Introduction: Current Issues in Islamic Studies

Laura Thomas

What are the concerns of Islamic scholars today? This compendium of articles from outstanding scholars throughout the world presents a wide-ranging series of issues and developments in Islamic Studies, in order to profile the 'state of the art' in the discipline. The chapters are subdivided into five groups. First, Islam is defined, its multicultural aspect emphasized, and then illuminated with a review of the Islamic experience in Iberia. Next, the foundations of Islam – the Qur'an, justice, economics, education and political philosophy – are described and analyzed. The rich Islamic culture is then examined in the areas of literature and art. Contemporary issues concerned with the experience of Muslim women, Islam and democracy in Turkey, and Islam in the West are chronicled. The final three chapters present discourse on the diversity found within Islam of the Shi'a and Sufi traditions. A brief paragraph to introduce each of the chapters is presented in the following section.

ISLAM AND MULTICULTURALISM

Islam as a Community of Discourse and a World-System

John Obert Voll

What does the term 'Islam' mean in the scholarly analysis of the historical Muslim experience? Is it a way of life, a civilization, a culture, a historic community, an economic world-system or the major monotheistic faith of a great Middle Eastern imperial empire that rose and then disintegrated into an agricultural, quasi-feudal, decentralized network of sultanates? John Obert Voll proposes that it can be defined best as a 'community of discourse'. Calling upon Immanuel Wallerstein's early concepts of a world-system, he says the 'Islamic experience suggests … networks of human relations based more on discourse and exchange of ideas than on … economic relations'. The Islamic world has a

long history of diaspora and multiculturalism continuing to the present times. Even though the Islamic Imperial political unity was destroyed by the thirteenth century, the Islamic world virtually doubled by the sixteenth, expanding from the Middle East into the Mediterranean, Iran, South Asia, Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. It stretched from China and the Philippines to India, Bosnia, and South Africa. Islam became an important component in many societies outside the Middle East, in urban, pastoral, and nomadic communities. A transregional communal identity was formed, allowing the search for knowledge to evolve from singular study with highly respected individuals to teachers and students travelling from end to end of the Muslim world with the support of the great *tariqah* (brotherhood) organizations. Islamic instruction thus evolved into formal institutions of Islamic learning (*madrasahs*) with a common canonical syllabus of learning. Disciples, students, and merchants were moving in a single cultural universe that transcended the boundaries of regional traditions of civilization, creating a 'discourse community' beyond local identities. This was a cosmopolitan, multicultural, and trans-civilizational network of groups, maintaining and developing a shared discourse. This unity in diversity is the world of Islam.
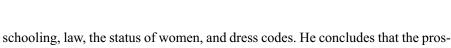
Islam, Diaspora, and Multiculturalism

Bryan S. Turner

Globalization, the fall of communism, and modern communication technologies are creating a diaspora of transnational religious communities. One of the principal questions facing religious leaders is how to live among social diversity without compromising orthodox belief and practice. How can religious laws coexist with secular laws? At the same time, the modern state supports labor migration, which produces ethnic diversity, while attempting to enforce their sovereignty with cultural homogeneity, a contradictory strategy. Secular governments often fear that religious expansion coupled with a liberal multicultural political approach will threaten civil order and political security. Citizenship is by definition national, while religion is transnational. The states also fear that religious movements will equal the rise of radicalism and lead to bombings and military conflicts. Bryan S. Turner, formerly of the Asia Research Institute, reviews these dynamics as he considers the global interaction between Islam, multiculturalism and citizenship in today's world. His examination of the Islamic diaspora into the modern states first covers the nature of citizenship and definitions of multiculturalism. It then proceeds to an overview of treatment of these societies in the British Commonwealth, Continental Europe, and the United States of America. Each has an individual set of problems and approaches to the sociopolitical conditions created by multiculturalism. The majority of the Western states follow the Westphalian model, with religion a matter of private conscience, subordinated to politics and removed from the public sphere. This approach has caused difficulties with Islam, as well as Hinduism and Judaism, over issues such as

schooling, law, the status of women, and dress codes. He concludes that the prospect of peaceful coexistence will depend on the survival of flexible conditions of citizenship.

