

International Handbooks of Religion  
and Education 7

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Holger Daun  
Reza Arjmand *Editors*

# Handbook of Islamic Education

 Springer

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# International Handbooks of Religion and Education

**Volume 7**

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Holger Daun • Reza Arjmand  
Editors

# Handbook of Islamic Education

With 24 Figures and 52 Tables

 Springer

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ISBN 978-3-319-64682-4      ISBN 978-3-319-64683-1 (eBook)  
ISBN 978-3-319-64684-8 (print and electronic bundle)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64683-1>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018937520

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Printed on acid-free paper

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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## Preface

Islam has been the epicenter of a wide array of social and political deliberations and contentions since the dawn of the new millennium. The turn of the events and subsequent changes in the global arena and the role of Islam as one of the major global forces have augmented – perhaps more than ever before – the need for an in-depth understanding about much contested Islamic education. Those changes include are not limited to (1) the globalization of Islam as a religion and an ideology, (2) the migration of Muslims into new areas of the globe, and (3) the increasing contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims, which reinforces the need for mutual understanding. The principal aim of the *Handbook of Islamic Education* is to present Islamic education around the world and to contribute to a deeper international understanding of its varieties. In order to meet this, it deemed necessary to trace and present the fundamentals of Islam and education, their historical development, and the varieties. The handbook is aimed to be a valuable tool not only in different disciplines within higher education (including but not limited to sociology, political science, educational science, etc.) and teacher training institutions but also targets international organizations, NGOs, independent scholars, and the audience with interest in such topics.

The handbook provides a global and holistic, yet a detailed portrait of Islamic (or Muslim as it is sometimes named) education around the world. The more specific objectives are to introduce the reader into (a) the origins and foundations of Islamic education, (b) the responses of Islamic educational institutions to different changes from precolonial times, through the colonial era up to the contemporary situation, (c) interactions between the state, state-run education, and Islamic education, and (d) Islamic educational arrangements existing around the world. In the latter case, the development of Islamic education in some 25 countries or geographical areas is presented.

As a way to give a broader and deeper understanding of contemporary Islamic educational arrangements, the handbook includes three parts, of which the first two provide a view of the historical development, the foundation and most relevant components of these arrangements and the second some salient features which have interacted and are interacting with these arrangements.

Section I presents the historical and philosophical elements necessary for understanding contemporary Islamic education as well as Muslim educational preferences

and views on education. It gives a broad picture of the different aspects of Islam and its views on various social, political, and educational phenomena. The purpose of this section is to provide a background to and a platform for the other sections, as well as the developments of modern education in Muslim countries.

Section II describes the development of some of the features that have affected – and have been affected by – Islamic education and have contributed to different Islamic educational arrangements in the world today. It describes the contemporary relationships between Islam and different processes and features that are highly relevant in the context of education. First, the Muslim reactions to the colonial powers and their imposed educational arrangements and the struggle for national independence are brought up. Then the section presents shifts and changes in Muslim views, especially in relation to the state and education as well as the changing relationships between Islamic values and beliefs and “Western” values and secularizing forces. Certain issues that are important on the global agenda such as NGO activities in education; the role of women and the struggle for gender equality; liberal democracy; human rights; and globalization are addressed in detail. It is also pertinent to study the state and peoples’ responses to non-Muslim demands for education in Muslim countries. This section also presents technical characteristics of Islamic education institutions and how the Islamic architecture of educational institutions borrowed and interpreted the abstract notions into educational spaces and buildings.

Section III presents development of various types of Islamic education and contemporary commonalities and differences among Islamic educational arrangements and includes country studies which follow a common framework – public educational systems established and run by the state and responses to these systems in Muslim as well as non-Muslim countries; the place of Islam in the curriculum of the public schools; typical Islamic educational arrangements outside of the state systems; the interactions between the state and public school, on the one hand, and Islamic forces and their educational efforts, on the other hand; attempts at integration or syntheses; and so on. All countries have some elements in common, but there are also considerable differences, especially in the ways states are handling Muslim demands for Islamic education or Islamic elements in the predominating education system. The chapters present the historical roots of Islamic and Western education and the contemporary situation in selected case countries in all continents except Oceania. The country studies include a description of (a) the relationships between these two types of education, (b) to what extent the state is involved in Islamic educational arrangements (control, subsidies, monitoring, etc.), (c) the Islamic educational arrangements *per se*, and (d) to what extent the curriculum of the public schools include Islamic elements.

Case countries included in Section III have been selected according to one or more of the following criteria: (i) countries having a large Muslim population; (ii) countries having a comparably large group of Muslim immigrants; and (iii) countries having some specific patterns of interaction between the state, public schools, and Islamic schools.

The authors of the different chapters are specialists within the area on which they write or have direct local knowledge. The latter is particularly useful when it comes to the area or country descriptions of Muslim views on education systems run by the state as well as Islamic educational institutions. The terminology and spelling of the Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu terms is based on ALA-Library of Congress Romanization Scheme, and transliteration is done based on the written forms of the terms. Also, since different countries use different terminologies, for instance, it can be debated whether the main themes of this handbook should be “Islamic Education” or “Muslim Education,” hence, the editors of the handbook have decided to use them interchangeably. In the handbook, Islamic education is specified into *madrasah* and Qur’anic school in relevant cases, and higher Islamic education is described only marginally and in a specific chapter. For the chapters in Part III, the terminology used in the country in question is maintained.

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May 2018

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## Transliteration Guide

Transliteration of the terms and jargons in this volume follows ALA-LC Romanization (American Library Association – Library of Congress) system. However, familiar variant names follow the official spelling of the individuals or sites, even though they may not fully comply with ALA-LC system. Names of dynasties are also regularly anglicized, even when they are not given in English suffix.

### Letters of the Alphabet

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization Arabic	Romanization Persian	Romanization Ottoman Turkish
ا	ا	ا	ا	omit	omit	omit
ب	ب	ب	ب	b	b	b
پ	پ	پ	پ	–	p	p
ت	ت	ت	ت	t	t	t
ث	ث	ث	ث	th	<u>s</u>	<u>s</u>
ج	ج	ج	ج	j	j	c
چ	چ	چ	چ	–	ch	ç
ح	ح	ح	ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh	kh	ḫ
د	د	د	د	d	d	d
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	dh	<u>z</u>	<u>z</u>
ر	ر	ر	ر	r	r	r
ز	ز	ز	ز	z	z	z
ژ	ژ	ژ	ژ	–	zh	j
س	س	س	س	s	s	s
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh	sh	ş
ص	ص	ص	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ş
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ḏ	ž	ž
ط	ط	ط	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ

(continued)

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization Arabic	Romanization Persian	Romanization Ottoman Turkish
ع	ع	ع	ع	‘ (ayn)	‘ (ayn)	‘ (ayn)
غ	غ	غ	غ	gh	gh	ğ
ف	ف	ف	ف	f	f	f
ق	ق	ق	ق	q	q	q
ك	ك	ك	ك	k	k	k
گ	گ	گ	گ	–	g	g
–	ن	ن	ن	–	–	ñ
ل	ل	ل	ل	l	l	l
م	م	م	م	m	m	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	n	n	n
ه	ه	ه	ه، هـ	h	h	h
و	و	و، ؤ	و	w	v	v
ي	ي	ي	ي	y	y	y

## Vowels and Diphthongs

اَ	a	آ	ā	إِ	ī
أُ	u	أُ	á	أُو	aw
إِ	i	أُو	ū	أُو	ay

## Notes

1. (*alif*), و and ا when used to support ء (*hamzah*) are not represented in romanization. In initial position, whether at the beginning of a word, following a prefixed preposition or conjunction, or following the definite article, ء is not represented in romanization. When medial or final, ء is romanized as *ʿ* (*alif*).
  - (*alif*) when used to support *waṣlah* (آ) and *maddah* (إِ) is not represented in romanization.
  - ا (waṣlah), like initial ء, is not represented in romanization. When the *alif* which supports *waṣlah* belongs to the article اَل, the initial vowel of the article is romanized
  - When اَل is initial in the word, and when it follows an inseparable preposition or conjunction, it is always romanized *al* regardless of whether the preceding word, as romanized, ends in a vowel or a consonant.
  - In other words, beginning with *hamzat al-waṣl*, the initial vowel is romanized *i*.
  - ا (maddah)
  - Initial آ is romanized *ā*.
  - Medial آ, when it represents the phonetic combination *ʿā*, is so romanized.

- $\tilde{}$  is otherwise not represented in romanization.
  - $\text{ا}$  (*alif*) and  $\text{آ}$  when used as orthographic signs without phonetic significance are not represented in romanization.
  - $\text{ا}$  (*alif*) is used to represent the long vowel romanized  $\bar{a}$ . This *alif*, when medial, is sometimes omitted in Arabic; it is always indicated in romanization.
  - The macron or the acute accent, as appropriate, is used to indicate all long vowels, including those which in Arabic script are written defectively. The macron or the acute accent, as the case may be, is retained over final long vowels which are shortened in pronunciation before *hamzat al-waṣl*.
2. The *Maghribī* variations  $\text{ف}$  and  $\text{ق}$  are romanized *f* and *q*, respectively.
  3.  $\text{ت}$  in a word in the construct state is romanized *t*.
  4. As  $\text{ت}$  in nouns and adjectives of the form  $\text{فـاـتـل}$  which are derived from defective roots. This ending is romanized  $\bar{t}$ , not  $\bar{t}y$ , without regard to the presence of  $\text{ة}$  (*shaddah*).
    - Medial  $\text{تـة}$ , representing the combination of long vowel plus consonant, is romanized  $\bar{t}y$ .
    - Final  $\text{تـة}$  is romanized  $\bar{t}$ .
    - Medial and final  $\text{تـة}$ , representing the combination of diphthong plus consonant, is romanized *ayy*.
    - Over other letters,  $\text{ة}$  is represented in romanization by doubling the letter or digraph concerned.
  5. The plural forms of the Arabic and Persian words are treated as English. The broken plurals (*jam' mukassar*) form are avoided, unless necessary.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABB	Algemene Besturen Bond
AÇEV	Anne-Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı
AIC	American Muslim College
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AHDR	Arab Human Development Report
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkıma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ALESCO	Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
AMSSA	Association for Muslim Schools in South Africa
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ATI	Anjuman-i Talabah-i Islām
ATV	Açık Toplum Vakfı
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMT	<i>Bayt al-Mal wa al-Tamwil</i>
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i>
BPA	<i>Bahagian Pelajaran Agama</i>
BPI	<i>Bahagian Pendidikan Islam</i>
BPIM	<i>Bahagian Pendidikan Islam dan Moral</i>
BPR	Bank Perkreditan Rakyat
CA	Classical Arabic
CDIAL	Centro de Divulgação do Islã para a América Latina
CEDI	Centro de Divulgação do Islã
CIP	Civic Involvement Projects
CISNA	Council of Islamic Education in North America
CMS	Clara Muhammad Schools
CRE	Confessional religious education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
<i>Dā'ish</i>	<i>al-Dawlat al-Islāmīyah fī al-'Irāq wa al-Shām</i> (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DARE	Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe
DEC	Junior secondary certificate (Mali)
DECS	Department of Education, Culture, and Sports
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey

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DoE	Department of Education
DRA	Department for Religious Affairs
DUMER	Ecclesiastical Administration of Muslims of European Region of Russia
DUMU	Spiritual Administration of Ukraine Muslims
EAWS	East African Welfare Society
EDC	Education for democratic citizenship
EE	Eastern Europe
EFA	Education for all
EIDHR	European Union's European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
EFNE	Education for a New Era
EU	The European Union
FET	Further Education and Training (South Africa)
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FPI	<i>Falsafah Pendidikan Islam</i>
FRDE	Fundamental reform document of education
FSB	The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCE	General Certificate of Education (United Kingdom)
GCSE	The General Certificate of Secondary Education (United Kingdom)
GE13	Thirteenth general elections
GES	Ghana Education Service
GET	General Education and Training (South Africa)
GNP	Gross National Product
GVO	Godsdienstig Vormings Onderwijs (Religious Education Classes)
GWOT	Global war on terror
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HRE	Human rights education
HVO	Humanistisch Vormings Onderwijs (Humanist Education Classes)
IACI	Instituto Argentino de Cultura Islámica
IAIN	<i>Institut Agama Islam Negeri</i> (State Institute of Islamic Studies)
IBERR	International Board of Educational Research and Resources (South Africa)
ICBH	Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina
ICC	Community of Croatia
ICiS	Islamic Community in Serbia
ICK	Islamic Community of Kosovo
ICM	Islamic Community of Montenegro
ICS	Islamic Community of Serbia

ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IDD	International Development Department
IEA	Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IEU	Islamic Education Unit (Mali)
IGO	Islamitisch Godsdienst Onderwijs (Islamic Religious Education)
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organization
IIUI	International Islamic University of Islamabad, Pakistan
IIUM	International Islamic University of Malaysia
IJT	Islāmī Jam'iyat-i Ṭalabah
INGO	International non-governmental organizations
IPGM-KAMPIS	<i>Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia Kampus Pendidikan Islam Selangor</i>
IRCM	Islamic Community of Macedonia
IRE	Islamic religious education
ISBO	Islamitische Schoolbesturen Organisatie
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISLA	Islamic Schools League of America
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (Malaysia)
IUIU	Islamic University in Uganda
JAKIM	<i>Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia</i>
Ji	Jimā'ah Islāmīyah
J-QAF	<i>Jawi, Qur'ān, Arabic and Fard 'ayn</i>
JUP	Jamā'at-i 'Ulamā'-i Pakistan
KBSM	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah</i> (Integrated Secondary School Curriculum)
KMI	<i>Kulliyah Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah</i>
KNM	Kerala Naduvathul Mujahidin
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KUIM	<i>Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia</i>
LEA	Local education authority
LEAP	Literacy Enhancement Assistance Program
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LLL	Lifelong learning
LPO	Läroplan för det Obligatoriska Skolväsendet
MA	<i>Madrasah Ālīyah</i>
MAN	State Senior Secondary <i>Madrasah</i> (Indonesia)
MCA	Muslim Community of Albania
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

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MEALN	Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Alphabétisation et des Langues Nationales (Mali)
MEB	Ministry of National Education (Turkey)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MERA	Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs (Morocco)
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MI	<i>Madrasah Ibtidā'iyah</i>
MIU	Moscow Islam University
M-learning	Mobile learning
MMA	Mutaḥidah Majlis-i 'Amal
MoE	Ministry of Education
MONE	Ministry of National Education
MORA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
MPI	<i>Maktab Perguruan Islam</i> (Islamic Teachers Training College)
MPO	Management and Planning Organization of Iran
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
MSA	Muslim Student's Associations
MTS	<i>Madrasah Tsanawiyah</i>
NAE	National Agency of Education
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NEET	Neither in employment, education, or training
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	National Innovation Systems
NOI	Nation of Islam
NU	Nahdhatul Ulama
ODTÜ	Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (Middle East Technical University)
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education (United Kingdom)
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OIPAL	Organización Islámica Para América Latina
ONS	Office for National Statistics (United Kingdom)
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia</i>
PERMI	<i>Persatuan Muslim Indonesia</i>
PGAI	<i>Persatuan Guru Agama Islam</i>
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PIPP	<i>Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan</i>
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PR	<i>Pakatan Rakyat</i> (People's Pact)
PVO	Private Voluntary Organizations
RDI	Research Development and Innovation

RE	Religious education
RIU	Russian Islam University
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SABK	<i>Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan</i>
SACRE	Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
SAR	<i>Sekolah Agama Rakyat</i> (Malaysia)
SAS	<i>Sekolah Agama Swasta</i> (Malaysia)
SBMRJ	Sociedade Beneficente Muçulmana do Rio de Janeiro
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SCRA	State Committee for Religious Affairs
SMA	Sekolah Menengah Atas
SMAN	<i>Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri</i>
SMKA	<i>Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama</i>
SMU	Senior Secondary School (Indonesia)
SPIOR	Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
STA	<i>Sjil Tinggi Agama</i>
STAIN	<i>Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam</i> (State Colleges of Islamic Studies)
STAM	<i>Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia</i>
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
STIs	Sexually transmitted infections
TEGV	Türkiye Eğitim Gönüllüleri Vakfı
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Sciences Study
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIN	<i>Universitas Islam Negeri</i> (Islamic University)
UKM	<i>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</i> (National University of Malaysia)
UM	<i>Universiti Malaya</i> (UM)
UMALUSI	Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (South Africa)
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	The United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	The United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UoI	University of Islam (United States)
UOIF	Union of Islamist Organizations of France
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIM	<i>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia</i>
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UUSPN	Undang-undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional



VCD	Video compact disc
VOS	Vereniging Openbare Scholen
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
WB	The World Bank
WFD	Great Britain's Westminster Foundation for Democracy
WRR	Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy
WVS	World Values Surveys
WVS6	The World Values Survey Wave 6
YFCs	Youth-friendly clinics
YÖK	Higher Education Council (Turkey)

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## Part I

# Islamic Education: Historical Perspective, Origin, and Foundation



# Introduction to Part I: Islamic Education: Historical Perspective, Origin, and Foundation

Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

Whereas the concept of *‘ilm* (knowledge) includes both religious as well as mundane knowledge, the traditional Islamic thought tends to identify the totality of knowledge as religious knowledge. The typology of knowledge in Islam divides the entire human knowledge into two all-embracing categories: *al-‘ulūm al-‘aqlīyah* (rational/argumentative knowledge) and *‘al-ulūm al-naqlīyah* (knowledge by transmission). This division conceptualizes the foundations of the Islamic epistemology and forms the educational arrangements in Islam. Four major approaches to education and knowledge acquisition include: (1) Constructive approach, which is using rules of logics and *qiyās* (analogical deductive

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reasoning) aims to attain human knowledge; (2) Theological approach which is based on *kalām* (dialectical theology) aims to decipher the divine knowledge as well as mundane one; (3) Philosophical approach which is inspired and informed by the Neo-Platonist movement and Peripatetic Islamic philosophy in which knowledge is attained through the process of *wham* (estimation) and using the active intelligence to achieve the unknowns through the known premises; and (4) Mystical/theosophical approach which argues for the notion of knowledge by presence. The mystical approach rests on the argument on the divine knowledge as the source of all knowledge and intuition as an instrument to achieve it. Such an epistemological principal has informed not only various approaches in the acquisition of knowledge but also institutions of education and learning. Although the social and political climate and the local cultures have significantly affected the development of the educational institutions across the Muslim world, a trifold model of the educational institutions prevail across the Muslim world. *Madrrasah* as the final product of this development, however, is challenged by the waves of modernization and domination of western values across the Muslim world.

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**Keywords**

Islamic education · Knowledge · Islamic epistemology · Islamic philosophy · *Kalām*

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## Introduction

Knowledge in Islam and an Islamic approach to education has been a domain of contestation and the core of scholarly debates and contentions across the Muslim world. In an endeavor to enhance understanding on the importance of knowledge in Islam and various methodologies and trajectories to knowledge acquisition by different factions of Muslims, this introduction provides an overview of Islamic epistemology and approaches to education suggested by different schools of thoughts in Islam.

To reflect the reality of the Muslim world, the discussion will follow the division of Islam wherein the Sunnī views are compared to those of Shī'ah. Arguably such division is not the paramount approach to study education, not least since many ideas and theories are not the matter of either/or. However, this approach may contribute to a better understanding of the theoretical diversity within the Muslim world which is fashioned based on a sectarian division.

The theories are mostly discussed as in their original form. Albeit modified and reformed, they are still utilized both as theoretical foundations and as indigenous policy-making instruments in most of the Muslim educational settings. Discussing the theories without reflecting on their temporal evolutions by no means is to undervalue the dynamics of intellectual and educational thought in the Muslim world, nor to deny the efforts and achievements of Muslim thinkers whose scholarly contribution to modern intellectual and educational outlooks have extensively been

acknowledged. Such reforms in the education theories and adaptations of the new approaches, not least inspired by Western theories and practices, are discussed in the introduction to Part II of this volume: Islam and Education in the Modern Era – Social, Cultural, Political Changes and Responses from Islamic Education.

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## Islamic Epistemology

Islamic epistemology primarily addresses the classic questions about the possibility, nature, and sources of knowledge. Knowledge in Islam is sharply divided into divine and mundane, the latter subordinate to the former. While the divine knowledge is present and is only accessible to the Prophet through revelation, the mundane is acquired by scholastic means. The divine knowledge ultimately is identical with human knowledge while at the same time it is somehow of higher order, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Dahlén 2001). Rosenthal (1970) notes that while the concept of *‘ilm* (knowledge) designates religious as well as mundane knowledge, the predominant trend in traditional Islam was to identify the totality and specify knowledge as religious knowledge. This division has a theoretical implication on which all Muslim scholars agree: knowledge is possible in Islam. Hence, in an effort to unveil the notion of knowledge in Islam, one has to explore the concept of mundane knowledge compared to the divine, and the way knowledge acquisition can lead to a different role for a learned person compared to a layman. On a discussion on the typology of knowledge in Islam, Ibn Khaldūn (1980: 436–437) divides the entirety of human knowledge into two all-embracing categories:

The first kind comprises the philosophical sciences. They are the ones with which man can become acquainted through the very nature of his ability to think and to whose objects, problems, arguments, and methods of instruction he is guided by his human perceptions, so that he is made aware of the distinction between what is correct and what is wrong in them by his own speculation and research, in as much as he is a thinking human being.

... The second kind comprises the traditional, conventional sciences. All of them depend upon information based on the authority of the given religious law. There is no place for the intellect in them, save that the intellect may be used in connection with them to relate problems of detail with basic principles. Particulars that constantly come into being are not included in the general tradition by the mere fact of its existence. Therefore, they need to be related [to general principles] by some kind of analogical reasoning. However, such analogical reasoning is derived from [traditional] information, while the character of the basic principle, which is traditional, remains valid [unchanged]. Thus, analogical reasoning of this type reverts to being tradition [itself], because it is derived from it.

With this typology, knowledge of various nature fall into one of the categories of the two-fold taxonomy: they either belong to the first type known as *al-‘ulūm al-‘aqlīyah* (argumentative knowledge); or they are part of the second category labelled as *al-‘ulūm al-naqlīyah* (knowledge by transmission). Hence, two distinct approaches to knowledge acquisition appear in Islam, each of which is established in the form of various theories of knowledge within the Muslim epistemology. The first

approach is the knowledge as the direct divine illumination, a prophetic approach for which human spiritual development is required. The second approach, however, relies on a philosophical methodology: to understand unknown phenomena through the known ones. While the latter moves from the imagination upward to the theoretical intellect, the prophetic approach takes the reverse path, from the theoretical intellect to the imagination. For this reason, knowledge of philosophy is knowledge of the natures of things themselves, while knowledge of prophecy is knowledge of the natures of things as wrapped up in symbols, the shadows of the imagination (Inati 1998). The philosophical approach requires scholastic methodologies to knowledge acquisition and the process of knowledge attainment is gradual. The prophetic knowledge, however, could not be gained in the same philosophical manner. The philosophical approach is based on the acquired intellect, gained through acquired knowledge. It is acquired, because it comes from outside. “The acquired intellect is the highest human achievement, a sacred state which conjoins human and divine realms by conjoining the theoretical and agent intellects (ibid.: 14)”. Unlike, the philosophical approach, the prophetic trajectory requires a set of preparations through which the human soul is equipped to receive knowledge.

In an endeavor to address approaches to knowledge acquisition based on the Islamic epistemology, a four-fold taxonomy is suggested by Muslim scholars and will be used here. Those approaches were utilized extensively not only to explain the notion of knowledge in Islam but also the trend of Islamization of knowledge in a Muslim society. Educational policies and practices – formal as well as nonformal – across the Muslim world is informed and inspired by such epistemological model (Nuseibeh 2001: 826–830).

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## Constructivist Approach to Knowledge

According to the constructivist approach, every humanly attainable truth can be found in the revealed text or can be logically extrapolated from truths that are found in the Scripture. The domain of this approach is limited to *al-‘ulūm al-naqlīyah* (knowledge by transmission). The dominant methodology to this kind of knowledge is *qīyās* (analogical deductive reasoning) which is a methodological tool for *faqīh* (the jurist) to conduct juridical reasoning by analogy. In a broad sense, “*qīyās* can indicate inductive reasoning (*istidlāl*) and even deduction (*istinbāt*, *istinbāt al-ḥaqq*). It is thus that in *kalām*, *qīyās* indicates the syllogistic procedure which consists of induction from the known to the unknown; it is the *al-qīyās al-aqlīyah* that is inspired by Greek syllogism” (Bernard 2003: 2). *Qīyās* enables the Muslim scholar to discover the relation of a *far’* (derived case) from an *aṣl* (principle).

Although *qīyās* – in the absence of explicit formulation of a concept in Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* – is employed as a method to elucidate religious issues, its reliability is treated with caution. It is considered an exercise by a fallible being who is subject to error. Milliot and Blanc (2001) notes that *qīyās* is a last resort in argumentation, “like a carrion, to be eaten only when no other food is available.” Consequently, the doctrine of *qīyās* is contingent upon the notion of *ijmā’* (scholarly consensus).

The notion of *ijmā'* suggests that the unanimous agreement of *ummah* on a *ḥukm* (regulation) is imposed by Allāh. Technically it is “the unanimous doctrine and opinion of the recognized religious authorities at any given time (Bernard 2003: 3)”. Not all scholars agree with such an all-embraced definition of *ijmā'*, many tend to limit it to the consensus of the companions of the Prophet. The *ijmā'* is not always used to recognize right from wrong, rather to rationalize the selection or preference of one creed over others known as the notion of *aṣḥaḥ* (the best option). The application of *ijmā'* sometimes associates with the notion of *tawātur* (traditions transmitted through a chain of reliable narrators), as the consensus on a *ḥadīth* may lead to more frequent quotation of it by scholars. The consensus of *ijmā'* is applied solely at an abstract and hypothetical level. The consensus over practical matters of the Muslim society is treated under the doctrine of *shūrā* (consultative and advisory institution) in which the Muslim community – or their representatives – gather to vote for a given solution.

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## **Kalāmī (Theological) Approach to Knowledge**

*Kalāmī* approach to knowledge is one of the most acknowledged approaches in Islam within the domain of transmitted knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-naqlīyah*). In general, *kalāmī* approach employs dialectical and exploratory methodology in which the *kalām* scholar (*mutakallim*) proceeds on an argument-by-argument basis. The *kalāmī* approach is based on Islamic teleological principles which also are extended into the domain of the Islamic philosophy.

The Qur'ān, as the main source of the Islamic law, is perceived as the written record of the word of God, revealed to Prophet Muḥammad through the angel Gabriel. While the legislative parts of the Qur'ān taken all together are not extensive, the Muslim community acknowledges the prominence of the Scripture as the main source of ruling and regulations for the society and the individual alike.

The verses in the Qur'ān are not explicit and not sufficient to regulate all the aspects of the Muslim life. Some of the fundamental concepts are taken for granted and never discussed or explained in the Qur'ān. In this vein, a special knowledge emerged to contribute to understanding and interpreting the word of God. *Kalām* (literally “word” and close in its meaning to theology in its western sense) is defined by Ibn Khaldūn as a science that involves arguing with logical proofs in defense of the articles of the faith and refuting innovators who deviate in their dogmas from the early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy. *Kalām* in fact is the “science of the word of God” and deals with the monotheism and “logical argumentation that will show the oneness of God.” It discusses the content of the faith and prophecy, in order to block the doors of falsification (*tahrīf*) and deviation. The Islamic concept and domain of knowledge and its respective epistemic sphere derived from it is firmly bound to the sovereignty of God over the knowledge. He is the original source of all knowledge. The ultimate objective of *kalām* is to elucidate all the scientific phenomena within the framework of the faith. *'Ilm al-kalām* which is regarded by al-Fārābī, the Muslim thinker who established the Islamic educational psychology and knowledge

taxonomy, in his *Ihṣā' al-'Ulūm* (Taxonomy of Knowledge) (1991: 86–87), as “a science which enables man to procure the victory of the dogmas and actions laid down by the Legislator of the religion, and to refute all opinions contradicting them.” *Kalām* is the early endeavor to persuade an independent Islamic epistemic tradition throughout the dogma of the religion. The aim of *kalām* is to provide the defensive arguments required for the elimination of all doubts and counterarguments on the principles of the faith. “While bound to the revealed text as a fixed frame of reference for developing answers and positions, *kalām*'s vivacity is derived from having to address questions and doctrines which originate from a variety of frames of reference (Gardet 2002)”. In fact, the Qur'ān is the primary frame of reference for a *mutakallim* (*kalām* specialist) and due of its commitment to the sacred text, *kalām* is specifically an Islamic science which exploits analogical methodologies (*qīyās*) with reference to *ijmā'* (consensus). These characteristics make it more similar to *al-'ulūm al-naqlī* (transmitted knowledge). Van Ess (1988: 149) notes, “not every discussion on any religious question can be considered part of *kalām*; rather *kalām* requires a specific way of treating religious issues: it is a treatment where it is necessary to have an adversary in the discussion.”

Mu'atazilīs and Ash'arīs, the first groups to argue for rationalization of dogma in Islam, based their arguments on dialectical principles and considered *'aql* (reason) as the necessary requirement for the religious science and an instrument to reach the Truth. Whereas the former argued for the agreement of the *sharī'ah* (the knowledge of religious law) with reason, in the latter *sharī'ah* defines the borders, limits, and conditions of the reason. “The fact that ‘traditional’ arguments [analogy and consensus] are in some manuals listed *after* the ‘rational’ arguments indicate that the former is to be regarded as a *confirmatur* to the results of dialectical reasoning (Gardet 2002: 321).” *Kalām* like *sharī'ah* is perceived a knowledge which belongs to a different sphere than mundane sciences, thus their methodologies are also regarded different. Ibn Khaldūn (1980: 346) considers religious sciences which have been adopted from divine sources, beyond the human perception and argues that “there is no place for the intellect in them” and suggests that they “need to be related [to general principles] by some kind of analogical reasoning.”

*Kalām* is a knowledge in which the faith is the core of scrutiny and it maintains the idea that *īmān* (the faith) should be enlightened with knowledge and reasoning (*īmān 'an al-'ilm*) and not a sheer emulation (*taqlīd*). *Kalām* in its Islamic sense is applied to “a science that involves the logical proofs in defence of the articles of faith and refuting innovators who deviate in their dogmas from the early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy (Ibn Khaldun 1980: 34).” In this way, the faith is admitted on the basis of personal reasoning and understanding on the behalf of the believer and scientific argumentation used against doubts and denials from the side of the theologians. *Kalām* also functions as an apologia against the philosophers who question the essence or the logic of the belief. This is the argument behind the notions by some scholars (e.g., al-Fārābī and Shahrīstānī) to maintain *kalām* as being synonymous to “logics.”

The Qur'ān is perceived as the sacred text to be followed by all Muslims. It is believed that the Text has taken both *'aql* (reason) and *naql* (traditions) into



consideration. As it is revealed from the source of knowledge, the rational argument is embedded in the verses, though the human knowledge can never grasp the real essence of it. Various schools of thought within Islam fall in a given position according to their inclination towards a spectrum, starting with *'aql* (reason) and ending with *naql* (transmission by narration). Those who emphasize *'aql* and the rational arguments (like Mu'atazilīs, Twelver Shī'ites and Ismā'ilīs with different degrees of emphasis on reason) believe in the doctrine of *tanzīh* (transcendence), followed by *t'awīl* (interpretation). It is in the course of interpretation of the revealed scripture that the rational criterion has been given more weight than transmitted knowledge and they shall fulfil the argumentative devices by providing *dalīl* (proof) as the rational requirement followed by traditions transmitted through a chain of reliable narrators (*tawātur*) and proved to be genuine. These traditions, then, have to gain the consensus of the experts within the discipline (*ijmā'*). On the other hand, those who believe in the importance of *naql* along with *'aql* (like Ash'arīs, Ḥanbalīs, and Zāhirīs) argue for "the predominance of *ithbāt* (taking the text at face value) or *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism) (Abdel Haleem 2001: 71)." The importance of the engagement of *t'awīl* (interpretation) in understanding the text is truly grasped if one examines the Qur'ānic verses: some verses of the Qur'ān are known as *muḥkamāt* (explicit verses) which deal with issues in a precise language while others are known as *mutashābihāt* (implicit verses) and need to be deciphered and interpreted.

In the course of time and throughout intercultural exchanges, later *kalāmī* scholars began to adopt methods different from those used by early scholars. A popular move was to apply the principles of Greek logics "according to a certain structure by question and response, frequently built up in the form of dilemmas (ibid.: 72)." This approach is still widely practiced as a common *kalāmī* methodology and used as one of the main approaches in the education of *fiqh* and *sharī'ah*.

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## Philosophical Approach to Knowledge

With its methodological foundations borrowed from Greek philosophy and adapted to Muslim context, Islamic philosophy addresses the classic questions on the nature and taxonomy of knowledge in Islam. In its philosophical sense, knowledge is the intellect's grasp of the immaterial forms, the pure essences or universals that constitute the nature of things; and human happiness (*sa'ādah*) is achieved only through the intellect's grasp of such universals (Inati 1998). Acquisition of such knowledge, however, is possible through three *worlds*, which Ibn Khaldūn (1980: 419–421) terms: the world of sensual perception; the ability to think; and the high spiritual world. Thusly, the domain of the philosophical approach to epistemology is the "knowledge by intellect."

Islamic philosophy primarily addresses the notion of human happiness (*sa'ādah*) and the ways to attain it, as the main goal for the individual and society alike. Whereas there are disagreements among the Muslim philosophers on the definition and domain of *sa'ādah*, there is a consensus that knowledge is the only way to attain such happiness. The concern of the Islamic philosophy about knowledge as a means

to achieve happiness is extensively reflected in the Islamic literature from philosophy to logics and psychology. The epistemology, accordingly, has served as one of the main disciplines for the Muslim philosophers in their endeavor to explore the ways to happiness and prosperity.

Al-Kindī (1974), who is credited as the founder of Islamic Neo-Platonism, is regarded the first scholar to adopt and harmonize Aristotelian and Neo-platonic philosophy to the religious climate of Islam. Al-Kindī (1974) addresses the notion of knowledge in Islam and emphasizes that – unlike the Greeks’ view – knowledge in Islam is not solely limited to the senses. His definition includes the divine knowledge, which requires merging Islamic theology (*kalām*) with the philosophy, while maintaining the classic division of physics and metaphysics. For al-Kindī, the combination of philosophy and theology is not contradictory, as both will be employed to attain the one and the same end: The Ultimate Truth, God. He emphasizes, however, the possibility of human knowledge acquired through scholastic and scientific methods. The divine knowledge, in his view, is of the same kind as human acquired knowledge. The divine knowledge does not differ in type from human knowledge; the difference is in the method of acquisition. While, human knowledge has to be acquired through schooling, the divine knowledge could be gained in a “supernatural” way: “God may choose to impart it to his prophets by cleansing and illuminating their souls and by giving them his aid, right guidance, and inspiration; and they, in turn, communicate it to ordinary men in an admirably clear, concise, and comprehensible style, even though ‘human’ knowledge may lack the completeness and consummate logic of the prophets’ divine message.”

The typology of knowledge in Islam – revealed divine knowledge of the Text versus human acquired knowledge – opened a new ground for debates among generations of Muslim philosophers.

The dominance of Neo-Platonism on Islamic philosophical thought, which according to Mahdi (2001) “tried to make room for a God beyond reason,” stimulated further disputes among Muslim scholars. Al-Rāzī, a Muslim philosopher and physician, through his borrowing of the Mu‘atazilī atomism developed a rational approach to the theory of creation. He proposed five eternal principles: God, Soul, prime matter, space (infinite or absolute), and time (unlimited or absolute) and argued that the creation took place as a result of *faltah* (the unexpected and sudden turn of events), therefore, we “cannot treat the act of creation as a sheer act of grace (Goodman 2002).” Al-Rāzī believed in the decisive role of reason and maintained that, “philosophy and the philosophic life yields the only salvation that is ultimately possible (Walker 2015).” For him the philosophical life is to seek knowledge and practice justice which in turn makes man habituated to reason. Al-Rāzī “was opposed altogether to prophecy, to particular revelations and to divine laws, and engaged in serious criticism of religion in general. He thought that organized religion was a device employed by evil men to establish a kind of tyranny over mankind and that it led to conflicts and wars (Al-Farabi 1962: 51).” Today, only some fragments of al-Rāzī’s works are available which show the first attempts of Muslim scholars in employing philosophical methodologies to the study of religion. Through this, they “tend to bear out the view of later Muslim students of philosophy that both lacked

competence in the logical foundation of philosophy, were knowledgeable in some of the natural sciences but not in metaphysics; and were unable to narrow the gap that separated philosophy from the new religion, Islam (Fazl-Rahman 2004)."

Ibn Sinā (Avicenna) was among the first philosophers who attempted to explain *kalāmī* questions and mysticism, using rational and scientific arguments. The philosophies of Avicenna, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) were closely connected with sciences. All these philosophers were prominent scientists in the field of hard and natural sciences: Avicenna and Averroes in medicine and al-Fārābī in mathematics and music. Their efforts were the attempt to somehow make intelligible, in a wider rational sense, phenomena that were admittedly beyond reason, that were not rational (in its instrumental sense) and could never be turned into something altogether rational.

Islamic Neo-Platonism is one of the most established epistemological schools in function, which has maintained its significance in the Muslim world and it sometimes appears in combination with other schools or intellectual trends. A proper example of this school is al-Fārābī, whose epistemological stand has both a Neo-Platonic element and an Aristotelian dimension. With his inspiration from these two schools, al-Fārābī presents an epistemology which is "encyclopaedic in range and complex in articulation (Netton 1998: 13)." Delineating an epistemological paradigm, al-Fārābī composed a trilogy of Islamic epistemology, *Kitāb-i Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* (The Book of Enumeration of Sciences), *Risālah fī al-'Aql* (Treatise on Reason), and *Kitāb al-Hurūf* (The Book of Letters) and fashioned a taxonomy of knowledge in Islam. His *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* is regarded as one of the early attempts to classify knowledge. A glance over the book gives a brief picture of the division of sciences among early Muslim philosophers. The book is composed of five chapters, each opens with Aristotelian classic emphasis on the significance and role of knowledge. Different chapters deal with the "science of language," "science of logic," "mathematical sciences," physics and metaphysics, and "civil [political] science," jurisprudence, and scholastic theology. Each knowledge category has its subcategories. For instance chapter three on the mathematical sciences "embraces the seven subdivisions of arithmetic, geometry, optics, astronomy, music, weights and 'mechanical artifices'; these subdivisions in turn have their own subdivisions (Netton 1998: 14)."

Logic has a prominent status in the Muslim epistemology. Following Aristotelian methodology, Muslim philosophers opened the debate on knowledge with the classic notion of knowledge in the human mind. The primary sort of knowledge in the human mind is *taṣawwūr* (conception) which is reflected in the human mind like a reflection in the mirror, an apprehension of an object with no judgment. When the apprehension associates with a judgment, it creates *taṣdīq* (assent or accepting truth or falsity) which signifies a mental relation of correspondence between the concept and the object. Thus, conceptions are the main components of assent, which neither bear falsity nor truth. "One must keep in mind, however, that when assent is said to be a form of knowledge, the word is then used, not in the broad sense to mean true or false judgment, but in the narrow sense to mean true judgment (Inati 1998: 4)." Human mind is able to grasp the known conceptions (self-evident and acquired)

actually, and the unknown conceptions potentially (through reducing them). Likewise, assents could be either known or unknown. The known conceptions, like known assents, are divided into evident and acquired. Unlike the evident, the acquired conceptions are relative to any individual. Al-Fārābī defines the evident object as “the customary, primary, well-known knowledge, which one may deny with one’s tongue, but which one cannot deny with one’s mind since it is impossible to think their contrary. Of the objects of conception and assent, only the unknown ones are subject to inquiry. By reducing the number of unknown objects one can increase knowledge (Al-Farabi 1991: 12).” To elaborate knowledge using the principles of logic owes its validity to the status of logic; that is considered by Avicenna as a “key to knowledge and knowledge is a key to happiness, the ultimate human objective (Inati 1998: 806).” In order to understand this proposition, thus, one shall address three essential questions in Muslim epistemology: (a) the nature of knowledge; (b) the reason why logic is necessary to knowledge; and (c) the manner in which the knowledge can lead to happiness.

In the same vein, Avicenna argues that the purpose of philosophy is to reach the realities of all things, in as much as that is possible for a human being (1983: 12–14). He identifies the mental faculties of the soul in terms of their epistemological function and creates a number of propositions through which he maintains that there are two types of philosophy: theoretical and practical. According to Avicenna, while the purpose of theoretical philosophy is to perfect the soul through knowledge alone, the purpose of practical philosophy is to perfect the soul through knowledge of what must be done, so that the soul acts according to this knowledge. “The theoretical philosophy is knowledge of things that exist not owing to our choice and action, [while] practical philosophy is knowledge of things that exist in account of our choice and action (Inati 1998: 233).” Avicenna argues that, knowledge in its early form exists in abstraction and could be attained through perception — a mental process that takes place through the senses. The perception is the image manipulated and retained by human mind. For Avicenna “both manipulation and retention are distinct epistemological functions, and cannot depend on the same psychological faculty; therefore [he] . . . distinguishes faculties of relation and manipulation as appropriate to those diverse epistemological functions (Salim 1998: 2).” The practice of retention is performed through the faculty of representation in human imagination. The nonsensible objects are perceived through the faculty of *wahm* (estimation) which is responsible for intentions beyond the abstraction and/or perception. The human soul by itself can attain only the first three degrees of abstraction: sensation, imagination, and the action of estimation. It then apprehends the intelligibles provided to it from the outside world. In their interrelated forms, all these faculties produce the common sense. Human mind is equipped with the *active intellect*, which has the responsibility of processing images, relating them with meanings and retaining them. The retained images, products of manipulation of the human mind, create universals. The active intellect, as a result of training, develops the habit of recognizing universals, a faculty which the human soul lacks. Through the universals, the known components stored in the human mind, man can develop his knowledge to unknowns. The highest object of human knowledge is the Ultimate

Intellect, God. All knowledge descends from God, the source of all knowledge. A prophet receives that through intuition and an ordinary human through reason. In Salim's (1998: 5) words:

All sense experience, logic and the faculties of the human soul are therefore directed at grasping the fundamental structure of reality as it emanates from that source [God]. . . By this conception, then, there is a close relation between logic, thought, experience, the grasp of the ultimate structure of reality and an understanding of God . . . [the things in the world] are ordered according to a necessity that we can grasp by the use of rational conceptual thought.

Thus, the Peripatetic epistemology (*Mashā'ī*) is based on an understanding of the unknown phenomena through the known ones. This approach relies heavily on logics and syllogism. The movement from a known conception to an unknown proceeds through an explanatory phase (*al-qawl al-shāriḥ*) where *burhān* (proof) is employed as a dominant method. The use of valid proofs in the explanatory phase leads to certitude and the employment of invalid ones will bring falsehood. Logic is the criteria for the validity or invalidity of the explanatory phase and proof. For Avicenna, logic is a necessary key to knowledge and cannot be replaced except by God's guidance.

Albeit differences in the methods of acquisition, the prophetic and philosophical truths are identical. Thus, philosophy, which is considered a foreign science, serves as a medium through which the seeker is lead to the truth. Ibn Ṭufayl in his philosophical tale, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* (The Living Son of the Vigilant) elaborates the Avicennian epistemology and provides a vivid instance of the harmony of philosophy and religion where Ḥayy, the sole habitant of an inhabited island – microcosm of the real world – encounters the natural phenomena and moves beyond his sensory perceptions to respond the questions of creation, soul, etc. His philosophical approach leads him to the knowledge which in the neighboring island has been achieved through religion and education. The book is the manifestation of the alternative paths to truth and proves the reconciliation of philosophy and religion in their path to knowledge.

Throughout his treatise, Ibn Ṭufayl (1991) develops the classic debate on knowledge acquisition and the role of education throughout the human lifespan in Islam. Ḥayy's development, representing the human being and subsequently the human society, is schematized in seven stages of seven years each: an approach to education which was kept in practice in the Muslim world. The first stage is childhood in which the learning approach is based on intuition and imitation. Slowly the child develops a sense of the world and the things in it, a taste for some and aversion for others. At the age of seven, childhood is over. From seven to twenty-one, is the period of practical reason, the kind that finds means to ends. The first signs of spiritualization appear around the time of adolescence, which develops throughout the next stage when the human being begins to think seriously about metaphysics. From twenty-one starts the age of wonder, when the soul seeks inquiries it cannot respond and struggles for their answer. On the island, Ḥayy in his search for the creator discovers God; and not knowing whether God is one or many, he recapitulates human history. Then at twenty-eight the age of reason starts, when the paradoxical unity and diversity of the world is put into focus. This is a level beyond the abstraction which paves the way for development of reason to wisdom. At

the age of thirty-five when the soul begins to search deeper, the wisdom wakes. The relation to metaphysics is not merely by knowledge, but also by love. The last stage, the spiritualization of wisdom, its rise from exercise to experience, marks the end of tutelage and beginning of maturity, the fulfilment of self-awareness in the realization that all that has gone before is a “ladder of love” to union with God; for at the end of his seventh set of seven years, Ḥayy attains the beatific experience.

*Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* is regarded as a classic instance of work in the Islamic philosophy on education. Though concise, it addresses various types of knowledge acquisition in Islam each of which is developed through various schools. The significance of the book is that the idea of education in both forms – scholastic and by experience – is regarded complementary to each other. Training in one, helps professing the other.

As the philosophical debates in Islam were focused on the notion of soul, resurrection, creation, and religious community, and gave support to discussions on the advantages of a religious community over a nonreligious one and logics of ruling, that ultimately led to the birth of a new discipline known as “the new wisdom” (*al-ḥikmat al-jadīdah*). The emergence of “the new wisdom” by Shī‘ite philosophers, which started in the Persian city of Isfahan in the mid-seventeenth century, was contemporary to the development of (Western) rationalism in France. The new wisdom, on the one hand, borrowed Mu‘atazilīs arguments on *kalāmī* debates, and on the other hand, the entire philosophical tradition from al-Kindī to Avicenna and to those added the elements of mysticism and the *ṣūfī* notion of “direct vision.” Thus, wisdom, now comes to be understood as the completion of philosophy or rational thought, to be attained through private illumination, which could be dreams or visions. This new school of theosophy was composed of *kalām*, mysticism, and philosophy. While the *kalāmī* part was focused on the theological questions and mysticism inquired into the notion of illumination and True vision, the philosophical component borrowed from the Neo-Platonic philosophy which had no interest in social and political circumstances. The new wisdom, segregated from the social events, was challenging the classic questions of Islamic theosophy. Therefore, the attempts on rationalization remained at an abstract theoretical level and never gained the chance to engage in the social and political questions.

The theosophical approach was criticized for ignoring the reality of the Muslim society. A number of intellectual movements formed which tried to include and discuss the issues set aside in Islamic philosophy. The debates on rationalization, however, changed direction and attempted to discuss the challenges of Islam in the modern world. Some modern intellectual movements use the Mu‘atazilī rationalization movement as a proof for the necessity of rationalization from within in any given era.

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## **Mystical/Theosophical Approach to Knowledge: Knowledge by Presence**

A contested approach to knowledge in Islam with the emphasis on the notion of “knowledge by presence,” as against the scholastic methods, is inspired by the mystical heritage of Muslims. As an instance of a mystical approach to knowledge

and education in Islam, this section explores Suhrawardī's school of illuminationism (*ishrāqī*). The illumination school is developed through 'irfān (linguistic science of mystical apprehension) which according to Ha'iri (1992: 22) is considered as "the expression of mystical ways of experience both in the introversive journey of ascent and the extroversive process of descent." From this perspective, illuminationism is regarded experiential, although one should be aware that the notion of experience is not the one obtained through the senses, rather it denotes the mystical experience. Ibn al-'Arabī's theory of *wahdat-i wujūd* (unity of the existence) inspired many scholars as it suggested the 'irfān as new knowledge and not part of Muslim mysticism. Suhrawardī's theory of illuminationism demonstrates some similarities with Ibn al-'Arabī's *wahdat-i wujūd* thesis. The illuminationist epistemology suggested by Suhrawardī emerges in response to Peripatetic epistemology and is based on *al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī* (knowledge by presence). However, knowledge by presence is not suggested as an alternative to *al-'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī* (acquired knowledge) rather it signifies an epistemological position prior to acquired knowledge. The illuminationist epistemology explains not only the prophetic and intuitive knowledge, but also relations between ontology and epistemology. Unlike Avicenna who maintains "upholding the 'priority of essence' over existence . . . illuminationism defends the 'primacy of quiddity' . . . [and] considers existence to be [an abstract] mental concept (Ziai 2001: 701)." In this vein, the domain of knowledge is not physics, as Avicenna suggests, but metaphysics: the realm of myths, dreams, fantasies, and truths known through inspiration (ibid.). The prime mode of the knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) is "self-awareness, and every being existing in itself which is capable of self-awareness is a pure and simple light, as evinced by the pellucid clarity with which it is manifest to itself (Cooper 1998: 220)." Suhrawardī emphasizes the distinction between scientific knowledge and knowledge by presence and argues that the luminosity of one's inner existence leads to self-awareness, i.e., knowledge by presence. God, the Light of Lights – whose self-awareness is the all-embracing of all other entities – is the very source of all illumination. According to Suhrawardī in his *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, (The Theosophy of the Illumination),

The Essence of the First Absolute Light, God, gives constant illumination, whereby it is manifested and it brings all things into existence, giving life to them by its rays. Everything in the world is derived from the Light of His Essence and all bounty and perfection are the gift of His bounty, and to attain fully to this illumination is salvation.

With this order, a conical structure appears in which the main constituent of reality is the hierarchies of such pure lights, differing solely in the intensity of their illumination, and thus of self-awareness.

Through this symbolic expression, Suhrawardī formulates his thesis on knowledge. Whereas Avicenna's notion of knowledge is based on a move from known components toward unknown ones, as a mental process in the mind of man, for Suhrawardī such knowledge only guarantees certainty. He argues that there exists a more fundamental kind of knowledge that does not depend on form and which is, like the experience of pain, unmediated and undeniable. By this,

Suhrawardī challenges the Avicennian inherent form of knowledge which maintains that knowledge as it is held by the knower is solely true when it corresponds to reality.

The illuminationist approach to knowledge is a mystical (*'irfānī*, to a certain extent even *sūfī*) approach to which the notion of knowledge by presence is a key concept. Ha'iri (1992: 43–46) defines the “knowledge by presence” as a kind of knowledge that has all its relations within the framework of itself, such that the whole anatomy of the notion can hold true without any implication of an external objective reference calling for an exterior relation. It is “the knowledge of the Truth” to which the criterion of truth or falsehood is not applicable. It is free “from the dualism of truth and falsehood. This is because the essence of this pattern of knowledge is not concerned with the notion of correspondence. The basics of logical argumentation could not be applied to the knowledge by presence as it is free from “the distinction between knowledge by ‘conception’ and knowledge by ‘belief’ (ibid.).” To be the host of knowledge by presence, one must be purified spiritually, to receive the rays of the Divine Light. Upon receiving the Light, “illuminationist must employ discursive philosophy to analyse the experience and systematize it, in the same way as with sensory experience (Cooper 1998: 221).” Suhrawardī bestows his endeavors to explain the process of analysis and systematization of the knowledge by presence. He utilizes a symbolic anecdotism to clarify various aspects of illuminationism. His writings are not only sublime pieces of literature with highly sophisticated philosophical questions employing scientific methodologies, but also praised for having great pedagogical functions using an illuminationist approach to knowledge. They are “guides to the kind of experiences to be encountered by the seeker and to their interpretation; indeed, a central figure in these narratives is often a guide (Cooper 1998: 221),” sometimes a master and sometimes a muse, they often symbolize angel Gabriel who mediated revelation of divine knowledge to the Prophet through *wahy* (intuition).

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s and Suhrawardī’s theories are attempts of the *'urafā* (scholars of *'irfān*) to introduce doctrines of mysticism into epistemology in a systematic fashion. Their theories result in the emergence of a philosophical school rival to Peripateticism. Efforts of these philosophers are devoted to a philosophical approach in which an alternative method is proposed to replace Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic logic and metaphysics. The new approach is “based on the relationship between light as the main principle of creation and knowledge, and that which has lit up the rest of reality (Leaman 1998: 14).” This tradition was followed by many Shī'ite philosophers mainly in the Persian world which lead to various theories by Mullā Ṣadrā (1981, 2003), Mir Dāmād (1977), and Mullā Hādī Sabzivārī (1982), to name but a few. It is addressed frequently as *al-Ḥikmat-i al-Muta'ālīyah* (Transcendental Theosophy), a rather new discipline within Islamic philosophy which has spread all over the Muslim World.

The theories proposed by Ibn al-‘Arabī (1997), illuminationism (Suhrawardī 1999) and other theosophers credited as the *'irfānī* approach to ontology and epistemology. Al-Ghazālī, who is regarded as one of the most influential Muslim philosophers – though he rejected his affiliation to philosophy – endeavored to make



the *sūfī* tradition of mysticism more accepted within scholastic and scientific circles. To al-Ghazālī the reconciliation of religion and philosophy – considered foreign knowledge for Muslims, due to its affiliation to the Greeks – is problematic. For him, philosophy is acceptable to the extent that it is in agreement with Islam. He profoundly scrutinizes the philosophical works of both Greek and Muslim philosophers and summarizes the philosophical debates of his age in his book *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah (The Aims of the Philosophers)*. After this demonstration of his intellectual mastery over philosophical questions, he composes his famous work *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)* where he discusses the notion of God as the Ultimate Knower of the universals as well as the particulars and argues for his doctrine of eschatology. The book contributed extensively to the pre-existing intellectual debates in the Muslim world against philosophy and weakened the position of Greek philosophical thought to the extent that “its effects was felt as far afield as Christian Europe (Nofal 1994: 521).” Throughout his debates against the philosophers and Shī‘ite notion of infallibility of the *Imām* – which according to Shī‘ite bestows the *Imām* the capacity to host the divine knowledge and to serve as the source of knowledge for Muslim community – al-Ghazālī develops an alternative thesis based on Sufism.

Al-Ghazālī’s (1959) epistemology is not limited to the classic notion of *ṣūfī* knowledge attainment based on the unveiling of the truth to the recipients who have developed the capacity to receive it; rather it includes the means by which knowledge could be attained through the senses, reason, and intuition. In his comprehensive work *Ihīyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*, al-Ghazālī launches an extensive discussion about the concepts, aims, methodologies, and categories of knowledge. God is all-knowing, the source of the true knowledge. Hence, true knowledge is nothing but religious knowledge: knowledge of God, His books, His prophets, and the revealed law (*sharī‘ah*). Since the aim of religious knowledge is to attain the true happiness and salvation of human kind, they are superior to nonreligious sciences. This, by no means, do maintain that non-religious sciences such as medicine should be ignored. However, disciplines related to this world, such as medicine, arithmetic, etc., are classed as techniques.

In terms of aims, al-Ghazālī divided knowledge into the science of transaction and the science of unveiling. While the former deals with the behaviors and actions (including customs and rites), the latter is the knowledge of reality and the essence of things. It is the supreme, true knowledge which is not possible to attain through scholastic practices, schooling, or reading books. It needs a purification stage through which the soul attains the phase to receive the light of knowledge. Then after, the heart of the recipient of the light will be illuminated with the divine knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī (1959) also agrees that, in terms of origin, knowledge is divided into revealed knowledge which is revealed to the Prophet through intuition and explains the unity of God, exegesis, rites and morals; and rational sciences which are products of the human mind including theology, natural sciences, mathematics, and the like. According to Nofal (1994), there is no contradiction, in al-Ghazālī’s opinion between the revealed sciences and rational sciences. Any apparent conflict stems

from the incapacity of the seeker of knowledge and from faulty understanding of the reality of revealed law or the judgment of reason. To master both is a hard task, as interest in one reduces the chance of mastery of the other.

Against these epistemological schemes, there have been a number of modern epistemological paradigms presented by contemporary Muslim thinkers. Although most of these paradigms are efforts to create an Islamic model inspired by Western social sciences, one can trace the impact of classic Islamic philosophy throughout them.

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## Institutionalization of the Islamic Education

Muslims start any discussion about education with the argument that the opening of the prophecy of the Prophet Muḥammad is through the emphasis of God on knowledge: “And thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man, that he knew not (Qur’ān, XCVI: 3–5).” Qur’ān as the most important source of knowledge for Muslims insists on the quest for knowledge. “Read” is the first word through which the Prophet is assigned as the messenger of God. God is the source of all knowledge and the prophets were granted the access to knowledge and wisdom. The prophetic knowledge as noted earlier arrives through revelation to the prophet. “We have sent among you, of yourselves, messenger, to recite our signs to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book and the Wisdom, and to teach you that you know not (Quran, II: 151).” Prophet Muḥammad is *al-nabī al-ommī* (unlettered), his knowledge is of divine source and his *Sunnah* is complementary to the Text.

“The subject of Islamic education in general is treated under *tarbīyah*” (Pedersen and Makdisi 2003: 8). There are numerous arguments about the root of this word which may help grasp the notion of *tarbīyah* in Islam. While some linguists argue that the term is derived from *rbw* (upbringing), others connect it to *rabb* (the Lord). Fakh al-Rāzī regards “God as the Educator and the human being as educator. The classical understanding of *tarbīyah* is thus close to the English word ‘upbringing’ (Roald 1994: 48).”

Once the young Muslim community was constituted, a primitive system of education, embracing the bare elements of knowledge was set on foot. According to Pedersen and Makdisi (2003: 23), “the earliest, informal institutions of learning in the Islamic world were probably children’s schools, such arrangements doubtless going back to the pre-Islamic period,” which appeared later in all around the Muslim world under a variety of names. Such institutions are in the West usually known as Qur’ānic schools, in Arabic *kuttāb*, in Persian *maktab* or *maktabkhāneh*, and in Turkish they are known as *mektap*. The structure varied from one context to next, as many local elements integrated into these institutions. However, Landau (2003: 567) argues that there are some pieces of evidence to suggest that the structure and teaching methods of *kuttābs* were modelled on the Byzantine primary schools. *Kuttāb* has also been applied to Jewish *heder* schools. Pedersen and Makdisi (2003: 603) argue that there was an educated elite among Jews in Medina. Teachers, in the early Islamic era, were among this group of Jews who practiced their own educational methodologies using Islamic curricula. The “ability to write was

not so common in Medina as in Mecca (Pedersen and Makdisi 2003: 603)", while "in Mecca were only 21 persons who could read and write (Hojjati 1979: 21)." When the newly established Muslim community conquered their hostiles in the battles, the captured non-Muslims were released against teaching Muslim children. This service was counted as their ransom. Twelve boys were assigned to each educated prisoner and as soon as the pupils had attained the stipulated degree of progress, their teachers were set to liberty.

By the early Umayyad period (660–750 C.E.), the Islamic elementary education had been thoroughly established. Famous scholars such as al-Ḥajjāj (the politician) and al-Kumayt and al-Ṭirīmmah (poets) were schoolmasters. Among the first instances of free formal education in Islam, one can recall "Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim who kept a *kuttāb* in Kūfah providing free education for children (Goldziher 1908)." It became so popular that it had "been attended by 3,000 children, where he used to ride up and down among his pupils on an ass (Pedersen and Makdidi 2003: 12)." The first recorded private elementary school was established in the second century A.H. (eighth century C.E.) when "a Badawī of the tribe of Rīyāḥ settled in Basra and conducted a school for payment (*bi al-ujrat*) (al-Hamawi 1923: 230)." There is a rather common misconception among some scholars (like Goldziher) to treat *kuttāb* as a religious institution in which some nonreligious subjects were taught, while some others (like Ahmad Challabi) argue that there had been two *kuttābs*: one was a formal primary education institution and the other an informal, were used solely for educating Qur'ān to the children.

As Islam reached other lands, Muslim education took its root and developed, adopting the pre-existing system of education; educational traditions of those civilizations left a permanent imprint on the Muslim system of education. Mohammadi and Qaieni (2002: 14) note that when Iran was conquered by Islam there were already established educational institutions for children. They adopted Islamic curricula and continued their function, while *maktab* (*kuttāb*) was added as the institution for learning Qur'ān. *Kuttāb* was in a way the continuation of private home schooling which was an established tradition among aristocratic families in Iran and some other countries. Such tradition was practiced even in the Islamic era (e.g., Umayyad) when the princes were educated at court where education reached a high standard of excellence. *Mu'addib* (instructor) was a standing figure at the Umayyad court and was admirably supported in his work by the fathers of the princes. At this period home schooling spread among ordinary people and made partly the education of girls possible.

Children started to attend school at the age of seven. Parents were recommended not to send their children to school before this age. Whereas the informal *kuttābs* solely taught Qur'ān and rarely simple works of literature, formal *kuttābs* had a rather well-developed curricula divided into theoretical knowledge and practical skills. While the theoretical part had its own teacher, the practical subjects were taught by an instructor from the respective guild. Goldziher (1908) argues that some elements in the practical part of the *kuttāb* curriculum were borrowed from the Persians. This implies that the Persian educational model – with its division of theoretical knowledge and practical skills – practiced during the Sassanīd era has served as the model to be emulated among Muslims. In the Persian system, the

teacher was responsible for literacy and numeracy skills and a *farhangbud* (instructor) was leading the practices of riding, swimming, shooting arrows, and some other practical skills like etiquettes. The curriculum both in theory and practice varied from place to place, however, ideally it was composed of writing (*taktīb*), reading or recitation (*talqīn*), rudiments of arithmetic, *ḥadīth* (mostly those in the favour of knowledge and seeking it), *qiṣaṣ al-anbīyā'* (the legends of the prophets), and selections from poetry (those with moral messages). However, not all the subjects were taught in all *maktabs*. Qur'ān was used not only as a religious text but also as a main source for the practice of writing. Pupils practiced writing verses of Qur'ān on a *lawḥ* (tablet). As the verses of Qur'ān were regarded sacred, every morning, prior to any other activity, a ritual of cleansing (*maḥv*) took place in the school where pupils had to wipe out the verses of the Qur'ān from their *alvāḥ* (tablets).

The practical skills, which were considered as a part of the curriculum, also dealt with the proper response to the call for prayer (*adhān*), performing sacred ablution (*wdū*) and practice of joint prayer (*ṣalāt al-jamā'ah*): one of the school boys acted as leader of prayer (*imām*) while the rest followed him. The teacher supervised the performance and made comments when necessary.

From a different outlook, however, there were two types of *maktabs*:

- Inhouse (private) *maktabs* which took place in the homes of wealthy people and were attended by children of the household and other dependents. A room or a separate part of the building was devoted to *maktab* where children attended daily classes. In some cases, families got together and assigned a place at the home of one family, where the children could take part in the *maktab* and they then shared the costs. The teacher who was employed by the parents often became a resident of the house.
- Common (public) *maktabs* were often catered by middle class families. The classes, which were meant for the reading and memorizing the Qur'ān, took place in the neighboring mosque or home of the teacher where students paid fees cash or in kind.

*Maktab* started early in the morning and lasted until sunset. In Iran, as some other places, the pupils went back for lunch and resumed the classes in the afternoon while in other places they brought their own lunch packets where each pupil was required to offer a portion of his food to the *ākhūnd* [*mullā*] or to the servant of the *maktab* (*bābā* if a man or *nanah* if a woman). Children also had to carry "a small rug rolled up under their arms" (Ghanoonparvar 2002: 116) or "cushions, felt mats (*jul*) or pieces of sheepskin (Doustkhah and Yaqmaie 1990: 181)." Upon the completion of the Qur'ān and when the pupil could read (parts of or) the entire Qur'ān by heart, a ceremony took place where the parents offered the teacher a gift. School children usually performed all sorts of tasks for their teacher in lieu of school fees. In his autobiography, Taha Hussein describes his school days in a *kuttāb* in a village in Upper Egypt where his father was delayed in his payment to the teacher and the teacher ignored his pupil till he forgot the Sacred Text he could recite by heart. The story shows that *kuttāb* are still following the same practices in many parts of the

Muslim world. Here is the teacher talking to the young blind Taha, who has forgotten the verses of Qur'ān, shortly after memorizing it:

... May God reward me for all the time I have spent with you and for all the effort I have expended on your instruction, so you have forgotten the Qur'ān and must learn it again. Not that I am to blame, nor you, but only your father; for if he had paid me my dues on the day you finished the Qur'ān, God had blessed him by causing you to remember it, but he denied my just dues and so God has driven the Qur'ān out of your head! (Hussein 1997: 28)

The *maktab* could be run not only by men but also by women. In Iran, where this was a rather common practice, the woman was called *khānumbāji*, *khānbāji*, or *mullābāji*. There was no age limit to attend the *maktabs*: children from the age of four to eight attended *maktabs* and the education lasted two to five years; thereafter children could continue in *madrasah*. In the *maktabs*, girls were separated from boys, except in the inhouse *maktabs* where they usually occupied the back rows.

*Kuttābs* or *maktabs* have not always been small-scale institutions. “Under the Ottoman Empire, a specific building was devoted to *kuttāb*, it consisted of a large, domed, unadorned hall in which all the pupils sat cross-legged on mattresses in a rough semicircle, usually next to low desks. Such buildings were generally erected by philanthropists (Landau 2003: 463).” Corporal punishment was common in *maktabs*. The “teacher or his assistant chastised the disobedient, the recalcitrant, and the unstudious by beating their hands with a cane or in more severe cases, subjecting them to the bastinado (*falak*) (Doustkhah and Yaqmaie 1990: 181).” Ansari (n.d.: 38) in his memoir recalls his school days when he was beaten on Thursdays, in advance “to prevent him to behave inappropriately at home during the weekends [Fridays].”

Mottahedeh (1985: 33–34) notes an alternative informal education, which is still in practice in many Muslim societies. Apprenticeship is not specifically an Islamic tradition but it is widely practiced in Muslim communities. In his comparative study of various types of education in Islamic countries, Mottahedeh discusses apprenticeship, practiced mostly by poor and disadvantaged families, as a rival to *maktab* and secular primary schools. This education was more appropriate to those who wished to work in private small businesses. Mottahedeh’s apprentice boy is working in a tailor shop. He is harshly beaten by the master and has to go through various stages of practical education to become a master of his own. Theoretically, the practice of apprenticeship was documented by *ḥadīth* from the Prophet and the Caliphs or *Imāms* and strengthened through morals of folk wisdom and folklore.

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## Mosque as the Early Institution of the Islamic Education

*Masjid* (mosque) is among the most important institutions for Muslims, which serves multiple purposes, from worship to education; and from military exercises to literacy classes and art exhibitions. During the course of Muslim history, mosques are extensively used as the institutions of education. Still, mosques are widely used

for educational purposes across the Muslim world. The mosque also has played a significant role in the development of an independent Muslim educational institution, namely *madrasah*. Makdisi (1981: 27) argues that, the process of shaping the independent Islamic educational institution was made in three stages: from *masjid*, to the *masjid-khān* complex, to the *madrasah*. *Masjid*, hence, is considered the first educational institution in Islam. Also, *majlis* was the first educational institution which emerged in the mosque as a common practice after the daily prayers, an institution which is extensively in practice across the Muslim world today. Makdisi (1981: 11) notes the significance of *majlis* in teaching religious knowledge and the *sunnah* within the institution of *masjid*. The term *majlis* originally meant the position assumed by the professor when teaching after having performed the ritual prayer in the mosque. Most likely *majlis* is derived from the Islamic tradition of sitting and listening to the lectures after the daily rituals, denoted mostly a gathering in which the religious knowledge was transferred. Later, however, the use of the term extended to cover all types of educational activities and a number of rituals, through a number of extensions added,

... *majlis al-'ilm* ... discussions on subjects whether of religious or scientific knowledge [and] medicine; ... *majlis al-ḥadīth* ... for teaching *ḥadīth*; *majlis al-ḥukm* meant ... courtroom; *majlis al-wa'z* ... for academic sermon; *majlis at-tadrīs* [meant] the place in which the teaching ... took place, a classroom; ... *majlis al-shu'arā*, a meeting place of poets; *majlis al-adab* for belletrists; *majlis al-fatwā* ... [a session] in which solicited legal opinions [were issued]; *majlis al-fatwā wa'n-nazar*, for legal opinions and disputations; *majlis al-implā'* ... what a professor dictated during a session. (Makdisi 1981: 10–13)

The lecturer or the professor who, on most occasions, was affiliated to religious scholars ('*ulamā'*) or religious experts in the field, sat down on a *kursī*, a wooden seat that usually had a desk for the Qur'ān or any other book, is known as *khāṣṣ*, *qārī'*, or *raḥl*. Sitting on the *kursī* he could easily be recognized through his elevated position over the others in the *majlis*. If the session was the one intended for the recitation or learning of the holy book, the teacher would sit on the *kursī* while others opening their books on a *khāṣṣ* or *raḥl* were following the teacher.

When the audience is large and the *majlis* is more than a course session, or in public sermons, the preacher or the speaker uses *minbar*, a raised structure or pulpit from which solemn announcements to the Muslim community are made and from which sermons are preached (Pedersen and Makdisi 2003). As the *minbar* was used for speeches addressing an audience, it is therefore identical with *majlis*.

*Masjid al-Nabī* in Medina, which was established by the Prophet Muḥammad, is considered as one of the early Muslim educational institutions, still in use, with the same educational institutions practicing similar pedagogical methods and traditions as in early Islam. "Even at the time that the Prophet was alive, teaching and studying of science and religion was not limited only to *Masjid al-Nabī*. There were nine more mosques in Medina used for educational purposes (Qonaima 1998: 15)." Al-Ghazālī (1959) quotes an early Muslim narrator that, the Prophet arrived in a circle of the companions in the Qubā mosque (near Medina) and told them: "among you those who learn and practice knowledge, are those whom will be rewarded by

God.” This *ḥadīth*, which is often used to emphasize the significance of the practice of knowledge (and not only learning it), stands also as an evidence for the devotion of mosques to educational activities in the early years of Islam.

Chronologically, *Masjid al-Ḥarām* in Mecca is older than *Masjid al-Nabī* of Medina. However, it served solely for religious purposes. It was not until after the conquest of Mecca in the eighth year A. H. (630 C. E.) that it was used as an educational center. The jurisprudence circles (*ḥalaqāt al-fiqhīyyah*) in *Masjid al-Ḥarām* has been considered one of the most distinguished circles in the entire Muslim world where, among others, Abullāh ibn ‘Abbās (d. 687 C.E.) and Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 819 C.E.) established and practiced two dominant schools of jurisprudence along with their respective educational traditions.

Whereas *masjid* was originally established to serve as a venue for worship, performing daily prayers and supplications, there was another institution that was specialized for larger congregations, mostly for Friday prayers. Contrary to *masjid*, which is a local institution, *jāmi‘* (derived from the root *jamā‘ah* to unite, to bring together), is a macro and umbrella institution consisting of a cluster of mosques. It fulfils the role of the main congregation institution for a larger district or an entire city. This extensive and inclusive function, affected the significance of *jāmi‘* and the institutions within it. The term is an elliptic form of *masjid al-jāmi‘*, which still in some countries like Iran is used in its original form. According to Makdisi (1981:490), the *jāmi‘* is an institution of learning with *ḥalqahs* (study circles) in which all various Islamic sciences are being taught. The *ḥalqah* was common to all *jāmi‘*s during various eras of Muslim history. Some *jāmi‘*s have *zāwīyahs* (study corners) devoted mostly to different schools or *madhabs*. *Jāmi‘* — as an educational institution — has been common across all the Muslim world. The function of some *jāmi‘*s as the higher educational institutions remained intact up to recent years when the universities took over their roles as a result of the impact of Western educational influences. Also, the Arabic word *jāmi‘ah* (university) is derived from the same root as *jāmi‘* (congregational mosque).

To use *masjid* and *jāmi‘* as educational institutions is considered the first in a three-fold stage of development of the independent educational institution of *madrasah*. One should not ignore the fact that *masjid* and *jāmi‘* as educational institutions do not belong to the history, they are widely accepted and are still in use all over the Muslim world today.

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## Formation of the Muslim Educational Institution: *Masjid-khān* Complex

The second stage in the development of Muslim educational institutions is the emergence of the *masjid-khān* complex in which the *khān* or hostelry served as a residence for the students. The *masjid-khān* was created as part of the development of the Muslim scholastic traditions when the importance of *ḥadīth* as one of the main sources of Islamic knowledge was acknowledged. The knowledge of *ḥadīth*, contrary to other Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was dependent on the

professor teaching and quoting them. To recognize the authentic *ḥadīth* from a forged one and to examine the chains of reliable narrators turned *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* into one of the highly valued expertise. Many students travelled from the remotest corners of the Muslim world to meet a *ḥadīth* scholar (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) and benefit from his lectures. In the early years, mosques served as the residence of the travellers in their pursuit of knowledge, but later there was a need for more lodging facilities for scholars and students near the mosques.

Melchert (1990: 512) argues that, religious scholars were recipients of alms in early Islam, so it is not surprising that eventually *khāns* were endowed specifically for them, usually next to the mosques, and that sometimes teaching took place in them. To build *masjid-khāns* turned into a pious practice among the emirs and well-off families.

In the course of ten centuries of educational activities, mosques including both *masjids* and *jāmi*'s were specialized in different branches of Islamic sciences. The migration of teachers and students and the exchange of ideas and specialists became part of a scholastic and scientific tradition. The existence of these institutions all over the Muslim world contributed to the rise of mobility among students.

The *masjid-khān* complex paved the way for the creation of the *madrasah* as the independent Islamic institution of education. The idea of including residence to the educational institutions, practiced extensively across the Muslim world, served as a point of departure for the establishment of *madrasah*. By the emergence of *madrasah*, however, the *masjid-khān* complex did not disappear from the educational scene of the Muslims. It continued to exist parallel to *madrasah* and contributed to the education of generations of Muslim thinkers.

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### ***Madrasah: Muslim “Institution of Education par Excellence”***

According to Makdisi (1981: 27), *madrasah* is the Muslim institution of learning per excellence. As such, it was a natural development of two previous institutions: the *masjid*, in the role of a college of law and its nearby *khān* as the residence of the law students in attendance. The first institution called *madrasah* is dated back to the tenth century C.E. The *madrasah* is in fact the fruit of the efforts to centralize the scattered educational activities under one roof. Unlike the Western education, Islamic education is not based on the credibility of the institution, rather it relies on the teachers' scientific reputation. It is a learner-oriented system of education in which students are recommended and encouraged to wander from one teacher to another, benefiting from informal discussion circles and where parallel sessions of the same subject provide possibility for the students to choose the best teacher and build up their expertise in their own unique way. The system of *madrasah* centralized all these activities and made the education more institutionalized and accessible. Even after the establishment of *madrasah* in the Muslim world, the individual and informal approaches to education and teaching — especially in subjects such as medicine and astronomy — have always been prioritized over the institutional policies. Apprenticeship, wrapped in the new Islamic *sūfī* tradition of *the master* and *the disciple*, was



practiced extensively in the newly established institution of *madrasah*. Also, interest in foreign subjects such as philosophy found their grounds to grow there.

“*Madrasah* came to dominate learning in the Islamic Middle East as much as universities do in the contemporary West (Mottahedeh 1985: 89).” *Madrasah* was something different in the arena of Muslim education: an independent institution which receives various kinds of endowments for funding the education and research following an established curriculum. The founders of *madrasahs*, often viziers, sultans, wealthy people, and scholars, usually specified two types of financing for *madrasah*: a budget to cover the running and administrative costs; and scholarships to admit a large number of students (often boarders). Hence, the *madrasah* set a model with education under the supervision of paid teachers using a fairly uniform curriculum. They became an important part of every Muslim city, just like a mosque or bazaar. Architecturally, “they were constructed similar to fortresses and like fortresses, they were seen and saw themselves as the primary focus of attempts to preserve learning and defend orthodoxy (ibid.: 91).” (For details see Chapter ► [“Islamic Educational Spaces: Architecture of Madrasah and Muslim Educational Institutions”](#))

The dominance of ‘*ulamā*’ over education, on the one hand, and the support of the government, on the other hand, facilitated a good relation between *madrasah* and the state. In this way, the ‘*ulamā*’ were confident to have secured the support for *madrasah* while the government was sure to have the favourable consensus of ‘*ulamā*’ on its side. Soon, *madrasah* became the main provider of the bureaucratic manpower for the government. The patronage of *madrasahs* even provided the government with a vital piece of ideological armor. The financing of *madrasah* was dependent on the institution of *waqf* (endowment): “the irrevocable act of founding a charitable trust, . . . [through which] a person, with the intention of committing a pious deed, declares part of his or her property to be henceforth unalienable and designates persons or public utilities as beneficiaries of its yields (*tasbīl al-manfā‘ah*)” (Peters 2003: 1).” On certain occasions, the founder reserves the right to dispose the *waqf* property under given circumstances. The institution of *waqf* for many scholars has been a source of financing their independent research which in turn contributed to the autonomy of the research and scholarly works in the Muslim world (for details see chapter ► [“Waqf and Financing Islamic Education”](#)). On the other hand, as Talbani (1996) notes, the state trying to gain control over education, patronized some *madrasahs* by giving them financial resources and status while others were neglected. This paved the way for an effective state control of *madrasahs*, which were used to propagate state ideology and legitimize one particular religious faction over others.

The first attempt to establish a uniform curriculum in *madrasah* in eleven century was not due to the educational needs or pedagogical aims. Uniform curriculum in *madrasah* was put into practice by Nizām al-Mulk who is also credited as the innovator of the *madrasah* system. As *Nizāmīyyah* (series of *madrasahs* founded by Nizām al-Mulk) were founded to strengthen the Shāfi‘ī school of thought, the uniform curriculum was a means to guarantee that the *madrasah* stays within Shāfi‘ī guidelines, regardless of geographical and demographic differences.

The curricula of *madrasahs* vary not only according to the stipulations of the founders but also according to the preferences of the teachers and the wishes of the

directors of *madrasahs*. The *madrasah* has always been regarded as the institution for Islamic sciences. Thus, it is expected to provide the basic education in *fiqh* (religious law, Islamic jurisprudence). Students are expected to be acquainted with the arguments using Qur'ān, *ḥadīth (sunnah)* and *sīrah*. Over the course of time, other subjects – some foreign sciences – were introduced to the *madrasah* curricula. Here is Ibrahim Salama (1939: 273) describing education in al-Azhar of Cairo (very similar to *madrasah* in other parts of the Muslim world):

Instruction at Azhar consisted of studying a set of basic texts (*mutūn*), which were in fact highly condensed abridgements of the main works in their respective subjects. These texts were to be learnt by heart and explained by the teacher through three levels of exegesis: commentary (*sharḥ*); glosses or marginalia (*ḥāshīyah*) and supercommentry (*taqrīr*). Having commenced reading the basic text with the words, “the author said God rest his soul”, he would launch into the word by word explanation of the text, not just theoretical digressions, even in a lecture on Law. After explaining the text, the teacher would read the first commentary, followed by the gloss and finally by the supercommentry.

Underlying assumption was that the main facts concerning any subject had already been established at some time in the past, and that all that remained for the following generations was to memorize and comment upon such final “truths.” The desire to impart as much received information as briefly as possible inevitably gave rise to turgid and highly cryptic texts (very often in verse) that would require elaborate word-by-word exegesis. This understandable necessity, coupled with a preserve taste for far-fetched hypotheses and dialectical juggling, resulted in an endless mass of irrelevant detail. It was difficult, if not impossible for students to perceive through this overgrowth what was really at issue, or to exercise any faculty other than sheer memory. On the collective level, enlargement in what was derivative and purely verbal, meant, among other things, the relegation of major and original works to oblivion. Thus a procedure whose sole *raison d'être* was the conservation of traditions, resulted in a grave form of collective amnesia concerning what was best in Islamic culture, namely the classical heritage (Mahmoudi 1995: 20).

The centrality of *sharī'ah* in Islam is of the paramount significance. Chapter ► “[Sharī'ah and Education: A Brief Overview](#)” provides a detailed historical account and an analytical overview of *sharī'ah* in its making. Informed by Qur'ān and inspired by the *sunnah*, *sharī'ah* was developed as a practical manual of the Islamic law. Development of such codec fashioned a new methodology to extricate knowledge in order to respond the needs of the growing Muslim community facing the challenges of adaptation to various local cultures. The principles of the Islamic law and the approaches to teaching and learning of the Islamic canon is further discussed in the chapter ► “[Sharī'ah and Education: A Brief Overview](#)” which also provides an overview of the arguments behind various schools of thoughts and *madhabs* in Islam. Likewise, the chapter explores the historical background of *fiqh* as a key knowledge within Islamic education and its respective methodologies. Such methodologies played a pivotal role in the formation of the philosophy and institutions of education in the Muslim world.

Successorship of the Prophet Muḥammad is recognized as the most important challenge of the early Muslim community, which resulted in the formation of two

major schools of thoughts and subsequent political theories in Islam. Chapter ► “[Sunnism, Shī‘ism, Sufism, and Education: A Brief Overview](#),” presents an overview of the social and political landscape in which Sunnism and Shī‘ism were formed and also how Sufism was developed into an alternative approach to religion and religious knowledge. Sunnī Islam, which came to be embodied in four major schools of thought, formed the Caliphate system of governance in Islam relying heavily on the transmitted knowledge (*al-ulūm al-naqlīyah*). Whereas the early Muslim scholars used a critical approach to study religion, as a result of the defeat of the Mu‘atazilī movement which is credited as an early scholarly endeavours of rationalization, *mutakallimūm* (theology scholars) became the dominant scholarly authorities. This turn affected not only the destination of the Muslim community in the years to come, but also the formation of the institutions and approaches for the transmission of knowledge. As a result, the rational knowledge was banned and knowledge by transmission became the dominant educational methodology, resulting in stagnation. Likewise, the Shī‘ah school of thought was formed around the notion of *imāmat* which was based on the successorship of the religious and political authority through a chain of infallible *Imāms*. While Shī‘ah perceived the gates of *ijtihād* open for scholarly contention at the era of grand occultation, the dominance of *Uṣūlī* tradition over the *Akhbārīs* limited the scholarly horizons to the domain of transmitted knowledge. The doctrine of *taqlīd* (emulation) which provides a greater authority to the religious scholar also restricted the critical and philosophical approaches to the religious knowledge. The chapter ► “[Sunnism, Shī‘ism, Sufism, and Education: A Brief Overview](#)” advances a discussion on the Sufism and the *ṣūfī* approach to education which is fundamentally different from the dominant theological approach. Formed in various orders (*firqah*), the *ṣūfī* educational methodology is based on “knowledge by presence” through apprenticeship of a spiritual master and a disciple. Albeit criticized and refuted by the *kalāmī* scholars, the Islamic Sufism grew in popularity across the Muslim world which in turn enhanced and spread its educational practices to new settings.

