes. By 629, the restoration of fragments of the true cross to Jerusalem was taken to confirm the prediction of Christian success against the pagan Zoroastrians of Persia.

The concluding part, "Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages and Modern Era," contains two occasional pieces of purely academic interest: "The Ethiopian Community in Jerusalem until circa 1650" and 'The Greek Orthodox

Community of Jerusalem in International Politics." This is hardly an adequate discussion of a city whose modern era is as turbulent as its ancient past. There is nothing on the Ottoman conquest of Palestine in 1517, not to speak of Jerusalem's currently uncertain future.

In the past decade alone, there have been four known attempts to demolish the Temple Mount area, known to Muslims as the Noble Enclosure (Haram ash-Sharif) and sacred to Jews because of the adjoining Wailing Wall. General Moshe Dayan, Israel's sagacious military commander, after the Six Day war in 1967, actually left the Temple Mount in Muslim hands despite Israel's capture of the Arab Quarter. This wise concession continues to enrage committed Zionists and Orthodox Jews and those Christian fundamentalists who believe in the imminent Second Coming of Jesus. This sincere but competitive piety must puzzle and fascinate the secular observer of the Jerusalem scene.

Shabbir Akhtar
Bradford, United Kingdom.

Correction

Please note the following correction to Professor Rashiduzzaman's review in *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1999), page 86, line 19: During the civil war of 1971, Ziaur Rahman was not "a military general" (as reported in the review) but a major in the Pakistan Army.

Studies in Contemporary Islam, a refereed journal, is published semiannually, in spring and fall. It is devoted to the understanding, review, analysis, and critique of contemporary Islamic religious, intellectual, and philosophical developments as well as sociopolitical changes in Islamic societies. The journal aims to be interdisciplinary and international in its range and coverage. It is intended as a forum to foster dialogue and communication among scholars, not to promote a particular point of view or ideology.

Notes to Contributors. Two copies of manuscripts should be sent to Mumtaz Ahmad, Department of Political Science, Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia 23668 (junaid@erols.com), with an electronic copy e-mailed to Mustansir Mir (mmir@cc.ysu.edu). *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th edition) is the preferred reference for format and style. Authors will be requested to supply accepted manuscripts on disk. It is assumed that a manuscript submitted to *Studies in Contemporary Islam* is the author's original work and is not under submission anywhere else. Books for review should be sent to the following address: Center for Islamic Studies, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio 44555-3448. (330-742-1625; 330-742-3448 (messages); 330-742-1600 (fax)).

Subscription. Institutional $30, individual $15. Checks, made payable to *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, should be mailed to the Center for Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University.

Information. For further information, contact the Center for Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University.