Andalusian Jurist, Berber Commander, and Mozarab Rebel: Understanding Iberia's Islamic Experience

Camilo Gomez-Rivas

The pace of change within the Muslim world, as well as increased interaction with the non-Muslim world, suggest that a review of Iberia's Islamic experience from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries would help illuminate the benefits and problems of Islamic reformist missionary expansion, sectarian rifts and multiculturalism. Camilo Gomez-Rivas of Willamette University uses the lives of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, a leading religious and legal authority from Cordoba, and his grandson, Averroes, to present many of the themes that affected the history and culture of the region. In al-Andalus (the Arabic name for the Iberian peninsula and derived from the Visigoths), the relationship between the three communities of the Abrahamic faiths (Muslims, Jews, and Christians) produced a unique Andalusian culture of intellectual exchanges and artistic production, as well as some of the most violent episodes of ethnic cleansing prior to the holocaust. The interactions between the ever-present sectarian rivalries and changing allegiances within the Islamic world (Umayyad vs. Abbasid vs. Almoravids vs. Almodads vs. Marinids), as well as on the Iberian peninsula itself (the rivalries of local governors, uprisings by converts, rebellions by local Christians, infighting among the petty kingdoms and the Christian crusades to retake the territory) had a major effect on the legal interpretation of Islamic law and the resulting treatment of converts and non-Muslims. The culture of both the Arabic and the European worlds benefited most when a cosmopolitan culture of tolerance was allowed to thrive. Periods of unrest brought about persecutions within and between the religions. When a method to 'resolve conflict while acting righteously' was not followed, neither the religious nor the secular world gained.

FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAM

The Qur'an

Qaiser Shahzad

As the foundation stone of the faith and morality of the Muslim community, it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of the Qur'an for Islam. Qaiser Shahzad of the Islamic Research Institute and International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan, offers an understanding of its structure, evolution, and themes in the chapter 'The Qur'an'. To Muslims, the Qur'an is God's literal, uncreated word as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and His final divine message to humanity. It presents the essence and attributes of God, the correct path

for a relationship with Him and the proper management of relations with each other in a codex of 114 segments containing statements and stories arranged into 30 parts. Very little of day-to-day life is left out of the compass of its religious guidance. The central issue is Monotheism and the many stories have a common moral that warns mankind of the fates that befall those who ignore His message. The Qur'an recognizes the prophets and revelations of the Torah and the Gospels and their shared history. It does not demand blind obedience or religious compulsion but seeks a reasoned commitment from its followers. It calls for wisdom and beautiful, 'gracious teaching' to those who argue against Islam. As in Christianity, the final reward for the righteous human being is a return to their Creator during a final resurrection and judgment. Even the most highly developed Islamic arts of poetry and calligraphy revolve around the Qur'an. It is the quintessential scripture of Islam and plays a central role in the life and culture of Muslims.

Islamic Concepts of Justice

Lawrence Rosen

'Justice' is the key word for Muslims in issues of political and moral order as well as an active element of everyday life. Centuries of disputes among theologians and philosophers, as well as the conflicts among the different divisions of Islam, both sectarian and regional, are evidence of the contentious specifics of justice in the world of Islam. From the intellectual history and cultures of Islam, Lawrence Rosen of Princeton University teases out the common assumptions and concepts that form the Islamic principles in his chapter 'Islamic Concepts of Justice'. A brief history of the development of the discipline shows how justice evolved as a means to maintain balance and give everything its proper due. The concept of justice as maintaining balance is a wonderful image but what about its cultural component? What is its common meaning? How does it work in the real world? The practical issue is 'what balances with what' in any given situation. Justice is dependant on relationships in context, full of negotiation and multiple possibilities. Rosen compares the concepts of justice and the cultural postulates in a table to help illuminate the dynamics between the two. In conclusion, he encourages 'unending attention' to the concepts of justice.