One outcome of the dominance of the *kalāmī* tradition was the restriction of philosophy and utilization of philosophical approach in understanding the phenomenon. Derived from Hellenistic philosophy and perfected to meet the requirements of the Muslim world, Islamic philosophy as a discipline addresses the nature of knowledge – divine as well as mundane – and aims of education. Discussing the philosophy of education in Islam, chapter ► “[Islamic Education: Philosophy](#)” embarks a discussion on a nomenclatural approach of knowledge acquisition in Islam and the contentions around Islamic educational philosophy inspired by *tabula rasa* and maieutic against the Socrates innate ideas. The chapter explores the Islamic historiography and formation of the *ṭabaqāt* method in the Muslim scholarly literature. The chapter advances the discussion on the anagogical methods in Islam as inspired by the notion of *adab*, one of the main objectives of the Islamic education. While philosophy has always been a source of contestation among Muslim scholars, use of philosophical methods – albeit the popularity of logical deductive methods – in *ijtihād* to issue a *ra‘y* (scholarly opinion) has always been acknowledged and promoted.

Development of the Islamic philosophy of education resulted in an elaborated taxonomy of knowledge and subsequently the educational practices specific to Islamic

communities. The outcome was the formation of the educational institutions both at primary and higher levels. Chapter ► [“Islamic Education and Development of Educational Traditions and Institutions,”](#) traces the evolution of the educational traditions which initiated in the mosques first as informal gatherings and subsequently turned into formal circles of specialized subjects. Primary education was conducted in the mosques and *kuttābs* or *maktabs* which relied on the memorization of the Qur’ān as well as numeracy, reading, and writing. While the new generation of Muslims was trained in newly established institutions of learning, Muslim scholars endeavored to fashion the corpus of Islamic sciences. The need for collecting reliable *ḥadīth* from all corners of the Muslim community formed a new class of scholars known as *ahl al-ḥadīth* who travelled around in the efforts to peruse genuine *ḥadīths*. The mobility of the scholars in search of knowledge soon became a tradition for scholars in other disciplines. In the same vein, a body of literature on *ghazawāt* (prophetic military expeditions), *sīrah* (prophetic biography), and *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic exegesis) were collected and composed. This necessitated the erection of boarding amenities in vicinity of the mosques to facilitate the access. *Madrasah* as the Muslim institution of education was formed in three stages of *masjid*, *masjid-khān*, and ultimately *madrasah*.

Chapter ► [“Waqf and Financing Islamic Education”](#) aims to discuss the institution of *waqf* (religious endowments), an act of founding a charitable trust through which a person, with the intention of committing a pious deed, declares part of his or her property to be henceforth unalienable, and designates persons or public utilities as beneficiaries of its yields. Among other purposes, *waqf* laid the cornerstone of an independent means of financing education across the Muslim world. Such an independent economic means contributed greatly to the autonomy of the research and scholarly works across the Muslim world.

While *waqf* was established to assure the independence of the research and autonomy of the researchers and scholars, state apparatuses across the Islamic world have endeavored to limit such autonomy through the institutionalization of *awqāf*. The dominant ideologies often patronized some *madrasahs* by giving them *waqf* and other financial resources and status while others were neglected. As noted earlier, the dominance of ‘*ulamā*’ over education in need of *waqf* to finance *madrasahs* forced them to ultimately support the governments as the legitimate custodians of *waqf* and other religious taxes. This facilitated a good relation between *madrasah* and the state. Meanwhile, despite the dominance of state over *waqf* in almost all countries in the Muslim world, a small number of *waqf*-based institutions continued to function independently and produced a great body of independent research and scholarship.

The prominent status of knowledge in Islam with God as The Ultimate Educator is emphasized repeatedly both in the Qur’ān and throughout the *ḥadīth*. The Muslim learned class of ‘*ulamā*’ is regarded as the guardian of the faith and the dogma, and has played a paramount role in creation of the theoretical foundations of Islam as well as practical issues which emerged as a result of the Muslim expansion and encounter with new issues. Chapter ► [“The Learned Class \(‘Ulamā’\) and Education”](#) discusses the emergence of ‘*ulamā*’ and their role in rationalization of Islamic dogma through the Mu‘atazilī movement and thereof the dominance of the narrative-based

discourse in jurisprudence. The notion of *ijtihād* as an instrument for the adaptation of the Islamic principles to the temporal and territorial varieties is discussed thoroughly in the chapter and the distinction between the Sunnī perceptions of *ijtihād* as against the ones according to Shī'ah is examined and elaborated.

Although *madrasah* education in particular and Islamic education in general, is recognized as nondegree, a system of evaluation and accreditation has existed throughout the Islamic world. *Ijāzah* (literally authorization, license) is an institution through which the qualified candidate receives authorization from his/her immediate professor – though not from the institution. The *ijāzah* provides permission for scholarly opinion (*r'ay*) in a given discipline. It is particularly considered vital in subjects such as *ḥadīth* in which the reliability of the narrator is important; *tafsīr* – where a given interpretation of the Qur'ān is expected to reflect the position of a specific school of thought; and *fiqh* – through which a scholar derives religious creeds for the Muslim community in various situations. The notion of *ijāzah* and its variation in the Islamic education is the concluding discussion of the Part I, which is presented in chapter ► [“Ijāzah: Methods of Authorization and Assessment in Islamic Education.”](#) Likewise, various methods of the assessment and accreditation – oral against written – and – recurrent as well as peer-to-peer is explored and discussed through throughout the chapter.

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## Conclusion

This chapter discussed Islamic epistemology, key concepts in education and approaches to knowledge from the Muslim perspective. Qur'ān, *sunnah*, *'aql*, *ijmā'* and/or *qiyās* are four devices through which the religious knowledge is built. The dogma (*sharī'ah*), however, is dependent on the interpretations provided by the religious experts (*'ulamā'*) who have created dominance over the Muslim society through their moral and religious leadership, and monopoly over religious education. The domination is justified under the notion of *ijtihād*, based of which an individual who has not a religious expert is not entitled to interpret the dogma and thus should follow a *mujtahid* as a source of religious emulation.

*Madrasah* as the most recognized institution of the Muslim education is the outcome of a series of developments in the Muslim world in an effort to institutionalize Islamic education. Known for its flexibility and learner-centeredness, *madrasah* was built around the notion of Islamic sciences to exclude the foreign disciplines such as philosophy. The unified curriculum of *madrasah* education and design of the educational spaces of various functions bestowed flexibility to endure the changes and challenges to this day.

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# Shari'ah and Education: A Brief Overview

Abdullah Saeed

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## Abstract

*Shari'ah*, which regulates all aspects of the a Muslim's life and covers rituals as well as legal rules, has significant status in Islam.

The first compendiums of the law, compiled by the jurists of the existing five schools of law, differed from each other. In these texts, it is easy to see the personal speculation of the jurists as well as the influence of the social environments in which they lived. As only a relatively small number of verses of the Qur'ān clearly deal with legal issues, the doors of personal interpretation and reasoning were open to the early scholars.

Since the era of the Companions, *shari'ah* and its decisive role and function in Muslim community had developed extensively. Various schools interpreted it differently, and as a result, a variety of schools and practices have developed within Islam. Educational institutions were gradually established to cater for the needs of training in Islamic disciplines including *shari'ah*, which continued until the modern period.

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**Keywords**

*Sharī'ah* · *Fiqh* · Islamic education · Islamic Jurisprudence · Qur'ān

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## Introduction

This chapter is a brief overview of what *sharī'ah* is, its historical development, its sources, as well as schools of law. It also provides a brief outline of the development of *sharī'ah* disciplines and educational institutions.

A key term associated with Islamic law is *sharī'ah*, which is often translated as “Islamic law.” The term occurs once in the Qur'ān (the primary religious text of Islam), where it designates a divinely appointed path: “We have set you on a *sharī'ah* of command, so follow it” (XLV:18). *Sharī'ah* is thus considered to be the path set by God for Muslims to follow in order to achieve salvation. It refers to the totality of the guidance provided in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* (the normative behavior of Prophet Muḥammad) (Saeed 2006, p. 43).

The term *fiqh* is closely associated with *sharī'ah*. It originally meant “understanding,” (ibid) and it occurs in the Qur'ān in its verb form with this same general meaning (VII: 179). It is also used in the *ḥadīth* literature (traditions of the Prophet). These usages of *fiqh* are associated with an understanding of all matters of religion. As such, it extends further than legal matters. In its early usages (up until the mid-second/mid-eighth century) *fiqh* covered legal, theological, and ascetic disciplines. With the development of theology (*kalām*) and asceticism (Sufism) in the second and third/eighth and ninth centuries, *fiqh* came to be applied only to the body of legal knowledge (Saeed 2006, p.44). Gradually, *sharī'ah* and *fiqh* came to be differentiated: *sharī'ah* referred to the totality of commands and prohibitions found in the Qur'ān and *sunnah*, whereas *fiqh* referred to specific rulings that were obtained through the understanding and interpretation of the two primary sources of *sharī'ah* using tools such as *qiyās* (analogy) (ibid).

Thus, for the Muslim the source of *sharī'ah* is God, while the source of *fiqh* is human. However, in common usage at present, *sharī'ah* has come to be understood to encompass the commands and prohibitions that are found in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, which are then interpreted and elaborated on in *fiqh*, to be acted upon in everyday life. For this reason, both terms are often used interchangeably today (Hasan 1970, pp. 1–10 and Rahman 1979, pp. 100–109). That is to say, *sharī'ah* and *fiqh* broadly refer to “Islamic law” or “Islamic jurisprudence” as a conception of rules, regulations, law, and norms that cover all aspects of a Muslim's life. Thus, *sharī'ah* is not, strictly speaking, solely a legal system: it pervades the individual's thought, life, and conduct.

In *sharī'ah* there are five classes of actions, which culminates in “the fivefold model of obligation, known as *al-ahkām al-khamsah* (the five judgements or normative categories)” (Carney 1983, p. 161). This model of obligation exemplifies the all-encompassing nature of the *sharī'ah*, because, as Carney identifies:

In Islam obligation in morality and obligation in law derive largely from the same grounds and in fact considerably overlap in their requirements and, second, because the grounds are

to a very considerable extent conceived as the will of God revealed in the Qur'ān and in the exemplary life of the Prophet Mohammed. (*ibid.*)

The five classes of action in *sharī'ah* are as follows:

1. Obligatory (*wājib* or *farḍ*), which “represents an act whose performance entails reward, and whose omission entails punishment” (Hallaq 1997, p. 40). An example of an obligatory action under *sharī'ah* is the five daily prayers.
2. Recommended (*maḍūb* or *mustahabb*), which “represents an act whose performance entails a reward but whose omission does not require punishment” (*ibid.*, p. 41). This class of action is designed as such to “encourage piety” in a more general way, thus encouraging a kind of pious autonomy (*ibid.*). An example of recommended action is having children.
3. Neutral (*jā'iz* or *mubāḥ*), which is “the principle that whenever the text fails to command the commission or omission of an act, the Muslim has a free choice between the two” (*ibid.*).
4. Disapproved (*makrūh*), which “is rewarded when omitted, but is not punished when committed” (*ibid.*).
5. Forbidden (*ḥarām*), which “entails punishment on commission” (*ibid.*). Forbidden actions can broadly be classified as “[o]bligations pertaining to any injury to others’ rights concerning security, honour, execution of lawful acts, family, property, etc.” (Abdel-Wahhab 1962, p. 129).

The obligatory and forbidden actions are generally addressed through the application of the law and sometimes by the employment of sanctions. Those actions that are described as recommended or disapproved are generally not the subject of law in Western democracies, but fall into the realm of personal conviction or choice.

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## Sources of Islamic Law

The first source of Islamic law is the Qur'ān. For Muslims the Qur'ān is the Word of God and carries the authority of God. The Qur'ān refers to itself as “guidance”. From the very beginning of Prophet Muḥammad’s mission in 610 CE until his death 22 years later, the Qur'ān provided guidance for all areas of life, including the legal sphere, particularly after the Prophet’s migration from Mecca to Medina in 1/622. However, the Qur'ān should not be considered a ‘legal code’ as only approximately 10 percent of the Qur'ān’s texts may be considered as directly relevant to ethical and legal matters. This has functioned as raw material for dealing with legal issues and remains at the centre of legal debates in Islamic tradition.

The second source is the *Sunnah*, which is the normative behavior of the Prophet.

One of the difficulties for many early Muslims was how to understand what the *Sunnah* of the Prophet actually was. For the first generation Muslims, the practice of the Prophet provided the basis of the *Sunnah*, while later generations had to rely on what was reported about the practice of the Prophet. These reports came to be known

as *ḥadīth*. When establishing the Prophet's *Sunnah* through *ḥadīth* became the norm – especially after al-Shāfi'ī, scholars became more aware of the level of *ḥadīth* fabrication and the problems of using *ḥadīth*. While some scholars in the second/eighth century such as Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) were cautious about accepting the large number of *ḥadīth* circulating at the time, later scholars such as al-Shāfi'ī argued in favour of accepting a wide range of *ḥadīth* in legal matters. For al-Shāfi'ī, legal rulings must be based on the Qur'ān or the *sunnah* (understood through the *ḥadīth*), and this position came to be widely accepted in the context of Islamic jurisprudence (Saeed 2006, p. 48).

The third basis of Islamic law for Sunnī schools of law is *ijmā'* (consensus). It is the unanimous agreement of Muslim scholars (jurists) or the Muslim community on a specific issue, usually a legal one. Arriving at a consensus is not easy. Because of this difficulty, some scholars argued that consensus can mean agreement of a majority of scholars, rather than all scholars. Others argue that consensus was only possible for the first generation of Muslims, when the number of Muslims was relatively few, not after that. There are also other difficulties with the notion of consensus: for example, how consensus can be reached; under what circumstances and conditions; and whether a consensus reached at one point of time can be overturned by consensus at a different time.

The fourth basis of law for Sunnī jurists is *qiyās* (analogy). While there are only relatively few legal rulings in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, there are a large number of situations that an individual or society may face. To deal with such new situations, Muslim jurists developed the tool of analogy. This was a form of *ijtihād* where a legal practitioner or a scholar based his ruling on a precedent or a similar case based on a similarity between the two. An example of *qiyās* is as follows: a text in the Qur'ān clearly prohibits the consumption of wine. The rationale of this prohibition, according to many jurists, is the effect of alcohol on the mind. Based on this, any product that leads to the same effects, such as narcotics, can be prohibited using the principle of *qiyās*, thus extending the rule for wine to narcotics (Saeed 2006, p. 49).

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## Legal Theory (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*)

Competing theoretical approaches toward the law was a key source of debate and struggle within the intellectual circles prevalent in early Islam. The two major intellectual approaches toward legal theory, traditionalism and rationalism, struggled for hermeneutic primacy: a struggle exemplified in the *Mihnah* (inquisition), which began in 218/833 and lasted until 234/848 (Hallaq 2005, p. 124). The *Mihnah* became a critical intellectual struggle between the traditionists (led by Ibn Ḥanbal) and the rationalists (led by the Mu'tazilīs and some 'Abbāsīd caliphs) (*ibid.*, p. 125). Debate began over the status of the Qur'ān and whether it was created or not, which led to a broader debate on the hermeneutics of the divine: that is, the place of human reason in the interpretation of the divine text, the Qur'ān, (and by extension, the role of human reason in deducing the law) (*ibid.*, p. 124).

This intellectual struggle ebbed and flowed throughout the early history of Islam, although by the third/ninth century the traditionist perspective began to dominate. The prophetic *ḥadīth* was posited as the second fundamental source of Islamic law, with the production of “six ‘canonical’ *ḥadīth* collections, designed – in their contents and arrangement – to service the law” (ibid., p. 123). The fourth/tenth century saw what is known as “the great synthesis” which remained the dominant approach right up to the modern period. This was a kind of merger between traditionalism and rationalism (ibid., p. 125).

This synthesis essentially manifested as *uṣūl al-fiqh* structured by the idea “that human reasoning must play a significant role in the law, but can in no way transcend the dictates of revelation” (ibid., p. 148).

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## **Madhhabs (Schools of Law)**

Alongside the development of *uṣūl al-fiqh* was the development of *madhhabs* (legal or doctrinal schools). One of the meanings of *madhhab* properly encapsulates the function of the four Sunnī legal schools:

A group of jurists and legists who are strictly loyal to a distinct, integral and, most importantly, *collective* legal doctrine attributed to an eponym, a master-jurist so to speak, after whom the school is known to acquire particular, distinctive characteristics. (Hallaq 2005, pp. 151–52)

Although the legal schools each take their names from leading jurists, they are not necessarily the representation of the respective jurists’ theories. Instead, the ideas of each school were the result of the work of many jurists within each school.

There are four main Sunnī law schools (the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī, and Ḥanbalī schools) and one Shī‘ah school (the Ja‘farī school).

The Ḥanafī school arose largely from the teachings of a jurist based in Iraq, Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 148/699). This school, particularly in its early stages, was associated with a strong emphasis on reason. Today, it is dominant in the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, and Turkey.

The Mālikī school is attributed to Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795) who lived in Medina where the Prophet Muḥammad spent the last 10 years of his life. Mālik was a great scholar of *ḥadīth* and law who generally preferred using text to reason in his teachings. He also considered the customs of the people of Medina as indicative of Islamic practice that stemmed back to the time of the Prophet, and therefore viewed them as authoritative (Carmona 2005, p. 43). In general terms, Mālik’s teachings were twofold: they “consisted, on the one hand, of the transmission of *ḥadīth* or, more specifically, of Medinan legal traditions ultimately collected in his *Kitāb al-Muwattā’*’, and, on the other hand, of the explanation of his own *ra’y*” (ibid., p. 43). The school remains dominant in North and West Africa.

The Shāfi‘ī school is associated with Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820), who is credited with the earliest systematisation of the principles of Islamic

jurisprudence. He studied with the scholars of Medina and Iraq. Shāfi'ī believed that Islamic law should be based on the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and that interpretation of these sources should be guided by certain principles. Today, the Shāfi'ī school is dominant in Southeast Asia and coastal areas of East Africa.

The Ḥanbalī school traces its origins to the teachings of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Ibn Ḥanbal was a “staunch textualist” (Bearman and Vogel 2005, p. xi), which is to say he “structured his thought on the principle of adherence to *ḥadīth* in preference to personal reasoning” (Rippin 2005, p. 95). As Bearman and Vogel (2005, p. xi) point out, Ibn Ḥanbal acknowledged the four authoritative sources endorsed by Shāfi'ī, although “he recognised analogous reasoning only as a last resort”. The Ḥanbalī school is currently dominant in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Ja'farī school is the Shī'ah school of law, which takes its name from the Shī'ī legal pioneer and sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765). The Shī'ah hold that the Qur'ān is the primary source of *sharī'ah* and that the *Sunnah* (*ḥadīth*) is important for developing law. However, the Shī'ah believe that those *ḥadīth* that are authentic must have been narrated and transmitted mainly by the family of the Prophet. The Shī'ah Imāms are regarded as those who primarily hold the authority and ability to interpret the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. This school is dominant in Iran and Iraq. The Ja'farī school represents Twelver Shī'ah (not the Ismā'ilī or the Zaydī Shī'ah), and was officially recognized as a fifth school of law by Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the head of al-Azhar University, in 1959 (Bearman and Vogel 2005, p. xii).

These schools of law continue to function in the modern period. There are major debates among Muslims on the need to reform traditional Islamic law in order to meet the needs of Muslims today. While many Muslims are comfortable with the discourse on reform, others are staunchly opposed to such changes and argue for the retaining of traditionally held views in Islamic law.

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## ***Sharī'ah* and Education**

Knowledge has a central place in Islamic tradition, and constitutes an important element in a Muslim's attitudes towards life, work, and being. The first five verses of Chapter XCVI of the Qur'ān emphasize the importance of knowledge and the inseparability of God and knowledge (Marshallsay 2012, p. 180). For Muslims, the acquisition of knowledge is not only a form of worship but also a code of conduct. Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslims to seek out and acquire basic knowledge, in order to follow God's word in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muḥammad (ibid).

Since the inception of Islam, the transmission and acquisition of Islamic knowledge therefore has been one of its core missions. During the Prophet's lifetime, transmission of knowledge took place inside his house, mosques, and within circles of learning. Teaching and learning methods were primarily oral, and learning usually took place in an informal environment where both men and women engaged and debated directly with the Prophet about the Qur'ānic revelation (ibid., pp. 180–1). Some of the early institutions for Islamic education are outlined below.

During the earliest periods of Islam, mosques played a central role in imparting Islamic learning. The main mosque to be established in Medina after the Prophet's

migration was used for this purpose. The Prophet used to gather his followers there to convey the revelation of the Qur'ān and to elaborate on its meaning. There is evidence that an annex to the mosque (the *ṣuffah*) was used as a place for reading, writing, and memorizing chapters of the Qur'ān under the direct supervision of the Prophet (Hamidullah n.d., p. 31). Since Islamic education had not been formalized at this stage, nor the Qur'ān was written down, knowledge was generally imparted verbally. After the Prophet's death the approaches to teaching and learning in mosques became more formal and organized. Libraries were eventually attached to most important mosques, although they could also be found in other parts of the city (Munir 1987, p. 335).

Prior to the emergence of the formal educational institutions called *madrasahs*, education was the responsibility of the community, which financed the salaries of teachers and provided students with stipends. The decentralized nature of education meant that scholars enjoyed a certain amount of academic freedom and that learning was generally accessible and open (Al-Fattah 2010). As *imāms* were appointed directly by the mosque – as opposed to the state – mosques were generally free from the political constraints exercised by those in power (Makdisi 1981, p. 17).

The Muslim community kept up the tradition of using mosques as institutions for imparting knowledge of Islam until the fifth/eleventh century, which saw the emergence of the *madrasah* (Al-Fattah 2010).

As well as in mosques, education took place in private dwellings called houses of learning (*bayt al-'ilm*). In many cases, the private homes of scholars became educational institutions. For example, the house of Abū Muḥammad Sulaymān ibn Mihrān al-A'mash (d. 148/765) was considered a center of learning in Kūfah (Munir 1987, p. 324). The *ḥadīth* specialist Abū Ḥātim al-Buṣṭī (born 277/890) also founded a similar institution with a library and apartments for out-of-town students (Munir 1987, pp. 323–24). The Dār al-'Ilm, founded by the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥakīm in Cairo in 1005 CE, became the closest institution to a fully fledged *madrasah*. The premises included a library, boasting more than 6000 volumes on astronomy, architecture, and philosophy. Furthermore, teachers were appointed and students were provided with ink, pens, and paper free of charge (Munir 1987, p. 336).

The importance of these institutions lies in the fact that they taught disciplines of knowledge that were in some cases restricted in mosques. Disciplines such as philosophy, logic, geometry, alchemy, astronomy, music, and medicine were included in the curriculum, as there were no restrictions on what could be taught in private houses. Many became well-regarded places of learning, with caliphs, ministers, and others as patrons (*ibid.*).

The institution of the *madrasah* (an institution of higher learning that was almost exclusively religious in its vocation) was a natural progression from the mosque. *Madrasahs* were often established through an endowment system (*waqf*) that allowed wealth and status to be passed on to a person's descendants. Through this system, many rulers and wealthy citizens set up *madrasahs* in their names. The founder of a *madrasah* and its heirs had the right to determine its curricula and to appoint and dismiss its teachers (Makdisi 1981, p. 27).

By 1260 CE, 75 *madrasahs* had been established in Cairo, 51 in Damascus, and 44 in Aleppo, with many more to be found in Andalusian cities, such as Cordoba, Seville, Toledo, Granada, and Valencia during the Caliphate of Cordoba (929–1031 CE) (Hassim 2010).

*Madrasah* curriculum focused on the Islamic sciences and its ancillaries, including Qur’ān exegesis, the science of variant readings of the Qur’ān (*‘ilm al-qirā’ah*), *ḥadīth*, legal theory and methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and the principles and sources of religion as well as Arabic language, grammar, lexicology, morphology, Arab tribal history, and Arab tribal genealogy (Makdisi 1981, p. 87).

Although *madrasah* education focused on advanced studies in the sciences of the *sharī‘ah*, the extent to which other disciplines were also studied remains unclear. Some authors suggest that at least during some historical periods other disciplines were also taught alongside Islamic subjects (Hassim 2010). Certainly, many renowned Muslim scholars developed expertise and became leaders in fields of knowledge outside traditional *sharī‘ah* disciplines. Al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī, for instance, are known to have had advanced knowledge of medicine, astronomy, physics, logic, and Greek philosophy. Evidence exists to suggest that Ottoman *madrasahs* taught calligraphy, Arabic language, Islamic philosophy, and logic in addition to traditional religious education (Inalcik 1973, p. 167). This indicates that no uniform course was followed: that is, the teacher, instead of a common syllabus, was the main influence on what was taught (Hamidullah n.d., p. 35).

Students studied at the *madrasah* for different lengths of time depending on their area of focus. Students would not complete their studies at a specific age, rather, this varied according to the personal circumstances and aptitude of the individual students. Students of philology and jurisprudence remained with one teacher for a considerable length of time. However, by the time *madrasahs* were established in Baghdad, courses of jurisprudence were standardized at 4 years duration (Makdisi 1981, pp. 80–81).

Instruction in *madrasahs* was generally conducted in Arabic, even in the regions where other languages were spoken, although there are reports that some teachers either taught simultaneously in Persian and Arabic or translated their courses into local languages for those students who struggled with the language (Munir 1987, p. 341).

Teaching generally occurred orally, as Prophet Muḥammad had conveyed his message to the Companions, and this was considered the ideal method of instruction for most of the time until the modern period. In the field of *ḥadīth*, learning from a teacher was considered mandatory, as “no one was supposed to transmit that which he or she had not himself or herself heard from the teacher directly, on whose authority it was transmitted” (ibid., p. 321).

Students often wrote down what was dictated, and memorization became an important tool of learning in the early stages of education. Students were encouraged – at least in some *madrasahs* – to seclude themselves and to study what had been dictated to them until it had been learned by heart. The teacher would listen to the student recite the passage in the following class before dictating another portion for him to learn (Makdisi 1981, p. 102). In the discipline of law, however, disputation was valued because students needed to be able to defend legal opinions against those jurisconsults who held “opinions to the contrary” (Makdisi 1981, p. 110).

*Madrasah* education has gone through some changes in the modern period in many Muslim societies. Many have accepted some modern methods of teaching, standardized curricula, and formal qualifications in line with the practices of non-*madrasah*-based educational institutions in the society. Others have been reluctant to modernize. Practices vary from country to country and it will be difficult to generalize. Reform of *madrasah* education has remained an important debate in much of the Muslim world at least from the late nineteenth century.

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## Conclusion

*Shari'ah* is the religious law which regulates all aspects of a Muslim's life. It pervades an individual's thought and conduct, and it has an impact on the conduct of day-to-day life, politics, family, sexuality, hygiene, banking, business, contracts, social issues, education, acquisition of knowledge and so on. It is the duty of all Muslims to seek out and acquire knowledge. *Shari'ah* also guides as to what knowledge is and the content of education.

Muslims began to develop Islamic law based on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet from the first century of Islam. As part of this exercise, methodological tools were also gradually developed. In different parts of the Islamic world, scholars began to develop a body of law in each region that often took into account to some extent the specific concerns and needs there. Training in law became an important part of the emerging educational institutions in cities like Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. These educational institutions and their curricula have continued right up to the modern period. From the midnineteenth century, many Muslim thinkers have been arguing for reform of traditional Islamic educational institutions and their curricula, a debate that continues to this day.

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# Sunnism, Shī'ism, Sufism, and Education: A Brief Overview

Abdullah Saeed

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## Abstract

This chapter examines very briefly three trends within Islam: Sunnism, Shī'ism, and Sufism. The main differences and similarities between the two dominant interpretations of Islam – Sunnism and Shī'ism – are outlined through discussion of their historical origins, their diverging conceptions of religious and political authority, and their key theological trends. A discussion of Sufism follows, which casts a different light altogether on the possible interpretation of Islamic belief

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and practice. The development of education and educational institutions in Islam is also outlined, to demonstrate the varied connections between these trends of Islam and the broader area of Islamic education.

### Keywords

Islamic education · Sunnism · Shī'ism · Sufism · *ṭarīqah* · *madrasah*

## Historical Origins of Sunnism and Shī'ism

Historians often focus on the turbulent nature of early Islamic history, in particular on the period immediately after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad and during the first century of Islam. The Prophet died in 632 CE, after a remarkably successful career that brought together the divergent and warring tribes of Arabia. These tribes became allied to Medina, the seat of power at the time of the Prophet. Conversions to Islam included individuals and clans, and, sometimes, whole tribes. At the time of the Prophet's death, the Medinan community was comprised largely of Meccan migrants (*muhājirūn*) and the Medinan Muslims (*ansār*): each of which retained their tribal identities in addition to being Muslim.

The Prophet's death meant the community of Muslims – primarily situated in Medina, but also surrounding regions – were left without a leader. Even before the Prophet was buried, leading figures within the Medinan Muslim community met at the meeting place of Saqīfah in Medina to debate and discuss the issue of leadership, and to appoint a new leader. Key figures from the Meccan Muslims in Medina also joined the leadership debate. In this debate, the tribal identities of both groups (the Medinan Muslims as well as the Meccan Muslims from the Quraysh tribe) were on full display.

The Medinan Muslims had provided the support that was necessary for the 10 years (622–632 CE) of success that the Prophet achieved during his residence in Medina. They felt, therefore, that they should have a stronger say in the legacy of the Prophet and the political domain that he created. Conversely, the Meccan Muslims insisted that pre-Islamic tribal identities were still politically relevant in the eyes of the Arabs. In addition, the Meccan Muslims argued that the Prophet himself was from Mecca, and therefore a leader emerging from the Medinan tribes would not be politically expedient; the surrounding tribes, they argued, would only recognize a Meccan leader. The debates were heated and the Meccan participants, headed by senior figures such as 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Abū Bakr, prevailed. In the meeting, 'Umar nominated Abū Bakr to be the leader (caliph) of the community. Abū Bakr had been a close adviser to the Prophet and was close to him throughout his prophetic career. 'Umar's nomination of Abū Bakr led to the acceptance of Abū Bakr by a significant number of participants but also rejection by some leaders of Medina. Despite all the difficulties in the meeting, Abū Bakr became the leader of the community, the Prophet's first successor, who came to be known as the "First Rightly Guided Caliph."

Despite the conflict, the appointment of a leader in Medina was supported by the majority of the community at the time, and this political leadership remained within the Meccan Muslim community. Before Abū Bakr died (in 634 CE) he nominated another Meccan Muslim, 'Umar, to be the leader of the community. In turn, just before his death, 'Umar nominated six people (all of whom were Meccans), one of whom was potentially to succeed him. One of these was 'Uthmān, who subsequently became the leader after 'Umar's death. 'Alī became the fourth caliph after a turbulent ending to 'Uthmān's caliphate, which resulted in 'Uthmān's assassination. Following the assassination, divisions within the Muslim community increased significantly: namely, a split between those who were pro-'Uthmān and those who opposed him. Although 'Alī remained the leader for 4–5 years, his rule was marred by conflicts and wars between various camps in the Muslim community. 'Alī himself eventually faced a violent death at the hands of his opponents.

The first century of Islam can be described as fluid in nature, and following these events as well as heated debates on the nature of religious and political authority in early Islam, it took roughly 200 years for the basic ideas of Sunnism and Shī'ism to develop into what they are today. In relation to early theological questions, one of the earliest to arise was how to define a Muslim believer, as opposed to a hypocrite (*munāfiq*). Questions were asked about the limits of tolerance as far as the definition of a Muslim and a person's key beliefs were concerned. The distinction between a Muslim and non-Muslim and a believer and unbeliever was also debated, and ideas in relation to these issues were refined. Whereas debates such as these unfolded in the first century, the second and third centuries of Islam were characterized by the emergence of distinct Sunnī and Shī'ah identities.

Adherents to Sunnism asserted the importance of broad consensus in the community and placed their faith in the community's guidance in relation to political questions. Put simply, they emphasized that authority should be vested in the community. For Sunnīs, part of Muslim identity was the degree to which they followed the example of the Prophet: that is, his *sunnah*. As long as a Muslim followed the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the book of God (the Qur'ān), then he or she was considered to be authentically connected to Sunnī Islam, at least in its key aspects. A Sunnī Muslim, therefore, accepts that political authority is vested in the community, and that the consensus of the community is the guiding principle for understanding and following the *sunnah* and the Qur'ān.

The Shī'ah, however, adopted a different view: the Prophet's spiritual (alongside his political) authority needed to be maintained in the postprophetic context. The Shī'ah came to believe that this spiritual authority could solely be passed down through the Prophet's descendants. The hereditary line, according to the Shī'ah, continued from the Prophet to his son-in-law, 'Alī, and then to 'Alī's children. Crucially, for the Shī'ah, postprophetic leadership was outlined by the Prophet himself, and, accordingly, 'Alī was expected to be the Prophet's rightful successor.

A number of statements are drawn on by the Shī'ah to support this position. In one *ḥadīth*, for example, the Shī'ah report that the Prophet said, "Alī is from me and I am from 'Alī" (Momen 1985, p. 17). They also identified a range of other sayings that

have been attributed to the Prophet on this question. The Shī'ah also refer to an event that, according to them, occurred in Ghadīr Khumm (located between Mecca and Medina) in 632 CE, just before the Prophet died. According to the report, the Prophet declared he was leaving two very important things that together would prevent the Muslim community from going astray: the Qur'ān – the Book of God – and *'itrah* – the Prophet's family (understood as represented by 'Alī). (See <http://www.al-islam.org/ghadir/incident.htm> for a range of views on this issue from a Shī'ah point of view.)

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## Sunnism

The term “Sunnī” comes from the Arabic term *sunnah*. “*Sunnah*” refers to “the normative practice of the Prophet, as in the phrase *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*, the people of the *sunnah* and the community [or collectivity]” (Berkey 2003, pp. 142–143). Sunnī Islam is the dominant expression of Islam, and it is currently followed by approximately 80–85% of Muslims around the world (Mathewson Denny 2009). In the early centuries, Sunnī Islam developed its own legal and theological schools and a specific political theory (ibid.). As such, its difference from Shī'ism is twofold: the distinction between Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam “rests in the first place upon different memories of what occurred in the earliest years of Islam, and second on radically different views of the nature and locus of religious authority” (Berkey 2003, p. 142).

For Sunnīs, the central idea is “that the community as a whole had got things right, that at least in broad outlines it was following the will of God” (ibid.). This is epitomized in the famous statement attributed to the Prophet: “My community will never agree upon an error” (ibid.). The emphasis on community and communal consensus lent itself to the development of jurisprudence as a way of managing this approach. That is to say, alongside the development of Sunnism emerged the legal system of *sharī'ah*: “the privileging of the consensus of the community brings us to the central question of the law, and of the formation of a science of jurisprudence” (ibid., p. 143). In relation to this, Berkey (ibid., p. 146) argues:

The formation of Islamic law constituted a critical step in the consolidation of a unifying if not entirely uniform Muslim identity, a means for delineating what it meant to be a Muslim while at the same time accommodating the growing diversity of outlook and practice within the Muslim community.

Overall, there are four sources or principles (*uṣūl*) of Islamic law according to Sunnism. The first is the Qur'ān, Islam's primary text. The second is the *sunnah*, the normative behavior of the Prophet, which culminated in six canonized *ḥadīth* collections. The third source is *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), a method of legal interpretation to be used “where no clear, explicit, revealed text or general consensus existed” (Esposito 2011, p. 83). The fourth source is *ijmā'* (the consensus of the community). While the idea of community was, in the first instance, tied to the whole

Sunnī community, over time it was redefined “in a more restricted sense as the community of legal scholars or religious authorities who act on behalf of and guide the entire Muslim community” (ibid., p. 83).

There are four schools of law (*madhāhib*; singular *madhhab*) that developed as extensions of Sunnī legal thought. Each is named after a leading figure of the school, but they are ultimately the culmination of many legal scholars' work. The schools consolidated by the tenth century CE.

The independent development of jurisprudence first took shape under the Umayyad dynasty. Under the 'Abbāsids, legal science was developed in a more systematic way. In particular, this involved the development of hermeneutical concepts such as *maṣlahah*, the derivation and application of a juridical ruling that is in the public interest; *qiyās*, the use of analogy; *ijtihād*, independent reasoning; and *istihsān*, the preference for a ruling that a jurist deems most appropriate under the circumstances. As the work of the jurists (*fuqahā*) became increasingly systematic, different schools of thought began to unfold (Takim 2003). In the early years, development of the various legal schools was tied to geographic place, and, as such, they were influenced by local particularities (ibid.).

The Mālikī school, for example, is attributed to Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), and was based in Medina. This school of law put a strong emphasis on the practices of the people of Medina. This is based on the idea that these practices were largely based on those of the Prophet himself as he spent the last ten years of his life there. Today, this school is dominant in North, Central, and West Africa.

The Ḥanafī school is attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), and was based in Kūfah. Rather than just developing legal points or rulings according to the traditions of the Prophet, the Ḥanafī school emphasized reason to some extent in the development of jurisprudence (Takim 2003). Today, this school is dominant in the Arab Middle East and South Asia.

The Shāfi'ī school is attributed to Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 205/820). For Shāfi'ī, jurisprudence must be based on the Book of God and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. It is through the *ḥadīth* we must get a sense of what the *sunnah* of the Prophet was, he argued. Shāfi'ī's approach fundamentally impacted the subsequent development of Sunnī jurisprudence. Today, this school is dominant in East Africa, southern Arabia, and Southeast Asia.

The Ḥanbalī school is attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). According to this school, the traditions of the prophet are fundamentally superior to any form of human reasoning in relation to how law is derived. Today, this school is dominant in Saudi Arabia (Esposito 2011, p. 85).

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## Sunnī Theology

Among Muslims, a range of theological debates began in the very first century of Islam. These intensified over the course of the second and third centuries.

For Sunnī Muslims, the most important theological school is that of Ash'arīs, associated with the theologian Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī (d. 331/942).

Al-Ash‘arī was initially associated with the most influential theological school of the third century of Islam – the Mu‘tazilah – which adopted a strong rationalist position on theological matters. However, he came to reject and criticize many of the positions of the Mu‘tazilah. Although al-Ash‘arī did not completely disregard the use of reason in theological matters, he adopted some of the positions held by the Mu‘tazilah’s opponents, who were strongly literalist. In that sense, al-Ash‘arī can be seen as following a middle position between the strong rationalist and literalist trends in theological thinking at the time. Gradually, the theological ideas adopted by this middle position came to be accepted as part of the most influential Sunnī theological thought. (Saeed 2006, pp. 67–69).

Some of the important theological ideas of the Ash‘arīs include:

- The first duty of a human being is to know God. Although it is possible to know God through reason, the obligation to know comes through revelation, which is therefore superior to reason.
- There is nothing like God in creation. In describing God, we should primarily use those attributes of God that are mentioned in the Qur‘ān. The attributes of power, knowledge, life, will, hearing, speech, and sight subsist in God eternally and are inherent in God’s Essence.
- The Qur‘ān is the immutable, eternal, and uncreated word of God.
- Sinful acts do not have a bearing on the faith of a Muslim. This is essentially a rejection of the Mu‘tazilī position that committing a grave sin may lead to a Muslim’s loss of faith.
- It is possible to see God in the next life in a manner that is appropriate, which may not be the way we see in this world.
- Human beings do not possess the power to originate or complete an act; that power belongs to God alone. However, they have the ability to freely choose between right and wrong. This means they are responsible for their choices (Saeed 2006, pp. 67–69).

The second most important school of theology for Sunnīs is the Maturīdīs. While there are differences between them and the Ash‘arīs, the similarities far outweigh their differences. These two schools of theology remain dominant to this day in Sunnī Islam.

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## Sunnism and Politics

Sunnism forms around the notion of communal access to God. This is exemplified in Abū Bakr’s famous statement: “Muslims! If any of you have worshipped Muḥammad, let me tell you that Muḥammad is dead. But if you worship God, then know that God is living and will never die!” (Statement attributed to Abū Bakr.) (Esposito 2011, p. 35). In this context, the caliphate can be seen, at least retrospectively, as a Sunnī form of governance that “established the pattern for the organisation and administration for the Islamic state” (ibid., p. 36). Ultimately, for the Sunnīs, the caliphate is the defining

political institution of the Islamic community (Nasr 1966, p. 152). As Nasr (*ibid.*, pp. 152–153) explains, the role of the caliphate is not to interpret “the Divine Law and religious matters in general, but to administer the Law and act as judged in accordance with this Law”. Nasr (*ibid.*, p. 152) states:

As there is only one community (*ummah*) and one Divine Law or *sharī'ah*, so is there ideally one caliph who rules over the community and whose duty it is to protect the community and administer the *sharī'ah* in conformity with the view of the '*ulama*'.

Sunnīs consider the early Islamic period of the Rāshidūn Caliphs (the first four caliphs, 632–661 CE) to be the proper manifestation of political authority. For Sunnīs, the Prophet did not provide clear instruction as to how his successors should be appointed after his death. Following the conventions of the time and after heated discussion, the elders of the Muslim community in Medina decided to choose Abū Bakr (d. 634), one of the closest advisors and followers of the Prophet, as their leader after the death of the Prophet. Abū Bakr did not enter into dialogue with the community when he nominated 'Umar (d. 644) as his successor. However, 'Umar adopted a very different method. He nominated six key figures of the Muslim community, all from Mecca, and asked them to make a decision among themselves about who should be the leader of the community after his death. Uthmān, the third caliph, who was chosen as a result of these discussions, was assassinated in 656 C.E. and therefore did not have any say in who should be his successor. At the time of his death, the community was divided between those who supported Uthmān and those who did not. Relying largely on those who did not support the caliph Uthmān, Ali (d. 661 C.E.) became the fourth political leader of the Muslim community. Thus, there was no common pattern for appointing the leader of the community among the Rāshidūn Caliphs.

After this time, the Umayyads in Damascus consolidated their power and a period of dynastic rule began. Almost a century later, the 'Abbāsīds were successful in a revolution that led to the consolidation of their power in Baghdad for several centuries.

Sunnī political theorists examined how power was transferred from one ruler to another in these early centuries of Islam and concluded that the ruler of the Muslims should come from the tribe of Quraysh. This is often supported by a tradition attributed to the Prophet. However, it is more likely that these theorists were, in fact, looking at what had occurred. The Rāshidūn Caliphs, as well as the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsīds, were all from Mecca and from the tribe of Quraysh. So it made sense to argue that legitimate rulers should come from this tribe.

Sunnī political theory also adopted ideas about the central place of the *sharī'ah* in matters of governance. Based on this theory, (a) as long as the ruler implemented the *sharī'ah*, the legitimacy of the ruler could not be questioned, and (b) even if the ruler committed major sins, he was still a Muslim, and Muslims should not rebel against their ruler unless he becomes an apostate. Sunnī political theory also accepted the idea that at certain times and contexts the caliphs might not have effective power. Instead, those such as military figures who were powerful enough to take over the actual functioning of the state could become *de facto* rulers. Thus, there could be a caliph who held symbolic power and a sultan with effective power, ruling at the same



time. This dynamic became very obvious in the later part of the ‘Abbāsīd period, and Sunnī political theory adapted to this situation.

In sum, Sunnī theorists looked at the political reality in the early centuries of Islam, and tried to accommodate that in their theories of political leadership. In a sense, then, it could be argued that Sunnī political theory is reasonably flexible and different kinds of arrangements may be considered legitimate as the community adopts new ideas and systems in the area of governance.

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## Shī‘ism

There are many differences between the Shī‘ah and Sunnī approaches to Islam. As noted above, the original schismatic event occurred with the death of the Prophet:

The Shī‘ah are those who believe that the right of succession to the Prophet belongs solely to his family and who follow the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), as their source of inspiration and guidance for the understanding of the Qur’ānic revelation brought by the Prophet. (Nasr 1966, p. 153)

There are three different trends within Shī‘ism: Twelver Shī‘ism (also known as Imāmī or Ithnā ‘Asharī), Sevener Shī‘ism (also known as Ismā‘ilīs), and Fiver Shī‘ism (also known as Zaydīs). The majority of the Shī‘ah follow Twelver Shī‘ism. Twelver Shī‘ism is based on the belief that:

The spiritual-political leadership of the community (the Imamate) was passed down through the male descendants until the twelfth Imam, born in 868, who is believed to be the Mahdi alive but in hiding until Allah determines the appropriate time for his return to bring peace and justice to the world. (Newman 2009)

Today, Twelver Shī‘ism is most prominent in Iran (where they comprise roughly 90% of Iran’s population), followed by Iraq, Lebanon, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The Ismā‘ilīs are the second largest of the present-day Shī‘i groups. They believe that “Ismā‘il, the eldest son of the sixth Imām Ja‘far al-Šādiq (d. 765 CE), did not die—as many Twelvers believe—but went into hiding and had a son, Muḥammad, who also went into hiding or died” (ibid.). The Zaydī Shī‘ah gave allegiance to Zayd, son of the fifth Imām, and followed a living Imām until recently (Newman 2009). Zaydīs comprise a significant portion of the Muslims in Yemen, and there are also Zaydīs in Saudi Arabia (ibid.).

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## Shī‘ah Legal School

The Shī‘ah school of law – in particular that of Twelver Imāmī Shī‘ism – is the Ja‘farī school. Like the Sunnīs, the Shī‘ah accept the Qur’ān and *sunnah* of the Prophet as the fundamental textual sources (Esposito 2011, p. 85). However, the Shī‘ah have their own collections of traditions that “include not only the *Sunnah* of the Prophet but

also that of 'Alī and the *Imāms*" (ibid.). The Shī'ah "reject analogy and consensus as legal sources, since they regard the Imām as the supreme legal interpreter and authority" (ibid.). In the absence of an Imām, *mujtahids* (legal scholars) have the right to guide the community until the return of the Mahdī. The Shī'ah have historically maintained a strong emphasis on *ijtihād*, compared to the de-emphasis of this concept among Sunnīs in the later centuries of Islam (ibid.).

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## Shī'ism and Politics

The concept of the *Imām* in Shī'ism has a very specific meaning: the "person who is the real ruler of the community and especially the inheritor of the esoteric teachings of the Prophet" (Nasr 1966, p. 162). The *Imām* is said to be infallible, and to possess "the quality of inerrancy (*iṣmah*), in spiritual and religious matters" (ibid.). Historically, the Twelve *Imāms* of Shī'ism are as follows: 1. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; 2. 'Alī's elder son, Imām Ḥasan; 3. 'Alī's younger son, Imām Ḥusayn; 4. Imām Ḥusayn's son, Zayn al-'Abidīn; 5. Son of Zayn al-'Abidīn, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir; 6. Son of al-Bāqir, Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq; 7. Son of al-Ṣādiq, Imām Musā al-Kāzim; 8. Son of al-Kāzim, Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā; 9. Son of al-Riḍā, Imām Muḥammad al-Taqī; 10. Son of al-Taqī, Imām 'Alī al-Naqī; 11. Son of al-Naqī, Imām Ḥasan al-'Askarī; 12. Son of al-'Askarī, Imām Muḥammad al-Mahdī. The *Imām* is "one who carries the 'Muḥammadan Light' (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*)" (ibid.), although the idea of prophetic light is found in both Shī'ism and Sufism.

According to the Twelver Shī'ah, the Twelfth *Imām* is in Occultation, and while he cannot be seen, he remains the primary authority that structures their faith. Al-Mahdī (otherwise known as "The Hidden Imām") is present yet unseen, but crucially his return is expected: "before the end of time he will appear again on earth to bring equity and justice and to fill it with peace after it has been torn by war and injustice" (ibid., p. 166).

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## The Imamate

Minority Shī'ī groups (namely the Zaydīs and the Ismā'ilīs) have differing theories about the Imamate. However, this section focuses on the majority Twelver Shī'ah position.

The Twelver Shī'ī conception of the Imamate is based on several ideas. Firstly, the *Imām* has the divine right to be the leader of the community, because, as mentioned, he embodies both spiritual and political authority. This is unlike the Sunnī approach, which often makes a clear distinction between the two.

Secondly, the *Imāms* are protected by God from error and sin: a protection they share with the Prophet. This is based on the concept that humanity is in perpetual need of a divinely guided leader and interpreter of the faith. The difference between the role of the Prophet and the role of the *Imām*, then, is that the former brings forth divine books of scripture, whereas the latter interpret such revelation and lead the

community accordingly. Thus, a person can be both prophet and *Imām*, while an *Imām* may not necessarily be a prophet (Tabataba'i 1989, pp. 185–186).

Thirdly, the question of how the Shī'ah should relate to the existing political authority while the Twelfth *Imām* is in Occultation is one of critical importance. While, Shī'i jurists represent the Twelfth *Imām* in interpreting the law, they do not represent him in the political arena (Amini 2004). Rather, during the Occultation, the Shī'ah have had to relate to existing political authorities that do not represent their beliefs. The question has therefore arisen: should Shī'ah cooperate with existing authorities or reject them as interlopers? Different views have been expressed, with some scholars arguing that some form of cooperation is necessary, while others deny the importance of such cooperation (Lambton 1981, p. 252).

The authority of a jurist is in close connection with the authority of the *Imām*; however, it is not without limits. The limitations in theory include implementation of the Qur'ānic *hudūd* punishments, making Friday prayers obligatory, interpretation of legal texts and the commandment of *jihād* (Halm et al. 2004, p. 57). While in theory these can only be enacted by the *Imām*, Shī'i scholars have over several centuries removed some of these limitations.

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## Twelver or Imāmi Shī'i Theology

The three main groups within Shī'ism differ in their theological positions. The Twelvers and Zaydīs are heavily influenced by Mu'tazilī theology. Their respective theological positions may thus be considered extensions of the Mu'tazilah. The Ismā'ilīs differ considerably, predominantly emphasizing esoteric interpretation (Saeed 2006, p. 71).

The systematic elaboration of Imāmi beliefs is attributed to the work of a number of scholars, such as Ibn-Bābawayh al-Qummī (d. 381/991), al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), al-Sharīf al-Murtadhā (d. 355/1044), and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). Twelver doctrinal belief was first fully elaborated in the *Risalah* (*Epistle*), composed by Ibn-Bābawayh (Watt 1998, pp. 122–124). Key Twelver theological positions include:

- Insistence on God's unity and acceptance of a distinction between the essential and active attributes of God (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*, and *ṣifāt al-fi'l*). The active attributes originate in time: for example, God cannot be Provider (*rāziq*) until there is a creature for which he makes provision (*rizq*) (Saeed 2006, p. 71).
- Interpretation of anthropomorphic terms, such as "face" and "hand," is applied metaphorically, rather than literally, to God (ibid.).
- Acceptance of common eschatological beliefs, although some are interpreted metaphorically (ibid.).
- Acceptance of the idea of the createdness of the Qur'ān.

The Twelvers come very close to Mu'tazilī positions in theology. However, much like Sunnīs, there have been two contrary tendencies in Twelver Shī'ism: one that uses

reason and engages in *kalām* (Speculative theology), and the other that mostly restricts itself to the Qur'ān and traditions and criticizes the use of reason (Watt 1985).

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## Sufism

Sufism (known as Islamic mysticism) is one way of understanding and approaching God in Islam. It makes use of “dormant” intuitive and emotional spiritual faculties through guided training. One definition of Sufism, therefore, is “embracing those tendencies in Islam which aim at direct communion between God and man” (Trimingham 1988, p. 1). Training in Sufism is known as “traveling the path.” Sufism reacts against the rationalization of Islam in law and theology, focusing instead on spiritual freedom that allows a person’s intrinsic intuitive spiritual senses their full scope (ibid., p. 2).

Islamic asceticism began to develop during the first century of Islam and continued into the second century. Gradually this movement that began with an emphasis on renunciation developed into what we may call Sufism (Smith 1995, p. 158).

Key ideas and practices of early Sufism include rejection of the world in the form of an abandonment of the transient pleasures of this life, and the desire for eternal bliss; the sacrifice of all material goods, exercise of patience and resignation to the will of God, and the glad endurance of affliction in this life, for the sake of attaining God in the hereafter (ibid., p. 166); wearing of patched robe; excessive fasting; spending extensive time in prayer, recitation of the Qur'ān and remembrance of God (ibid., pp.161–2)

*The Ṣūfī Path:* The ultimate goal of a *ṣūfī* is ‘union with God’ through a variety of spiritual exercises. To arrive at this goal a *ṣūfī* must follow the ‘path’, which is referred to as *Ṭarīqah*. The path has various stages of spiritual attainment, and to move through these stages, a *ṣūfī* must start under the guidance of an experienced *ṣūfī* master. While the descriptions of or terms used for these stages may differ among *ṣūfīs*, they include repentance, watchfulness, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust, and acceptance (Saeed 2006, p. 76).

*Development of Ṣūfī Orders:* Sufism developed ways of purification by establishing religious orders, based on the idea of a master–disciple relationship (Trimingham 1988, p. 3). A disciple accepted the authority and guidance of a master who had traveled through all the stages of the *ṣūfī* path. Initially, the *ṭarīqah* referred to a gradual and practical method of contemplative and soul-releasing mysticism, which took a disciple through a succession of *maqāmāt* (stages) in order to experience Divine Reality. Later, *ṭarīqah* also came to refer to particular *ṣūfī* groups with distinct initiation rites and ritual practices. (ibid., p. 10).

Although initially poorly received by the ‘*ulamā*’, Sufism came to be recognized as legitimate by the fifth/eleventh century, mostly due to the activities of well-respected Muslim scholars who were also *ṣūfīs*, most notably Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), a respected theologian who was appointed as head professor at the *Nizāmiyyah* college in Baghdad (ibid.).

By the seventh/thirteenth century, *ṭarīqah* (as *ṣūfī* orders) became associated with a single master, whose teachings, mystical exercises, and rules of life were handed

down through a *silsilah* (chain) of spiritual guides (ibid., p. 10; Nasr 1991, p. 3). These orders include the Qādiriyyah order, named after Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d.561/1166) from northern Iran; the Shādhiliyyah order, named after Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d.656/1258); and the Naqshbandiyyah order, named after Khwājah Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad Naqshband (d.791/1389). Apart from these, there are also many other *ṣūfī* orders. Each order has its own ceremonies, activities, practices and beliefs. Many orders emphasise the need to move along the spiritual path by adhering to religious law, while some do not.

Sufism is still an important part of the Islamic experience in modern times, and has even spread to the West. In the Muslim world, Sufism has been ferociously denounced by puritanical groups such as the Salafīs, who view it as an unacceptable innovation. However, Sufism has also spurred revivalist movements in the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia and Africa (Hunwick 1996).

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## Education

### Sunnī Education

From the emergence of distinct schools of thought came the disciplines of Qur’ān and *hadīth* studies, law, theology, philosophy, science, and Arabic linguistics and literature. Eventually educational institutions were developed to disseminate teaching in each discipline. (For further details, see Saeed 2006, pp. 10–12 and the references cited below are those that are listed there.)

By the fifth/eleventh century, the *madrasah* emerged as the key institution of Islamic learning, first established “in the eastern part of the Islamic world” (Leiser 1986). Through the establishment of the *madrasah*, the ‘*ulamā*’ became the transmitters of formal Islamic knowledge, and formed an intellectual elite that came to penetrate all parts of the Muslim world (Robinson 1996, p. 219).

During this time *madrasahs* were established in Iraq and Syria. By the end of the sixth/twelfth century, at least 30 *madrasahs* existed in Damascus and Cairo (Robinson 1996, p. 221). Over time, a network of these institutions had spread throughout the Muslim world (Rahman 1979, p. 148). Al-Azhar, the famous mosque-school, was founded in Cairo in 361/972 by the Fatimids (297–567/909–1171), a North African Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ah dynasty. It later became a Sunnī institution, and the single greatest traditional Islamic seminary in the Sunnī world.

In *madrasahs*, as well as in other study circles, learned shaykhs taught legal and theological subjects, in addition to medicine, poetry, mathematics, natural sciences, *belles-lettres*, and Hellenistic “rational” sciences (Chamberlain 1994, pp. 83–85). Depending on the particular school, some controversial fields like logic and philosophy were avoided, although they were accepted in some. The growth and development of the *madrasah* system continued and came to achieve its greatest heights during the Ottoman Empire:

From the organizational point of view, the *madrasa* system reached its highest point in the Ottoman Empire where *madrasas* were systematically instituted, endowed and maintained . . . with remarkable administrative skill and efficiency. The 'ulamā' were organized in a hierarchy and became almost a caste in the Ottoman society. These traditional seats of learning are still functioning all over the Muslim world outside Turkey. (Rahman 1979, p. 184)

In *madrasahs*, common texts were often used across regions. For example, the 'ulamā' in Timbuktu used the same books as their counterparts in Morocco and Egypt. The openness to rational sciences on the part of some Sunnī and Shī'ī Muslims also led to common texts between their 'ulamā' (Robinson 1996, p. 12). A system of certification (*ijāzah*) was used by such scholars to enable their students to pass on their bodies of knowledge (Chamberlain 1994, p. 880). There were several different types of these, and they were often verbal rather than written: "what was granted was as much an emblem of a bond to a shaykh as a certificate with a fixed value in social relations" (ibid., p. 890). (For more detailed discussion on *ijāzah* see chapter ► "[Ijāzah: Methods of Authorization and Assessment in Islamic Education](#)")

## Shī'ah Education

The religious elite of the Shī'ah "gain their authority primarily through their learning. Religious knowledge is the quality that distinguishes" religious leaders from the rest of the Shī'ah community and gives them a special status (Gleave 2012, p. 5).

Knowledge is obtained by studying at one of the Shī'ah seminaries, collectively referred to as the *hawzah*. The term *hawzah* comes from the Arabic root ḥ-w-z, which means to obtain, achieve, or receive, or as a noun, the district or precinct of knowledge (*hawzah 'ilmīyah*). (Arabic: *hawzah* and *hawzah*, while from Persian it is usually transliterated as *howzeh* or *howze*. See Rasiah 2007, pp. 1–2). Today, the main centers of *hawzah* are located in Iraq and Iran, both majority Shī'ah countries. Their influence is widespread, and they educate Shī'ah religious leaders from places as diverse as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, India, and Lebanon (ibid.).

The *hawzah* system has many unique features. It is informal and flexible. Traditionally, there was no set curriculum, tuition fees, examinations, or particular qualifications obtained by students upon graduation. Students were allocated to a particular school or college (individually known as a *hawzah* or *madrasah*) overseen by an individual or group of religious leaders. Once a student reached the limit of their intellectual ability, they left the college to take on the role of a religious leader within the community. Only a few students would stay on to reach the apex of the institution and teach at the higher levels of the college (Gleave 2012).

Within this structure, students had considerable autonomy to pursue their own interests. There were some compulsory subjects, such as Arabic grammar and jurisprudence, but students could choose from many electives. Thus, the process of learning was not seen simply as gaining a qualification but as undertaking a process of spiritual discovery and growth. Students had "freedom to experiment with subjects and themes and to develop" their own area of specialization (ibid., pp. 5–6).

Today the *ḥawzah* curriculum is somewhat more structured. While the *ḥawzah* attempts to train students in each of the Islamic disciplines, its focus has been on training in the sciences and principles of jurisprudence. Islamic sciences are classified into two divisions: the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence on the one hand, and logic (*mantīq*), principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), philosophy (*falsafah*), and speculative theology (*kalām*) on the other. Since the 1920s mystical tendencies within Shī’i thought have grown in the *ḥawzah*, but they still remain largely an extra-curricular endeavor (Rasiah 2007).

The formal curriculum involves mastery of particular religious texts, where students progress through three stages of study: introductory, intermediate, and advanced (Rasiah 2007, p. 161).

A number of different teaching methods are employed in the *ḥawzah*, including solitary or individual reading, group discussion, linguistic analysis of texts, and understanding textual structure and argument. Learning is often teacher-led, but peer learning also plays an important role well into the advanced levels of learning. Students are encouraged to voice questions or objections (*ishkāl*) in the classroom (ibid., pp. 177–179).

## Ṣūfī Education

While the Sunnī ‘*ulamā*’ often “flourished in cities and areas of state power, *ṣūfīs* reached all parts of the Muslim world, particularly remote areas where kinship and tribal organization were paramount” (Saeed 2006, p.12).

The early *ṣūfī* movement was concerned with experiential knowledge of God through the soul, cultivating an inner spiritual life, attaining inner knowledge (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*) (Karamustafa 2007, pp. 1–19), and disciplining and domesticating the self (ibid.). This journey was marked by various stations and corresponding spiritual states, but at this stage there was no consensus or systemization of this understanding (ibid.). Although most *ṣūfī* shaykhs were educated, Sufism led some of them to shun scholarly pursuits like *fiqh*, theological understanding, philosophy, and the use of human reason. Knowledge of the *sharī‘ah* was valued; however, it was seen as only the beginning of one’s spiritual journey. During this early period teaching was generally informal and took place in private venues or among small groups (ibid.).

From the third/ninth century, the “disciples of *ṣūfī* shaykhs were central to the transmission of mystical knowledge and became part of the shaykh’s chain of spiritual transmission (*silsilah*)”. After their initiation, “disciples swore an oath of allegiance, received a special cloak” (Saeed 2007, p.12), and were told a special protective prayer. *Ṣūfī* masters became spiritual guides for their students (*ṣāhib* or *murīd*), intimately involved in every aspect of their lives and developing intensely personal bonds. A characteristic of the relationship was the practice of *taqlīd*: imitation of the behavior of the master in both spiritual and mundane matters (Malamud 1994, p. 434). Training under the guidance of a *ṣūfī* master also meant that a *ṣūfī* novice became part of a spiritual chain that stretched back to the lifetime of the Prophet (ibid., p. 437).

By the fourth/tenth century specialized *ṣūfī* literature had begun to emerge with the aim of establishing Sufism as a legitimate “science” and highlighting its superiority to other modes of piety. These texts detailed the history of the movement and the influence of key figures, and systemized some of Sufism’s key concepts. *Ṣūfīs* such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) compiled texts that quickly became authoritative expressions of *ṣūfī* doctrine and practice (ibid., p. 429). The spread of specialized *ṣūfī* literature also brought with it an interest in questions of pedagogy and training in the field, now recognized as a legitimate “science.”

Eventually the practice of master-disciple groups grew into communities that resided in particular places and carried out their teaching, training, and spiritual activities (Karamustafa 2007, pp. 430–436). By the fifth/eleventh century, *ṣūfīs* began living together in what came to be known as *khānqahs* (communal residences established by private benefactors or donors) (Malamud 1994, p. 436).

From around the seventh/thirteenth century *ṣūfī* orders were pivotal in transmitting mystical knowledge throughout the Muslim world (Humphreys et al.).

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## Conclusion

The main disagreements between Sunnism and Shī'ism are not so much on the most basic and fundamentals of the religion but a number of other important areas, particularly in theology and politics. This has left its trace – among other areas – on the organization and administration of Islamic education.

In the Sunnī areas, educational institutions developed to disseminate teaching and research in each discipline. The *madrasah* emerged as the key institution of Islamic learning. Through the establishment of the *madrasah*, the ‘*ulamā*’ became the transmitters of formal Islamic knowledge, and formed an intellectual elite that came to penetrate all parts of the Muslim world. Over time, a network of these institutions had spread throughout the Muslim world.

While Sunnism relies on the notion of caliphate as the legitimate institution for the governance of the Muslim society, Shī'ism is intrinsically tied to the conception of the infallible Imām, who is conceived of as the spiritual guide *and* the only legitimate political leader. The Shī'ah view the Prophet’s spiritual (alongside his political) authority was needed to be maintained in the postprophetic context. For them, spiritual authority could solely be passed down through the Prophet’s descendants.

The concept of the Imām in Shī'ism means the person who is the ruler of the community and especially the inheritor of the esoteric teachings of the Prophet. The religious elite of the Shī'ah gain their authority primarily through their learning. Religious knowledge is the quality that distinguishes religious leaders from the laymen.

Knowledge is obtained by studying at one of the Shī'ah seminaries (*hawzah*). Today, the main centers of learning are located in Iraq and Iran, both majority Shī'ah countries. Within this structure, students had considerable autonomy to pursue their own interests, although there were some compulsory subjects. Today the *hawzah* curriculum is somewhat more structured. Learning is often teacher-led, but peer learning also plays an important role well into the advanced levels of learning.



The ascetic movement of the first two centuries of Islam was gradually combined with tendencies towards mysticism. The early *ṣūfī* movement was concerned with experiential knowledge of God through purification of the soul, cultivating an inner spiritual life, and attaining inner knowledge (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*). Knowledge of the *sharī‘ah* was also valued, but seen as only the beginning of one’s spiritual journey.

Sufism developed ways of purification by establishing religious orders, based on the idea of a master-disciple relationship. This eventually grew into communities that resided in particular places and carried out their teaching. In due course, Sufism came to reach all parts of the Muslim world. Although during Sufism’s early period, teaching was generally informal and took place in private venues or among small groups, in later periods, instruction and guidance became highly structured in *ṣūfī* orders.

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# Islamic Education: Philosophy

Mujadad Zaman

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## Abstract

This chapter investigates the vibrant intellectual history within the tradition of Islamic educational philosophy. The extent and ways in which philosophy of education is relevant to Islam is not the same in every Islamic country and at any given time. Beginning by problematizing the nomenclature of a philosophically “Islamic” tradition within education, the chapter introduces the significant contributions of Muslim scholars from respective legal, spiritual, and corporal traditions from around the Muslim world. These developments are placed through the lens of four historical periods defined as “Prophetic” (or gestationary), “Classical” (900–1200), “Early Modern” (1201–1500), and “Modern” (1501–). One of the aims of delineating these eras is not merely to identify motivating “logos” for such educational discourse but rather to see key divergences and vibrancy within

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the Islamic tradition. The chapter concludes with suggestions for how and where contemporary debates within Islamic education may contribute to the field of the philosophy of education.

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### Keywords

*Adab · Ijtihād · Islamic Education · Philosophy · Tabaqāt*

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## Introduction

The primary concern of this chapter is to survey the literature and consider the question of what it means to think about Islamic education “philosophically” or, more precisely, “how” may one do this. Although the study of philosophy and the concomitant philosophical sciences in Islam have been a flourishing component of Muslim intellectual history since the ninth century, the notion of an Islamic philosophy of education is a relatively recent in contemporary academia. As such, any study will anachronistically attach the term “philosophy” to “Islamic education” as premodern scholars would not have recognized a discipline dedicated to the study of “philosophy of education.” As such references to “*falsafah al-tarbīyyah*” are not to be found in premodern sources and questions which occupy the present endeavor would have historically been considered as part of broader discourses pertaining to ethics, literature, pedagogy, etc., with a theistic view of the world and an agreement on the essential unity of knowledge (Rahman et al. 2008; Safi 1997). In the absence of such lucidity, philosophy of Islamic education as academically studied outside of a confessional community, draws from theology, cosmology, and pedagogy in relation to historical and contemporary educational sociology, anthropology, etc., to engage with educational debates in and related to Islam. Despite definitional liminality, Islamic educational philosophy, as a subdiscipline of religious education, attracts much intellectual interest from both academics and educational practitioners (Shahin 2013). Consequently, this chapter’s remit is to navigate an extensive body of literature which covers everything from metaphysics to pedagogy in order to reveal something of the primary components of Islamic philosophies of education and why we may consider them as a field of study in their own right. To help answer the question of “what it means to think about Islamic education ‘philosophically’” this chapter identifies three methods namely “historical,” “anagogical,” and “philosophy” proper in the extant literature to suggest how this occurs.

The chapter begins with a discussion of terminology with regard to a “philosophy” of Islamic education. It then begins with an “historical” perspective, drawing a narrative of Islamic education in order to see how philosophical questions may be extrapolated. This is followed by an “anagogical” approach which examines the superintending moral issues related to debates within the sources with regard to Islamic education. Finally, the chapter explores contemporary debates in which educationalists and others are “being” philosophical in their study of Islamic education. This “philosophical” method, although developed relatively recently, brings with it important questions about the future of Islamic educational thought as well as problems of interest to educational studies.

## Philosophy of Education and the Nomenclatural Disputes

The philosophizing of education arguably has a continuous legacy which can be traced back to classical antiquity and although the narrative and conclusions of these discussions differ greatly all are concerned, in relative terms, to questions of the “where,” “why,” and “what” of education. As a perennial intellectual undertaking, the development of the philosophy of education as a constituent of educational studies proper has developed more recently and is associated in particular with the work of Peters (1983), Hirst (1974/2010), Noddings (2006), and Pring (1976). Though these thinkers have tackled much of the definitional ambiguity wrought into the study, Wilson (2003, p. 279) describes the continuing complexity of defining the philosophy of education as a subdiscipline because, as he describes

Different people may even assign different meanings to that phrase, because they have quite different perspectives of what the philosophy of education either is or ought to be. They differ about its procedures, subject-matter and criteria of success. We may not even be clear about who to count as a ‘philosopher of education’: Froebel, Freire and Foucault, Marx, Montessori and Mao Tse-Tung all had plenty to say about education, but which of them shall we call philosophers? Our understanding of other disciplines at least allows us to raise questions about their use or value, for instance to student-teachers or practising teachers, to educational researchers or policy-makers; but in the case of philosophy of education we can hardly do this until we know what we are talking about.

When formulated thus, it is not difficult to see how a philosophy(ies) of Islamic education may add to the nomenclatural nebulousness pertaining to a lack of clarity. This is despite the fact that there is a great level of dexterity within the philosophy of Islamic education covering conventional areas of interest related to religious education such as cosmology and ontology (Wan Daud 1989), divinity (Nasr 1993), as well as more contemporary issues of epistemology (al-Attas 1979), social inclusivity and citizenship (Mabud 1988; McDonald 2014), the efficacy of philosophy (Panjwani 2004), and the role of the natural sciences in education (Ashraf 1982). These lively discussions suggest that Islamic educational thought is very much engaged in the philosophy of education generally. Judging by these interests what we mean by philosophy of Islamic education may refer to “pastoral” education, i.e., education as related to primary religious goals or the performance of sacred duties. This leads to the question of what is distinguishable about “Islamic” education, say from Christian or Jewish philosophies of education? To highlight this problem, we may consider al-Zarnūjī (d.1223), a prominent Muslim educationalist, who argued that the “purpose of learning is to act by it, while the purpose of action is the abandoning of the perishable for that which lasts forever. It is necessary for man neither to neglect his soul nor what helps or injures it in this life and in the next life” (quoted in Cook 2010, p. 112). Compared with Émile Durkheim (d.1917) who claims that “education is the action exerted by adult generations on those who are not yet ripe for social life. It has for its object to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual, and moral states which political society in its entirety” (quoted in Hamilton 1994, p. 4) and though over half a millennium

separates the writings of these thinkers, the importance of education for praxis remains paramount. This lack of clarity about Islamic education has led others, such as Leaman (2014), to claim that the particularities of Islamic education are merely a veneer and its substance does not differ significantly alter from other (nonreligious) educational perspectives.

However, there is also the argument to be made that Islamic philosophy of education is unique in the sense that it, according to Nasr (2012, p. 14), acknowledges

Qur'anic revelation. Then there is the conveying of the Islamic revelation by the Prophet . . . and his *sunnah* [life] and *hadīth* [sayings and teachings] and the establishment of the earliest Islamic community. And from those sources issues a whole world, you might say: the world of Islamic civilization. Everything within that civilization is related to those principles which are revealed in the Qur'ān, embodied and taught by the Prophet throughout his life and reflected in his *hadīth* and more generally *sunnah*, transmitted through the saints and scholars following him, and elaborated upon century after century by various Islamic authorities. The whole of this reality is what we call the *Islamic tradition* (emphasis added).

By making the “strong” case for Islamic elements in the philosophy of Islamic education, Nasr also attracts disagreements to this essentialist view from those on other side of the definitional rift, such as Panjwani (2004), who argue that “the focus on the “Islamic” in current discourses on Islamic education thus needs to be revisited. Not as an abstract idealized concept but rather, focused on the concrete historical agency of Muslims. Such a shift might help a better understanding of how Muslims have dealt with the intellectual and educational issues of their times” (p. 26). To bridge this ambiguity a “normative” definition of the philosophy of Islamic education may be employed which is informed by *both* an ontologically “vertical” and “horizontal” axis whereby the human being is linked to an understanding and recognition of the *noumena* through metaphysical realities and *phenomena* of educational practices, thereby accommodating both “essentialist” and “constructivist” views.

In terms of definitions, there are also, as Halstead (2004, p. 519) identifies, problems in translating ideas which are not easily occupied by certain intellectual cultures when he postulates that in

the case of ‘philosophy’, as we have seen, some Muslims took the foreign word into the Arabic language and then struggled (ultimately unsuccessfully) to render the alien concept compatible with Islamic teaching. In the case of ‘education’, on the other hand, the problem is not that the word does not exist in Arabic, but that the central meaning of the term in Arabic does not correspond very closely with the central meaning of ‘education’ as expounded by liberal philosophers of education in the west.

Far from advocating an artificial rapprochement between “western” and “Islamic” discourses on education, whereby the latter is naturalized to traditional discourses present in western interests, Halstead sees the importance of investigating Islamic education on its own terms. Though the discussions of essentialism and constructivism only scratch the surface of debates about definitions they importantly consider

the problem of “methodology” when considering Islamic educational philosophy and the question of how we may begin to pursue educational inquiries. In lieu of this, we may suggest that whether arrived at by scripture, pedagogical texts, or contemporary sociology of education, there is an array of sources from which contemporary philosophy(ies) of Islamic education may readily draw. Constructing ideal types of the literature, we will define these methods as “historical,” “anagogical,” and “philosophical,” respectively. Though imperfectly designating order to a large body of work, each of these categories is given a corresponding Islamic nomenclature to aid in definitional clarity and offers methodological sources which can be, and are, used for philosophical discussions in Islamic education.

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### Historical (*Ṭabaqāt*) Methods

Islamic history provides the first of our paths to thinking about the philosophy of Islamic education as drawn from the literature. Traced through the course of over 1400 years, this narrative is a composite of historical writings on education as well as contemporary attempts which draw on disciplines such as theology, oriental and medieval studies, etc., and although the writings may not be philosophically orientated in themselves, they nonetheless portend questions of philosophical importance. We may further demarcate between two streams of philosophy of Islamic education found in this literature. The first being the use of historical accounts/texts and the second being contemporary historians who, through an examination of the past, suggest questions of philosophical interest to the subject matter. Though different, both methods emphasize the importance of specific case studies and accounts for understanding Islamic education. In reference to a nomenclature, we may define this approach collectively as that of *ṭabaqāt*, a term used in the genre of classical Islamic historiography, and like the Roman prosopographic tradition, emphasizes individual biographies as sources of history as opposed to macro schemas of regional or global narrative (Robinson 2002). Analogously, the term *ṭabaqāt* may be used to designate the specificity of individual moments and eras from which to extract issues which could be useful to Islamic education. As such, this “method” draws attention away from identifying “motivating logos” for such educational discourse and rather sees key divergences within Islamic philosophical discussions on education.

Due to the diversity of historical accounts of Islamic education, we may further distinguish the first *ṭabaqāt* method into “Prophetic,” “classical,” and “modern” educational typologies, respectively. This helps to place scale on the various Islamic educational discourses and explicate the scholarly interests that have hitherto existed in the field. Firstly, the “Prophetic” is a reference to the founder of the Islam, born in 570 to an aristocratic clan in the Arabian Peninsula Muḥammad, who is considered the first Muslim “educationalist” of the religion (Ashraf 1982). His biography is especially insightful for educational purposes especially as the first word of what would become Qur’ān was “read” (Abdul Haq 1990). With no little insignificance, these words reflect consequent Prophetic prescriptions on education found in the *ḥadīth* and include “the seeking of knowledge is a must for Muslim man and

woman,” “God’s mercy is on he who is on the path of knowledge until he returns,” “scholars are the heirs of the Prophets” and “seek knowledge even unto China.” The beginnings of the new religion struck to impart the importance of the acquisition of knowledge as a duty for the larger Muslim community (*ummah*). These also include more formal pedagogic instructions from the founder of the religion such as the progression of a child’s educational evolution with three 7-year periods. The first of these being reserved for “play,” the next seven for “teaching,” and finally making the child a “vizier” or trusted consul in the parents’ daily affairs for seven. Within the first three generations after the Prophet’s death in 623 CE, approaches to education were formed in and around the preservation of his temporal and spiritual legacy. Alongside political-economic growth and the expansion of its frontiers stretching from the Mongolian steeps to the Liberian peninsula, we find equally diverse systems of educational institutional development (Safi 1997).

The “classical” Islamic period from approximately eighth to fourteenth centuries presents itself not merely as invaluable for educational studies but as Cook (2010, p. ix) argues to ignore it would be to neglect “some of the basic foundations of the western intellectual tradition.” Institutionally this period sees the establishment in 1066 of the first Islamic university *Al-Azhar*, still considered one of the oldest operating universities in the world. Another prominent and contemporaneous institutional moment comes in the personage of Nizām al-Mulk (d.1092), the Seljuk vizier, who founds the *Nizāmīyyah* as an advanced academy whose first rector was the prominent theologian-mystic al-Ghazālī (d.1111). Among important educational thinkers in this period include Ibn Saḥnūn (d.870), Ibn Miskawayh (d.1030), al-Zamūjī (1223), Ibn Jamā’ah (d.1333), and Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406). Here questions of philosophical import derive from the formalizing of institutions, curricula, and disciplines from which questions are asked about the relation of education to the state, civil society, minority groups, etc. Taking one figure from this period will suffice to demonstrate its philosophical importance. Ibn Sīnā (d.1037) the polymath, physician, and philosopher defines in his *al-Madkhal* a distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy, where the former is the amelioration of the soul through knowledge and education (understood as contemplation) and the latter through knowing, as “praxis” (Goodman 2005). Specifically related to education, his *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, the philosophical account of a boy who grows up outside of civilization and applies reason to live his life subsequently influenced Ibn Ṭufayl (1170), whose reconstruction of the story intimated John Locke’s *tabula rasa* as well as Rousseau’s pedagogical theories in *Emile* (Humberto 2012).

The “modern” period running from approximately the end of the late medieval world into the twenty-first century includes a plethora of social, political, religious, and economic changes culminating in the rise of modernity, civil society, and the acceleration of globalization. This subsequently has implications for education in an increasingly fragmented Muslim community context. For example, Cook (1999, p. 340) argues that these changes lead to an “imbalance of power. . . [and then to] the introduction of foreign modes of administration, law, and social institutions by the expansionist West. One of the most damaging aspects of European colonialism was the deliberate deterioration of indigenous cultural norms by secularism.” Such



thinking is reiterated by a number of scholars as having educational repercussions and implications for philosophical thought (Zaman 2008; al-Faruqi 1982). Furthermore, in the wake of postcolonialism and the rise of nation-statehood in the Muslim world, Islamic educational philosophy has encountered the need for “re-education” as a cultural means for appropriating Islamic identity (Hatina 2007). For instance, Islamic education in modern Egypt, influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, has emphasized traditional individual development as well as moves towards a concentration of “communal activism and benefiting others ‘*al-‘amal al-ṣāliḥ*” (Hatina 2007, p. 182). In modern Turkey, the Nurcu movement of Said Nursî (d.1960) became critical of the perceived parochialism of traditional *madrasah* education. Affirming that modern science and religion are not incompatible, they claim the purpose of modern Islamic education ought to safeguard from “unbelief” and religious students from “fanaticism” (Yavuz 1999). Furthermore, there has been mounting importance given to the development of open, democratic discourses with the use of new technologies for social good, which remain a prominent feature within modern Islamic educational philosophy (Starrett 1998). Here the “modern” era reveals propitious questions concerning secularism, identity, morality, education and oppression, education and democracy, agency, etc., for which the educationalist dealing with Islamic education will find continued philosophical fodder.

The second method of *ṭabaqāt* that we may identify is that which modern historians use to explore themes in the trajectory of Muslim educational institutions (Berkey 1992; Dodge 2011), intellectual traditions (Rosenthal 2006), legal systems (Hallaq 1999), and social movements (Ahmad 2012), etc. These in-depth case studies present important questions for the philosophy for Islamic education. As an example of this body of literature, the influential orientalist scholar Makdisi (1995, p. 149) argues, commenting on the development of Christian universities in medieval Europe, that

A culture in which institutions cannot be related to indigenous antecedents must have received those institutions from an external source, i.e. a culture having the requisite indigenous antecedents. This is the case with respect to the scholastic method and the licence to teach, both of which are found in the Christian university, which could only have received them from classical Islam; for they existed in no other known culture. What was received from classical Islam was not a matter of some disparate institutions; it was a completely constituted organizational structure.

Makdisi’s perspicuous claim, as with this literature as a whole, presents philosophical questions about cultural influences, the role of religion in modern education, and the construction of pedagogies which acknowledge and promulgate ethics.

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## Anagogical (*Adab*) Methods

The second potential source for an engagement with Islamic philosophy of education occurs through anagogical or moral components within education. Arguably the *prime facie* principle of Islamic education, this defining element is as Nasr (2012, p. 14) claims

must never be divorced from two truths: the first, that knowledge comes ultimately from God, Who is the final source and subject of knowledge, and also its supreme Object; and the second, that ethics is inseparable from the process of *learning and knowing*. (emphasis added)

These presuppositions offer a way of thinking about education as centered around the individuals “comportment” to creation, i.e., reacting to the world and how ought this to be done (Chittick 2007). This literature, as a source for thinking about philosophy of Islamic education, considers the primary sacred texts (Qur’ān and the Prophetic sayings) as resources for debates on education, knowledge, gentrification of the individual self, psychology, as well as soteriology. As Nasr (1987, pp. 150–151) explicates this manner of thinking about education as to

... to perfect and actualize all the possibilities of the human soul leading finally to that supreme knowledge of the Divinity which is the goal of human life. While education prepares man for felicity in this life, the ultimate goal is the abode of all education points to the permanent world of eternity (*al-ākhirah*) beyond the transient vacillations of this world of change.

Thinking about educational questions in this way includes linking the individual to a cosmological worldview and education as the composite element of a Muslims lived experiences in which the ordering of existence entails understanding his relation to the cosmos through individual ethics. As with the historical methodology described above to understand the anagogical view further, the Arabic term *adab* may be employed here offering philosophical insight. Various defined as literature, conduct of character and spiritual acumen, *adab* in this context is the way in which ethical principles become actualized in the individual subject through education according and Leaman (2014) bears a resemblance to the Greek idea of *paideia*. For the educationalist, this provides a storehouse of themes for investigating how moral propensities are conceived as well as harnessed in their educational meanings. Firstly, there is the importance of considering the relevancy of the Divine within education and corresponding cosmological framework sees education as an *analogia entis* between man and God, nature, and creation. Considered as a vicegerent on earth in the Qur’ān, the Adamic (primordial) nature of man attempts, through Divine Grace, to achieve its potentiality as a human being. Therefore, in the way that Islam presents itself as a means of *being* in the world, the idea of education can be understood as way of life (or *dīn*) through ethics (al-Attas 1979).

