

## Some Recent Publications on Islam/Muslims

**Slavery and Islam** by Jonathan A. Brown, 2019. One World Academic

What happens when authorities you venerate condone something you know is wrong?

Every major religion and philosophy once condoned or approved of slavery, but in modern times nothing is seen as more evil. Americans confront this crisis of authority when they erect statues of Founding Fathers who slept with their slaves. And Muslims faced it when ISIS revived sex-slavery, justifying it with verses from the Quran and the practice of Muhammad. Exploring the moral and ultimately theological problem of slavery, Jonathan A.C. Brown traces how the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions have tried to reconcile modern moral certainties with the infallibility of God's message. He lays out how Islam viewed slavery in theory, and the reality of how it was practiced across Islamic civilization. Finally, Brown carefully examines arguments put forward by Muslims for the abolition of slavery.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Islamic Empires: The Cities that Shaped Civilization** by Justin Marozzi,  
2020 Pegasus Books.

A history of the rich and diverse civilizations over fifteen centuries of Islam seen through its greatest cities.

Islamic civilization was once the envy of the world. From a succession of glittering, cosmopolitan capitals, Islamic empires lorded it over the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and swathes of the Indian subcontinent, while Europe cowered feebly at the margins. For centuries the caliphate was both ascendant on the battlefield and triumphant in the battle of ideas, its cities unrivaled powerhouses of artistic grandeur, commercial power, spiritual sanctity, and forward-looking thinking, in which nothing was off limits.

*Islamic Empires* is a history of this rich and diverse civilization told through its greatest cities over the fifteen centuries of Islam, from its earliest beginnings in Mecca in the seventh century to the astonishing rise of Doha in the twenty-first.

**Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2020)**

[www.muslimsocieties.org](http://www.muslimsocieties.org)

Marozzi brilliantly connects the defining moments in Islamic history: from the Prophet Mohammed receiving his divine revelations in Mecca and the First Crusade of 1099 to the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the phenomenal creation of the merchant republic of Beirut in the nineteenth century, and how this world is continuing to change today.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Demystifying Shariah: What it is, How it works, and why it's not Taking over our Country** by Sumbul Ali- Karam Ali, 2020. Beacon. Press.

A direct counterpoint to fear mongering headlines about *shariah* law a Muslim American legal expert tells the real story, eliminating stereotypes and assumptions with compassion, irony, and humor.

Through scare tactics and deliberate misinformation campaigns, anti-Muslim propagandists insist wrongly that shariah is a draconian and oppressive Islamic law that all Muslims must abide by. They circulate horror stories, encouraging Americans to fear the “takeover of shariah” law in America and even mounting “anti-shariah protests” . . . with zero evidence that shariah has taken over any part of our country. (That’s because it hasn’t.) It would be almost funny if it weren’t so terrifyingly wrong—as puzzling as if Americans suddenly began protesting the Martian occupation of Earth.

*Demystifying Shariah* explains that shariah is not one set of punitive rules or even law the way we think of law—rigid and enforceable—but religious rules and recommendations that provide Muslims with guidance in various aspects of life. Sumbul Ali-Karamali draws on scholarship and her degree in Islamic law to explain shariah in an accessible, engaging narrative style—its various meanings, how it developed, and how the shariah-based legal system operated for over a thousand years. She explains what shariah means not only in the abstract but in the daily lives of Muslims. She discusses modern calls for shariah, what they mean, and whether shariah is the law of the land anywhere in the world. She also describes the key lies and misunderstandings about shariah circulating in our public discourse, and why so many of them are nonsensical.

This engaging guide is intended to introduce you to the basic principles, goals, and general development of shariah and to answer questions like: How do Muslims engage with

shariah? What does shariah have to do with our Constitution? What does shariah have to do with the way the world looks like today? And why do we all—Muslims or not—need to care?

\*\*\*\*\*

**Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom and Tolerance** by Mustafa

Akyol, 2020. St. Martin's Essentials

A Fascinating Journey into Islam's diverse history of ideas, making an argument for an "Islamic Enlightenment" today

In *Reopening Muslim Minds*, Mustafa Akyol, senior fellow at the Cato Institute and opinion writer for *The New York Times*, both diagnoses “the crisis of Islam” in the modern world, and offers a way forward. Diving deeply into Islamic theology, and also sharing lessons from his own life story, he reveals how Muslims lost the universalism that made them a great civilization in their earlier centuries. He especially demonstrates how values often associated with Western Enlightenment — freedom, reason, tolerance, and an appreciation of science — had Islamic counterparts, which sadly were cast aside in favor of more dogmatic views, often for political ends.

Elucidating complex ideas with engaging prose and storytelling, *Reopening Muslim Minds* borrows lost visions from medieval Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Rushd (aka Averroes), to offer a new Muslim worldview on a range of sensitive issues: human rights, equality for women, freedom of religion, or freedom *from* religion. While frankly acknowledging the problems in the world of Islam today, Akyol offers a clear and hopeful vision for its future.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Shia Migration, Transnationalism Minorities in the Contemporary World and Multilocality (ed.)** by Oliver Scharbrodt Shanneik. 2020. Edinburgh University Press

New comparative perspectives on Shi'a minorities outside the Muslim world

*Key features*

- Provides comparative insights into Shi'a Muslim communities across the globe, set in Muslim minority contexts

**Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2020)**

[www.muslimsocieties.org](http://www.muslimsocieties.org)