Islamic Economics: Salient Features and a Critical Survey

S.M. Ghazanfar

Economic matters have always been a part of the discourse in Islam and a major component of the social order. The knowledge and application of doctrines and injunctions of the Islamic Law (Shari'a) promotes social justice in the society and requires the pursuit of economic activities through efficient use of resources to provide for the material need of all individuals. The chapter 'Islamic Economics: Salient Features and a Critical Survey' by S.M. Ghanzanfar of the University of Idaho discusses the main characteristics of Islamic economics and undertakes a critical assessment of this discipline, which only became a distinct school of

study in the 1960s. Six key motivations and assumptions are presented, followed by a discussion of the characteristics and institutions of the Islamic economic framework. An assessment of the viability of the Islamic approach is presented and followed by remarks on possible future directions. Can Islam respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century and allow economic growth and socioeconomic justice to go hand in hand? It may be the 'third way' that can bring about the synthesis of the capitalist/socialist paradigms.

From Madrasa to University – the Challenges and Formats of Islamic Education

Dietrich Reetz

Islam is a revealed religion with missionary goals, so the transmission of religious knowledge is an integral part of its function. Dietrich Reetz of Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin, Germany, reviews the emergence of Islamic education from an act of revelation to the contemporary *madrasa* institutions to introduce his commentary on the two main types of Sunni Islamic education – the Deobondi Institutions and the International Islamic Universities (IIU). These two networks demonstrate how Islamic education contributes to the spread of faith, the formation of character, and political involvement under changing circumstances and varying cultural, social, and economic conditions. He posits that the main issue confronting either approach to Islamic education is their relevance for the Muslim community in the modern world.

Political Philosophy and Political Thought in the Medieval Arabic–Islamic Tradition of the Middle East

Charles E. Butterworth

The central issue within the Arabic–Islamic philosophical tradition is the ongoing debate over what should guide political life, unaided reason or revelation. Charles E. Butterworth, University of Maryland, explores the historical development of political philosophy in the Arabic–Islamic world from the Middle East to Andalusia during the Middle Ages. His chapter portrays how Plato and Aristotle's approach to human nature and politics influence the political thought of Alkindi and Alrazi and then the writings of Alfarabi, the first thinker within the medieval Arabic–Islamic tradition to develop a political philosophy. To Alfarabi, politics is central to achieving the individual's ultimate happiness or perfection. However, the next major Arabic–Islamic philosopher, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), subordinates politics to religion. Political philosophical thought then moves from Baghdad to Andalusia. Ibn Bajja and Ibn Tafayl continue the dialogue and prepare the way for Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who explores the relationship between philosophy, divine law, and the role of prophecy. He attempts to bring together religion and philosophy by examining the regimes he sees around him in the light of principles first articulated by Plato and Aristotle. Due to the Crusades, the fall of Baghdad in 1258, and the fragmentation of Andalusia, political philosophy

then gives way to mysticism and theosophy for 200 years until the advent of Ibn Khaldun. In *Kitab al-ʿIbar*, his massive philosophical history of civilization, and its *Muqaddima* (Introduction), he explores the nature of civilization and the way it develops over time. After his death, political philosophy again undergoes an eclipse – this one lasting a little over four centuries. To Butterworth, the challenge for Arabic–Islamic thought today is to renew the debate between the proponents of the two approaches to human understanding – unaided reason on the one hand and revelation on the other. 'Only through such debate is it possible to raise doubts about generally accepted opinion and about premises that have been accepted without question'.

CULTURE OF ISLAM

Arabic–Islamic Literature: Continuities and Transformations

Asma Afsaruddin

'Arabic–Islamic Literature: Continuities and Transformations' by Asma Afsaruddin of Notre Dame University is a synoptic presentation of the broad literary and intellectual trends of the classical, medieval, and modern periods of the many oral and written compositions in the Arabic language. While the common denominator is the Arabic language itself, not all contributors are ethnically Arabs, native speakers of Arabic, or even Muslims. Arabs and Muslims, as well as Persians, Turks, Berbers, Spaniards, Greeks, Sicilians, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, have shaped Arabic–Islamic literature. This multiculturalism is reflective of the universal role that the Arabic language has played and the influence it continues to exert throughout the world. The influences of religion, politics, society, and multiculturalism on this literature is described and amplified with examples from the work of major authors. The evolution of genres, purposes, form, patterns, themes, and developments is organized and explained. Finally, a brief survey of contemporary Arabic literature, including the influence of Western literary genres and modes, is given.
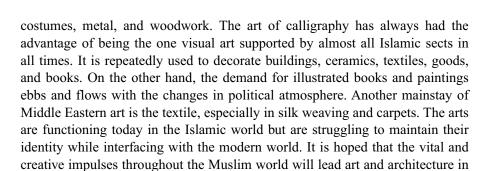
Islamic Art: Visual Manifestations of a Faith and a Culture