There is also the importance given to the Prophetic manner (*sunnah*) as a barometer of comportment in anagogical/*adab* educational literature. The Qur’ān refers to Muḥammad as someone whom was given “a vast character” and similarly in a *ḥadīth* the Prophet is reported to have said “my Lord, educated (*addabah*) me and made my education (*ta’dībī*) most excellent.” The *imitatio Muḥammadi* is then the cultivation of character by perfecting the act of worship, as Muḥammad himself says that “I was sent to perfect noble character” presenting a philosophy of education in which mind and act are melded into the *modus operandi* of pedagogy. In a similar way, Halstead (2004, p. 52) identifies three prototypical models of Islamic educational philosophy based on this Prophetic propensity for *adab*. The

first of these is that of *tarbīyah* (to grow, increase) as pertaining to individual development, the next *ta'dīb* (to be disciplined, cultured) being the special development and awareness of the student, and finally *t'alīm* (to know, be informed, perceive, discern), i.e., knowledge acquisition and transmission. This useful typography helps examine the *telos* of education within Islam as realizing one's state of *'ubūdīyyah* (servitude to God) through refining his Adamic nature as God's custodian on earth (Ramadan 2004). Understood in this way, Islamic education is a path also towards knowing and perfecting one's knowledge of God.

Anagogical (*adab*) values have been translated into features of education across the span of Islamic history, creating a broad basis for philosophy(ies) of education. For example, Ibn Jamā'ah in his *A Memorandum for Listeners and Lectures: Rules of Conduct for the Learned and the Learning* gives advice to teachers that their

treatment of people should be marked by generous traits of character: a cheerful countenance, effusive greetings, offering food, controlling his anger, averting harm from people, and bearing it from them ... he should be kind to the poor; he should show love to neighbours and relatives; and he should be gentle to students, helping and nurturing them. (Cook 2010, p. 163)

For al-Ghazālī, a prominent figure on discourses for Islamic pedagogy, the purpose of education similarly suggests “to know the meaning of obedience and service to God” (quoted in Cook 2010, p. xli) and his influential educational theory presents a balance between rationality and religious insight. Specifically, his *Letter to a Disciple* was written for a student and presents a compassionated exposition of education as mediated by knowledge allowing the individual to know his relationship toward his fellow man, nature, and ultimately God. As such, the moral imperative suggests that “knowledge without action is sheer folly, but there is no action without knowledge.” In the Ottoman world, the influential educationist Taşköprülüzade (d.1561) created an influential educational philosophy emphasizing contemplation and mysticism as keys to the development of the student both in terms of educative progress and spiritual development (Inalcik 2000).

These diverse elements converge to frame a historical and social perspective to educational philosophy which conceives the importance of emulating the Prophetic manner as well as offering an understanding of how humankind relates to its place within the cosmos. The gravitating force of these individual ventures is the role morality, ethics and spirituality play in dictating an educational discourse and personal journey of those educating and being educated. In this way, accepting the amorphousness of the *adab* literature presents the philosophy of Islamic education with a number of important questions among them being “how do Islamic approaches to ethics frame particular worldviews of education?” or “what is the relationship between education and the good life?” and “can Islamic education be appropriated by those of other or no faith?” It is clear that anagogical questions of this kind are important for the philosophy of Islamic education as it engages with a rich tradition of ethics and metaphysics. An anagogically inspired methodology therefore serves to dialogue with contemporary (often secular) debates in education

which range from issues of faith/values and pedagogy (Waghid 2011), moral education (de Wetering and Miedema 2012), exclusion and access (Shahin 2013), as well as the possibility of Islamic education in secular contexts (Abdi 2014).

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## Philosophical (*Ijtihād*) Methods

The third trend to identify within the literature on the educational methodologies is “philosophy” proper and as with the problems of defining the philosophy of Islamic education above, there is no definitional consensus to what is meant by *philosophical* in lieu of Islamic education. This is partly due to the fact that philosophy of Islamic education is a relatively recent undertaking and therefore questions of how and what we mean when we say we are “doing” philosophy of Islamic education is unclear. For example, does it mean using Socratic methods to discover truth or ideals about education, engaging with existing philosophical ideas, creating a system for philosophical inquiry in education, etc. Based on the interests of the literature, it would seem that all of the above would fall within the remit of philosophical discourses about Islamic education. The question of “how” education presents prospects and challenges is a matter to which increasingly space is given. As “being” philosophical means a great number of things Noddings (2006, pp. iii–iv) sheds light on this complexity when she argues that

Philosophers, as philosophers, have not usually created theories of education (or teaching, learning, and like); instead they have analyzed theories and arguments—sometimes enhancing previous arguments, sometimes raising powerful objections that leads to the revision or abandonment of theories and lines of argument. However, there are many exceptions to this view of philosophy as analysis and clarification... Some of the liveliest contemporary treatments have all but abandoned what might be called the *content* of philosophy and concentrate on applying a clarity of thought (characteristic of philosophical method) to serious problems of education.

Here Noddings, we may intimate, suggests a distinction between “seeing” philosophical questions and “being” philosophical, through her distinction of “content” and “application.” This difference refers to the interaction with philosophical questions where the former “content” may stimulate discussions on education and is informed by perspectives such as Rousseauian, Deweyan, or Pragmatic, etc., while the latter “application” or *being* philosophical remains more ambiguous. We may also argue that this marks a difference between the philosophy of Islamic education and the educational philosophies of Islam.

The study of philosophy in Islamic civilizations has itself a long, albeit contested, legacy (Marenbon 2006) with arguments ranging from medieval discussions on the soul to contemporary issues related to the role of religion in an increasing secularized world (Winter 2008). As mentioned in the introduction, philosophy of Islamic education has not historically been treated as a distinct discipline and as such this category comprises contemporary contributions to the field. However, its importance for the

modern educationalist cannot be underestimated. It is perhaps due to the *terra nullius* of the meeting between Islam and philosophy that this method may best be defined by the Arabic term *ijtihād*. This legal term refers to the “exertion of mental energy for the sake of arriving, through reasoning, at a considered opinion” (Hallaq 1999, p. 114). The terms help to summate the means by which philosophers of Islamic education today use a variety of sources to develop theories of education informed by Islamic intellectual traditions. It furthermore refers to a means for “thinking with” an Islamic intellectual context to engage and develop ways of thinking about contemporary problems and unearthing areas of exposition in education. A comparison may be sought in the field of theology wherein the eleventh century theologian al-Ghazālī’s expostulation of Hellenizing propensities upon Islamic theological thought led to the formation of a new theological discourse, *kalām jadīd*, in which to consider and think about traditional theoretical matters (Setia 2012).

Among the most prominent modern thinkers of this variety include al-Attas (1979), who draws together epistemology, ontology, and philosophy in his treatment of Islamic education. Arguing that the developments of a post-Enlightenment world have left modern man (including the *ummah*), with a lost sense of purpose in the world *vis a vis* God, he offers his influential “Islamization of knowledge” as a potential remedy. This thesis begins with the idea, as with the essentialism of Nasr, that knowledge of God is the *sin qua non* of education and that any system aspiring to do something different cannot refer to itself as Islamic. His “cosmology of the self” presents a traditional map of man as being a composite of soul and body whose psychology, premised on Aristotelian categories, is both part an “animal” and “rational” self. The misappropriation of the gift of reason, for purposes other than purely moral and socially enhancing, presents a form of alienation of man from himself, which can only be undone by the development and refinement of *adab* or personal edification in education. Consequently, al-Attas’ educational program calls for epistemologically redefining dominant forms of “western” secular knowledges within the parameters of a theo-centric narrative. The Islamization of knowledge therefore calls upon educating the human being towards achieving his status as God’s custodian on earth and therefore orientate himself in accordance with the Sacred and remove anything which causes distance from it, i.e., the perusal of a “secular” world views. Al-Attas (1993, pp. 162–163) continues that

Since what is formulated and disseminated in and through universities and other institutions of learning from the lower to the higher levels is in fact knowledge *infused* with the character and personality of Western culture and civilization and moulded in the crucible of Western culture . . . our task will be first to *isolate the elements* including the key concepts which make up that culture and civilization . . . The “islamization” of present-day knowledge means precisely that, *after* the isolation process referred to, the knowledge free of the elements and key concepts isolated are *then* infused with the Islamic elements and key concepts which, in view of their fundamental nature as defining the *fitrah*, in fact imbue the knowledge with the quality of its natural function and purpose and thus makes it *true knowledge*. It will not do to accept present-day knowledge as it is, and then hope to “Islamize” it merely by “grafting” or “transplanting” onto it Islamic sciences and principles; this method will but produce conflicting results not altogether beneficial nor desirable.

Practically, this “re-educative” philosophical account of education bears a family resemblance to similar attempts from twentieth century philosophers in the form of Iqbal (d.1938), Nursî (d.1960), Wan Daud (1989) among others, to create philosophical systems, of which education is a gravitating element, in the presence of western (often secular) intellectual traditions. The work of al-Attas (1979) is important in the process of re-imagining what education is and could be in the twenty-first world for the *ummah* though attempts at Islamization of curricula and the educative experience more broadly (Rahman 1988). Its importance to the philosophy of Islamic education remains central to an attempt in “thinking” philosophically about education and Islam in the modern world.

More contemporaneously there have been attempts at adapting Islamic philosophies of education to broader discourses in academic philosophy. Notably for example, Waghid (2011) has shown, using contemporary social theorists such as Derrida, to investigate points of rapprochement with traditional Islamic ideals. Constructing a socio-philosophical paradigm, he maintains that the “constitutive meanings of Islamic education ought to be considered as existing on a minimalist-minimalist continuum [after McLaughlin 1992], meaning that the concepts associated with Islamic education do not have a single meaning, but that meanings are shaped depending on the minimalist and minimalist conditions that constitute them” (p. 1). These debates continue with issues such as faith and secular schooling (Panjwani 2012), differences between Islamic and western liberal forms of education (Halstead 2004), and whether indeed an Islamic philosophy(ies) of education is even possible (Leaman 2014). These contributions to the literature show a vibrancy and sophistication which liberally takes from theology, sociology, economics, etc., in order to (de)construct ideas about Islamic education and intimate how we may think about, react, and adapt to contemporary educational contexts. What has been referred to here as the philosophical method then seems to provide important pathways for future developments in Islamic educational thought as well as contribute to educational studies more generally.

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## Conclusion

Rosenthal’s (2006) seminal *Knowledge Triumphant* claims that Islam’s unique importance as a world religion is its privileging of knowledge. It may come then as little surprise that lively educational debates have surfaced throughout Islam’s history in a myriad of forms. This chapter has been a survey of the literature of those discussions and has sought to ask what it means to “think” about Islamic education philosophically and what “happens” when we do so. Typologies have been offered to discuss the ways in which the literature has sought to think about the philosophy of Islamic education through “historical,” “anagogical,” and “philosophical” methods, respectively. Though the entirety of this literature does not ostensibly claim to be philosophical, these methods identify ways of thinking about philosophical questions and how their particular analytic lenses may contribute to Islamic philosophy (ies) of education as a whole. Where this leads thinking in the philosophy of Islamic

education thought today is uncertain though measured by the fecundity of its contributions to the literature its continued importance remains assured. Due to the broad sway of interests that studies in the philosophy of Islamic education entail, as demonstrated here, it is also not *sui generis* but rather ought to be considered alongside mainstream debates in educational studies.

Offering new directions for the literature, the latter part of the chapter suggested how and why thinking about philosophical questions may require a distinction between “thinking” and “being” philosophical. The question of what it means to be philosophical about Islamic education, though elucidated here, remains open to debate. Exactly how and what may be achieved is indeterminate and shows being “philosophical” can be more difficult than first thought. As a burgeoning field of inquiry, Islamic education seems clearly an important locus for contemporary debate and its continued paths of development will provide important questions for the field. As with the process of philosophical inquiry itself, the doyen of modern philosophy of education, Peters (1983, p. 55) remarks

I do not think [however] that down to earth problems . . . can be adequately or imaginatively dealt with unless the treatment springs from a coherent and explicit philosophical position. . . . But maybe there will be a ‘paradigm shift’ and something very different will take its [the analytical paradigm’s] place. But I have simply no idea what this might be. I would hope, however, that the emphasis on clarity, the producing of arguments, and keeping closely in touch with practice remain.

It is comforting, in taking Peters’ counsel, that when considering the trajectory of the philosophy of education and the blossoming of its pursuits, likely to create ever more conundrums for the educationalist, philosophical inquiry remains paramount to their resolution.

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# Islamic Education and Development of Educational Traditions and Institutions

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## Abstract

Muslim countries have a rich history of intellectual traditions and educational institutions, which have evolved over the course of 1400 years. Like every other intellectual tradition, educational traditions and institutions in the Muslim countries have also been subject to change and a fluctuating trend of emergence and development, and regression and decline. Although there is an increasing interest in Islam in general and in Muslim education in particular, there is still a significant shortage of academic and analytical historical research on Muslim educational traditions and institutions. This chapter explores and analyses how Muslim educational traditions and institutions emerged in the classical period, evolved over the course of history, and have been handed down to the present time.

## Keywords

Islamic education · Ismā‘īlī · *madrasah* · *kuttāb* · Deobandi · *ṣūfī*

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## Introduction

This chapter approaches the theme of this investigation from historical and educational perspectives. It is important to highlight this approach at the outset of this chapter, because there are often narrow and exclusionist views to any aspect of the study of Islam and Muslim communities, including the historicity and development of education, and educational traditions and institutions in the Muslim countries. This narrow and exclusionist approach is often influenced by what one would categorize, at least for the sake of argument here, as sectarian and ideological perspectives. By contrast, this chapter adopts a pluralist and minority-inclusive approach. In advocating such an approach, this chapter aims to present an inclusive and analytical account of the historicity of educational institutions and traditions in the Muslim world. Thereby, this chapter opens a space for oft-marginalized and excluded voices, such as those of the Shī'ah, particularly its Ismā'īlī, and *ṣūfī* traditions as well as the voices of intellectual figures from Khurāsān, namely the Barmak family from the northern Balkh province of modern-day Afghanistan.

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## Islam and the Tradition of Education

The tradition of learning and education in Islam goes back to the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad and his manner of living (*sunnah*) which is studied through the Prophet's sayings (*ḥadīth*). The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* constitute two primary vehicles of knowledge and education for Muslim communities and make the seeking of knowledge, learning, and education a religious obligation and a central part of belief. Muslims believe that Allāh is the absolute source of knowledge and recognize the divine revelations, which were first revealed to Adam, as the beginning of all human knowledge. In *sūrah* two, al-Baqarah (the Cow), the Qur'ān (II: 31) says that, "And He [Allāh] taught Adam all the names, then presented them to the angels, then he said: tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful." Muslims believe that the concepts of knowledge and education, in the form of reading, writing, and teaching, are present in the Qur'ān from the very first verses revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad. Through the first five verses of *sūrah* 96, al-'Alaq (the Clot), God sends His first message to Muḥammad, who does not hold the office of the Prophet yet, and tells him to:

Read in the name of your Lord who created. He created man from a clot. Read for your Lord is most generous. He teaches by the pen. He teaches man what he did not know. (XCVI:1–5)

Before analyzing the above five verses, it is worth highlighting that the Qur'ānic *sūrahs* are not arranged chronologically but by their sizes, except for *Sūrah* al-Ḥamd, which belongs to the category of short *sūrahs* and serves as the opening *sūrah* of the Qur'ān. Therefore, *Sūrah* al-Baqarah because of its length is arranged as the second, and *Sūrah* al-'Alaq, which the very first revealed *sūrah* but because of its short length, is arranged among the short *sūrahs*. Hence, teaching, pen, knowing, and

reading constitute the central theme of the above-quoted verses. The quoted verses from the two *sūrah*s (al-Baqarah and al-‘Alaq) also portray God as the absolute master of knowledge (*‘ālim*), and the divine revelations as the only medium through which God has mediated and transmitted His knowledge to mankind. These verses also, albeit indirectly, present prophets as the primary teachers of divine knowledge to the mankind. Moreover, the Qur’ān also instructs the Prophet to pray to God for more knowledge, “And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge” (XX: 114). The Qur’ānic notion of knowledge and education is discernible in various verses and their interpretation. Based on these Qur’ānic observations, Muslims believe that the concepts of knowledge and education, i.e., reading, writing, and teaching, are present in the Qur’ān, particularly from the very first verses that were revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad.

The Prophet Muḥammad translated the divine guidance on knowledge and education through his speeches and actions. He encouraged the pursuit of knowledge and demonstrated his appreciation of teaching and learning through his sayings (*ḥadīth*) and *sunnah*. There are numerous *ḥadīth*s that encourage the pursuit of knowledge and education. Two such sayings attributed to the Prophet read “seek knowledge, even as far away as China” and “it is an obligation for every Muslim to seek knowledge.” These are some of the typical statements how the Prophet viewed knowledge and education and encouraged Muslims to expand their horizon of knowledge and education by exploring and learning from other nations, cultures and civilizations. Although doubts are attached to the authenticity of some *ḥadīth*, this is not a matter of concern here. Rather what is important is that, as Jonathan Berkey (1992, p. 3) states, the import of the verses reflects a principle, generally held in the Muslim world and a common theme of early Muslim literature, which the pursuit of knowledge was an activity always worthy of approbation and encouragement. Also, from the Muslim perspectives, what matters is that the Prophet not only enjoined the pursuit of knowledge and education in theory but in practice also. In his *al-Kāmil*, Abū al-Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad (known as al-Mubarrad, d. 284/898) narrates that after the Battle of Badr in 2/624, the Prophet set free literate Meccan captives on condition that each would teach ten Muslims how to read and write (al-Mubarrad 1892, p. 171). The account of al-Mubarrad demonstrates the practical aspect of how the Prophet valued education as well as suggesting that literacy among the Muslim community of Medina at the time of the Prophet must have been very low and that oral instruction and memorization must have been the main medium for the transmission and preservation of knowledge.

The Prophet himself served as a divine messenger as well as a teacher and guide. The primary site where the Prophet delivered his instructional sessions was his mosque, known as “Masjid Rasūl Allāh” (the Mosque of the Messenger of Allāh), in Medina (in present-day Saudi Arabia). It is very likely that people turned primarily to the Prophet to learn the meaning of the Qur’ānic verses and to receive instruction on religious rituals and obligations, matters concerning the emerging Muslim community and state in Medina as well as a variety of other information. It is in fact due to the Qur’ānic concept of knowledge and education and the Prophet’s role as the first teacher and guide of the Muslim community that love for knowledge and

learning, as Netton (1996: vii) states, became a leitmotiv of Islam from its early days. Consequently, as Muslims built upon this spirit of love for knowledge and education, they were able to create many centers of civilization and to develop thought in diverse fields of knowledge. By the fifth century, mosques, *madrasahs*, and other institutions of learning taught both the religious and natural sciences of the time (Grunebaum 1970, pp. 506–507; Hillenbrand 1986, p. 1130; Arkoun 2006, p. 180), and handicraft (*hiraf*) for the masses (Arkoun 2006, pp. 181–182). The latter represented modern-day apprenticeship and vocational education at that time. As will be discussed below, the mosque served as the cornerstone of education and brought about a new spirit in the pursuit of knowledge.

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## Institutions and Traditions of Elementary Education

Two key factors appear to have triggered a massive expansion of educational institutions across the Muslim world: The Qur’ān and the Prophet’s tradition and the expansion of Muslim conquests. The former factor has already been discussed, particularly how the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muḥammad emphasized the pursuit of knowledge and education. On the latter, the expansion of the Arab conquests required the development of a new political, administrative, and financial system, for which an army of educated people were needed.

The early education in the Arabian Peninsula appears to have been very simple and basic. Apart from learning the Qur’ān, it included reading and writing, moral tales, heroic stories, and proverbs. An early non-Qur’ān educational curriculum, attributed to the second caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (caliphate: 12–23/634–44), recommended the teaching of good poetry, proverbs, swimming, and horsemanship. The proposed curriculum demonstrates two important points. Firstly, it indicates some of the basic needs that the territorial expansion of Muslim caliphate brought about. The need for horsemanship and swimming appears to have been felt during the Muslim conquest and engagement in various wars across and beyond the Arabian Peninsula. There are also numerous *ḥadīths*, attributed to the Prophet, in praise of horse and horsemanship. Reportedly, the Prophet recommended “horsemanship” and “lancing.” Apparently, encouraging Muslims to learn these two qualities reflects the need of fighting skills that was felt during the Prophet’s lifetime. In his *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*, Ibn ‘Abd Rabbīh (d. 328/940) dedicates a short section on the virtues of horses (*faḍā’il al-khayl*), where he narrates numerous *ḥadīths* (Ibn ‘Abd Rabbīh 1983, pp. 134–135) and (Ibn ‘Abd Rabbīh 2006, p. 109). Undoubtedly, the Prophet’s praise for horsemanship had also influenced the Muslim leaders to include such qualities as part of an elementary educational program. However, it is also worth noting that the teaching and learning of swimming and horsemanship required access to river or sufficient water and horses, both of which were not adequately available all over the Muslim countries, particularly for children and youths at their early stage of learning.

Secondly, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s proposed curriculum also reflected some key aspects of the Arab culture and tradition, particularly the Arabs’ love and admiration for poetry, moral tales, heroic stories, and proverbs. These themes consisted of

important parts of education as well as moral and ethical attitude at all levels. In his *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*, al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346/957) notes of Mu'āwīyah's moral behavior and attitudes. He states that Mu'āwīyah used to spend a third of the night with those closest to him, such as his special attendants, distinguished ministers, and confident members of the court and would discuss the narratives of Arab and non-Arab kingdoms, their political affairs, warfare, and the rulers' behavior and conduct towards their subjects (al-Mas'ūdī 2005, p. 32). This type of gathering, which took place in a private residence or in that of the caliph, typifies Arab culture and their people's love for poetry, moral tales, and heroic actions. It is also worth noting a gathering of this ilk gave the palace an informal educational character. As shall be discussed later, palaces became indeed places of intellectual discussion and attracted scholars of different fields.

An organized form of elementary educational institutions started under the Umayyad caliphs. These institutions provided primary-level education and were known by many different terms, as *kuttāb* (pl. *katātīb*, elementary school) and *maktab* (pl. *makātīb*, elementary school), *zāwīyah* (pl. *zawāyā*, corner), *ḥalqah* (pl. *ḥalaqāt*, circle), and *majlis* (pl. *majālis*, sessions by sitting on the ground). In the early period of Islam, these terms were often used interchangeably. However, gradually, the terms *kuttāb* and *maktab* came to be exclusively applied for elementary education, whereas the other terms also included educational sessions and traditions for advanced studies.

Historically, it has been recorded that the institutions of the *kuttāb* and *maktab* arose during the Umayyad era (661–750) and became widespread in the early Abbasid (750–1258) times (Landau 1986, p. 567). In discussing educational institutions in the Abbasid caliphate, Ahmad Amin states that the *kuttāb* was an educational institution for children. He refers to two types of *kuttābs*: one was dedicated to the teaching of principles of reading and writing and the Qur'ān, while the other type was fully committed to the teaching of language and all other related components, including grammar (1998, p. 50) (Also see, Shalabi 1979, pp. 17–18; Hitti 1996, p. 178). Despite this duality, *kuttāb* and *maktab* were often associated with the education of the Qur'ān. The *kuttāb* curriculum was simple and often managed and taught by a single teacher. Therefore, it could easily take place anywhere in mosques, private houses, houses of learned men, libraries, and palaces. The curriculum of the Qur'ān-oriented *kuttābs* included correct recitation, reading and understanding of the Qur'ānic verses, which would then culminate in the memorization of as many verses and *sūrahs* (chapters) as possible. Apparently, as Jurjī Zaydān (1993, p. 625) states in his *History of Islamic Civilization*, the first Qur'ān lesson consisted of the correct reading of the verses. Those *kuttābs* that pursued a non-Qur'ān route mainly taught children reading, writing, penmanship, language and grammar, poetry, and mathematics. Some teachers, as Amin states, would teach without charging a fee (ibid.: 50). Apparently, this generosity, which reflected a spirit of pious endowment of time and knowledge, was also important in increasing young children's access to *kuttāb*, particularly for those from poor financial background. Similarly, building a *sabīl-kuttāb*, i.e., a public water point, during the Mamlūk and the latter Ottoman periods in Cairo, was viewed a pious act (The term *sabīl* (pl. *subul*) literally means 'way, road, and path'. It acquired

the specific meaning of drinking fountain, public supply of water as a charitable act in the later Islamic times (Bosworth 1995, p. 678), particularly after the twelfth century). Caroline Williams, for instance, states that the *sabīl-kuttāb* combined public drinking fountains, or troughs, with Qur'ānic schools and was a favorite civic charity (Williams 2002, p. 15). Doris Behrens-Abouseif (1989, p. 16) further adds that the *sabīl* could also be attached to mosques and *madrasahs*. Primarily, it was a place where the thirsty passer-by could get a drink of water. She states that it was not common to all Muslim cities. In the cities where it was founded, such as Fez, Cairo, and Istanbul, the *sabīl* did predate the twelfth century (Behrens-Abouseif 1995, p. 679). It is true that the *sabīl-kuttāb*, with its impressive architectural designs, was unique in the streets of these three cities, and the concept of offering free public water was certainly a widespread tradition. As Behrens-Abouseif states, it was common in the Roman and Byzantine cities (ibid.: 679). Offering free public drinking water, as Williams says, was viewed as a great civic charity, and similarly offering free education to young children in the *kuttāb*, particularly at a time when fewer teachers and educational places were available, must also have been viewed as an act of great piety.

One of the key questions is that why the early *kuttābs* separated the Qur'ān and non-Qur'ān education. This separation and approach to elementary education was based on a number of reasons. First, certain *kuttāb* teachers lacked sufficient knowledge of the Qur'ān. Apparently, they were afraid of making mistakes in teaching the Qur'ān, for which they had a great religious devotion and personal respect. Therefore, they preferred to teach non-Qur'ān subjects. Secondly, copies of the Qur'ān were not available in great quantity, and not every household and every teacher possessed a personal copy. This was another key reason why some teachers, even if they wished, could not teach the Qur'ān. Thirdly, not all *kuttāb* teachers were Muslims. There were also Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslim teachers. These teachers for obvious reasons not only refrained from teaching the Qur'ān, but they also ran their *kuttābs* outside mosques.

Finally, two travelers Ibn Jubayr (d. 613/1217) and Ibn Baṭūṭah, (d. 778/1377), share an identical reason as to why *kuttābs* were divided between Qur'ān and non-Qur'ān education. In their *Riḥlahs* (travelogues), both authors give the following reason why the Qur'ān- and non-Qur'ān-oriented *kuttābs* were separated from one another. In discussing the state of elementary education in al-Jāmi' al-Mukarram in Damascus, Ibn Jubayr states that children's education included memorization of the Qur'ān, writing, poetry, and similar subjects. He then adds that teachers were teaching reading and writing through poetry and other non-Qur'ānic texts. The reason for this approach was that teachers and pupils would have to write verses of the Qur'ān and then delete and re-write them, but the deletion of Qur'ānic verses was seen inappropriate. In addition, teachers often feared that pupils, due to their mischievous nature, would not treat the Qur'ānic verses with due respect. Ibn Baṭūṭah offers a similar reason. In his account of teachers in al-Jāmi' al-Mukarram in Damascus, he states that because teachers did not want the Qur'ānic verses to be deleted, and as children might forget to treat the written texts with due respect, they preferred to teach the Qur'ān orally and reading and writing through poetry and other non-Qur'ānic texts. He further adds that in order to avoid any confusion in the mind

of children, the sessions or teaching *ḥalqaḥs* of the Qur'ān were separated from the *ḥalqaḥs* of reading and writing, particularly when they were taught inside a great mosque. Ibn Jubayr views this separation as a sound tradition because teachers of the Qur'ān and teachers of reading and writing could thus fully dedicate themselves to their subjects and offer students their full and best efforts (Jubayr 1907, p. 245; Ibn Baṭūṭah 1997, pp. 314–315).

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## Institutions and Traditions of Higher Education

Higher education in the classical period of Islam is often connected with the concept of *madrasah*. The rise of *madrasahs* gave an organized shape and structure to education and provided a new avenue and organizational system for higher education. Students from *kuttābs* and *maktabs* made their way to *madrasahs*, where they began to pursue their advanced studies in an organized and structured way. From the structural point of view, *madrasahs* are usually attached to a mosque, preferably to a Friday or *jāmi'* mosque, and offer accommodation and classes in the form of a lodging complex (*khān*) next to the mosque, enabling students to have classes in the lodge and attend prayers in the adjacent mosque. This new combination of *maṣjid-khān* complex gave birth to a formal boarding school that came to be known as the *madrasah*.

Despite the rise of *madrasahs*, the mosque continued to preserve its position as the mother institution, particularly for education. In the early history of *madrasah* education, the distinction between *madrasah* and mosque was not as clear as it is today, because of physical proximity of lodges to mosque and the educational character of both places. Therefore, it is important to highlight at the outset of this section that higher education was not exclusively confined within the parameters of *madrasah* buildings. The mosque remained one of the primary centers of higher and advanced studies in various disciplines during the first five centuries of Islam. It was customary for scholars to sit on the ground of grand mosques and to be encircled by students. This type of study circles on the floor of the mosque were known as *majlis*, *ḥalqaḥ*, and *zāwīyah*.

Educationally, mosques were used as meeting places where people gathered around scholars, listened to their lectures, read books with them, and gained knowledge. Some of the greatest scholars of Islam received their education and taught their students in mosques. All four founders of the Sunnī Muslim schools of law – the Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah, Malik, Shāfi'ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal – not only gained their immense knowledge, but also taught their disciples, in mosques by sitting in an educational *ḥalqaḥ* and *majlis* inside congregation mosques. Under the auspices of these scholars, students learnt and debated various fields of study, such as the Arabic language and grammar, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, history, and other disciplines of the time. Zaydān states that as the number both of students and fields of study increased, with each *ḥalqaḥ* coming to be known by the name of the master who was leading and teaching a specific set of subjects (Zaydān 1993, p. 625). Thus, while a congregation mosque might serve as a grand *madrasah*, there were also many smaller *madrasahs* or educational centers whose teaching was that of their leading masters.



The Shī'ah Imāms, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 125/743) and his son Ja'far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), were known for the depth and breadth of their knowledge. Imām Ja'far al-Šādiq was famous for his vast circle of disciples. Dwight M. Donaldson compares al-Šādiq's educational circle or forum, which was held in his garden, to that of the Socratic school (Donaldson 1933, p. 132), and apparently referring to the quality of intellectual thinking and debates that took place in al-Šādiq's educational circle. One could assume that the teaching and learning methods in the time of al-Šādiq and the centuries to come were based on a simple principle of the master's lecture and instruction, and learners taking notes, followed by group discussions. Such group discussions were in the form of a dialogue, in which ideas and concepts were explored, questioned, and discussed. Such dialogues were the intellectual spirit of early Muslim education and important for the advancement and expansion of the horizons of knowledge. It is also important to note that during al-Šādiq's time, students were not followers of a specific school of jurisprudence, as these schools had not been founded yet. Scholars were respected for their knowledge, rather than being perceived as law-givers and law-makers. This spirit of the pursuit of knowledge and education was the primary motivation for students from various parts to the Muslim world to gather around well-known scholars of the time.

Educational circles and *majālis* were primarily meant to inspire and broaden the horizons of students' knowledge, instead of controlling their views and minds. This was true for al-Šādiq's Socratic forum. The number and outstanding quality of al-Šādiq's disciples are evidence to this claim. On the authority of Ikhtiyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl (known as Rijāl al-Kashī) of Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz Kashī, Shaybī states that in the mosque of Kūfah alone there were around 900 scholars, who studied under al-Šādiq (1974, p. 181). Some famous and respected scholars had even greater numbers of students, but al-Šādiq must have had one of the largest educational circles. According to historical reports, his famous disciples included Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' (d. 130/748), Malik b. Anas (d. 179/795), Jābir b. Ḥayyān (d. 199/815), and Muslim b. Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), who became great personalities and scholars of their time (Shaybī 1974, p. 181; Donaldson 1933, p. 132). These and many other of his disciples took important intellectual and scholarly roles in Muslim communities. Despite the fact that Abū Ḥanīfah disagreed with al-Šādiq on certain issues, he respected him as his master and the greatest scholar of his time. In his *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz*, Abū 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhababī (d. 748/1348) quotes Abū Ḥanīfah, saying that "I have not seen a scholar more knowledgeable than Ja'far b. Muḥammad" (al-Dhababī 1954, p. 166). Abū Ḥanīfah's disagreement with, and respect for, al-Šādiq demonstrate the intellectual depth and spirit of the early period of Islam. The true masters were interested in expanding their students' horizon of knowledge rather than controlling their mind and narrowing their vision of religion, knowledge and education. Abū Ḥanīfah became an authority on *fiqh* in Kūfah and the founder of Sunnī Ḥanafī schools of *fiqh*. Joseph Schacht states that after the death of Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 120), Abū Ḥanīfah became the foremost point of reference for the Kūfan school of *fiqh*. Following the established tradition of imparting knowledge and education in and through mosques, Abū Ḥanīfah used to lecture at the congregational mosque in Kūfah (Schacht 1986, p. 123). Similarly, Mālik b. Anas

founded the Sunnī Mālikī school of jurisprudence, and Wāṣil b. Āṭā' became the founder of what later became the Mu'atazilī rational school of thought. Thus, it became customary for students in the early period of Islam to pursue their higher education in their desired field of study under famous scholars, who used to sit and teach in congregational mosques.

Historically, a major shift in the development of organized higher education and research centers started under the Abbasid caliphate. It is worth highlighting that two personalities of Khurāsān deserve special credit in facilitating the intellectual shift. The first figure is Abū Muslim Khurāsānī (b. 102/723) (for further details, see Baiza 2014) (Ghubar 1957, p. 64). He led the anti-Umayyad revolt and prepared the ground for the rise of the Abbasids to the Muslim caliphate (132–656/750–1258). The second personality is Khālīd ibn Barmak (90–165/709–782) and the Barmak family members. Abū Muslim appointed Khālīd ibn Barmak commander in his army. The latter marched towards Kūfah, where he defeated the Umayyads and released Abū al-'Abbās 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Saffāḥ from his hiding place and helped him to become the new caliph. This encounter highly increased Khālīd ibn Barmak's personal value in the eyes of the first Abbasid caliph, al-Saffāḥ (caliphate: 132–36/750–54). Consequently, the Barmaks became the most trusted and popular family in the Abbasid caliphate.

The Barmak family came from Balkh and played a leading role in advancing scientific and literary knowledge in the Abbasid caliphate. The Barmaks, since the pre-Islamic era, were an influential intellectual and religious family in Balkh, a city known for being the cradle of ancient civilizations, including Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. The name and fame of the city was also known to the Muslim leaders in the early period of Islam. In his *Faḍā'il-i Balkh* (written in 610/1214), Wā'iz Balkhī narrates a saying attributed to the fourth caliph of Islam, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, in which he praises the city, saying that "blessed is the weather, water and plants of Balkh, where scholars and knowledge are so intermingled with one another like a pomegranate with its seeds" (Wā'iz Balkhī 1971, p. 14). The quoted saying of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib not only describes the name and fame of the city of Balkh, but it also describes the intellectual milieu and context in which the Barmak family lived. The family's name, Barmak, is derived from the Sanskrit word *parmak* (or *pramukha*), meaning "superior chief and leader." Apparently, the Barmaks served in the temple of Naw Bahār, near Balkh. Again, the name of the temple stems from Sanskrit *Nava Vihāra* meaning "new monastery." It is very likely that the family earned its name "Barmak," an altered version of *parmak* (or *pramukha*), from serving as "superior chiefs" in a Buddhist monastery in Balkh (Barthold and Sourdell 1986, p. 1033). Hence, the surname Barmak not only indicates the concerned family's social and religious position, but also suggests that, as head of Buddhist monasteries, they were an important source of knowledge and education. At the time when Khālīd ibn Barmak entered the Abbasid caliphate, the Arabs did not have a highly advanced educational and scientific tradition. It was the Barmaks who brought a new educational and scientific culture to the Abbasid caliphate.

The Barmak family encouraged the Abbasid caliphs and the educated class of native Arabs to engage in translation works, which then allowed them to make

original contributions to various fields of knowledge. The Barmaks' first three generations, namely from Khālīd to Yaḥyā and Yaḥyā's four sons, (Faḍl, Ja'far, Muḥammad and Mūsā), led the development of administrative and intellectual affairs of the Abbasid caliphate. Khālīd Barmak himself acted as the leading advisor to al-Saffāḥ and his successor Abū Ja'far 'Abd Allāh al-Manṣūr (caliphate: 136–7/754–75). When al-Manṣūr founded the city of Baghdad in 145/762, Khālīd Barmak laid the architectural foundation for the city and advised the caliph how to build the new Dār al-khilāfah (the caliphal palace) (al-Ṭabarī 1996, pp 4871, 4916). Equally, Harūn al-Rashīd (caliphate: 169–193/786–809) appointed Yaḥyā son of Khālīd ibn Barmak as his vizier. Yaḥyā encouraged the Abbasid caliphs to promote knowledge and translate scientific works from Hindi, Persian-Dari, and other languages into Arabic and to establish schools and promote various fields of knowledge. Yaḥyā himself is believed to have written a book on astronomy and translated a book of medicine from Hindi into Arabic. Yaḥyā's son, Mūsā, was also engaged in translation works (Ghubar 1957, pp. 87–88). Harūn al-Rashīd's Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom) or Khazānat al-Ḥikmah (Treasury of Wisdom) and Dār al-Tarjumah (House of Translation), which reached the height of their fame under al-Ma'mūn's rule and became famous for the translation of books from Hindi, Persian-Dari, Greek, and Syriac into Arabic, were very much the result of the Barmaks' intellectual and educational leadership.

The translation initiatives not only raised awareness about educational and scientific achievements in other civilizations, but also initiated fresh scientific and experimental research. As an example, Zaydān (1993) states that al-Ma'mūn, after becoming aware of Ptolemy's astronomical works, ordered the building of observatories on Mount Qasyūn in Damascus and Shammāsiyah in Baghdad in 214/829. Although al-Ma'mūn's observatories were left incomplete after the caliph himself died in 218/833 (616–17), his observatories left behind a scientific tradition, which was then advanced by the Fāṭimīds in Egypt and by mathematicians in Khurāsān. However, in response to their services and contributions to knowledge, education and strengthening the Abbasids' political, administrative, intellectual, and social foundation, Harūn al-Rashīd followed the example of his ancestor, al-Manṣūr, who killed the founder of the Abbasid caliphate, Abū Muslim Khurāsānī. Harūn killed Yaḥyā's son, Ja'far in 187/803, and put Yaḥyā and his another son, Faḍl, in prison. Yaḥyā and Faḍl died in Harūn's prison in 190/806 and 192/808 respectively (Ghubar 1957, p. 90). Following this family tradition, Harūn's son, al-Ma'mūn (caliphate: 198–218/813–833), treacherously murdered his vizier, al-Faḍl ibn Sahl al-Sarakhsī, who helped him to establish his empire in Khurāsān and then defeat his brother al-Amīn in Baghdad (Ghubar 1957, vol. 3, pp. 94–95) (al-Ṭabarī 1996, pp. 4655, 4676, 4678, 4691, 4700–4701, 4706–4707). However, despite the Abbasids' campaign against Abū Muslim Khurāsānī, the Barmak family, and other Khurāsānian leaders, the Barmaks' intellectual and educational legacies survived for centuries.

Over the course of two centuries, many new centers of civilization began to flourish all over the Muslim world, from Granada and Cordoba in Andalusia of Spain to Nishāpūr, Herāt, Ghaznī, Balkh, and Bukhārā in Khurāsān. As already stated, mosques and caliphs continued to play an important role in Muslim

education. The prominent early mosques, which became important intellectual centers, include al-Zaytūnah in Tunis, Tunisia (founded in 731), al-Qarawīyyīn in Fes, Morocco (founded in 859), and al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt (founded by the Fāṭimīd caliphate in 970). Among all mosques of the early period of Islam, as Zaydān states, al-Azhar was the most famous mosque, and as an educational center, it was the absolute best. He further adds that al-Azhar became a popular destination for students, pursuing various fields of education, from many different Muslim countries (1993, p. 625). The Fāṭimīds also founded other educational institutions, namely *Dār al-ʿIlm* (House of Knowledge) and the institution of *daʿwah*, built by the sixth Fāṭimīd Caliph-Imām al-Ḥākīm bi Amr Allāh (caliphate: 386–411/996–1021). The latter primarily advanced the Ismāʿīlī religious mission.

The Fāṭimīds' tradition of learning was not limited to their official educational institutions. They also used to hold two types of educational traditions: public lectures and sermons (*khuṭbahs*) for all and special lectures for Ismāʿīlī converts, known as *majālis al-ḥikmah* (wisdom sessions). The general lectures or sermons were usually given in Friday Mosques inside and outside Cairo, whereas the wisdom sessions, also known as the *daʿwah* sessions, could take place anywhere, from a private meeting between a *dāʿī* and his disciple in an informal place to the caliph's palace. It was the caliph himself, but more often one of his *dāʿīs* (summoners), mainly his chief *dāʿī* (*dāʿī al-duʿāt*) and jurist, who used to hold regular *majālis* in the al-Azhar mosque and other Friday mosques outside Cairo. These gathering could take place up to twice a week, every Monday and Thursday, and high ranking officials and dignitaries were among the regular attendees (Bearman et al. 1986, p. 1032) (Madelung 1986, p. 1032). In his *Akhhār Miṣr fī Sanatayn* 414–415, al-Musabbihī (d. 420/1029) states that it was either the Fāṭimīd Caliph-Imām himself or his chief justice who used to deliver the sermons and lectures after the Friday prayers. The al-Azhar and al-Ḥākīm (also known as al-Anwār) mosques were the most popular congregational mosques in Cairo (al-Musabbihī 1980, p. 180–183). The best-known of such public lectures are those of Imām-Caliph al-Muṣṭanṣir bi Allāh's chief *dāʿī*, al-Muʿayyad fī al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 470/1077), whose public lectures were collected under the title *Majālis Muʿayyadiyyah*. The work contains 800 lectures which al-Muʿayyad delivered over the course of 20 years, from 450/1058 until he died in 470/1077, in various congregation mosques and in the Dār al-ʿIlm of the Imām-Caliph al-Ḥākīm bi Amr Allāh.

It was a tradition among the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs* to present each lecture to the Imām before reading it to the public. The Imām would read it and make corrections if needed before ratifying it. Since the Imām corrected and authorized each lecture, the *dāʿīs* often regarded their lectures as their Imām's words, rather than attributing it to themselves (Shīrāzī 1950, p. 7). Apparently, this humble attitude towards the imām was one of the primary reasons why the author of *al-Majālis al-Muṣṭanṣiriyyah* avoided mentioning his own name as the author of the lectures (Although, in his *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*, Wladimir Ivanow attributes *al-Majālis al-Muṣṭanṣiriyyah* to al-Muʿayyad (1963, pp. 46–47), it now appears as a fairly accepted view that the book is the work of another Fāṭimīd *dāʿī*, ʿAbd al-Ḥākīm b. Wahb al-Malījī. It was Samuel Miklos Stern who first attributed the book to

al-Malījī, and this was then confirmed by Wilfred Madelung (1986, p. 1031) and Farhad Daftary (2005, p. 129–130). There are also other collections of lectures, namely *al-Majālis wa al-Musāyarāt* and *Taʿwīl al-Daʿāʾim al-Islām* of al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Majālis Sayyidinā Ḥātim Ḥamīdī*, *Majālis al-Nūsh wa al-Bayān* of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Walīd, and an anonymous work entitled *Majālis ʿAshūrīyah*. The last work was apparently delivered on the occasion of ʿAshūrā (the tenth of Muḥarram), when Shīʿah Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 61/681). These lectures, whether delivered for the general public or for Ismāʿīlī audience alone, covered a wide range of themes and were primarily intended to educate, raise awareness among, and share knowledge with, the targeted audience.

Generally, the Fāṭimīd caliphs had a very high esteem for knowledge and education and paid significant attention to the development of educational and scientific disciplines and institutions. In describing the city of Cairo and the Fāṭimīd caliphs, al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441) provides good details about the city, its important buildings, and developments. He also describes one of the Fāṭimīds' important educational and scientific research centers, known as the Dār al-ʿIlm (House of Knowledge), which served as an academy of sciences. In his *Kitāb al-Mawāʿiz wa al-Iʿtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa al-Athār*, al-Maqrīzī states that the Fāṭimīd caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (caliphate: 386–412/996–1021) built the Dār al-ʿIlm in the vicinity of the Western Palace and inaugurated it on 10 Jumādā al-Ākhir 395 (30 March 1005). The new research center, Dār al-ʿIlm, attracted scholars from a wide range of disciplines, such as the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, astronomy, philosophy, philology, jurisprudence, and medicine. The caliph provided scholars with books, pens, ink, inkstands, writing reeds, papers, and other needed facilities (al-Maqrīzī 1987, pp. 458–459). Al-Maqrīzī's description of the Dār al-ʿIlm research center suggests that the Fāṭimīd caliph aimed at providing scholars with a truly effective and well-equipped library and made sure that the library, librarians, scholars, and visitors built a very cordial and comfortable relationship so that the best cutting-edge knowledge of the time could be produced and disseminated. The Dār al-ʿIlm did not survive the course of history, but al-Azhar survived and evolved into a well-structured university. In the eyes of many Muslim and non-Muslim historians, al-Azhar is one of the oldest universities in the world. Today, al-Azhar serves as one of the most prestigious educational centers, particularly in Islamic studies, in the Sunnī Muslim world.

The Fāṭimīds' educational endeavors became a source of inspiration as well rivalry for the Seljuk vizier, Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), in establishing numerous *madrasahs* in Iraq, Persia, and Khurāsān. He founded the first *madrasah* in Baghdad in 457/1065, named after Nizām al-Mulk himself. It is worth highlighting that there had already been a tradition of *madrasahs* in Khurāsān, before Nizām al-Mulk was born. In discussing educational and scientific institutions during the Abassid period, Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Kāfi al-Subkī (d. 771/1369) states in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-Kubrā* that there had already been *madrasahs* in Khurāsān long before the establishment of *Nizāmiyah* Madrasahs. He names the *madrasahs* of al-Bayhaqīyyah and al-Saʿdīyyah in Nīshāpūr, which were built by Sulṭān Maḥmūd Ghaznawī's brother, al-Amīr Naṣr b. Sabuktagīn (Al-Subkī 1964,

p. 49). However, Niẓām al-Mulk undoubtedly played a major role in expanding and structuring the chain of *madrasahs* in Khurāsān and Iraq. Apart from being a learned man and appreciating the value of education and the spread of knowledge, his encounter with the Fāṭimīd Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* school, which was successfully spreading throughout the Muslim world, was another major element for Niẓām al-Mulk's establishing of *madrasahs*.

The positive outcome of this educational and theological rivalry was the spread of many *madrasahs* that were fully funded by the Seljuk state, and it provided an inspiration for other statesmen to establish their *madrasahs*, to build and equip libraries, and to provide financial support for teachers, students, and scholarly research. Zaydān lists a number of *madrasahs* which were inspired by Niẓām al-Mulk's Niẓāmiyahs, such as Nūr al-Dīn Zangī's (d. 577/1181) *madrasahs* in Syria, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's (d. 589/1193) *madrasahs* in Egypt. This trend was then followed by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's successors as well as by the Ottoman Turks and Ṣafavīds in Iran. Orhan (rule: 726–61/1326–60), the second Ottoman caliph and successor of his father, Osman I (rule: 698–726/1299–1326), established the first Ottoman *madrasah*. Other Ottoman caliphs, particularly Sultan Sülaymān I (d. 973/1566), followed this tradition and founded eight *madrasahs* (Zaydān 1993, p. 629). Similarly the Ṣafavīds (906–1134/1501–1722) in Iran established *madrasahs* which primarily promoted the Shīʿah Ithnā ʿAshʿarī creed. However, by this time, *madrasahs* had already lost their spirit of creative thinking and the culture of exhaustive research. As Zawabiti (1980:, p.98–99) suggests, the Ṣafavīd *madrasahs* were more sectarian than genuine institutions of educational research. The authorities closed the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfiʿī *madrasahs* and opened new *madrasahs* that promoted the Shīʿah Ithnā ʿAshari view of Islam. Such trends of politicization silenced the early dynamism of *madrasah* education in Iran. However, the rise and spread of *madrasahs* during the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries were undoubtedly a major step forward. Higher education became more structured and organized, and caliphs and statesmen became personally engaged in the affairs of education by providing funding for teachers and students.

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## Higher Education Curriculum: An Inclusive and Interdisciplinary System

Generally, higher education in the mediaeval period was open to different fields of study. In order to see the range of different subjects and their relationship with one another, one needs only to look at the classification of knowledge of early Muslim scholars. From numerous classifications, that of al-Fārābī (d. 338/950) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) are briefly analyzed and discussed here. Al-Fārābī presents his classification of sciences in his famous work, *Iḥsāʾ al-ʿUlūm* (Enumeration of the Sciences), whereas Ibn Khaldūn discusses his classification of sciences in his *al-Muqaddimah* (*Prolegomena*).

Al-Fārābī follows the Aristotelian model, which divides sciences into different classes and subclasses. This model not only determines and explains the contents

and relationship of sciences with one another, but it also defines their nature, function, and characteristics as far as possible. However, al-Fārābī differs from Aristotle on one important point. Aristotle divides sciences into two overarching theoretical and practical categories, whereas al-Fārābī views these categories as two dimensions of individual sciences, rather than overarching categories. As an example, he states that the science of counting, the science of geometry, and the science of music all contain both theoretical and practical parts (al-Fārābī 1994, p. 49–51 and 60–61). From al-Fārābī's perspective, the division of sciences into theoretical and practical categories neither adequately nor comprehensively describes their quality, characteristics, and functions. In his Enumeration, al-Fārābī classifies the body of generally accepted sciences available to him into five main classes of (1) *ʿilm al-lisān* (science of language), (2) *ʿilm al-manṭiq* (science of logic), (3) *ʿilm al-taʿlīm* (science of mathematics), (4) *ʿilm al-tabīʿ wa ʿilm al-ilāhī* (sciences of nature and metaphysics), and (5) *ʿilm al-madanī* (also called political science or political philosophy, and is the ancient science of politics, i.e., Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*) *wa ʿilm al-fiqh wa ʿilm al-kalām* (political science and the sciences of jurisprudence and theology) (al-Fārābī, 1994: 17–92). He then divides these five classes into further sub- and sub-sub-classes, and demonstrates their relationships and distinctions. While al-Fārābī's political science follows the ancient Greek political philosophy, which includes debates on the characteristics of rulers and the type of rule, the way cities have to be managed and the affairs of nations should be governed, the inclusion of the sciences of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and dialectical theology (*kalām*) were quite modern in his time. The Greek political philosophy was concerned with temporal life, whereas jurisprudence and dialectical theology gave a prominent religious feature to al-Fārābī's political philosophy.

Ibn Khaldūn approaches the classification of sciences from a broader civilizational perspective. His classification methodology, however, bears close resemblance to that of al-Fārābī. In his *al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn presents a classification of those sciences that were taught in educational institution of his time. He divides sciences into two categories of natural sciences (*ʿulūm ṭabīʿiyyah*), also called rational sciences (*ʿulūm ʿaqliyyah*) or the sciences of wisdom and philosophy (*al-ʿulūm al-hikmīyah al-falsafīyah*), and religious sciences, also known as the transmitted sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-naqlīyyah*). He further adds that the class of natural sciences refers to those sciences that man learns them through the use of intellect and thought (*fikr*), observation and senses. Then, he divides this class of sciences into four categories of: logic, physics, metaphysics, and the study of measurements (geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy) (Ibn-Khaldūn 2005, vol. 2, p. 358, and vol. 3, pp. 71–75) and presents a detailed discussion on each of these sciences and their subclasses.

In Ibn Khaldūn's classification of sciences, there is a sharp distinction between the rational and the transmitted sciences. Regarding the class of transmitted sciences, he states that they could be learned only from those who created and established them (Barazangi 1995; Ibn-Khaldūn 2005, vol. 2, p. 358). Above this class of sciences stand the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muḥammad. The major subclasses of the sciences of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* include the Arabic language, the sciences of *hadīth*, exegetics, recitation, jurisprudence, and theology. Each of

these sciences entails subclasses, such as *uṣūl al-fiqh* for jurisprudence, and the science of *rijāl* (narrators) for *hadīth*. The science of language also includes several subclasses, such as grammar, rhetoric, and literature. From Ibn Khaldūn's viewpoint, all branches of transmitted sciences are rooted in the divine revelation (Ibn-Khaldūn 2005, vol. 2, pp. 359–376).

What is important to note in al-Fārābī's and Ibn Khaldūn's classification of sciences is that they do not divide sciences into individual categories. They show how the different sciences and their branches are inter-related. From an educational viewpoint, their models of classification offer an interdisciplinary curriculum and approach to sciences. On the importance and relationship between these sciences, Mohammad Arkoun states that the Muslim scholars of the mediaeval era were aware of the importance of the rational sciences and kept developing them. While the religious sciences had theological primacy, the rational sciences had methodological priority (Arkoun 2006, pp. 181–182). He also adds that in addition to the religious and rational sciences, the *madrāsah* education system also included handicraft (*ḥiraf*), an essentially practical subject and the third important element in the classification of sciences of the medieval period. It also catered for the needs of the masses (ibid.).

A final point in this discussion of institutions and traditions of higher education is the tradition of graduation and teaching permits. Permission to teach was based upon the successful completion of a course of study. Individual masters, or if the course of study was part of a larger *madrāsah* curriculum, and *madrāsah* authorities examined individual students on their knowledge, before granting them the teaching license (*ijāzah*). In the classical period, there were various forms of *ijāzah*. Initially, these were issued to transmit *hadīth* primarily. Later on, separate licenses were issued for legal opinion (*al-ijāzah li al-iftā'*) and the teaching of law (*al-ijāzah li al-tadrīs*) or a combined license for both (*ijāzah li al-tadrīs wa al-iftā'*) (Makdisi 1981, p. 270). Its equivalent in modern-day institutions of higher education would be graduate and postgraduate achievements, such as the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. (For details see Chapter ► "[Ijāzah: Methods of Authorization and Assessment in Islamic Education](#)")

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## **Taṣawwūf and Its Educational Institutions and Traditions**

In parallel to the educational traditions and institutions discussed above, the school of *taṣawwūf* also developed its own educational institutions and traditions. The term *taṣawwūf* means Sufism, a *ṣūfī* way of life, or Islamic mysticism. By now, it has generally been accepted that the term is originated from the Arabic *ṣūf*, meaning wool. Therefore, a member of this mystical school is called *ṣūfī*, meaning woolen or the one who wears wool (Massingon 2000, p. 313). Its Persian equivalent is *pashmīnah pūsh*. Over time, the term also acquired other meanings, such as *darwīsh* and *faqīr* (poor), and *zāhid* (ascetic), which reflect the *ṣūfīs*' simple and God-fearing lifestyle.

The *ṣūfī* educational tradition focuses on the inner and hermeneutic meaning, and esoteric and spiritual dimension, of the divine scripture. In contrast to traditionalists and jurists, who pursue a textual approach to the divine revelations, particularly through understanding the external meaning of the divine scripture and the



implementation of the *sharī‘ah*, the *ṣūfī* paths seek reunion with the realm of the divine presence through understanding the inner and esoteric meaning of the divine scripture and, above all, through spiritual contemplation and illumination. Conceptually, the *ṣūfīs* are close to the Shī‘ah Islam, particularly to its Ismā‘īlī interpretation, which believes that the divine scripture has both exoteric and esoteric aspects. However, other than this conceptual approach to the divine scripture, the *ṣūfī* and Ismā‘īlī traditions differ from one another in many ways. The Ismā‘īlīs have developed an organized and systematic system of thought, particularly in relation to the esoteric dimension of the divine scripture. The Ismā‘īlīs maintain a balance between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the divine scripture. The latter is explored and understood by way of *ta‘wīl* (hermeneutic interpretation). In *ṣūfī* educational tradition, the primary methodological approach to exploring and discovering a glimpse of the divine presence is based on a love relationship between the seeker and the divine reality. This love relationship is exercised through *dhikr* (remembrance) of God, silent spiritual contemplation in *khalwah* (seclusion), singing and listening to devotional poetries (for more detail, see Massingon-[B.Radtke] 2000, pp. 313–317) in praise of God, the Prophet Muḥammad and his companions, particularly in praise of the fourth caliph of Islam, and the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law, ‘Ali ibn Abī Tālib. For each *ṭarīqah* there is a *ṣūfī* master, who, as Karamustafa (2007 p. 262) states, takes personal interest in the spiritual development of his (in some cases, her) disciples (*murīds*). The shaykh is perceived to be the spiritual director and the physician of heart and soul. Each *ṭarīqah* represents a path of God, and as there are many *ṭarīqahs*, there are many paths of God. The number of paths of God could even be multiplied by the number of human population, i.e., each person is potentially a path of, or could have his/her way of reaching, God. This is the most common characteristic feature of all *ṣūfī* educational and intellectual traditions.

In the *ṣūfī* educational tradition, attaining a glimpse of the divine presence is the ultimate goal. In the *ṣūfī* tradition, *fanā’ fī Allāh* (annihilation of the self in God) is the first stage of attaining a glimpse of the divine reality. The highest stage is *baqā’ bi Allāh* (life in the union of God). In the latter stage, the seeker of divine union lives in the eternal presence of God. While some traces of personal self-consciousness might still exist at the stage of *fanā’ fī Allāh*, this may no longer be present in *baqā’ bi Allāh*, where the seeker totally identifies himself with the divine reality. In the *fanā’ fī Allāh* phase, the seeker finds himself in the divine presence, whereas in the *baqā’ bi Allāh* stage, the divine is revealed in the soul of the seeker. This is, however, very different from the belief in divine incarnation. The seeker of the divine reality remains a divine worshipper. In the words of Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938), it is the stage when the subject (the seeker of divine reality) transcends, encompasses, and momentarily suppresses his private personality – an experience which leads him to form a single unanalyzable unity with the object (the divine reality), where the ordinary distinction of subject and object does not exist (Iqbal 1958, p. 19). It is the highest stage of submission to God. In other words, there is nothing personal about the seeker himself. It is all from and about the divine presence. Such an educational approach to the divine reality, however, does not have a space in the traditionalist school of thought.

It is this difference between the *ṣūfī* and the traditionalist schools of thought that led the latter to condemn and suppress the former. Perhaps the earliest prominent victim of this difference goes back to the era of the Abbasid caliph, al-Muqtadir (caliphate: 295–320/908–32), who executed Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj in 922. The Abbasid jurists and traditionalist could not understand and tolerate al-Ḥallāj's Gnostic thought and words, particularly when he reportedly cried, "I am the Truth" (*anā al-Ḥaqq*). From *ṣūfī* educational perspective, al-Ḥallāj had reached the stage of *baqā' bi Allāh*, where he identified himself with the absolute Truth. Therefore, he called himself the Truth. Almost all great *ṣūfī* sheykhs (masters) remember al-Ḥallāj with great respect and reverence. It suffices to quote a phrase from a great Persian poet, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (d. 791/1389), who states that the only fault, if any, al-Ḥallāj had, it was "divulging the secrets" (*asrār huwaydā mīkard*). The term *asrār* (secrets) in *ṣūfī* tradition refers to a very personal experience of the divine presence, be it in the level of *fanā' fī Allāh* or *baqā' bi Allāh*.

The *ṣūfīs*, like the Ismā'īlīs, have often been marginalized from the mainstream interpretations. It was only through the work of al-Ghazālī, who turned to Sufism, and his *Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn)* that gradually opened a space and acceptance for *ṣūfī* tradition in Sunnī Islam. However, by the time of al-Ghazālī, the official line of Sunnī tradition, which had been influenced by the Abbasid caliphs, namely al-Mutwakkil (caliphate: 232–46/847–61), al-Qādir bi Allāh (caliphate: 380–422/991–1031) and al-Muqtadir (caliphate: 295–320/908–32), had vehemently become hostile towards the *ṣūfīs*, Shī'ahs, particularly its Ismā'īlī tradition, the Mu'atazilīte and all other rationalist and philosophical schools of thought. These developments have undoubtedly influenced al-Ghazālī and the *ṣūfī* traditions in the Sunnī milieu. The *ṣūfī* institutions include *zāwīyah*, *ribāt*, *khānqah* (*khāniqah* and *khāngā*), *jamā'at khānih*, *dargāh*, and *takīyah khānah* (*tekkeh*). These places, which are indeed different names for similar purposes, offer *ṣūfīs* not only accommodation, a place of worship (*'ibādah*), retreat (*khalwah*), and *dhikr*, but they also serve as a school, where *ṣūfī* masters (*pīrs*) or their deputies (*khalīfahs*) meet with, and impart their spiritual wisdom and knowledge to, their disciples and followers (*sāliks*). Each *ṣūfī tariqah* follows its own chain (*silsilah*) of masters or spiritual guides (*murshids*). Unlike *madrasahs* and mosques, which serve as public institutions, admission to *tariqahs* and the above-mentioned *ṣūfī* places of worship and education is strictly restricted to those willing to take the oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) – a tradition that has a long history – among other schools – in the Ismā'īlī institution of *da'wah*.

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## The Modern Period

The era of European colonialism brought unprecedented changes to the Muslim traditions and institutions of learning. The nineteenth-century utilitarian concept of education, strongly influenced by the dynamic of the industrial revolution, led European authorities to view the traditional Muslim educational institutions and traditions as devoid of any useful outcome for students and society as a whole. Some of the early

European orientalists even went on to attack the Arabs and Islam as a religion and commented that the Arabs lacked a tradition of, and Islam was inherently opposed to, rational thought, philosophy and the natural sciences. Typically, one of such early and notable attacks on the Arabs and Islam came from Ernest Renan (1823–1892), a French orientalist and a historian of religion, who was a loyal supporter of scientific reason and rationalism. He viewed religion in general and Islam in particular as a set of beliefs that are void of reason and rationalism. Equally, he described believing Muslims, particularly the Arabs, as a group of people who not only lacked a scientific mind-set, but also believed in superstition and dogmatism (Renan 1883, pp. 2–3 and 11). (For more discussion, see chapter ► [“The Learned Class \(‘\*Ulamā\*’\) and Education,”](#) by this author in the present volume.) Such perceptions not only strengthened the negative view of Islam and the Arabs, but also demonstrated the arrogance displayed by orientalists in the mold of Renan and their lack of understanding of the historicity of Muslim educational institutions and traditions.

The European attack and pressure on Muslim educational institutions and traditions of learning divided Muslim scholars into two camps. Nonconservative *‘ulamā’* argued for adopting the European model of education as the second best alternative until new home-grown creative and dynamic systems of education could be developed across the Muslim countries. As an example, pioneers of this line of thinking in India and in Egypt were Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (d. 1898) and Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897). Sir Syed established the Aligarh College in India based on the British educational system. In contrast, the conservative class of *‘ulamā’* rejected modern European political, economic, and cultural institutions. Instead, they argued for a return to the early period of Islam. Consequently, they initiated a regressive trend, which further complicated the declining status of education. In Egypt, the Salafists, and in India, the Deobandis were two prominent movements that established their own educational institutions, where they primarily taught the traditional curriculum. However, despite their resistance, they could not escape the influence of the European education system. At least, in terms of their management, administrative system, examination, and awarding of degrees, the Deobandis, for example, preferred the European instead to the mediaeval Muslim tradition. Despite changes in the modern period, the educational institutions and traditions of the earlier classical period have survived down to the present day, particularly in the form of mosque education for children and *madrasahs* for advanced studies, albeit in a noncreative and much more diminished form.

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## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the emergence and historical evolution of educational institutions and traditions in the Muslim world. It has explored and analyzed how different Muslim educational institutions and traditions at elementary and higher levels emerged and evolved over the course of history and survived until the current date.

One of the key institutions, where a lasting educational tradition has developed, is the mosque. This chapter has explored and analyzed how the tradition and institution of mosque education provided children and advanced learners a solid educational platform. It has traced this institution and tradition from its early beginning, during the Prophet's lifetime, to the development of more advanced and sophisticated forms of education in later periods. Although elementary schooling and higher education have gradually become more structured and organized in the forms of the *kuttāb* and madrasah, respectively, the mosque has retained both its position as the mother institution and its intellectual and educational character throughout the history.

On elementary education, this chapter has analyzed and discussed how and why two distinct forms of educational traditions, Qur'ān and non-Qur'ān education, emerged in the early period of Islam. The non-Qur'ān schools were held separately from the Qur'ān schools. It also discussed the curriculum and structure of elementary education, which was simple and largely based on the decision of individual teachers.

Muslim higher educational institutions and traditions enjoyed a remarkable development in the mediaeval period. Caliphs and statesmen paid attention to the development of the rational or natural as well as the religious sciences. The curricula of higher educational institutions and traditions were flexible, inclusive, and intellectually open to the different fields of study, which flourished inside and outside mosques and madrasahs. The spirit of open dialogue and debate was very important for the advancement and expansion of the horizon of knowledge. It was this spirit of the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and education that attracted students from various parts of the Muslim world and eventually led to the flourishing of many centers of civilization, from Cordoba and Granada in Spain to Balkh and Bukhārā in Khurāsān.

The educational institutions and traditions of the earlier classical period have survived to the present day. Mosques and madrasahs provide education for children and advanced learners, but in a much more diminished form. Currently, there is a dilemma between reforming the traditional educational institutions and traditions on the one hand and preserving them unchanged on the other.

Finally, this chapter has investigated the subject of this study from broader historical and educational perspectives and applied a pluralist and minority-inclusive approach. This approach has opened a space for marginalized voices, namely the Shī'ah, particularly the Ismā'īlī and *ṣūfī* tradition, which are normally absent from mainstream interpretations. In addition, this approach has also brought to light the contributions of the Barmakīs to the development of educational institutions and traditions in the early Abbasid period. The history and presence of these marginalized voices have often been ignored and rarely appreciated in mainstream interpretations.

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# Waqf and Financing Islamic Education

Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

The institution of *waqf* (religious endowment), an act of establishment of a charitable trust, often in a form of a property or any legitimate fund-generating estate – for which public utilities are designated as beneficiaries of the yields, among other purposes – laid the cornerstone of an independent means of financing for education across the Muslim world. Such an independent economic means contributed greatly to the autonomy of the research and scholarly works among the Muslims.

While *waqf* was to guarantee and maintain the independence of the research and autonomy of the researchers and scholars, the relationships with the state and power apparatus has been far from straightforward. In its endeavor to gain control over education, the state patronized some *madrasahs* by giving them *waqf* and other financial resources and status while others were neglected. Over time this resulted in an effective state control of *madrasahs* and other educational institutions, which were used to promulgate state ideology and legitimize one particular religious faction over others. The patronage of *madrasahs* also provided the government with a vital piece of ideological armor. The dominance of ‘*ulamā*’ over education in need of *waqf* to finance *madrasahs* across the Muslim world

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forced them to ultimately support the governments as the custodians of *waqf* and other religious taxes. This facilitated a good relation between *madrasah* and the state. In this way, the ‘*ulamā*’ were confident to have secured the support for *madrasah* while the government was assured to have the favorable consensus of ‘*ulamā*’ on its side. Meanwhile, despite the dominance of state over *waqf* in almost all countries in the Muslim world, a small number of *waqf*-based institutions continued to function independently and produced a great body of independent research and scholarship.

### Keywords

*Waqf* · Endowments · *Madrasah* · Islamic economics · Financing education

## Introduction: *Waqf* as a Muslim Legal and Economic Institution

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the *waqf*, or pious endowment created in perpetuity, has provided the foundation for much of what is considered the “Islamic civilization” (Hennigan 2004: 1). *Waqf*, as an institution and an economic enterprise was defined by *fiqh* (the Islamic jurisprudence) as “the irrevocable act of founding a charitable trust, and, hence the trust itself. The essential elements of which are that a person, with the intention of committing a pious deed, declares part of his or her property to be henceforth unalienable (*ḥabs, taḥbīs*) and designates persons or public utilities as beneficiaries of its yields (*tasbīl al-manfi’ah*) (Peters et al. 2012).” By definition, *waqf* is a trust-like instrument created by a Muslim who designates the principle of property that he or she owns as an endowment that henceforth may not be sold, gifted, or transmitted through inheritance, with the result being that the property becomes in-alienable in perpetuity. Hence, as an economic enterprise, *waqf* is using the tax-exempted bequests of land or other wealth established for the financial support of religious, educational, and welfare institutions, or charitable facilities. The terms of an endowment are recorded in an endowment deed (*waqfiyyah*) that is drawn up with great care in an effort to eliminate any ambiguity. In the deed, the founder announces the purpose of the endowment, specifies the beneficiaries, and makes provisions for its administration (Powers 2004: 856–857). Zaryab (1997: 185–187) argues that the *waqf* foundations were better protected against confiscation and against division among heirs, who nevertheless might benefit from them, for example, as administrators. Teachers of the religious sciences often had important popular followings, so that patronage might also help secure the loyalty of these segments of the population.

*Waqf* is regarded as a form of *ṣadaqah*, an act of charity to please God and bring the donor closer to Him in the pursuit for salvation, whose establishment is of a two-way transaction: the founder provides a regular source of income for his descendants or the means for the establishment and upkeep of a public institution, and, in return, the beneficiaries of his largesse are instructed to perform certain duties on his behalf, the reward for which is credited to the deceased (Powers 2004: 858). Kozlowski (2004: 731–732) argues that the common textbook definition of *waqf* as a “charitable



and religious trust” only partly conveys the much richer history of these institutions. *Waqf* always had familial and political dimensions along with, as well inseparable from, the purely pious ones. These dedications did provide ways of organizing welfare and piety, but also ways of passing from one generation to the next, the wealth as well as the social power that wealth insured.

Most endowments mixed private and public dimensions. *Waqf* has been used extensively – among other areas – in funding the education in the form of scholarships and provided economic means for construction of *madrasah* buildings and providing for the running costs of the *madrasahs* as well as the salaries of teachers and professors. While *waqf* has provided many ‘*ulamā*’ with a financial means that was independent of state control, it was conceived to generate income and therefore played a crucial role in both rural and urban economies, making education and thereby social mobility possible for many disadvantaged groups. It is safe to argue that the institution of *waqf* has greatly contributed to the production of knowledge and effectively promoted training of the generations of the Muslim scholars.

The role of *waqf* became especially significant during the tenth century and when travel in pursuit of *ḥadīth* was finally made its impact to form the *madrasah* as an educational institution, along with respective residences for students. Prior to the establishment of *madrasahs*, Islamic sciences were always studied in mosques or private houses. The mosque was among the earliest institutions of Islam and unalterably public in character, originally the site of government and justice, as well as of prayer and religious learning. Mosques were used as the hostels of the itinerant students. A venue of supplication and education at daytime, mosques tuned into student dormitories at night (for further details see chapter ► [“Introduction to Part I: Islamic Education: Historical Perspective, Origin, and Foundation”](#)). The possibility for boarding resulted in an increase in the number of students and gave rise to the study of other disciplines such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *kalām* which did not require traveling as much as *ḥadīth*. As noted in detail earlier in Introduction to Part I, those who had connections and means could stay in *khāns*, the merchants’ business chambers. This is partially because, “often the students themselves were long-distance traders; in biographical dictionaries religious scholars are more often associated with the occupation ‘trader’ than with any other, and there are many stories of traveling students who supported themselves by selling goods they had brought with them (Zaryab 1997: 186).” The institution of *waqf*, hence, played an intriguing role in the formation of an independent Islamic institution of education or *madrasah*. In some early references the terms for mosque and *madrasah* appear to have been used interchangeably, as teaching took place in both even after the establishment of *madrasahs*. However, the distinction is clearest from the point of view of the *waqf* and the intention of the founder and the purpose for which the *waqf* is applied.

Concomitantly *waqf* also promoted the religious learning as something of a profession, and the ‘*ulamā*’ – the religious learned – as a social class with economic interest. Mottahedeh (2000: 169) notes that “in the *madrasah* professors were real ‘professionals’, in the sense that [*waqf*] -the religious endowment- that maintained the *madrasah* also provided their livelihood.” Traditionally, *madrasahs* – like mosques, shrines, and hospitals – have always been charitable organizations across

the Muslim world and has been financed by private endowments of *waqf*. Religious scholars made their livings variously as teachers, scribes, Qur'ān reciters, or *mufīīs*. “With their huge endowments and their wide acceptance as the citadels of true knowledge and correct belief, *madrasahs* usually dominated and often monopolized the world of education. . . . They had often uniform curricula and methods. . . and they therefore dominated the content and methods of education as well (ibid.: 79).” Indeed, *waqf* made it possible for *madrasah* institutions to stand largely outside direct state control. Once a Muslim had formally established a *waqf*, he or she could not impose any further conditions on the use of the funds, a stipulation that ensured a considerable amount of freedom – academic and otherwise – to the teachers attached to the *madrasahs*.

*Waqf* has also been instrumental in providing one of the major avenues for women's participation in public religious and political life in many Muslim societies. A number of the major Muslim architectural monuments in the Muslim world were built to house institutions founded on *waqf* bequests by wealthy women during the period of the Ottoman and Şafavīd Empires (Ruggles 2000). Such arrangements had the double benefit of providing the wealthy with a way to secure their property in perpetuity while at the same time providing important income and resources to the ranks of religious scholars who constructed the regulations of this system and thus avoided subservience to the state (Feener 2004: 23). For the Islamic world *madrasahs* with its unique system of funding formed as a new organization: schools founded on substantial charitable trusts that had been given in perpetuity for the teaching of a specific kind of curriculum. The founders of these *madrasahs*, often viziers and sultans or other wealthy people, by the size of their endowments and the stipulations in their deeds of gift, guaranteed that these new schools would last long and take in a large number of students (often as boarders), whom they would attempt to teach a fairly uniform curriculum under the supervision of paid teachers (Mottahedeh 2000: 68).

As noted earlier, the institution of *waqf* has been a source of financing the independent research for generations of the Muslim scholars and has contributed to the autonomy of the research and scholarly works in the Muslim world. On the other hand, as Talbani (1996) argues, the state in endeavor to gain control over education, patronized some *madrasahs* by giving them financial resources and status while others were neglected. This resulted in an effective state control of *madrasahs*, which were used to propagate state ideology and legitimize one particular religious faction over others (Arjmand 2008: 103). This was true even with nongovernmental patrons who often sponsored particular schools as, for example, Nizām al-Mulk, who is credited as the founder of *madrasahs* favored teachers of the Shāfi'ite school of law. However, despite these partialities, *waqf* made the diversity within education possible and many *waqf*-based institutions sought to maintain a balance; for instance, the chief of Bayhaq built separate *madrasahs* for Ḥanafites, Shāfi'ites, Karrāmīs, and evidently Zaydīs or Mu'tazilītes (Halm 1977).

Despite this, some scholars (Feener 2004; Voll 1982) argue that the freedom idealized in the classical formulations of *waqf* regulations proved not to be completely unassailable, and later Muslim authorities took various means to exert

control over religious scholarship, which they saw as an important sphere of potential opposition. For instance, in the seventeenth century, as part of efforts to control *madrasahs*, the Ottoman Empire promulgated new “official” legal codes aimed at standardizing Islamic law in their territories. Feener (2004) argues that, in the early nineteenth century, the modernizing programs of Muhammad Ali in Egypt brought more centralized administration and even the outright dissolution of Muslim institutions that had previously found their sources of funding and social autonomy in privately endowed *waqf*. The financial support of ‘*ulamā*’ associated with Egyptian *madrasahs* was progressively eroded, first by the taxation of *waqf* in 1809 and then by the state confiscation of *waqf* properties in 1814 (Marsot 1984: 66, 143) (for further details see chapter ► “Islamic Education in Egypt”). Similar programs were often also taken up by European powers in the Muslim societies that came under their colonial control in the late nineteenth century, as well as by the independent postcolonial governments of many Muslim countries. Khaled Abou el-Fadl (2001: 46) cites these trends toward centralized control of *waqf* as contributing to the disruption of civil discourses of disagreement among traditionally trained Muslim scholars and to the subsequent rise in popularity of more narrowly imagined religious authoritarianisms.

Further, the dominance of ‘*ulamā*’ over education, and the support of the government, facilitated a good relation between some *madrasahs* and the state. In this way, the ‘*ulamā*’ were confident to have secured the support for *madrasa* while the government was sure to have the favorable consensus of ‘*ulamā*’ on its side. Hence, *madrasah* became the main provider of the bureaucratic manpower for the government. The patronage of *madrasahs* even provided the government with a vital piece of ideological armor. On certain occasions, the founder reserves the right to dispose the *waqf* property under given circumstances. This resides in the power of *waqf* as an institution, in which, “the person making the dedication (the *waqif*) retains two important powers. S/he can distribute the income of the *waqf* in any way that does not violate Islamic sensibilities. Therefore, donors as well as their near relatives can receive the income from such a trust. Also, the dedicator appoints a trustee (*mutawallī*) who administers the income of the *waqf*. Donors are free to be appointed as *mutawallīs* themselves, their children, and grandchildren.” The connection of ‘*ulamā*’ and state became especially significant since, once a patron had endowed a mosque as a pious foundation (*waqf*), it passed out of his effective control; for example, though it might have been established for a particular teacher of jurisprudence, it was not in the patron’s power to appoint a successor to that teacher. By contrast, the patron who founded a *madrasah* might retain, for himself and his heirs, the right to appoint or even dismiss the faculty and staff. The importance to potential founders of such continuing control is illustrated negatively by the rarity of *madrasahs* in lands where Mālikīte law prevailed, for Mālikīte law is peculiar in denying such control (Makdisi 1981: 37–38).

Below this upper echelon of *madrasah* education, a popular type of *waqf* was financing elementary educational institution such as *kuttābs*, *maktabs*, or Qur’ān schools for children of the disadvantaged families and orphans. These institutions, “gratuitously taught the Qur’ān and where they received an apportioning of money

to provide orphaned boys with small stipends and some food, money for *lwaḥs* (wooden tablets), ink, inkwells as well as teaching them the Qur'ān, some basic literacy, and arithmetic." Some *waqf* supported *ribāṭs*, which were homes for widowed or divorced women. These institutions were usually founded by wealthy women and were frequently presided over by female administrators. Some endowments provided food and water to pilgrims and residents of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. There were also smaller *waqfs*, many of them associated with family tombs, that provided food and water to the poor on a weekly basis, in exchange for the poor saying prayers for their deceased benefactors. These tomb *waqfs* became popular in Cairo in the second half of the fifteenth century. Also, the practice of building kitchens to feed the employees of large endowments gave rise in the Ottoman Empire to the foundation of separate soup kitchens (*'imāret*), such as the one established by Hasseki Hurrem Sulṭān in Jerusalem in the 1550s. Finally, some endowments provided for the washing and burial of the dead. This service was of particular importance in the Late Middle Ages, when outbreaks of plague repeatedly struck the Middle East (Sabra 2004: 226).

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### The Deed of *Waqf* (*Waqfiyyah*)

The conditions for *waqf* are formulated in a written document known as *waqfiyyah*, drawn up, registered, and certified according to fixed rules (*shurūt*), in which the donor informs the superintendent and manager of his endowment (and anyone who might be tempted to infringe on its inviolability) about the scope of the *waqf*. *Waqfiyyah* functions as the organization statutes, and in the first part of the document is always

architectural units of the building or buildings are listed and described in detail. The reader of the document is given an imaginary guided tour of the mosque or *madrasah*. He sees the rooms and courtyards one after another just as a visitor would systematically pass through them. The description is meticulous and, when it comes to the decoration, often exuberantly metaphorical, displaying the pride the founder takes in his own taste, piety and munificence. It also provides a fixed inventory of the mobile and immobile property of the endowment. At the end of the architectural description the reader is led around the boundaries of the building or lot (*al-ḥudūd al-arb'ah*). The exact geographical location is given by the indication of the neighbouring private and public premises, beginning with the side of the *qiblah*. (Haarmann 1980: 33)

This information is essential for legal reasons and is registered in detail in order to guarantee the irrevocability of the object of the *waqf* and serve as a reference for maintenance of the property. The institution of *waqf* stipulates that the object of *waqf* – unless specified otherwise – be kept in its original form. In reality, however, in many instances and due to economic, political, and social circumstances this has not always been possible. In the following piece of text, Taha Hussein, the Egyptian educator is reflecting on his days in a *waqf* dormitory, adjacent to al-Azhar in Cairo, neglected and left in a dire condition.

The house belonged to the *waqfs*, which is as much as to say that its origin was lost in the vast backwardness of time; its walls were rotten with age and full of cracks containing hordes of insects and other small animals. These creatures seemed to have made it their business, after nightfall, to keep watch and ward over the boy as he lay crouching in his corner. There were inconsiderable scratchings, light movements this way and that, now furtive, now hasty enough to make the boy shiver with fear. (Hussein 1984: 28)

In the event that *waqf* is intended for the running costs of *madrasah* or *maktab*, an exhaustive inventory of the costs and the payments are detailed in the *waqfiyyah*. In his study of Mamluk *waqfiyyahs*, Haarmann (1980: 35) lists the specific designations of the costs detailed in a *waqfiyyah* as

... monthly salaries and allotments of food, clothes, etc. for employees and beneficiaries based on an exact description of their duties and necessary qualifications are itemized. [T]he material expenditure, required by the monthly budget is listed: food, both for normal days and feasts; the transportation of water from the Nile – not the *khalīj* – at the time of the flood (*ayyām al-Nīl; ziyādah*); fodder for animals, lamps, oil, incense, carpets, kitchenware, as well as sponges, brooms and rags for the cleaning and polishing of walls and floors. All sums refer to lunar months (*shuhūr al-hilālah*). This is not surprising in view of the importance of the Muslim calendar for the everyday rhythm of a mosque or *madrasah*.

Such detailed information could be found in *waqfiyyahs* in other parts of the Muslim world. Table 1 shows the details of the annual expenditures of *waqf*-based Madrasah Marvī in Tehran in mid-nineteenth century.

The budget of the *madrasah* was derived from rents and the income of the *waqf* properties. According to de Rochechouart (1867: 114), in the case of Madrasah Marvī the stipends of the students averaged 11 tomans a year plus lodging, comparable to the annual stipend of 8–16 tomans (100–200 francs) for students at contemporary military schools. Since the establishment of the *Hawzah ‘Ilmīyah* at Qum in Iran in the 1920s, student stipends have been regularized and drawn largely from religious taxes. They were called *shahrīyyah* (monthly allowance) and were paid either in the form of cash or coupons for breads or other essentials (for details see chapter ► “Islamic Education in Iran”).