- Makes an important contribution to understanding the global dynamics of contemporary Shi'a Islam
- Illustrates how transnational Shi'a networks operate in Muslim minority contexts
- Discusses the impact of events in the Middle East on Shi'a Muslim minorities across the world
- Case studies include an in-depth ethnographic study of the Shi'a community in Buenos Aires; insights into the unique challenges of Shi'a Muslims in Sri Lanka; the connections of Shi'a Muslims in Cambodia to Iran; and the limits of sectarian differences among Shi'a Muslims in Germany

Global migration flows in the 20th century have seen the emergence of Muslim diaspora and minority communities in Europe, North America and other parts of the world. This book offers a set of new comparative perspectives on the experiences of Shi'a Muslim minorities outside the so-called 'Muslim heartland' (Middle East, North Africa, Central and South Asia). It looks at Shi'a minority communities in Europe, North and South America, Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia and discusses the particular challenges these communities face as 'a minority within a minority'.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Translating Wisdom: Hindu Muslim Intellectual Interactions in Early Modern South Asia** by Shankar Nair, 2020 University of California Press.

During the height of Muslim power in Mughal South Asia, Hindu and Muslim scholars worked collaboratively to translate a large body of Hindu Sanskrit texts into the Persian language. *Translating Wisdom* reconstructs the intellectual processes and exchanges that underlay these translations. Using as a case study the 1597 Persian rendition of the Yoga-Vasistha—an influential Sanskrit philosophical tale whose popularity stretched across the subcontinent—Shankar Nair illustrates how these early modern Muslim and Hindu scholars drew upon their respective religious, philosophical, and literary traditions to forge a common vocabulary through which to understand one another. These scholars thus achieved, Nair argues, a nuanced cultural exchange and interreligious and cross-philosophical dialogue significant not only to South Asia's past but also its present.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Secrets of Divine Love: A Spiritual Journey into the Heart of Islam** by A. Helwa, 2020.

Notion Press

Are you longing to experience a more intimate and loving relationship with the Divine?

Secrets of Divine Love draws upon spiritual secrets of the Qur'an, ancient mystical poetry, and stories from the world's greatest prophets and spiritual masters to help you reignite your faith, overcome your doubts, and deepen your connection with God.

Through the use of scientific evidence, practical exercises, and guided meditations, you will develop the tools and awareness needed to discern and overcome your negative inner critic that prevents you from experiencing God's all-encompassing love.

The passages in this book serve as a compass and guiding light that returns you to the source of divine peace and surrender. Through the principles and practices of Islam, you will learn how to unlock your spiritual potential and unveil your divine purpose. *Secrets of Divine Love* uses a rational, yet heart-based approach towards the Qur'an that not only enlightens the mind, but inspires the soul towards deeper intimacy with God.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Muslims and US Politics Today: A Defining Moment** by Mohammad Hasan Khalil,

2019.Harvard University Press

The twenty-first century has been a volatile period for American Muslims. Yet American Muslims now have unprecedented avenues of influence in U.S. politics. Anti-Muslim hate crimes peaked after September 11, 2001, then increased again after 2014. Hate crimes and other forms of anti-Muslim bias have been accelerating since the candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump. *Muslims and US Politics Today* explores the various representations of Muslims in American political and civic life, the myriad ways American Muslims are affected by politics, and how American Muslims are engaging political life as individuals and communities. This integrative volume reaches back to presidential elections after 9/11 (Edward E. Curtis), further back to Iranian immigrants after the Iranian Revolution (Mohsen Mobasher), and back even to fundamentals of religious freedom in the United States (Kambiz GhaneaBissiri; Mucahit Bilici). Aspects of anti-Muslim politics and marginalization, as well as mobilization and activism, are covered in essays by Salah Hassan,

**Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2020)**

[www.muslimsocieties.org](http://www.muslimsocieties.org)

Evelyn Alsultany, Juliane Hammer, Alisa Perkins, and Sally Howell. In a final section on rethinking Muslim politics, Donna Auston and Sylvia Chan-Malik dialogue on Black American Islam and Junaid Rana looks broadly to a global Muslim left. In this critically-timed volume, editor Mohamed Hassan Khalil has drawn together leading scholars to provide a deep look at the rich political history and future of American Muslims.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Indian Muslim Women's Movement: For Gender Justice and Equal Citizenship (ed.)**

Zakia Soman & Safia Niaz, 2020 Notion Press

This collection of essays and articles captures the beginning of the Muslim women's movement in India in the last two decades. Written at different points during the journey, these pieces provide a glimpse into the collective tumultuous journey of women demanding reform in Muslim family law in India and for equal citizenship without discrimination. This journey was undertaken by ordinary women under their own leadership. This collection highlights the challenges faced by women. It also celebrates successes such as the organization of women into groups, abolition of triple talaq and women's entry into the *mazar* of Haji Ali Dargah. This book is a collection of articles written by authors, individually and jointly in various newspapers, magazines, journals and other publications. It challenges the misogynist regressive norms for women in family set by patriarchal religious groups. It calls for state accountability in providing safety, security and equality to Muslim citizens. Based on experiences and insights from grounded struggle of ordinary women, these essays give hope and provide strength in addressing discrimination through shared vision and collective democratic action. It calls out the failure of conservative religious leadership as well as elected representatives in providing an enabling environment to the community and particularly, women. It calls out certain feminists for their dual standards and for unsuccessful attempts to weaken the movement for reform in family law led by ordinary Muslim women.

\*\*\*\*\*