Walter Denny

Art has a complex relation to the Islamic religion. The Islamic canon prohibits the depiction of humans or animals, but there are numerous contradictions to this principle due to the union of religious and royal authority in one ruler. Further variances from religious imperative are the result of the exposure to Helleno-Roman traditions and, later, the impact of new cultures and traditions as Islam expanded. Islamic artistic tradition begins with the architecture and equipage of religious mosques, shrines, monuments, and the kingly palaces with their luxury goods. Along with the religious and royal patronage, bourgeois patronage emerged from the urban middle classes for decorated ceramics, pottery, carpets,

costumes, metal, and woodwork. The art of calligraphy has always had the advantage of being the one visual art supported by almost all Islamic sects in all times. It is repeatedly used to decorate buildings, ceramics, textiles, goods, and books. On the other hand, the demand for illustrated books and paintings ebbs and flows with the changes in political atmosphere. Another mainstay of Middle Eastern art is the textile, especially in silk weaving and carpets. The arts are functioning today in the Islamic world but are struggling to maintain their identity while interfacing with the modern world. It is hoped that the vital and creative impulses throughout the Muslim world will lead art and architecture in new and fruitful directions.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ISLAM

Women's Agency in Muslim Society

Amineh Ahmed

In Amineh Ahmed's chapter 'Women's Agency in Muslim Society', two case studies are used to show how ordinary local women participating in Islamic studies are bringing about change in Northern Pakistan once they become aware of the contradictions between Islam and the local customs. In the male-dominated Pukhtan culture, where honor is the key concept, women are responsible for a large measure of social power behind the scenes. They make decisions as household managers, domestic supervisors, and financial managers, and are charged with keeping track of the social debits and credits so important to honor and matters of familiar and political allegiance. The women take responsibility for the hospitality and the life cycle events such as funerals and weddings (*gham-khadi*). These events are celebrated communally within networks of reciprocal social obligations and long-standing traditions. The studies focus on two different funerals (*gham*) where the attending women, who had graduated from Islamic school, were able to assert independent decision-making and break with tradition by calling for more rational, voluntary, and Islamic practices. The Qur'an and Hadith were cited as having precedence over local customs, as it is the duty of every good Muslim 'to command right and forbid wrong'. This Islamization of the Pukhtan culture is not easy, nor without tension and opposition, but it is part of the wider Islamic revival movement as well as the Islamic women's movement.

Islam and Democracy: Is Turkey an Exception or a Role Model?

Haldun Gülalp

Are Islam and democracy incompatible? What can and/or will be Islam's response to the economic and political structures created by globalization? Is there an 'unchanging essence in Muslim societies that makes them impervious' to modernization, secularization, democracy, and/or liberalism? Must Islam be suppressed for modernization to proceed? In his chapter 'Islam and Democracy: Is

Turkey an Exception or a Role Model?', Haldun Gülalp of Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul, Turkey, attacks these questions by looking at the evolution of 'conservative democracy' under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey. After reviewing various explanations, he moves the debate out of religion and into the realm of socioeconomics and politics to propose that the best route to a democratic role for an Islam-based political movement lies in the transformation from an exclusionary politics of identity into an inclusionary liberal movement that recognizes and encourages cultural diversity. He posits that a Muslim society is not innately hostile to liberal democracy. The main impediment to a Muslim democracy may well be the preconceived notions held by the many sides.