**Table 1** Annual expenditures of Madrasah Marvī as detailed in the *waqfiyyah*

Recipient	Tomans	Percentage of total
Custodian	160	10.0
Instructors	800	50.0
Prayer leader	80	5.0
Books	30	1.8
Librarian	24	1.5
Porter	18	1.2
Miscellaneous	24	1.5
Stipends for 40 students	464	29.0
Total	1600	100

Source: de Rochechouart (1867: 111), as cited in Zaryab (1997: 186)

*Waqfiyyahs* also include passages on the remuneration, and the academic and moral obligations of the employees of such an endowed pious institution, which are a precious correlate to the often biased reports on academic life and strife found in contemporary historical – mainly biographical – literature. In the *waqfiyyahs*, an intrinsically legal genre of writing, there is no space for manipulation by a scholar employed at such a school who might be prone to present his own position and achievement in the brightest light. The stipulations of the *waqfiyyahs* were unalterable, and there was a clearly fixed hierarchy in the mosque or *madrasah* with graduated salaries and prerogatives (Haarmann 1980: 34–35).

The term of the *waqfiyyah* also determines the procedure for the recruitment of the professors and admission candidates entitled for scholarships. In certain cases, a detailed instruction leaves a narrow margin for any modification with the *madrasahs*. In the case of a Mamlūk *waqfiyyah* studied by Haarmann (ibid.: 38), such details include,

The recruitment of the four professors (*al-mutaşaddirūn*), of the *shaykh of ḥadīth*, and of the teacher of the seven readings of the Qur’ān was, in principle, carried out in all Islamic lands, . . . although promotion *intra muros* was not only permitted, but even encouraged. The donor certainly knew why he made it a strict rule not to accept anyone through the mediation of a friend. Notaries (*shuhūd*) and judges (*hukūm*) were not allowed to join the *madrasah* as long as they were not ready to give up their posts. This remarkable prohibition may have envisaged an unavoidable conflict of interests in which they would have become involved, being guardians and subjects of the rules of the *madrasah* at the same time.

In the same vein, the responsibilities and duties of the students who received their scholarships or stipends through *waqf* was often detailed in the *waqfiyyah*. This included not only the academic duties such as attendance at classes – which was checked by supervisors, often a peer of their own ranks – but also with respect to their private lives, their manner and the extent of their piety, commitment to religion, and observance of the social codes of conduct. Students were often strictly monitored, and in the event of violating the rules, parts or the entirety of the scholarship was withdrawn. Accordingly, *waqfiyyah* defines both the structural organization and frames of action. In a case that the regulations were not kept as stipulated, or improper management of the entrusted funds occurred, the jurist –often mentioned in the *waqfiyyah* – takes the legal measures to resolve the problem.

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## State and Institutionalization of *Waqf*

The institution of *waqf* acquired a kind of dual status across various communities in the Muslim world. On the one hand, their status according to scholars of *sharī‘ah* was a constant source of debate, and on the other hand, the *waqf*-based institutions continually evolved to suit the economic, social, as well as political circumstances of particular times and places.

In the medieval and early modern periods, the establishment of the *madrasahs* and the system of *waqf* that supported them had provided mechanisms for social

mobility and cultural continuity during times when the great Muslim empires of the Middle East and South Asia appeared to be crumbling (Meri 2004: 23). Following the devastating disruptions of the thirteenth-century Mongol invasions of the Middle East and the consequent shattering of large-scale state institutions in the region, the ‘*ulamā*’ associated with the *madrasahs* provided a means not only to preserve the traditions of Islam but also to spread them into areas beyond the limits of earlier Muslim movements into Europe, Africa, and Asia. As *madrasah* institutions proliferated throughout the expanding Muslim world, they fostered the formation of networks of ‘*ulamā*’ who used a common curricula and shared a cosmopolitan cultural tradition that paralleled that of the royal courts (*ibid.*).

The development of commercial enterprises through the institution of *waqf* in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire vindicated for the sustainability of the funding was an intriguing turn in which – by using the Islamic legal argumentations – the state was justified to take over *waqf*. Hence the previously decentralized system of welfare institutions based on *waqf*, that often formed the basis of each city quarter (*mahalle*), a structure arguably as central to urban life as the guilds themselves was centralized under the state. Although early *waqfs* were donations of land and immovable property for the good of the Islamic community, donations of cash *waqfs* began to boom in the mid-sixteenth century. Cash from these *waqfs* was lent to merchants and other parties at interest (*rib*). This innovation was justified by Mehmed Ebussuûd Efendi, the leading Ottoman religious authority, who argued that taking of interest was justified if it served the public welfare of the Muslim community (Norman 2004: 181–182).

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, governments of most Muslim countries encroached on *waqf* as a “private sector” of religious institutions and rival to the state and its apparatus, and systematically endeavored to take over the responsibility of administering *waqf* properties and the institutions, individuals, and activities they fund. Declaring the state as the eligible body responsible for administration of financial recourses of the *bayt al-māl* (House of Wealth), the newly established states, through the inception of various organizations (e.g., Ministry of the *Awqaf* in Egypt; Organization of Awqaf and Charities in Iran; Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowment [*waqf*], Da’wah and Guidance in Saudi Arabia; Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments in UAE), assumed the responsibility for the administration of *waqf*. This was partially to seize control over education and religious establishment. Because of governments’ new roles in relation to the regulation of religion and society, conflicts of political interest exposed them to sharp criticism by Muslims who opposed particular policies or practices perceived as being un-Islamic. Popular targets of such critiques included the governmental sanction of such things as the availability of alcohol, sexual content in the media, reform of divorce laws, or treaties with countries that abuse local Muslims (Staarrett 2004: 67–68). This trend continued, and over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, governments of most Muslim countries encroached to varying degrees on *waqf* institutions by nationalizing the administration of *waqf* properties, which left significant imprints on traditions of Islamic learning in the modern period.

Sadr (1981) argues that, as the custodian of the interests of Muslims, the Islamic state has the right to distribute social and economic resources to attain the maximum production that brings prosperity to all people. Aziz (1991: 333–335) notes that Islam has left the government with a high degree of flexibility in developing new regulations to meet any emergent economic circumstances. Sadr calls the absence of clear guidelines in the *sharī'ah* as *manatiq al-farāq* (the discretionary sphere of the law), where the Muslim jurist has the liberty and authority to make judgements and rulings according to the principles of *fiqh*. Although this liberty does not apply to the “primary principles” of Islam, i.e., the sphere of *halāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (prohibition), but rather he may act within the realm of “secondary” matters, i.e., the *mandhūb* (preferred) and *makrūh* (disliked). Sadr considers this area of legislation as a realistic approach to ensure the development of economic activities and the means of production. The leadership of the Islamic state then could initiate any new legislation and regulations that it sees as appropriate to the new emergent circumstances in order to meet the economic needs of the people and secure maximum utilization of economic resources. In other words, the Islamic government is free to adopt a wide range of economic policies from full control of the economy to free-enterprise in order to achieve its social goals. In this case, the government must depend on the economists and experts to watch for the best possible alternative policies to set the direction of the state economy (provided that it will not overrule the theory of distribution).

Using this argument, the states across the Muslim world – despite the differences in the scope of the authority of the state – based on various schools of thought, reserved the right as the regulator and monitor of *waqf*, and introduced new areas for the activities of the *waqf*-based institutions. This includes the usage of *waqf* as a credit system or to formulate it in a form of student loans to assist students with lower economic resources. Hence, similar to placing an asset, particularly property in trust, the *waqf* is used to generate wealth. The appropriation or tying-up of a property in perpetuity in the *waqf* makes it as a sustainable source of income to be utilized and reinvested.

Islamic Development Bank (IDB) as one of the main global actors within the Muslim world, which endeavors to implement the Islamic banking through the methods of appropriation and adaptation to modern principles of economics, is one of the institutions to explore new avenues to utilize *waqf*. Through investment in *waqf*-based enterprises, IDB peruses various programs and projects for poverty reduction as well as scholarships for postgraduate students from poorer Muslim countries to attend recognized universities. Its affiliate, the Islamic Research and Training Organization, provides organizational backup and sponsors numerous Islamic finance institutions. The IDB has evolved into a World Bank for Muslim countries; indeed, it cofunds with the World Bank and other development assistance agencies, involving – among other means – *waqf* institutions (Wilson 2008).

The debate over the new usages of the *waqf* is also continued at national level, where religious scholars explored new areas of collaborations with economists and policy-makers. The notion of *wakālah-waqf* (aka. *waqf* model) which proved a feasible method among various Muslim countries was an outcome of such debates.



In the *waqf* model, policyholders' (the customers) funds are replaced with a charitable trust fund or a *waqf* fund. Under the *waqf* model, which is guided under a Shari'ah Supervisory Board, part of the capital of the shareholders' fund is donated to create the *waqf* fund. In all other respects, the *waqf* model works in the same way as any economic hybrid model. While so far the *waqf* model is used in Pakistan and South Africa, it unseals new potentials. According to Islamic Development Bank, the *waqf* fund under the *wakālah-waqf* works to achieve the following objectives.

- To extend financial assistance to its members in the event of losses
- To extend benefits to its members strictly in accordance with the *waqf* "trust" deed
- To donate to activities approved by the Shari'ah Supervisory Board

Hence, as per a hybrid model, the shareholders fund is remunerated through the *wakālah* and *mudharabah* fees, and a *qardh al-ḥasan* is payable in cases where the *waqf* fund is in deficit, which is unlikely to happen given the initial donation paid by the shareholders' fund (Khan 2008: 134–135).

Despite this and other potential areas to benefit *waqf* as in new domains to facilitate development and economic growth, usage of *waqf* in some areas and by a number of actors has waked contestations and resentments among many. Some Muslim militant organizations incepted their activities as *waqf*-based welfare organizations, mostly to finance education and health for poor and disadvantaged. HAMAS began its life as a charitable trust for Palestinians. Much of its work still continues to be feeding the poor or tending to the sick and wounded (Kozlowski 2004), and throughout its services it could recruit many supporters and members. Many *maktab* and *madrasah* which are perceived as the contributors to the rise of religious militancy and extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan are operating under the *waqf* foundations. The Muslim philanthropy based on *waqf* would definitely dominate the social and political landscape in future to come. Instantaneously, new kinds of *waqf* are emerging that have a global focus and have developed as a proselytizing tool – among others for Iranians and Saudis. Others with a less confrontational approach dedicate themselves to activities, more often than not to such humanitarian assistances in the global scale. Though their institutional shape may alter, *waqf* will be a feature of Muslim life in the years to come.

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## Concluding Remarks

The institution of *waqf* or religious endowment often in a form of a building or plot of land or even cash to be invested is utilized extensively as an instrument in financing education. A tool for the production of both religious and nonreligious knowledge and independent research across the Muslim world, *waqf* has been a source of contention and polemics among the scholars and policy-makers alike. With the appearance of nation-states across the Muslim world, the state became the main custodian to control the *waqf* and hence to patronize some groups over others.

With the expansion of Islam and modes of modernization, *waqf* is used as a means of investment to assist various individuals and NGOs – among other areas – in their poverty alleviation or girls' education projects. *Waqf* will remain as part of the Muslim economic discourse and while its usage will be altered into new domains, its usage will also wake further resentments and contentions.

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# The Learned Class ('*Ulamā*') and Education

Yahia Baiza

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## Abstract

The subject of this chapter comprises two independent and yet mutually intertwined complex debates: the '*ulamā*' and education. The complexity of the subject derives from the fact that the two themes of this chapter are also connected with several other historical developments that influenced the historicity of both '*ulamā*' and education. For this reason, it is vital to explore and analyze the historicity of the '*ulamā*', their changing positions and shifting concerns and priorities as well as the evolving concept of education. In doing so, this chapter discusses the theme of this investigation in relation to (i) Islam, knowledge, and authority; (ii) territorial expansion and the rise of Muslim civilizations and quest for knowledge and education; (iii) the development of institutional and educational structures; (iv) the emergence of the '*ulamā*' to the level of law-makers and their influence on education and rational sciences; and (v) nationalism and modern approaches to science and education. These themes are by no means exhaustive, but within the limited capacity of this chapter, they present fresh interpretations of the subject matter and open new debates for further research and discussion.

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**Keywords**

 Islam · Knowledge and Authority · ‘*Ulamā*’
 

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The concept of *ilm* (knowledge) constitutes the essence of both terms: ‘*ulamā*’ (scholars) and *ta’līm* (education). Etymologically, the Arabic terms ‘*ālim*’ (pl. ‘*ulamā*’, literally, scholar, knower, master and learned) and *ilm* (knowledge) are closely connected to each other. The term ‘*ālim*’ is derived from the three-letter Arabic verb root ‘*a-l-m*’, which means “to know, to have knowledge of, or information about, something.” Conceptually, Muslims in general, and the ‘*ulamā*’ in particular, trace their understanding of both knowledge and education to the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muḥammad’s manner of living (*sunnah*), which is studied through his sayings (*ḥadīth*). They together not only represent two fundamental sources of knowledge and authority in Islam, but also serve as sources of guidance and inspiration for knowledge and education. Muslims believe that Allāh is the absolute source of knowledge and recognize divine revelation as the beginning of all human knowledge. In *sūrah* two, *al-Baqarah* (The Cow), the Qur’ān (II: 31) states that:

And He [Allāh] taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful.

The above verse introduces God as the first teacher and master of Adam. Muslims believe that God taught Adam the meaning and knowledge of all things. They regard the first clause of the above verse, “And He [Allāh] taught Adam all the names”, as an indication of the beginning of transmission of knowledge to humanity. In a philosophical interpretation, Muḥammad Iqbal (d. 1938) states that the above verse demonstrates that the character of human knowledge is conceptual. The fact that man has the faculty of naming things, that is to say, forming concepts of them is capturing them. It is through this process of conceptualization that man approaches the observable aspect of reality (Iqbal 1958: 13). It also means that God has given human being the faculty to empirically observe, understand, and conceptualize the visible aspect of reality. An empirical understanding and examination of the divine creation ultimately serves the advancement and development of various fields of knowledge.

Moreover, the Qur’ān also makes frequent references to the term *ilm*. According to Anees (1991), the root word and derivatives of the term *ilm* appear more than eight hundred times in the Qur’ān. This signifies the importance of knowledge as the second most important concept after *tawḥīd* (recognition of the oneness of God) (p. 10). Based on these Qur’ānic observations, Muslims believe that the concepts of knowledge and education, i.e., reading, writing, and teaching, are present in the Qur’ān from the very first verses that were revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad. These first revelations, *Sūrah al-‘Alaq* (The Clot), not only encouraged the Prophet Muḥammad to read God’s creation but also highlighted the concepts of knowledge, teaching, and education as the central themes of the divine revelation:

Read in the name of your Lord who created [everything]! He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is the most Bounteous! Who taught by the pen. He taught man that which he did not know. (Qur’ān, XCVI: 1-5)

The above as well as previously quoted verses depict knowledges as God’s creations. They describe teaching and transmission of knowledge as one of bounteous acts of God. In this way, they also portray God as the “Master of all knowledge.” These two quoted verses suggest that knowledge is a divine gift, and prophets are God’s trusted mediums of transmission of knowledge to humanity. It also means that God reveals Himself to humanity through His gift, that is, knowledge. If God is knowable through knowledge, then acquiring knowledge becomes an act of worship, i.e., an act of understanding God. If, as Muslims believe, the Qur’ān contains knowledge of God, then reading and understanding the Qur’ān is an act of worshipping, or acquiring knowledge of, God. Thus, the Qur’ān equates the acquisition of knowledge to an act of worship; in other words, whoever acquires knowledge indeed worships God thereby.

Similarly, the Prophet’s sayings also make the seeking of knowledge, learning, and education a religious obligation and a core tenet of belief. Historically, the Prophet Muḥammad himself is believed to spearhead Muslim education in speech as well as in action. Makḍīsī states that it is possible that the Prophet himself taught his disciples in his mosque, *‘Masjid Rasūl Allāh’* (the mosque of the Messenger of Allāh), in Medina (1981: 20), and hence he was the first teacher and transmitter of divine knowledge and wisdom to an emerging community that came to be called and known as the “Muslim community,” or simply the “Muslims.” For details, see chapter ► [“Sunnism, Shī‘ism, Sufism, and Education: A Brief Overview”](#) in this volume on the development of the educational traditions and institutions in Islam, where the present author discusses and analyzes the Prophet Muḥammad’s views and actions regarding the promotion of knowledge and education.

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## Territorial Expansion and the Rise of Muslim Civilizations

The expansion of the Arab empire resulted into a dynamic phase of cultural exchange. The Arabs brought their new religion to the occupied lands, where they encountered ancient cultures and civilizations. By the end of the Umayyad Caliphate (41–133/661–750), the Arabs expanded their conquests under the banner of Islam westwards to Spain and eastwards to modern-day Afghanistan (formerly Khurāsān) and Central Asia (Transoxiana), and southwards to India. Territorial expansion had a significant influence on the life of both the Arabs and the non-Arabs for centuries to come. It played a major role in facilitating and promoting trade and commerce across land and sea. Muslims either built upon the existing, or opened new, trade routes. In Africa, commercial activities intensified trade and commerce on Trans-Saharan trade route between West Africa and Mediterranean, which predated Islam. The presence of a Muslim caliphate in Spain (139–422/756–1031) also encouraged trade and

opened new routes between North Africa and Spain. Equally, Muslim traders used the existing trade route, popularly known as, Silk Road in the east and connected China, Central, South, and West Asia with the Arab lands and Europe. These different trades were then connected together via Mecca, which not only attracted Muslims for the annual pilgrimage but also became a hub and attractive destination for trade.

The development and flourishing of trade routes encouraged the rise of commercial centers, bazaars, markets, and caravanserais (roadside inns) across the Muslim territories. Trade and commercial activities contributed to scholarly and educational activities on the one hand and were soon supported by the development of new scientific disciplines, particularly jurisprudence, on the other. The science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which comprises the two major disciplines of *'ibādāt* (divine worships) and *mu'āmilāt* (transactions), developed commercial laws and regulations, which fell under the transaction section of jurisprudence. Traders and caravan teams not only carried their commercial goods, but they also carried the religion of Islam and its rulings on worship, religious creeds, and rituals as well as trade, commerce, and matters of civil transaction. Trade and commerce also facilitated encounters between traders and scholars of different faiths and cultures, including Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian. This new dynamism encouraged and facilitated travelers, scholars, scientists, and young inquisitive men to journey across the Muslim territories and exchange their information, knowledge, and learning. As a result, many centers of civilization began to flourish across the Muslim world. The prominent centers included Cordoba in Spain; Kairouan (al-Qayrawān) in Tunisia; Fez in Morocco; Cairo in Egypt; Damascus in Syria; Basra and Baghdad in Iraq; Nīshāpūr in Iran; Hirāt, Balkh, and Ghaznī in modern-day Afghanistan; and Bukhārā and Samarqand in modern-day Uzbekistan. Scholars across these centres not only preserved their works of ancient wisdom by translating them into Arabic and Persian/Dari, for instance, but also produced the cutting edge science and scholarship of the time. The emerging fields of knowledge were then actively pursued and developed by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars for at least six centuries from the mid-seventh to the mid-thirteenth centuries of the Islamic era, and stamped their character on what is retrospectively viewed as the Golden Age of Islam.

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### **Institutional and Educational Structures and the Role of 'Ulamā'**

The mosque (*masjid*) represents the earliest Muslim institution. It served not only as a place of worship, but also as a space for communal gathering, governance, polity, and education. Historically, the mosque served as the first official place of learning before this activity spread to libraries, bookshops, private houses, and lodges attached to mosques which came to be known as *madrāsahs*. The tradition of mosque functioning as an instructional center for Muslims goes back to the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad, when his mosque in Medina served as a place for private and public worship. (For a detailed discussion on mosque and its role in the

development of knowledge and various disciplines, see chapter ► “Islamic Education and Development of Educational Traditions and Institutions.”) Hence, the mosque characterized the earliest institution for worship, communal decisions, and education in Islam.

Among the prominent mosques of the medieval time, al-Azhar requires a special attention. The al-Azhar congregational mosque was established and expanded by the Shī‘ah Ismā‘īlī Fāṭimid Imām-caliphs (The Fāṭimid caliphate was an Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ah caliphate that emerged in North Africa (present-day Tunisia and Algeria) in 296/909, before they conquered Egypt and founded the city al-Qāhirah (present Cairo) in 358–59/969–970, where the al-Azhar mosque and the modern-day al-Azhar university are located.) in 361/972 C.E. in Cairo, Egypt. The case of al-Azhar is intriguing, because it represents a typical case how a congregation mosque (*masjid jāmi‘*) in the early Islamic period served as a place of worship, education and scholarship. The case of al-Azhar is also important, because, as Kasa’i (2008) states, it is the oldest educational institution having survived a thousand years of social, cultural, and political events and is still active. In 1005, al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (r. 386–412/996–1021), the sixth Fāṭimid caliph-imām, founded *Dār al-‘ilm* (the House of Knowledge), a center for education and research, in Cairo. It was sometimes erroneously called *Dar al-Ḥikmah* (House of Wisdom) – misleadingly insofar as “wisdom” (*ḥikmat*) was usually understood as the specific Ismā‘īlī esoteric (*ta’wīlī* or *bāṭinī*) knowledge that was communicated by the imām through *dā’īs* to the Ismā‘īlī audience alone. As Heinz Halm explains, al-Ḥākim’s institution did not serve the *da’wa* purpose. Rather it provided funding for and promoted nonreligious sciences (Halm 1997, pp. 71–72). The Fāṭimid caliphs, and their *dā’īs* (summoners) and jurists inside and outside Cairo used to hold regular *majālis* (sing. *majlis*), in which high ranking officials and dignitaries attended twice a week, every Monday and Thursday (EI 1986: 1032; Madelung 1986: 1033). According to Madelung’s account, *majālis* appeared to be formal sessions for both Ismā‘īlī and non-Ismā‘īlīs. Since the lecturers for the Ismā‘īlī faithful were known as “wisdom,” their *majālis* came to be known as “the wisdom sessions” (*majālis al-ḥikmah*). The Ismā‘īlī *dā’īs* also prepared lectures for the general audience, reading them out twice a week on specified days. Each lecture prepared by the chief *dā’ī* was submitted to the caliph-imām for approval before it was read to people from different sexes, social, and religious ranks (1986: 1033).

It is also worth noting that the Fāṭimids and their *dā’īs* paid systematic attention to women’s education. They held special “wisdom sessions” for women. This tradition spread all over the Ismā‘īlī communities and reached remote and isolated valleys and villages as far away as modern-day Afghanistan and Central Asia. For example, the Badakhshānī, Hazārah, and Pashāī Ismā‘īlī communities in Afghanistan until recently preserved the traditional religious education sessions for men and women. The primary traditional institutions for conducting either separate or mixed educational sessions for both sexes were known as *chillah nishīnī* (forty-day session) and *jum‘ah nishīnī* (Friday session). These sessions were privately held at homes and within community circles, in which families not only shared a common set of Ismā‘īlī beliefs, language, modes of living, culture, tradition but also blood ties.



The curriculum and religious education sessions mainly revolved around the *ta'wīl* (hermeneutic interpretation) or the wisdom of the *sharī'ah* and general matters of religion. It ought to be clarified that the Ismā'īlī *chillah nishīnī* is different from, as it is not a form of, the traditional forty-day *ṣūfī* fasting and meditation in absolute seclusion and isolation. In the Ismā'īlī *chillah nishīnī*, participants attend educational sessions in order to enlighten their soul and increase their knowledge in various matters of religion. Normally, a religious scholar would lead all forty sessions on nightly basis. Using a rotation system, the religious scholar was holding one session in one family's home for one night and thus he was incorporating all the families in the community. A typical session would include teaching, dialogue in the form of questions and answers, and discussions between the scholar and the participants as well as between participants. While these sessions normally began after dinner and finished before midnight, participants were free to look after their families and personal life for the rest of the day. The preferred season for these forty sessions was winter, when families were not actively engaged in farming or animal husbandry and were keen to spend the long cold winter nights in increasing their religious knowledge and passing their religious faith down to the next generation.

In contrast to the *chillah nishīnī* that more suited for rural communities in the winter season, the Friday session (*jum'ah nishīnī*) suited the needs of the urban Ismā'īlī communities whose way of life and income were not based on agriculture or farming production. As with the *chillah nishīnī*, the Friday session was open to both men and women. These traditional educational sessions and women's education may have not been unique or limited to the Ismā'īlī tradition; however, the Ismā'īlī educational tradition certainly does deserve attention since they fostered the notion of learning for men and women systematically and globally across their communities. These sessions, which used to be part of the broader traditional religious and spiritual enlightenment education, have now been replaced by modern educational programs, both at primary cycle, known as the International Ta'lim (Education) Programme, and the secondary cycle, known as the Secondary Teacher Education Programme.

Al-Azhar sessions of legal instructions were openly held for all learners of jurisprudence. These were taught in the al-Azhar Mosque (Halm 1997, pp. 44–46) as well as in other congregation mosques outside Cairo. The *dā'īs* as well as the '*ulamā'*' from both Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds made significant contributions to the development and advancement of knowledge and education in both al-Azhar and al-Ḥākim's House of Knowledge. However, it is al-Azhar that has survived until today, evolving into an organized institution for higher learning. Retrospectively, many modern-day scholars consider it the first and the oldest university in the world (Tibawi 1972: 30; Bilgrami and Ashraf 1985) (Among the oldest mosques and institutions of higher learning, one could also name al-Zaytūnah mosque). The Fāṭimids' educational pursuits also inspired the 'Abbāsids, the Seljuqs (The Seljuqs (Seljuks) belonged to a Turkoman nomadic tribe who lived along the Oxus River and were led by their chief called Seljuq, after whom their dynasty is named. They establish their empire in Western Asia (1037–1194) (Saunders 1978, p. xiv and 145).) and their celebrated vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 1092) to establish a

network of *madrasahs* in Basra and Mosul in present-day Iraq, Isfahan and Nīshāpūr in Iran, and Balkh and Herat in Afghanistan (Dodge 1962, pp. 65–66). Although these *madrasahs* were built to train jurists in discursive reasoning so that they might effectively counter the activity of the Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* from al-Azhar (Kasa'i 2008), it was also during this period that *madrasah* became the cultural center of Muslim civilization (Hillenbrand 1986, pp. 1128) and began to represent the educational and intellectual dimensions of Islam.

In the modern period, European colonialism brought new political, military, and educational challenges to the occupied Muslim countries. The initial intellectual encounters between European and Muslim thinkers represented some stereotypical views of some European orientalists and misled more than they attempted to understand the historicity of Muslim education, sciences, and civilizations. One of such early and notable encounters was the case of Ernest Renan (1823–1892), a French orientalist and a historian of religion, who was a loyal supporter of scientific reason and rationalism. In his 29 March 1883 lecture at the Sorbonne in which he spoke of Islam and science, he fiercely attacked both the Arabs and the religion of Islam. Renan viewed religion in general, and Islam in particular, as a set of beliefs that are void of reason and rationalism. Equally, he described believing Muslims, particularly the Arabs, as a group of people who not only lacked the scientific mindset, but also believed in superstition and dogmatism (Renan 1883, pp. 2–3).

Renan's comments led the leading '*ulamā*' and Muslim intellectuals of the time, led by Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897), to voice their responses. Living under occupation, the Muslim intellectuals had to defend their history, culture, tradition, and religion and the fact that Islam is compatible with modern science. The immediate intellectual response from al-Afghānī was defensive, explanatory, and apologetic by nature. He took it upon himself to defend both the Arabs and Islam. Equally, he aimed at proving that contrary to Renan's view, Islam was compatible with modern science. In an eloquent lecture, *Teaching and Learning and Answer to Renan*, delivered in Calcutta on 8 November 1882, al-Afghānī stated that:

The Arabs, ignorant and barbaric as they were in origin, took up what had been abandoned by the civilized nations, rekindled the extinguished sciences, developed them and gave them a brilliance they had never had. Is not this the index and proof of their natural love for sciences? ... The Europeans welcomed Aristotle, who had emigrated and become Arab; they did not think of him at all when he was Greek and their neighbour. Is there not in this another proof, no less evident, of the intellectual superiority of the Arabs and of their natural attachment to philosophy? (al-Afghānī 2002, pp. 108-9).

Despite his eloquent response to Renan, and his praise for religion, particularly its role in delivering man from darkness to the path of civilization, al-Afghānī and Renan agreed that religion and philosophy were irreconcilable. Al-Afghānī asserted that:

Religion imposes on man its faith and its belief, whereas philosophy frees him of it totally or in part. . . It will always be thus. Whenever religion will have the upper hand, it will eliminate philosophy; and the contrary happens when it is philosophy that reigns as sovereign mistress. (ibid.: 110)

It is worth noting that the view of al-Afghānī is not shared by other Muslim intellectuals and reformers. For instance, Muḥammad Iqbāl states that both philosophy and religion spring from the same root. The former grasps reality piecemeal, whereas the latter grasps it in its wholeness. In other words, religion fixes its gaze on the eternal, and philosophy focuses on the temporal aspect of Reality (Iqbal 1958, pp. 2–3). However, regardless of how uncomfortable Muslims intellectuals were with their European counterparts, modern European thought inspired a considerable number of Muslim thinkers to speak of educational and intellectual reforms in contemporary Islamic thought.

Muslim reformist movements in Turkey, India, and Afghanistan generally called for the adoption of some aspects of modern European thought and education as the second best alternative to the lost glory of Muslim intellectual dynamism and education. In Turkey, the supporters of the *tanẓīmāt* (reforms) and the Young Turks advocated the adoption of modern European intellectual values. The former actively contributed to the translation of works in Turkey (see following section), whereas the latter emerged as an intellectual circle and soon developed into a political opposition group. In India, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–1898) advocated the adoption of the European model of education. His impact on the Indian Muslim education became formalized through the establishment of the Muslim Anglo-Orient College of Aligarh, known as the Aligarh College, which adopted the British model of education. These new reform movements also found resonance in Afghanistan with al-Afghānī, during his advisory mission in the court of Amīr Shīr ‘Alī (r. 1863–1866 and 1868–1879), and the early twentieth century modernist clique, led by Maḥmūd Ṭarẓī (1865–1933) and his son-in-law, the then king of Afghanistan, Amān Allāh (r. 1919–1929) (for further details, see Baiza 2013, pp. 43–51 and 60). These reform movements advocated the integration of European model of education, curriculum, administration, finances, graduation, and teaching and examination methods, which marked a significant departure from the traditional *madrāsah* system.

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## The ‘*Ulamā*’, Caliphs, and Education

It was in the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate (1261–1517) that the Sunnī ‘*ulamā*’ emerged as a strong, independent political force and weakened the caliph’s authority. The caliphs, who hitherto inherited the Prophet’s religious and political authority, were forced to hand their religious authority to the ‘*ulamā*’. This change allowed the ‘*ulamā*’ not only to gain independence, but also to declare themselves the heirs of the Prophet Muḥammad’s religious authority. As a result, they laid the foundation for a distinct identity for themselves. However, the ‘*ulamā*’ did not detach themselves from the center of political power. Rather, for various religious, social, financial, and political reasons, they sought closer affinity to the caliphs. This led to the bifurcation of authority: the ‘*ulamā*’ assumed the role of lawmakers, whereas the caliphs and their governments took the executive power.

This unpredictable change began when an elite class of '*ulamā*', who had emerged in Basra and Baghdad in the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries, sought their religious independence from the caliphs. This class of '*ulamā*' emerged because the Umayyads and some of the early 'Abbāsīd caliphs failed to observe the Qur'ānic ideal of a just social order. The '*ulamā*' became increasingly critical of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, particularly al-Mahdī (d. 173/785) and his son Caliph Harūn al-Rashīd (d. 197/809), who replaced the simple lifestyles of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Khulafā' Rāshidūn*) with a highly aristocratic lifestyle, luxurious habits, extravagant spending on poets and women, and the alienation of citizens from the state. In response, the '*ulamā*' sought to assert their religious autonomy from the caliphs. They gradually developed their status as that of the heirs of the Prophet's religious authority and appropriated the title *warāthat al-anbīyā* (heirs of the Prophets) for themselves and sought authority based on their claim to be successors to the Prophet (Takim 2006: 11–12). Since the reign of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 236/848), caliphal authority had been reduced to the level of the protectors of the divine law (*sharī'ah*), to be distinguished from the legal norms (*fiqh*). It meant that the caliph did not have the power and authority to interpret or implement divine law (Arkoun 2006: 207), whereas the '*ulamā*' became the lawmakers. This shift presented a significant change in the role and position of the '*ulamā*', Islamic polity, the future of knowledge and education across the Muslim world.

Contrary to the division of authority in the Sunnī tradition, the Shī'ah school perceived both religious and political leadership to be the domain of the '*ulamā*'. Among other means to achieve this was through the interpretation of the Qur'ānic texts, for instance, in IV: 59, to "Obey Allāh, obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you." In the eyes of the Shī'ah '*ulamā*', "those in authority" are religious leaders ('*ulamā*') who are considered as the righteous heirs of the Prophet. Nevertheless, Allāh does not exercise political authority; rather, a lordship over the universe. He is "not directly involved in mundane political events nor in the explicit source of political authority" (Arjmand 2004: 69). However, there are also different interpretations within the Shī'a school. The Shī'ah Ismā'īlīs, for instance, believe that the Qur'ānic reference to "those in authority" exclusively refers to the office of imamate. They further argue that a present living *imām* from the progeny of the Prophet, through his daughter Fāṭima and son-in-law 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, is the only rightful heir of the Prophet's authority.

The rise of '*ulamā*' to the rank of law-makers had serious implications for education. It changed the inclusive spirit of education and gradually removed the rational or natural sciences from the curriculum of higher education. The conservative '*ulamā*' began to use knowledge as a source of political legitimacy and supremacy. By claiming to be the successors and heirs of the Prophet's religious authority, they also appropriated to themselves the role of bearers of "correct" knowledge. Rivalry was not limited to the level of rational/natural and religious/transmitted sciences, but it also influenced the position of '*ulamā*' within the category of transmitted sciences. As a typical example, the Qur'ānic commentators and interpreters regarded *tafsīr* (the science of Qur'ānic exegesis) as the foundation

of religion and the highest discipline in the class of transmitted sciences (Saleh 2004, p. 78). They viewed their work as the “queen” of all sciences purely because it dealt with knowledge of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. On the contrary, jurists viewed their field as the most noble and the queen of all scholarly works because they dealt with the Qur’ān, the *ḥadīth*, as well as the *sharī‘ah*, believing that they alone were capable of showing people “the correct path.” Such self-centered competition, as Saleh states, permeated the spirit of the 5th/11th century when different competing schools were struggling for dominance (ibid.: 78–9).

The traditionalist *‘ulamā*’s monopoly of knowledge led to the marginalization and suppression of mysticism, philosophy, and other branches of knowledge on the one hand and a narrow interpretation of the Qur’ān and the Prophet’s traditions on the other. This change happened as a result of a continuous tension between traditionalists or the people of *ḥadīth* and the rationalists, spearheaded by the Mu‘atazilite rationalist school. One of the major debates that escalated this tension to a full-scale war came to be known in history as *miḥnah* (inquisition). The inquisition revolved around the notion of the createdness and uncreatedness of the Qur’ān. The matter soon became a doctrinal position and a major point of contention between rationalists and traditionalists, each side arguing and promoting their own doctrines. The Mu‘atazilites argued that the Qur’ān is God’s created words (*muḥdath*) and so it is subject to human reasoning and rational inquiry. By contrast, the traditionalists held a view that the Qur’ān is eternal (*qadīm*) and hence uncreated and cannot become subject to human rational inquiry. The ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma’mūn (r. 193-8/809-13), who favored the Mu‘atazilite rationalist view, ordered the inquisition in 218/833, through which he attempted to somewhat formalize the Mu‘atazilite position which would then become the official doctrine of the caliphate. In opposition to the Mu‘atazilite’s doctrine and al-Ma’mūn’s position, the people of *ḥadīth* (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), headed by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, rejected the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur’ān. In his *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma‘ādin al-Jawāhir*, al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345/956) notes that after al-Ma’mūn’s death, his brother (al-Mu‘taṣim, r. 218–27/833-42) and nephew (al-Wāthiq, r. 842-47) continued his path until al-Mutawakkil ascended to the caliphate and put an end to al-Ma’mūn’s legacy. Al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-47/847-61) forbade argumentative debates (*jidāl*) and discussions (*munzirah*), and ordered emulation (*taqlīd*) instead (al-Mas‘ūdī 2005, Vol. 5: 253–54). From Makdisi’s point of view, the years between the caliphates of al-Ma’mūn and al-Mutawakkil were years of prolonged debate and terror. Al-Mutawakkil brought the matter to an end, and by his era the Mu‘atazilites were politically fully exhausted and unable to recover (1981: 7). However, it would perhaps be naive to believe that it was the issue of the createdness and the uncreatedness of the Qur’ān alone that initiated the inquisition and a political struggle between the Mu‘atazilites and the Ḥanbalītes that lasted for nearly half a century. It was more a matter of personal and doctrinal prestige and survival for both schools than a mere dispute over the createdness versus the uncreatedness of the Qur’ān. The Mu‘atazilites represented supporters of rationalism in Islam, whereas the people of *ḥadīth*, primarily the Ḥanbalītes, represented all traditionalist and conservative groups. The issue of the createdness of the Qur’ān became an excuse and a doctrinal symbol over which the

two camps fought for their survival. Eventually, the traditionalists, with the support of al-Mutawakkil, won the struggle and established a new political, theological, and educational trend.

It was not only the Mu'atazilite school but also the rational school and liberal thought in Islam in general that suffered from the inquisition. Consequently, the sphere of rational thought has significantly become limited in what has become a Sunnī caliphate. Although Makdisi's account suggests that al-Mutawakkil brought the matter to an end, the debate still continued and the Mu'atazilite trend was still not wiped out. Al-Mutawakkil banned the pursuit of rational sciences and public debates (*munẓirah*). Instead, he persecuted the Mu'atazilites and followers of the Shī'ah interpretation of Islam. Undoubtedly, it was a very hard blow for the Mu'atazilite school, which could not meaningfully recover. However, the struggle lasted for more than a century until the Mu'atazilite and rationalist groups were totally silenced by the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qādir bi Allāh (r. 380-422/991-1031), who completely banned the pursuit of rational sciences. The Ḥanbalite '*ulamā*' championed al-Qādir's move and exclusively favored the transmitted sciences, namely the study of the Qur'ān, *sunnah* and *ḥadīth*, to the exclusion of all forms of rational sciences.

Al-Qādir escalated the matter further by launching a new project, claiming to restore Sunnī Islam. He staged a full-scale war against the rationalists, and Shī'ah Muslims, particularly the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs. His well-known *al-I'tiqād al-Qādirī* (the Qādirite Creed) testifies to the depth of his fear and the strength of his opposition to the schools of rational thought and the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs. He took these initiatives under the slogan of restoring the Sunnī creed of Islam, which had arguably been challenged and overshadowed by the Mu'atazilite rational arguments during al-Ma'mūn's rule. In attempting to restore the Sunnī creed, in 408/1017 he called upon the Ḥanafites and Mu'atazilites to publically denounce Mu'atazīlism. At the same time, he forbade public discussion (*munāzirah*) and the teaching of Mu'atazilite and Shī'ah interpretations of Islam, which he termed as *rāfiḍī*, throughout the 'Abbāsīd territories. A year later, he wrote three epistles, which collectively came to be known as the Qādirite Creed and which were read out in his palace (*Dār al-Khilāfah*), and in all small and congregational mosques. In his *al-Muntaẓim fi Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Imām*, Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) states that al-Qādir's decree declared that:

the word of God is uncreated (*kalām Allāh Ta'āla ghayr makhluq*) ... and anyone who maintains that it is created is an infidel (*kāfir*) and so the shedding of his blood is permissible (*ḥalāl al-dam*) ... and this is the view of the People of Ahl al-Sunnah and al-Jamā'ah. (ibn al-Jawzī 1992: 280–281)

This decree was a direct reference to the great inquisition that happened during al-Ma'mūn's time. As previously discussed, the Mu'atazilites believed that the Qur'ān was God's creation (*muḥdath*), and so is subject to rational inquiry, whereas the Ḥanbalite group condemned the Mu'atazilites and declared that the Qur'ān is eternal (*qadīm*) and uncreated, and so cannot be made subject to human rational

inquiry. Thus, the restoration of Sunnism required the triumph of the traditionalist, particularly the people of *ḥadīth*, led by the Ḥanbalite ‘*ulamā*’, and the suppression and elimination of the Mu‘atazilite rational school of thought as well as the sciences of *kalām* (theology), philosophy and the Shī‘ah creeds. Moreover, the Mālikī and Shāfi‘ī schools of jurisprudence contributed to the caliph’s restoration of Sunnism. Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), from the Mālikite school, al-Māwardī, (d. 450/1058) and al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) from the Shāfi‘ite school, and al-Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā al-Farrā’ (d. 560/1165) from the Ḥanbalite school, were the prominent ‘*ulamā*’ who supported and defended the caliph’s project. In Khurāsān, Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghaznī (r. 388-92/998-1002) and his jurists supported the caliph’s restoration of Sunnism. The Ghaznawids (366-581/977-1186) intensively persecuted Shī‘ahs, primarily the Ismā‘īlīs, in Khurāsān.

It would, however, be naive to believe that all the Sunnīs, especially the Ḥanbalite, ‘*ulamā*’ firmly stood behind the caliph’s decree and against the Mu‘atazilite rational school of thought. To give an example, the famous and prolific Ḥanbalite scholar and writer Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 513/1119-20) used to study rational theology (*kalām*) secretly with two renowned Mu‘atazilite masters, Abū ‘Alī Ibn al-Walīd and Abū al-Qāsim bin al-Tabbān. It is safe to argue that Ibn ‘Aqīl never left the field of rational inquiry, which became evident when some of his secret writings in praise of Mu‘atazilites and Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj were discovered and brought to the leading Ḥanbalite jurist, Sharīf Abū Ja‘far, who then condemned and threatened Ibn ‘Aqīl with death. Consequently, as Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) wrote in his *al-Dhayl ‘Alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, Ibn ‘Aqīl went in hiding for four years (461-65/1069-73). Eventually, he came out and wrote a letter of confession, by which he sought forgiveness and repented from his “heresy” (Ibn Rajab 2005, Vol. I: 322–24, 348), i.e., praising the Mu‘atazilite rationalist approach and spirituality of Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, both of which clearly went against the Qādirite creed and the view of *ahl al-ḥadīth* and their traditionalist and textualist approaches to the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*. Apparently, he repented to save his life, rather than rejecting Mu‘atazilite rational school in any meaningful manner.

Another prominent example is the case of Ibn al-Jawzī. Ibn Rajab informs us that this prominent Ḥanbalite scholar was influenced by Ibn ‘Aqīl (ibid.: Vol. II: 487) and his rationalist tendency. Ibn Rajab’s account suggests that Ibn al-Jawzī must have also had some secret sympathy towards rationalist movements, specifically for the Mu‘atazilite school. Similar divisions of opinion must have also existed among the two other Sunnī schools of jurisprudence, namely the Mālikīte and Shāfi‘īte, which firmly supported caliph al-Qadīr’s decree and the Ḥanbalite anti-rationalist stance. However, those scholars who opposed the caliph’s project must have practiced *taqiyyah* (dissimulation of one’s true faith and opinion) out of fear of persecution.

The Ḥanafite scholars certainly differed from the Ḥanbalites ‘*ulamā*’ as the former viewed *qiyās* (deductive analogy or analogical reasoning), which is based on *ra’y* (rationally gained judgment), as one of the four juridical principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). There are contradictory reports about Abū Ḥanīfah himself and his view as to whether the Qur’ān is created or not. In his *Tārīkh Baghdād aw Madīnat al-Islām*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī narrates both views that refer

to Abū Ḥanīfah's belief that the Qur'ān is the word of God and uncreated (*al-Qur'ān kalām Allāh ghayr makhlūq*) and that it is created (*al-Qur'ān makhlūq*) (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997: 375). Overall, it appears that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī tries to demonstrate that Abū Ḥanīfah believed in the createdness of the Qur'ān. He narrates the name of Mālikite and Shāfi'ite jurists, the people of *ḥadīth*, including Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and his companions, who collectively were in agreement that Abū Ḥanīfah was on the wrong path (*kuluhum ittafaqu 'alā taqlīl Abī Ḥanīfah*) (ibid.: 382–3). Whatever the truth may be about Abū Ḥanīfah's opinion on this particular debate, what matters here is to note that (i) the *mihna* itself was a politically motivated debate; (ii) groups were formed for the sake of marginalizing opponents and rival groups rather than explaining the subject matter itself, and (iii) opinions were divided as the intellectual milieu of the time still enjoyed a degree of intellectual autonomy and scholars of religion were free to express their opinions rather than having to follow one another blindly. However, in general, the fate of Ibn 'Aqīl and the risk of being identified with the Mu'atazilite rationalist school of thought alarmed all moderate '*ulamā*' to the point of concealing their true opinions. The examples discussed demonstrate that there was a significant division among the Sunnī '*ulamā*', even among the Mu'atazilites, and the rejection of rationalism had not yet been fully crystallized. However, as discussed below, the Qādirite Creed and the Ḥanbalite scholars' opposition to rationalist schools have significantly damaged the state and quality of education in general, and in the Sunnī world in particular.

The Qādirite Creed and the 'Abbāsīd anti-rationalist and anti-Ismā'īlī stance restricted the work and activities of Ismā'īlī scholars and *dā'īs* outside the territory of the Fāṭimid caliphate, but it had no conceptual impact on the Ismā'īlī educational and intellectual traditions of learning. The Fāṭimid *imāms* and their *dā'īs* continued with their educational and research programs in both fields of rational and natural as well as the traditional or revealed sciences. The Fāṭimid grand *dā'īs*, poets, philosophers, and theologians of al-Mustanshir bi Allāh's time (r. 427-87/1036-94), namely Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078) in Cairo and Nāṣir Khusraw (d. 480/1088) in Khurāsān, and the later Nizarī Ismā'īlī scholars in Alamūt in Persia, particularly the prominent philosopher and scientist, Naṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), unwaveringly promoted and produced valuable works in both rational and religious sciences. Moreover, Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 428/1037) refused to serve Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghaznī and remained focused on his scholarly work in philosophy and medicine. Moreover, the great mathematician, physicist, astronomer, and Indologist of the time, Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 439/1048), produced iconic works in natural sciences in Ghaznī.

Al-Qādir's creed and his antirationalist position, however, left long-term negative consequences on the Sunnī educational institutions and traditions of learning. The complete ban on rational thought and public debates had a negative influence within the Sunnī Islam on all forms of science, including the transmitted sciences. For example, in the field of jurisprudence, *taqlīd* (emulation) began to replace genuine *ijtihād* (scholarly independent reasoning to resolve legal problems). It is true that *ijtihād* as a form of personal reasoning never died, but *ijtihād* as a form of genuine thinking, or grand *ijtihād*, disappeared. In Sunnī Islam, for instance, jurists are still



only allowed to reason and conduct their *ijtihād* or personal critical thinking within their respective school of jurisprudence, or at best within the four Sunnī schools of *fiqh*. They are not allowed to question or reform the credibility of the four grand jurists, namely, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Shāfi‘ī, and Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, even though the Sunnī jurists are aware of the fact that certain matters within each of these schools of *fiqh* are questionable and simply unacceptable. It is *taqlīd* that has prevailed since the declaration of the Qādirite Creed, which is due to the belief that grand jurists of the yore knew everything in the best possible way, and there is no need for rethinking what they have already thought out for the community of believers.

These developments then caused substantial damage to all aspect of education, from curriculum design, production of textbooks to methods of teaching and learning. While the ‘*ulamā*’ had still not firmly established their role as the sole law-makers and “heirs of the Prophet’s religious authority,” they still had a flexible and broader perception of knowledge which tolerated the principles of human reasoning and rational judgment, such as *ra’y*, *qiyās*, *ijmā’* (consensus), and *ijtihād*. These principles were mainly applied to situations for which an established “procedure,” or “norm” did not exist (Bravmann 1972: 184, 188). However, the situation gradually changed, as the ‘*ulamā*’ established a firm position within the caliphate, and consequently narrowed down the space for the exercise of rationally gained judgment. The concept of ‘*ilm*’ became strictly associated with the knowledge of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, whereas *ra’y* was associated with a lack of knowledge. Therefore, the latter had to be controlled rather than exercised as part of knowledge (Speight 1988: 66). Consequently, it left negative impact on education, as the new religious policy discouraged the teaching of rational sciences. Instead, a new trend of commentary upon commentary upon commentary has replaced the spirit of genuine advancement of knowledge. Thus, the rise of the conservative ‘*ulamā*’ to the unprecedented level of law-makers, particularly after the Qādirite creed, began to influence negatively both the notions of knowledge and education across the Muslim countries, as the conception of knowledge came to constitute a narrowly uncritical study of religion and the religious sciences.

It is also fair to acknowledge the influence of external factors, such as war and tyrannical rules on the deterioration of Muslim education and thought. For instance, Genghis Khan’s rule and his Mongol army’s onslaught have often been pinpointed as one of the primary factors causing the decline of Muslim education and thought. It is true that the Mongols destroyed many centers of civilizations across the Muslim world, including Baghdad in 656/1258, which deprived Sunnī Muslims from spiritual and material support. Equally, the fall of the Nizārī Ismā‘īlī state in Alamūt in 654/1256 put an end to scholarly activities in one of the important centers of research and scholarship. Undoubtedly, the Mongols inflicted major blows to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Retrospectively, however, one could also arguably state that under the Mongols, who lacked religious dogmatism, research activities in rational and natural sciences, namely mathematics and astronomy continued. Therefore, it could be argued that the Mongols are not the primary cause of the decline of Muslim science and education. Rather it was the internal factors, namely the pre-Mongol

conservative '*ulamā*', who supported al-Qādir's antirationalist stance and the religio-political project of the restoration of the Sunnī creed that caused the most serious and primary decay in Muslim education and thought.

In the modern period, a chain of conservative '*ulamā*', namely Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in Saudi Arabia, Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) in India, and the Salafī and Deobandī revivalist movements (from the mid nineteenth century onwards) in Egypt and India, respectively, have revived the pre-Mongol antirationalist stance. Partly being influenced by ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 728/1328) views, these figures and movements even went as far as condemning *Ṣūfī* and Shī'ah communities. (For ibn Taymiyyah's view against Shī'ah Islam, see his *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah fī Naqḍ Kalām al-Shī'ah al-Qādirīyyah*. In this book, ibn Taymiyyah focuses on refuting the Shī'ah doctrine. The book itself is a refutation of his Shī'ah Ithnā 'Asharī contemporary, Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. Maṭaḥhar Ḥillī (726/1326), the author of *Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Ma'rifat al-Imāmah*.) By the nineteenth century, when the European colonial powers occupied most of the Muslim lands, critical scholarship had almost vanished from Muslim education and thought, while a tradition of emulation and uncritical commentary and meta-commentary became the basis of teaching. While the conservative '*ulamā*' no longer had the necessary critical tools and nor did they have the spirit and vision to reform and revive a true spirit of education and scholarship, having become politically oriented under the banner of liberating occupied Muslim lands and reviving what they considered the authentic historical spirit of Islam. This political orientation further complicated the state of Muslim education. Consequently, they adopted a regressive and inward-looking approach and argued that the ancient '*ulamā*' knew every source of knowledge and developed the best practices and answers to all problems of their own time as well as those, which may occur in the future. Therefore, their tradition and legacies have to be emulated rather than reformed, let alone modified by European scientific and technological achievements, educational approaches, and models. As a result, ultra-conservative '*ulamā*' in Egypt rejected al-Afghānī's and his associates' call for the integration of modern European thought in the al-Azhar curriculum. In contrast, they not only advocated the tradition of emulation, but they also supported an imaginary revival of the manner of living of the first generation of Muslims. Similarly, the Deobandīs opposed Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's call for reform and adoption of the European model of education as the second best alternative, particularly in the absence of a creative and dynamic "Islamic" model. This trend further intensified in the postcolonial period of the 1950s and 1960s, as discussed in the following section.

It was within this nineteenth- and then twentieth-century milieu that the reformist movements, which called for the return to the generation of the "forefathers" (sing: *salaf*), emerged in Egypt and came to be known as the Salafī movement. Deobandī teachings found a strong reception among the Sunnī Muslim communities and *madrasahs* in India, modern-day Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, for instance, the Deobandī- and Wahhābī-influenced '*ulamā*' opposed political and educational reforms in the 1910s and 1920s, particularly the development of modern education for boys and girls. The tension between modernists and conservative

'*ulamā*' reached new heights during the Soviet occupation of the country (1979–1989), which also escalated the cold war rivalry between the United States of America and the former Soviet Union. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan soon led to a series of proxy wars between the two cold war rivals as well as regional powers, namely Saudi Arabia and Iran, and India and Pakistan. It was within this context of proxy wars that a global call for *jihād*, which came to be interpreted as armed struggle, while ignoring other definitions and interpretations of the term, began to dominate and radicalize the educational programs, curriculum, textbooks, and teacher education in tens of thousands of *madrasahs* in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan even brought academic institutions into the frontline. The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) in the United States led the technical and educational project of developing a new war or *jihād* curriculum for young children, schools, and *madrasahs* in Pakistan and in Mujāhidīn-controlled areas in Afghanistan. This new trend of *jihād* education was unanimously supported by the absolute majority of Sunnī '*ulamā*' in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the Arab and Sunnī world. Consequently, *madrasah* education in this part of the world has totally been transformed into places for radicalizing and militarizing young children and students who were expected to join *jihād* and continue the fight. It is, therefore, not surprising to see young children, who joined these *jihād madrasahs* in the mid-1980s, becoming extremely radicalized and Ṭalibānized by the mid-1990s. (For more discussion on *jihād*, *madrasah* education and the Ṭalibān, and the involvement of foreign players, in Afghanistan, see (Baiza 2013: 147–58, 163–85) and (Baiza 2014: 77–80).) The current *madrasah* educational reforms in Pakistan and Afghanistan are unlikely to address the ongoing challenge of radicalism, let alone the millennium-long blight of antirationalism. Equally, the '*ulamā*' in these countries as well as in Middle Eastern countries lack the necessary intellectual competence, philosophical vision, and modern pedagogical tools to address the plight of Muslim education. Amid these challenges, advances in medicine, information and communication technology, and new sociological discourses pose new questions and challenges to traditional ethics and to the understanding of faith and social relationship across societies. The '*ulamā*' lag far behind these debates.

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## Nationalism, Islam, and Science

The European notion of nationalism reached Muslim countries during the colonial period and intensified in the postcolonial era. Most Muslim countries-in-making developed their local brand of nationalism which combined ethnic, religious, and linguistic discourses. For instance, Arab, the Turkish, Iranian, and Afghan nationalism went hand-in-hand with Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Pashto. The purification of language became a top nationalist agenda in the decades between the 1920s and the 1950s. The Arabs began a program of Arabization, i.e. replacing the colonial languages of Spanish, French, and English. The Turks pursued the promotion of pure Turkish by purging their Ottoman Turkish of Arabic and Persian loan-words. Equally, the Iranians began to de-Arabize Persian. In Afghanistan, the Pashtun

governments made every effort to de-Persianize Pashto and to eliminate the Persian/Dari language, cultural and intellectual heritages (for more detail, see Baiza 2013: 114–24). Similar nationalist trends also influenced postpartition India. Post-colonial India adopted Hindi and Pakistan adopted Urdu as their national languages with their associated scripts and the gap between them is increasing as Hindi progressively replaces Persian and Arabic words with Sanskrit-derived words. However, language nationalism could not guarantee a complete purification of these languages and nor could it completely ignore the colonial languages. For instance, French continues to be used in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia and is an important language in Lebanon. Similarly, English occupies an important position, particularly in the field of higher education, science, telecommunications, and technology in India and Pakistan, Egypt, and Jordan. Equally, since their independence in 1991, the former Soviet Union's Central Asian republics appreciate the usefulness of Russian and the Cyrillic script. Thus nationalism in its ethnic, linguist, or religious forms does not necessarily guarantee advancement in education, science, and technology.

Nationalism has also produced a number of new approaches to the debate of Islam, science and education. The one which is relevant to the subject of this chapter is the “Islamization” of knowledge and education. The idea of “Islamizing” knowledge is an offshoot of the postcolonial nationalist discourse, rooted in religious nationalism. The discourse of the “Islamization of knowledge” sprang from a series of world conferences on Muslim education held between 1977 and 1996. The First World Conference on Muslim Education was held in Mecca between 31 March and 8 April 1977, whereas the sixth and latest one was held in 1996 at the Islamic College in Cape Town, South Africa. The proponents of this idea believe that Islamization of knowledge can lead Muslim countries to revive a new phase of Muslim civilization. However, an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon reveals that it is primarily an apologetic and reactionary approach towards Western advances in science and technology (Yahia Baiza 2014: 92). For instance, Syed Muḥammad al-Naḥīb al-Attas, one of the leading figures of the Islamization of knowledge, categorically rejects contemporary Western civilization. He argues that it has “brought about chaos in man’s life instead of, and rather than, peace and justice.” He also refers to the knowledge produced by Western civilization as a producer of “confusion and skepticism” (Al-Attas 1979: 9–21) instead of certainty. The primacy of human reason and thought, instead of the divine revelation, as the principal foundation of Western civilization, knowledge and education is the key reason why al-Attas and other proponents of the Islamization of knowledge are opposed to Western civilization. Even though the supporters of the Islamization of knowledge argue that the primary idea behind this approach is to rescue knowledge, education, and science from its present secular context, by way of combining Western sciences with the divine revelation in Islam together, the idea itself is controversial. Without entering into further debate, it suffices to state that the idea of the Islamization of knowledge, being based on an antagonistic approach to contemporary Western civilization (i) is unphilosophical and intrinsically harmful to the very idea of “knowledge” itself, (ii) theologizes knowledge by creating a false division between

what is “Islamic” and what is “non-Islamic” science, which can only lead to educational and intellectual crises and confusion instead of peace and certainty, and (iii) reiterates the view of conservative ‘*ulamā*’, particularly from the time of the Qādirite creed onwards, when they categorized knowledge as Muslim (transmitted) or non-Muslim (rational and natural) sciences, in a new context. Therefore, it is no wonder that similar politically motivated theories, such as that of Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), have found an audience and currency in modern Western political and even intellectual circles. The promotion of ideas of clash of civilizations obviously springs from and leads to ignorance on both sides. It is therefore of paramount importance to correct such misunderstandings through a reformed educational program that could promote a civilizational approach to education, knowledge, and society.

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## Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented an analytical overview of the historicity of the ‘*ulamā*’ and education. It has highlighted the decisive role played by the ‘*ulamā*’ in the advancement as well as the decline of knowledge and education across all Muslim countries. The rise of the ‘*ulamā*’ to a self-declared position as the “heirs of the Prophet’s religious authority” created confusion and regression in the field of education. The situation further deteriorated when the Mu‘atazilite rational school was politically defeated and eventually banned by the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, namely al-Mutawakkil and al-Qādir. The outcome of this antirationalist process has been devastating for education and intellectual thought for all, and particularly for Sunnī Muslims. Historically, the ramifications of al-Qādir’s decree were that anyone who maintains that the Qur’ān is created is an infidel and *fāsiq* (great sinner) and the shedding of his blood is permissible, and this created widespread fear in the hearts and minds of scholars who were thereby constrained to suppress rational and scientific inquiries.

The chapter also acknowledged the impact of the onslaught of the Mongols and their destruction of many centers of Muslim, and non-Muslim, civilization. However, it also highlighted that the Mongols could not be accounted as the primary factor for the decline of Muslim education. In the modern period, the chain of religious figures and reform movements that revived the pre-Mongol anti-rationalist stance across Arab and non-Arab Sunnī countries. This new trend has been further radicalized by the conservative ‘*ulamā*’ as well as by modern scholars during and after the European colonial period. Consequently, a spirit of super-egoism, combined with a regressive and inward looking trend, has not only changed the image and role of the ‘*ulamā*’ from that of humble, creative, and liberal thinkers, teachers, and educators to one of sacred and untouchable religious figures, but it also progressively narrowed the conception of knowledge and education to the point that *madrasahs* in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries became places of religious extremism, radicalism, militarism, and military activity.

The ultimate question is not about who holds the correct knowledge, but that of who will ultimately survive the struggle between religious radicalism and a revival

of rationalism. Historically speaking, the conservative '*ulamā*' and their associates have had an upper hand. It is this chapter's conclusion that the conservative '*ulamā*', with their antirationalist stance, particularly in the Sunnī context, who have dominated the Muslim world and education thus far, have reached the end of their history. Here, Francis Fukuyama's expression *The End of History* (1989) means that there is nothing in the existing conservative and politically motivated class of '*ulamā*' that could meaningfully transform knowledge, education and scholarship, or people's life. The latest trend of the Islamization of knowledge demonstrates that the thus far dominant majority group in the Muslim world is unable to create any meaningful change in the field of knowledge and education. Their categorical rejection of Western civilization is extremely counterproductive to the very struggle for the revival of knowledge and education in the Muslim world. Their ideas represent a recycled version of the Qādirite Creed's political milieu, when the Mu'atazilite rational school of thought was eliminated, public intellectual debates (*munāẓirahs*) were forbidden, the Shī'ahs were persecuted, and the rational, philosophical, and natural sciences were removed from the *madrāsah* curriculum.

While it is easy to imagine the end of the era of conservative '*ulamā*', the more difficult and practical question is how a new era of a genuine educational and intellectual pursuit shall replace it. It is by now at least clear that the regressive trends promoted by the Wahhābī, Salafī, and Deobandi movements have so far been unable to provide the right answer to the plight of Muslim education. The new generation of Muslims urgently demands a fresh, progressive, and future-looking orientation of their faith and education. This demand is the very basic need of young Muslims at the age of rapid technological and scientific advancements, which bring people from different faiths and cultures together and make them more interdependent.

Muslim intellectuals, religious, and political leaders cannot deny the current educational and intellectual crisis that permeates across the Muslim countries. The very first task of Muslim scholars and students is to abandon the regressive and inward looking trends that began as a reactionary response to the superiority of colonial powers. The second important task of all Muslim intellectuals is to understand the historicity of dogmatism that permeated the Sunnī Muslim world since the defeat of Mu'atazilism and the era of the Qādirite Creed.

Thirdly, Muslim educationists have no choice other than to understand and learn from the intellectual side of the European cultural and scientific achievements, with an objective of how to reformulate and reconstruct their contemporary thought and education systems. The adoption of nationalism, parliament, political parties, and election system, which have attracted Muslim political leaders more than the intellectual side of Europe, is not enough. The political side of Europe was not necessarily a positive experience in Europe itself. It became another source of disaster for Muslims when their political leaders mixed the adopted political systems with corruption, tribalism, and promotion of the interests of the ruling group on the expense of the ruled ones.

Finally, Muslim intellectuals have to form intellectual platforms on which they could come together and discuss the future of knowledge and education without reference to religion, region, ethnicity, and language. Knowledge does not recognize

anything other than itself. Knowledge cannot be given, and nor it can be limited to, any form of regional, religious, ethnic, and linguistic identity. It is always people who have to identify themselves with knowledge and not *vice versa*. Muslims will continue to fail in their struggle for the revival of their spirit of knowledge and scholarship, if they continue to look for a Muslim education or Islamization of education.

**Acknowledgments** I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Russell Harris, editor and researcher at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, for proofreading and commenting on this chapter.

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# Ijāzah: Methods of Authorization and Assessment in Islamic Education

Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

*Ijāzah*, meaning permission, license, or authorization, refers to several distinct types of academic certificates within Islamic education. Given the primacy of oral traditions and importance of reliability of *ḥadīth*, the license of audition (*ijāzah al-sama'*) was established in order to guarantee the credibility of the transmission. *Ijāzah al-riwāyah* served as written records of the direct audition of a text on the part of the recipient from the transmitting authority, whether a single *ḥadīth* report, a work by the transmitting teacher himself, or a work by a third party. Accordingly, *ijāzah al-iftā'* or *ijāzah al-ijtihād* was developed within *fiqh* as a method of authorization of the qualified '*ulamā'* to respond to the changes within Muslim societies throughout *fatwās*. Through *ijāzah li-al-tadrīs*, a scholar was entitled to teach parts of a book or an entire subject. Independent from any social and political institutions, *ijāzah* was executed within a disciple-master relationship and developed into a literacy genre within Islamic education.

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**Keywords**

 Islamic education · *Ijāzah* · Authorization · Educational assessment
 

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**Introduction**

Islamic education is credited for being nondegree and learner-centered and unlike western education relies on personalistic relations between the pupil and teacher. While de-institutionalism is perceived among the key features of the Islamic education, there have been tools and methods for assessment of the academic and scholastic achievements and means for monitoring and assessing the accomplishments of the pupils. *Ijāzah* (ellipsis for Per. *ijāzihnāmih*, Tr. *icazetname* - lit. permission, authorization or certificate) is a license granted by someone who possesses the authority whose holder is bestowed an authority over a subject, either to transmit or to interpret a text. Despite the fact that *ijāzah* was extensively used within such specifically Islamic subjects as *fiqh* and *tafsīr*, it is associated with the study of *ḥadīth* in which the accuracy of a *ḥadīth* was contingent upon the reliable chain of narrators. While in *fiqh*, the *ijāzah* implies a license to teach Islamic law, or to issue *fatwās* as the need among the lay arises, within the *ḥadīth* studies is a certificate of authorization to transmit the *ḥadīth*. Hence, *ijāzah* “is not a formal document in which the fact of teaching is recorded, but rather a document of authority granted by the master in favor of his disciple (Ribera 1928: 227).” Utilizing this argument, Makdisi (1981: 343) treats the “*ijāzah* as a license to teach a book or books,” although he notes that such a definition does not apply to “field of law [*fiqh*].” In the same vein, from technical terminology prism, the *ijāzah* is one the eight methods of receiving the transmission of *ḥadīth* and means that “an authorized guarantor of a text or of a whole book (his own work or a work received through a chain of transmitters going back to the first transmitter or to the author) gives a person the authorization to transmit it in his turn so that the person authorized can avail himself of this transmission (Vajda 2012a).”

Graham (1993) argues that the *ijāzah* was born as result of “the journey in search of knowledge” that developed early in *ḥadīth* scholarship, involved traveling to specific authorities, especially the oldest and most renowned of the day, to hear from their own mouths their *ḥadīths* and to obtain their authorization or to transmit these in their names. This *ijāzah* system of personal rather than institutional certification has served not only for *ḥadīth*, but also for transmission of texts of any kind, from history, law, or philology to literature, mysticism, or theology. According to Vajda (2012a) beyond the narrow definition of *ijāzah* as a license, there is in fact involved the principle, fundamental in Islam, of the pre-eminent value attached to oral testimony, a principle which has been maintained through all the fictions to which *ijāzah* and the other methods of transmission have given rise from a very early date and which still today continue to influence Muslim traditional thinking. It is this that gives its ideological and historical importance to the very full documentation contained in the *isnāds*, in the *samʿs* (certificates of hearing) and in the *ijāzahs* – often having indications of dates and places and details of the names of the persons

who formed links in the transmission – which precede, frame, or follow not only the texts of *ḥadīth*, of *fiqh*, or of *tafsīr*, but also theological, mystical, historical, and philological works, and even, literary collections, of both prose and poetry.

*Isnād* is the record of the authorities who have transmitted a *ḥadīth* of a statement, action, or approbation of the Prophet Muḥammad or the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), or later authorities (*tabīʿīn*). It is the reliability of *isnād* that determines the validity of a *ḥadīth*. The *isnād* precedes the actual text (*matn*) and takes the form of the acknowledgment of the chains of the narrators. The most important extension of the *isnād* paradigm, however, is into the fundamental framework of education and scholarship, a phenomenon that has both characterized and sustained Islamic culture wherever it has spread” (Graham 1993: 511). *Ijāzah* was established as an assessment approach in the domain of *al-ʿulūm al-naqlīyyah* and played an important role in the transmission of texts in all fields, and it was meant to guarantee the accuracy and authenticity of the student’s manuscript copy. In an age before printing, the *ijāzahs* recorded in series at the end of a manuscript often provided an accurate codical genealogy that reached back to the original author. In the field of Prophetic *ḥadīth*, the formal transmission of a report from one authority to the next in the chain of transmission (*isnād*), authorized by an *ijāzah*, was considered an important indication of its authenticity (Stewart 2006).

The notion of *isnād* deemed significant among the *muḥadithīn* (scholars of *ḥadīth*) to the extent that other subsidiary disciplines such as *ʿilm al-rijāl* (lit. study of the men: study of the people who transmitted *ḥadīth* reports), *ansāb* (genealogy) and *tarājum rijāl* (biographies of scholars and narrators) and systematic lists of authorities *muʿjam* (lexicon), *mashyakhah* (catalogue of authorities), *ṭabaqāt* (biographical dictionaries), *fahrasah* (Who’s Who), and *barnāmāj* (almanac) were created and thrived to strengthen the reliability of *ḥadīths* throughout the study of their narrators. Somehow such diligence came at the cost of negligence of the content of the *ḥadīth* and diminishing the role of reason and scholarly judgment. This occurred despite the serious reservations which had been made from the beginning, notably by the Imām al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820 CE), with regard to transmissions not guaranteed by the direct study of the text transmitted and the effective meeting between a transmitter and a receiver capable of understanding the text, yet practice, supported when necessary by appropriate statements of casuistic reasoning, has always tended towards the acceptance of fictions and increasing indulgence (Vajda 2012a). Citing al-Baghdādī (1938: 350), Vajda (2012a) raises a concern over the overemphasis on the chain of narrators rather than the expertise in the judgment of the text as a result of foci on the notion of transmission: a general *ijāzah* without the hearing of the texts, an *ijāzah* conferred on young children who have not yet reached the age of reason, even to those still unborn, an *ijāzah* obtained as the result of a short interview during journeys whose aim was not exclusively study or the Pilgrimage, an *ijāzah* requested and granted by letter without any personal contact between the authority and the candidate. Among the fictional *ijāzahs*, which were moreover of social and political significance, were those conferred at their request on rulers or on high state dignitaries. In a similar vein Stewart (2006: 202) argues that “in practice, the *ijāzah* of transmission was often a formality that did not guarantee that direct audition had taken place. In fact, the sources often

report that a scholar transmitted a text *ijāzahtan* (by license) to indicate that he had not studied or heard it directly from the transmitting authority, which is in contradistinction with *qira'atan* (by reading).” Teachers granted *ijāzahs* for a book after the recipient had read out a few lines from its opening pages. They granted *ijāzahs* by correspondence to “students” they had never met, or they granted *ijāzahs* for all of their own works to students who could not possibly have studied them all. Students often received a general certificate (*ijāzah 'āmmah*) that granted them blanket permission to relate all of the works that a given teacher had the authority to transmit. Referring to this practice, Ibn Hazm al-Andalusī (1987) remarks that the license that is in common use by his contemporaries is invalid, and insists that the transmitting authority must list the texts for which he is giving authorization completely and exactly (Stewart 2006). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ Shahrāzūrī (1181–1245 CE), while considers *ijāzahs* as the third means of conveying and receiving *ḥadīth* which could take several forms, spots a problem in the *'an 'anah* method (listing the chain of previous narrator by using the Arabic particle *'an* “from”). The Arabic particle *'an* (from) frequently appears in the *isnād* of many Prophetic reports of *ḥadīth* and is taken actually mean a grant of permission to the narrator by his immediate source (Kamali 2005: 17). While it was utilized to keep the “transmission of *ḥadīth* free of the taint of misrepresentation (*tadlīs*),” the *ijāzah* poses a contradiction.

... [T]he use of “from” in licensing (*ijāzah*) has become common among those who consider themselves to be scholars of *ḥadīth*. When one of them says, “I recited to X from Y (*qara tu 'alā fulān 'an fulān*), or something like that, it is understood from this that X related from Y by license [*ijāzah*] and it is obvious that this does not keep it from being uninterrupted. (Shahrāzūrī 2006: 46)

Against arguments of this nature, Huff (2003: 78) notes a merit in *ijāzah* system, notably albeit highly personalistic “neither the state, the sultan, nor the caliph had any influence over the recognition of educational competence.” Chamberlain (1994: 90) argues that the *ijāzah* as a form of “qualification” seems to have had little to do with *madrāsahs*. That the *ijāzah* was not given as a result of study in *madrāsahs* is attested by the fact that even *amīrs* could acquire one. As a sign of the transmission of authority from a master to disciple, the *ijāzah* was not a passport of entry into a category of persons, nor was it an institutional degree. The *ijāzah* was rather the sign of an authority that was transmitted within temporary social networks bound together through loyalties of love and service. This authority was acquired through an *ijāzah* from another *shaykh*, who himself had acquired it through personal contact. The ability to grant an *ijāzah* was not restricted to holders of *mansabs* (social and political positions), but was held by other bearers of *'ilm* as well. What was granted was as much an emblem of a bond to a *shaykh* as a certificate with a fixed value in social relations. In this respect, the *ijāzah* resembled inclusion in the “register of auditors” kept in the mosque attesting to learning. However, the acquisition of *ijāzahs* played an important part in establishing scholarly status by documenting links to earlier generations of scholars in the Muslim community. The *ijāzah* granted scholars permission to teach the fundamental works of the Islamic sciences and to cite them authoritatively. In some ways, however, *ijāzah* collection

became a symbolic activity. Receiving *ijāzahs* from various sources of authority turned into a tradition to represent symbolic academic capital of a given scholar and served the important social function of establishing a scholar's identity and credentials. Shī'ahs and other minority groups could divert suspicion by collecting *ijāzahs* from Sunnī prominent scholars whose orthodoxy was unimpeachable. In addition, the exchange of *ijāzahs* became a part of professional academic camaraderie (Stewart 2006).

Due to the paramount prominence of the criterion of reliability among the scholars of *ḥadīth* in such disciplines as *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* (critical study of the *ḥadīth*), *akhbār* (scriptural reports), and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (manuals of jurisprudence) direct aural contact, in which the student hears the dictation of the transmitting authority or reads the text back to that authority, descending by degrees to *munawalah* (the "handing over" of a text by the authority to the student) and *wijadah* (the "finding" of a text in the hand of the author) established as a dominant approach. This scheme reflects a formal stress on the value of oral/aural transmission that early on became archaic, particularly when most of the texts so authorized were standard published works (e.g., canonical compilations of *ḥadīth*) (Stewart 2006).

The notion of '*ulamā*' as the "heirs" of the Prophet is explicitly vindicated through two principal pillars of Islamic knowledge: The Qur'ān (IV: LIX; III: XVIII) and various *ḥadīths* (al-Sijistani 1998: Vol. 3, p. 317, No. 3641; al-Tirmidhi 1998: Vol. 4, p. 48, No: 2682). Despite the contentions on the semantics and the domain of expertise, for '*ulamā*' seeking knowledge was deemed pivotal and an indication of distinction. This had two outcomes: 1. The authority was not transferred through the religious hierarchy, rather to be acquired through knowledge acquisition attested in *ḥadīths*; and 2. It advocated the *riḥlah* (the journey in quest of knowledge) and promoted a learner-centered approach to education based on a flexible curriculum and master-disciple interaction at personal level. As noted earlier, quest for *ḥadīth* initiated such tradition of educational mobility. "As a result, Muslim scholarship has always been and remains international. The lines of connecting *isnāds* criss-cross the geographical and political divisions of the Islamic world. The goal has always been to build the strongest links with past learning, which has always meant going to the most venerable teachers (Graham 1993: 512)." Perhaps, such diversified array of education triggered the need for an accreditation system in order to evaluate the scholastic achievements of the contenders. Thus, before embarking on advanced study, students were expected to pass an oral examination (*'arḍ*).

The examiner would open the book chosen and ask the student to recite from memory the passages on which he alighted. One generally performed this '*arḍ*' in one's teens and repeated the performance before a number of scholars. For example, Muḥammad b. Ṭūlūn (d. 1546 CE) received *ijāzahs* for presenting one set of books from eight teachers at the age of fourteen. The certificate was written on a small square piece of paper, and several examiners might write certificates on the same sheet. (Stewart 2006: 203)

The learner-centered and individual approach to education was established in early years of the Muslim history when the Islamic education was not institutionalized. Intriguingly, however, the tradition was maintained after the establishment of

*madrasahs* in eleventh century. Hence, the educational credentials within the domain of *'ulūm al-naqlī* were acquired not by a diploma certifying a completed course of study, but by acquisition of a series of personal certifications of “permission” to transmit and to teach specific texts and knowledge learned at the feet of particular scholars. The large and important genre of works known under the rubric of *mashyakhah*, or “catalogue of *shaykhs*,” amount to the amplification of the teaching *isnād* into personal biographical dictionaries of all of the teachers from whom one has obtained an *ijāzah* to transmit and teach. They testify to the importance throughout the Muslim history of the solid intellectual and religious repute of the persons from whom one has one’s learning, wherever they may have been found (Graham 1993), which included not only the license of transmission but also the *'ard* (presentation of books) and the *ijāzah al-iftā'* (license for issuing legal opinions) *ijāzah al-tadrīs* (license for teaching). Graham (ibid.) notes that traditionally, there has been no true education, scholarship, or authority in any field without personal engagement in a “golden chain” reaching back to the Prophet Muḥammad and the Companions, and this principle extends across a broad spectrum of fields and concerns among Muslims.

Whereas the *ijāzah* system was the dominant approach within the *'ulūm al-naqlī*, despite the dominance of master-disciple relationship within *'ulūm al-'aqlī* (e.g., medicine, hard sciences, and also philosophy), there is no indication to suggest the prevalence of the *ijāzah* system. The dominant approach was tutoring, apprenticeship, and self-instructed experimental approaches. Huff (2003: 80) argues that insofar as the development of science and scientific thought is concerned, such a system provided neither group support for philosophers cum scientists who held dissident views *vis-a-vis* the religious and political authorities nor any mechanisms whereby received wisdom (as understood by the best and most competent experts, or as attested by experiment) could be separated from the false and disproven. Likewise, the prohibitions against bringing it into the colleges perpetuated the personalized master-student pattern and prevented the efficient cumulation of knowledge by bringing scholars versed in the sciences together in one place.

Throughout his extensive comparative study on the institutions of higher education in Islam and the West, Makdisi (1981) argues that *licentia docendi* of Christian West in European universities was inspired by Islamic *ijāzah li al-tadrīs*. While both informed by religion endeavoring to maintain respective religious veracity, the former was issued by an individual and the latter by either ecclesiastical hierarchy or the masters acting as a guild. Haneberg’s (1850) study confirms this claim, “I suppose that our licentiate stems from this Muslim institution, meaning the *ijāzah*.” Likewise, Ribera (1928) discusses the possible connection between *ijāzah* and Western university license to teach and notes that, the medieval university owed much to conscious imitation from the Muslim system of education.”

Hence, the term *ijāzah* which was first coined to authorize the transmission of *ḥadīth*, when used in the absolute, that is, without a complement, referred to *ḥadīth* in particular. But with legal studies, it began to be used with complements in order to distinguish it from the *ijāzah ḥadīth*. The authorizations for issuing legal opinions, or for teaching the law, or both, were designated as follows: *al-ijāzah bi al-fatwā'*

(or, *bi al-iftā'*), *al-ijāzah bi al-tadrīs*. One thing remained constant throughout the centuries: no matter how sophisticated the *ijāzah* became, whether it authorized one book, or a whole repertoire of *ḥadīths*, or the teaching of law, or the issuing of legal opinions, it remained an authorization made by one person, or if by more than one, by one at a time. The scholar receiving it could go on to collect other authorizations from other masters; and one could do this for the same book or books, or for teaching law (based on books studied, as well as disputation), or for issuing legal opinions (Makdisi 1981).

### ***Ijāzah al-Sama'* and *Ijāzah al-Qirā'ah* (Certificate of Audition)**

*Ijāzah al-sama'* (certificate of audition) is the protocols of reading sessions which were often added to a text, in particular with ample information on the human element in the transmission of texts (Witkam 2012). *Ijāzah al-sama'* means reading a text or its recitation from memory. This reading or recitation was expressed by two basic terms, one connected with the Qur'ān and the other with *ḥadīth*, both of which terms were closely interrelated and sometimes even synonymous: *qara'a* and *sami'a*. The three radical letters, *qr'*, from which the word al-Qur'ān, the sacred book of Islam, is derived, were also those of the most basic technical term of Muslim education and the most versatile; namely, the verb *qara'a*. It means to read aloud, to recite, especially the Qur'ān, *lit.* the Recitation (Makdisi 1981). Perhaps, this in part explains the primacy of memorization which often is attributed as the most dominant feature of Islamic education. The Qur'ān is believed to be verbally revealed through the angel Gabriel gradually in 23 years. It was not until after the death of the Prophet that Companions wrote down the verses of the Qur'ān as they remembered. Henceforth, memory and the oral reproduction of knowledge assumed a prime status within Islamic education. Huff (2003) argues that the Arab inclination to distrust the merely written word and to prefer oral testimonies in part stemmed from the religious context in which the traditions of the Prophet (*ḥadīths*) were carefully recorded and passed on through a chain of oral transmitters whose names and identities had to be recorded in order to authenticate the *ḥadīth*. The act of forgery was always perceived possible in the copying of a text – not to mention errors of copying – an oral tradition in which each transmitter of the text testified to its authenticity was an essential part of the authentication of any written source.

The elements involved in this certificate were: *musmi'* (the certifier), *qāri'* (the reader or reciter), *sāmi'(-ūn)* (auditor/s), and *kātib al-sama'* (the writer of the certificate). The *musmi'* could himself be the author of the work being studied; or he could be another scholar who possesses the *ijāzah al-tadrīs* (license to teach) the book, in which case he cited his authority going back directly to the author, or through one or more authorized scholars intervening between the author and himself. The *qāri'*, reader, was usually the person who was the most qualified to read the book, or recite it by heart. The auditors were “cited in the certificate by the writer, *kātib*, who gave the exact portion of the book studied by each auditor, if not studied equally by all. The writer was usually one of the students who could be relied on to

give the exact names, the number of sessions, and the place and dates involved (Makdisi 1981).” Although *ijāzah al-sama‘* and *qirā‘ah* denote acts of reading and hearing, in many occasions they indeed meant “studying.” Makdisi (ibid.: 93) provides examples of such usage as,

*Qara‘a al-madhhab wa al-khilāf hattā tamaiyaz* (He ‘read’ the law of his school and that of others until he distinguished himself); and *qara‘a al-fiqh ‘alā [fulān]* (He ‘read’ law under the direction of So-and-So); both used in the sense of the ‘studied’.

*Sami‘a* meant to recite from memory, as well as to hear, study, and learn. On the other hand, the meanings of these two verbs diverged when the prepositions were not the same. The professor was doing the “hearing,” that is, the teaching, by following the recitation and correcting the text when necessary. The term *qira‘a*, to read, applies to both the student’s reading to “the professor, as well as the professor’s reading to the student.” When it was desired to point out clearly that the actual reading was performed by a certain person, additional words to that effect were used (*ibid.*).

On the credibility of the oral transmission of knowledge and hence the account on the trustworthiness of the oral knowledge may suffice to note that, Muslims perceive the Qur’ān as a perfect, unchanged, and uncorrupted text because Muslims from the beginning committed every single word to memory, and thus no forgery of this living text was possible. No account was thus taken of the possibility of faulty memories. What is more, a standard of moral and religious uprightness was often applied to the transmitter, and only a person considered to be morally worthy by the community could be relied upon. This same pattern of reliance on especially circumspect persons developed into the institution of the professional witness (*amīn*) who assists the judge, an institution that continues down to the present (Huff 2003). Discussing the significance of oral tradition in Islamic education, Gilliot (2012: lii) notes the ambivalence between the oral and the written as well illustrated in the certificate of listening (*ijāzah al-sama‘*) reproduced at the beginning of the publication of Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad* from the colophon of one of the manuscripts,

“certificate of reading” in the presence of the master Ibn al-Shaybānī (d. 525/1121), in the “reading” mode; the chronologically preceding guarantor who “listened” to this recitation/lecture was Abū ‘Alī Ibn al-Madhhab (d. 444/1052), who held the license to transmit this work through the reading mode from Abū Bakr al-Qatī‘ī (d. 368/979), who in turn held it from the son of Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd Allāh (d. 290/902), the true editor of his father’s book.

Mudir Shanechi (1998) argues that although over time the written took over from the oral, the latter continued to be regarded as an ideal mode in “reception of knowledge” (*tahammul al-‘ilm [al-ḥadīth]*). According to al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) and al-Nawāwī (d. 676/1277), among others, the best type of mode in reception of knowledge is “direct listening” (*al-sama‘*): the disciple or the auditor listens to the traditions that are recited from memory or reads from the master’s “book” or “booklet” (*juz‘*). In this case, the terms used in the transmission will be: “I heard” or “So-and-So transmitted to me/us.” Next comes “reading” (out loud-indeed,



this used to be the only known way of reading) or “recitation” (*qirā’a*) in front of the master. The disciple or another person reads from the book, or booklet, or else recites from memory one or several *ḥadīths*, or even the entire book, in front of the master. The master listens and compares what is recited to his own copy or memory of it. In this case, the appropriate terms are “So-and-so taught me/us” or else “I read in the presence of” (*qara’u ‘alā*). Despite Muslim scholars’ disagreement over the question of whether recitation has the same value as direct listening, in both cases, direct listening and recitation, the disciple (or disciples) is authorized to transmit what they have received from the master (Gilliot 2012). Likewise, when an original work was presented to the learned world, this was accomplished orally as the author himself would dictate the work word by word to his students. After carefully checking the transcribed work, the author added his signature of authenticity along with his permission, his *ijāzah*, “making the work lawful” and allowing the copyist to then transmit the work to still other auditors (Huff 2003).

Some certificates of audition (*sama’āt*) appeared as noted on the margins of the texts, at the beginning or end of manuscripts and autobiographical reports about a scholar’s studies that circulated in the form of *fahrasah*, *mashyakhah*, *barnāmaj*, *thabāt*, or *mu’jam* (Chamberlain 1994). More formally, however, attestation of reading authorization: *ijāzah al-qirā’ah*, delivered following a reading made by a master to a pupil or – which is the more frequent case – following a reading made by the pupil under the supervision of the master; use of the expression *ijāzah al-sama’* implies the presence of auditors (or recipients) other than the reader. As for *sama’*, the distinctions are as follows:

- the author of the work attests with his own hand that a student has heard the text from him
- the student affirms that he has read the work before the author (*qara’a ‘alā*)
- attestation of reading made before a master who is not the author of the work read (Vajda 2012b).

Shahrazuri (2006) describes the process of awarding the certificate of audition and notes that often the *ijāzah* was a document with a text as, “I hereby give you permission to transmit it” or the like. In the eyes of many, this is a permissible way to relate a given material to a specific person. This view was related transmitters of *ḥadīth*, jurists, and legal theorists. He notes, however, that if his teacher were to say to him, “This is my relation, but do not transmit it from me,” he could still transmit it from him. Just as it, would not affect him if he were to hear a *ḥadīth* from him and afterward he said to him, “Do not transmit it from me” or, “I do not license it to you.” The justification for the doctrine of these people is that they consider “declaration of the transmitter” to be equivalent to “recitation to the teacher.” When the student recites some of the teacher’s *ḥadīth* to him and the teacher silently assents that, it is his transmission from X b. Y. It is permissible for the student to transmit the *ḥadīth* from him, even if he did not hear the *ḥadīth* from his teacher’s lips and the teacher did not say to him, “Transmit it from me” or “I hereby grant you permission to relate it from me.”

Vajda (2012b) enumerates ten elements in the process of awarding a certificate of audition, albeit not always found in their totality, especially when it is a case of summaries or simple mentions of certified auditions of manuscripts:

1. The name of the transmitter (*musmi'*); if he is not the author of the text transmitted, it is appropriate to specify in addition the authority whereby he has received the text (*sanad*). Sometimes, the whole chain of transmitters (*riwāyah*) linking the reader to the author is given in detail.
2. The names of auditors: men, women, children, with indication of the age of the latter. Personal names and those of fathers are not considered enough; supplementary indications are added, starting with the *kunyah* (nickname); these customs of precision prove, it may be noted in passing, extremely useful for the identification of individuals, and thus for the collection of the materials of the *Onomasticon Arabicum*.
3. Precise account of what such and such an auditor actually heard (where necessary, for instance it is stated quite bluntly that he slept during the reading) and of the sessions which he may possibly have missed.
4. Name of the reader.
5. Type of manuscript (original, copy belonging to a certain person) which has been used in the reading.
6. Identity of the registrar of the names of participants in the audition (*dābit al-asmā'*). The term denoting the writer is *kātib al-tabaqah*. In some instances, forgers (*muzawwir*) are also encountered.
7. The formula *ṣahḥah wa thabata* (certificates) following the names of the auditors.
8. Place of the audition.
9. Date of the audition; possibly the number of sessions or the initial and final date of the readings.
10. The signature of the *musmi'*. If there is a need to specify that the reading is not the simple recitation of a text but a study in the strict sense, with analysis and explanation, this character is underlined by formulas such as *qirā'at taṣḥīḥ wa tafahham* (Vajda 2012b: 166–69).

Such detailed accounts registered in *ijāzahs* provide not only educational documentations, but some rich sources of chronological, topographical, and personal information by no means negligible for the scholars of Muslim education and culture.

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### ***Ijāzah al-Riwāyah* (License to Transmit Ḥadīth)**

The *ijāzah* is a conspicuous feature of Arabic manuscripts, and it illustrates how a text functions in an educational, scientific, or cultural environment (Witkam 2012). Attachment to the oral transmission of knowledge, entrenched in the mentality of traditional scholars of Islam, remained active and is still active today, long after the commitment to writing of the materials to be transmitted, and the determination, according to the criteria

of the appropriate discipline, *‘ilm al-ḥadīth-* of chains of authenticity (*isnād*). Consequently, it could not be said that the repetitive reading of texts, reading certified by authorizations of transmission (*ijāzah*) established for the benefit of hearers, should be a procedure aimed towards the conservation of the works concerned, or even necessarily, in the first instance at least, towards formative education; it is in some respects a meritorious work, perpetuating a state of affairs which found its full *raison d’être* only in the crystallization of the major collections of *ḥadīth* (Vajda 2012b).

The *ijāzah*, the original license, derived its authority from the Prophet Muḥammad. His Companions (*ṣaḥḥabah*, lit. fellows, associates) were the first to transmit his teachings to posterity. They transmitted the *ḥadīths*, vehicles of the statements, deeds, or tacit approvals of the Prophet, to their Successors (*tābi‘ūn*), and they to those coming after them, and so on, from one generation to the next. So that a *muḥaddith*, in authorizing a person to transmit a *ḥadīth*, did so by that authority conferred upon him by his predecessor, the authority being traced back to the Prophet himself, whose authority comes from God (Makdisi 1981). Obviously, at some point, the authentication of transmitters necessarily ceased, and scholars often went to great lengths to search out and personally copy versions of scholarly works they believed were genuine. Similarly, owners of books and manuscripts customarily inscribed their names as part of the tradition of authentic transmission (Huff 2003).

Witkam (2012) argues that just as a Muslim’s relationship with God is direct and personal, so too is a man’s way of procuring religious knowledge. In Islam, it is the personal relationship between teacher and pupil that, through the generations of scholars, has produced a powerful driving force that ensures a continuity of its own. Several genres of Islamic literature have developed in the course of time, which reflect this individual and personal attitude. It started very early indeed, with the emergence of Islamic tradition, *ḥadīth*. As important as the content of the *ḥadīth* is the chain of authorities, the *isnād*, which precedes each tradition. The early collections are even organized not according to subject matter but to their authorities and hence referred to by the name *Musnad*. Half of Islamic *ḥadīths* is *‘ilm al-rijāl*, the “knowledge of the transmitters.” Only an authentic chain of trustworthy authorities validates the text of a *ḥadīth*. Without it, a *ḥadīth* is suspended in space and is incomplete. For practical reasons, these *ḥadīth* texts and chains of authorities were written down. The *isnāds* can thus be read as protocols of successive instances and sessions in which learning was transmitted. The written form of *ḥadīth* is thus but one dimension of the Tradition: the human factor in the transmission and continuity of knowledge is as important as the recorded message itself. The saying that “knowledge is in the breasts [of men], not in the lines [of books] (*al-‘ilm fi al-ṣudūr lā fi al-suṭūr*)” aptly summarizes this idea (Witkam 2012).

The *ijāzah al-rivāyah* includes *taḥammul al-‘ilm al-ḥadīth*: reception of transmission which according to Vajda (2012b: 164–166) may be effected according to eight modalities enlisted in descending order of worth (*aqsām ṭuruq al-ḥadīth*):

1. *Sama‘*: the disciple or the auditor hears traditions recited from memory or read in the book.

2. *Qīā'ah* (or *'arḍ*): the disciple or another person reads aloud from the book or even recites by heart one or several *ḥadīths* before the *shaykh*; the latter listens and compares what is recited with his exemplar or with what he has conserved in his memory.
3. *Ijāzah*: it can be of two kinds (with subdivisions of which the special works supply the detail: the *shaykh* or an authorized transmitter gives permission to transmit one or several texts; he delivers to a certain person authority to transmit works which he does not specify; he will say for example: "I permit you to transmit (in your turn) everything which I am authorized to transmit.")
4. *Munāwalah* (hanging over): The *shaykh* gives to the disciple either the original where the traditions heard by him are written or a comparative exemplar of this original, while reciting a formula such as "this is what I have collected" or "that which I have been given by such and such a person, pass on in your turn on my authority." He can hand the pupil the written document either in definitive form or on the stipulation that once copied the exemplar be returned to him.
5. *Kitābah*: The *shaykh* personally executes a copy of his book or of his transmissions (he may however entrust this task to another person, usually to the disciple who is the direct recipient of the transmission. In these circumstances, the transmitter is not obliged to declare explicitly to the recipient (whose effective presence is furthermore not required): "I entrust to you the right to transmit.")
6. *I'ālām* (declaration): This procedure, the validity of which has been disputed by some theoreticians, consists in the declaration by the *shaykh* that a certain text has been heard by him, without necessarily specifying that he has received license to transmit it or that he gives the auditor authorization to do so.
7. *Wasīyyah* (testament): Close to death or to setting out on a journey, the master bequeaths to some individual a casebook of traditions reported by him.
8. *Wijādah* (invention): On coming into possession of the manuscript of the last transmitter, one acquires the right to make use of the document thus "found," whether the latter be contemporary or ancient. In fact, the validity of a transmission operated in these conditions is not recognized and the worth of the *ḥadīth* thus transmitted depends on its credibility.

Shahrazuri (2006: 109) explains a specific type of *ijāzah al-riwāyah* according to which the *riwāyah* (transmission) of a specific text is licensed to a specific person. For instance, the teacher says, "I hereby license book X" or "the contents of this booklist of mine (*fihristū*) to you." This is the highest form of licensing lacking the transference of the text (*munāwalah*). Biographical literature emerged in Islam as one of the consequences of this individual and personal approach, and the "science of men," or *'ilm al-rijāl*, developed into a critical method for the assessment of scholarly authority. Many biographical works were concerned with describing networks of scholarship and chains of transmission. The biographee is thereby presented in the center of an activity of transmission of knowledge.

Witkam (2012) notes that the primacy of the reliable transmission of *ḥadīth* and subsequent *ijāzahs* nurtured a special literary genre that developed from this practice is the *juz'*, a short text usually consisting of not much more than one quire, and often

small enough for it to be easily carried. It could happen that only a very small part of a scholar's work was read and taught in a session in which an *ijāzah* was going to be granted. In that case, the issuer of the *ijāzah* had the choice between two options. He could confer upon his pupil, or a visiting scholar, the right to transmit the whole of a book by him, or his transmissions (*marwīyyāt*), or his own orally received knowledge (*masmū'āt*), or the works for which he himself had already acquired certificates (*mustajāzāt*), or of any other of his works even if they had only been partially read or not read at all. The other option was that the short text or the collection of transmissions which had been read could be written out separately. Such shorter collections of part of the repertoire of a *shaykh* often bear the title *juz'*. In some cases, the *ijāzah* may contain the titles of most or all of works and be, in effect, an auto-bibliography. By virtue of studying a given body of *ḥadīth*, the recipient is invested with the authority to transmit or teach part or whole of the work of scholar who has issued the *ijāzah*. The whole process is not unlike the diplomas which students of present day universities consider as the culmination of their study, the difference being that these *ijāzah* reflect the relationship between two natural persons, rather than between a student and his institution of education.

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### ***Ijāzah al-iftā'* and *Ijāzah al-ijtihād* (License to Issue Legal Opinions)**

The license to teach law and issue legal opinions (*ijāzah al-iftā' wa al-tadrīs* or simply *ijāzah al-iftā'*) is the type of *ijāzah* which resembles the medieval European university degree. Most closely, for rather than authorizing the recipient to transmit or teach a particular text, it attests to his or her mastery of an entire field (in this case, the law) and permits entry into professional categories: law professor (*mudarris*) and jurisconsult (*mufīṭ*) (Stewart 2006). However, while in the Islamic system the granting authority is an individual professor, in European system a corporate institution (university) is the awarding body. The license to teach law and issue legal opinions was clearly an actual document of official or legal standing. Such licenses were written in the *riq'ah* script on Syrian or Egyptian paper, in folio, with evenly spaced lines a finger's width apart; this is the same format that was used for other important legal documents, such as patents of probity (*isjalāt al-'adālah*), which established the candidate's qualification to serve as a notary or official witness (al-Qalqashandi 1964). Like the patent of probity, the license was often drawn up before a judge and signed by witnesses in addition to the granting authority. This license shows many similarities to the medieval Rabbinic *semekha*, although the relationship between the two has not been investigated to date (Stewart 2006).

The license to teach law and legal methodology, and to issue legal opinions, conferred upon the candidate authority based on his/her competence in law and legal methodology. This authority and competence resided in the '*ulamā'*, the learned men of religion, specifically in the *faqīh* (jurisconsult). When the master-jurisconsult, the *mudarris*, granted the license to teach law and issue legal opinions, he acted in his capacity as the legitimate and competent authority in the field of law. When he

granted the license to the candidate he did so in his own name, in the capacity of an individual, not as part of a group of master-jurisconsults acting as a faculty. Throughout its history down to modern times, the *ijāzah* remained a personal act of authorization, from the authorizing ‘*ulamā*’ to the newly authorized ones. The sovereign power had no part in the process: neither caliph, nor sultan, nor *amīr*, nor *wazīr*, nor *qaḍī*, nor anyone else, could grant such a license. There being no church in Islam, no ecclesiastical hierarchy, no university, that is to say, no guild of masters, no one but the individual master-jurisconsult granted the license. No one could legally force him to do so, or to refrain from doing so. The line of religious authority rested, not with sovereign power, but rather with the religious scholars, the ‘*ulamā*’. Moreover, the institutions in which the ‘*ulamā*’ taught were creations completely independent of the sovereign as such, and in no need of his sanction to come into existence. Indeed, the sovereign had no say in the matter of the license even when he was the founder of the institution. Islamic education, like Islamic law, is basically individualistic, and personalist. The license was issued after an oral examination satisfying the examining scholar as to the competence of the candidate. At first a simple process, the examination developed into a sophisticated disputation in which the candidate for the license defended a thesis or series of theses. When the candidate had proved his proficiency in disputation, he was given the license (*ijāzah*) to teach law (*tadrīs*) and issue legal opinions (*iftā*). The origin and development of this license follows a line running parallel to that of the development of the science of *fiqh* from the science of *ḥadīth*. As a license to teach, the *ijāzah* developed in Islam at least as early as the tenth century (Stewart 2006).

When a student “terminated,” he passed from the undergraduate to the graduate phase of legal education. In the early medieval period, this phase was that of *ṣuḥbah*, the student became a *ṣāhib*, fellow, of the professor of law; later, this phase was referred to as the class of *iftā*’ (*ṭabaqāt al-iftā*). Thus, the terminal class immediately preceded the *iftā*’ class of legal education, the period during which the student was trained in research and disputation, involved in the issuing of legal opinions and their defense. The student-jurisconsult, at this stage, devoted his time to apprenticing with the master-jurisconsult, under whom he learned and practiced the process of arriving at legal opinions. On completion of this phase of his education, *ṭabaqāt al-iftā*’, the class of apprenticing for the muftīship, he was licensed by the master-jurisconsult to issue them (*ijāzah al-iftā*’, or *idhn bi al-iftā*’) (Makdisi 1981).

Stewart (2006) notes that the license to issue legal opinions is said to go back to the eighth century. Although there is no indication to suggest that the *ijāzah* was issued as written certificate, it is clear that the practice of granting licenses had become prevalent in Egypt and Syria by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The licenses usually restricted to the law of one of the four recognized Sunnī legal *madhhabs* from this period (*ibid.*). Occasionally, women also received the license: ‘Ā’ishah bint Yusuf al-Ba’ūniyah (d. 1516 CE), scion of the distinguished Ba’ūnī line of Damascene scholars, studied law in both Cairo and her native Damascus. She obtained the license to teach law and grant legal opinions, and gained wide recognition as a jurist. In Sunnī circles, granting of the *ijāzah al-iftā*’ *wa al-tadrīs* seems to have lapsed after it was replaced at al-Azhar by the European-inspired *shahadat*

*al-'alimīyah* (degree of scholarly status) in 1871 (for further details see chapter ► “Islamic Education in Egypt”). Called *ijāzah al-ijtihād*, it survives to this day as part of traditional Twelver Shī‘ah legal education at the centers of learning in Najaf and Qom (Stewart 2006) (for details see chapter ► “Islamic Education in Iran”). Among the Twelver Shī‘ah, the *ijāzah* obtains its authority from the infallible *imāms* whose *ḥadīths* are scrupulously transmitted by their faithful supporters (Laoust 1965: 303).

The term *iftā’* means the issuing of a *fatwā*, a legal opinion. The jurisconsult, *faqīh*, issuing such an opinion does so in his capacity as a *mufīī*. The person soliciting the *fatwā* is referred to as the *mustafīī*. The *mufīī* is called upon to exert himself to the utmost in the study of the Sacred Scripture, the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, and in researching the sources of the law, in order to arrive at his legal opinion. This exertion is called *ijtihād*, and the jurisconsult who so exerts himself is called *mujtahid*. His opinion (*fatwā*) is a response (*jawāb*) to a question (*su’āl, mas’alah*) put to him by a Muslim layman (*‘ammī*) on a point of law. Muslim law, *fiqh*, encompasses both the religious, *ibādāt* (religious worship), as well as the civil, *mu’āmalāt* (transactions), aspects of Muslim life (al-Jawzi 2014: vol.1, viii). A *mujtahid* practices his *ijtihād* freely, answerable to God alone. All legal opinions share this same quality of being “right,” for being the result of the religiously exerted effort, “*ijtihād*, of the jurisconsult” (Makdisi 1981).

In Islam, the authority resided in the *‘ulamā’*, specifically in the master-jurisconsults whose opinions went to make up the consensus, *ijmā’*. If the matter of authority offers some difficulty, albeit superficial, that of competence, leading to qualification for the license to teach, presents a very clear picture. From initial training in the literary arts, to embarking on the long course of study leading to the mastership, passing through the ranks of scholar (*mutafaqqih*) and fellow (*faqīh*), representing the undergraduate and graduate levels, assisting the master as ordinary repetitor (*mu’īd*) or extraordinary docent (*mufīd*), including the work of building up repertoires of disputed questions (*masā’il khilāfiyah*, quaestiones disputatae), the student practice of quizzing one another (*mudhakarah, collatio*), disputing for practice with fellow students, or with masters in class (*munāzarah, disputatio*), disputation based on the confrontation of conflicting opinions (*khilāf, sic et non*), and the mastery of dialectic (*jadāl, dialectica*), and finally obtaining the license to teach (*ijāzah li-al-tadrīs, licentia docendi*), and incepting by giving the inaugural lesson or lecture (*dars iftītahī, inceptio*) (ibid.).

The personalistic emphasis is also seen in law, where the individual believer may request alternative rulings on legal questions from several legal specialists, for “all legal opinions share this same quality of being ‘right’ for being the result of religiously executed effort,” that is, the intellectual struggle (*ijtihād*) of the jurisconsult (*mujtahid*). Conversely, the “freedom of the *mufīī* [in arriving at his personal opinion] is matched by the freedom of the *mustafīī* [the layman seeking an opinion] in following the opinion of his choice; for he may solicit as many opinions as he wishes, and may follow whichever he chooses” (Mottahedeh 1985).

When in the eyes of the professor, students had mastered the subjects taught in the *madrasah* – perhaps more accurately, mastered the manuscripts that were read,

copied, and memorized – they were given an *ijāzah*, an authorization to teach these matters to others. One could say that a license to teach these subjects was granted by the master-jurisconsult to the student. And here the stress is on the personal authorization that was involved.

### ***Ijāzah li-al-Tadrīs (Licentia Docendi)***

*Ijāzah li-al-tadrīs (licentia docendi)* is a license to teach. Also, Persian *ijāzahnāmeḥ* and Turkish *icazetname* have come into modern use to mean “certificate of fitness” (to teach) (Vajda 2012a). The difference between the *ijāzah li-al-tadrīs* and its later Western Christian parallel, the *licentia docendi*, was not in the license or authorization itself, but rather in the granting authority. The authorization to teach, as it came to be known in the Middle Ages, whether in Islam or in Western Christendom, derived its legitimacy from two sources: (1) authority based on recognized competence in the field of knowledge involved and (2) authority based on a recognized right to grant authorization to teach (Makdisi 1981). The authorization to teach was tied primarily to the book. It guaranteed the transmission of authoritative religious knowledge. The authoritative character of the transmission derives ultimately from the Prophet, the seal of all prophets, chosen by God to receive the revelation, the religious knowledge (*‘ilm*) necessary for salvation, transmitted to him through the agency of the Angel Gabriel. This knowledge the Prophet passed on orally to his Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) and they to their Successors (*tabi‘ūn*), and they to their successors (*tabi‘ al-ṭabi‘īn*), and so on, down through the centuries to the *‘ulamā’*, heirs of the prophets. Such was the transmission of *ḥadīth*, accounts relating to the deeds, words, and attitudes of the Prophet, called his *sunnah*. The vehicle of this transmission was the spoken word, recited, read aloud, as was the “Recitation” itself, the Qur’ān (*ibid.*).

As noted earlier, initially the certificates were appended to a book, or other writing, certifying that the owner, and perhaps others along with him who were then also named, studied the materials under his direction. The master could also authorize the person or persons named to transmit the contents on his authority as author of the book, “or as one who was duly authorized to make the authorization.” Chamberlain (1994) reflects that despite the ambiguity in the role of *madrasahs* in granting the *ijāzah li-al-tadrīs*, one thing is clear that lecturers gave *ijāzahs* to students through an examination system (among other places in Damascus), or in fact that any type of the *ijāzah* had any association with *madrasahs* at all. Moreover, the biographical dictionaries rarely if ever described lecturers as holders of an *ijāzah li-al-tadrīs*. There were, however, *shaykhs* without *manṣabs* who gave *ijāzahs*. There were even fathers who got *ijāzahs* for their sons by requesting them from many different *shaykhs*, a process they called *istijzā’* “seeking *ijāzahs*.” In Damascus the sources cited the *ijāzah li-al-tadrīs* less frequently than the *ijāzah al-iftā’* and the *ijāzah fī al-takallum*. The latter referred to the ability to discourse on behalf of the *shaykh* and may occasionally have referred especially if not uniquely to matters of doctrine. Like the other *ijāzahs*, it was granted by a single *shaykh*. These forms of authorization were not necessarily attested by a certificate, but were often expressed



as much by the verbal form *yujūzu* as through the verbal noun *ijāzah* and also by other verbs such as *adhanah*. These forms of the *ijāzah* were granted when *shaykhs* deemed disciples ready to represent a body of knowledge and to exemplify its other carriers. Some *ijāzah* did not necessarily refer to a single text, as *shaykhs* gave *ijāzahs* for their knowledge as a whole or for a body of texts that they had learned. This may have included some kind of examination, despite no record of any ever having been given (Chamberlain 1994).

Makdisi (1981) who is the adamant advocate of the *madrasah* as the source of inspiration for Western higher education argues that the *madrasah* and the university in the Middle Ages had this in common: that they both had titular professors who had acceded to the professorship after having been duly licensed to teach. In Islam, the license first appeared as an authorization primarily to transmit *ḥadīth*. Authority and authorization were both transmissible. *Ijāzah li-al-tadrīs* were two functions combined into the license to teach law and issue legal opinions, *Ijāzah li-al-tadrīs wa al-iftā'*. The license for one of these functions usually implied a license for the other. With the development of *fiqh*, jurisprudence, the license was no longer primarily to preserve *ḥadīth* for posterity; it developed further into a license to instruct, to teach. Mere transmission did not require the carrier to understand what he was transmitting; his function was to help in the process of preservation; others in the community would provide the necessary understanding. This function was alluded to in the *ḥadīth*, "Many a carrier of knowledge is there who carries it to another more understanding than he." The primary concern here was the preservation of the Prophet's *sunnah*. *Fiqh*, on the other hand, literally meant understanding. It involved the teaching of the substance of what was being transmitted. It also involved the teaching of a method of research (*ijtihād*) leading to a legal opinion (*fatwā*) in response to a question (*su'āl, mas'alah*) on some point of law. In actual chronology, the term *iftā'*, the issuing of legal opinions, is earlier than that of *tadrīs*, the institutionalization of the teaching of law, legal theory, and methodology (Pakatchi and Gorji 1998).

*Ijāzah li-al-tadrīs* was also utilized among *ṣufīs*, and as in other Islamic religious and intellectual traditions, one acquires a teaching *silsilah* only through a formal *ijāzah* from one's *shaykh* – a practice in place apparently since even before the emergence of formalized *ṭariqah* orders (Graham 1993).

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### Structure of *Ijāzah* and *Ijāzah bi-al-Istid'ā'* (Certificates by Request)

The *isnād* of a long manuscript as well as that of a short *ḥadīth* ideally should reflect the oral, face-to-face, teacher-to-student transmission of the text by the teacher's *ijāzah*, which validates the written text. However, in a formal, written *ijāzah*, the teacher granting the certificate typically includes an *isnād* containing his or her scholarly lineage of teachers back to the Prophet, the Companions, a later venerable *shaykh*, or the author of a specific book (Graham 1993). This expresses vividly a consciousness on the teacher's part of the fact that knowledge is essentially cumulative (Nashabi 1985).

One usually finds *ijāzahs*, or copies of them, added at the end of a text or written on the title page preceding the text for which the authorization is granted. Sometimes the *ijāzah* consists of a few lines only but occasionally they can be quite elaborate. They may be combined with readers' certificates. To add *ijāzahs* to texts was a time-honored practice in Arabic manuscripts which remained in use for a number of centuries. Witkam (2012) notes that by looking at the manuscripts in which the *ijāzahs* are written, one can gain an idea of how this system of authorization to teach operated. In addition to this, an *ijāzah* can reveal much about the way a certain text or manuscript was used. Quite surprisingly, as yet very little has been done by way of a systematic collection of the data contained in the *ijāzah* in Arabic manuscripts.

Most *ijāzahs* are plain statements of fact, but sometimes *saj'* (rhymed prose) was used and the beneficiary is described in extravagant epithets. Some *ijāzahs* have lengthy introductions and the whole document becomes an exercise in rhetoric. Goldziher and Bonebakker (2012) argue that al-Qalqashand (d. 1418 CE) penned examples of *ijāzahs* for various purposes and set up as templates for writing *ijāzahs*. As early as the ninth century, the poetic form was popular for the *ijāzah* as well as for the request for an *ijāzah* (*istid'ā'*). Hence, many *ijāzahs* were expressed in elaborate rhymed and rhythmical prose (*saj'*), and they provided opportunities for scholars to impress their peers, flattering them with honorific epithets and showing off their skills in artistic prose composition (Stewart 2006). Similarly, the description of the course of one's studies could form part of an *ijāzah*. It appears that what was originally an oral authorization came more and more to be documented in writing and formalized in structure and terminology in parallel with the growing dominance of the written word and the growing institutionalization of the scholarly culture. Besides the license to transmit that was issued for specified texts, there were text-independent *ijāzahs* not tied to specific contents or texts. Because of their generally large scope, such documents often no longer appeared in the margins or at the beginning or end of other texts, but themselves became autonomous texts, sometimes in the form of books, often with their own titles. The contents authorized to be transmitted were usually comprehensive, frequently comprising the whole literature of a certain scholarly tradition (*ijāzah kabīrah* or *ijāzah āmmah*) (Schmidtke 2006).

There were no set texts for *ijāzahs*, which could vary in length from a single paragraph to a sizable volume, but they did follow a relatively standard outline: (1) an opening prayer, praising God and blessing the Prophet Muḥammad; (2) an introduction of the student, with genealogy and flattering epithets that were intended to indicate his academic accomplishments and relative scholarly merits; (3) some description of the circumstances under which contact occurred and under which the *ijāzah* is being granted; (4) permission to transmit or teach, expressed by the term *ajaāztuhu* (I hereby permit him) and followed by the list of works subject to this permission; (5) a summary of the authority's own chains of transmission, establishing his right to transmit said works; (6) the authority's own bibliography, listing the works he has written for which he is granting permission to the student; and (7) a colophon giving the precise date on which the document was granted and often recording the place as well. *Ijāzahs* were often issued in response to an *istid'ā'* (written petition); the scholar so petitioned would record the *ijāzah* on the same sheet

of paper. Little is known about payment for *ijāzahs*, but it is likely that payments or gifts were expected in some cases (Stewart 2006).

Within Shī‘ah school of thought, the majority of *ijāzah al-riwāyah* follows a more or less fixed pattern, with formalized phrases that serve as demarcators for the different building blocks of the document. The opening prayer is followed by an introduction, naming the issuer and the recipient as well as the occasion on which the license was issued. This is followed by the main section detailing the contents and extent of the *ijāzah*. It usually begins with the formula *ajāztu lahu ‘an yarwīyah ‘annī. . .* Very often the *mujīz* includes detailed information on his own *shaykhs* and their chains of transmission. The *ijāzah* usually ends with the conditions attached to it introduced by formulas and a colophon indicating the place and date of issue.

A typical core element of the text-independent *ijāzah kabīrah* or *ijāzah ‘āmmah* is the autobibliography of the *mujīz*, usually a complete list of his works, often including even unfinished writings and providing details about the size, content, or other special characteristics of the individual titles.

An essential function of comprehensive, text-independent *ijāzah* is the documentation of the scholarly tradition, first and foremost the scholars making up the *mujīz*’s chains of transmission. Moreover, it is not unusual for presentations of scholars to elaborate on other persons who were somehow connected to them, such as family members or predecessors and successors in public office, irrespective of whether these persons were links in the *mujīz*’s chains of transmission or not. For the sake of documentation, a *mujīz* often quotes complete *ijāzahs* by earlier scholars in his own license, even if they were not his own teachers. Schmidtke (2006) argues that the *ijāzah* fulfills, among other purposes, functions similar to those of biographical works. In many cases, these two genres cannot be clearly distinguished. Documentation of one’s own scholarly tradition is also the motive behind the compilation of independent collections of *ijāzahs* (*kutub al-ijāzāt*).

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## Conclusion

*Ijāzah*, which is particularly associated with transmission of Islamic religious knowledge, especially *ḥadīth* is a method of assessment and granting authorization within the Islamic education. The license usually implies that the student has acquired a particular knowledge from the issuer of the *ijāzah* through first-hand oral audition. The importance of the reliability of *ḥadīth* among Muslims informed the *ijāzah* to provide a chain of authorized transmitters going back to the Prophet Muḥammad.

By the development of the Islamic education various forms of *ijāzah* appeared. Religious scholars ‘*ulamā*’ were the only officials qualified to grant the *ijāzah*, the authorization to transmit knowledge. Various forms of *ijāzahs* were used for different academic and administrative purposes. While *ijāzah al-sama’* or *ijāzah al-qirā‘ah* (certificate of audition) was issued orally to suggest the reliability of a narrator of a *ḥadīth*, as one of pivotal sources of Islamic knowledge, *ijāzah al-tadrīs*

*wa al-iftā'* (*licentia docendi*) was granted as a certificate of fitness to teach and issue legal opinions within Islamic law.

Originally informal and oral, by time *ijāzah* developed into a written genre within Islamic education and used as a means – among other purposes – for the research on biographical accounts of various scholars and Muslim historiography. *Ijāzah* as a method of authorization is still in use extensively among various groups of Muslims, especially Twelver Shī'ah educational circles in Iran and Iraq.

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## Part II

# Islam and Education in the Modern Era: Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Changes and Responses



# Introduction to Part II: Islamic Education in the Modern Era: Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Changes and Responses from Islamic Education

Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

Islamic education in the modern era has been at the crossroad of globalization, rapid economic development, social changes, and resurgence of rival religious ideologies. Islam as a global force has affected other forces and has been affected by them, and along the way the Islamic education has changed to adapt to the realities of the modern world. Such adaptation is the reflection of the diversity across the Muslim world and heavily influenced by the domestic factors and by the nature and extent of the linkage to other global forces. Despite the contextual variations and diversity, changes within the Islamic education in the modern era have certain features in common: (a) affected by the new socioeconomic development and changes within the civil society; (b) affected by the realities of the modern state and governance; (c) influenced by the cultural (traditional/religious) factors and political climate; and (d) affected by the international factors. Despite the variations, Islamic education reform across the Muslim world has one thing in common: all have lost the grandeur and glory of the past, they are struggling to meet the demands of a competing world, and they exist in the margin of a strong formal education system.

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There are endeavors to synchone traditional approaches and contents of the Islamic education with those of the formal education to inhibit or enhance the chance for the accreditation of the religious education across the Muslim world. This has partially resulted in internationalization of the institutions of Islamic education and tailoring the curricula to add new subjects such as foreign languages and natural sciences to accommodate the global discourse and attract new groups of students internationally.

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**Keywords**

Islam · Education reform · Globalization · Islamic education · Muslim civil society

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**Introduction**

The development of educational traditions, systems, and structures in the Muslim World is the outcome of a series of historical, cultural, and economic circumstances. Being the cradle of civilization and religions, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have always maintained the influence of religions on its cultures and traditions. The vivid presence of Islam in MENA region is partially ascribed to the geographic closeness to Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, where the main demographic characteristic of the Bedouin society formed and affected by the tribal structure is rendered into a modern structure and integrated into the state apparatus. Despite disparities and strong tribal bounds and ethnic affiliations, the countries in the Middle East and North Africa have mainly united around the religious affiliations to Islam. Although on the theoretical level the notion of transnational community of Muslims (*ummah*) overrides national and ethnic affiliations, this by no means has resulted in a unified regional identity, and the Muslim societies remain heterogeneous and extremely diverse. Despite the pre-eminence of Islam, they are divided across various national and ethnic lines to the extent that religious sectarianism is more prevalent than ever. Part Two of this handbook endeavors to reflect this diversity and suggests that essentialization of Islam without taking due consideration to the variations and diversities which in turn creates various perspectives towards social and political issues would result in unrealistic premises which would affect the policies and practices, among other issues in education.

The cultural, linguistic, and traditional backgrounds of the countries in the Muslim world, especially the Middle East and North Africa, have resulted in an artificial, yet strong, taxonomy and have triggered religious nationalism. Arab Middle East nation-states with Arabic as the medium of communication, is recognized for maintaining their Arab identity along with the Islamic identity across fourteen centuries of the Islamic presence. In some instances, for example, in Africa, the Arab identity is challenged by vernacular forms of Islam or other religions. Other nation-states, like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Asian Muslim countries, and Muslim Central Asia promote non-Arab Islamic identities. The category might sound obvious and far from complication, however, since it has raised a series of debates



and arguments in theoretical level and plays a decisive role in the formulation of the aims, objectives, and purpose of education, and hence ultimately the implementation of the education reforms at a national level deserves due attention. It also alters forms of a new traditionalism in the Middle East and North Africa with its return to vernacular cultures – both pre-Islamic and Islamic – reflected in the education. Although in Islam the notion of nationality is regarded secondary to the one's affiliation to the religion and religious community of the believers, the strict inclusion criteria have resulted in the unequal distribution of resources and unjust and in some cases discriminatory treatment of the minorities and disadvantaged groups. This is despite the fact that the rapid expansion of Islam, for many scholars, is ascribed to the significant position of social justice in Islam, despite the reality that many Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East region lag behind most parts of the world. Hence, various forms and arrangements of education in the countries across the Muslim world while deeply rooted in Islam have altered by local traditions and cultures and the colonial experiences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the aftermath of the recent global changes and demonstration of Islam as a global force, interest in the Muslims has increased dramatically. Role of education informing new generations of Muslims in the region has increased interest across the Western world in general and the academic circles in particular. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Muslim countries with all its diverse demographic, cultural, and traditional compositions have been scenes of a series of extensive social, political, economic, and educational movements and reforms. The MENA region, marked by its strategic and economic significance, includes a range of countries from high-income Persian Gulf states to middle income Iran and low-income Yemen which makes the social and educational changes an intriguing subject to study.

Education reform across the countries in the Muslim world has one thing in common: all endeavor to develop a vision and provide strategies for the educational development, to prepare these countries to meet the demands of the competing world. Rapid economic growth across the Middle East and North Africa due to the vast amount of hydrocarbons reserves as well as geopolitical, strategic, and economic significance of those countries has attracted the interests of the world, economically and otherwise. These countries also have provided a new opportunity for the study of modern interplay of religion, culture, and tradition, where the older notions of tribal structure are solidified in the form of neotraditionalism, which often run with rentier systems (unearned income derived from the export of hydrocarbons). Such structure also affects the planning, trends, arrangements, content, and financing in education. Ehteshami and Wright (2012) note that a mode of new traditionalism in the Middle East has presented these countries (except post-revolutionary Iran) with strict affiliation to new form of the kinship – a compromise between old notion of kinship and modern state apparatus. The concept of kinship, discussed by Ibn Khaldūn (1980) under *'aṣabīyyah*, generally rendered as esprit *de corps* of solidarity and cohesion which is based on *nurā* (kinship), the feeling of affection for and attachment to close relatives and all who are of the same blood (Cheddadi 1994: 11).

A new mode of governance which is introduced to synthesize the traditional role of state (still in practice in the region in the form of new-tribal, rentier, or based on traditional local interpretations of Islam) with the global economic and technological advancements. This in part has been an endeavor to retain ultimate social and political control, to suit interests of traditional power factions and provide freedom to allow the economic growth, and is introduced to education through the modification of the objectives of education, organizational, and administrative reforms as well as new modes of financing.

Many studies have focused on the unique relationship between religion and culture in this Middle Eastern and North Africa, and, to some degree, the impact this relationship has on students' opportunity to learn. In most of the countries with Muslim population, the schooling process points toward Islam and its prophet as the ultimate guides for social values and power (Al-Misnad 1985). Also, although Islam as a religion stresses equality for all, the blending of religious and political ideology, and the value of commitment (Shurish 1988), in practice Muslim countries have been frequently characterized as authoritarian in both political and educational structure (Massialas and Jarrar 1991).

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## **Global Changes and Need for Educational Reform Across the Muslim World**

The revival of religious values and traditions and processes of modernization and re-appropriation in the modern Muslim world is worth closer scrutiny. Whereas *ummah* as an imagined community of all Muslim believers is regarded the ultimate model of social life for Muslims, the notion of nationality is proved significant in an era marked by nation-states memberships. Hence, national membership has served as a modern criterion of inclusion and has resulted in the discriminatory treatment of the minorities and disadvantaged groups. The ideological foundation of pan-Arabism has been to merge the "artificially divided" Arab nation-states, which is formed based on the Arabic language, independent of state borders. Pan-Arbaism has escalated as a rivalry response to pan-Iranism and pan-Turkism each affiliated to a given school of thought in Islam formed around an ethnic or national grand narrative. Hence, formal education systems in the Muslim world are shaped around such national discourses, reflected in the formal education and subsidized by state to provide support for what was perceived as "an official religion" in any given national setting.

On the other hand, education as a human capital for economic growth and development across the Muslim world is heavily affected by the dominant development discourse promulgated by such international organizations as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Hence the need for structural adjustment and reform within education has been highly contested among various groups and caused much friction between various local and religious forces. Educational reform across the Muslim world is focused on the given axioms. Most of the policies of reform in these countries are based on the global discourse on development such as

Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Despite this, one can argue that the needs for reform came through “domestic actors” and endorsed by “external actors” and in many cases through mutual interactions between the two.

Despite demographic diversity and hence the variations within the agendas for the reforms, educational reforms across the countries in the Muslim Middle East and North Africa has one thing in common: to prepare these countries to meet the demands of the competing world. In recent years, a series of events in the world have intensified need and demand for the structural reforms in the political, social, educational, cultural, and economic domains across the Muslim world. Rise of militant Islamism and fear of the Western powers of empowerment of radical Islam escalated by September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and events aftermath, provided the support of the Western countries for peaceful reforms to avoid the consequences in the form of radicalization. Those events have accentuated the dangers of political stagnation and religious radicalism and spurred the need for restructuring educational arrangements and redefining the role of religion in education and across the society. The rising tide of Islamic extremism (militant and otherwise) and emergence of al-Qā'idah and the Islamic State (IS) in the light of Wahhābī and Salafī missionary activism paved the way for the involvement of states to minimize the role of religious leaders in education (for detailed examples see chapter ► [“Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia”](#)). The pathology of extremism, however, reveals that the decline in the economic fortunes – in the Middle East due to dependency on oil revenue, corruption and mismanagement which resulted in high unemployment contributed significantly to increase of militant activism. The growth of poverty as a result of a skewed income distribution across many countries in the Muslim world also paved the ground for the emergence of religious extremism.

The *domestic actors* which triggered interests and provided arguments for a need for the reform within education include NGOs and political factions which in the light of global changes and emergence of religious extremism gained the grounds for their activities. Such activities also introduced the notion of civil society as one of the stakeholders in education in the Muslim world. The new form of the civil society, with its need for the organization appeared against traditional welfare-based *waqf* institutions. The development of this new civil society was partially shaped by globalization, socioeconomic development, existing political culture, and, crucially, by the willingness of the existing regimes of power to tolerate it.

The trend of liberalization of the economy across the Muslim countries was partially justified based on legitimacy of the private ownership in Islam, promulgated as a trajectory towards democratization. In many countries, the top-down decentralization and privatization were introduced which in many cases met the bottom-up initiatives by the civil society. The liberalization of the economy, however, contributed greatly to the emergence of the Muslim middle class, which has appeared as a major actor within education. The private schools with Islamic profiles used the economic and political open space to introduce new educational institutions. The Muslim bourgeoisie base “their significant degree of autonomy on very extensive

wealth acquired initially largely from state expenditure but increasingly from productive investment and commercial activity – wealth that has in any case become a factor in its own right not dependent on government distribution” (Ehteshami and Wright 2012:19).

Although, it is an accepted premise that there is no linear direct correlation between economic development and democratization, the emergence of the new Muslim middle class is considered as one of the forces to facilitate the changes in the society and increase the need for educational reform. Economic development – as a result of social and political changes exhibited in the increase in literacy, access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its impact on the distribution of social and economic power, and rapid urbanization – is regarded the main drive behind the democratization in the Muslim world and brought by the new independent Muslim middle class. It introduced changes to the dynamics of what Ehteshami and Wright (ibid.) call “power resources landscape”, granting the private sector power over resources and take part in the decision-making. Paradoxically, the ICT, while promoting the diversity, also is used as the tool for propagation of various – and in some cases aggressively antagonistic – ideologies.

In the similar vein, the changes within education across the Muslim world were also lead by the external factors, namely, the international political economy and such global actors as the United Nations and the Washington Consensus. The endorsement of those international actors used as a legitimate ground for the reform and a token of following the international discourse. Hence, most domestic policies were formed and reformed in an amalgamation of the international factors and domestic needs and responses. The external environment’s impact was not solely on the domestic policies within education but through the lending/borrowing of policies, and “best practices” played a crucial role in changing the educational landscape in the Muslim world. Henceforth, the notion of education as it tied to the economic growth and development helped to inhabit and enhance the changes within education as endeavors to be recognized by the global political economy and to appear in various international benchmarks.

Those changes also to the greater extent was a result of globalization – economic and cultural – which endorsed the western values as global and universal and introduced a culture of accountability and transparency, fostering diversity and choice.

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## **Education and New Domains of Contestation in the Muslim World**

European colonialism is one of the most significant experiences in the history of the Muslim world. While some scholars (Lewis 2003; Palmer 2007) argue that the Muslim world fell behind the West because of its own problems, problems inherent *within* Islam, and not because of colonialism, Western colonialism did create a historical situation in which the universalist drive of the West developed a conflictual relationship with Islamic ideas of selfhood and belonging. Hence, as Western modernity was introduced into the Islamic lands under a colonial mandate, the

resistance to its Western-ness also became inscribed within the cultural, political, and religious debates of the Islamic world (Raja 2010: 101). Despite the variations in the colonial experience, the impact of colonialism is vividly visible in post-colonial educational practices across the Muslim world. Chapter ► [“Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Islam, and Education”](#) provides a critical overview of the colonial practices within the education of Muslims and the Islamic education. The chapter also provides an in-depth analysis of the dilemmas and challenges of the Muslims’ education during the colonial and subsequently in post-colonial periods. Two different colonial and post-colonial experiences of two countries (Egypt and Singapore) are provided instances to illustrate the impact of the colonial heritage resulting dilemmas and challenges from the social imaginaries, policies, and practices.

While Islam as a global force is multifarious and far more diverse than could be essentialized, it is often treated as monolithic religion and ideology. The diversity among Muslims is visible in variation of the orientations and the perspectives of various groups of Muslims towards education. The focus of the discussion in chapter ► [“Muslim Orientations and Views on Education”](#) is to provide a category of various orientations among Muslims based on their educational preferences and priorities. Undeniably, while the labelling of various orientations is far from unproblematic and categories anything but mutually exclusive, nevertheless provides an analytical tool to enhance understanding on how different groups of Muslims react to various social and political realities. The chapter thoroughly examines four Muslim orientations, labelled as the secularist, the traditionalist, the modernist/liberalist, and the fundamentalist and their responses to the role of Islam as a religion in general and *sharī‘ah* in particular, over social and individual life of the believers. Those orientations are placed somewhere in a spectrum which starts with pure religious education and ends with secular, making among other combinations a hybrid of modern forms with religious matters possible.

The complex history of relations between Islam and the West has more often than not is known for rivalry and clashes. However, it is often neglected that there have been a number of rich and fertile encounters, in the realms of life and ideas alike. One of the features of our historical memories, as deplorable as it may be, has been the way in which conflicts overshadow peaceful experiences and reproaches down the voices of comprehension.

Meanwhile, interpretations of local tensions and disputes as manifestations of a global confrontation feed into a “transnational discourse” on “bloody borders” between Muslim World and the Western World. This tendency is carried sometimes by the “diaspora” of communities and nations concerned, espoused by a number of religious organizations and, in certain cases, by policymakers in the light of recent incidents of violence (Mitri 2007: 24). The clashes and co-operations between the Muslim World and the Western World is discussed in chapter ► [“Islam and the West: Clashes and Cooperations,”](#) where the role of Greek philosophy in forming the Islamic philosophy and in turn the role of Muslim intellectual legacy in Western renaissance are given as examples of such collaborations. The over-simplified Islam-West dichotomy is critically reviewed and the notion of knowledge and education as it affected and enhanced by the co-operations are further detailed.

Utilizing the prisms of Orientalism and essentialism, some European and American scholars insisting on the historical and cultural specificity of the concept of civil society and argue that it is a unique product of Europe and thereby have doubted the existence of civil society in Muslim contexts. Other scholars used the notion of *waqf*-based institutions as an adversary counterargument. Chapter ▶ [“Islam, State, Civil Society, and Education”](#) unfolds the much debated inquiry on civil society in the Muslim world. Using cases from Egypt, Iran, and Indonesia, the chapter discusses both the circumstances under which Islamic educational institutions contribute to education for civility and that enables a perspective on the contentious questions of the role of Islam in education and Muslim institutions in modern societies. The chapter also reveals the contested nature of *waqf* as an instrument by which the independent research and education in the Muslim world made possible. This also explains the historical frictions between the states and ‘*ulamā*’ in controlling *waqf*, as an economic enterprise.

Albeit the fact that on the theoretical level Islam emphasizes the right, importance of and access to education unequivocally, both for women and men, the reality is severed from that ideal across the Muslim world. There is abundance of examples in the Muslim world where women initiated educational institutions, not only for women but also for male religious scholars (‘*ulamā*’). One may recall Fāṭimah al-Fihri who founded al-Qarawīyīn mosque and *madrasah* in 859 CE, in Morocco which is credited as the oldest existing, continually operating, and the first degree-awarding educational institution in the world; Dafīyah Khātūn who built numerous *khānqāhs* (congregation venues for *ṣūfī tariqahs*) and *madrasahs* in Damascus and Aleppo (Ruggles 2000: 86); or the Timurīd princess Gawhar Shād (d. 1457) and the way she exploited codes of piety and politics of the fifteenth century to reinterpret and use the religious expression for her activities and served as role model of a woman who was highly engaged in social issues, not least through building *madrasahs* for male clergies (Arjmand 2016: 23). Rizvi (2000) argues that Ṣafāvīd women, through their patronage to various public spaces, mostly shrines and *madrasahs*, claimed their authority over society and made themselves visible in the public realm. The royal women emerge as autonomous actors and exploit patronage to not only emphasize the active role of women in a Muslim society but also their share of an otherwise patriarchal structure of the government.

Despite these historical facts which illustrate that Muslim women have played pivotal role in creation of *madrasahs* and other educational institutions of learning and despite the achievement of Muslim women in higher education in recent decades, the access of women to education and labor market in the Muslim world still is a major concern. Using the case of Egypt, chapter ▶ [“Women and Education in Muslim Context”](#) explores women’s access to education and the extent women literacy – through mainstream formal secular and Islamic institutions – contributes to the national development and economic growth.

Sexual attitudes and behaviors are the renditions of religion, culture, politics, and economic relations which in turn not only affect the social discourse but also the practices of sexuality at the individual level. As explained and discussed in detail in chapter ▶ [“Islam, Sexualities, and Education,”](#) sexuality is a mirror of the conditions

and concomitances of a society at any moment in time. Discrepancies between Islamic doctrines and applications, changing relations between the sexes, various socioeconomic and political transformations, and competing claims for legitimacy and authenticity further add to the contested domain of sexuality and increase tensions experienced by Muslims navigating the growing gap between expectations and reality. The traditional heterosexual perspective in traditional Islam is increasingly challenged and the notion of sexual freedom as part of human right is travelling across the Muslim world. Same-sex desires, practices and lenient attitudes towards it in the Arab Muslim world are not alien topics among the Muslims across various societies. There is an abundance of literature to suggest the existence of such practices as early as the first centuries of Islam and same-sex practices have been an inseparable part of Islamic, Arab, Persian, and Ottoman medieval literary writings of various genres. While this vernacular narrative of predominantly male same-sex love is rooted deep in the culture and has turned into a well-established literary tradition – more pronounced among *ṣūfī belles lettres* – modern same-sex desires and practices are largely affected by the Western notion of homosexuality notably visible in literature of the twentieth century. Over the last decades in various Middle Eastern countries, as is the case in a number of African and Asian countries, homosexuality has increasingly been reconstructed as a “Western” practice that is “imported” from the west and threatens the social and moral order. This is despite extensive evidence to suggest sexual relations between people of the same sex throughout these countries, even if the way these practices and cultures are labelled and understood varies from place to place and may well differ from Western homosexual identities and cultures.

The conservative sexual mores that are associated today with Islam are ironically not a reflection of longstanding popular attitudes in Islamic countries, but are a result of Western influences introduced in the colonial era. According to Abu Khalil (1993), the well-known sexual conservatism of the modern Middle East is due more to Victorian Puritanism than to Islamic mores. It is quite inaccurate to attribute prevailing sexual mores in present-day Arab society to Islam. Originally, Islam did not have the same harsh Biblical judgment about homosexuality as Christianity. The Christian West produced homophobia, as an ideology of hostility toward people who are homosexual (Neill 2009: 299). In the eyes of medieval Western writers, the fact that Islam was allegedly tolerant and even encouraging towards sexual practices between people of the same-sex was yet another indication of Islamic self-indulgence (Daniel 1993: 164). The impact of colonialism on the change in attitude toward same-sex desires and its consequences on the penal codes is still visible in some of the former colonies. For instance, Jordan until 2003 had no penal code that criminalized same-sex actions (Jama 2014). That being said, honor killing in Jordan for homosexuality functions as the social prosecution code.

Post-colonialism and the development of the orientalist image led to the enhancement of the Arab masculine image. This, however, failed to affect the dynamics of the homoerotic practices. The construction of penal and criminal codes on sexuality across the Middle East is an indicator of the official and institutionalized narrative of sexuality through the state. Zuhur (1988: 11) offers a comparative study and in-depth analysis for

historical and contemporary laws in the Middle East. She provides a historical account and insight into the amalgamation of the tribal, religious, colonial laws and their impact on the existing criminal/penal codes in the region in the Middle East and maintains that in some of the Muslim countries, the penal codes are largely influenced by the colonial law. Again, in Jordan, for instance, which was under the Ottoman Empire, homosexuality was decriminalized, however, between 1922 and 1945 the country was a subject mandated by the League of Nations when homosexuality was criminalized. However, in 1951 the new nation made homosexuality legal again (Jama 2014).

The questions of democracy and human rights have always been a contested concern among Muslims. Some scholars argue that the notion of political participation as one of the major principles of modern society has always exercised among Muslims; others referring to the traditional authoritarian absolutism (tribal oligarchy) in many Islamic Arab countries argue that the elitist nature of such participation is far from modern democratic notion of participation.

Proponents of a vernacular Islamic democracy emphasize the institution of *shūrā* as the Islamic version of participatory and democratic institution. However, *majlises* (congressional councils) informed by the traditional Arab-inspired features and values of egalitarianism, also known as “desert democracy” have been futile to assure and accommodate such questions as minority rights and – among other things – access to education. Globalization and spread of western values, on the other hand, has resulted in an awareness about and demand for such values as Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Chapter ► [“Islam and Democracy in Muslim Educational Settings”](#) explores the development of such discourse in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iran predominantly Muslim countries which represent various models of reconciliation of religion and democracy, through education.

The inauguration of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1945 waked the ambition among the leaders of the Muslim world to create an organization to take the lead for “the best interests of the Muslim *ummah*” (ISESCO 2015: 5). The Third Islamic Conference (Mecca, 25–28 January 1981) decided to set up a new international Islamic body named The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) which shall operate, alongside other joint Islamic action organs, within the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (renamed Organization of Islamic Cooperation). With 52 member states, ISESCO is one of the largest Islamic IGOs specialized in the fields of Muslim culture, education, and science.

The shift in the aid discourse in the dawn of the twenty-first century – among other issues – from bilateral to multilateral cooperation, highlighted the role of the faith-based Islamic INGOs and NGOs and whether those actors could detach the development activities from proselytizing religious values to maintain a non-discriminatory approach to aid. In an endeavor to divulge how Islamic INGOs maintain the course of their actions in tune with such directives, Chapter ► [“The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, \*Ummah\* Unity, and Children’s Rights to Education”](#) employs a thematic content analysis of agreements by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in the period between 1981 and 2014. The chapter shows the increasing



trend of synchronization between declarations of the United Nations and those issued by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Islamic notion of *ummah*, a transnational global community of Muslims, is perceived as one of the earliest endeavors towards globalization. Using *da'wah* (call or invitation to Islam through the proselytization) and commerce, Muslims gained the credit for what Abu-Lughod (1991) calls archaic globalization. Despite this early initiative, modern globalization, with its new media and ICT, migration of ideas and people and universal education models posed serious challenges for the Muslims, both within their national borders and as part of international community alike. Chapter ► [“Islam, Globalizations, and Education”](#) explores Islam as a global force affecting and affected by other globalized forces in a competitive educational prospect and the labor market. The persisting enquiry among many Muslims is the actual usage of the Islamic education in a competing world ramified by economic gain and consumption culture. The chapter further elaborates the various educational hybrid arrangements, both facilitated and restricted by globalization and the dual contesting role of globalization in both imposing western models and promoting the diversity.

Using media as a tool for propagation of religion and ideology is not an alien phenomenon in the Muslim world. A good example in recent era is the Iranian Revolution of 1979 which Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994) call it, “a big revolution with a small media,” when the mobilization was coordinated by the religious leaders using traditional networks of social communication, enhanced and extended by an innovative use of various contemporary “small media,” including photocopied leaflets and audiocassette tapes. Iranian uprising following the presidential election in 2009, the Green Movement was managed through blogs and Facebook (Alavi 2005). The Arab Spring and Egyptian uprising in 2010 is described as a “Twitter Revolution” (Idle and Nunns 2011). The internet and new media is used extensively in almost all around the Muslim world as a tool to help shape various forms of uprisings and granted masses an alternative media to make their voices heard, often against the dominant meta-narratives which monopolized means of communication and information. New media was also used by Islamist groups across the Muslim world and in the West as a tool to recruit new members. In Europe, more than elsewhere, self-recruitment for IS has taken root, mainly through online channels and concerning small self-styled groups rather than activism at the mosque. The Islamic State alone has managed to make the most of social media (Facebook and Twitter in particular), both as specific tools for recruitment and as instruments that are coordinated with other media to achieve broader goals. “While it is clear that IS has not used social media in an innovative way, it has managed to include them in a wider scheme: they are part of the overall media strategy that IS has developed giving proof of remarkable competence. In the hands of IS, social media have become ‘story telling’ instruments, ensuring high circulation in virtual places where fighters share their experiences from the battlefield (Maggioni and Magri 2015: 88)”. Also, use of the internet and the new media as an outlet for self-expression in otherwise traditionally conservative societies used as a political tool which in turn sparked a series of institutional and legal changes to manage and control the cyberspace.

New media and political situations also allow further possibilities to acquire authority. For example, “Cyber *muffī*s,” who give *fatwās* via the Internet, and often have unclear backgrounds, draw new audiences (Wiegers 2004: 327). These are parts of the discussions explored in Chapter ► “[Information and Communication Technology and Education in Muslim Context](#)” which also provides the use of ICT as an instrument for informal education and a call for *da‘wah*, and cyber religion *vis-à-vis* its usage in formal education.

The increased access to new media networks from the Muslim center has had an important effect on religious discourse in the periphery. Muslims in the periphery are often encouraged to emulate practices of the countries in center. As noted earlier, globalization and its respective forces and institutions also assumed greater role for civil society as one of the major stakeholders in the policy-making. The introduction of the human rights – among other areas – into the development discourse embarked the rights of the religious – and also in some cases the ethnic – minorities in the countries with Islamic profile. At the doctrinal level, Islamic jurisprudence divides the world into *Dār al-Islām* (Abode of Islam) and *Dār al-Ḥarb* (House of War), the latter subject to *jizyah* – a per capita annual tax levied by the Islamic state on non-Muslim subjects (*dhimmīs*) residing in Muslim lands under the Islamic law. However, the development of the nation-states and the replacement of “subjects” with “citizens” and subsequently obligations of the states to provide and guarantee rights of all the citizens within their political borders, made the implementation of the *jizyah* impossible. The recent use of *jizyah* by IS (*Dā‘ish*) in its proclaimed caliphate and ill treatment of religious minorities brought the question of religious minorities in the Muslim countries to the forefront of debates and discussions. *Jizyah* system proved a challenge many times when, for instance, in the process of creation of Pakistan, Abū ‘Alā’ Mawdūdī argued for re-imposing the *jizyah* on non-Muslims. Despite this and other examples, most Muslims encompass *jizyah* as inappropriate for modern nation-states against the human rights and democratic values. Hence, the contested question of non-Muslims minorities living in the Muslim countries as discussed in Chapter ► “[Education of Religious Minorities in Muslim Countries](#)” wherein various educational arrangements by different countries are discussed in detail.

The conceptual division of *Dār al-Islām* as opposed to the *Dār al-Ḥarb*, albeit impracticalities embarked a radical interpretation of *jihād* (the sacred war) as the armed struggle of Muslims against infidels. Hence the radical Islamist movements since 1980s and onwards appeared with the intention of the military confrontation with non-Muslims. *Madrasahs*, which at the absence of functioning formal education – among other places – in Afghanistan and Pakistan started to assume the responsibility over education, were used to spread seeds of militant Islamism. Despite the fact that many of the traditionally militant organizations, such as Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after decades of armed struggle turned towards non-violent means of post-Islamism, nevertheless the militant Islam did not cease to exist.

The subsequent events after 9/11 and invasion of the United States and its allies to Afghanistan and Iraq started a new era of ideological encounter between Islam and the West. The discourse surrounding the War on Terror, along with the relentless recurrence of the neo-Crusaderism, nourished the idea of Muslims as potential threat

to the Western civilization and incompatibility of Islam with Western values and lifestyle. Chapter ► [“Islamic Fundamentalism, Terrorism, and Education”](#) discusses the emergence of religious resurgence and subsequent turn of the events which fostered Islamic fundamentalism. The contested role of Islamic institutions of learning in formation of the fundamentalism is explored along with the development of Islamic militancy which nurtured the discourse of Islamic terrorism in the West.

Islam with its respective educational traditions and institutions is a major global player in the World System. Chapter ► [“Traditional and Modern Muslim Education at the Core and Periphery: Enduring Challenge”](#) explores Islam and education in relation to such contested queries as (de-)secularization, (re-)sacralization within a synthesis of the global core and local periphery in a dichotomy of the internal needs verses external pressures.

While Europe is struggling to cope with one of the largest waves of migration in its history, the rise of Muslim transnationalism across the Western world has introduced new dynamics both to the Muslims and the host countries. Chapter ► [“Migration, Diaspora, Muslim Transnational Communities, and Education”](#) opens with a focus on the notion of migration (*hijrah*) in Islam and its intriguing role in the development of the Islamic civilization. As mentioned earlier, from a doctrinal prism, the West is perceived *Dār al-Ḥarb* (House of War) in which the Muslim life would substantially be different. While some Muslim groups argue for leaving the West to live in a Muslim land, others note it as a *hijrah*, for a sublime cause such as education or *da‘wah*. The chapter also details the creation of the Islamic transnationalism and the way various groups of Muslims try to introduce changes within the formal education system in order to educate their religion, culture, and language to their children.

Intergenerational issues, however, introduced new areas of contestation among the Muslim communities in the West, which also pertain to questions about the boundaries of whose and what Islam is and how to be practiced in a diaspora. Muslims at diaspora come face to face with the myriad shapes and colors of global Islam, forcing their religion to hold a mirror up to its own diversity. These encounters often play an important role in processes of identity formation, prompting Muslims to relativize and compare their self-understandings of Islam (Mandaville 2001: 126).

Muslim communities in the West have started to establish formal networks, which is needed to achieve an impact, both broadly and within the community. Hence, organizational forms have to be found which can operate within the parameters set by the “host” society (Nielsen 2003: 32). It is probably no coincidence that, at least in the public space, the immigrant generation has had some success in establishing such formal networks, and in imprinting themselves on the political and other agendas – including their educational demands and needs.

Policies pertaining the Muslims in the West are varied. The political discourse in some countries – like Sweden and Denmark – leaned towards multiculturalism, some argued for assimilation – France – and other for integration – The Netherlands. Western public space turned into a scene of normative confrontations and mass media, recognized as an independent pillar a democratic society, nurtured the fear of Muslim immigrants (Kamali 2014: 78). Kamali (ibid.) argues that, the

disproportionate representation of Muslims in such events as of “honor killing” was characterized as a part of the “Muslim immigrant culture,” and “Muslims were categorized as potential perpetrators of ‘honor killings’ and the entire power apparatus joined in to ‘protect the poor, immigrant women and girls’ from their brothers and fathers”, to their efforts in what Abu-Lughod (2002) calls “the mission of saving Muslim women from their aggressive men.” Such constructed immigrant culture had a geographic location and was related to non-European Muslims immigrants to justify and reproduce the images of “us” and “the others.” However, and paradoxically, the existence of “the Muslim other” shaped the construction of a Western identity (Martinot 2000) where the subordination of “the others” was contingent upon the reproduction of a “superior us.” Education of migrants in the West was seen as means to transfer the Western values and create new generation of “Western Muslims.” This would be an alternative to dilute the line between Islam as practiced in the “centre” Muslim societies and the one practice in the “periphery” of the transnational Muslim communities.

While the formal education and respective policies are pivotal in preparing children of Muslim immigrants in the West to function in the society, the informal education and socialization are meant to address the religious needs of the Muslim diasporic communities. Chapter ► [“Islamic Children’s Literature: Informal Religious Education in Diaspora,”](#) discusses education of the Muslim immigrant children through the informal means within transnational community of Muslims in Europe and North America.

Through an extensive content analysis, the chapter explores and scrutinizes the brand of Islamic children’s literature produced in diaspora, in order to discern how such supplementary educational tool as children literature responds to concerns of Muslim families in educating their children. Rather than understanding this literature in terms of mere adaptations of novel formats, the chapter examines Islamic children’s literature as a mode for cultural negotiation in and of itself. Popular among various groups of Muslims at diaspora, Islamic children literature disseminates core religious values which are increasingly staged through vivid narrative and graphic representation, and in inclusive appropriation of Euro-American literary formats such as the detective story, the world of sports, the comic book, the fable and fairy tale. Such innovative formats invite culturally inclusive depictions of diasporic existence, in an open and vulnerable exploration of what Muslim identity and Islamic faith may mean for a young mind. In the process, the borders become less distinct between the brand of Islamic children’s literature and an emergent literature depicting the lives of young Muslims with less explicit religious or ideological purposes.

While the Muslim diaspora and transnational communities are representation of the global community of *ummah*, the reflection of solidarity of *ummah* has been more explicit in the traditional Muslim cities. The rendition of *ummah*, in the traditional environment targeted a communal result of the collective objectives and aspirations.

Symbolically Islamic architecture is an expression of the unity of *tawhīd* and *ummah*, whose function is to lead man to the higher stage of being, to transform the

invisible notions into a visible forms, to convey the perennial Truth into the physical realm of manifestation and to exemplify, through symbolism, the primordial images and archetypes. Through such symbolic elements, Islamic architecture achieves what could be called an “architectural alchemy”, epitomizing Islamic principles and traditions into functions.

Islamic educational spaces are visual manifestations of the Islamic culture adapted to the vernacular features of the Muslim societies. The notion of *tawhīd*, which is interpreted as the “unity in multiplicity” and “multiplicity in unity”, has laid the foundation of an architectural model for *madrasah* as the main institution of education in Islam. Chapter ► “Islamic Educational Spaces: Architecture of *Madrasah* and Muslim Educational Institutions” provides a historical development of the *madrasah* architecture and its development across various parts of the Muslim world. The chapter discusses various forms of *madrasah* architecture affected by both climatic and cultural factors. Although not mutually exclusive, the taxonomy includes: 1. Persian *madrasah* model, inspired by the Khurasāni architecture which uses the four-*īwān* model for *madrasahs* in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Central Asia; 2. The Anatolian model which served as the foundation of the subsequent Ottoman Model and developed in Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Jordan; 3. The Egyptian model –affected by the ‘Abbāsīd architecture- was developed under the Fātimīds and Mamlūks in Egypt; and 4. Moorish/Maghribī model with its diminutive sizes spread across the Maghrib: Morocco, Tunisia and transferred to Andalusia. Although most modern educational institutions in the Muslim world is inspired by Western architecture, the Islamic institutions of learning in the Muslim world still follow the principles of those models. Hence, the chapter aims to identify the taxonomy and common architectural characteristics of Islamic educational spaces in order to enhance understanding on the interactions among space, education and Islamic values.

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## Conclusion

“Religion” – Islam – and “tradition” have been reinterpreted and appropriated within education both in the official discourse and in the grassroots levels and have been introduced into the non-formal changes and formal reforms. The needs for reform have come through “domestic actors” and endorsed by “external actors” and in many cases through their mutual interactions.

A slow process of democratization within the education is proceeding across the the Muslim World. A series of top-down democratization initiatives attributed to the global trend of – social and economic – liberalization and bottom-up demands of the local stakeholders have affected the process of education changes across the Muslim countries.

A new mode of governance is introduced to synthesize the traditional role of state – still in practice in the region in the form of new-tribal, rentier, or based on traditional local interpretations of Islam – with the global economic and technological advancements. This in part has been an endeavor to retain ultimate social and political control, to suit interests of traditional power factions and provide freedom to

allow the economic growth and is introduced to education through the modification of the objectives of education, organizational and administrative changes, as well as new modes of financing.

A new concept of “civil society” is fostered which has challenged the Islamic *waqf*-based notion of civil society and has introduced a new domain for social activism. The emergence of the new civil society contributed to a socioeconomic development which in turn is reflected in the form of democratization – including recognition of minority rights, assuming greater social role for women and the likes – within these countries and escalated the need for the change, among other areas in education.

As a result of social changes and economic growth, a new middle class has emerged which has contributed to the changes in the educational landscape across the Muslim world. This “independent Muslim bourgeoisie” is a major actor in the social and education reforms in the Muslim world, where it sees its interests constrained by the existing authoritarian systems, and especially when allies for reform are found within the regimes. This development also contributed to the introduction of entrepreneurship within the education and has influenced the trend of democratization and provided competitiveness and more educational alternatives and opportunities.

There is synchronization between domestic actors (both state and civil society) and international actors which inhibit or enhance the chance for and/or process of the education reforms. This has resulted in internationalization of the local reform discourse. The local changes, hence, are accommodated within greater international discursive practices such as Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and Lifelong Learning (LLL).

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# Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Islam, and Education

Charlene Tan

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## Abstract

This chapter provides a critical overview of Western colonialism and its impact on Islam and Islamic education from the nineteenth century. The colonization of Muslim countries has left lasting and indelible marks on Islam and Islamic education. Not only did colonialism call into question the domination of the Islamic discourse in Muslim countries, it also imposed on these countries secular laws, modern state apparatuses and Western-type education. Consequently, these changes generated a number of dilemmas and challenges for the Muslims during and after the colonial period. In the case of Islamic education, the key debates and controversies center on the place and mission of Islamic schools against a backdrop of independence, state-building, and modernization; the relationship between and integration of “secular” subjects and religious subjects; and the “right” way to reform the Islamic schools. This chapter explains how various and competing social imaginaries of Islam and Islamic education such as “Orientalism” and “reformist Islam” were constructed and promoted by both the

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colonial powers and Muslims. To illustrate the existence of and resulting dilemmas and challenges from the social imaginaries, appropriate examples drawn from former colonized countries such as Egypt and Singapore will be given.

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**Keywords**

Islamic education · Singapore · *Madrasah* · Post-colonialism · Colonialism

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## Introduction

The colonialism of Muslim territories by European powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has left lasting and indelible marks on Islam and Islamic education. Not only did colonialism challenge the domination of Islam in the state and society, it also imposed on these countries major changes that had far-reaching repercussions. This chapter provides an overview to the nature and impact of the colonialism of Muslim territories by European powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first part of the chapter discusses the major changes introduced by the colonial governments and the responses from the Muslims. The second part of this chapter highlights the example of Singapore to illustrate the impact of European colonialism on Muslims and the latter's reactions to colonialism.

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## Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Islam, and Islamic Education

The political hegemony of European powers began before the nineteenth century. A turning point was the signing of the Treaty of Carlowitz (1699) by the Ottomans which ended 16 years of hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League (Austria, Poland, Venice, and Russia). The defeat of the Ottoman empire to Western powers quickened the pace of Western colonialism over many Muslim territories (Janin 2005). Western colonialism reached its height in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Whether in India (under the British), Indonesia, and the Malaysian archipelago (under the Dutch), the Caucasus and Turkestan (under the Russians), or the Maghreb (France), most Muslim countries came under direct or indirect colonial rule. Janin (2005, p. 129) lists some of the Muslim territories colonized by Western powers across the world: Indonesia (after 1602, where the Dutch East India Company was formed), Bengal (the British East India Company took possession of Bengal and its surrounding lands in 1765 and subsequently colonized the entire Indian subcontinent), Egypt (briefly occupied by the forces of Napoleonic France in 1798 and occupied by the British in 1882 because it was unable to pay its debts), Algeria (occupied by the French in 1830 and eventually became part of France itself), the coastal regions of Yemen (which came under British rule in 1839; the British protectorate in the Yemen-Oman-Persian Gulf region eventually expanded to embrace 23 Sultanates, Emirates, and tribal regimes),

Tunisia (became a French protectorate in 1881), much of Africa (in 1884 the Berlin West Africa Conference effectively divided the continent among the European powers), Sudan (in 1898 when the British general Kitchener captured the Dervish capital of Omdurman), Libya (conquered by the Italians in 1911), and Morocco (became a French protectorate in 1912). By 1920, the only independent Muslim states remaining were Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Central Arabia (Najd), the Hejaz, and northern Yemen (Ruthven 2006; for a good reading of Europe, Islam and world history, see Hodgson 1993).

Western colonialization brought about a “revolutionary shift” in the sense of a “total eclipse of Muslim military, political and intellectual life” (Panjwani 2004, p. 22). Among the major changes introduced by the colonial governments to the Muslim territories were secular laws and Western-type education. First, the colonial governments imposed *secular laws* that were supported by foreign state apparatuses, modes of administration and social institutions. Whether it was a direct and assimilationist colonial strategy (by the French, Italians and Portuguese) or an indirect and integrationist strategy (by the British), the colonial governments replaced the indigenous laws that were based on or influenced by Islamic precepts with secular ones. The exception was family laws that were left to the administration and control of the local religious leaders and populations (Daun et al. 2004). Secular laws were underpinned by the ideology of *secularism* that was primarily characterized by its exaltation of human reason over divine revelation and the separation of religion and politics (Cook 1999; for a good discussion of the origin and meanings of secularism, see Elmessiri 2002; Keane 2002; Ten 2010).

It is important to note that an emphasis on human reason is not necessarily incompatible with Islamic worldviews. Al-Attas (1999, p. 15) points out that Islam defines a human being as a rational being with “the capacity for understanding speech, and the power responsible for the formulation of meaning – which involves judgement, discrimination, distinction and clarification, and which has to do with the articulation of words or expressions in meaningful pattern.” But human reason should not be exalted above Islamic knowledge. Muslim leaders at the four world conferences on Islamic Education from 1977 to 1982 reminded Muslim students to “think precisely and logically but let their thoughts be governed by their spiritual realisation of truth as found in the Qur’an and the Sunnah so that their intelligence is guided in proper channels and does not stray” (Erfan and Valie 1995, p. 35). By learning about the proper places of things in the order of creation, Islamic education strives to lead human beings to the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence (Al-Attas 1999). It is evident that the Islamic conception of human reason is potentially in conflict with the secular conception. Secularism entails a man-centered (anthropocentric) outlook where “the mind, being autonomous and self-referential, needs no divine inspiration from above, for all knowledge comes from below and from within” (Elmessiri 2002, p. 70).

The second key characteristic of secularism was the separation of religion and politics. As explained by Keane (2002, p. 29):

Secularists suppose that during the past few generations religious illusions have gradually disappeared, and that this is fortunate since the extrusion of religious sentiments from such domains as law, government, party politics and education – the separation of church and state – releases citizens from irrational prejudices and promotes open-minded tolerance, itself a vital ingredient of a pluralist democracy.

Consequently, the state leaves much of the religious obligation to the individuals and respective religious groups, thereby relegating the “religious” to the private sphere (Tan and Abbas 2012). Arguing that one of the most damaging aspects of European colonialism was the deliberated deterioration of indigenous cultural norms by secularism, Cook (1999, p. 340) avers that secularism “is anathema to the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* (oneness), where all aspects of life whether spiritual or temporal are consolidated into a harmonious whole” (see also: Ali 1984; Ashraf 1987; Gauhar 1982).

The second major and related change was the introduction of “modern” *Western-type education*. Such an education was identifiable by the promotion of the language of the colonial powers (such as English, French, or Dutch), limited enrolment to a select number of locals, and the dual nature of the colonial school system. For example, in the case of French rule in Africa, African schools were open to the masses, while European schools were reserved to educate “an African elite that could eventually fill the lower ranks of the colonial civil service” (White 1996, p. 12). Likewise, the British imposed a “separate but equal” education policy where technical and vocational training was separated from purely academic training; the Africans were confined to receiving vocational training with an agricultural emphasis (White 1996). Secular education was privileged where it strived principally for the development of the rational life of every individual, premised on a form of reality that is restricted to sensory experience, scientific procedure or processes of logic without regard for religious matters (Cook 1999; Halstead 1995). As a result, Islamic education was ignored and left to the management and discretion of Muslim organizations and individuals.

Underpinning Western-type education is *modernization*, interpreted by many Muslims during and after colonization to mean not just modern education, technology, and industry, but also a Western style of life (Daun et al. 2004). It is important to clarify that the terms “modernization” and “modernity” are not necessarily viewed pejoratively by Muslims. Theoretically, modernity, in the sense of globalization, progress, and development, is not necessarily incompatible with Islam (e.g., see Ahmad 1980; Moten 2005; Saeed 1999; Azra et al. 2007; Thobani 2007; Tan 2009).

Muslims believe that all knowledge comes from God and is received by human beings in two main categories: the rational sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-‘aqlīyyah*) or intellectual sciences, and the traditional sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-naqlīyyah*) or revealed knowledge. The former refers to knowledge that stems from human beings’ capacity for reason, sense perception, and observation; it includes “modern” disciplines such as logic, physics, metaphysics, geometry, arithmetic, medicine, geography, chemistry, biology, music, astronomy, and science of civilization (Alatas 2006). The second category of knowledge, on the other hand, focuses on knowledge that is obtained via

Revelation. At the empirical level, history informs us that “modernity” in the sense of possessing an achievement motive, supporting economic growth, scientific and technological advances, and increasing social mobility and political participation, is compatible with most Islamic traditions. In fact, these qualities had historically contributed to an Islamic renaissance between the ninth and fourteenth centuries that was distinguished by scientific, technological, and philosophical achievements (Moten 2005). Turner (1995) adds that Islamic civilization has contributed to the developments of Western science since modern Western science is embedded in the Greco-Islamic legacy. What many Muslims object to is not modernity *per se* but the association of modernization, secularization and globalization with “Westernization” as this is perceived to rob the *ummah* (Muslim community) of its religious and cultural heritage (Moten 2005).

Situated against the backdrop of Western imperialism and Western paradigms, modernization was interpreted as Westernization by many Muslims. As noted by Rahman (1982, p. 46), these Muslims believe that “the acquisition of modern knowledge be limited to the practical technological sphere, since at the level of pure thought Muslims do not need Western intellectual products – indeed, that these should be avoided, since they might create doubt and disruption in the Muslim mind, for which the traditional Islamic system of belief already provides satisfactory answers to ultimate questions of world view.”

The impact of secularism continued after colonialism where many political leaders of newly independent countries – themselves beneficiaries of Western-style, non-religious education – sought to modernize their countries along the lines of Western development paradigms, to varying degrees (Cook 1999). Such an attempt naturally led to different developments for different Muslim countries. For example, the secularizing progress in Iran was cut short by the Iranian revolution that reinstalled the Islamic influence in education, while Turkey experienced a gradual restoration of Islam in education after Atatürk’s modernizing efforts in the 1920s (Daun et al. 2004). Another interesting development was the diminished role of Islam in state and society. On the one hand, most Muslim governments incorporated some reference to Islam in their constitutions such as the requirement that the ruler must be a Muslim or that the *sharī‘ah* was a source of law. On the other hand, they replaced Islamic law (except family law) with legal systems inspired by Western secular codes, with the ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars) playing no or a marginal role in modern reforms (Esposito 2002).

In the area of education, Daun, Arjmand, and Walford (2004, p. 10) summarize the educational developments of Muslim countries after colonialism:

[E]ducation systems were ‘nationalised’ in that (a) the state determined the curriculum and the structure of the system, (b) the national language was introduced if it had not been the language of instruction in the colonial schools, and (c) Islamic matters were included in the curriculum of the state-run education. This strategy was used in most of the Middle East, North Africa, and Pakistan. In some countries, the state maintained the parallel system that had emerged during the colonial period when the secular school network expanded along with the Islamic schools (e.g. Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan). In countries with a less influential

Muslim tradition (e.g. countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and some Asian countries), the secular education system was maintained. In all of such countries, Islamic educational arrangements have been established outside of the state sphere.

The marginalization of Islamic education in the twentieth century continued into the twenty-first century as many countries felt the need to modernize their systems and institutions in an age of globalization. A legacy of colonialism in many Muslim countries was the perpetuation of “educational dualism” – “the existence of an Islamic educational system with little if any general educational content alongside a secular educational system with little if any Islamic content” (Azra et al. 2007, pp. 182–183). Highlighting the “knowledge dichotomy” between Islamic schools and public schools, Zakaria (2008) asserts that the Islamic educational system produces graduates who have a strong religious knowledge base and moral attitudes but lack a methodological approach, while general education produces graduates who are strong in methodological approaches but lack a religious knowledge base.

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## Responses from the Muslims

In response to the onslaught of colonialism, Muslims reacted in various ways. Ruthven (2006) identifies four general responses: the archaic, the neo-traditionalist, the reformist, and the modernist. Accordingly, the archaic response, exemplified by the revolts led by ‘Abd al-Qādir (1808–1883) in Western Algeria, represents the Muslims’ military struggles against and attacks on Western control. Neo-traditionalists such as Sayyid Abū al-‘Alā’ Mawdūdī (1903–1979) rejected modern Western civilization and argued for the need to return to the traditions of the earliest generation of Muslims as sources of authority and emulation. Reformists such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh, 1849–1905 in Egypt focused on strengthening Islam by internal reforms so as to assert itself more effectively against Western civilization. While modernists such as Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1917–1998) (founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in India) also saw the urgency for reform, they strove to rationalize Islamic thought and institutions in order to bring them into line with Western paradigms. Ruthven (2006, p. 291) explains the difference between the modernist and reformist as follows:

Whereas the modernist sought to clothe modernity in Islamic dress by proving that the Quran properly understood was no barrier to progress, the reformist sought to provide the Islam he knew and loved with modern clothes, believing that those aspects of modern or Western reality which seemed incompatible with Islamic teaching and practice must be discarded.

Corresponding to the above Muslim responses to Western colonialism were various approaches to Islamic education. Generally, the Muslims were divided in their views on the place of academic subjects *vis-à-vis* religious subjects in the Islamic education curriculum. There are two main groups: the “traditionalists” and the “reformists” (Sikand 2005). The “traditionalists” reflect the archaic and

neo-traditionalist responses by either resisting any attempt to introduce “modern” academic subjects to the Islamic schools or allow limited learning of these subjects with priority given to religious subjects. Some traditionalists argue that knowledge of elementary English, basic mathematical problems, and basic social sciences is helpful for the *madrasah* students to function in the modern world, but such learning should neither threaten nor dilute the religious character of the *madrasahs* (Sikand 2005).

On the other hand, “reformists” reflect the modernist and reformist responses by believing that *madrasahs* should be “modernized” through the learning of academic subjects within an Islamic framework so that the graduates, whether as future religious leaders or professionals holding secular jobs, are empowered with the wherewithal to provide answers to modern questions and challenges in a globalized world. The different positions of the traditionalists and reformists rest largely in their contrasting views on the role of *madrasahs*. The traditionalists see the mission of *madrasahs* as solely or primarily developing religious leaders and teachers for the Muslim community. On the other hand, the reformists believe that *madrasahs* should go beyond training future religious teachers and leaders to equipping their graduates with the skills for employment in the new economy, albeit within an Islamic worldview. To achieve this, some reformists suggest two streams of Islamic education:

In the first stream, students who want just a modicum of religious education and would then prefer to go on to join regular schools would be taught basic religious subjects along with ‘modern’ disciplines. The second stream would cater to students who wish to train as professional ‘*ulamā*’, and would focus on ‘religious’ subjects, teaching ‘modern’ disciplines only to the extent necessary for them to interpret Islam in the light of contemporary needs (Sikand 2005, p. 228).

To illustrate the implementation of and Muslim responses to colonial educational policy, the next section focuses on the experiences of Muslims in Singapore.

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## The Example of Singapore

A Muslim community existed in Singapore as far back as the fourteenth century. At that time, the Muslims were mainly South Asians and Arab Muslims who were converted under the influence of the Malay Sultans. When the British arrived in Singapore in the early nineteenth century, the island-city, then known as Temasek, was part of the flourishing Johore-Riau empire. Stamford Raffles, representing the East India Company, successfully negotiated with the Temenggong and Sultan Hussein of Johore to establish a British foothold in the island (Mutalib 2008). Consequently, Singapore was jointly shared by the British Resident, the Sultan, and the Temenggong from 1819 to 1824 and became a Crown Colony from 1824. The British government recognized the Malay sultans as guardians of the Islamic faith but introduced measures that curtailed the role of Islam in the state and society.

First, secular laws, together with modern state apparatuses, modes of administration, and social institutions were introduced whereas Islam was sidelined and relegated to the private sphere. When the British colonized Singapore, a growing and vibrant Muslim community, through the conversion of the sultans, already existed in Singapore. When Singapore became a British colony in the nineteenth century, the British, while recognizing the sultans as guardians of the Islamic faith, imposed secular laws over *shari'a* or Islamic laws and control the Islamic bureaucracy (Mutalib 2008).

The second major and related change was the introduction of Western-type education, characterized by English language as the medium of instruction, limited enrolment to a select number of Muslims, and the dual nature of the colonial school system. The colonial government aimed primarily at providing basic secular education to the masses and grooming a small group of educated elite from the Malay-Muslim aristocratic class. In the words of W. H. Treacher, the Resident of Perak: “[T]he vernacular education brought to their doors by a liberal government has not for its main object the manufacture of clerks, but that a lad who has gone through the school training is likely to be a better *padi* planter, trader, minor or sailor than one whose early years have been passed in idleness in the village lanes” (as cited in Zohri 1990, p. 7). Historian G. G. Hough observes that Raffles’ objective was “to improve the standard of education in the native languages, and to give in addition some instruction in English and in Western Science to those who seemed best able to profit by it. . . . His idea was to educate the country from the top downwards” (as cited in Mutalib 2008, p. 49). To help the Malay Muslims learn their indigenous language which was (and still is) Malay, the British rulers started the Malay-medium schools in the early nineteenth century. The first Malay-medium class was introduced in 1834 at the Singapore Free School for twelve boys, followed by other institutions such as the Malay Day Schools in 1856 and a College for training teachers for Malay schools between 1878 and 1895. However, while the Malay lessons were formally recognized as a part of the state curriculum, Qur’anic lessons were left entirely to the Muslim community who was responsible for paying the Islamic teachers. This approach led to the rise of a dual system of education in which secular state education came under the British government’s control, while Islamic education was left to the autonomy of the Muslim community.

Confronted with the colonial education policy, the Muslims chose the archaic response by rejecting the colonial government’s secular Malay-medium schools. At the same time, they turned to the Islamic schools (*madrasahs*) as a symbol and function of cultural and religious resistance towards the British. The Malay Muslims rejected the British educational agenda as many feared that their children would be anglicized, Christianized, de-Islamized, and deculturalized through schooling in Malay as well as English schools. The usage of the Bible as a schoolbook in the Malay schools in which Qur’anic lessons were held inadvertently entrenched this prejudice, leading to protests from the Muslim parents and strengthening their decision not to send their children to the Malay schools. All these factors resulted in the Malay-medium educational institutions being met with apathy, suspicion and resistance by the Malay Muslim community and led to their inevitable demise.

The preferred alternative for the Malay Muslims was schooling in the *madrasahs*. Islamic education, which started as private classes conducted by Islamic teachers at their homes and in mosques, predated the arrival of the British colonial powers in Singapore. *Madrasahs* that came into existence at the turn of the twentieth century were founded, sponsored and run by individuals and private organizations. *Madrasahs*, which already enjoyed considerable societal prestige and cooperation from the Muslim community, received greater community support with the arrival of the British. Rather than being marginalized or fading into oblivion with the establishment of the Malay schools, the *madrasahs* were functionalized by the Muslim community as a bastion against Western-type formal education and the religious and political encroachment of the colonials (for details, see Tan 2012). The ostensible activities of Christian missionaries, coupled with the admission of some Muslim students into Christian mission schools, further amplified the perception among the Muslim community that their religion was under siege and affirmed their desire to protect their own religious institutions. The *madrasahs*, besides fulfilling their original mission to educate the Muslim children in the Islamic faith and nurture religious elites for the community, became a symbol of challenge to the British social and educational agenda. In this way, they served the strategic and utilitarian ends of the Muslim community.

With Singapore's independence in 1965, the new government led by the People's Action Party (PAP) produced and legitimized an official discourse to enhance national economic development and foster social cohesion among the religious and ethnic communities. The government set out to replace the "vernacular schools" (i.e., the Malay-medium, Chinese-medium, and Indian-medium schools) with secular state schools (known as "national schools") for all Singaporeans. The political leaders of Singapore – many who were recipients of an elite English education implemented by the colonial government – continued the colonial educational system. Key elements of this system included promoting English as the first language and the medium of instruction for all subjects except the mother tongue languages, and a modern curriculum that emphasized English language, mathematics, sciences, and technology. Underpinning these educational reforms was a secular, technocratic, and functionalist view of education which stressed the need to optimize Singapore's limited manpower in order to produce a competent, adaptive and productive workforce. The national schools are secular in the sense that they do not teach or endorse religious education as a subject, apart from a short-lived experiment with "Religious Knowledge" in the 1980s that highlighted the moral teachings in various religious systems. They also require all students to wear common school uniforms which cannot be modified by the students regardless of religious beliefs.

In contrast to their resistance towards state schools during the colonial period, the majority of the Muslims in post-colonial Singapore adopt the reformist response as they see the merits of accepting both "secular" education and religious education. This is seen in the Muslims choosing to send their children to the national schools instead of the *madrasahs* in the years following independence. Economic considerations played a decisive role in this change of mind-set: *madrasah* graduates in the



mid-1960s and 1970s found themselves greatly disadvantaged in their employment opportunities and prospects as compared to those from the English schools. Centuries of rejection of the state schools by the Malay Muslim community had resulted in a disparity between the academic achievements and socio-economic status of the Malays and those of other ethnic groups – a gap that has persisted to the present day.

The reformist response was also evident in the *madrasah* leaders. Reacting to the decision of many Malay Muslims to prefer secular state schools to the *madrasahs*, some *madrasah* leaders took steps to reform the *madrasah*, so as to make it an attractive alternative to secular state schools and ensure the schools' social and economic survival and long-term viability. Some *madrasahs* have embraced and incorporated academic subjects into their curriculum since 1966 as they believe in preparing their students for the job market (Aljunied 1970, as cited in Chee 2006). It should also be pointed out that the reformist response towards Islamic education is not new in Singapore. Singapore was a regional hub for the reformist movement in the early twentieth century. The reformists even founded a *madrasah* in 1908 that ambitiously combined the learning of religious and modern academic knowledge. But the reformists' *madrasah* was closed down shortly due partly to "rumblings of disapproval from the religious traditionalists about its more 'Westernised' education system" (Chee 2006, p. 9).

Today the Muslims remain divided in their views on Islamic education. On the one hand, there are *madrasah* educators who espouse the reformist response. An example is a *madrasah* in Singapore that describes itself as a "modern *madrasah*" with a curriculum that "takes cognisance [of] the current unique context of the Muslims in Singapore as well as the challenges posed by 21st century, modern and globalised city-state" (information from its website). Its commitment to integrating both secular and religious subjects is seen in its school manual:

The *madrasah* remains committed towards producing religious elites, ie *asatizah* [teachers] and *ulama* [scholars], for the community. However, the *madrasah* strongly feels that religious elites of the future has [*sic*] to be in touch with modern sciences and contemporary challenges in order to be able to offer solutions and be of benefit to the community. As such, the *madrasah* offers an integrated curriculum encompassing both academic as well as Islamic sciences. This model has proven to be successful as seen from the products that the *madrasah* has produced. *Alhamdulillah*, the *madrasah*'s alumni excel in both Religious as well as Academic pathways doing well in both Islamic and Academic Universities. (School Manual, n.d., p. 10)

On the other hand, there are *madrasahs* that are unequivocal in fulfilling their vision to focus solely on molding students to become Islamic scholars. For example, one *madrasah* in Singapore states its philosophy as such: "Mastering of the Arabic language is a pre-requisite for the understanding of the Al-Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* (Prophetic Traditions), the two fundamental sources of Islamic Jurisprudence, less in importance, is the acquisition of knowledge in the secular sciences" (cited in Tan 2009, p. 73). Despite the different views among Muslims regarding Islamic education, the reality for Islamic schools in Singapore, as in many parts of the world, is that they no longer enjoy the uncontested status and support among Muslims as before the colonial period.

## Conclusion

In a postcolonial era, it is important for the world, especially those from the West, to go beyond secularist and modernist frameworks that prevailed during the colonial period. Esposito (2002, pp. 10–11) posits that secular presuppositions “which inform our academic disciplines and outlook on life, our Western secular worldview, have been a major obstacle to our understanding and analysis of Islamic politics” and “Islam has generally been regarded in the West (and among many secular-minded Muslims) as static phenomenon doctrinally and socioculturally, and therefore anti-modern and retrogressive.” Muslims continue to face the challenges of secularism, educational dualism, and the marginalization of Islamic education. Given the multiple forces seeking to influence Islamic education, a key question is how the Islamic educational institutions address these forces and deal with the multitude of demands and changes in a postcolonial world.

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# Muslim Orientations and Views on Education

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## Abstract

From an ideological point of view, Islam is not a uniform religion and cannot, therefore, be treated as a single or unitary phenomenon. In addition to cultural variations deriving from the geographical context where the religion is practiced, and the major division between the Sunnī and Shī‘ah schools of thought, other ideological variations have come to manifest themselves in modern Islamic thought. Islam as a religion and sociopolitical system has undergone a process of resurgence during the latter half of the twentieth century. Four major ideological orientations may be distinguished in Islam (also in relation to education): (i) the secularist; (ii) the traditionalist; (iii) the modernist/liberalist; and (iv) the fundamentalist. These four orientations will be described and analyzed in terms of their view on the role of religion in society; their view on *sharī‘ah* and mundane laws; freedom of interpretation of the sources; and their view on education.

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Secularism sees religion as a private matter, laws as man-made and accepts freedom of interpretation extended to laymen; and education should be modern and secular. In the Traditionalist orientation religion is a public affair; law is seen as made by God; interpretation is restricted to the *'ulamā'*; and education should be for the formation of *'ulamā'*. The Modernists/Liberalists perceive religion as a public matter, law as man-made but guided by Islamic principles; interpretation free to laymen, while education, according to them, should integrate a modern and religious curriculum. For the Fundamentalists/Islamists, religion is a public matter, law is defined by God and interpretation of the sources is prerogative for the *'ulamā'*, while it may be extended to laymen or 'Islamic thinkers'. Paradoxically, they argue that education should be a hybrid of modern and religious matters.

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### Keywords

Muslims · Religious orientations · Fundamentalists · Traditionalist · Secularist · Liberalist

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## Introduction

Despite basic coherence, there are principal religious and ideological differentiations and orientations within Islam. They also include different views on education. A basic universal categorization is evident throughout scholarly endeavors across different times in history, both in the East and the West. Hence, and according to Dessouki (1982, p. 7), "Islam is better understood from this perspective as designating an 'ideal type', which should be analyzed in relation to special social structures. The basic assumptions here are that unity and universality of the ideal type are reflected in a multiplicity of actual historical experiences in specific social contexts". This chapter is limited to a delineation of an analytical approach to contemporary Islam (as religion, interpretation, and practice). The Islamic orientations toward education will be traced.

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## Muslim Orientations

According to Huntington, Islam is a monolithic unit of reference and a unitary civilization (Huntington 1993, 1996). This conceptualization takes as given the premise that the "concept 'Islam' (is) something distinct, definable, essentially homogeneous," a notion strictly contradicted by reality (Hjärpe 1997, p. 74). "This statement disregards the interpretative diversity of Islam, and the different historical schools" (Also known as *madhāhib*. These are the four historical legal schools of jurisprudence Ḥanafī, Malikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī mentioned in chapter ► "[Sharī'ah and Education: A Brief Overview](#)") (Kepel 1985, p. 79) and impacting "different modern tendencies in religion and politics" (ibid., p. 15); Also, according to Hjärpe (1991), Islam cannot be treated as a single or unitary phenomenon. In addition to

cultural variations originating from the spatial context where the religion is practiced, and the major division between the Sunnī and Shī‘ah schools, other important ideological variations have come to manifest themselves within modern Islamic thought. As Hjärpe (1991, p. 30) furthermore argues “there is an entire scale of interpretations of the essence of Islam and its societal functions.” Islam as a religion and sociopolitical system has undergone a process of resurgence during the latter half of the twentieth century. This “Islamic resurgence” was an illustration of the “increasing political activism in the name of Islam by governments and opposition groups alike (Dessouki 1982, p. 4). It designates a politicized, activist form of Islam and the growing use of Islamic symbolism and legitimation at the level of political action.” This resurgence has contributed to a large extent to consolidation of the fine lines between different Islamic/Islamist orientations and ideological frameworks.

When describing different orientations, this chapter has borrowed the classification introduced by Hjärpe (1991, pp. 31–34), who distinguishes between four different Islamic orientations: secularism, traditionalism, modernism, and fundamentalism. This classification will, however, be complemented by theoretical approaches introduced by other scholars and contributors to the subject of Islamic orientations. Most space will be given to the analysis of the fundamentalist trend. One of the reasons for this is the overwhelming attention directed toward this phenomenon. Another reason is the preliminary assumption of fundamentalism as a recent, dynamic, and evolving trend manifesting both the highest levels of politicization, as a concrete activist agenda, that entails a distinctive identity formation. This choice has also been conditioned by the diversity within fundamentalism as an orientation. This phenomenon provides a clear illustration of what Rudolph and Piscatori (1997) term the “transnational civic society” and evolution of transnational religions, whereby the relevant identity supersedes at times the national, context-specific one. Table 1 presents the main orientations identified.

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## The Secularist Orientation

The Secularist orientation advocates the relegation of religion to the private sphere, within an individualistic space and context and the maintenance of a strict separation between the religious and the political. Secularism also argues that the ordering of society and the formulation of legal foundation on the basis of a value system, include both believers and nonbelievers. Muslim secularists support their orientation by the Qur’ānic premise negating compulsion in religion (II: 256), whereas the implication of religion in the ordering of society (and state) may result in some form of compulsion (Hjärpe 1991, p. 31). In addition to the narrow role given to religious ideology in the conduct of life, society, and government, secularists do not leave the interpretation of texts (*ijtihād*) to ‘*ulamā*’, but allow for freedom of interpretation. Parallel to this, is the strongly held notion that law is or can be man-made, and derivative from sources other than the *sharī‘ah*.

It is remarkable that the amount of literature and analyses of the secularist orientation within Islam has been minimal when compared with other orientations,

**Table 1** Different religious orientations within Islam and their predominant characteristics

Religious orientation	Sphere for religion	Concept of law	Interpretation ( <i>tjithād</i> )	Sovereignty and political system	Identity and supreme loyalty	Activism/ Islamic political Implications	Education
<b>Secularism</b>	Private	Man-made	Freedom of interpretation/ extended to laymen	Democratic/ pluralist	National identity and loyalty as important as the religious	–	Secular and modern
<b>Traditionalism</b>	Public	God's Law/ <i>shari'ah</i>	Interpretation restricted to <i>mudhāhib</i> and ' <i>ulamā'</i>	Not necessarily Islamic	Religious identity/ acceptance of national identity	–	Specialized ' <i>ulamā'</i> education
<b>Modernism/ Liberalism</b>	Public	Law man-made guided by Islamic principles	Freedom of interpretation/ extended to laymen	Not necessarily Islamic/guided by Islamic principles	No conflict between national and religious identity	Islam as politically neutral	Modern integrating a religious curriculum
<b>Fundamentalism/ Islamism</b>	Public	God's Law/ <i>shari'ah</i>	Freedom of interpretation/ supremacy of ' <i>ulamā'</i>	Islamic state/ politics	Supreme loyalty to <i>ummah</i> /religious identity	Islam as a source for political activism	Hybrid between modern and religious

especially the fundamentalist. Despite the obvious difficulties, this has made it necessary to use rhetorical text by fundamentalist scholars addressing and deconstructing Islamic secularism to further describe its characteristics. Hence, according to Muḥammad Qutb (1994), a fundamentalist theoretician, the secularists embody a trend that rejects the intermixing between Islam (religion) and state (politics) and, accordingly, oppose calls by the fundamentalists for the need to apply the *sharī'ah* (ibid., pp. 5–6).

Furthermore, secularists strongly advocate for democracy and democratic rule, and key words within their agenda are pluralism, political freedom, and alternation of government according to the principles of democracy. Calls against the application of the *sharī'ah* and the merging of state and religion derive from a belief that under such a system, political freedom according to the democratic model is unrealizable. In addition, no space would be allowed for political opposition or the “other” – meaning competing political entity(ies) – to manifest and exercise its political rights. This agenda and call emanates from the reaction to the absolutism that characterizes fundamentalism. Piscatori (1983, p. 5) has identified two main types of secularists: The Marxist variant (using Marxian dialectics of historical materialism) which “views religion *per se* in public life as debilitating” and prescribes a future scenario where “‘materialism and nationalism’ will replace that of ‘idealism and metaphysics.’” It is important to note here that this specific group focuses on the incompatibility between religion and politics, within the public sphere. A second variety of secularism delimits the incompatibility to emphasizing in their logic the “desirability” and “prudence” of the separation mentioned. Both varieties “do not think of Islam as a civilization or an ideology” (ibid.).

With respect to education, the secularist recognizes the importance of modern schooling and secular education. Notwithstanding Dessouki’s (1982, p. 24) assumption that “no contradiction is perceived between being engaged in advanced scientific education while upholding traditional beliefs on the family, the status of women, or relation between the sexes.” Today, this point is debatable, however, due to the emergence of a strong secular elite, whereby total divergence from a religious *raison d’être* is becoming more of a cause than an effect. This has led in many instances to the development of alternative worldviews within the same society.

Exchanges during the nineteenth century between the Muslim Middle East and Europe had as consequence Muslim students bringing back certain ideas about education after being exposed to Western education. Although many scholars prefer to use “modern” and “Western” as synonymous, this chapter and analysis abstain from making such a generalization, and categorize modernity as a phase of development rather than a socioideological worldview expounded by a specific region or political entity, i.e., the West. This is also integral with the thesis that what is modern is not by necessity Western, although it may be a state of development reached and surpassed by the West. This is important in discussions focused on the fundamentalist trend, and relevant calls for authenticity that in many ways reflect a resistance to colonialism, rather than a complete disengagement with modernity; or what the traditionalist and the fundamentalists confusedly understand as modernization, i.e., Westernization (Tibi 1988).



In the absence of any type of schooling except traditional religious-based systems, secular schooling came as an innovation in Muslim societies and a venture into the domain of modern knowledge (or industrial “higher culture”) (ibid., p. 98). Western schooling became also an extension and instrument of colonialism (ibid.). The ideological, indoctrinating features of western schooling, however, have been weakened in the postcolonial era to give way to modern schooling as such in spite of its classification by some as a reflection of neoimperialistic designs. In addition to this, missionary schools (developing during the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century) have, according to Tibi (1991), acted as a central locus around which the roots of modern educational systems and secularism in the Middle East, and specifically the Arab World, were built. The period, which witnessed this transition from traditional Islamic education to modern education, was also a period known as *al-nahḍah* (renaissance). Thereby, an “intellectual awakening” was perceived as taking place “legitimizing the innovations which came in the train of military, scientific, technical and educational imports from the West” (Livingston 1996, p. 543).

The modern, secular schooling in Muslim societies is still dominating today, but is gradually being replaced by alternative views on the role and value of education within an emergent religious framework and identity illustrated by an all-encompassing Islamic resurgence. Furthermore, the identification of secular education with the elite (Tibi 1988) has developed across socioeconomic lines and resulted in new sites for resistance and reactive response. This resistance is manifested at the popular level in a post-elite society (Post-elite society is the term hereby introduced to denote the development of new fine lines redefining social actors, which transgress class lines in Muslim societies. Social transformations and several other factors including globalization have led to the development of nonclass actors that accentuate the transcendence of elitist value in lieu of a more popular, traditionalist world view and value system impregnated by religious symbolism and ideological facets.), where nonclass actors and activists (predominantly religious) have a bigger role to play.

Despite the delineation of varieties, secularists converge across the following lines:

- The separation of religion (Islam) from the political process, realm, and/or state.
- Religion (Islam) delimited and relegated to the private sphere, and predominant within the domain of individual practice of Faith (*īmān*).
- The acceptance of man-made laws that are not (by necessity) derivative from the *sharī‘ah* due to the important prerequisite of ensuring equality under the law for both Muslims and non-Muslims.
- The importance and supremacy of pluralism and democracy with active opposition to absolutism or absolutist agendas that will not accept the manifestation of a political “other” (a direct divergence from the fundamentalist discourse).
- Islam is not an ideology, and especially it is not a political ideology.
- Education as secular and modern.

This, therefore, allows us to place, as Hjärpe does, secularism in direct opposition to fundamentalism. The polarity, however, is not of equal magnitude due to the broader scope of the fundamentalist orientation.

## The Traditionalist Orientation

Traditionalism in Islam denotes the adherence to traditional Islamic heritage, be it traditional legal schools of thought and jurisprudence (*madhāhib*), or traditional way of life. The sources of order in society stem from the Qur'ān, the *sunnah* – taking the life of the prophet as example and his sayings (*ḥadīths*) as discourse – and the *sharī'ah* as maintained by early interpretation (*ijtihād*) by the four *madhāhib*. Islam is, therefore, not only a religion but also a way of life (*dīn wa dunyā*) (Translated as religion and way of life). The traditionalists do not accept any changes, new or foreign ideas to Islam. For them, true Islam is the one built through historical precedence, as maintained in Islamic tradition; any innovation is by necessity a departure from the essence of the religion (Hjärpe 1991, p. 34).

Hjärpe (*ibid.*, p. 3) presents a useful characterization of the traditional worldview. This worldview was “established in its main elements by about the year 950 AD and certainly by 1200.” In addition, Watt (1988) claims synonymity between, what he calls, the “traditionalists/conservatives” and the “fundamentalists.” Like Arkoun (1984), he maintains that the traditionalists represent the categories of the “unthinkable and the unthought,” where ideological control confirms the category of “unthinkable” to be held true for everything related to Islam (Watt 1988, p. 1).

Kepel (1985, p. 79) also maintains that, “according to orthodox Islam, the four historical legal schools of medieval theologians and annotators established the limits of legitimate interpretation of the verses of the Qur'ān. After them the doors of interpretation (*ijtihād*) were closed.” “Orthodox” can be taken as synonymous with traditionalist. The view taken here is that the distinction between fundamentalism and traditionalism stems from the view of the former as an innovative, modernizing force, advocating the reopening of the door to the interpretative endeavor (*ijtihād*) directly from Text (Qur'ān and *sunnah*), and departing from the adherence to tradition. This important distinction shall be made clearer in the section dealing with fundamentalism.

The traditionalists, therefore, have stopped in time at the era of the four major schools of interpretation. Society should, therefore, be arranged according to this worldview, and innovation is totally rejected. Strict limits to the interpretative exercise are not only set in the time frame mentioned above, but interpretation is reserved for to the *'ulamā'*. Law, accordingly, is God's Law or the *sharī'ah* (Hjärpe 1991, p. 42).

It is important to mention here that the roots of traditional education emanate from the status quo ante of education systems that existed during the Ottoman Empire. Hence, as Tibi (1988, pp. 95–96) maintains, during that period, “the educational system was monopolized by the Islamic clergies, the *'ulamā'*. This monopoly in instruction and all other intellectual activities led to a situation in which the four pillars of religious education – Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, *sharī'ah*, and Arabic grammar – became the only sources of pedagogy. The central feature of this Islamic education was the memorization of the sources of Islam. However, problem-oriented thinking cannot be learned through raw memorization. This view of education corresponded to the absence of participation in a traditional society whose hierarchy consisted of the *'ulamā'*, the military, and the political authorities”.

Within contemporary societies, traditionalists argue for the separation between religious and modern systems of education. For them religious education is basically there to prepare and produce a body of ‘*ulamā*’ (clergies) who shall furnish the society with guidance and *fatwās* (religious opinions). In this respect, education becomes more specialized and more developed concentrating specifically on Islam as a religion and its different interpretative and historical/methodological premises. Schools such as the religious schools in Saudi Arabia or the Azharite schools in Egypt prepare the students for higher levels of education in the religious subjects – *fiqh* – and Islamic guidance (*irshād*). Students graduate from such specialized traditional schools to continue their education in such a religious institution as al-Azhar University in Egypt, which produces a large number of Islamic preachers for the greater part of the Muslim World.

Traditionalism, however, recognizes and does not directly compete with modern schooling and scientific knowledge, but as stated above, delinks the two worldviews. Furthermore, the premises of the traditional education have been relegated after the advent of modern schooling into the role of preparation of the rank and file of the ‘*ulamā*’. Traditional Qur’ānic schools such as the *kuttāb* in Egypt and the *madrasahs* in northern Africa are a legacy of traditional education that has been weakened considerably not only by the forces of the modern school system and education, but also by the pressure of emergent and alternative forms of religious education. Qur’ānic schools persist, predominantly in rural contexts, whereby important factors such as underdevelopment, economic incapability, and geographic isolation from a modern school system enhance their survival (Houtsonen 1994). Houtsonen (1994, p. 489) further confirms that “we can better understand the continuity of traditional Islamic education if we see it as being closely bound to the popular understanding of Islam.”

Traditionalism represents the following premises:

- Adherence to precedence of Islamic history and interpretative schools.
- Interpretation (*ijtihād*) is delimited in space and time to the four main historical *madhāhib*.
- Innovation or new interpretation is not permitted.
- Islam is a religion and way of life (*dīn wa dunyā*).
- The process of modernity, modern society, and development are external to the religious traditional worldview.
- The authority for interpretation (*ijtihād*) lies with the ‘*ulamā*’, while law is God’s Law or the *sharī‘ah*.
- Traditional Islamic education is a system of religious education inherited from the Ottoman period, but relegated by the advent of modern schooling to becoming a specialized type of education strictly dedicated to the development of the ‘*ulamā*’.

Other forms of traditional Islamic schooling such as Qur’ānic schools may persist by force of popular understanding of the religion, and factors intrinsic with underdevelopment and economic and geographic access to modern schools. Qur’ānic Schools or *Kuttāb* have however become rarer with the advent of novel forms of informal and non-formal religious-type education.

## The Modernist/Liberal Orientation

Modernism, as labelled by Hjärpe, entails advocating innovation and new interpretation (*ijtihād*) in Islam, and is in direct opposition to traditionalism (It is very important to distinguish here between Western liberalism and “patterns of liberal responses to Islamic fundamentalism, for example, emanating from within the Islamic public arena” (as maintained in Salvatore 1998, p. 75; and Binder 1988). It is a trend that recognizes the all-encompassing realm of the religion hence it advocates Islam as a religion and way of life (*dīn wa dunyā*). Interpretation, however, according to this orientation, is not the sole right or authority of the *‘ulamā’*. This is an element, in addition to the acceptance of man-made law, that the modernists share with the secularists. Law, according to the modernists, has to be inspired by the principles of Islam. An example of the modernist trend presented by Hjärpe (1991, p. 36) was the Egyptian Constitution that declared Islam as the religion of the state and the source of guidance when drafting laws. This, however, does not entail the subordination of the State to Islam because the resulting law and relevant interpretation of Islam and its principles are a man-made exercise, delimiting the absolutist scope of religion as it is understood by the fundamentalists. The law, therefore, is not Islamic Law per se (except in the case of personal status law for Muslims), but is a more mundane attempt at interpretation by laymen, with Islamic principles as guidance.

This trend is also represented in Islam in general and termed liberal by Watt (1988, p. 62), who argues that “Muslims who appreciated much of the Western outlook and felt that the explicit or implicit criticism of Islam were partly justified, but who at the same time thought of themselves as Muslims and wanted to live their lives as Muslims . . . the liberals began to look for a new identity which in some respects at least, would be more in accord with Western values.”

While in agreement with the emphasis placed by Watt on Western values as a yardstick for the liberal innovators, values reflected by modernity are also central within this orientation. Salvatore (1998), on the other hand, stresses the liberal hybrid, which he terms neutralist, emanating from an Islamic public arena as a reaction to fundamentalism, and viewing Islam as politically neutral (Salvatore 1998, p. 77). Central within the fundamentalist call in its multiple variants is the strict connection between Islam as a religion and politics or the state – *dīn wa dawlah* (religion and state). This reflects what Salvatore assigns the label of conflationist interpretative scheme which tends to “conflate two poles that can be called Islam and politics, or Islam and the state, or Islam as religion *dīn* and Islam as State *dawlah* (*Islām dīn wa dawlah*).” The neutralists, on the other hand, “see Islam as limited to *din* (religion) while also encompassing *dunyā* or the ‘world’ (according to the formula *Islām dīn wa dunyā*)”.

Salvatore (1998, p. 72), while recognizing the Islamic particularity of the liberalism represented by neutralism, does not however negate that it takes on “an added transcultural dimension for being assessed in the West as the area for the ‘Islamic liberals’, those who translate Western values into an Islamic framework.” But he strongly refutes the assimilation of the neutralists to “liberalism in the Western

sense,” due to one element of their thought claiming “that even without any reference to an actual form of state and government the Qur’ān necessarily provides the basis for an ‘order’ or ‘system’ (*nizām*)” (ibid., p. 79). This tenet echoes a characteristic cited by Hjärpe (1991, 1992), namely the role of Islam and its principles as a guide in the conduct of life, and exercise of processes such as the formulation of laws. Neutralists, in spite of manifesting the political neutrality of Islam, differ, however, from the Islamic liberals in general in terms of the comprehensive aspect of regarding Islam as *dīn wa dunyā*. By such an understanding Islam is placed within the public sphere, while it is taken seriously enough “as a socio-cultural regulatory force or ‘normative system’” (Salvatore 1998, p. 92).

The Islamic liberals strongly advocate a modern educational system, which is inclusive of a clearly defined religious curriculum that enhances the child’s development as a Muslim and intellectual being. Their approach to religious education as a foundation of an Islamic moral code, conduct, and way of life is essential within their understanding of a comprehensive body of education.

The main tenets of modernism/liberalism as an Islamic religious orientation include:

- The acceptance of Western values and values of modernity translating them into an Islamic framework.
- Islam as politically neutral, delimited to the realm of *dīn wa dunyā* (religion and way of life). The understanding of *dīn wa dunyā*, however, takes on a more expansive conceptualization where Islam becomes a blueprint for life conduct and moral system (ibid., p. 95).
- *dīn wa dunyā* in this expansive definition also entails Islamic principles acting as guiding principles in the formulation of man-made laws and the evaluation of systems (*nuzūm*).
- Freedom of interpretation extended to laymen, and the advocacy of man-made law.
- The belief that claims for an Islamic reawakening or solution (to the modern crises of Muslims) is a fundamentalist attribute that departs from the essence of the religion which should be confined to the realm of Faith (*īmān*) (ibid., pp. 93–94).
- Education is basically of modern type, integrating a well-defined religious curriculum.

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## The Fundamentalist Orientation

The term “Islamic fundamentalism” has been used by many writers interchangeably with Islamism and political Islam (see chapter ► “[Islamic Fundamentalism, Terrorism, and Education](#)”). And as Moussalli (1998, p. 3) explains “some scholars prefer to use the term “political Islam” instead of Islamism or fundamentalism. . . .where the whole issue of preferring one description over another relates not only to the phenomenon itself, but to the perspective of the analyst as well as his/her discipline

of knowledge and method of inquiry. “Some scholars prefer, it is probably fundamentalism, to a political scientist it is most likely Islamism or political Islam.”

Hence, and as Moussalli concludes, the terms may be used interchangeably. Islamic fundamentalism should however be distinguished from any connotations that may derive similarities to other forms of religious fundamentalism, especially Christian fundamentalist movements. As Ciment (1997, p. 62) confirms, “fundamentalism is a problematic concept when applied to Islam as a religion and Islamism as a political ideology.” Fundamentalism as a form of Islamism, “while seemingly a return to Islamic roots, is, in fact, inherently modern in its outlook . . . It tries to modernize authentic Islamic sources” (ibid., p. 79). Furthermore, the word fundamentalism in this sense strictly denotes those who regress to the fundamentals, which distinguishes it from the other uses outside the academic sphere of analysis, and terms of reference.

Islamic fundamentalism, furthermore, has an inherent activist agenda. To understand the nature of this activism, the relationship between Islamic fundamentalism and politics should be taken as a given, reinforced by its being a body of thought that “changes Islam into political ideology or an ‘ism’” (Moussalli 1998, p. 3). Hjärpe (1991, p. 30), who maintains that “Islam has always been a phenomenon with political consequences,” has also explained the relationship between Islam and politics within a historical framework.

Fundamentalism in Islam, however, is not uniform; it includes various trends and variants that reflect different interpretative discourses and ideologies. While the unitary factor between the different categories of Islamic fundamentalism is their “explicit affirmation” of the scriptural foundations of Islam, (Basically the Qur’ān and the *sunnah* which include the tradition of the Prophet or *hadīths* ie sayings. The diversity emanates from the implicit counterpart of what this affirmation is used for, or is intended to reject or deny (Arjomand 1995, p. 182).

Variation may be the result of variables such as the ideological and institutional context where the fundamentalist movement (and or identity) emerges or develops, thus influencing its political role and reaction (ibid., p. 183) (It is important to clarify here, however, that Islamist (i.e., fundamentalist) theorists strongly oppose the notion of “‘political Islam’ as based on the formula of a ‘politicization of religion’” an argument presented in Salvatore (1998, p. 88). In addition to this, the variation in the climate of the international political culture is cited as another eminent reasons for variance (ibid., p. 192–193). The main types that will be identified here are mainstream fundamentalism (also known as reformist) and radical fundamentalism. The choice of these two typologies, in spite of an existence of a variety of others, and a set of evolving hybrids, has been made to delimit the scope of analysis and provide an example of what the orientation represents.

However, before identifying the predominant characteristics of each type, a delineation of the basic tenets of fundamentalism in general is necessary. Fundamentalists share the following basic tenets:

- Islam (as derived from the scriptural foundations of Qur’ān and *sunnah*) is a source for a comprehensive social system and way of life (*dīn wa dunyā*) and for politics and government (*dīn wa dawlah*).

- The return to the scriptural foundations of Islam within a process of reform (*iṣlāh*) and revival (*sahwah*).
- Law is God’s Law (*sharī‘ah*), and God is Sovereign.
- *Sharī‘ah* is both a system of law and a source of guiding principles. Its application is inherent within fundamentalist designs to establish the Islamic state, the ultimate state for believing Muslims.
- Opening the door of interpretation (*ijtihād*), which is in direct contrast with the traditionalists (Salvatore 1998; Hjärpe 1991; Arjomand 1995).
- Supreme loyalty to the *ummah* (community of believers).
- Education combining both modern and religious education. Religious education, however, is given a role as an instrument, central in enhancing the expansion of the fundamentalist movement.

Within the renewal of interpretation, Hjärpe (1991, pp. 39–42) delimits this right in fundamentalism to the ‘*ulamā*’, taking the example of Iran and the post-revolutionary Iranian Constitution. This point however is refutable since within the development of fundamentalist ideology and more specifically the radical variant, interpretation emanated from intellectuals and members of the intelligentsia who regarded their religious knowledge as sufficient for interpretation and theorization. Hence Arjomand (1995, p. 187) confirms that “the oppositional lay intelligentsia played the leading role in the intermediate stages of the Islamic movements from the 1930s to the 1970s and was largely responsible for the creation of the new Islamic fundamentalist ideologies.”

However, since the 1990’s the Islamist ideological scene has witnessed an attempt by its theoreticians and especially the advocates of the *al-sahwah* (Islamic awakening) stance (representing the mainstream), to restore the centrality of the ‘*ulamā*’. Their definition of ‘*ulamā*’ is, however, more expansive in that it includes the category of “Islamic propagandists and intellectuals’ (*al-du‘āt wa al-mufakkirūn al-Islāmīyyūn*) only through stressing their belonging to *ahl al-‘ilm*, scholars of Islamic science” (Salvatore 1998, p. 85).

Thus they are seen as a subcategory to the ‘*ulamā*’ preoccupied more directly with the social sphere, while the ‘*ulamā*’ are to be recognized as the primary interpreters of the Islamic *sahwah* (awakening) within its theological connotations (ibid.). This has been deemed as an intellectual necessity in the light of the development of radical fundamentalist thought and conscious attempts by the mainstream at hampering its momentum. With these general features as a background, this chapter proceeds with the delineation of the selected variants of Islamic fundamentalism.

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## Mainstream Fundamentalism

As a starting point, it is important to stress the evolutionary characteristic of Islamic political thought. Ciment (1997, p. 78) maintained that the origins of “modern political Islam . . . traces its origins to the Muslim Brotherhoods of Egypt and Pakistan

of the 1920s” (Arjomand (1995, p. 183) confirmed this point by stressing that “two intellectual watersheds mark the ideological conditioning of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism,” citing Abū al-‘Alā’ Mawdūdī (Pakistan), and Sayyid Qutb (Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood movement). Both Mawdūdī and Qutb, however, represent a more radical view of Islamic fundamentalism. This radicalism had its foundations in the movements they derived from, and in the case of mainstream fundamentalism, the Egyptian Brotherhood is of particular importance. Fundamentalism as a movement and trend of thought was preceded by another type of revivalist Islam, namely the reformist trend in the late 18th century and early 19th century. Intellectuals and thinkers, such as al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, and Rashīd Riḍā, championed this reformist trend, also known as Pan-Islamism (Huband 1999, pp. 76–81). It was however a body of thought that was reactive to foreign, European colonialism, calling for the reassertion and revival of a true Islamic “civilization.” The terms Islamic state and polity did not appear within their discourse but it focused more on the internal cohesion of the *ummah* and Islamic civilization, the renewal of *ijtihād*, and the need for a “unified system of Islamic Law” inspired by the *sharī‘ah* (ibid.). This reformist movement laid the foundations for fundamentalism to evolve.

After the liquidation of the Ottoman caliphate by Kemal Atatürk in 1924, the development of modern Islamic thought took on a new level. The Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt) and its ideology came to the fore and represented a continuation of the legacy of al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh, and Riḍā “in the field of active politics . . . whose ideology marks the break of fundamentalism with the notion of the parallel existence of religion and politics and insists on the subordination of the former to the latter” (Enayat 1982, p. 83).

The Muslim Brotherhood was established in 1928 originally as a society and was turned into a political organization by its founder. In spite of this, the main ideological focus was on establishing an “Islamic order” in contrast to an Islamic state, and the strengthening of an Islamic moral code within society. Three main principles were the basis of ideological direction and activism, mainly:

- Islam is a comprehensive, self-evolving system; it is the ultimate path of life in all its spheres.
- Islam emanates from and is based on two fundamental sources: The Qur’ān and the *sunnah*.
- Islam is applicable to all times and places.

Thus, the elements of integrating an adjusted social order through the fundamentalist call were more prominent during the founding and early years of the brotherhood. This, however, changed gradually with the developments that led to the appearance of the radical trend. As a result, the adoption of the *sharī‘ah* as a regulatory moral and legal code became a symbolic transition preceding the establishment of an Islamic State. This is a factor that both mainstream fundamentalism and the radical trend share. The dividing lines have grown to be clearer during the latest five decades, along the logic adopted for the achievement of this goal of establishing the Islamic state. The mainstream opted for a gradualist endeavor within



a pluralist political system, while the radicals adopted a revolutionary stance supported by a more complex system of ideas (Karlsson 1994, pp. 56–57).

Religious education plays a central role and has an intrinsic value in reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of society. This does not negate the importance of modern schooling (to prepare the Muslim subjects intellectually), as long as it is combined with a more extensive and specific religious education based on fundamentalist principles. Ideologically, however, it is important to note that mainstream fundamentalists are in many ways conducting an Islamist movement (*Harakah Islāmīyyah*) that moves to deeper levels of hegemony. In essence they have championed their movement through promulgating an intellectual discourse with their opponents, predominantly the secularists. This discourse is in essence supportive of Islam as being the basis of a new renaissance, whereby the Fundamentalist/Islamist is defined by Emara (1998, p. 17) as “a Muslim implementing a project aiming at change, renewal and renaissance”. This is one facet of change in the realm of knowledge and its production. In correspondence to this, Emara (1998) strongly voices the position of his camp with regard to perceived threats of Western infiltration and especially intellectual infiltration: *al-ghazū al-‘aqlī* (mental invasion) or *al-ghazū al-fikrī* (intellectual invasion). Hence, modern education and instruction is to take place within the cognitive framework of the Fundamentalist/Islamist movement and its confines.

One of the most illustrative representatives of the mainstream fundamentalists is the solutionists (Salvatore 1998, p. 83) who advocate the following:

- The politics of *sahwah* (revival), instigating a comprehensive Islamization of discourse, in the public sphere, and the political arena.
- The importance of the application of the *sharī‘ah*, which gains a symbolic significance in the establishment of an Islamic state.
- The establishment of the Islamic state is based upon ideological and logical premises.
- Evolution is stressed within their discourse due to their emphasis on gradualism, and the centrality of the idea of the reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of society.
- Gradualism is also stressed in political activism where a call for participation and the use of a pluralist political system is eminent.
- A renewed focus on the centrality of the ‘*ulamā*’, in spite of its expansive definition, where the term ‘*ulamā*’, in addition to the category of Muslim scholars, may also include a subcategory of “the people of Knowledge” (*ahl al-‘ilm*), represented by propagandists and intellectuals.
- The competition over space with the radical, revolutionary stance within fundamentalism especially the most extreme (ibid., 1988, pp. 83–92; Arjomand 1995, p. 193).

Religious education on the practical level serves as an instrument for indoctrination and recruitment into the Islamist movement. Religious study circles (*halaqāt al-dars al-dīnī*) conducted within mosques and in the privacy of the homes of movement members, over the past four decades for example, have been one of the major alternative forms of nonformal religious education taking precedence over

curricular religious education. Such study circles figure as the site for expanding the movement and consolidating its recruited members. They serve also as a locus for the Islamization of society (independent from recruitment) to enhance its compatibility with the Islamist message and “higher cause” espoused by this group.

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## Radical Fundamentalism

Mawdūdī and Sayyid Qutb have been claimed to be the benchmark of modern militant Islamist thought. For Abul Ala Mawdūdī, Islamic government was an uncontested reality that had to be realized. Sovereignty was God’s sovereignty (*al-ḥākimīyyah li-Allāh*), while the Worship of God in His unity (*al-‘ubūdīyyah li-Allāh*) was a complementary principle to be realized (Kepel 1997). These two principles were also adapted and extended upon by Qutb. The means to achieve these delineated two pillars of the Islamic state was to be a revolutionary break with the status quo. One major difference diverted the two thinkers, mainly in the typology and activist agenda parallel to the concept of revolution. As Arjomand (1995, p. 185) confirms “although Mawdūdī’s ideological elaboration included the appropriation of the modern political myth of revolution, this appropriation remained more semantic than substantive” (p. 184). However, the revolutionary path must be led by a vanguard, who for Mawdūdī was represented by “the pious vanguard,” while for Qutb the vanguard’s duty was made achievable, by means of the activist implications of a movement (*ḥarakah*) that would first remove any obstacles unto him (Kepel 1997, p. 55).

Mawdūdī in many ways furnished Qutb with the background on which to build his own ideological base and transition to higher levels of militancy. The supremacy of Qutbian thought within the sphere of radicalism has come to be recognized; whereby his works *Signposts* (1964 [1980]) and *Under the Aegis of the Qur’ān* (1954) are considered the counterpart of Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* (1901) to this strand of fundamentalism (Ciment 1997, p. 74). What are the main tenets of Qutbian/radical thought? It is a complex system of ideas which is hereby presented as simply as possible:

- *Jāhilīyyah*: “There are only two types of societies: Muslim and *jāhilīyyah*. The latter is identified as a society where Islam is not applied” according to the parameters of *ḥākimīyyah* and *‘ubūdīyyah* (Kepel 1997, pp. 50–51). Thus, most societies live in a state of *jāhilīyyah* (a state of ignorance, anarchy, and idolatry analogous to the one that was present in pre-Islamic times). The role of the vanguard is to redeem Muslims from this *jāhilīyyah* by showing the Right Path and applying the major principles of *ḥākimīyyah* and *‘ubūdīyyah*.
- Many types of societies were categorized as *jāhilīyyah* societies, including Western democratic systems, and societies where “modern forms of idolatry” exist, allowing “the belief in the ultimate sovereignty of the people” (Ciment 1997, p. 78).

- To establish and proceed toward an Islamic state guided by the rule and sovereignty of God and His Law, the rightly guided Muslim had to fulfill different types of action. First among these was the execution of *'uzlah* (isolation). By this is meant, according to Qutb, the “spontaneous mental withdrawal of the pious and practicing Muslim from those who do not feel bound by Islam’s obligations” (Kepel 1997, p. 64).
- Thus, believers in this credo formulate what is called the Islamic society. If three believers professing this credo exist, then they may be considered an Islamic society which “exists in deed.” The new-founded society of three shall expand to include other members who after secession from the surrounding *jāhilīyyah* society engage in a constant struggle with it. This struggle and the credo that moves it become a movement (*harakah*), which is propelled by a “sacred combat” or struggle (*jihād*) (Kepel 1997, p. 54) (reference to Sayyid Qutb (1980), (edition of the World Islamic Union of Students, (n.d.) Kuwait.). Thus for Qutb, the world must be cleansed and purified by means of this struggle or *jihād*, even if Islam is not threatened; while existing conditions in a specific country or another should have no impact on the nature and practice of *jihād* (Huband 1999, p. 89). (As Kepel (1997) and Huband (1999) affirm, for Qutb *jihād* was mainly a process of purification to redeem the status of the Muslim religion *dīn*, not necessarily an endeavour that precludes forms of aggression. This, however has been a point on which interpretation by later radical, more extremist movements varied, where Jihad in some instances was synonymous with “holy war”).
- The *ummah* (community of believers) is idealized, and in its conceptualization it has no national boundaries or internal divisions (Ciment 1997, p. 71).

Thus, for the radical fundamentalist, all societies that do not follow the discourse and principles necessary to implement a more authentic form of Islam (including *'ubūdīyyah* and *ḥākīmīyyah*) are declared as *jāhilīyyah societies*. Hence, the fundamentalist with this belief practices two important duties: *'uzlah* (isolation) in the form of spiritual withdrawal, and *jihād*, struggle to purify the *jāhilīyyah* society and initiate a movement that will eventually overcome obstacles and lead to the establishment of an Islamic state. According to this ideological discourse, all Western societies and practicing democracies are considered *jāhilīyyah societies*. Radical fundamentalism is an ideology with a revolutionary stance and an explicit form of activism. Later radical and extremist movements and theoreticians, however, interpreted the dynamics of revolution verbally, where *jihād* and revolution were combined, and translated into armed struggle. This however is an ultraradical trend, which transgresses into militancy. (This chapter will not attempt to venture into this specific trend).

Sayyid Qutb (1980) in deliberating about education, its value and role clearly distinguished between types of modern education on the basis of the following assumptions: “A Muslim cannot go to any source other than God for guidance in matters of faith, in the concept of life, acts of worship and human affairs, values and standards, principles of economics and political affairs, and interpretation of historical processes. It is, therefore, his duty that he should learn all these from a Muslim whose piety and character, belief and action, are beyond reproach” (Ibid).

However, “a Muslim can go to a Muslim or a non-Muslim to learn abstract sciences such as chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, medicine, industry, agriculture, administration, technology, military arts, and similar sciences and arts; although the fundamental principle is that when the Muslim community comes into existence it should provide experts in all these fields in abundance” (Qutb 1980, pp. 108–109). He further added:

“A Muslim can study all the opinions and thoughts of *jāhili* [those belonging to *jāhiliyyah* society(ies)] writers, not from the point of view of constructing his own beliefs and concepts, but for the purpose of knowing the deviation adopted by the *jāhiliyyah*, so that he may know how to correct these man-made deviations, in the light of true Islamic belief and rebut them according to the sound principles of Islamic teachings”. (Qutb 1980, p. 110)

Sayyid Qutb in writing his treatise, was focusing on the Islamic State Project and the parameters for its establishment. Hence, an apologetic stance is taken up in his writing toward what he denotes as “the practical sciences” enhancing the development of the human condition. The Muslim community according to him has to equip itself with all the necessary tools for its progress, including scientists who can realize this goal.

For the contemporary radical, however, the value and role of education has become modified to fit the level of Jihad, and constant struggle, with an eminent threat from the West and modernity. Muḥammad Qutb brother and disciple of Sayyid Qutb took the interpretation of the latter’s works a step further toward the extremist spectrum. In doing so a total disengagement with Western and modern education was evident. In addition to this, the delinking of Muslims with this type of education was considered as a duty in trying to face up to the claimed threat and conspiracy aimed at Islam by the Western Christian/Judaic civilization (Qutb 1994). The materialization of anti-Western discourse is eminent within contemporary radicalism. One major locus for these forces of power and claimed intellectual competitiveness was education. Modern education, hence, is considered as an instrument of intellectual infiltration that did away with the essence of Islam (ibid., pp. 77–89). It is viewed as a sophisticated form of neoimperialism. This view has been more prominent under the aegis of globalization.

In spite of this, it is evident within the radical trend that the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and technological advances will help in promulgating the movement and fulfilling its agenda. Thus, certain areas of modern science are still considered important. This selective use of modern education especially in science and technology lies within the confines of the exercise of what is denoted as “selective modernization”, whereby aspects of modernity are considered as serving to the Islamist movement and categorized as essential.

On the practical level, the radical fundamentalists also concentrate on nonformal forms of education such as religious study circles (similar to the mainstream fundamentalist but different in content and facets of indoctrination) to recruit and expand the Islamist movement. Such activities and circles are usually carried out underground, or in specific and renowned mosques identified as under the hegemony of a specific radically inclined group. Islamist schools for younger students and

**Table 2** Fundamentalism: major categorical tenets and differences

Type	Means towards Islamic state	Form of political activism	Political system	Prerequisites	Role of <i>shari'ah</i>	Interpretation	Education
Mainstream	Gradualist	Political participation	Democratic/ Pluralist	Societal reform – <i>is/āh</i>	Symbolic	Formalized	Hybrid between modern and nonformal religious education
Radical	Revolutionary	Jihad/struggle with <i>jāhiliyyah</i> society	Absolutist	A society of Muslims/a movement	Fundamental/ Law of God	Freedom of interpretation	Non formal/tool for indoctrination and recruitment

children are also expanding as a form of early socialization and indoctrination. It is considered as a part of the exercise of *'uzlah* – i.e., separation (on the mental and intellectual levels). Such schools are present in both Muslim societies and among Muslim minorities in predominantly non-Muslim countries.

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## Conclusion

This chapter attempted to present a general outline of different orientations within Islam. The predominant ideological framework for each orientation with its implications for education illustrates the variance that may exist. It is hence important to recognize such variance in trying to approach a deeper understanding of the connotations that the term “Islam” can manifest both on the epistemological and cognitive levels. It is also illustrative of the ramifications of competing ideologies and interpretations that predominate in a religion that surpasses in many ways the theological sphere to becoming a potential for a way of life, moral code and system of rule. As Najjar (2000, p. 177) affirms,

“Tension between Islamic fundamentalists and liberal Muslim intellectuals is as old as the beginning of modernization in the Muslim world. Western institutions, ideas and values have swept over the Arab-Muslim world, breeding suspicion and resentment among Muslim conservatives. Most feared and resented are Western secular laws and education, which have gradually supplanted Islamic laws and religiously controlled educational systems. This onslaught of Western culture presents Muslims with a serious dilemma: how to become modern, and remain Muslim. While liberal intellectuals seek a modernized Islam, fundamentalists seek to Islamize the modern age, calling for a return to pristine Islam”.

Najjar’s account reflects the divergence of ideas, alternative worldviews, and cognitive realities existent within the sphere of Islam.

**Acknowledgments** This chapter is an abridged and updated version of Sherin Saadallah (2004). Islamic orientations and education. In Daun, Holger and Geoffrey Walford (Eds.) *Educational strategies among Muslims in the context of globalization: Some national case studies*. Leiden: Brill.

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# Islam and the West: Clashes and Cooperations

Azhar Ibrahim

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## Abstract

In this chapter, various competing styles of thinking that are found in Muslim thought on education and knowledge, especially in its contacts with and responses to the West, will be examined. Apart from the economic and political contacts, the Muslim world interacts with the West via intellectual and educational realms. As early as in the classical Islam period, the intellectual contact of Muslim with the Mediterranean civilization saw the appropriation of Greek thought and ideas. Muslim thinkers saw Greek thought, including those on education, as wisdom to be cherished. Western renaissance in turn appropriated the intellectual legacy of classical Islam. In the colonial period, Muslims became more exposed to Western thought, including colonial education based on Western languages and intellectual corpus. Some Muslims affirmed the need to learn from the West in order to bring enlightenment and reform in their respective societies. They saw a critical selection of Western education/knowledge as a way to reform their society, battling against ignorance, illiteracy, and scientific underdevelopment. In the postindependent era,

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Muslim societies are confronted with a more complex response to Western knowledge and education. There are generally three strands of response. The first was and is more of exclusivist-rejectionist type which objects to any kind of Western knowledge, which is deemed as un-Islamic, wayward, and disruptive. The second is an inclusivist-integrationist response which sees no reason for not embracing Western knowledge as long as it brings benefits to Muslims. The third response, emerged in the period of religious resurgence, is one that is characterized by an exclusivist-inclusivist complex, where the present modernity (Western framework of knowledge and education) is accepted but it can also be legitimate or even “authentic” if it is first Islamsized. Today many Muslim societies are beset by these contending styles of thinking, each promoting its cherished ideal and model, while undermining the other(s).

As a result, we see a continuing simplistic Islamic-Western dichotomy, while the efforts of a creative and critical adaptation remains relegated, while problematizing the captivity in knowledge and education remains not very little developed.

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### Keywords

Islamic education · Islam and West · Clashes of civilizations

Human beings, created from the same essence, are limbs of one another,  
 When one limb aches, the other limbs are restless, too.  
 O you who are indifferent of the pains of others,  
 You do not deserve to be called human.  
 Sa’dī (d. 1292 CE).

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## Introduction

In the present era, there is much anxiety, mainly through a simplified and binary lens, to see Islam and the West as necessarily, and inevitably, in an imminent clash. Political, economic, and cultural motivations made such idea of the clash of civilization as a real and impending threat, which unfortunately gain currency on both sides of the spectrum. In any human contacts where the language of animosity and belligerency dominate, it could lead to clashes and continuous harboring of distrust. But a sense of humility for dialogue and the will to nurture common humanity will forge cooperations. Here the role of education, in forging common understanding and coexistence, cannot be relegated nor underestimated. Muslims’ encounter with the West had been there for centuries. These encounters are in various dimensions, some by force, such as military intrusions, some through natural human and cultural interactions, and trade. Another important encounter is in the realm of knowledge and education. It was only in the nineteenth century that this encounter was more dramatic and impactful, an era of Western imperialism, where many Muslim states, from North Africa to South-east Asia, were subjected to Western colonial rule.

In this chapter, the various competing styles of thinking that are found in Muslim thought on education and knowledge, especially in its contacts with and the responses to the West, will be examined. Apart from the economic and political contacts, the Muslim world interacts with the West via intellectual and educational realms. As early as in the classical Islam period, the intellectual contact of Muslim with the Near Eastern civilization saw the appropriation of Greek thought and ideas. A great many Muslim thinkers saw Greek thought as wisdom to be cherished. Within the Islamic tradition, there are ample utterances to show the importance of seeking knowledge beyond the Islamic realm. The famous saying of the prophet purported to be uttered by him enjoined: “Seek to learn knowledge even though you have to find it in China,” which later many reformers cited, was an example of Muslims’ attitude towards knowledge. In Islamic philosophical history, al-Kindī (d. 866) exhorted the virtue of learning and acquiring knowledge from any sources even though they were not Muslims, as long as they were in the path of truth, since “nothing should be dearer to the seeker after truth than truth itself, and nothing should derogate from the value of truth, whoever might be its author or transmitter. Truth has never humiliated anyone, rather everyone has been honoured by it” (Fakhry 1977, vol. IV, pp. 103–104).

There are ample scholarships to show how the two civilizations interacted and intimated with each other. Scholars, both from the West and Muslim world, have noted that Western renaissance intellectual legacy could found its roots in classical Islam, which the latter was nourished by the civilizational achievements of the Greeks, Roman, Persian, Indian, and others. In the medieval period, Christian Europe appropriated philosophy, sciences, and technology from the land of Islam, which was later instrumental for the birth of Renaissance in the European continent. Even in Christian theology, Muslims’ primacy of human reasoning and dignity found its way into the Western Christian theological discourse (Walker 2005).

Another important historical contact was the nineteenth century, the colonial period where Muslims became more exposed to Western thought, with colonial education introduced Western languages and intellectual corpus. This time the Muslim world was in its decaying stage, forced to deal with the approaching Western imperialism. But that period was also a time of reawakening of Muslims after a long lapsed of decay beginning since the later thirteenth century. But the contact with the West brought significant impact, both in negative and positive terms. While there was resistance by the conservative circles, the progressive elements of Western intellectual and scientific tradition gained recognition among the progressive circles, to the point even the ideas of individualism and, liberalism and freedom gained currency among them, deemed as fundamental values for critical and scientific values to develop. Gradually Western concepts and ideas made inroads into Muslim thought, especially those that were seen as in consonance with the Islamic tradition (Merad 1977, Vol. IV, pp. 114–15).

The experiences of Sheikh Rifā‘et al.-Ṭaḥṭāwī of Egypt and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of British India in the nineteenth century were two classic examples of Muslims’ elite affirmation of the need to learn from the West in order to bring enlightenment and reform in their respective societies. They saw a critical selection

of Western education/knowledge as a way to reform their society, battling against ignorance, illiteracy, and scientific underdevelopment. For the reformist, to acquire and master the Western knowledge was not simply to advance Muslim societies, but to respond to European imperial powers. Renewal of Islam requires not just salvaging the critical dimensions as offered within the religious traditions, but also from the modern knowledge that had been developed by the Europeans.

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## Engaging the West-Islam Conceptual Dichotomy

Before moving into the discussion proper, it is important to reaffirm the tendency to essentialize “Islam” inasmuch as the category the “West.” Generally, the tendency to identify a particular attribute as essentially Islam or West is problematic, assuming that both have innate and fixed qualities, regardless of time and circumstances. To Asma Barlas to compare Islam and the West is untenable as the former is a religion while the latter is a geographic space/identity (Barlas 2003). Most importantly she noted that dichotomizing and pitting between the two “then buys into a view of religious and cultural differences(s) that signifies an absence of mutual recognition,” which in turn minimize the possibility of genuine dialogue. (ibid.: 4). However, this is not to deny that both have their own characteristics and peculiarities. In studying the two as a civilizational entity, there is a need to avoid the tendency towards essentializing them. At present, on both sides of the equation, there is a tendency to essentializing and reducing the Other. Orientalist scholarship is one example where essentializing Islam is highly notable, while the Muslims’ exclusivist discourses (read fundamentalist) are prone to exhibit the same thinking, but this time reducing and essentializing the West. Thus concluding that “Islam” as an entity has one single idea on the West is absurd, if not a sheer prejudice. Similarly, some in the Western scholarship see Islam as monolithic. Rather than simply pitting Islam against the West, there are some scholars who argued that both civilizational entities have common Greek heritage, in the philosophical tradition at least. Philosopher Mohammed Arkoun, following the historian Fernand Braudel, saw the need to see the West and Islam as belonging to a Mediterranean cultural region, where both shared commonalities in the Greco-Semitic tradition, that is “they sit on the same philosophical-religious pedestal” (Arkoun 1994, pp. 74–77).

In this chapter the category of Islam and the West are primarily seen as a civilization category, and we do not subscribe that there are fixed attributes for both. The clashes or cooperation cannot be reduced as due to innately “regressive” Islam as perceived by some in the West, nor as “secularistic” West as easily concluded by some Muslims. It is best that we see the two civilizational entities as complementing and learning from each other. Indeed, philosophers like Muḥammad Iqbal saw the movement of Muslim thinking towards the West is the very realization to the perfect ideals of Islam. He opines: “The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history . . . is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement,

for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of the most important phases of the culture of Islam” (Iqbal 1944, p. 9).

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## The Exclusivist-Rejectionist

There are generally three strands of responses. The first is the exclusivist-rejectionist type which objected to any kind of acquiring and learning of Western knowledge, which they deemed as un-Islamic, wayward, and disruptive to Muslims. These strands appeared throughout many periods in various Muslim societies, some more blatant and vociferous than others. Religious traditionalists and especially religious revivalists form the bulk of this strand. As one writer points out: “A present-day traditionalist/fundamentalist would say ‘no’ to both Westernization and modernization” (Babeair 1991, Vol. 81, p. 239). To them Islam is the complete and the final religion; that to borrow from the West means to imitate the infidels, and to destroy Islam itself. In depicting all negativities to the West, Islam is the answer (*Islām huwa al-ḥall*). The West is conflated with either a Christianizing force or relativistic and immoral secular, or fatally both. The Crusades, missionaries, and colonialism were the causes of Muslims decline. The imperialist West contends Sayyid Quṭb is all out to undermine Islam, to an extent that they

established an educational policy that put a distance between budding youth and the source of the religion; they kept only the questions [about religion]. They were anxious to raise an “intellectual” generation in each Islamic country, one that rejects religion and avoids it, perceiving it as stagnation, retardation, retreat, ossification, and degeneration . . . They succeeded in their efforts . . . They were successful in separating Muslims from their faith . . . (Haddad 1982, p. 17).

Such defensive tone is not uncommon today, especially among exclusivist Islamists. They categorically reject the West as an antithesis to Islam. This strand not only critical against Western ideas but also refuted fellow Muslims who gave primacy to reason or having affinity to philosophy in their intellectual repertoire (Khalil 1994, Vol. 48, pp. 676–94), which they deemed as either influenced by the West or simply imitating it, with a total disregard of the rationalist tradition within the history of Islamic thought. Hence there is no reason to learn or cooperate with the West. To them there are no human predicaments that could not find its solutions in Islam. In the exclusivists’ thinking, Western ideas are disruptive and aberrant. Islam does not need anything as it is the antidote and answers to all problems. Abū al-‘Alā’ Mawdūdī, an ideologue among the revivalist asserts: “the detailed structure of social life which ensures from the [Islamic] doctrine is inherently opposed to all others existing in the world . . . all problems of human life, whether big or small, are viewed and treated by Islam in its own way” (Maudoodi 1965, pp. 17–18). Obviously there is no need to rely or learn from others. What is imperative is the Islamization of Muslim society. The presence of these exclusivist ideologues hinders genuine intellectual dialogue/discourse, which would often argue from authority rather than on rationality and contextual reality.

There are many other examples throughout the Muslim world, where there was a strong opposition against the introduction of Western knowledge and sciences. In the Malay world, when *madrasah* school system was first introduced, alongside the introduction of modern subject in its curriculum, it was rejected by the religious traditionalists who deemed that only the traditional *pondok/pesantren* institutions could ensure the teaching of “authentic” Islam (Bakar 1994).

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## The Inclusivist-Integrationist

This group is primarily made up of reformers, though the extent of which Muslim should embrace the Western civilization differs among them. Generally, to the reformists the decline of Muslim societies was attributed to the underdeveloped intellectual and educational realms, where the sciences and modern knowledge could not be developed and mastered. Western nations, who were by then the imperial powers, were seen in both the lens of admiration and fear. It was in this context we see varieties of responses and emphases within this strand. During the period of Arab Renaissance (Hourani 1983), this conservative thinking rejected any attempts to introduce modern knowledge in Egypt. They accused al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, who was leading the educational reform in Egypt as a heretic and a danger to Islam. Ṭaḥṭāwī who was himself trained in traditional Islamic sciences noted the importance for the mastery of rational sciences (*‘ulūm-i ma‘aḳūl*), for this was the reason to explain the Western progress, while Muslims were only preoccupied in acquiring traditional religious sciences (*‘ulūm-i manḳūl*). The refusal of conservative *‘ulamā’* to expand the meaning and scope of sciences, alongside their prohibition of learning them, was the main reason for the neglect of developing knowledge in the Muslim world. Ṭaḥṭāwī asserted that not only studying the modern sciences was nowhere against the religious injunction, but it becomes obligatory for Muslims to acquire them, since it would assist in building the nation and society (Cole 1980, Vol. 70, pp. 41–42).

Moreover, to Ṭaḥṭāwī learning from the Europeans means reacquiring what Muslims had accomplished before, since in his words: “We were their teachers in all the sciences and we had an advance on them. It is obvious, and intellectual has determined, that credit goes to the pioneers, for surely it is the case that he who lags behind draws from what preceded him and is guided by this influence” (Euben 2006, p. 101). Ṭaḥṭāwī, who spent 5 years in Paris as an *imām* to Egyptian students studying there, took himself the opportunity to learn French and observed the French educational and governmental institutions. *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz ilā Talkhīṣ Bārīz* (The Extraction of Gold from a Distillation of Paris) also known as the *Riḥlah* (The Journey), published in 1834, contained many interesting observations and views of Ṭaḥṭāwī (al-Tahtawi 2004). His comparison between the West and the Islamic world, especially in the area of sciences and governance, made him to be optimistic that the path of modernization was not impossible for Muslims. “If Egypt modernized, and the means of civilization were abundant in her, she could be the sultan of cities and the leader of the countries of the world” (Altman 1982, p. 67). But Egypt needs

men of experts in the modern sciences, who are instrumental to the wellbeing of the people and the state, such as “the science of medicine, engineering, mathematics, astronomy, physics, geography, history, the sciences of administration and economy, military skills etc.” (ibid.: 43).

Much earlier, Hassan al-Attar, a learned Egyptian ‘*ulamā*’ was already convinced that that acquiring European science and technology was crucial for Egyptians, including its accompanying ethics. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, who was al-Attar’s protégé, had similar conviction though he attempted to synthesize Western and Islamic knowledge (Rabi 1989, Vol. 58, pp. 42–59). But many Azharite scholars were opposed to the acquisition of infidels’ sciences. Jamaluddin al-Afghani lashed out at the conservative ‘*ulamā*’ for their ignorance of modern knowledge needed by the society. While they were engrossed with their religious tracts, they had no inkling to know about the modern innovations that were emerging such as electricity, the steamboat, and railroads. Their disinterest was no an less intellectual catastrophe for Muslims in general (Keddie 1968, pp. 109–122). At the same time, he was criticizing the way in which the state modernizers were only interested to acquire European military sciences but not scientific and philosophical knowledge. Al-Afghānī was of course very critical of Western imperial powers which at that time were extending their colonies in many Muslim lands. But this did not prevent him to see the efficacy of Muslim learning from Western sciences, so as to make them equipped to defend themselves against the ever more encroaching Western powers. The rejection or avoidance means to their own peril. In his speech delivered in India, he criticized Muslims for their conservatism which “turn away with distaste and disgust from sciences and arts and industries.” Instead he admonished them if they were true adherents of Islam, it should have spurred them “to acquire erudition, wherever they found them . . .” (Ahmad 1960, Vol. 13, p. 59).

In the same period, Indian Muslim reformist Syed Ahmad Khan was clamoring his fellow Indian Muslims to accept Western education (Baljon 1949), while battling against the conservatives who labeled reformers like him as sell out to the West. From the galleries of Muslim reformers, we can generally say that they have positive attitude towards Western knowledge which Muslims must acquire and develop for their needs, without being slavished by it. Ottoman’s *Tanzīmāt* was the first affirmative response in the modern age. To these modernizers, the only way to save the empire was through modernizing Muslim societies, with the West as the model to be embraced (Berkes 1964). Generally to them reforming Muslim societies will not be possible if Muslims remained ignorant of the progress made in the field of sciences and knowledge that have been developed notably in the West. Moreover, the encounter with the West was seen as an encounter with modernity, and this should facilitate the renewal of Islamic thought. It is the renewal of Islam that becomes pertinent for the revitalization of Muslims life, but how much to be embraced and adopted remains something that the reformers and thinkers had to contend and forewarn that modernization is never to be equated with Westernization.

Muḥammad ‘Abduh, another leading Egyptian reformist of the late nineteenth century, spoke of reform that must take into consideration “the content of the books and even the names of the sciences themselves” (Abduh 2000, p. 46). He even lamented

that men of knowledge were subtly “oppressed” where there was unfortunately the “shunning or avoiding of knowledge, or ridiculing men of science to their faces and insulting them and keeping a distance from them” (Livingston 1995, Vol. 80, p. 28). Education was deemed the thrust of reform and revitalization of Muslim societies: “Those who really desire good for the country should turn their attention essentially to education. For it is by reforming education that one will most easily realize all other reforms. But those who imagine that it merely transplanting to their country the ideas and customs of European peoples they will in a short time achieve the same degree of civilization, deceive themselves grossly. They take as their point of departure what is in reality the end of a long evolution; for the great states of Europe did not arrive at their actual degree of civilization without the price of enormous suffering and sacrifice” (Amin 1957, pp. 167–168). Reforming education thus refers to be imbued with an enlightened exposure to Western knowledge alongside a critical appreciation of the endogenous tradition. But the embracement of Western sciences can never be an imitative one. ‘Abduh added: “If we give ourselves up to this blind imitation of the West . . . , it is then to be feared that we shall only arrive at a superficial and scarcely durable transformation, which will suppress our morals, our customs and ruin all our personality” (ibid.: 168).

Another illustrious reformer who seriously called for Muslims to learn from the West was Prince Sa‘īd Ḥalīm Pāshā. In a long essay titled “The Reform of Muslim Society,” he diagnosed Muslims’ backwardness, especially in the realm of science. He saw the urgency to acquire the positive sciences, although they must be wary of Western economic and labor institutions.

As that knowledge is possessed by the people of the West, it is among them we must go to seek it. It is from them we must re-learn the experimental method which we have forgotten, and the modern technique which we have neglected. But it is important that we should be certain that that is all we have to ask of the peoples of the West. Indeed, if it is indubitable that the only way to put a stop to Muslim decadence is to borrow from the West its positive science and technical progress, that does not mean at all that we should adopt the applications of its scientific knowledge which the West made, notably in the matter of the organization of Capital and Labour . . . (Pasha 1927, Vol. 1, p. 121)

To many reformers, the West was the model to be adopted, though some differ as to the degrees of embracement and adoption that Muslims should undertake. In the early twentieth century, Ziya Gökalp, a leading Turkish intellectual, was confident that the path of modernizing Turkey was inevitably Europe. But the adoption of Western civilization cannot mean to undermine the Turks’ own national culture. What was crucial to adopt from the Europeans were their “concepts, methods and techniques.” The people themselves would determine the elements of Europeans civilization that are to be selected. To those Westernizers, Gökalp criticized: “There is in our country a class, the so-called Levantines or Cosmopolitans, who try to adopt the aesthetic, moral, philosophical tastes, and entire customs, ceremonies and behavior of the West rather than its scientific methods and industrial techniques. That is, they try erroneously to imitate the cultures of other nations under the name of civilization” (Parla 1985, p. 27).

But to the reformers, the challenge of Muslims societies' path to progress not only come from the incorrigible conservatism and the captive Westernizers, but also a group that were pessimistic about any possibilities for Muslims to master the modern world, a sense of hopelessness that make them timid before the powerful West (Arslan 2004). Contemporary reformists like Fazlur Rahman emphasized that inasmuch as Muslim can draw the paradigmatic ideals and ethics of their religious traditions for their present challenges, the main task that cannot be avoided is "to assimilate, adapt, modify and reject the forces generated within its own fabric by the introduction of new institutions – of education, of industry, of communication, etc. - according as these forces are purely good, necessary evils, or positively harmful" (Rahman 1984, p. 143).

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### **The Exclusivist-Inclusivist Complex**

The third response that emerged in the period of religious resurgence is one that is characterized by an exclusivist-inclusivist complex. Generally, the latter accept the present modernity (Western framework of knowledge and education) but that can also be legitimate or even "authentic" if they are first being Islamized. It is the group that claims Islam as the complete and perfect religion. They rejected any form of borrowing and adaptation, although in many cases, they are inconsistent in their own positions. While there are repeated claims that the West has taken the mantle of civilizational achievements from Muslims, the present Western civilization is corrupt, dangerous, and irreligious. It is seen as a bloc that readily wants to undermine Islam by cultural, military, and ideational intrusions. Hence to defend against this becomes incumbent upon Muslims.

This strand that emerged in the post-independent era obviously harbors mistrust to Western ideas, which they easily associate with imperial hegemonic design in the present. Though this concern is valid, their anti-Western rhetoric reduced the West as a single entity that is invariably against Islam. To them any form of renewal as unnecessary as Muslims need to return to the pristine authentic Islam of the first generation of Muslims. It in this sense that makes their position fraught with ironies and inconsistencies. While it is not uncommon that they make claim that West inherited the knowledge and sciences of the golden age of Islam, they show equal interest to demonstrate how Western ideas are secular, corrupt, atheistic, immoral, thus a threat to Muslims. Interestingly those who subscribed such views are themselves trained and schooled in "secular" educational institutions. It is not uncommon the professionals trained in modern knowledge are now clamoring for an Islamized science, while drumming against the danger of Western epistemic dominance in Muslim thought. A case in point is a view expressed by an Indonesian writer, Hartono A. Jaiz, who was dismissive of any Western import, especially in the realm of Islamic studies. Islamic scholars who are sent to study in Western universities eventually according to him become the collaborators of "the infidels who launch Christianization, apostasy and undermining Islam." Without learning Islam from Islamic scholars, he insisted that it only benefits the enemies of Islam. Thus



Indonesian Islamic universities, especially those known for its progressive ideas, are deemed by him as a danger to Islam. Claiming as a defender of Islam, he wrote:

The epistemology which is possessed by the lecturers [in these universities] has been planned as such so that it departs from the Islamic epistemology. Hence when they discuss about Islam, it is no longer like those that are made by the *ulamas*. The educational resources which these lecturers possessed are not the sciences of Islam, based on God's revelation and the Tradition and other knowledge that had been passed down by *ulamas*. They do not possess a worldview which is in line with the understanding of the Companions, of the pious generation and its successor, those who had the best understanding of Islam. (Jaiz 2005, xxi)

Apparently the main objection is the appropriation of Western social sciences in the study of Islam, which easily reduced as "Orientalist." From within this strand, there is a strong tendency that it is legitimate to acquire (even simply even to consume) the Western technologies and sciences. But they asserted serious apprehension in acquiring Western social sciences and humanities, which are deemed as epistemic waywardness, or simply irrelevant for Muslim societies. Khaled Abou El Fadl, who is critical of such thinking noted this trend: "There is a notion that we [can] take from the West their science but not their not social or political ideas, and if you accept social and political ideas then you will be given the label 'secular'" (Fadl and Abou 2005).

Currently the euphoria for the Islamization of knowledge shows such position, characterized on the one hand, romanticizing the glorious Islamic scientific past, and on the other, the need to purge all the embraced modernity from its Western elements, with the ultimate aim to carve out an authentic Islamic "alternative" (Mohamed 1993, Vol. 10, pp. 12–23). It becomes clear that the puritanical interest to weed out the so-called Western epistemic excesses becomes the main preoccupation, rather than a serious endeavor to build up sciences and knowledge itself. At the height of religious revivalism in the 1980s and 1990s, the call for Islamization of knowledge received considerable attention from many Muslims intelligentsia. This enamor for Islamization only give rise to intense anti-Western rhetorics, and the feeling of moralistic superiority, nor hardly any critical about the received/transmitted knowledge.

In fact by demonizing the "Western" epistemology, such thinking easily resorts to affirm the validity of the authentic Islamic science which they have propped up though the very idea that is promoted is antiintellectual and anti-scientific in many sense of the term. At a closer look, their preoccupation of Islamizing the sciences demonstrates, on the one hand, their want of participating in science and appropriating the fruits of modernity. On the other, there is a puritanical tendency that aimed to eradicate any kind of thoughts that may pose sceptical questions on their absolute dogmatism. Perhaps their concern for science is even more limited. It is not even exploring and developing science in order to bring out Muslims societies from the stage of underdevelopment, but actually concern in proving that Western-derived sciences are theologically unacceptable, and therefore a danger to Muslims. In the end no genuine efforts are made to build system of knowledge, only to claim that their Islamic

epistemology is after all superior, holistic, and authentic as opposed to the West (Rahman 1988). Reformer like Fazlur Rahman focused not on the false dichotomy between Western versus the Islamic knowledge, but contends the importance of correcting the approach of knowledge acquisition, and its use that should be based on ethical consideration. Apparently the clamor for Islamization of knowledge ends up with piles of rhetoric of the superiority of Islamic epistemology (whatever that means), while a genuine intellectual response against intellectual dependency and academic imperialism (Alatas 2000, Vol. 28, pp. 23–45), as exerted by the metropolitan centers of the West, remains relegated.

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## The Challenge of Intellectual and Cultural Captivity

In the postindependent era, Muslim societies are confronted with a more complex response to Western knowledge and education. Today, many Muslim societies are beset by these contending styles of thinking, each promoting its cherished ideal and model, while undermining the other(s). As a result, we see a continuing simplistic Islamic-Western dichotomy, while the efforts of a creative and critical adaptation remains relegated, while problematizing the captivity in knowledge and education remains largely unthought of. Several Muslim intellectuals have emphasized that educational reform and development is integral in Islamic regeneration. Khuda Buksh in the early decades of the twentieth century put the points eloquently, emphasizing that the acquisition of Western knowledge should not mean a wholesale abandonment of the Eastern tradition:

Oriental we are, and Orientals we must remain, and European culture can never be for the majority of us more than an incidental and subsidiary acquisition. It is therefore to Eastern culture that we must pre-eminently turn. Let us take all we can from the West. Let us study its languages and literatures, its history and civilization; let us assimilate and absorb all that is worth absorbing and assimilating, but let us not play the sedulous ape to the West, nor lose our distinctive stamp and individuality. Otherwise we shall lose all that is ours without making our own that which really does not and cannot belong to us. (Buksh n.d., p. 45)

Learning from the West does not mean aping it, though there were cases where in the enthusiasm to reform and modernize, some submitted the need to be Westernized as a complete conviction for progress and enlightenment, be it conscious or otherwise. This has been the concern of many progressive Muslim thinkers, between embracing and enquiring Western knowledge, yet vigilant to avoid imitative and uncritical captivity. The latter can happen when the captive mind is in dominance. The captive mind according to S.H. Alatas inhibited developing societies, where “it is not able to differentiate between the universal and the particular. It confounds both to be the universal. When a captive mind studies the sciences from the West, phenomena which are distinctly Western are often confounded as universal” (Alatas 1974a, p. 42). The dominance of the captive mind is aggravated when knowledge that is transmitted “does not promote consciousness of the fundamentals of scientific thinking and reasoning” (ibid.: 44).

## Intellectual Response and Continuing Dialogue

Prominent Muslims thinkers in the Muslim world in the modern era have sought to be in dialogue with the West, a sense of cooperation and in solidarity for common humanity. What we need is not about the simplistic choice between the enlightened West and the spiritual East. The building of the new nation has to incorporate education and that requires according to Ziya Gokalp, “a synthesis of national culture and international civilization” (cited in Andrew Davison 1995, p. 189). He noted in education it has to have two main components, namely educating and instructing. The former aims to nurture national consciousness, while the latter for modernity. He asserts: “while we are not in need of Europe from the point of view of culture and education, we badly need it from the point of view of techniques and learning” (ibid.: 209). Some are of course sceptical of this approach, but at least a selective borrowing is at least better than a total rejection of any Western imports.

The fear that Western influences or elements are always against the East/Islam persisted because there is a serious lack of understanding of the Other. This calls for the recognition and creation of a space for dialogue and cooperation. With dialogue we can further understand the Other, including our own positions and limitations. Dialogue fosters cooperation and averts a clash of civilizations. “Mutual awareness of difference” writes Bassam Tibi, “does not necessarily have to lead to strife. It also can lead to a mutual understanding with the clear will to live in peace with one another. Cultural dialogue in the pursuit of the search for value commonality, that is for international morality, is more promising than the imposition of a universalism of one civilization on the others” (Tibi 1999, p. 120).

With dialogue we could mitigate the Islamophobia in the West inasmuch as the anti-Western sentiments and rhetoric in the Muslim world. Iranian leader and intellectual, Mohamed Khatami, one of the advocates of dialogue emphasized that: “We must understand the peculiarities of our era and treat Western civilization as our era’s ultimate manifestation and symbol . . . This means understanding the values and tenets of Western civilization and freeing ourselves from the equally harmful extremes of either hating it or being completely taken in and entranced by it” (Shadid 2001, p. 216). Inevitably with dialogue it allows for a critical examination of our own tradition. But the obstacles to dialogue and cooperation are many. The language of superiority thwarts serious dialogue. The strong reactions against Western civilization are due to variety of reasons. To a critical observer like Fauzi Najjar, Muslims’ reactionary stance was due to the fact of their weak culture in the face of a hegemonic Western one. In reality Muslims are embracing modernity in its Western mould in a selective manner, or accepting them in ad hoc basis. However they could not afford to ignore it totally, unless they are prepared to be marginalized further. Yet without a proactive participation in the scheme of modernity, Muslims could never be able to confront the hegemony of globalization (Najjar 2005, Vol. 12). Najjar’s comment, specifically focusing on Arab societies, has its relevance to all other Muslims societies, that any historical romanticism that only inflated the past glories will be inadequate inasmuch as subjecting to the state of dependence and negative imitation.

But before cooperation can be realized and enhanced, there should be humility and a sense to build a common goal for humanity must exist. The developing Muslim world needs more creative and critical engagement with the West, always focusing on how best and to what extent that should learn from the latter, and how Muslims too can contribute towards the present humanity as they had accomplished before. In addition, as long as Muslims are subjected to fear that Western ideas are all out to undermine them, there could never be a proactive attitude in dealing with Western ideas. As such, “those who believe that Islam is still a living force” noted Muhsin Mahdi “cannot be afraid of such an open encounter with modern Western culture” (Mahdi 1988, pp. 72–73). Mahdi also points to the naivety of certain Muslim circles that think that Muslims need only to learn the Western scientific and technological advances, while its thinking and culture must be shunned for fear it would only contaminate Muslims’ mind. He asked Muslims whether such a distinction is tenable for there are serious ramifications of this position. Its persistency will only mean a superficial understanding of the Western culture and its path to progress and development. (ibid.) This is exactly the point made by other scholars like Bassam Tibi and Edward Said, all of which have serious ramifications in the educational thought among Muslims. As Said aptly noted, while many rich Arab Gulf states sent their students abroad for hard sciences and business administration, there is hardly any interest to send their students to master the humanities and social sciences.

During the period of religious revivalism, many Muslim circles subscribed to the romantic idea of an Islamic golden age that produced the “authentic” and glorious education system, producing many scientists and thinkers. This enamored enthusiasm of a pristine Islamic model went hand in hand with a clamor for the search of the so-called Islamic epistemology of various realms of knowledge, including education. In several Muslim countries, the Islamization of education becomes a celebrated project, though many core educational issues, such as educational access and infrastructures, curriculum and pedagogical practices, teacher-training and the like, are much more important than those “Islamic epistemic” fervor. Such misplaced concern is further aggravated by an absence of critical intellectual circles, while the state power appropriates Islamic symbolism to cover up their inability to address fundamental issues and policies of their countries.

This uncreative and uncritical aspects of the captive mind pose a great challenge especially when Muslims societies are confronted by unthinking imitation of exogenous (read Western) ideas, while at the same time subjected to intellectual imperialism, which is exerted primarily from the Western metropolitan. When this predominates, we can see educationists and policy makers are “dominated by Western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner.” This intellectual captivity that is mutually enforced by imposition from without, and its persistency from within, has serious ramifications to the educative and researching dimensions of the education system (Alatas 1974a, p. 42). This other captivity stems from a narrow parochial nationalistic sentiment, often manifested in a strong ethno-nationalistic sentiment *vis-à-vis* the competing pluralistic reality of the country. As such educational ideals are built around this idea, influencing also the “national” education.

When ethno-nationalistic sentiment harnessed and rallied, often for the political mileage of the ruling party, the intellectual integrity is seriously compromised.

Today, Muslims' societies, like all other Third World nations, face surmountable challenges in building educational infrastructure, with often low budget given to education, alongside an underdeveloped intellectual culture beset by many factors, such as repressive authorities, clerical interference, and brain drain due to political instability and economic depravity. The persistency of religious conservatism with a strong dose anti-West rhetorics meant that any Western ideas, even in the realm of education, is seen as secularism that will undermine Islam. However, the challenge today for Muslims is no longer about choosing between Western knowledge and the Islamic ones. Muslims, like all other believers, need to ensure that its educational endeavor is one that imbues a strong critical and creative dimension, always at the forefront in blending the endogenous and exogenous knowledge, according to their contextual needs, while envisaging to contribute knowledge to the larger humanity. As a saying attributed to the Prophet: "The best among you is he who is best for people." Today, Muslims have to grapple which of their past traditions can be made relevant today, inasmuch as to creatively select the best of the modern knowledge and sciences for their own development.

This obviously requires a sense of critical historical and sociological imagination, including a vision of reforming a system of ideas or an institution. What they need is a type of education that is characterized by an education for change. According to Karl Mannheim a discerning historical perspective enables a society to be aware of the transitions and changes taking place, enabling them to weigh what the best of the present knowledge could offer, yet without losing faith of the past traditions, nor being timid in fulfilling their contribution to the future (Mannheim and Stewart 1964, p. 33). All societies, be it Muslim or Western, are subjected to changes and are in need of an education for change as highlighted by Mannheim. The functioning of a modern society cannot afford a sector within it to remain aloof or ambivalent about the changes that are taking place around them. "In our age it is not enough," writes Mannheim, "to say that this or that educational system or theory or policy is good. We have to determine for what it is good, for which historical aims it stands and whether we want this educational result" (ibid.: 44). This is exactly expressed within the Islamic religious educational institution in Indonesia (known as *pesantren*) that often cites an Arabic proverb which forms part of their ideals that is "to conserve the good of the past, and to appropriate the best of the present" (*al-muḥāfiẓatu 'alā al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdhu bi al-jadīd al-aṣlah*).

In the end, Muslims like all other communities need to be inspired by the progress of sciences and knowledge, emerging from all over the world, not simply from the West. Local and regional intellectual and educational heritage should be considered alongside those from the Western tradition, so as to mitigate intellectual captivity and dependency. As Alatas points out aptly, while students in Euro-America never disregard the ancient Greco-Roman thought, likewise Muslims should master and cherish their own intellectual legacies, alongside those from the world civilizations (Alatas 1974b, p. 46).

It is this task of ensuring coexistence, dialogue, and cooperation that both the Muslim world and the West need to consistently foster a sense of common universal humanity and destiny. If clashes had occurred in the historical past, reconciliation, hope, and healing must be the agenda for the present and future. The challenge to foster genuine dialogue and the commitment for cooperation must come with mutual respect without ever denying the constant challenges, which require the political and cultural will on both sides, inasmuch as to be reminded that “dialogue is not a property of those who think they are the sole proprietors of truth” (Khatami 1999, p. 14). Lastly, in the words of Goethe, the famous German humanist, who himself was inspired by the fourteenth-century Persian poet, Ḥafiz, who says this admirably, very much against Rudyard Kipling’s “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,”

One who knows him/herself and others  
will find out here  
that East and West  
are no longer separable.

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## Conclusion

Through history, the relationship between Islam and the West can be characterized as both positive and negative, the former meaning peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and mutual integration of cultural, scientific, and other elements from the other and the latter including mutual distrust and even hostility. However, it is a simplification to talk in terms of “Islam” and the “West” since both of these categories are very differentiated and there have been changes in them from time to time. In addition to this, at least three different types of Islamic or Muslim responses to the West can be distinguished: (a) the exclusivist-rejectionist type (rejecting everything coming from the West); (b) inclusivist-integrationist response (accepting and including modern phenomena from Europe, America, and Oceania); and (c) exclusivist-inclusivist complex, where the present modernity (Western framework of knowledge and education) is accepted but modern Western phenomena can also be legitimate or even “authentic” if they are first Islamized.

In education, these views have been and are present as far as policies and attitudes are concerned, but generally Muslim areas have mainly borrowed and imitated from educational policies, ideas, and institutional arrangements from the West. Many Muslim countries have made attempts to combine or integrate Islamic (religious) ideas and modern (secularist) ideas in education.

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# Islam, State, Civil Society, and Education

Florian Pohl

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## Abstract

How do Islamic institutions of learning support civil society and prepare students for life in modern democratic societies? The chapter examines the significance of Islamic education, first, organizationally for the associational life and, second, culturally for the promotion of civic values in various Muslim societies. The pairing of “Islamic education” and “civil society” can appear counterintuitive in light of the increasingly heated public debate about radicalizing effects of Muslim schools. The situation is exacerbated by the relative paucity of studies on Islam and civil

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society when compared with the scholarly interest in questions of civil society and democratic reform in non-Muslim countries. Over the past years, however, a number of western scholars have demonstrated that civility and public sphere have been anything but absent in the history of Islamic civilizations, including structures to limit the powers of the state and the promotion of independent associational life. In addition, the more recent resurgence of Islam in societies around the world has seen efforts to reinterpret Islamic resources in support of participatory politics and public civility. Reflecting the socio-political processes of Islamic resurgence and democratization, the Muslim educational scene displays a wide spectrum of ideological positions concerning the role of religion in politics and public life. Drawing, among others, on cases from Egypt, Iran, and Indonesia, the chapter argues for a careful case-by-case approach that incorporates both the circumstances under which Islamic educational institutions contribute to education for civility and that enables a fresh perspective on the contentious questions of, first, the role of Islam in education and, second, the role of Islam and Muslim institutions in modern societies.

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**Keywords**

Islam · Education · Civil society · Islamic education

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**Introduction**

The connection this chapter draws between civil society and Islamic education first originates from the recognition of the significant role Islamic schools play in the associational lives of Muslim communities as well as of the relevance Islamic education has for the promotion of civic values and, second, from the concept's widespread resonance among many in the Muslim community, including Muslim educators, for both politics and practice. For anyone interested in the conditions under which Islamic education promotes (or hinders) democratization, pluralism, and human rights, civil society remains a useful heuristic to examine the political dynamics of Islamic education because it draws our attention to both institutional and normative dimensions of Islamic educational practice and how they influence the course of politics. Finally, approaching the relationship between Islamic education and other sociopolitical institutions in terms of civil society, challenges both the claim of Islamic exceptionalism and dominant conceptions of civil society. Civil society in all its definitional ambiguity has become a truly global term. Questioning how the concept functions in and relates to Islamic educational traditions may broaden interpretations of civil society and make the concept more useful in cross-cultural analysis.

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**Civil Society as a Contested Idea**

Among democracy-promotion advocates, civil society has become a cornerstone of functioning democracies. Following the success of prodemocracy social movements in toppling communist governments of Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, influential scholarly theories emerged that posited the centrality of civil society to the

transformation of authoritarian regimes into healthy democracies (e.g., Diamond 1999; Gellner 1994; Putnam 1993). This optimism that civil society at last would succeed where state-centric and market-driven approaches of the preceding decades had failed was mirrored in European and the United States' foreign policy. The Center for Democracy and Governance at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Great Britain's Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), and the European Union's European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) are examples of institutions that saw an outpouring of state funds directed at civil society assistance programs in the 1990s. Following the attacks in Washington, DC, and New York City on September 11, 2001, the promotion of democracy across the Middle East became an explicit foreign policy goal for the United States. The creation of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) provided the institutional infrastructure through which the Bush administration launched ambitious programs in countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The programs assigned for civil society a central place in the mission to democratize the region. The Bush administration's assistance in creating the Ministry of Civil Society Affairs in the Iraqi Transitional Government in May 2005 demonstrates the strategic significance civil society had for the Bush administration push for democratic reform in the MENA region. What followed was an outpouring of funds for civil society organizations (CSOs) or for government-facilitated volunteering programs in areas deemed critical such as healthcare and education.

Islamic schools have become a particular focus for the international development community, foremost the United States government, in its efforts to strengthen civil society and promote democracy. Policy recommendations have variously aimed at improving school access, reforming curriculum and teaching methods, and effectively promoting secular education as antidotes to the perceived radicalizing influence Islamic education has over Muslim youths. Rabasa (2004) offers a detailed discussion of the policy recommendations upon which these programs rest see. These policies have translated, among others, into aid programs by the Agency for International Development (USAID) to initiate and support education reform in Pakistan (Rahman and Bukhari 2006, p. 331). Similarly, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) received 180 million US dollars throughout the 2003 and 2004 fiscal years with the explicit goal to expand and improve secular education in Arab countries (Sharp 2005). In late August 2004, the United States also announced that it would provide 157 million US dollars to Indonesia over a period of 5 years in order to enhance the quality of instruction in the country's religious schools. Despite the growing significance Islamic education holds for policy and practice of democracy promotion, questions remain about the exact relationship between Islamic education and its role in civil society as a positive force for democracy.

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## **Associational Life or Type of Society?**

As is the case with other big ideas that serve as interpretive frameworks for human thought and action, civil society has multiple and at times contradictory meanings. Despite a lack of consensus in the literature on civil society about how precisely to

define the term, most current uses of the concept draw on it to describe the realm of citizen action between the individual and the state. Next to this broad view of civil society as public square or sphere are two other definitional perspectives writers on the concept frequently exhibit. The first highlights civil society as voluntary associational life whereas the second emphasizes a specific type of society constituted by norms and values that make it civil. Proponents of the former usage think of civil society as a distinctive part of the wider society. It is the part of society that is constituted by a broad array of voluntary and quasivoluntary organizations, which provide the institutional infrastructure for citizen participation and action. Advocates for the latter perspective on civil society focus their concerns on the normative principles, values, and achievements that regulate social relationships and motivate collective action. Civil society in this school of thought is the “good society” characterized by constructive social norms such as cooperation and trust that help accommodate diversity in the direction of pluralism.

In Western social science, the prevailing school of thought, particularly among academics in the United States, has focused on the significance of civil society as associational life. The place of voluntary associations at the heart of civil society thinking goes back to the work of Alexis de Tocqueville on nineteenth-century America. Tocqueville viewed a strong network of voluntary organizations as the best protection from state attempts to centralize power and to wrest from its citizens individual liberties and rights. In his influential definition of civil society, Michael Walzer echoes Tocquevillian themes such as the centrality of voluntary associations for the protection and advancement of individual interests when he writes, “the words ‘civil society’ mean the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks – formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology – that fill this space” (Walzer 1995, p. 7).

The relative prominence of the associational view of civil society, however, must not be understood as indication of an emerging consensus on the concept. What the exact scope is of associations that should qualify for admission to civil society (Do traditional associations whose membership derives from involuntary traits such as family, ethnicity, or religion constitute civil society?) or what the appropriate relationship between civil society and the state should be (What degree of relative autonomy of associational life vis-à-vis the state is required for civil society to work?) are questions that remain open to contestation and answers differ widely depending on the historical context or theoretical approach one chooses. Moreover, scholars who primarily emphasize the social role of civil society as the arena that nurtures and reinforces socially constructive values of solidarity and caring across all members of society direct attention to what Michael Edwards considers the most vexing question in the civil society debate, namely, “how *does* a strong civil society make society strong and civil?” (Edwards 2004, p. 74). Instead of somewhat naively assuming a direct relationship between participation in the formal realm of civil society and the development of values that strengthen society and enhance its civility, these critics draw attention to the need for nuanced and contextual approaches to understanding under what conditions different forms of civic participation affect the development of specific types of social norms.

A significant hindrance to understanding Islamic education's contributions to civil society has been the problematic identification of the term with the West, both as a historical phenomenon and a theoretical idea, which raises questions about the concept's explanatory power for processes in the non-Western world. While some Western scholars have pointed to the heterogeneity of Western intellectual traditions that have shaped the concept and argued that more nuanced and expansive understandings of civil society remain relevant for crosscultural analysis, especially scholars in postcolonial studies such as Partha Chatterjee (1990) have resisted any attempt at universalization as a further example in a long history of epistemic violence. Suspicion that civil society serves Western hegemonic designs are exacerbated by the shallow and ideological use of the term in the development community. The official endorsement of civil society by institutions such as the World Bank has raised concerns about the extent to which the concept has become instrumentalized to serve a neoliberal economic agenda by reducing it to a descriptive shorthand for the activities of nongovernmental organizations that advocate for liberal values and provide social services in areas previously assigned to the responsibility of the state (Beckman 1993). Hesitancy to employ the concept in the analysis of Islamic politics, however, is based on more than the contested nature of the term and relates to putative claims of Islamic exceptionalism that view Islam alone among the world's great traditions as resistant to secularization, which advocates of civil society – at least in its liberal variant – see as a crucial prerequisite for its accommodation.

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## Islamic Conceptions of Civil Society

Muslim organizations have taken on key roles in the civic life of many contemporary Muslim societies over the past decades. Muslim self-assertiveness has grown and with it Islamic issues have increasingly influenced public debate. Broadly speaking, we find two contrasting lines of thought in response to the question of whether this upsurge of religious expression is compatible with civil society and a democratic public culture. The first advances the pessimistic view that Islam and the societies shaped by it are generally incompatible with modern civil society (see Turner 1984).

The argument that Islam does not possess the mechanisms that make democracy work was most prominently advanced in the 1990s in the work of Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, who argued that the notions of individual freedom, participatory politics, and the separation of religion and state were at odds with central tenets of the Islamic worldview (Huntington 1993, p. 40). Other Western social scientists have echoed Huntington's culturalist argument of ascribing a proclivity toward religious totalitarianism to Muslim societies based on the assumption that Islamic doctrine does not allow for the separation of religion from the state (see Lawrence 1998). Islam's continued vitality and assertion in the public sphere of Muslim societies, in the assessment of social anthropologist Ernest Gellner, marked Islam as a "dramatic and conspicuous exception," an anomaly to the otherwise universal modern trend of secularization (Gellner 1992, p. 5). Focusing in a later

book specifically on the issue of civil society, Gellner (1994) went on to argue that since the development of democratic and pluralist sociopolitical structures depends on the privatization of religious belief, the development of an independent space between the state and the individual in which civil society might grow was highly unlikely in Muslim communities.

Quite different from the first group's negative assessment, another group of observers discerned that the resurgence of Islamic expression frequently was paralleled by a trend toward greater public participation in the political process. Although not every public expression of Islam promoted participatory politics or adhered to notions of public civility, Esposito and Voll (1996, p. 3) noted that "[i]n many areas, movements of religious revival coincide with and sometimes reinforce the formation of more democratic political systems." From the mobilization of a powerful Muslim prodemocracy movement in Indonesia that helped oust the autocratic New Order regime of President Suharto in 1998 (Hefner 2000) to the popular demand for democratic reform in Iran from social and political actors, including an emerging women's press (Mir-Hosseini 2002), in the wake the election victory of the reformist President Khatami in 1997 and again in the postelectoral events of June 2009, scholars in this second group have observed that debates over democratization and civil society are anything but absent from the Muslim world and frequently draw on the Islamic tradition in their commitment to tolerance, human rights, and rule of law.

A number of studies on the civil-pluralist resources of the Islamic tradition reveal ample historical precedents of Islamic institutions and organizations that were independent of governmental control and set limits to the arbitrariness of state power (Bulliet 1999; Kelsay 2002; Lapidus 1992). Such extrastate religious organizations included the '*ulamā*' (Islamic legal scholars), many of which viewed the acceptance of administrative posts as undesirable and as a danger to their religious integrity. A similar civic independence can be noted concerning many of the Muslim mystical brotherhoods. The *ṣūfī shaykh* (spiritual master of a mystical order) often remained in cautious distance from the apparatus of the state so that the *ṣūfī* order provided its members with additional opportunities for civic organization and religious participation independent of state authority. Despite regional variations reflecting differences in the economy of power between state and society, '*ulamā*' remained mostly independent and resisted state attempts to control Islamic law. Islamic law thus provided a balance to the power of the ruler who had to rely on a parallel system of caliphal law or *qānūn* to exercise his legislative and judicial powers. The dual system of laws and courts in Muslim societies throughout much of medieval time serves as a reminder that contemporary claims by advocates for an Islamic state about the exclusivity of Islamic law – powerful and attractive as such claims may be – have little precedent in Muslim history and should better be understood as a phenomenon of the modern period. Far from a monolithic fusion of religion and state, historical studies demonstrate incidents in premodern Muslim communities of quasiautonomous associational life as well as mechanisms to protect it from state domination.

Over the last two decades, an increasing number of studies of Muslim-majority countries have been informed by civil society perspectives (Jahanbegloo 2011; Mardin 1995; Norton, 1994 and 1996; Sajoo 2002). These studies reflect not only the growing

presence of Muslim civil society organizations but also a vibrant discourse among Muslim activists and intellectuals on the subject. The observation that robust networks of Muslim voluntary organizations have been engaged in social welfare, education, and health care instead of promoting Islam on the political level has served as a corrective to the conventional wisdom that civil society has no place in Islam (Sullivan 1994). Whether the growth of Muslim civil society on the level of associational life is conducive to democratization, however, defies facile predictions. Prevailing autocratic elements in the use of state power, civil associations that advance politically regressive and socially conservative goals, as well as restrictive access and uneven representation in the public sphere, all interfere with the strengthening of democratic civility in many Muslim societies. What remains clear, however, is that the concept has engendered a vibrant debate among Muslims on the values that should guide public life.

Drawing on resources within Islamic tradition, the Muslim world has witnessed a growing discourse on civil society that has seen the articulation of alternative conceptions of the term. Although questions about the organization of associational life play a part in the debate – a debate that itself contributes to the vitality of civic-associational institutions – dominant themes to which the civil society concept is connected are deeply ethical in nature and relate to questions of how Muslim communities should respond to diversity. How to conceptualize civility and tolerance within an Islamic framework as well as how to rethink Islamic tradition in the direction of minority and human rights have moved to the center of public debate and given rise to distinctly Islamic articulations of the civil society idea (Hanafi 2002; Kelsay 2002; Soroush et al. 2000). Despite their conscious embrace of the term, these conceptions are not always, or in most cases, carbon-copies of Western or even liberal counterparts. That religious ethics are unapologetically brought into the realm of civic debate over how society should be organized, from the perspective of political liberalism, violates the liberal norm of a religion-free public sphere that is seen as a precondition to the peaceful accommodation of substantive difference. Such normative differences, however, can not only reveal the contested nature of the concept but also call into question the secular connotations that adhere to processes of democratization in Western social scientific discourse.

Islamic education occupies a prominent place in the discourse over civil society in Muslim communities, both on the associational level and in terms of the civic values it promotes. It is to these two dimensions, roughly corresponding to the two definitional strands or schools of thought on civil society discussed earlier, that the analysis turns next. The final section will revisit the contentious question of the relationship between these two core elements of the civil society idea by addressing Islamic education's contributions to broader sociopolitical processes such as democratization.

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## **Associational Dimensions of Islamic Education**

Voluntary and collective citizen action restraining the powers of centralizing institutions is the principal theme of civil society theories focused on associational life. From this perspective, a functioning civil society requires the existence of civil

formations that operate independently from the state and have the power to oppose it. As noted earlier, studies in Islamic history have shown that premodern Muslim societies had developed civil formations analogous to what modern thinkers had in mind when they described civil society as a countervailing force of checks and balances. The medieval *madrasah*, the central institution for the transmission of religious knowledge, was one such institution. From its inception in medieval times, the *madrasah*'s relationship to the authority of political rule has remained a contentious feature of Islamic institutions of learning and their role in Muslim communities. It is this relationship between Islamic education and the state that has gained renewed significance for Muslim politics with the advent of the modern nation state and its use of education for the purpose of nation-building.

### Madrasah-State Relations from Medieval to Colonial Times

Beginning in tenth-century Iran, the *madrasah* served as the central institution of Islamic learning throughout the medieval Near East; and by the thirteenth century its influence had spread even farther to Southern Spain and the Indian subcontinent. In addition to providing training in the Islamic sciences, many *madrasahs* offered instruction in nonreligious or auxiliary subjects from mathematics to philosophy and medicine. The systematic organization of its curriculum, the standardization of instruction through classroom and dormitory complexes that allowed for extended periods of study, and its wide geographical distribution made it a pivotal institution in medieval Muslim society. The thirteenth century further broadened the *madrasah*'s civil significance as it saw the development of what Arjomand (1999) referred to as an "educational-charitable complex," which combined the *madrasah* with a number of previously independent institutions such as teaching hospitals and *ṣūfī* convents through which it expanded the range of services offered to the wider society.

The state's role in *madrasah* education differed throughout the medieval period in ways that reflected the relative strength or weakness of society in relation to the state. In parts of the Muslim world that boasted a strong and independent socioeconomic strata of wealthy landowners, such as the networks of patrician families in tenth- and eleventh-century northeastern Iran, the establishment and management of *madrasahs* often fell into the hands of private individuals (ibid.: 267–268). Where, as was the case in the Mamlūk Sultanate in Egypt and the Levant two centuries later, a foreign governing elite saw an opportunity to enhance its legitimacy in the eyes of the local Muslim population, rulers commonly founded *madrasahs* and maintained control over their activities (Berkey 1992). In the Ottoman Empire state patronage continued well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when most of the leading *madrasahs* were established and supervised by the state. By contrast, throughout most of Asia and in other parts outside of the Ottoman Empire, *madrasahs* tended to be set up by private initiative and managed by the '*ulamā*' who carefully guarded their monopoly on education against government intrusions. The major challenge for the *madrasahs* from the nineteenth century on, however, was not state intrusion in its affairs but the advent of Western colonialism.



During the colonial period, the *madrasah* became increasingly marginalized as a result of colonial education systems modelled on European schooling that for the most part sought to circumvent the traditional Islamic institutions of learning. Reactions within the Muslim community varied from acquiescence to direct opposition to colonial rule. Expansive networks for the diffusion of extrastate authority and relative autonomy from government control made the *madrasah* a vehicle for political mobilization against the colonial government rule. In some instances, such as the Banten peasants' revolt in West Java in 1888, the resistance took the form of armed rebellion. In other cases, however, *madrasahs* became the base for social reform movements that aimed not so at an armed struggle to transform the institutions of the state but one that took the aim at increasing popular piety and empowering the wider Muslim public through education. India's Deobandis and Indonesia's Muḥammadīyah were two of the most successful movements based on *madrasah* reform still in existence today (Metcalf 1982; Shihab 1995). These new associational networks at times could consciously emulate practices of European voluntary associations, including Christian missionary groups and their focus on education and medical services. As the example of the Muḥammadīyah shows, reformist educators also would expand the *madrasah* curriculum to include non-religious subjects taught in the colonial system.

Despite indigenous education reform movements in parts of the Muslim world, Islamic institutions largely emerged weakened from the colonial era. Marginalized by colonial administrations and increasingly deserted by local elites for whom Western-style schooling promised greater chances of economic success, the newly emerging nation states that succeeded colonial rule continued to bypass Islamic schools and relied heavily instead on inherited colonial institutions to develop their own national systems of education. Rulers of countries that had evaded colonialization such as Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey also introduced Western-style educational reforms that led to the marginalization of indigenous systems of education. How to relate to this new political formation of the nation state and what role, if any, Islamic education had to play in the national education systems have remained significant questions for the *madrasah*.

## National Education in Postcolonial States

The national education systems that developed in the postcolonial Muslim world at the outset did not make any sustained attempts to draw on indigenous institutions such as the *madrasah*. Political elites generally favored Western-oriented models, partially because many within the political leadership of the new nations had been educated in European-style colonial schools and regarded Islamic schools as insufficient to the task of initiating students into the new culture of citizenship. Sporadic state efforts could be seen to employ some of the more prestigious Islamic schools in the nation-building process, such as the nationalization of Egypt's Al-Azhar in 1961, but mostly Islamic institutions continued on the path paved during the colonial era. They functioned as a separate system from the state schools serving mostly, as in

Pakistan, rural communities where they provided access to education for the poor. As a result, the state systems developed largely along secular lines. Islamic education continued to exert its influence in the private sector but only marginally shaped the curriculum and educational routines of state schools.

The growth of state-based education, as the example of Morocco shows, coupled with a shifting public perception in favor of secular schools and the social mobility they promised, precipitated dramatic drops in enrolment for many Islamic schools (Eickelman 1985). State failure, however, to meet the increasing demand for education that its own educational campaigns had created ensured that Islamic schools continued to play a role in the civic sphere of most states. This role increased considerably with the resurgence of Islamic piety that swept the Muslim world in the 1970s and 1980s.

Reasons for the unprecedented global revival of Islamic expression varied from country to country but had to do with the failure of secular nationalist and socialist regimes to deliver on their promises of prosperity and progress as well as with geopolitical developments, from the Arab-Israeli War and oil embargo of 1973 to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, that revived pride in Islamic identity. Rapid urbanization without the state's accompanying infrastructure services left increasing numbers of citizens on the margins of society. It was within a climate of socioeconomic transition and disruption that the number of *madrasahs* grew steadily and the public demand for Islamic education increased. The *madrasah* alongside other civic institutions, foremost the mosque, provided religious and much-needed social services and offered particularly disenfranchised urban residents' new opportunities for public participation and interaction. Robert Hefner (2005, p. 20) highlights the voluntary nature of this resurgent Islamic associational life – in which the *madrasahs* were a foundational element – stating, “described in the language of modern political theory, the resurgence was primarily an affair of civil society, not the state.” How, then, did the state react to this extraordinary mobilization of civil society?

State efforts to bring together private Islamic and public education accelerated in response to Islamic revival, chiefly following two strategies: governments, on the one hand, increased the proportion of religious instruction in state schools and, on the other hand, began to standardize curricula for Islamic schools in the private sector. In exchange for adopting state curricula, and thus being brought more closely under state supervision, *madrasahs* could receive financial subsidies and state recognition of their degrees. As result of these developments, remark Daun and Walford (2004, p. 2) in a comparative analysis of national case studies, “the Islamic educational arrangements are rather similar across Muslim countries.” They include: national education systems in which Islamic education is part of the otherwise secular state schools (e.g., Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia); systems where privately owned Islamic schools to varying degrees are subsidized and state regulated (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Indonesia); as well as education systems with Islamic schools run by civil forces and not linked in any way to the state (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Senegal). While Islamic education in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa occurs outside of the state sphere, most countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia exhibit a combination of these systems (ibid.: 20).

Islamic education has remained a central issue for the state across Muslim countries. Because a crucial purpose of national systems of education is to socialize young citizens into a broadly shared national culture, they need to mediate between national and other communal identities such those tied to religious traditions. It is this process of managing the discourse and practice of Islamic education in ways that promote state interests that Gregory Starrett (1998) in a masterful work on Islamic education in Egypt described as “functionalization.” As Starrett’s analysis demonstrated, government interests to control the public discourse on Islam did not necessarily go hand in hand with the promotion of pluralist civility. In the effort to shore up its authority against criticism from the Islamist opposition, the Egyptian regime implemented increasingly conservative Islamic education programs promoting regime-friendly messages. Instead of co-opting and uniting its opposition under the banner of the state’s version of Islam now codified in textbooks and taught in schools, the efforts gave rise to a new pluralization of Islamic groupings and messages. The newly broadened space, however, has been filled more by conservative voices than by those of civil-pluralist persuasions (Wickham 2002).

### **Implications for the Civil Society Concept**

In the context of the discussion of how Islamic education relates to the civil society concept, the preceding description of how Islamic education has been “functionalized” to serve state interests will appear problematic. Especially from the liberal perspective, which demands civil society associations remain independent to restrain the powers of the state, the concept’s usefulness in its application to Islamic education is limited by processes of functionalization as well as by cooperative relationships Islamic schools have entertained with the state. Two preliminary responses can be formulated. First, it is important to emphasize that the functionalization of Islamic education is neither a new phenomenon nor one related solely to the agency of the modern state; nor has the functionalization of Islamic education always or even predominantly been narrowly political by aiming at transforming the states’ political institutions. From medieval noblemen to reformist educators in the premodern period, Islamic education has served the strategic interests and ambitions of a wide range of individuals and institutions, including actors in the civil sphere. And the public ambitions to which educators relate the discourse and practice of Islamic education frequently is civil-societal in the sense that they aim for broad-based social reforms through greater popular piety and learning.

Second, the observation that Islamic schools entertain cooperative relationships with the state must not immediately make them suspect from a civil society perspective. Instead, the observation that Islamic schools will opt at times for cooperative strategies in pursuit of their collective goals questions the presumed normativity of liberalism’s juxtapositioning of state and civil society as too simplistic. It is instructive here to recall Charles Taylor’s observation (Taylor 1990) that even in Western democracies civil society and the state have been connected in cooperative and mutually supportive ways. Whether specifics

associational actors should be considered part of civil society may have less to do with the form of the relationship with the state than with the goals that motivate these actors and the ways in which they pursue collective interests. Given its varied history and practice it is easy to agree with Robert Hefner that “the primary question today as regards Islamic education is not whether it should be drawn up into broader political projects (functionalized), but whose projects they should be and how they should engage the plurality of people, powers, and ideas that marks our age” (Hefner 2007, p. 33). It is these normative questions about the type of society that associational actors promote that will be the focus in the remaining two sections.

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## Islamic Education as a Source of Civility

Next to thinking of civil society as the part of society inhabited by voluntary associations and their networks, a second approach understands civil society in normative terms as provider of values such as civility and tolerance. Just how a society’s associational life generates the types of norms and behaviors that make society civil has been subject to much debate. The idea that voluntary citizen action somewhat predictably produces normative effects in the direction of tolerance and caring is at the heart of Robert Putnam’s influential *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam 1993). It is through involvement in voluntary associations, Putnam argued, that citizens develop what he called “social capital”: an array of constructive social norms that promote cooperation, tolerance, trust, and stability. Responding to critics who noted that voluntary associations are too diverse in their orientation and could promote retrogressive political cultures, Putnam subsequently distinguished between two types of social capital associations could promote. Whereas “bonding” social capital is created by internally more homogeneous groups and tends to reinforce more exclusive identities, “bridging” social capital is the hallmark of internally diverse associations that give rise to broader identities (Putnam 2000).

When considering what types of social capital Islamic education offers its students a common perception is that Islamic schools are a brake on the development of civil society because they cultivate the wrong kinds of social capital. Because the student body in Islamic schools is almost exclusively Muslim, so the assumption goes, Islamic schools nurture strong bonds of trust among Muslims but do not prepare students adequately for integration into a diverse society and thus have a negative effect on social cohesion. This perspective fails to acknowledge that there is a considerable normative diversity within Islamic educational tradition and contemporary practice. The following examination of civility-enhancing aspects of Islamic schools starts from the recognition of this diversity. In addition to reflecting some of this diversity and highlighting specifically civility-promoting aspects of Islamic schooling, this chapter will also consider the extent to which educational practices high in bonding are compatible with the development of a more open and tolerant society.

## Integrative Functions of Islamic Schools

One of the basic ways in which Islamic schools help integrate students into the wider society has to do with the access to education they provide and the opportunities for social mobility such access entails. Even though these qualities do not fully correspond to Putnam's notion of bridging social capital, such integration with markets and the state can be considered a form of vertical social capital (Colletta and Cullen 2000). Especially in rural areas, Islamic schools worldwide offer access to educational services to poor communities who are underserved by state systems and cannot afford high tuition costs many private schools charge. Where Islamic schools as in Mali have undergone educational reforms to combine religious with general education and have accommodated themselves to the state system through the recognition of their degrees, they help integrate their students into their nation's wider political-economy and provide them with opportunities for economic advancement (Brenner 2007).

A second way in which Islamic schools exhibit integrative functions and broaden their students' identities, even where the student body remains exclusively Muslim and learning focused on Islamic sciences, derives from the quality of the educational networks that characterize Islamic education. Many Islamic schools are part of extended, often global networks that raise students' awareness of the wider world. Even where they are predominantly national, these networks bring together students from different regions, ethnicities, and walks of life that introduce students to diversity and enlarge their perspective. In rare cases, such as the famous Shi'ah seminaries in the Iranian city of Qum, intracommunal integration can occur because the schools' reputation attracts not only Shi'i students but also some from Sunni communities (Farish et al. 2008, p. 18).

It should be emphasized that many of the educational networks do not display inherently liberal values. Schools of the Gülen movement, for example, that originated in Turkey but now operate in about 50 countries around the world are religiously and socially conservative even though they embrace science education and have a strong global orientation. Similarly, the schools affiliated with the conservative Tablīghī Jimā'ah – the Indian-origin pietistic movement that has grown to become one of the largest international Muslim movements – are seemingly politically passive. Through their educational activities they aim at the transformation of society, not the political institutions of the state. These schools stand in stark contrast to a small but highly visible number of politically radical educational networks of which the Southeast Asian Jimā'ah Islāmīyah (JI) rose to notoriety in the noughties. At the Indonesian Pesantren Ngruki, cofounded by Abū Bakar Ba'asyir, presumed to be the spiritual head of JI, teaching materials described nationalism as inimical to Islam and a form of polytheism, put forth Islamic law as the only appropriate basis for the state, and taught students to avoid interreligious relations (Hefner 2009, p. 85–86). While it is not warranted to assume that activist orientations will inevitably give rise to violence and militancy in Islamic schools, it is clear that even schools that otherwise have integrated their curriculum and cooperate within national education systems can assign little to no positive value to religious

or ideological diversity, and in many instances socializing with non-Muslims or with Muslims who do not share the same ideological convictions is avoided on principle.

Negative attitudes or at best indifference toward diversity can be contrasted with initiatives in Muslim schools that directly relate to Putnam's bridging social capital. Aware that few, if any, of their students are non-Muslim and thus limited in their inherent capacity to bridge the life-worlds between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, a growing number of institutions intentionally have sought to provide their students with learning experiences that involve advancing relationships across different communities. Especially in instances where Islamic schools combine their educational mission with efforts at community development to address social and economic needs in their societies, interreligious and interethnic collaborations have become common as a result of encounters with members of other communities (Pohl 2006; Sikand 2008). By bringing together Muslim students with members of other groups and intentionally providing their student population with cooperative experiences, these schools are very much involved in creating and sustaining the type of constructive social norms Putnam referred to as bridging social capital.

Although as a general rule programs of interreligious collaboration remain the exception, a growing number of education systems in Muslim-majority countries have begun to more explicitly address questions of religious diversity even if their focus squarely remains Islamic identity formation and self-affirmation. How to balance commitment to Islamic identity with openness and tolerance for non-Muslim communities is a challenge these schools share with their religious counterparts in other traditions.

In a comparative analysis of religious education models in Muslim-majority countries, Leirvik (2004) discusses educational strategies in Islamic schools that have begun to respond constructively to the need for interfaith harmony and the building of mutual trust across confessional borders. Most of the efforts to create more inclusive forms of Islamic education occur along confessional lines. More and more, state curricula require Islamic education in public schools as well as private Islamic schools cooperating with the state system actively to promote civic values of tolerance and cocitizenship. While the confessional model still prevails, attempts at developing models of interfaith education can be found on a limited scope in the private educational sector as well. Leirvik's analysis points to a number of triggers for the development of more inclusive designs. Next to the experience of political change toward democratic reform and intercommunal conflict in countries such as Lebanon, Bosnia, and Palestine, he identifies the existence of international impulses as a further shaping influence on national educational programs (Leirvik 2004, p. 230). Indonesia furnishes a widely discussed case that underscores some of the salient features of this development.

## **Civic Education in Indonesian Islamic Schools**

In the wake of democratic reforms that followed the end of the authoritarian regime of President Suharto in 1998, two of Indonesia's largest networks of Islamic schools

developed new and ambitious civic education programs. Both the state Islamic system of higher education with more than 50 campuses across the archipelago as well as the private Muḥammadiyah system had international support in their efforts from The Asia Foundation. Responding to the growing demand for citizenship education in Indonesia's transition to democracy, the development of a new civic education program aimed at promoting open and inclusive forms of citizenship. Instructional methodologies foster participatory learning and critical thinking aimed at democratizing the student's learning experience. The textbooks developed for the new courses display an open and plural orientation in their approaches to civic education by foregrounding the compatibility of core values in the Islamic tradition with democratic pluralism and civil society.

The extent to which the new civic education courses in Islamic schools manage to combine Islamic notions of citizenship with Western traditions of democratic pluralism is a defining feature of the new curriculum (Jackson and Bahrissalim 2007, p. 42). The conceptions of civil society discussed in the curriculum materials furnish an evocative example of the way normative Islamic principles are scaled up to promote respect of pluralism as well as religious and cultural rights of a diverse population. Among the terms available in the Indonesian discourse on civil society, the English "civil society" or its direct Indonesian translation, *masyarakat sipil*, are contrasted with the term *masyarakat madani*. The latter reflects an Islamic orientation that is captured in the use of the Arabic word *madanī*. Although *madanī* functions as the Arabic cognate for "civil" its connotations also directly connect it to central norms and values of Islam and the Muslim community that developed in the city of Medina at the time of Prophet Muḥammad. The late Nurcholish Madjid, one of Indonesia's leading neomodernist thinkers, in particular employed the term *masyarakat madani* to refer to the Constitution of Medina that regulated the rights and responsibilities of different religious groups in the early Muslim community (Madjid 2001). As an Islamic reference point for the conceptualization of civil society, *masyarakat madani* with its emphasis on an Islamic framework for public ethics is not identical with Western social-scientific concepts, but it is also not entirely different.

The Indonesian case is representative of but a small number of Islamic schools and education systems around the world. In any attempt at understanding the role, Islamic schools play in strengthening society in the direction of civility broad generalizations have to give way to more nuanced investigations about the specific types of values and norms Islamic schools in concrete contexts generate among their students and the wider society. Clearly it is possible to find examples of intolerant and uncivil views about non-Muslim communities as have been noted in textbooks used in the Saudi state system (Leirvik 2004, p. 225). The inherent multivocality of Islamic traditions, however, has given rise on the other side of the political spectrum to a vibrant discourse among Muslim educators on theory and practice of citizenship, human rights, and peace education that see tolerance and cooperation across the boundaries of religious communities as compatible and required by normative principles central to Islamic traditions (Castelli and Trevathan 2008; Huda 2010).

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## Bonding Versus Bridging

When assessing the contributions that schools with a strong identity-based orientation make to the development of civil society, it is important not to overdraw the division between bonding and bridging social capital by assuming that high levels of bonding are incompatible with high levels of bridging ability. The effects that internally homogenous groups organized around their own interest have on their members' normative dispositions is rarely straightforward as Robert Post and Nancy Rosenblum (Rosenblum and Post 2002) argue. Many of these groups may still follow internally some of the deliberative procedures that animate democratic citizenship; still other groups whose internal structures are less egalitarian give voice to otherwise marginalized positions, which in turn can lead to greater openness on the part of their members to engage in collaborative activities with outsiders once they are assured that their positions are being represented and heard publicly.

What lies behind the inclination to dismiss the contributions Islamic schools make to civil society is the normative assumption central to political liberalism that democracy requires a religion-free public sphere. It is the secular underpinnings of the liberal conception of civil society that qualify religious and other identity-based groups as suspect and insufficiently qualified to play a public role in the political process of democratic societies. These normative assumptions about the relationship between religion and civil society will be considered in the final section as part of the larger discussion of Islamic education's contributions to broader sociopolitical goals of democratic consolidation and sustainability.

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## Islamic Schools as Schools of Democracy

Even though scholars can disagree over the exact relationship between various types of associations and their abilities to strengthen democratic institutions, that democracy depends on an underlying set of civic values and that civil society is the "school" where these democratic norms, attitudes, and behaviors are learned, practiced, and reproduced is a central feature of the civil society idea. Despite empirical evidence of instances in which Muslim educators are quite capable of connecting their educational programs to civic norms of tolerance, trust, and equality, a general skepticism remains that Islamic schools can be viable schools of democratic citizenship. Suspicion arises from the observation that many Islamic schools unapologetically insist on the public relevance of religious education and push for participation in politics and public affairs. Only a minority proposes positions that could be considered politically radical. However, from the perspective of a civil society concept tied to the normative presuppositions of political liberalism, even the insistence that Islamic ethics remain relevant in the public arena where they can be brought to bear on political debates violates the differentiation of society into separate spheres and the subsequent demand to relegate religious ethics to the private realm.



## Reassessing the Secularization Paradigm

The liberal dictum of a religion-free public sphere was most compellingly elaborated by the great philosopher of political liberalism John Rawls who stipulated that a democratic polity out of necessity “takes the truths of religion off the political agenda” (Rawls 2005, p. 151). The idea, however, that all but secular manifestations of religion are in unavoidable tension with democracy is not new. It has been carried through much of Western thought since the time of the Enlightenment and has been a staple of modern social theory from the empirical predictions of Durkheim and Weber to the normative prescriptions of political liberalism as expressed in the work of Rawls and his influential strand of political philosophy. Critical voices on the question of secularization began to assert themselves with the late 1980s (Keane 1988). A growing body of scholarship has since emerged that raises questions not only about the empirical veracity of the secularization paradigm but also about its normative dimensions. Scholars such as Jose Casanova (1994), David Martin (1990), and even earlier proponents of the secularization paradigms such as Peter Berger (2008) begin to examine not only the desecularizing tendencies in many parts of the world but also the often desirable contributions religious movements make to democratization processes.

Reassessment of the secularization paradigm has produced new ways of conceptualizing the religion-democracy relationship. Whereas before religiously based arguments were configured as a violation of democratic norms and detrimental to the political process, now the spectrum has broadened to include those who urge they should be understood as part of a necessary and legitimate negotiation process over the appropriate role of religion in democratic societies (Na'im 2008). Others counsel patient accommodation based on the historical examination of European democratization processes. As the case of nineteenth-century Belgium demonstrates, the integration of religious actors and their institutions into the democratic system was not the result of their forced exclusion from public debate but rather came after a long history of political negotiations in which religious communities participated in the democratic bargaining process to enhance their self-interest and made strategic choices that ultimately led them to accept democratic rules (Kalyvas 1998). What is more, a growing body of scholarship points to the desirable and beneficial effects the inclusion of theological discourse in public debate can have on public support for democracy precisely in those instances in which religious communities are uncertain about the compatibility of democracy with their religious worldview (Driessen 2010).

The change in attitude toward public religion is most striking in the work of Jürgen Habermas who decades after his work on the concept of the public sphere more recently has abandoned exclusively secularist conceptions and now counsels engagement with religious language. Asserting the right of religious people to bring their religiously grounded convictions to bear on issues in the public sphere, Habermas specifically points to the pivotal role of religious tolerance as “pacemaker for multiculturalism, correctly understood, and for the equal coexistence of different cultural forms of life within a democratic polity” (Habermas 2008: 257).

## Religious Frameworks as “Thick” Motives for Tolerance

The critical role of religious tolerance in building democratic and pluralistic societies has become the focus of a new strand of scholarship inquiring into the sources of religious tolerance and the types of institutions in society that promote its development. Religious institutions, chief among them religious education, have received special attention for the task of nurturing tolerant and inclusive identities. Among the body of scholarship on education for religious tolerance, the work of the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion and its special research project on Teaching for Tolerance and Freedom of Religion and Belief has been particularly impressive in its global scope (R. Jackson and McKenna 2005). Next to questions about the sources from which ideas of tolerance can be derived, the concept of tolerance itself has received critical attention.

Insistence that religious education plays a productive role in the development of religious tolerance is based on the recognition that tolerance cannot be derived from itself but instead must be rooted in concrete ethical traditions. Among the central difficulties with liberalism’s insistence on tolerance, based on the recognition of the right of individuals and groups to religious freedom, is that it amounts to little more than an abstract rule. Abstract moral imperatives, to use Michael Walzer’s (1994) distinction, cannot provide more than “thin” motives for toleration because they do not go beyond a passive form of respect that simply lets the other be. What is required instead is the development of “thick” motives for tolerance grounded in the cultural specifics, complexities, and nuances of existing ethical traditions.

The search for “thick” motives for tolerance has direct implications for theory and practice of religious education. Rather than conceiving of strong commitments to specific religious traditions as a source of intolerance and trying to relativize or weaken them, the search for thick motives suggest the possibility to ground an education for tolerance on specific religious traditions by amplifying the tradition’s existing resources for tolerance. Identifying values, beliefs, and examples in students’ specific religious traditions and making them the basis for tolerance provides students with concrete reasons and models to draw upon as they develop, affirm, and justify tolerant attitudes toward the religious other.

The challenges Muslim educators face in negotiating strong commitment to Islam with openness and tolerance to people of other religious traditions reveal a stock of shared dilemmas and overlapping responses among educators worldwide who struggle with questions of how to prepare students for participation in diverse and democratic societies.

It is in response to foundational questions of how to negotiate commitment to Islamic identity with openness to religious diversity that Islamic education can and frequently does make two significant contributions to the promotion of democracy. First, by articulating normative Islamic frameworks that ascribe a positive value to religious diversity and enjoin civic values that correlate positively with democracy, Islamic schools not only demonstrate that democratic ideals can be accommodated in Islam but also that these ideals can be consistently derived from normative Islamic principles. Especially in societies in which Islam remains a major source of

identification, the ability to tap Islamic resources can increase societal legitimacy for these civic values. Second, and related, rather than leading to a relativistic elimination of strong convictions, Islamic educational models that afford students the opportunity to experience Islam as a resource for tolerance deepen students' Islamic identities while at the same time contribute to the development of "thick" motivations for tolerance that are grounded in and sustained by deep Islamic convictions.

In light of the growing recognition of religious education's viable and desirable contributions to religious tolerance, Muslim educators' insistence on the development of strong Islamic identities and encouragement to carry Islamic ethics into the public sphere need not immediately alarm. It is not the pursuit of public relevance or the fostering of strong confessional identities and commitments that should be cause for concern. Rather, the concern is the inclination of a numerical minority of Islamic schools on the fringes of a largely moderate educational mainstream that is disposed to thinking of Islamic identity and ethics in staunchly exclusive and narrowly political ways. While the dangers of radical educational formations cannot be denied, it is important to realize that the assertion of Islam's public relevance and the ability of Islamic schools to foster democracy-enhancing and civility-promoting values and behaviors are two independent variables. What determines this ability has less to do with whether or not Islamic schools nurture strong Islamic identities and encourage students to carry Islamic convictions into the public sphere than with the extent to which Islamic schools succeed in creating learning experiences for their students through which to perceive Islamic traditions as a source of tolerance.

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## Conclusions

The increased public and political relevance of Islam around the world is likely to ensure that Islamic education, as a site where interpretations and uses of Islam are negotiated, will retain a central place of contestation over the types of societies in which Muslims want to live. Whether these energies will be channeled into the direction of more democratic and pluralist public orders remains to be seen. Examining the relationship between Islamic education and politics through the prism of the civil society concept, however, offers insights into the conditions under which Islamic schools contribute to democratization processes. Two in particular deserve to be highlighted that combine insights from the different schools of thought on the civil society concept. The first concerns insights derived from approaches to civil society as a normative model and considers the significant contributions Islamic education can make to legitimating norms and ideals of democratic and civil politics within Islamic frameworks. The second draws on civil society theories that emphasize the formal dimension of civil society as associational life and considers the limitations of Islamic schools within the broader spectrum of state-society relations.

What resonates with a growing number of Muslims around the world is not necessarily the dominant liberal-democratic variant of the civil society concept but

the search for a civil social order defined in normative terms. These norms may be contested and vary from place to place, but they generally include such positive social norms as tolerance, equal rights, cooperation, and trust. Even pluralism and democracy – not understood in exclusively Western terms but defined as processes through which a greater level of popular participation and an egalitarian public order can be secured – find growing support. For Muslims to embrace civil-pluralist politics, such politics and the values that underpin them will have to be grounded in local traditions. Herein lies the first contribution Islamic education can make to reorient Muslim politics: to articulate alternative political concepts from within an Islamic framework and to shape societal consensus by incorporating Islamic-based arguments into the public discourse. From the perspective of modern liberalism, the heightened attention Islamic schools give to promoting Islamic values in the public sphere may seem inappropriate. Although tensions remain with secular liberal notions, Muslim educators' insistence that political choices be informed and shaped by religious ideals is also found in other traditions and does not reflect a form of Islamic exceptionalism (Casanova 1994). What underscores the positive potential of Islamic schools to serve as carriers of civility is that Islamic education is not only seen as imminently relevant to public life, but that this relevance also increasingly is conceived in democratic and civil-pluralist terms.

Civil elements in many Muslim communities around the world remain open to assault from uncivil elements both on the level of society and the state. It is here that a second factor, derived from civil society concepts that call attention to associational activity independent of the state, comes into relief when considering the civility-enhancing role of Islamic education. Against civil society views that juxtapose society and state, the decision by many Islamic schools to opt for cooperative rather than oppositional relationships with the state draws attention to the interdependence of state and civil society. As Norton (1994, p. 12) points out under reference to civil society in the Middle East, civil society does not replace government, but “government must play the essential role of referee, rule-maker and regulator of civil society.” In other words, political and legal institution-building is required to lend permanence to civility generated in the associational realm. Where political and legal institutions provide only weak protections for civil society groups, it can be a legitimate strategy for associational activism to seek cooperative relationships with the state to advance collective goals. It is obvious that such cooperation can serve nondemocratic goals. The appropriation of Islamic education by the Egyptian and the Malaysian states has meant accommodating more conservative expressions. Saudi Arabia serves as another example where the educational sector remains firmly under the control of an undemocratic state. As with Künkler and Lerner's (2016) recent comparative study of religious education in Indonesia and Israel, however, state-support can also support, embolden, and legitimate public civility engendered in the educational realm. It is thus expedient to maintain realistic expectations about the contributions Islamic education can make to the promotion of civil society.

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# Women and Education in Muslim Context

Sherine Hafez

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## Abstract

To this day, women's access to education still faces substantial stumbling blocks as two-thirds of the world's illiterates are women from rural areas. In the Middle East and Muslim majority countries, concentrated efforts in the last two decades have improved women's educational opportunities, yet the gap between the genders remains daunting. This chapter will focus on women's education in Egypt to explore the links between levels of education, poverty, and social development. The emerging efforts of women's Islamic organizations to spread education and vocational training in rural areas of the country will receive a special focus. The chapter aims to examine the outcome of an "Islamic education" on the sociopolitical life in the country. This will shed light on some aspects of education overlooked by international development organizations that deal with issues of illiteracy.

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**Keywords**

Women education · Muslim organizations · Egypt · Women activism · Private voluntary organization

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**Introduction**

In the recent events of the Arab Spring, young Arabs have emerged as the region's revolutionaries in the face of tyranny and corruption. Analysts and observers of the Arab world today have linked rising levels of education to the increased dissatisfaction with local governments that misuse resources and offer no opportunities for employment or hopes for the future. Women, in particular (and especially in Egypt), have proved to be a power to contend with the protests that took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. They marched from all classes and religions, some bringing their children with them, others putting themselves in the line of fire undaunted by violence or military tanks. In Egypt alone, on any given day during the events of January 25, 2011, women comprised 20–50% of the protestors. The rates of literacy and education among women, however, are significantly below those of men in Egypt as they remain the less educated, the politically marginalized, and the overwhelmingly disenfranchized in a society that has witnessed the feminization of poverty in the last five decades. To this day, women's access to education around the world still faces substantial stumbling blocks as two-thirds of the world's illiterates are women from rural areas. In the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries, concentrated efforts in the last two decades have improved women's educational opportunities, yet the gap between the genders remains daunting (Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam 2003).

This chapter will focus on women's Islamic education in Egypt to explore the links between levels of education, poverty, and social development. The efforts of women's Islamic organizations to spread education and vocational training in rural areas of the country will receive a special focus. The chapter presents a number of ways an, "Islamic" education approach is designed to meet the challenges which have daunted government education systems in the country. The case studies presented from ethnographic fieldwork in urban and rural settings in Egypt will shed light on some aspects of education overlooked by international development organizations that deal with issues of illiteracy.

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**The Current State of Literacy Among Females in Egypt and the MENA**

Islamic teaching places great emphasis on education. The first verse in the Qur'ān begins with, "Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created [all that exists]. He has created human from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught human that which 'he'

knew not” (XCVI: 1–5). Other verses discuss knowledge as the privilege of knowing God, “It is only those who have knowledge among His servants that fear Allāh” (XXXV: 28). Yet, despite this important emphasis on education and literacy, most of the Muslim majority societies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region still remain challenged by high levels of illiteracy. By comparison to the rest of the world, the MENA has one of the highest rates of illiteracy, with rates higher in rural than in urban areas and among females rather than males (Egypt: Rural 23% of males, 45% of females; and Urban 12% of males, 22% of females) (UNDP 2005).

To a large extent, gender and poverty are key factors which directly impact the rates of illiteracy among the region. Although countries like Tunisia and Jordan have succeeded in closing the gender literacy gap within a mere 30 years period, the challenges to overcome the reasons behind high levels of illiteracy remain daunting (Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar and Libya – have all succeeded in raising literacy rates to 80% and above (UNESCO 2000)). This is while poverty, lack of development, and unemployment among countries like Egypt, Yemen, and Morocco have caused the rates of literacy to lag behind.

Poverty keeps young girls from school. In Egypt, the percentage of the population over age 15 who are illiterate are 56% female, and 33% almost half that rate for males, while in Yemen 75% of women over 15 are illiterate while it is 33% for men (*ibid.*). When faced with the need to make a choice, studies have shown that most Arab families tend to favor a boy’s education over a girl’s. The same is true of higher education. Egypt’s 2000 Demographic and Health Survey (El Zanaty and Way 2001) asked women with children ages 6–15: “If parents have one son and one daughter and can send only one child to the university, which child should they send?” Although 53% of the mothers reasoned that their decision would depend on the child’s individual capability, 39% preferred that the son attend university, while only 8% picked the daughter to go. These indicators are by no means simply a result of patriarchal ideologies; they also reflect the gendering of the Egyptian market economy and the needs of families to make wise choices for themselves and their children. Families choose to invest in a boy’s education over a girl’s since a boy’s labor is somewhat culturally guaranteed to benefit his family and economically to become productive labor, while a girl’s future labor benefits her husband’s family and is not perceived as a source of income (*ibid.*).

Young girls are therefore often denied opportunities for education as their labor is channeled towards meeting the needs of their natal households and in the event of marrying, of the marital household. Yet statistics show that this is now changing in some countries. In Egypt the ratio of girls to boys under the age of 15 who are educated is 96 girls to 103 boys. Women constitute 21% of the labor force in Egypt today. Factory jobs in rural areas have been requiring basic literacy skills for employment. This is starting to create a motivating factor for families to educate their girls, yet these new changes are not without its challenges (Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam 2003).

## Education, Women's Labor, and Market Participation

In a country with high population levels like Egypt, (almost its entire youth population remains jobless – a fact behind the events that led to the January 25th revolution against the Mubarak regime), efforts to provide access to education have had a limited impact. Approximately 25% of the Egyptian population is university educated (or is in the process of being so) (ibid.). Yet, at 9.4% the unemployment rates remain high with 87.2% of the unemployed being between the ages of 15 and 29 (Kotschwar and Schott 2010).

Another important factor that has significant ramifications is the lack of success of schooling to prepare students for twenty-first-century jobs. The UNDP 2002 Arab Human Development Report (UNDP 2002) asserts that the role of higher education in providing employment has been limited. Even in cases when employment has been secured, educational credentials fail to meet the standards of the modern workforce. What is more worrisome according to the report, however, is that the present systems of education in the Arab world are not capable of social development. The report points to significant shortcomings of the educational systems in the Arab world, and particularly to the lack of student training in critical thinking and analysis. Moreover, the dually split system, with poor public education on one hand and elite private education on the other has underscored wider socio-economic issues that cannot be ignored such as the gap between the wealthy few and the poor majority. The widening of the gap between the underprivileged and the privileged is an observable phenomenon in every single country that has been part of the so-called Arab Spring to date.

In this unequal system, a key element that organizes access to resources (including education) among these countries is gender stratification. Women remain largely marginalized from gaining access to education. Patriarchal ideologies and rising levels of poverty place women's labor under the monopoly of others. According to a 2002 World Bank study, women head 22% of Egyptian households – a disturbing fact considering that the skills women can draw upon for economic sustenance are limited by lack of access to education and when possible, the education available to them does not adequately provide the necessary training for twenty-first-century employment (World Bank 2002). What makes women's situation particularly dire is that educational curricula remain mired in outdated gender ideologies that preclude women's equal participation in the labor market and political sphere in their countries.

Having provided this background on the state of education in the Arab world with an emphasis on Egypt, I now turn to examine the role played by Islamic organizations in the country and particularly women's Islamic activism in their efforts to overcome some of the challenges that make access to education difficult to the large percentage of the population. I take as an example of these efforts, the organizations I will name, al-Hilāl and al-Faḥ. Two Islamic Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) run by activist women in Cairo. (The names and places have been changed to protect the privacy of research informants and communities.) My fieldwork in Cairo, Egypt, focused on women's Islamic movements where I researched their projects of social reform and the spreading of Islamic teachings

in their communities (see Hafez 2003, 2011). What this section of the chapter demonstrates is how Islamically informed educational reform has impacted a wide social and intellectual base in the population. It is my view that these Islamic Private Voluntary Organizations provide services that are highly competent, free, and available to the multitude of the under privileged in Egypt resulting in a wave of social change that parallels – but more often than not competes – with the state’s services and therefore undermines its monopoly over the intellectual development of the younger generations and emerging political actors.

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## Islamic Education and Social Reform: Women’s Islamic Activism

There were 12,830 Private Voluntary Organizations in Egypt according to a 1990 report (Clark 2004). Of these 74.5% are social development organizations and are mostly Islamic organizations. While these Private Voluntary Organizations operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs there are also larger and more far reaching organizations that promote women’s activism and especially in the area of education such as the women’s chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood, for instance. (The members of the MB are said to be around 50,000–60,000 registered members with a further 400,000–500,000 sympathizers and supporters. Of the total, 25–30% are women (Rashwan 2008).) For the most part among the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) organizations, women continue to focus on religious education and charitable work. They coordinate their work and activities with the person in charge (almost always a male cadre) of women’s activism (*al-Nashāt al-Nisā’*) in the administrative office for their respective areas. This form of Islamic women’s activism is male-sponsored which is unlike the activism of organizations such as al-Hilāl which is entirely run by women.

Islamic women activists exercise a fair amount of freedom in running their own Private Voluntary Organization or *gam ṭyyat*. (A *gam ṭyyat* (*jam ṭyyat* or *jam ṭyyah*) is what activist women call the centers where they work. In general terms, a *gam ṭyyah* means an association.) The scope of their activism extends beyond the walls of these organizations to the poorer districts of the city and villages on the outskirts of Cairo. Al-Hilāl is located in one of Cairo’s heavily populated suburbs which has seen exponential growth in the last two decades. Al-Hilāl has more than one center in the city, and has branches in various other suburban neighborhoods making it one of the most established women’s Private Voluntary Organization’s in the country. The Private Voluntary Organization has transnational ties to similar “sister” organizations in neighboring countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

Operating from within an Islamic vision based on ethics and principles of social life, the women activists of al-Hilāl remain devoted to their goal of Islamizing society and orienting it to an Islamic agenda which advocates the belief in divine ordinance and the principles and ethics of Islamic teaching. Promoting education and knowledge are at the core of their organizational agenda. The activist women I interviewed were emphatic about the need for a complete overhaul of the educational system, because like many other Egyptians they see the system of education as

a failed state project. Each working group at the Private Voluntary Organization is concerned with a different task, whether it be the production aspect (they produce various consumer goods for charity bazaars), or the arts and crafts classes, vocational training, or religious education. All groups emphasize education and integrate on a regular basis an educational component.

It comes as no surprise that the Islamic activist women of al-Hilāl rejected the government's educational services which – save for the postrevolutionary changes instated by the Nasser regime – have seen limited reform since the earlier history of modernization that began with the nineteenth century. The Egyptian government had then sought to regulate social behavior and labor production by inculcating in the population a fixed sense of time and space, order, and obedience. The establishment of a comprehensive educational system encompassing both primary and secondary schooling and the European training of Egyptians was intended to produce the new, individual citizens of the state, disciplined and productive subjects. Islamic *madrasah* education was perceived as a traditional form of learning that had no place in the new modern state (Mitchell 1988). Religious '*ulamā*' were placed on the government payroll to extend the government's control to religious schooling, a fact that facilitated the secularization of Islamic institutions. The educational system adopted the European model as an ideal, and Europeans oversaw "modern" schools in the cities. Forms of Islamic education were undermined by the newly adopted European systems, and in particular the *kuttāb* was denigrated although it continued in rural parts of the country (Clark 2004).

The state's modernization schemes, often aimed at limiting religious authority, gradually constructed a discursive binary between the progressive nature of state reforms and the "backward," "traditional" practices of the religious establishment. The '*ulamā*', whose authority was limited by these claims, regarded modernization as a form of Western imperialism and, not surprisingly, as a loss of Islamic culture.

Although modernization schemes in Egypt have often placed the education of the population at the center of their projects, government schools today do not adequately meet the needs of the average Egyptian. Since education has become a social marker of prestige and a necessary vehicle for social mobility, the inadequacy of state-run schooling is therefore understood as a failure of the government to provide the means for social mobility hence resulting in frustrated hopes and dreams for the many who struggle to escape the ravages of poverty.

The population of al-Hilāl draws mostly from the middle class which has a socioeconomic level that has grown in large numbers after the 1952 socialist revolution. Benefiting from the educational reforms put in place by Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir's regime, the Egyptian middle class consists of the most educated class of professionals who are upwardly mobile and subscribe to an ideology that is principally bourgeois. Private sector employment relies principally on the middle class for its main recruits. The majority of the al-Hilāl women are from the middle to upper-middle class (including the leaders of the Private Voluntary Organization), whereas the larger pool of volunteers comes from various socioeconomic levels. One important fact to note is that in Private Voluntary Organizations like al-Hilāl, leadership positions are consistently reserved for the most educated or those who have had work experience in

a predominantly middle-class job. A young activist who described the requirements for a model leader of the Private Voluntary Organization put it like this,

You have to earn your place in the centre. Being reliable, punctual, and consistent in your attendance are the most important factors determining your value as a dependable volunteer. You also need to work hard at the religious lessons and do well on exams. It goes without saying that a good background in education will help you learn. *Fiqh* is sometimes very hard to understand. I have noticed that those who do well in discussions and on exams are those who are able to think critically. These people are university graduates like myself. Education determines how well you will perform in general because you can think logically.

Attesting to the centrality of education at al-Hilāl, the speaker emphasizes that in al-Hilāl's organization, a modern education is a requirement for assuming higher responsibility. Neither class nor socioeconomic level is as important to the organization. What becomes clear in the above quote as well is that the modern values of punctuality, achievement, excellence on exams, and the ability to think critically are seen as a requirement for a leader at al-Hilāl. Although knowledge is highly valued as an Islamic ethic, it is also important to be an educated woman to run a *gam'īyyah* as big as al-Hilāl efficiently.

In line with these organizing principles, al-Hilāl's activists were especially concerned with providing basic general knowledge as well as Islamic teachings to the young children who attended their after school tutoring programs, week end programs, summer school, and day-care centers. The classroom teachers at the center relied on curricular documents which were developed especially for each level to guide their classes. The activists in charge of the educational program of the Private Voluntary Organization went to great lengths to develop curricula for children's education, which were carefully revised every 6 months. These were rather long documents, often as long as 150 pages each.

In postrevolutionary Egypt, the activists of al-Hilāl continue to emphasize education in their social reform projects. More than ever before, their activism seems to them to be particularly relevant now. The women activists believe that education today in a country torn by divisive politics and subversive forces can enable Egyptians to be discerning political thinkers. This is why the Islamic activists of al-Hilāl decided to organize weekly classes to inform their attendees about the voting process and how to go about giving their vote. In these classes, the neighborhood women who attended were shown voting ballots and taught how to fill them out. To build a democratic system that allows each individual to practice their citizenship rights like voting, individuals need to be educated and well-informed according to al-Hilāl.

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## **A Multifaceted Islamic Educational Approach**

Al-Hilāl offers vocational training for various forms of employment. From culinary skills, to craft-making, and carpet-weaving – these programs are highly attended by hundreds of women. The approach the activist women take to education is a holistic

one. Literacy, education, general knowledge, and Islamic teaching are all integrated within the larger experience of vocational studies. The young women, who enrol in the Private Voluntary Organization activities, are engaged in learning a vocation that brings them some income while also benefitting from literacy classes, Islamic teachings, and so on. This approach is highly popular with the participants and is organized and monitored by the activists to ensure that the participants attend all of the required courses. Attendance is mandatory and participants are often questioned if they miss classes. On the other hand, the women who are doing well in the Private Voluntary Organization program go on to assume leadership roles in the Private Voluntary Organization or are often placed in outside employment by the activists.

To illustrate how the organization's Islamic education approach is practiced, the following project anecdote from my fieldwork in a village on the outskirts of Cairo can serve as an example. Salwā, a young woman who has been working at al-Hilāl for several years, decided to set up a carpet-weaving workshop there to help the poverty-stricken villagers. She and a working partner subsequently opened a vocational center for the benefit of the village women. Despite their good intentions however, their project was off to a rocky start. Aside from the logistical problems of setting up a new venture in a rural venue with little resources, they had to battle conventional gender ideologies which were not open to the idea of young unmarried girls working outside the home. The two activists had to win over some of the leaders of the community to recruit a small group of young women to the weaving center. But that was only the beginning of the many gender issues which followed that they had to contend with.

The carpet-making center was housed in a one-story building which was a few feet from the village dirt road. Freshly painted, spotlessly clean, and well-organized, the building comprised five rooms where the weaving looms were set up. Here at the weaving center, there was order and organization. About 12 young women worked during each shift, from detailed designs pinned to the wall, their fingers moving deftly on their looms as they worked in unison.

In a matter of a few months, the carpet-weaving project began to yield a profit that helped pay the girls a good amount of wages. The girl weavers were also required to attend the literacy classes and the weekly religious lessons. Yet, despite the success, there were confrontations with local traditions concerning gender. Duniyā, a 16-year-old girl, told Salwā that her father had forbidden her to come to work again because he wanted her to stay home and help her mother. This worried Salwā, and she told the distraught young woman that she would talk to Ḥaggah Samīḥah (another older local villager who helped at the center), who knew her father and could intervene with him. This is merely a small example of the issues that the activists had to deal with regarding gender ideology.

After the call for mid-day prayer was announced on loud speakers in the village, Salwā gathered the girls around her in a big circle. This was to be a science class, specifically an astronomy one. Salwā was prepared with flashcards and visuals in vivid colors and evocative shapes of the planets and the stars. She brought out a few beautiful pictures of planets and stars that she had printed from the Internet and held them up. "See?" she asked. "The power of God is great. Not even the United States

knows everything about outer space. The Americans have gone to the moon and sent rockets across the earth, but they still cannot measure the power of God.” Salwā went on to talk about the planets and the stars, giving the girls a lesson in astronomy. I watched their faces light up with interest and awe. At the end of class, Salwā asked them to recite some *sūrah*s (verses) from the Qur’ān and then distributed their lunch.

When they were finished eating, the girls went across the hall to perform their ablutions and came back quickly. As they got ready to begin praying, their eyes were riveted on Salwā. Finally, the small group stood shoulder to shoulder, with Salwā at the front leading them in prayer.

Addressing the girls before the prayer, Salwā emphasized the power of the creator and the importance of following him in their hearts in their daily lives. In her short lesson to the girls, she repeatedly stressed the importance of their commitment to development, education, and to being productive members of their community. She stressed hygiene and cleanliness, and indeed, the girls kept the workshop immaculate.

In her exchange with the girls, Salwā emphasized achievement and the value of productivity and financial independence, and self-reliance. Her rhetoric captured a sense of the liberal modern as it is incorporated in Islamic discourse on ideal womanhood, which she herself exemplified to the girls and women of the village.

Salwā and Amīnah have carried on their project for 4 years. It is a poignant example of the impact of Islamic activism in tackling poverty and illiteracy on the scale to witness in this village. Other than the vocational training programs, al-Hilāl provides extracurricular support for school children as mentioned earlier, with classes that are specifically targeted to compliment the government curriculum. The main goal is to enable students to pass government exams with high grades. These classes take place after school during specific weekdays, on weekends, and during long vacations and summer time. Students also enrol in these programs free of charge, and the activists who teach these classes emphasize creativity and critical thinking in their curricula. Hands-on approaches which encourage students’ artistic skills are a high point of these classes, and the children of the activists themselves often attend the classes as well. The third floor of al-Hilāl’s building is where these classrooms are located. The hallways and doors are covered with bulletin boards that display students’ work and are colorfully decorated with construction paper cut-outs that emphasize teaching concepts.

On the opposite side of town, another Islamic organization, which I call al-Faḥ, sponsors the school children of women-headed households. The activists there not only provided for the children’s school supplies, uniforms, and tutoring needs (which are substantial considering that these children attend public school, where I am told, teachers either often do not show up or when they do they encourage their students to pay for private lessons outside of school hours), but they also held competitions and award ceremonies for the students who distinguish themselves. In one of those ceremonies I became aware of the powerful impact that women’s organizations have on the lives of the children in their neighborhoods. The activists knew the children by name, they knew their histories and the backgrounds of their families, and were deeply involved in their school experiences. The event took place at the main hall of al-Faḥ which was decorated for the occasion. The girls and boys



(about 75 of them) who were invited to attend could barely control their excitement as they lined up in front of the stage dressed in their best clothes, their hair neatly brushed and gleaming. As each of their names was called they came up, one by one. Dalia, one of the activists, stood next to me telling me about each of them: “this is Saḥar, her mother was divorced and her husband left her to take care of four children”; “take note of Yāsir, he is a cheeky one, but oh, so smart!” “This is Lāmīyā, look how cute she is, ‘barely out of the egg’ and she is already excelling at school.” (An Egyptian expression meaning barely grown.) On and on was the list, as she kept track of the children that she has known for years and saw growing before her eyes. The children were delighted to receive the awards which included a certificate signed by the director of al-Faṭḥ, a small monetary sum of L.E. 100 (which is about \$20), and a colorfully wrapped toy marked with their name. It was easy to see the impact that this small organization had on the lives of these children who would otherwise have had no similar opportunity for recognition at a government-run school.

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## Conclusions

Government efforts to educate the masses in Egypt have fallen short of the challenge to prepare the youth of its population for the job market of the twenty-first century. Poverty, illiteracy, gender ideologies, and the lack of relevance of educational curricula to practical employment have challenged these efforts and caused a lag in rates of literacy and education. The women-led Islamic forms of education is part of a larger social package which has thus far been more effective addressing the needs of young girls in particular. The multifaceted educational approach led by these organizations addresses the challenges that Egypt (and various countries of the MENA region) face today. The rise of poverty, patriarchal gender ideology, and inadequate training for the labor market can be seen addressed here – albeit on a much smaller scale than public schooling. Yet, the approach that the Islamic women activists follow is particularly successful in rural areas where the impact of a male-centric gender ideology takes its toll on the young girls of rural background who often stay home to carry out domestic duties. By drawing on key figures in the community, creating rewards, and producing labor opportunities for the young women, the village families soon preferred to send their girls to be educated and to earn money bringing in additional income. These approaches are far more successful than government systems, and it may be assumed that they will have a much larger impact on the directions that the future will take in the country.

The recent revolt in Egypt as part of the so-called Arab Spring did not emerge from within an Islamist framework, but sprung from a broad-based nationalist impetus. It is significant to note, however, that prior to the uprising, the only force in the country (and the Arab world at large) that was in any way organized and well established with a large following were Islamic groups. It is Islamic groups like the Muslim Brotherhood who won both the presidential and parliamentary elections. The years of social services and social reform especially among rural communities were behind the Muslim Brotherhood’s sweeping success. It is significant to note

that these groups succeeded in creating generations of committed followers who not only benefitted from their social welfare programs but who were shaped by these organizations' Islamic-oriented educational reform as we have seen to a large extent in the cases discussed here.

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# Islam, Sexualities, and Education

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## Abstract

The notion of sexuality in the Muslim context is characterized by silences and invisibilities; discussion of sexuality is not encouraged and practices such as homosexuality and/or premarital sex are not acknowledged. Sexuality is a potentially explosive sphere and a contested domain where social and ideological conflicts are played out. Demographic, socio-economic, and political changes have brought about the appearance of “new” forms of marriage and the

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emergence of noncommercial premarital sex, resulting in a new geography of sex and sexuality. The domain of sexuality is becoming increasingly contested, especially when factoring in the hegemonic Islamic discourse, which prohibits premarital sex and conceptualizes individuals' transition from birth to adolescence to marriage as asexual. This chapter examines the discrepancy between conventional expectations that sexuality be postponed until marriage and the lived realities of the emerging youth culture and education that is attuned to global trends but rooted in local sensitivities. Although youth are busy negotiating new terrains of sexuality, public policy's stance towards young people's sexuality in the Muslim world is still characterized by silence and denial. This is evidenced by the lack of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, which would empower young people in relation to sexuality.

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**Keywords**

Sex · Sexuality · Muslim · Youth · Islamic education · Islam · Egypt

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## Introduction

Many of the countries in the Muslim world are experiencing a youth bulge produced by improvements in infant mortality and delayed fertility declines (Singerman 2007). In the Middle East, 60% of the population is under the age of 25; nearly one in five people is between the ages of 15 and 24, and in Egypt half the population is under the age of 25 (Geel 2012; Singerman 2007). At the same time, this demographic transition coupled with greater participation of women in the labor force and education, changing gender norms, globalization, and the financial costs of marriage has resulted in delayed marriage (Singerman 2007). In 1970, 65% of Egyptian women aged 20–24 were married by age twenty, while in 1995 this proportion dropped to 41% (ibid.). Similarly, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the percentage of women aged 15–19 who were married in 1975 was 57%, dropping to 19% in 1987 and to 8% by 1995 (ibid.). Early and universal marriage established the link between sexuality and marriage; however, as more men and women delay marriage, the institution of marriage is changing and new marriage substitutes and sexual norms are emerging (Dialmy 2005; Singerman 2007). This trend of delayed marriage – among other reasons – is attributed to the higher level of literacy among women and contribution of women in the public realm more than ever, which in turn has affected the sexual behavior of women across the Muslim world.

Attempts to collect empirical data on sexual behavior and attitudes are many times confronted with methodological problems associated with studies of sexuality, due to the sensitive nature of the topic (Al-Shdayfat and Green 2012; Obermeyer 2000). Based on existing statistics and estimates based on the prevalence of illegal abortions, hymen reconstructions, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), it is widely established that the prevalence of premarital sex in Muslim societies is rising (Bennett 2007; Dialmy 2005; Singerman 2007; Utomo and McDonald 2008). In contemporary Indonesia, it is estimated that the prevalence of premarital sex is as

high as 42% (Bennett 2007). Other indicators of premarital sex are the rise of HIV and other STIs as well as teenage unplanned pregnancy rates – which in Egypt stand between 4% and 7% among 15–19 year olds (Bennett 2007; Farrag and Hayter 2014). As sexual and reproductive health education (SRH) is controversial in most if not all Muslim countries, young people are not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to safely negotiate sexual relationships. Only limited aspects of SRH education are covered in Egyptian public schools and may be skipped because educators are unprepared or embarrassed (Geel 2012).

This chapter will focus on the demographic, socio-economic, and political changes that have resulted in a new geography of sex and sexuality. It will illustrate the ways in which the domain of sexuality is contested leading to feelings of ambivalence, as a result of the widening gap between young people's lived experiences and societal expectations. Drawing examples from various countries in the Muslim world, the chapter will examine the contradictory impact of modernization, nationalist ideologies, and the rise of the religious right in redefining traditional constructions of sexuality as well as the emergence of a new geography of sexuality. Although youth are busy negotiating new terrains of sexuality, public policy's stance towards young people's sexuality in the Muslim world is still characterized by silence and denial. This is evidenced by the lack of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, which would empower young people in relation to sexuality.

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## Sexuality as a Contested Domain

Sexual attitudes and behaviors are tangled up in religion, culture, politics, and economics. All of these factors come together to create an individual's sexuality. For the purpose of this chapter, sexuality will be defined as:

... a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships. (World Health Organization 2006)

As such, sexuality is a mirror of the conditions of a society at any moment in time. For example, examining the domain of sexuality can lead to a better understanding of the conditions that led to the uprisings and the 2011 Revolution in Egypt; sexuality will also be a measure of progress (or lack thereof) (El-Feki 2013). Tahrir Square and the 2011 Revolution created an atmosphere of antistructure, in which “the structures of everyday life were disrupted or overturned, but new structures have not yet emerged to replace them” (Peterson 2011: xi). Antistructure leads to transformations in existing social structures that may or may not resemble the old and this seems to be happening in Egypt currently. Sexuality is a domain in which many ideological wars are fought and is “an especially dense transfer point for relations of power” (Foucault 1978: 103). Discrepancies between Islamic doctrine

and application, changing relations between the sexes, various socioeconomic and political transformations, and competing claims for legitimacy and authenticity further add to the contested domain of sexuality and increase tensions experienced by young people navigating the growing gap between expectations and reality.

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## Construction of Sexuality

### In Islamic Doctrine

Most who research sexuality in the Muslim world would agree that Islam is a critical factor in understanding sexual behavior; however, the exact significance of Islam is harder to pin down (Ilkharacan 2002; Uhlmann 2005). Obermeyer (2000) claims that traditional Moroccan culture – like most cultures in the Muslim world – exhibits a fundamental contradiction between a relatively permissive religious doctrine and a system of social institutions that leads to double standards regarding sexual behavior. Although Islam has a generally positive view of sexuality, less noted is the importance in Islamic doctrine to mutual consent, reciprocity, and shared pleasure (Bouhdiba 1975; Obermeyer 2000). Simultaneously discussing ways to increase pleasure and rules of purification related to intercourse, a link between sexual enjoyment and the duties of believers is established; a parallel is drawn between the sacred and the sexual. Divine law introduces order and regulates sexual activity – for both men AND women – instead of letting unchecked instincts lead to chaos. Both the individual and the greater Muslim community are meant to benefit from this system. At the same time, sexual standards in Islam are paradoxical: on the one hand the exercise of sexuality is encouraged yet, on the other hand, sex is only permissible within marriage and homosexuality is considered a perversion (Dialmy 2010; Obermeyer 2000). Hegemonic status is given to marital heterosexuality; any exploration of sexuality outside of this framework is not tolerated by Islam (Obermeyer 2000).

### In Application

Inegalitarian constructions of gender in the Muslim world temper – and even contradict in certain situations – the generally positive attitude Islam has towards sexuality. Practices such as veiling, female genital mutilation (FGM), honor killings, and defloration rites generate discussion regarding the extent to which these practices express a “Muslim” construction of gender and sexuality (Abu Lughod 2001; Obermeyer 2000). Many different people with varying interests have engaged in this project of defining the nature of “Muslim” sexuality; the eroticization of the Orient has always been a preoccupation of the Western colonial imagination (Abu-Lughod 2001; Uhlmann 2005). Western discourses focus on practices such as veiling and FGM as signs of repressive control of women’s bodies and women’s sexuality. In the Muslim world itself, some argue that the misogynist practices of sexuality are corruptions of the ideals of the Qur’ān and other religious texts, while others claim

that legal and sacred texts do indeed carry messages that perpetuate certain attitudes and beliefs towards the bodies and behavior of women (Bouhdiba 1975; Ilkharacan 2002; Sabbah 1984). All of these discussions share the presumption that there is such a thing as a “Muslim sexuality” when neither Islam nor sexuality should be essentialized or taken as things with intrinsic and transhistorical meanings but rather understood within specific sociohistorical contexts (Abu-Lughod 2001; Ilkharacan 2001; Imam 1997; Uhlmann 2005). It is difficult to define what is intrinsic to Islam about shaping sexual behavior, and this task becomes more complex when Islam interacts with various socioeconomic and political systems.

In most societies, religion is central to sexual regulation; therefore, it is of no great surprise that many discriminatory practices are justified through recourse to Islam. As one of the most powerful – if not the most powerful – cultural vehicles in the region, utilizing Islam as a carrier for particular messages ensures success in achieving social and cultural prominence. At the same time, Islam plays an important role in national identification processes, representing a marker of national difference from the West. Consequently, behavior that is seen to not conform to religious norms is represented as un-Egyptian for example (Pratt 2007). In Ilkharacan’s (2002) examination of the violation of women’s sexual rights in the Middle East and North Africa, she concludes that religion is misused as a powerful instrument of control with the goal of legitimizing violations of women’s human rights. Similarly, in an analysis of Egyptian Bedouin weddings, Abu-Lughod (2001) argues that Islam is not a blueprint for sexuality but rather a weapon in the changing relations of power. Changing wedding rituals such as the loss of the female dancer symbolize the decrease in women’s ability to successfully challenge men rather than the even contest between the sexes that was symbolized by previously included wedding rituals. Furthermore, invocations of Islam and the proper behavior of women in the context of weddings are commonly heard among older men, effectively displacing women as prime actors in the rites that produced and reproduced Bedouin constructions of sexuality and desire.

While the exact role played by Islam in shaping the gender order and sexual behavior seems indeterminate, many argue that traditional cultural regimes in the Muslim world concur in considering the sexual order both binary and hierarchical at the same time (Dialmy 2005, 2010; Obermeyer 2000). This order revolves around two poles: one, which is superior and dominating and made up of men, and the other, which is inferior and passive and made up of women and homosexuals (Dialmy 2005, 2010). In order to distinguish between man and not man, social initiation is achieved through circumcision. Male circumcision is an opportunity to celebrate and take pride since masculine identity is more prized, while female circumcision takes place silently and in secret and is a means of policing female sexuality. This dichotomy of active/passive is predicated on “a masculinist definition of the sexual act as penetration” and is located within cultural regimes that are typified by a “general importance of male dominance, the centrality of penetration to conceptions of sex and the radical disjunction of active and passive roles in male homosexuality” (Dialmy 2005: 18). In this case, it is the sexual act rather than sexual organs that are constitutive of gender (Obermeyer 2000).

The active/passive dichotomy is central in traditional organizations of sexuality in the Muslim world with the definition of sex as penetrative privileging male satisfaction (Dialmy 2005, 2010; Obermeyer 2000). This power structure fosters a keen awareness in partners of “inferior” rank of the political dimension of sexual relations. Obermeyer (2000) suggests that women have an acute perceptiveness of the imbalanced system that regulates their relations to their husbands, considering it their duty to allow their husbands to have sex with them whenever they wish but refusing to ask for sex directly as it would decrease their power.

Interestingly, the masculine subconscious contains a different image of female sexuality, one that turns her into the stronger sexuality (Ahmed 1992; Dialmy 2005; Ilkcaracan 2002; Mernissi 1987). Analyzing the double theory of sexual dynamics in medieval canonical texts and historical interpretations of Islam, Mernissi (1987) presents an “explicit” theory of female sexuality in which women are depicted as passive subjects and an underlying “implicit” theory in which women are depicted as hunters and a constant challenge to man’s virility. Male and female sexual drives are construed as opposites: men as rational and capable of self-control and women as emotional and lacking self-control. Uncontrolled female sexuality is regarded as a potential cause of discord with threatening implications for the social order (Ahmed 1992; Dialmy 2005; Ilkcaracan 2002; Mernissi 1987). Therefore, social order requires male control of women’s bodies and sexuality. Practices such as defloration rites, FGM, and honor crimes have evolved in order to police female sexuality (Dialmy 2005; Ilkcaracan 2002; Lee 2011). This depiction of female sexuality justifies early marriage, seclusion, and more generally a subjection to a strict hierarchy that denies women freedom of movement and instils contempt towards sexual pleasure.

Uhlmann (2005: 13) contrasts this view of sexuality with that of European society, arguing that “if in European societies differences in the essence of men and women produce the social differentiation, then in the Middle East and North Africa it is rather the enforcement of the differentiation that produces the differences between men and women.” In the European context, the cultural construction of reproduction (sexual intercourse, pregnancy, etc.) structures both kinship and gender. The association of women with the domestic domain is rationalized through their internalized role as caregivers, in contrast with the masculine role as breadwinner. Uhlmann (ibid.) suggests that the seclusion of women and their attachment to the domestic domain in the Muslim world is directly related to the differential sexual functioning of men and women, organized around the act of penetration. Since the consequences of sex are potentially more devastating for women and their families more generally, women are policed as closely as possible, a mission in which women themselves act as the primary policing agents of their own sexuality. In the latter region, the issue is the moral policing of sex rather than the expression of gendered essence. And it is this policing, an integral aspect of which is education and upbringing that produces the differences between the genders. The act of penetration is more salient in the cultural idioms and metaphors that are used to evaluate the two genders in the Muslim world than it is in Europe (Dialmy 2005, 2010; Uhlmann 2005).



This analysis of the masculine subconscious and of the sexual order is merely a provisional approximation of sexuality in the Muslim world, since social phenomena occupy specific socioeconomic and political conjunctures and are always contingent and contestable. Specific mechanisms that are utilized to police sexuality differ within the Muslim world according to geographical location, time, class, and race of a given community. Unfortunately, the role of the interaction of Islam with specific socioeconomic and political systems in shaping sexuality in different Muslim communities is still a relatively unexplored issue; there is a striking lack of empirical data on sexual behavior (Al-Shdayfat and Green 2012; Ilkcaracan 2001). By examining laws and practices such as civil and religious marriages, bride prices, polygyny, marriage consent, reproductive health, extramarital relationships, and domestic violence, more light can be shed on the ways religion is used to create and perpetuate oppression and injustice in certain societies. Although the exact role Islam plays in shaping sexual order and behavior is indeterminate, Islam will definitely continue to be critical in the configuration of sexuality in the Muslim world. Instead of striving to define what is intrinsic to Islam in shaping sexual behavior, it would be more beneficial to explore the variable roles discourses on religion can play in constructions of sexuality.

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## Socioeconomic and Political Changes

In this age of globalization, women's bodies, sexuality, and masculinities are increasingly becoming arenas of intense conflict, an ideological terrain in which forces such as the religious right or the state fight to maintain control (Ilkcaracan 2002). Public-discourse versions of masculinities and of racialized Middle Eastern maleness, for example, play a large role in the analysis of political change and social conflict in the region (Amar 2011). These "institutionalized methods of masculinity studies" shape geopolitics and generate support for war, occupation, and repression in the region (ibid.: 38). However, public discourses such as these obscure the multiplicity of social realities and create hypervisible "fetishized figures" that are not recognizable in socio-economic and political contexts of production. The most popular subjects of modern geopolitical hypervisibility are "moralised, criminalised, racialized, colonised masculinities . . . twinned with their fetishized Others of victims – the supposedly suppressed traditionalised veiled woman and the supposedly Occidentally-identified modernized gay man" (Amar 2011: 40). Amar calls for gender/sexuality/coloniality-conscious ways to understand emerging formations and trends, ways that more accurately highlight the existing social realities. On a similar note, Ilkcaracan (2002) argues that tendencies to essentialize Islam result in an inaccurate portrayal of cultural practices such as FGM, stoning, and virginity tests and obscure the wide diversity of Muslim societies. By focusing on a combination of political, economic, and social inequalities rather than an "Islamic" version of sexuality, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of topics such as violations of women's sexual rights. In the following section, this chapter will explore some of

the historical and sociopolitical factors that have had an impact on sexuality in the Muslim world drawing examples mainly from Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey.

## Modernization

Since the nineteenth century, there have been many modern legal, economic, and social reforms in the Muslim world. Women have occupied and continue to occupy a central place in modernization efforts in the region; modernists within the Muslim world as well as mainstream development discourse argue that reforms in the position of women in the economic, educational, and legal spheres will lead to greater gender equality in all spheres and consequently more “modernization” and economic development (Ilkcaracan 2002; World Bank 2004). Modernization in Turkey, for example, included the adoption of the Turkish Civil Code in 1926 based on the Swiss Civil Code (Ilkcaracan 2002). Aimed at complete secularization, this code banned polygamy and granted women equal rights in matters of divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Again it is important to note that legal reforms and the extent to which these legal reforms redefined or failed to redefine gender relations and sexuality vary greatly between countries in the Muslim world. While Turkey adopted a fully secular civil code, Iran and countries in the Gulf –despite different interpretations – continue to rely on Islamic legal jurisprudence as the fundamental law. Other countries such as Egypt retained an “Islamic” interpretation of personal status laws yet introduced modern reforms such as an increase in the minimum age of marriage to 18 and the criminalization of FGM (Ilkcaracan 2002; Tadros 2010).

In addition, decades of government commitment and increased public spending have enabled Muslim countries to make impressive strides in women’s education and health in order to address existing gender disparities. According to the World Bank (2004), the average years of schooling for women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) increased from 0.5 year in 1960 to 4.5 years in 1999. Countries such as Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Libya have achieved gender development indices that fall into the top 2 groups, which are comprised of countries with high and medium to high equality in human development index (HDI) achievements – a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living – between men and women (UNDP 2015: 223). Women in the MENA are living longer and healthier lives; fertility and maternal mortality rates have decreased and contraceptive use has increased (World Bank 2004). Partly due to the aforementioned increase in women’s educational attainment rates as well as the decrease in fertility rates of working-age women, the MENA has seen a corresponding increase in female labor force participation rates.

Although much effort has been directed towards reforming women’s positions in the name of modernization and development, the impact of these reforms has been contradictory or divergent depending on class, race, or ethnicity (Ilkcaracan 2002). Generally speaking, those who benefit the most from modernization attempts tend to be women from the urban middle or upper classes as well as those who are a part of the dominant ethnic or racial group. Regional disparities in socioeconomic conditions are

experienced more by women than men and contribute to the contradictory impact of modern reforms. While many Muslim countries in the MENA region have made considerable progress at the primary level in raising girls' completion rates, girls from rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are often at a disadvantage to boys (UNDP 2015). Poor rural children – both boys and girls – are disproportionately represented in the share of out-of-school children. Household wealth is a major determinant of higher education with almost half of the students pursuing higher education from the richest 20% of the population and only 4% from the poorest 20% (Handoussa 2010). In 2005, 71.2% of Egyptian women aged 19 to 22 in the top wealth quintile had been enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 39.5% in the second quintile and 6.6% in the bottom quintile – all evidence that the poverty gap is wider than the gender gap in some cases (Handoussa 2010; World Bank 2008).

Modern legal reforms theoretically created many opportunities for women yet the implementation of these new laws was classed and racialized. In Egypt for example at the end of the nineteenth century, new rape laws were imported from France as part of the process of nation-state building (Ilkcaracan 2002). These laws may have standardized penal codes bringing criminal procedures under the authority of the state; however, these new laws superimposed a system that did nothing to discourage rape while introducing new forms of discrimination based on gender and class. Justice was only accessible by women who could afford to hire lawyers and pay legal expenses. Another example of the negative impact of modern legal reforms on women's lives and sexuality can be seen among Kurdish women in Turkey (Ilkcaracan 2001, 2002). Legal reforms have prohibited practices such as early and forced marriages, polygyny, and honor crimes since the 1920s; however, only a minority of Kurdish women who have had access to education can benefit from the legal reforms. Those who have never been to school and therefore speak no Turkish are unable to turn to legal institutions in cases of violations as Turkish is the official language in all governmental organizations.

Sharabi (1988) offers an explanation as to why modern reforms have had such a divergent and contradictory impact on women. Working within a Marxist framework of historical realism, Sharabi (*ibid.*) describes societies in the Muslim world and the Middle East specifically as “neopatriarchal,” proposing that neopatriarchy is a response of patriarchal societies to the advent of capitalism. Although these reforms may be implemented in the name of “modernity,” in neopatriarchal societies “modernity” is fetishized and imposed from the outside rather than arising from native experiences through reflective transformations. Therefore, what is modern is largely inauthentic with little relationship to local practice. Regional socioeconomic disparities combined with a disguised underlying formation of patriarchy results in the gendered, classed, and racialized outcomes of modern reforms.

## **Nationalism**

In times of independence and nation-state building, States often seek to manage citizens' sexual behaviors and identities usually in an attempt to define national

identity and to save the nation from “Others” (Lee 2011). With colonization, Arab societies “set up structures of passive defence around zones rightly regarded as essential: the family, women, the home” (Bouhdiba 1975: 231). Similarly, Najmabadi (2005) argues that Iran’s cultural and political interactions with Europe during the nineteenth century influenced the emergence of a new regime of sexual and gender regulations in Iran that was deeply connected with the concept of “achieving modernity.” Since the early nineteenth century, the “woman question” has been central to debates regarding the achievement of independence and nation-state building in the Middle East; when power is being contested women often become markers of political goals and cultural identity (Ahmed 1992; Fay 2008; Moghadam 1994). This era of postcolonial state formation coincided with women’s increasing participation in political movements and debates and a rise of feminist consciousness in countries such as Egypt (Badran 1993, 1995; Baron 1994; Ilkcaracan 2002). Women’s movements were more focused on expanding women’s opportunities for education and employment and less focused on sexual rights (Fay 2008). In Egypt, most of these movements were eventually incorporated into nationalist movements and the lack of independent feminist organizations during this time was paralleled by the state’s appropriation of women’s issues (Al-Ali 2000). For most countries in the region, this was an era of “state feminism” during which many state policies and programs were introduced during this time that implemented changes in the productive and reproductive roles of women. Although state feminism provided important social services for women such as education, health, and employment, it did not challenge personal status laws that institutionalized women’s dependency on a personal and familial level.

Nationalist movements and ideologies often pose contradictory roles for women. During struggles for liberation, women play a significant role however they often get side-lined post-liberation – as seen in Algeria and Iran (Moghadam 1994). The lack of compatibility between the projects of nationalism and feminism is further emphasized once independence is achieved. In the name of nationalism and development, women are allowed and encouraged to participate more fully in social and political life yet at the same time they are seen as mothers and bearers of the newly constructed nation. This leads to new strategies of policing women and their sexuality, a sexuality, which is now in service to the nation-state and expected to reproduce and maintain of the newly constructed “national identity.” For instance, as noted by Ilkcaracan (2002), in Turkey the foundation of a secular and “modern” nation-state led to changes in gender roles in order to destroy ties to the Ottoman Empire and to attack existing foundations of religious hegemony. Nationalist discourses focused on the sexual identity and behavior of Turkish women in an effort to establish a new nationalist morality that would justify women’s increasing participation in the public sphere. This preoccupation with women’s chastity and virtue led to the creation of the Statute for Awards and Discipline in High School Education in 1995, which states that “proof of unchastity” is a valid reason for expulsion. Institutionalizing a customary practice, this statute led to the suicides of many young women who were forced to undergo “virginity tests.” In 2002, after many protests and campaigns by the Turkish women’s movement and by international

Human Rights organizations the Ministry of Education finally deleted the clause stating that “proof of unchastity” was reason for expulsion.

The policing of sexuality continues to be a tool used by the state even decades after independence has been achieved to promote national security and national sovereignty (Lee 2011; Pratt 2007). More recently, governments of Muslim countries have been targeting homosexuality, examining these attacks illuminates the links between the sphere of interpersonal relations and notions of nationalism especially in the arena of international relations. Discourse and practices of national security “are rooted in (gendered) assumptions of ‘masculinized dignity and feminized sacrifice that sustain that sense of autonomous nationhood’” (Pratt 2007: 130). Consequently, sexuality becomes an arena of constant surveillance and control, as well as an inextricable part of the national and state processes that constitute the sphere of international politics.

In May 2001, the Egyptian police descended onto the “Queen Boat,” the location of a nightclub informally known to be a hang-out for gay men, arresting and detaining around 60 men (ibid.). Twenty-one were found guilty of “habitual debauchery” and sentenced to terms of one to two years and the remaining defendants were acquitted. Previously, the Egyptian authorities had turned a blind eye to the activities of the gay community in Egypt; however, the Queen Boat case may be seen as an instance where homosexuality was punished in order to reproduce heteronormativity. Just as women are punished for failing to conform to dominant notions of female sexual behavior, so are gay men, for failing to conform to dominant notions of male sexual behavior. This event also created an opportunity for government officials, the media, and other civil society activists, to “perform” a discourse of national security through which national sovereignty was reproduced and political order was maintained.

... the public harassment of homosexual men represents an opportunity to regain control of the ‘inner domain’ of the nation – meaning the sphere of personal and familial relations – by (re)asserting heterosexism as the only socially and politically acceptable means of ordering gender relations and identities. The fixing of sexual identities as heterosexual reinforces the boundaries of permissible behaviour for both men and women within the national collective, thereby contributing to the construction of national difference. (ibid.: 138)

This highlights how insecurities at a national level – stemming from global political and economic processes – impact gender and sexual relations and identities. In turn in an attempt to alleviate these insecurities, states attempt to re-establish hetero-normative hierarchies of gender relations and identities. Norms surrounding sexuality and sexual behavior become markers of national identity, and they delineate boundaries of the national collective.

## **Rise of the Religious Right**

In the decades since many countries in the Muslim world achieved independence, several factors have contributed to the creation of an unfavorable atmosphere regarding liberal reforms, such as those in the area of sexuality. These same factors

have also encouraged the rise of religious right-wing movements. As noted above, many of the social and economic reforms attempted in the name of modernization resulted in regional socioeconomic disparities and an increasing gap between the Westernized elite and the majority. Disillusionment with Westernized rulers, along with urbanization, migration, and increasing poverty, has created a vacuum wherein religious right-wing movements have gained support. Occupations and war have only added to the increasingly hostile atmosphere against the West and aided fundamentalist groups in constructing the West and its alleged culture as an “enemy.” Religious fundamentalists utilize this perceived threat against “Muslim” identity by constructing a “Muslim” female identity as a sphere of control against the enemy, the West. Similar to nationalist ideologies, women become bearers of constructed group identities and the control of women’s sexuality becomes an integral component of fundamentalist agendas.

One of the most visible strategies utilized by the religious right in controlling women’s sexuality and in demonstrating their political power is their dress code, the most perceptible form of identity creation. It is interesting to note that the misuse of the *hijāb* by the religious right has had a stronger effect on the Western audience than the Muslim one, as evidenced by the preoccupation with veiling in Western media. Aware of the power of the imagery of *hijāb*, the Islamic religious right has tried to prescribe or violently enforce extreme forms of veiling that only previously existed in certain communities. Fundamentalists have also revived previously extinct cultural practices such as temporary marriage or *mut’ah* that are disadvantageous to women and reappraised them as “Islamic.” Furthermore, the rise of the Islamic religious right has caused women in countries such as Iran and Algeria to lose previously gained legal rights (Ilkkaracan 2002). The Family Protection Act of 1967 – which restrained men’s legal right to polygamous marriage, enforced a woman’s right to divorce with mutual consent, and improved women’s chances of retaining custody of their children – was deemed un-Islamic in 1979 after the Islamic revolution in Iran. Similarly, in 1984 Algeria passed a repressive family law that legalized polygyny and retracted Algerian women’s rights in the family.

Hence, these conservative actors dominate the limited space available for public debate around policies related to sexuality. This semi-monopoly allows right wing religious groups to greatly influence the state’s sexuality politics both domestically and internationally. While some may argue that this is a representation of the increasing power and popularity of Muslim conservative forces, Bahgat and Afifi (2004) argue that in Egypt empirical evidence suggests that the daily life practices of many individuals do not strictly conform to the agenda of these forces, especially when it comes to youth. This constituency is largely removed from discourses and policymaking around sexuality resulting in a gap between perceptions and discourses and current practices.

## **New Geography of sex**

Policy interventions and normative shifts in the Muslim Arab world along with an increase in life spans, a decrease in fertility, and improvements in maternal and child

health care have ushered in a youth bulge (Fernea 2003; Singerman 2007). Unemployment levels are high throughout the region, yet at the same time a larger number of people have graduated from secondary schools and universities than ever before (Fernea 2003). The improvement in the standards and duration of education among girls, the increase in women's labor force participation, the increase in contraception use, the spread of the ideology of sexual consumerism, and the crisis of housing shortages and unemployment have resulted in delayed marriage (Dialmy 2005; Singerman 2007). As a result of these demographic and socio-economic changes, the average age of marriage has increased to the upper 20s and early 30s especially in urban centers, resulting in many young people facing the expectation of celibacy (Dialmy 2005; Obermeyer 2000; Singerman 2007). As adulthood has been historically linked to early and universal marriage in most Muslim countries, young people experience a prolonged adolescence and an ambivalent, liminal social status. During this prolonged "waithood," young people are expected to live with their parents, sometimes to remain financially dependent on their families, and to abide by the rules of the household. This has resulted in a potential discrepancy between conventional expectations that sexual activity be postponed until marriage and the realities of the youth (Dialmy 2005; Obermeyer 2000). There is increasing evidence that suggests that young people are indeed transgressing conservative norms that limit sexuality to marriage (Bahgat and Afifi 2004; Ghani et al. 2014; Holzner and Oetomo 2004; Singerman 2007; Utomo and McDonald 2008). As sexuality and marriage are decoupling, Muslim countries are witnessing an emergence of a new geography of sex with new discourses and debates about sexuality and morality, generational conflict, the appearance of "new" forms of marriage and a rise of a "marriage black market," and noncommercial premarital and nonmarital sex.

## New Forms of Marriage

Prolonged waithood is transforming marital institutions and intimate relations in the region. Whether young people are delaying marriage because of financial burdens, lack of a suitable spouse, a preference to remain single, or new forms of desire, they are navigating the evolving domain of sexuality and creating new approaches to intimate life and sexuality. The demographic and socioeconomic changes mentioned above have brought about the appearance of "new" forms of marriage or as Singerman (2007: 29) puts it a "marriage black market" where marriage substitutes can be found in an environment of weak regulation. The two most common marital innovations are de facto or *'urfi* marriages and visitation or *nikāḥ al-misyār* (traveler's marriage) (Dialmy 2005; Singerman 2007). *'Urfi* marriages – where the couple's family and general community are unaware of the marriage – are usually secretive and not registered with the government. In Egypt, *'urfi* marriages are becoming increasingly popular among young people. Crude estimates claim that these marriages number from 20,000 to 30,000 a year. In 2000 the Minister of Social Affairs claimed that the incidence of *'urfi* marriage among university students was 17%; other studies estimate that *'urfi* marriages are prevalent among 4% of the total

population of youth ages 18–30 and increasing to 6% among university students (Singerman 2007). This type of marriage reduces or eliminates the financial burden associated with traditional marriage and also removes the need for familial approval in the choice of the partner. For some young people, de facto marriages provide a marital framework in which sexual urges can be fulfilled and therefore legitimizing or justifying sexual relations.

The emergence of visitation or *misyyār* marriages can also be linked to the rise in the cost of marriage (Dialmy 2005; Singerman 2007). In order to decrease non-marital affairs, visitation marriages have become a legitimate alternative. In these marriages, the wife is visited by the husband, who is not contractually or legally obligated to provide housing for the wife (Singerman 2007). In many cases, women in *misyyār* marriages forgo their rights to equitable sexual access to their husband creating a softened form of polygyny where a man can visit his new wife without the knowledge of his co-resident wife (Dialmy 2005). There is also an increase in *zawāj al-misyāf* (summer marriage) among Saudi Arabians, which are enacted during extended vacations. Seen as a way to avoid illegitimate sex (sex outside of marriage), these short-term marriages are negotiated during trips abroad. *Misyāf* marriages are similar to *'urfī* marriages in that they are secretive and not registered with the government; however, the bride is aware that it will end at a particular time. Although these marriage substitutes have always existed, their proliferation and expansion beyond the margins of society point to the changing terrain of sexuality and normative behavior. More research is needed to understand these trends; however, they clearly represent a growing phenomenon and reflect the complex negotiations young people and their families experience.

## Premarital/Nonmarital Sexuality

With the current marriage system in transition, many sources point to the rising rate of premarital sex in many Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt (Bahgat and Afifi 2004; Dialmy 2005; Ghani et al. 2014; Holzner and Oetomo 2004; Utomo and McDonald 2008). It is difficult to determine the prevalence of premarital sexual relations as many reports and studies often conflict one another or are based on anecdotal evidence. In a study of patterns of marriage and family formation in Egypt conducted in 2004, researchers asked young men and women if they knew someone close to them who had been involved in a sexual relationship (El Tawila and Khadr 2004). About 13% of single young males responded affirmatively compared to only 3.4% of single females. When the question was posed to engaged young males, the number increased to 22% and remained the same for engaged females. When they were asked about their own experiences, numbers decreased considerably, probably due to the sensitive nature of the topic: only 1.4% of males reported any sexual experiences compared to less than 1% of females.

Although the accuracy of such surveys may be difficult to determine due to the taboo nature of the subject, sporadic evidence does suggest a rise in premarital



sexual behavior. Statistics for other indicators reflecting the existence of premarital sexual behavior such as hymen reconstruction surgery and back-street abortions are also difficult to come by and are largely based on observations and anecdotal evidence. Interviews with gynecologists in Cairo indicate that two or three young women visit clinics each month requesting hymen reconstruction surgery (Bahgat and Afifi 2004). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the demand for hymen repair is not limited to urban centers but also exists in rural governorates as well. Gynecologists also see women in their clinics suffering complications from back-street abortions, which are generally attributed to out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

For those who do not want to completely break from cultural and religious taboos against premarital sex, there is nonpenetrative sex (*ibid.*). Commentators have suggested that nonpenetrative sex is widely practiced especially in urban areas and is used by young unmarried couples to preserve virginity. Again, evidence is scarce with regards to how youth engage in sexual activity before marriage, but available evidence highlights a growing tension between Egyptian norms and practices and youth's desires and practices. There may be an increasing permissiveness with respect to premarital sex – mostly among urban, middle, and upper class young adults – but there is a continuing accommodation to tradition (Obermeyer 2000). Young women especially feel the tension between the norm of premarital chastity and the behavior of many, as consequences of premarital sexual activity are harsher for females than for males. This may partly explain the discrepancy between male and female reporting about sexual activity in the study mentioned earlier. There is still a high value placed on female virginity in the Egyptian society. Nonsexual dating relationships on the other hand are much more common; although these relationships are still frowned upon by society, they do not hold the same social stigma as premarital sex (Bahgat and Afifi 2004).

This emerging youth subculture is promoted by the spread of mass media and technology, which bring youth into contact with the global youth culture, and may encourage them to choose nontraditional patterns of behavior and to define new sources of identity. Youth are routinely exposed to global discourses of sexuality that do not necessarily oppose premarital sexuality (Bennett 2007; Utomo and McDonald 2008). These transnational flows transmit images of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to as “discrepant worlds.” These discrepant world views are further complicated as a result of Islamic doctrine and its application, changing relations between the sexes, socio-economic transformations, and competing claims for legitimacy and authenticity. Consequently, youth are attuned to global trends but rooted in local sensitivities. Young people feel pressure to adhere to socio-religious norms as evidenced by their feelings of guilt at transgressing social mores (Bahgat and Afifi 2004). The evidence of increased sexual activity among youth and the emergence of nonconventional forms of marriage indicates that conservative religious discourses do not exert the only influence over Egyptian youth. However, as much as this conservative discourse may not reflect the lived realities and practices of Egyptian youth, it largely informs how matters related to sexuality are dealt with in the public realm and in schools where sex education remains a controversial topic.

## Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Education in Muslim Countries

The severe lack of knowledge among young people regarding sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in the Muslim world is a serious concern especially in light of the changing sexual terrain among Muslim youth (Farrag and Hayter 2014; Geel 2012; Oraby 2013). Many studies have examined the increasing need and insufficient provision of SRH education in Islamic countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Egypt (Farrag and Hayter 2014; Geel 2012; Ghani et al. 2014; Holzner and Oetomo 2004; Utomo and McDonald 2008). As adolescent SRH education is controversial in Muslim countries such as Egypt, only limited aspects of SRH topics are covered in Egyptian public schools and little is known how well this subject is taught or how students react to it. Central to the debates concerning the provision of SRH education is a disagreement over what values (religious, secular, etc.) should underpin SRH curriculums (Tabatabaie 2015). In Egypt for example, conservative discourse largely informs matters related to sexuality including sex education (Bahgat and Afifi 2004). This monopoly is detrimental to youth in a variety of ways: they are more likely to be unaware of sexual and reproductive health implications of their actions, they are likely to experience guilt and confusion over sexual feelings, which may lead to regret and remorse if social mores are transgressed, and they are ill-equipped to emotionally deal with a sexual relationship.

Egypt like other Muslim countries is characterized by a “culture of silence” pertaining to young people’s sexuality and as a result public policy does not mandate comprehensive SRH education that would more accurately reflect the sexual behavior of the youth. Instead of acknowledging and adapting to social changes, there exists a collective unwillingness to recognize any behavior that falls short of a marital ideal, “a resistance buttressed by religious interpretation and social convention” (El-Feki 2013: 20). More recently, there has been some evidence of changes in policy towards sexual health. Previously, the Egyptian state widely claimed that all human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infected Egyptians acquired the infection either through a blood transfusion or through sexual intercourse abroad. Claims such as this fuelled arguments against sex education by arguing that “promiscuity” was a Western problem. Increasing public health concerns about the rise of sexually transmitted infections and HIV have pushed sex education and sexual health to the forefront of health agendas in many Islamic countries. There is also growing concern about teenage unplanned pregnancy rates in Egypt, estimated to be between 4% and 7% among 15–19 year olds fuelling a trend towards the adoption of sexual health promotion to reduce unplanned pregnancies (Abdel-Tawab et al. 2013).

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### Why the Culture of Silence?

Contemporary debates about sexual and reproductive health education highlight contrasting ideologies and their claim for legitimacy and power. On the one hand is the belief that SRH education enables young people to make informed safe decisions about sex, while on the other hand there are those that argue that it is morally

destabilizing and promotes risky sexual behavior. Although the majority of evidence supports that SRH education is empowering and protective, the latter view still exists especially in the Muslim world (Kirby et al. 2007; Shepherd et al. 2010). Central to these debates are the controversial issues of childhood and adolescent sexuality and a disagreement over what values should underpin SRH education (Farrag and Hayter 2014; Tabatabaie 2015). Consequently, religious value systems have profound effects on SRH education policies and practices. Tabatabaie (2015: 277) points out that the controversial nature of educating children and young people about SRH is not a result of Islamic doctrine but rather “the result of cultural sexual taboos that, although contradicting Islamic teachings, are strongly overlaid onto local understandings of Islam.”

Discourses of childhood innocence and protection have rendered children’s sexual subjectivities invisible and function as a rationale for denying children and adolescents relevant information about sexuality and relationships (ibid.). Similarly, the ideal young Muslim is conceptualized as one who transitions asexually from birth to puberty and then remains nonsexual after puberty until marriage. Under this conceptualization, adolescence is ideally a short phase and early marriage is intended to maintain the purity and integrity of the Muslim individual and society – given the hegemonic Islamic discourse on premarital sex and its prohibition. This does not account for lived realities of Muslim youth today, realities that include delayed marriage and exposure to global flows and peer groups. Additionally, in Islamic discourses of childhood, children are seen as immature, vulnerable, and needing protection and therefore unable to make independent informed decisions about sexual matters. An important strategy utilized in controlling and preventing childhood and adolescent sexualities is delaying the “awakening” of sexual awareness and subjectivity. It is believed that even educational sexual discussions could lead to premature sexualization and corruption.

In addition to underlying debates about childhood and adolescent sexualities, SRH education is seen as a manifestation of the pervasive influence of the West and of the Western social mores that clash with Muslim values and norms about sex and gender (Farrag and Hayter 2014). Demographic and socio-economic transformations leading to concerns about the rise of STIs (Sexually transmitted infections), HIV, and unplanned pregnancies have prompted a growing recognition of adolescent health issues. Hence, sex education and sexual health are becoming more prominent on the health agendas of many countries in the Muslim world. However, health educators and professionals are fighting an uphill battle since one of the key features of SRH education in Muslim settings is the strong correlation between religion, culture, and health policy. The major influence of religious leaders in the planning and implementation of SRH education may be a substantial source of tension and negativity and functions as a barrier in the provision of SRH education.

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## Barriers to SRH Education

Many families do little to educate their children about sexual and reproductive health; according to the 2009 *Survey of Young People in Egypt* (Population Council 2010), more than 73% of young people surveyed had never talked to their families

about puberty (Bahgat and Afifi 2004). Findings showed gender and class differences with findings higher among young men (93%) than among young women (56%) and among those who were poorest (80%) compared to the wealthiest (65%). And although the majority of youth are enrolled in school presenting a valuable opportunity for governments to educate youth about SRH, evidence suggests that little if any information is disseminated about topics such as puberty, reproduction, or STIs (Bahgat and Afifi 2004; Farrag and Hayter 2014; Geel 2012; Oraby 2013). Almost 70% of girls but only 45% of boys can describe any changes that occur during puberty, and those who can describe changes learn this information on their own; only 6% of boys and 7% of girls reported learning about puberty through school (Bahgat and Afifi 2004). In most Egyptian classrooms, if SRH topics are covered, they are done so in biology and not covered in any detail. Other times, SRH sections are skipped or covered inadequately because teachers are unprepared or embarrassed (Geel 2012).

In a study conducted in public secondary schools across three governorates in Egypt, Geel (*ibid.*) found that students knew little about puberty and relied on different sources of information. While the majority of female students claimed to have knowledge about changes associated with puberty, when asked they knew very little. Male students on the other hand were more upfront about their lack of knowledge. The study also found that female students referred to their mothers as the main source of information about SRH, followed by friends and relatives; male students' main source of information was their peers, followed by the Internet and teachers. In another study, adolescent knowledge about family planning was more encouraging with 99% of girls and 97% of boys having heard of family planning as well as contraception methods such as the pill and the IUD (Ibrahim et al. 2000). However, only 14% of boys and 5% of girls could identify condoms as a method of contraception, which may have something to do with the fact that condoms are often associated with illicit relationships leading to knowledge of condoms being under-reported. Overall knowledge of STIs was also low: only 3.4% of girls and 11% of boys could identify gonorrhoea and only 5% of girls and 3.5% of boys could identify syphilis. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS was higher with approximately 66% of girls and 76% of boys able to identify HIV/AIDS.

Studies such as the one conducted by Geel (2012) demonstrate that the current provision of SRH education in Egypt is insufficient and that adolescents have a great demand for SRH information. Most of the male and female students reported that they did not know enough for their age and could not point to what it was they did not know about (*ibid.*). All of the teachers and the supervisors interviewed stressed the importance of teaching SRH education in school; however, they stated that many barriers such as inadequate curricula, insufficient materials, and communication challenges hindered their provision of SRH education. Half of the teachers felt that the curriculum was inadequate, lacking information about STIs, female circumcision, and early marriage and pregnancy. Since no standards or guidelines exist for teaching SRH education, teachers have to rely on themselves to gather such information. Some suggested that the Ministry of Health should provide training courses on SRH and that SRH

materials should be available in school libraries. Others posited that it would be helpful to bring in specialists in order to conduct seminars on SRH, similar to private schools in Egypt.

In addition, both students and teachers emphasized the communication challenges faced, most commonly being too embarrassed to talk about SRH (Farrag and Hayter 2014; Geel 2012). They all stated that teachers lacked the communication skills and preparation to discuss such topics with students, all agreeing that SRH classes should be held separately for girls and boys in order to alleviate some of this embarrassment. Farrag and Hayter (2014) in their examination of school nurses and the provision of SRH education in Egypt also found that school nurses displayed a lack of confidence about their skills and knowledge related to SRH education and more specifically related to the unclear nature and goals of SRH education. They suggest that the lack of confidence may be linked to anxieties about cultural and social transgressions of teaching SRH since many nurses stated that they would be more comfortable if there was official approval.

School nurses also referenced culture and family repeatedly, when discussing both personal beliefs and the greater cultural and political context related to SRH education in Egypt (*ibid.*). Nurses were aware of how religion and culture affected health policy; some stated that these social and political issues were potentially holding back the development of SRH education especially the notion that such education would transgress “family values.” Other participants expressed concerns that SRH education was a symptom of the West and that such “modernization” could be a negative force socially and culturally. Interestingly, participants were anxious that their own morality may be at question if they were involved in the provision of SRH education. Farrag and Hayter (2014) posit that this may be linked to dominant gender roles in Muslim cultures – since most nurses are female – and the cultural image and norm of women as demure and sexually naïve. Although nurses seemed concerned about transgressing parental and familial values, they were more concerned about being blamed for the development of a permissive culture or being seen as morally inferior by parents and society.

These studies contribute to the discussion about SRH education in Muslim countries highlighting the need for SRH education and the barriers that educators experience in the provision of SRH education in Muslim setting. There is great need for high-level policy support in order to provide legitimacy and also a SRH policy framework to practice within. School nurses, teachers, and supervisors need to be more prepared, including training on sexuality and sexual health. Furthermore, parental and community support must be secured in order to provide adolescents with accurate SRH information, which is likely to be a difficult process due to the perceived encroachment of Western values. Many teachers and supervisors indicated that schools should not be the only source of SRH education but that efforts should be made to strengthen the roles of both the family and the media and the government in providing adolescents with accurate SRH information. Pilot government and nongovernment youth-friendly clinics have been established. However, their reach and success remain limited due to societal reluctance to address these issues, cultural and religious sensitivities, and lack of government commitment (Oraby 2013). In

order to develop SRH education, it is integral that educators and policymakers are perceived as actors from within rather than as “Western experts.”

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### Science or Religion Class?

One of the most repeated themes in the literature on SRH education in Muslim settings is how to integrate SRH information into school curriculums in a culturally acceptable manner. When asked what class SRH education should be integrated into, students and supervisors were divided – some felt that it should be integrated into science class in order to give the topics more prominence and less room more embarrassment, while others suggested integrating it into the religion curriculum to make it more culturally acceptable (Geel 2012). This emphasizes the disagreement over what values – religious or secular – should underpin SRH education (Tabatabaie 2015). It is also indicative of the wider debates surrounding the role of religion in schools in Egypt and the perception that SRH topics must be presented within the prevailing cultural framework in order to gain legitimacy. Some argue that the secularization of sexuality is the only solution and that as long as an Islamic framework is utilized the power of Islam is reinforced. Others argue that in order to fulfil the goal of providing youth with the necessary knowledge and tools, SRH education must be framed in a culturally and religiously acceptable manner (Bennett 2007; Utomo and McDonald 2008). Many NGOs and secular and Islamic women’s organizations are working to produce an alternative discourse on sexual and reproductive health that brings together Islam and women’s rights and which has legitimacy in moderate religious circles.

Arguing that comprehensive SRH education is a right of all Muslim youth especially in light of current trends in sexual behavior, Bennett (2007) considers the moral framework of Islam in relation to education, reproduction, and sexuality and stresses the need for Muslim youth to receive SRH education that is religiously appropriate. Bennett (*ibid.*: 380) emphasizes the need to acknowledge the ever-present gap between the social reality of Muslims and their religious doctrine by highlighting current trends of sexual behavior and the reproductive health status of Indonesian youth: “The possibilities of preventing premarital sex and of delaying sexual initiation need to be viewed as distinct, but can be better understood as complementary possibility co-existing along a continuum of ideally safer and better informed choices for young Indonesians.” Instead of painting Islam as a barrier to SRH education, she claims that relevant textual sources need to be examined to reveal potential for promoting the reproductive health and rights of Muslims in specific cultural contexts. Different interpretations of these texts may be indicative of the different power dynamics invested (Bennett 2007). She concludes that Islamic understandings of reproduction and sexuality are inherently compatible with SRH education, as long as cultural sexual taboos that may be overlaid onto local understandings of Islam are recognized (Bennett 2007; Khan and Khan 2015). This sort of work opens up a new discursive space and a new site of agency, where SRH is framed in a way that is compatible with Islamic faith (Utomo and McDonald 2008).

## Discussion and Conclusion

Demographic and socio-economic changes have resulted in a new geography of sex and sexuality, yet public policy is still characterized by silence as evidenced by the lack of comprehensive SRH education. As the link between marriage and sexuality is dissolving, young people are ill-equipped to safely negotiate this new terrain, a terrain that includes new marriage substitutes and new sexual behavior and norms. Discrepancies between Islamic doctrine and application, changing relations between the sexes, various socioeconomic and political transformations, and competing claims for legitimacy and authenticity further add to the contested domain of sexuality and increase tensions experienced by young people navigating the growing gap between expectations and reality. Youth are forced to deal with these contradictory influences and as evidence suggests do not always conform to strict socio-religious norms. The resulting dissonance does not allow youth to neither completely accommodate nor resist either sphere and forces them to resort to their own mechanisms to navigate their way through the contradictions. Youth are navigating their way through conflicting liberal and Islamist discourses by creating hybrid identities and realities.

Nevertheless, this constituency is largely removed from discourse and policymaking around sexuality, which is largely dominated by conservative actors (Bahgat and Afifi 2004). Consequently, young people resort to mechanisms of silent resistance and/or accommodation further leading to feelings of ambivalence as a result of the widening gap between young people's lived experiences and society's expectations. These mechanisms include but are not limited to fashionable styles of veiling, engaging in premarital sexual relations, unorthodox types of marriage, hymen reconstruction, and having illegal abortions. The absence of a counter discourse that more accurately reflects the lives of this population leaves young people without the necessary knowledge and tools to safely make and defend individual choices. Without coping mechanisms, they are left with feelings of shame and guilt towards their own practices and left unable to defend their autonomy in the face of socio-religious attacks.

The provision of SRH education is important as it raises awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health implications of young people's actions. It may also decrease feelings of guilt over sexual feelings and over transgressing social mores and better equip youth to deal emotionally with a sexual relationship. Evidence suggests that families and even schools do little to educate children about puberty, sexuality, and reproduction. As a result, those engaging in premarital sex do not take the necessary precautions to prevent the transmission of STIs since condom awareness appears to be low. In addition, while they may have knowledge of family planning, it is unclear if they are able to correctly use various methods of family planning. There is a definite need for high-level policy support in order to provide legitimacy for SRH education and also a SRH policy framework to practice within. Some argue that a fully secular SRH framework is "today politically unthinkable" and that in order to achieve reform it must be from within the community, in the name of Islam, through the re-interpretation of texts, others argue that as long as

Islam is utilized in any manner its power is reinforced (Bahgat and Afifi 2004; Bennett 2007; Dialmy 2010: 166). Whether fully secular or not, it is important that policy changes come from within rather than being perceived as “Western experts” exporting ideas about sex and sexuality. Reforms should not be flatly imported to a local context; theoretical models need to be reworked as a direct response to specific juridical, historical, and theological exigencies of the present.

There are also efforts to provide alternative platforms of SRH education for youth in the Muslim world. In a study on the role of youth-friendly clinics (YFCs) in addressing young people’s SRH in Egypt, Oraby (2013) found that the use of peer educators encouraged young people to talk about sensitive matters. Additionally, peer educators received extensive training on youth SRH topics and displayed less concern about the negative attitudes of the surrounding community. Oraby (ibid.) concludes that although there is great potential in YFCs, their role remains restricted due to societal reluctance to address these issues and cultural and religious sensitivities. Another example is *Maalouma*, which uses technology to provide an alternative platform of education (Zohney 2015). *Maalouma* is a prime example of the potential that technology possesses; it is Egypt’s first website to provide information on reproductive rights and sexuality, as well as online youth services (Zohney 2015, 2016). *Maalouma* publishes articles, provides private counselling services through text messaging, and offers e-learning modules and infographic material, as well as other web content on sexuality. Online platforms such as *Maalouma* have successfully developed a model to address sexuality in an interactive manner and to respond to the needs of the youth with the kind of content on sexuality that they require as well as anonymity.

It is also important that sexuality is not pigeonholed as a health issue by solely focusing on its association with disease, harm, and danger (Cornwall 2006). Although development agencies have explicitly dealt with issues of sexuality in programs on health and population, they have disregarded their significance for employment, livelihoods, security, housing, education, governance, and social protection. It is important to note that the issues of nondiscrimination and recognition at the core of sexual rights are fundamental to human dignity. On a similar note, Holzner and Oetomo (2004) argue that there is a need to shift prevailing discourses about youth sexuality from ones of prohibition and intimidation to ones of citizenship and human rights. In most Muslim countries, discourses about youth sexuality focus on prohibition, creating a regulatory framework where issues such as gender relations and sexual relations are not discussed and unintended consequences of youth sexuality such as pregnancy are used to demonstrate the horrors of youth sexuality (ibid.). A nonprohibitive sexuality discourse for youth would emphasize their rights and responsibilities as citizens and would build on a belief in their ability to balance needs with rights, therefore, empowering young people in relation to sexuality. Nonprohibition means having the necessary knowledge and information and an acceptance of desire, dialogue, negotiation, and pleasure.

Cornwall (2006) notes that before pushing for sexual rights, we must be cautious that we are not making assumptions about other people’s sexual identities, codes, and practices. In order to do so, more research is needed to define what “sexual



rights” mean in the everyday lives of various people, in different kinds of relationships, and in various cultural and political settings, including peoples’ understanding of their own bodies, desires, pleasures, and sexual relationships. Deeb and Al-Kassim (2011) argue that one of the challenges posed by sexuality studies in the Middle East is a return to concepts and debates seemingly put to rest in order to achieve more nuanced analyses of sexuality. Nevertheless, since sexuality and especially young people’s sexuality is a taboo subject in many Islamic countries, it is a difficult topic to research (Al-Shdayfat and Green 2012). In Lebanon for example, although there has been a steady increase in the number of pro-LGBT organizations, sexual and gender nonconformity continues to be criminalized and widely stigmatized (Mohamed 2015). Massad (2007) believes that this rise in pro-LGBT organizations has contributed to the hardships faced by sexual and gender nonconformists, arguing that they have introduced and promoted foreign sexual identities, lifestyles, and sexual epistemologies, consequently prompting resistance to behavior that is sexual and gender nonconforming.

It is important to note that because of their differences in history, religion, and culture, the West should not serve as a guide to how change will play out in the Muslim world. Furthermore, development is a nonlinear journey and different societies take different paths. However, a society that allows people to make their own choices, that provides them with the education, tools, and opportunities to do so, and that respects the rights of others in the process is a better place for it. This is not fundamentally incompatible with social values in the Muslim world, which historically was open to the full spectrum of human sexuality, nor does it clash with the region’s dominant faith – it is through certain interpretations of Islam that many Muslims are boxing themselves and their religion in. Religion is often used as both an instrument of a particular control mechanism and as a cultural system, however concentrating on the role of religion in constructing sexuality without considering its interaction with economic and political structures in a particular community can lead to essentialized notions of religion and sexuality.

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# Islam and Democracy in Muslim Educational Settings

Antonia Mandry and Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

This chapter seeks to explore the relationship between education and democracy in Muslim educational settings. The chapter will examine existing scholarship on Islam, democracy, and education with first, an overview of concepts and definitions and second, a review of educational systems regarding democracy and religion in selected Muslim-majority nations.

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**Keywords**

Islam · Democracy · Human rights education

Words like *freedom, justice, democracy* are not common concepts . . . It takes enormous and . . . individual effort to arrive at the respect for other people that these words imply. (James Baldwin 1985: 156)

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**Introduction**

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries are poised to show the world what democracies look like in the Muslim world. Politically, the twentieth century gave us single-party democracies like Turkey and short-lived experimental democracies like Azerbaijan. The twenty-first century has witnessed an explosion of democracy movements and revolutions against authoritarianism in the Muslim world akin to democratic revolutions in the countries of the former Soviet Union in the first decade of the twenty-first century (the Rose Revolution and the Orange Revolution in Georgia and the Ukraine). Countries in the former category have included Syria, Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, and Egypt.

The chapter proposes to explore the rise of democracies in the Muslim world over the last 80 years in relation to the introduction of citizenship and democratic education. Particularly with the revolutionary changes in the Arab world such as those above, concern has risen on the world stage as to what democracies can look like in Muslim countries or indeed if Islam and democracy are compatible (WRR 2004; Goddard 2002). Importance must also be placed on how democratic societies educate their children (Sears and Hughes 1996).

At the same time, other factors than religion play a vital role in understanding democracy and democratic education in such countries. Muslim-majority countries that have introduced democratic education curriculum into schools such as Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, and Iran can be roughly grouped into three types of nations: conflict, postconflict, and stable (or developed) settings. In these contexts, it can be illuminating to explore why, how, and when democratic education and citizenship education take shape in such countries, and how countries educate the population regarding their role in society (Mandry 2012).

Historically, the rise in democracy in many Muslim countries is also linked to reforms in education (Aksit 2007) as well as the introduction of citizenship education (Kolouh-Westin 2004). In addition, linked closely to nation building, this can be seen also as an education of the masses to nationalize, and create bonds between diverse ethnic groups. Education is value-laden (Jones 1995) and a political act (Freire 1990); curriculum can transform societies (Jones 2007) according to changing values and priorities. Thus, separating the process of emerging democracy from education prevents a holistic picture of what democracy looks like in Muslim contexts.

## Islam and Democracy

The contentious notion of the compatibility of Islam and democracy has been the core concern of a series of debates across the Muslim world, both at the theoretical and practical levels, and has engaged equally religious leaders, intellectuals, politicians, and practitioners. Across the Muslim world, the prevalence of democracy as a legitimate basis for a modern political order has grown in recent decades. Democracy is increasingly used as the criteria for the legitimacy of governments in the world and across a wide spectrum of populations from diverse walks of life. In the wake of such debates, a recurrent question on the compatibility of Islam and democracy returns to the social and political arenas. In addressing the question, however, one should consider what Soroush (2009) labels “a combination of text and context” namely, the revelation reflected in the Scripture and its human interpretation within a specific sociohistorical context.

Islam owes its spread and popularity to dynamic adaptation to various social and cultural contexts. The diversity within Islamic theological thought has resulted in different schools of theology and law and has fostered both extremism and conservative orthodoxy. This diversity is not only visible in a wide range of political schools and models but also informs the perception of democracy and human rights. While secularists and modernists (for further details see Chapter ► [“Muslim Orientations and Views on Education”](#)) advocate for the separation of religion and state, and perceive democracy under the domain of the state hence compatible with Islam, traditionalists and fundamentalists maintain that the Islamic notion of governance does not conform to democracy. The rejectionist approach has advocates among both Sunnī and Shī‘ah schools and is supported both by conservative Muslims and militant activists. A comparison between King Fahd’s citation, “the democratic system prevalent in the world is not appropriate in this [Middle East] region . . . The election system has no place in the Islamic creed” (Esposito 2015: 96), with that of Miṣbāḥ Yazdī who argues that “the Islamic government does not gain its legitimacy from the votes of its constituencies . . . People in the Islamic system does not have any religious or legal credibility” (Parsine 2015), demonstrates the similarities between Sunnī and Shī‘ah rejectionist views. The rejectionist faction argues that popular sovereignty contradicts Divine sovereignty, which turns any form of democracy against God’s rule, hence void and forbidden (*ḥarām*).

The rejection of democracy as a Western concept often nurtures a return to Islam to replace democracy with an Islamic equivalent. This movement was especially promoted during the twentieth century, through the Islamization movement (discussed in detail in Introduction to Part II: Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Changes and the Responses from Islamic Education), when modern Muslim reformers reinterpreted and appropriated key traditional Islamic concepts and institutions as equivalent to Western institutions. Some argued that the notion of *shūrā* as the consultation of the elite could replace political participation, while *ijmā‘* (consensus of religious experts) maintains the religious leaders’ control over the society. *Ijtihād* is an institution for the adaptation of the Islamic creed to the realities of

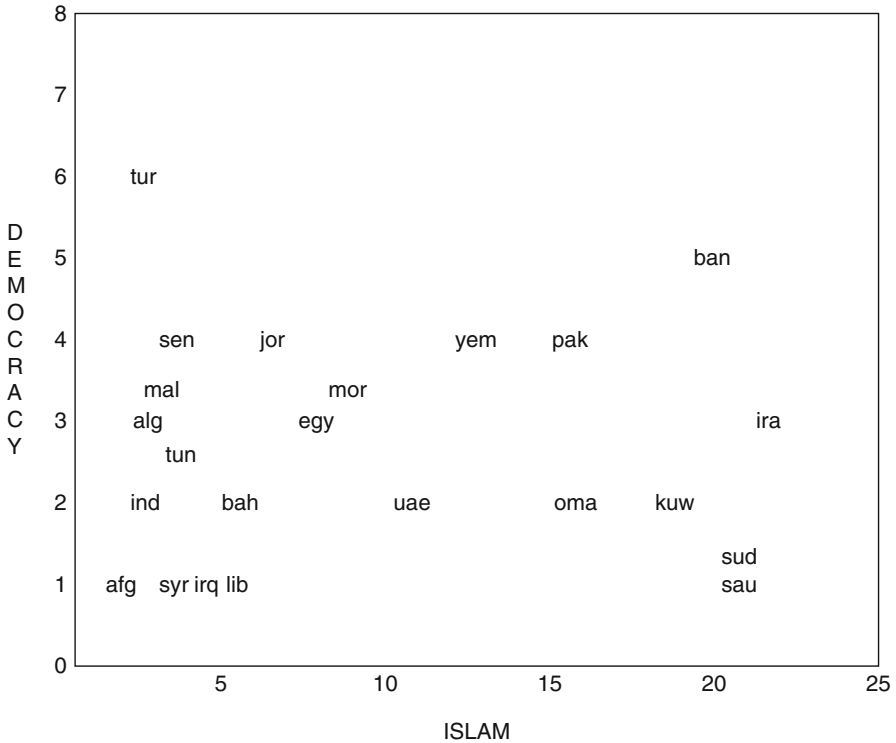
Muslim communities, resting on the notion of *maṣlaḥah*, the legal framework based on the public good.

Against these movements and against such Western concepts as democracy and human rights, a more recent approach has been the amalgamation and contextualization of those concepts. The coinage of Islamic democracy, which is interpreted differently by various groups, is seen as one of those endeavors. These scholars argue that, “no Muslim questions the sovereignty of God or the rule of *sharī‘ah*, the Islamic law. However, most Muslims do (and did) have misgivings about any claims by one person that he is sovereign. The sovereignty of one man contradicts the sovereignty of God, for all men are equal in front of God . . . Blind obedience to [a] one-man rule is contrary to Islam” (El-Affendi 2000: 21). Enayat’s (1982: 135) criticism of Islamic democracy for its lack of adaptation to modern institutions still holds to this day:

What is blatantly missing from contemporary Muslim writings on democracy, in spite of all the claims to the contrary, is an adaptation of either the ethical and legal precepts of Islam, or the attitudes and institutions of traditional society, to democracy. This is obviously a much more complex and challenging task than the mere reformulation of democratic principles in Islamic idioms. It is because of this neglect that the hopes of evolving a coherent theory of democracy appropriate to an Islamic context have remained largely unfulfilled.

At the theoretical level, the notion of Islamic democracy has to find ways to reconcile God’s sovereignty with that of popular sovereignty through political participation. As the first pillar of democracy, divine sovereignty has to be replaced by popular sovereignty – with the idea that citizens have rights and a responsibility to pursue justice. Also, in the Islamic model of governance, God’s law is perceived as preceding man-made law, which often times comes into conflict with democratic processes of law-making. The new waves of intellectual endeavors include Abou El-Fadl (studying the Sunnī school of thought) and Abdulaziz Sachedina (discussing the Shīite perspective) and have been demonstrating that the Qur’ān and traditions can be understood in ways that are compatible with democracy – that God’s sovereignty does not preclude human agency. The key issue, in their view, is that God’s law involving matters of faith should not be subject to the state’s intervention, that this is between God and each believer. No human being should intervene between God and a believer or pretend to judge in God’s place whether the believer is sincere or not. The Qur’ān specifically states that there should be no compulsion in matters of religion (Quandt 2004: 102–3).

Findings of a comparative study on Islamic political culture and democracy (Price 1999: 149–151) suggest that Islamic political culture does not have a significant effect on democracy. This relationship can be seen clearly in Fig. 1, which shows a relatively random distribution of levels of democracy across the predominantly Muslim nations. The most striking aspect of the alignment of the cases is the overall low levels of democracy among the predominantly Muslim countries, as most of the democracy scores are clustered between one and four. It is also interesting to note that, although four of the five most democratic political systems are predominantly secular, the Islamic political culture scores for most of the least democratic countries range between 0 and 3. Against this, Price (*ibid.*) argues that Islam “must be allowed



**Fig. 1** Islam and Democracy across various Muslim countries (Source: Price 1999: 150)

to play a role in government and politics if predominantly Muslim countries are to be democratic.” However, the “moderate” countries with Islamic political culture scores between 6 and 15 also appear to be randomly distributed, which contradicts the notion of competition between more religious groups and less religious groups leading to pluralization. On the other hand, the presence of three of the six countries with the highest Islamic political culture scores at or above the mean democracy score (3) is evidence that Islam might facilitate democracy.

While scholars and intellectuals across the Muslim world endeavor to settle the disputes around the placement of democracy informing civil liberties and human rights, Islam continues to lend itself to various modes and models of governance, from dictatorship, republicanism, and monarchy. Political participation, although only a partial requirement for democracy, has found its significance across Muslim societies, and the representation, albeit limited, continues to be established in various ways. Thus, the answer to the question of Islam and democracy remains unsettled, since Islamic political groups gaining complete control of a government through democratic means as in the case of Hamas in 2006 and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 2012 creates a new area of contestation regarding the legitimacy of democratic institutions serving for allegedly nondemocratic ends (for further details



see discussion on post-Islamism in chapter ► [“Introduction to Part II: Islamic Education in the Modern Era: Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Changes and Responses from Islamic Education”](#)).

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## Democracy in Muslim History

A brief look at the history of democracy and Islam is warranted in order to contextualize the discussion of how they interact in Muslim educational settings. A necessarily superficial summary follows of key concepts and points. *Democracy* as a term has been defined and redefined by scholars such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Popper throughout the ages, from the Greek roots literally meaning rule of the people (Carson 1960) to formulations of what that means in practice in the modern age. Campbell (2008) notes that the two main elements required for the existence of a viable democracy are *freedom* and *equality*. Freedom House criteria on democratic ranking are based on civil liberties: freedom of expression and, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, personal autonomy, and individual rights; and political rights: electoral process, political pluralism/participation, and government functioning (Freedom House 2012). A key component of these definitions revolves around the idea that democracy and *human rights* “are reciprocal political concepts (Lohmann 2006: 11)”, which nevertheless create tensions between the ideas of protection of individual rights and those of national sovereignty.

It is within this context that Islam’s relationship with democracy remains a contested concept among both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, a discussion with a rich history. Goddard’s (2002) examination of existing scholarship reveals four main discourses, that democracy is anathema to Islam, Islam is incompatible with democracy, Islam and democracy are compatible, and Islam demands democracy. While Goddard (ibid.: 4) sticks closely to the definition of democracy as “sovereignty of the people,” he concludes that the debate concerning the exact definition of democracy in the context of Islamic societies will continue, that Islam is by no means unique in displaying a spectrum of opinion concerning the relationship between Islam and democracy, and that examples of antidemocratic Christian opinion exist as well.

Some scholars argue that the Middle East region’s record with democracy and human rights proves that the area’s culture or history is inimical to democracy (Bellin 2004). Still others claim that democracy is a non-Islamic form of governance, rooted in secularism, “the mechanisms of which cannot be separated from the values they uphold (Sabet 2008: 251).” Amr Sabet also claims that *democracy*, as a foreign system, tries to open societies, which in turn makes them more susceptible to imperial forces and influences (ibid.).

Adhering to the strand of scholarship mentioned above in Goddard that Islam can be compatible with democracy, Parray (2010) explores attempts of several contemporary Muslim intellectuals to discover an authentic formula for good and ethical self-governance. According to Parray, “in Islam, speaking of democracy and the concept of democratic participation does not mean the word *democracy* is a Qur’anic

**Table 1** Definitions of democracy

Definition	Source
Rule by the people with two main elements required: freedom and equality	Campbell (2008)
“Government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is lodged in the hands of people collectively.” (page 2) “Etymologically, the word means simply rule by the people, the citizens, or the masses” (page 2)	Carson (1960)
“‘The rule of the people’; in other words, a system of making rules which is put together by the people who are to obey those rules.”	Brander and Keen (2002)
“Sovereignty of the people” (page 4)	Goddard (2002)
[In Islam] democracy is emphasized as <i>shūrā</i> , which is interpreted as allowing or actually requiring the expression of the popular will in matters of state.	Parray (2010)

term explained in the Qur’ān or the *sunnah*. What it really means is that (a) the Islamic heritage contains key concepts and images that are foundations of Islamic perceptions of democracy and (b) its positive features and values... are compatible with Islamic teachings (ibid.: 142).” In essence, democracy in the Muslim world is being asserted largely by emphasising *shūrā*, which is interpreted as allowing or actually requiring the expression of the popular will in matters of state.

Another example of how democracy is created in Muslim countries is explored in Hasan’s (2007) book on the Asian experience, which examines several different types and understandings of democracies, from participatory democracy to secular democracy, and from guided democracy to the Indonesian concept of Demokrasi Pancasila centered around five principles: belief in one God, humanity, unity of Indonesia, democracy, and social justice (Table 1).

This chapter has chosen to focus on majority Muslim countries not part of the Arab spring for a number of reasons. First, Arab Spring countries are currently in flux and the judgment and evaluation of history on its political processes and educational impact (or vice versa) requires time. Second, countries such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iran offer much in the sense of different models and stages of democratic engagement and educational reform. To that end, a brief look at the history of these countries vis-à-vis the emergence of democracy is warranted.

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## Afghanistan

For a large part of the twentieth century, Afghanistan experienced relative peace and stability due to shifts in geopolitical interests by regional powers, well-defined borders, a distinct national identity, and a strong monarchy in the second half of the century (Byrd 2012). A Marxist revolution and interference by the USSR in the 1970s destabilized the country and launched 40 years of civil war, insurgency, and autocratic rule. While efforts to introduce democracy in the face of Ṭālibān rule were attempted, most notably by the “Lion of Panjshīr” Ahmad Shāh Mas‘ūd, it was not

until an invasion by the United States in 2001 that the Tālibān was removed from power and a presidential republic was established with democratic elections.

Afghanistan's ranking from Freedom House (2012) paints a dismal picture, with political rights and civil liberties receiving some of the lowest possible rankings (6 out of 7) due to the violence and assassinations that continued throughout the country. The 2014 presidential elections resulted in the transfer of presidential power for the first time in the history of modern democratic Afghanistan.

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## Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan was one of the first democracies in the Muslim world. In the aftermath of the First World War, the short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918–1920) implemented a multiparty parliament, and granted universal suffrage (the first Muslim country to give women the right to vote). After 2 short years, the Soviet Union invaded and annexed Azerbaijan as a Soviet Socialist Republic and its democratic system was replaced by the Communist system. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan declared independence and fell into a disastrous war with neighboring Armenia over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Today, oil-rich Azerbaijan experiences an economic boom and the streets of Baku are lined with luxury cars. However, this is not matched by a comparative increase in political and civil liberties. Freedom House designates Azerbaijan as *Partly Free*, on the freedom index (Karatnycky 2002) in 2002. By 2012, Freedom House (2012: 9) shows that Azerbaijan, rated as *Not Free*, has steadily declined along the freedom index as government abuse continued, with “widespread attacks on civil society, including the unlawful detention and imprisonment of political activists, opposition members, and local and international journalists; restrictions and violent dispersals of public protests; and unlawful evictions of citizens from their homes.”

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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

After centuries of rule by the Ottoman Empire and a devastating and fractious Second World War, Yugoslavia, of which the modern Bosnia and Herzegovina was part, became reinvented as a multiethnic socialist state under the leadership of General Tito until his death in 1980. The state's 3-year violent disintegration into independent nations resulted in twentieth century siege warfare and hundreds of thousands of deaths (McDermott and Lanahan 2012). The rebuilding of cities and the establishment of democratic states in the wake of this violence was thus born in the midst of the ashes of war. The modern Bosnia and Herzegovina, a cobbled-together Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, is an electoral democracy; rankings by Freedom House (2013) show it as *Partly Free*, based on ratings of freedom, civil liberties, and political rights, the latter of which shows improvement.

## Iran

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911 marked the beginning of a new era, in which new conception of citizens as bearers of equal political and civil rights began to emerge. A novel understanding of governance, sovereignty, law, justice and fairness, protest and redress, nation and national self-reliance, the separation of powers, and governmental accountability was explicitly or implicitly embodied in the Constitution and became increasingly salient in the culture of politics (Azimi 2008: 9).

In the wake of revolutionary events, the electoral law of July 1909 (Jomādā al-Thānī 1327) drafted to the forced abdication of the king Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah Qājār and proved to be an efficient tool in the hands of the revolutionary forces. Elections for the first, second, and, to some extent, third *Majlis* (Iranian Parliament) are generally regarded as having been free from improper governmental intervention (Matin Daftari 1956: 4). With the start of the elections for the fourth *Majlis* in 1918, however, in the wake of the coup d'état of 1921, which resulted in Reza Khān's domination of the political scene, the intervention of the government in elections was undeniable. Despite the fact that Iran under Pahlvis was one of the early signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, they were repeatedly criticized by international human rights organizations for violating democratic rights of the citizens and affecting the outcomes of the elections.

Reference to history of democracy in Iran, however, is not complete without mentioning Muḥammad Muṣaddiq, who is perceived by many Iranians as the leading champion of a secular democracy and resistance to foreign domination in Iranian modern history. Muṣaddiq was removed from power in a coup d'état on 19 August 1953, organized and carried out by the CIA at the request of MI6. The event has to a larger extent shaped the mentality of Iranians on the western notion of democracy and democratic elections.

In an endeavor to establish an Islamic government, along with suppression of other groups who took part in the revolution, the demonization of the West and Western institutions and concepts was the core of the agenda to transform Iran to a Shīʿite theocratic regime. In his endeavor to reconcile the Islamic government with republicanism, Ayatullāh Khumaynī's version of the Islamic state adopted an Islamic constitution and created an electoral process of political legitimation and popular participation in politics. In practice, however, while Khumaynī's complex but nonetheless modern Islamic governmental system founded the governmental system on Islam and vested the final religious-based temporal authority in the *Vilāyat-i Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Muslim Jurist), it ensured that the system was participatory, enabling the public to be involved in the processes of political legitimation and policy formulation and implementation (Amir Arjomand 1988). Khumaynī's theory of the Islamic government triggered a series of debates and discussion among clerics and intellectuals on the compatibility of Islam and democracy as well as the flexibility of the Islamic creed to adjust to the needs of a modern state. As a result of such efforts by Soroush, Shabustari, Kadivar, Eshkavari, and others and despite the efforts of hardliners who argued that “an

Islamic government does not gain legitimacy from people” (Parsine 2015), the electoral process has remained in place.

The election of President Muhammad Khatami in 1997 opened a new chapter in the reconciliation of Islam and democracy in postrevolutionary Iran. Khatami intertwined “Islamic democracy” which will be achieved by the collaboration of the “Islamic civil society” and popular participation, through “dialogue” in local and global scales (Khatami 1999: 2). He noted that the notion of Islamic democracy was not in “conflict and contradiction in all their manifestations and consequences with those arising from Western traditions of rationalism and liberalism (ibid.: 601).”

Freedom House (2013) gives Iran, like Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, a Freedom Status of *Not Free*, with civil liberties and political rights both scoring 6 on a scale of 1–7, with 7 representing least free status.

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## Democratic Education

Education is a political act, according to Paulo Freire (1990), and the political decisions that inform a centralized or decentralized approach to curriculum development determine how and what individuals learn is the nature of their role in society. This role can be taught through courses such as citizenship education or, in some cases, in human rights or education for democratic citizenship. According to Gollob et al. (2010: 9),

“the objective of EDC/HRE [education for democratic citizenship/human rights education] is to enable and encourage students in their roles as young citizens to play an active part in their societies and political communities . . . Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society.”

Publications such as Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE) Pack (Birzea et al. 2004) and Dare in Action: Vision and practice for democracy and human rights education in Europe (DARE Network 2006) have clarified the European approach to education for democratic citizenship. They are intended to provide support and policy information to educators. The European-based DARE Network’s recommendations in Dare in Action (2006) include “skills of analysis, participation, informed choice, and appropriate action . . . negotiation, cooperation and discussion . . . [requiring] skills of critical thinking, analysis and review” (Brown 2006: 33–37). Table 2 illustrates core knowledge and skills that is central to education for democratic citizenship according to key publications. Brown further advocates for education’s “key role . . . in preparing learners to be global citizens with rights and responsibilities. . . working as active citizens for global social justice” (ibid.: 32); this, then, is her understanding of democratic education. Thus, “democracy conceptually presupposes critical citizens . . . [and] education is a precondition of democracy” (Puolimatka 1995: 147).

**Table 2** Core knowledge and skills

Skills	Skills of analysis, participation, informed choice, and appropriate action Negotiation, cooperation, and discussion Critical thinking, analysis, and review	“Skills to use local, national, regional, and international human rights instruments and mechanisms for the protection of human rights” (p. 14); skills including “critical analysis and skills for action furthering human rights” (p. 14). Analytical skills are especially emphasized as they are seen to be part of the process of creating solutions to human rights problems. Thus, a list of human rights-related skills would include critical thinking and analysis as well as democratic participation	Student-centered, participatory, and collaborative teaching practices Critical thinking and collaborative decision-making
Knowledge	Human, fundamental, and civil rights in European constitutions; charter of EU regarding human rights, instruments, and procedures; Refugee politics and the protection of human rights in the EU	Knowledge about human rights, their universality, indivisibility, and interdependence and about protection mechanisms	Respect for individual rights, human dignity, social justice, the common good
Source	Brander and Keen (2002) <i>Compass: a manual on human rights education with young people</i> . Strasbourg: Council of Europe	DARE Network (2006) <i>Dare in Action: Vision and practice for democracy and human rights education in Europe</i> . Berlin: Partners Bulgaria Foundation (UNESCO 2006)	McDermott and Lanahan (2012). <i>Democracy and Social Justice in Sarajevo’s Schools. The Qualitative Report</i> , 17(22): 1–27

## Education for Democracy and Human Rights in Muslim Educational Settings

Apart from and despite this European understanding of educating for democracy, similar concerns for such education based on a shared conceptual understanding can be seen in some Muslim majority countries. Gözütök and Alkın (2008) point out that education for human rights and democracy is essential, and reinforce Lohmann’s emphasis on the reciprocity of the human rights and democracy.

**Table 3** Examples of democratic education

Afghanistan	Azerbaijan	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Iran
Life skills course	Human rights Education	Civics education (K-10)	Human rights (higher education elective only)
Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan curriculum on traditional courses and activism (nonformal education) Civics (core)	Civics education	Foundations of democracy (K-8) Democracy and human rights (10th grade)	
Peace and human rights education (elective)			

Sources: Silova and Kazimzade (2006); Kazimzade et al. (2003); McDermott and Lanahan (2012); Ministry of Education [Afghanistan] (2003); Iranian Path (2011)

Regardless of how democratic countries are in reality, their rankings on Freedom House, or the GDP of the country, a look at how the selected countries *teach* democracy in the classroom can illuminate discussions of religion, education, and democracy. Some countries teach “democracy” as a concept within a history class, a citizenship education class, or a human rights education class. Others offer democracy as part of and the cornerstone of a standalone course, or as disseminated throughout the curriculum. Table 3 below gives some examples of courses at the primary and secondary levels that have components touching on the skills and knowledge linked to democratic education in the four selected countries. This demonstrates the multiple ways that Muslim educational contexts can engage with democracy as a topic.

Recent research (Çetindamar and Hopkins 2008; Mandry 2012) has shown changes in how education courses in the Muslim world have educated their population for their role in society ranging from traditional citizenship courses to democratic education, human rights education, and social responsibility courses. While research has shown that Islam and adherence to the faith does not increase or decrease the likelihood of favorable attitudes toward democracy (Rose 2002; Karatnycky 2002), little research has explored what attitudes are fostered in the school systems and the interplay between religion, secularism, and education. Thus, the fundamental question is what does democracy look like in Muslim educational settings, and how do students carry those lessons into the real world?

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## Afghanistan

Afghanistan’s education system has gone through critical reforms since the fall of the Taliban, both in terms of policy and in educational content. The Education Law of Afghanistan formalizes the right to equal education and respect for human rights, while the Ministry of Education emphasizes education as “based on Islamic

principles and respect for human rights by providing equitable access to quality education for all to enable them actively participate in sustainable development, economic growth, stability and security in Afghanistan” (Baharustani 2012: iv). In light of the fact that there was no standard national curriculum (SIGAR 2016), a national priority was set for its development. In 2003, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan partnered with UNESCO to develop a Curriculum Framework for primary and secondary education. In this framework, the importance of Islam is highlighted in the first chapter as a central part of the identity of Afghanistan and the understanding of the history of education in the country.

This framework also draws on and refers to international discourse on democracy and human rights, in terms of referring to curriculum as a social contract, a primary cornerstone of democracy. More explicit references in the Ministry of Education’s Curriculum Framework also include the formulation of specific education outcomes, including that “students will develop as civilized human beings, provided with the knowledge and skills to respect the other, promote participative democracy and human rights for [sic] all. . .” (Ministry of Education [Afghanistan] 2003: 17).

It also explicitly sets out core knowledge and skills that can be linked to the knowledge and skills laid out in Table 2 for democratic citizenship, such as “developing problem-solving skills to carry out both individual and collective tasks” (*ibid.*: 13). In addition, the framework formalizes the general objectives for education in core areas, including social and civic education. In this latter area, “students will be supported in their development as members of a family, and of a local, regional, national and international community through (*ibid.*)” the defense of Afghanistan’s sovereignty and adhering to the country’s Islamic principles, respecting laws, protecting rights, and many others. Especially pertinent to a discussion of democratic and human rights education in Afghanistan are the objectives that explicitly refer to the protection of rights, participation in all areas of life including in politics, the development and application of critical thinking skills, and respect for differences of opinion.

Beyond the discursive level, the education curriculum proposed also includes eight areas including Islamic studies, Life skills, and Social Studies. Within the core course of Social Studies, areas of study include Civics, while optional courses provide students with choices including Peace and human rights education.

According to UNESCO’s report of 2010/2011, the Afghanistan Ministry of Education finalized the basic education curriculum in 2010; however, the Ministry also signaled its intentions to take a cross-cutting approach to integrating general principles, such as human rights and gender equity, across subjects. This reflects the tension, evident in countries of different religious profiles around the world, between offering democratic and human rights education courses as stand-alone subjects and offering a curriculum where such principles are integrated across and within all subjects.

At the school level, however, it remains true that education services still struggle in reaching all children in Afghanistan, especially those in rural areas (Byrd 2012). Thus, even if the perfect approach to teaching about and for democracy and human rights is resolved at the curricular level, the realization of quality education for all will still limit its efficacy due to the reach of Afghanistan’s education services.



## Azerbaijan

An analysis of Azeri policy on education, curricula, and education research related to democratic education reveals similar trends as do examinations of Afghanistan and Bosnia. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan is responsible for education in the country at all levels. The Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan sets out the principles and rights that inform the education system within the country. The introduction to the law states that the purpose is to ensure “citizens’ educational rights as established by the Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic” (ELRA, para. 1). Discursively, the Law refers to an interplay between religion and democracy that is both subtle and clearly situates the role of each. It emphasizes the secular nature of education and its contributions to Azerbaijan on an individual, community, and national (or State) level, as well as the reciprocal responsibility of the recipients of the education system as participants in the democratic process.

The connection between these expected duties of both the State vis-à-vis the education services provided and the citizen-student is linked with international instruments and conventions. The range of principles and influences on the Education Law is distilled into a triumvirate of “democracy, human rights and liberties” (Education Law, Article 4.0.1) and its commitment to providing education to all. Article 5.2 lays this out explicitly,

“The State secures the creation of equal opportunities for each citizen and doesn’t tolerate for any discrimination, regardless of the individual’s gender, race, language, religion, political views, nationality, social status, background, and state of health.”

Ninety-nine percent of Azerbaijan’s population is Muslim, with the majority Shī’ah, and a small minority Sunnī. Despite this, a significant percentage of Azeris report that religion does not play an important role in their life (Crabtree 2010). Thus, this emphasis on the tolerance for religions as well as on the importance of the secular state is clearly reflected in education law and policy, and sets apart public and private spheres wherein religion and democracy operate. Within this legal framework and in light of the twentieth century history of Azerbaijan, research on Azeri education for democracy and human rights shows that these principles primarily occupy the public space of education initiatives, which almost completely excludes religion.

This can be seen in the various curriculum reform initiatives that Azerbaijan, with technical and financial support from international donors, has led throughout the last 10 years. In particular, a civics education curriculum was developed and implemented in the mid-2000s. Silova and Kazimzade (2006) examine the civics education curriculum development process and its impact. A significant finding was the difficulty of teachers in adapting to the teaching of civics education as a school subject in a post-Soviet world where the principles of freedom of expression were curtailed and notions of global citizenship were not encouraged. Thus, the research showed that the political transition engendered challenges for teachers in implementation. Nevertheless, the researchers also stressed that this initiative was able to introduce education content that taught the ideas of democracy and political participation but also trained the teachers in using pedagogy that aligned with those ideas.

In addition, in 2016, Azerbaijan reported that two courses promoted education for democratic citizenship and human rights: Life Knowledge (grades 1–9) and Society and Human Being (grades 10–11), and while both were obligatory, only the latter was integrative (Council of Europe 2016).

This evolution of the approach to the way of teaching students their roles in society through education is similar to the experiences of other countries. In particular, the tension between integrative, cross-cutting, or standalone democratic education approaches is also present in how Azerbaijan seeks to reform and improve education policy and curriculum in order to achieve the goals set out so clearly in the Education Law.

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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

The education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects both its recent history as well as its decentralized nature in terms of the Federation and the Republika Srpska. While there is a Federal Ministry of Education and Science, each of the nonfederal levels has its own ministry of education (MCABH 2015). Despite this structure which presents coordination challenges, “the educational institutions at all levels of education, within the environment they affect, have a responsibility to contribute to creating a culture that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens as enshrined in the Constitution and other documents on human rights signed by BiH” (2015: 7). The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 18/03), unlike the Afghan Curriculum Framework, does not refer to Islam directly; however, religious tolerance is promoted and linked directly to democracy in Article 3.

The general goals of education arise from the generally accepted, universal values of the democratic society, and from proper value systems based on the specific qualities of the ethnic, historical, cultural and religious traditions of the peoples and ethnic minorities living in Bosnia and Herzegovina (p. 2).

Nevertheless, because of the decentralized nature of the education system, each entity within the greater borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina has its curricula and these are not necessarily compatible, particularly when it comes to content. In postconflict Bosnia, democratic education began with the introduction of related subjects as independent courses drawing from materials created by CIVITAS, an educational center for democracy and human rights. These two courses within the primary and secondary curriculum of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina include the Foundations of Democracy courses at the primary level and the Democracy and Human Rights course in the final year of secondary level. These are now part of the formal Bosnian curriculum, an approach which is standard for twentieth century democratization efforts (Lanahan 2017).

Lanahan’s (ibid.: 70) research on democratic education in Bosnia reveals that, beyond the policy level, teachers understand not only that students must learn content-related knowledge and skills but they also need to be exposed to teacher behaviors in the classroom that model those democratic principles. This makes a

clear link between curriculum (whether in independent classes or streamlined across subjects) and pedagogy. Lanahan also noted that teachers are aware of the “need to integrate democratic ideas across the curriculum in addition to [the standard standalone courses]”.

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## Iran

Some 38 years ago, as part of the revolutionary educational policy, Iranian theocratic government claimed a creation of a new system of education based on equal rejection of Western values along with the values of Marxism and those of the indigenous non-Islamic traditions. The changes were being observed closely by other Muslim countries, and were considered by some Muslims as a systematic endeavor to Islamize education and for some others as an example of the education system in an Islamic state, and “Islamists from Morocco to Indonesia [were] demanding educational changes similar to Iran’s” (Reid 1995). Although the system after the first international assessment and upon the poor performance of Iranian students proved its inefficiency and paved the way for President Khatami’s substantial reform, it did not undermine the goals of Iranian postrevolutionary education as the medium for the creation of the committed Muslim intellectual (*roshanfikir-i mut’ahid-i mazahabi*).

The discourse of human rights in Iranian education is framed within Islamic human rights, the legitimacy of which was affirmed through comparisons to other religions and philosophies. Effort was made to maintain Islamic democracy which “must necessarily be based on Islamic human rights” (IRIB 2016) as an alternative to the Western notion of human rights education.

Islamic democracy was introduced into education by the Khatami administration in 1998 as part of an extensive educational reform. Throughout the reports and policy documents of the reform, references were made to religious (Islamic) democracy as one of the theoretical underpinnings of the reform. The reform utilized Islamicized versions of the social and education theories in an effort to “adjust them to the cultural, social and religious requirements of the Iranian Islamic society” (Arjmand 2008: 130). Religious democracy which is regarded as the first doctrine of the reform is based on the sovereignty of God and the governance of the people. