

Some Recent Publications on Islam/Muslims

Muslims' Greatest Challenge: Choosing Between Tradition and Islam by Omar Ramahi, Black Palm Books 2019

This book is an attempt to explore why Muslims are in conflict with themselves, and why Muslims have been living in an isolation and intellectual vacuum. This book is an attempt to find out why Islam, as embodied in the Mushaf, calls for a sharply different set of norms than those adopted by the majority of Muslims. To search for answers, the book uses, as much as possible, two sources: the first is critical reasoning, and the second is the Mushaf. In sharp contrast to the vast majority of books on Islam, this one does not base the validity of its argument on the stature of past or present Muslim personalities and scholars irrespective of their high status and reverence amongst the majority of Muslims.

The book takes a methodical approach to analyzing the techniques that evolved throughout the ages to marginalize the Muslims' mind and to project reason as the archenemy of Islam. It analyses alleged prophetic narratives (Hadith) and interpretations of the Mushaf by prominent jurists to confirm that rationalism and reason were both, and largely, disconnected from Muslims' intellectual discourse, at least in the overwhelmingly dominant religious material that has reached us.

This book analyses fundamental contradictions in the way the vast majority of Muslims perceive Islam, and how the conceived and practiced Muslim or "Islamic" doctrines lack a foundation in the Mushaf. The book goes behind the scene, so to speak, to analyze reasons behind such a perceived disconnect. The book provides a context to the severe intellectual underdevelopment amongst most Muslims vis-à-vis their understanding of their religion. It looks at canonized practices and doctrines that emerged throughout the ages through dubious scholarship to maintain a docile, hopeless, aimless, and subservient Muslim *umma*. It brings to the forefront stark contradictions between the canonized Muslim doctrines and the Mushaf that many Muslims choose to ignore.

The book challenges the use of Hadith as a source of Islamic legislation. It takes an unconventional perspective of the Mushaf's exegesis and reaches conclusions that are based

on reason and the Mushaf's direct text, yet are contradictory to conventional Muslim doctrines.

The book explores the culture of violence championed by the historically triumphant Muslim scholars, jurists and clergy, whose "scholarship" triumphed, and morphed that of other scholars who put the Mushaf first and everything else as secondary. It questions whether such culture inspired past and contemporary violent movements. The book revisits fundamental doctrines and canonized laws and looks carefully at their evolution and their connection to the Mushaf. Two chapters in the book address the two most important sources of Islamic Law: Hadith and the Mushaf. The analyses in these two chapters lead to unconventional conclusions, thus establishing a new perspective that stems purely from the Mushaf and critical reasoning. The conclusions in these two chapters put Hadith in a perspective and context that is completely non-convergent with prevailing Muslim doctrines. The conclusions have direct implications on what is typically perceived as Islamic law and the controversial doctrine of Sharia.

Shaping Global Islamic Discourses by (Ed.) Masooda Bano & Keiko Sakurai,
Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

Claims abound that Saudi oil money is fuelling Salafi Islam in cultural and geographical terrains as disparate as the remote hamlets of the Swat valley in Pakistan and sprawling megacities such as Jakarta. In a similar manner, it is often regarded as a fact that Iran and the Sunni Arab states are fighting proxy wars in foreign lands. This empirically grounded study challenges the assumptions prevalent within academic as well as policy circles about the hegemonic power of such Islamic discourses and movements to penetrate all Muslim communities and societies. Through case studies of academic institutions, the volume illustrates how transmission of ideas is an extremely complex process, and shows that the outcome of such efforts depends not just on the strategies adopted by backers of those ideologies but equally on the characteristics of the receipt communities.

In order to understand this complex interaction between the global and local Islam and the plurality in outcomes, the volume focuses on the workings of three universities with global outreach (al-Azhar University in Egypt, International Islamic University of Medina in

Saudi Arabia, and al-Mustafa International University in Iran) whose graduating students carry the ideas acquired during their education back to their own countries, along with, in some cases, a zeal to reform their home society.

Combatting Jihadist Terrorism through Nation Building: A Quality of Life Perspective by M. Joseph Sirgy, Richard Estes et al.,
Springer International Publishing, 2019

This book focuses on the drivers of Jihadist terrorism and explains how a better understanding of these drivers can lead to more effective counterterrorism policies all over the world. It builds on results of the extensive body of quality of life studies to document the historical, geo-political, economic, religious, cultural and media drivers of Jihadist terrorism. Guided by a major theme this book shows that the significant gains we have made in combatting Jihadist terrorism are not enough, but that we need to embrace a much broader and comprehensive view of the antecedents and the sustaining enablers of this threat to help guide any sustainable efforts. It proposes interventions designed to effectively treat the causes of this insidious disease. This book is of great interest to new media, policy makers concerned about national security as well as people and academic scholars whose research interest involves conflict and conflict resolution, religious studies, terrorism and counterterrorism, Islamic history, and Islamic geo-politics.

In a Pure Muslim Land : Shi'ism between Pakistan and the Middle East by Simon Wolfgang Fuchs,
University of North Carolina Press, 2019

Centering Pakistan in a story of transnational Islam stretching from South Asia to the Middle East, Simon Wolfgang Fuchs offers the first in-depth ethnographic history of the intellectual production of Shi'is and their religious competitors in this "Land of the Pure." The notion of Pakistan as the pinnacle of modern global Muslim aspiration forms a crucial component of this story. It has empowered Shi'is, who form about twenty percent of the country's population, to advance alternative conceptions of their religious hierarchy while claiming the support of towering grand ayatollahs in Iran and Iraq.

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Fuchs shows how popular Pakistani preachers and scholars have boldly tapped into the esoteric potential of Shi'ism, occupying a creative and at times disruptive role as brokers, translators, and self-confident pioneers of contemporary Islamic thought. They have indigenized the Iranian Revolution and formulated their own ideas for fulfilling the original promise of Pakistan. Challenging typical views of Pakistan as a mere Shi'i backwater, Fuchs argues that its complex religious landscape represents how a local, South Asian Islam may open up space for new intellectual contributions to global Islam. Yet religious ideology has also turned Pakistan into a deadly battlefield: sectarian groups since the 1980s have been bent on excluding Shi'is as harmful to their own vision of an exemplary Islamic state.

Global Sufism: Boundaries, Structures, and Politics by (Ed.) Francesco
Piraino & Mark Sedgwick

Sufism is a growing and global phenomenon, far from the declining relic it was once thought to be. This book brings together the work of fourteen leading experts to explore systematically the key themes of Sufism's new global presence, from Yemen to Senegal via Chicago and Sweden.

The contributors look at the global spread and stance of such major actors as the Ba 'Alawiyya, the 'Afropolitan' Tijaniyya, and the Gülen Movement. They map global Sufi culture, from Rumi to rap, and ask how global Sufism accommodates different and contradictory gender practices. They examine the contested and shifting relationship between the Islamic and the universal: is Sufism the timeless and universal essence of all religions, the key to tolerance and co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims? Or is it the purely Islamic heart of traditional and authentic practice and belief?

Finally, the book turns to politics. States and political actors in the West and in the Muslim world are using the mantle and language of Sufism to promote their objectives, while Sufis are building alliances with them against common enemies. This raises the difficult question of whether Sufis are defending Islam against extremism, supporting despotism against democracy, or perhaps doing both.

Muslim Pilgrimage in the Modern World by (Ed.) Babak Rahimi, Peyman Eshaghi, University of North Carolina Press, 2019

Pilgrimage is one of the most significant ritual duties for Muslims, entailing the visitation and veneration of sites associated with the Prophet Muhammad or saintly figures. As demonstrated in this multidisciplinary volume, the lived religion of pilgrimage, defined by embodied devotional practices, is changing in an age characterized by commerce, technology, and new sociocultural and political frameworks. Traveling to and far beyond the Hajj, the most well-known Muslim pilgrimage, the volume's contributors reveal and analyze emerging contemporary Islamic pilgrimage practices around the world, in minority- and majority-Muslim countries as well as in urban and rural settings. What was once a tiny religious attraction in a remote village, for example, may begin to draw increasing numbers of pilgrims to shrines and tombs as the result of new means of travel, thus triggering significant changes in the traditional rituals, and livelihoods, of the local people. Organized around three key themes—history and politics; embodiment, memory, and material religion; and communications—the book reveals how rituals, practices, and institutions are experienced in the context of an inexorable global capitalism.

The volume contributors are Sophia Rose Arjana, Rose Aslan, Robert R. Bianchi, Omar Kasmani, Azim Malikov, Lewis Mayo, Julian Millie, Reza Masoudi Nejad, Paulo G. Pinto, Babak Rahimi, Emilio Spadola, Edith Szanto, and Brannon Wheeler.

Queens, Eunuchs and Concubines in Islamic History, 661–1257 by Taef El-Azhari, Edinburgh University Press, 2019

The first comprehensive study of sexual politics in Medieval Islam

- Studies the military-political power of eunuchs and their relations with women under the Fatimid dynasty, and the appearance of first queen in Islamic history
- Investigates the power of the Turkmen women in the politics and how and why they introduced the unique post of atabeg
- Examines the role of the first Sunni queen in Islam, Dayfa Khatun the Ayyubid in Aleppo, and how she paved the way for another queen, Shajar al-Durr in Egypt

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- Considers the impact of the Mongol invasion on the Muslim world, and the coming of queen Abish to power in Shiraz, aided by Mongol power

Based on original and previously unexamined sources, this book provides a critical and systematic analysis of the role of queens, eunuchs and concubines in medieval Islamic history. Spanning over 600 years, it explores gender and sexual politics and power from the time of the Prophet Muhammad through the Umayyad and Abbasid periods to the Mamluks in the 15th century. Geographically its coverage extends from Iran and Central Asia to North Africa and Spain.