Islam in the West

Earle H. Waugh
What are the advantages and problems to shaping a Muslim life in the West? The West – defined as Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand – has a common Christian European heritage that places the follower of Islam in the challenging role of the minority, not a role to which most immigrants are accustomed. The various religious forms of Islam and the different classes of Muslims further divide the Muslim community. Muslims can be recent or long-term immigrants, native born and raised in the West, educated, uneducated, converts, and even indigenous Muslims such as the Black Muslims in the United States. There is no singular Muslim experience. Some of the advantages of dealing with liberal Western democratic states are their support of minorities, the right to free speech, an active religious discourse, access to leadership roles, national and international organizations and easy access to web-based Muslim communities. A problem is that not every state has the same application of these rights. While opinion shapers on both sides love to negatively caricaturize the 'other' to contrast it with their 'righteous' side, there are historical and religious commonalities as well as the increasingly shared cultural realms in literature, music, art, and food that help integrate Islam into the Western consciousness. The tragedy of 9/11 and its aftermath has forced the Muslim community to reassess, regroup, and re-establish links with each other and their Western communities to fight the contentious issues that have arisen. Creating a Muslim life in the West is not for the faint of heart.

DIVERSITY WITHIN ISLAM

Shi'a Islam

Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad
This chapter by Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad presents the historical evolution of Shi'a Islam political thought. Shortly after the prophet's

death, Shi'a became the first significant schism in the Islamic world. The split was caused by disagreements over the qualifications of the true successor to the prophet as well as the leader's functions and role in society. Shi'ites believe that Imam Ali is the first legitimate and divinely appointed leader entitled to the caliphate and the title of Imam. They are thus often referred to as Imamites and are in opposition to the Sunni majority, who holds that the caliphate of Abu Bakr is the true lineage. As the Imamites grew through the first higra-century to the third, they eventually settled into three main branches, Ithna'asharis, the Zaydis, and the Isma'ilis. The scholars of these different groups engage in 'bitter and antagonistic polemics' with each other, but nonetheless keep up their links with one another, creating schools and canons. The basic teachings of the fundamental and subordinate Shi'a dogmas – the imamate, the principles of faith, the position of jurisprudence and social principles, the social and political life – are reviewed. The contemporary application of a Shi'a political approach can be seen in the constitutional revolution in Iran.

Doctrinal Sufism and Theoretical Gnosis

Seyyed Hossein Nasr
A particular type of Sufism is the topic of this chapter, 'Doctrinal Sufism and Theoretical Gnosis' by Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University. This Sufi gnosis, a special body of knowledge of spiritual mysteries, is neither theology nor philosophy but a metaphysical, ontological knowledge of the Supreme Principle, or Reality. The development of this doctrinal Sufism, how to obtain it, and its main topics are presented. A brief history of the major contributors from the first to the seventh century AH in Syria and Anatolia is followed by an overview of the spread of theoretical gnosis to the different regions of the Islamic world, from Egypt, Yemen, Palestine, and Syria to Ottoman Turkey and on to Muslim India, Southeast Asia, and China. Finally, we encounter Persia, one of the main centers for the development of theoretical gnosis, if not *the* main one. This historical perspective leads into an explanation of how to gain knowledge of the Supreme Science as well as its subjects of flow, manifestations, unity, forms, and sacred knowledge. As a science whose realization is the highest goal of human existence, it can provide Islam's answer to the relation between religion and science, faith and reason, and the secular and the religious. This rich intellectual tradition could provide answers to contemporary intellectual, spiritual, and even practical questions.

Contemporary Sufism: Islam without Borders

Robert Sampson
While highly visible and tragic events have molded the world's perception of Islam as strident and intolerant, Sufi Islam can be seen as a counterbalance. User friendly and easily portable, Sufism appeals to all levels of society, literate as

well as oral cultures, traditional societies along with Thoreau, Whitman, Emerson, and New Age adherents, men, and women. This influential form of Islam has not only contributed to the history and preservation of the religion, but is also gaining adherents throughout the Muslim and non-Muslim world. In this chapter 'Contemporary Sufism', Robert Sampson of Edwardes College defines Sufism in its broadest sense to include 'any mystical impulse outside the worship in the mosque'. While Sufism exhibits a variety of styles and beliefs, it can be divided into three areas; the mystical orders (tariqat), shrine worship (ziarat), and mystical poetry (tasawwuf or technical Sufism). Sampson defines all three trends, explains the reasons for their growth, and reviews their influence on society, politics, and religion. Each type is also illuminated with a case study. Following this examination of the extent and influence of contemporary Sufism is an explication of four possible causes for its current health and expansion. The religious and political opponents to Sufism are also explained. As Sufism is a form of Islam without borders, it is a powerful influence on the world stage.

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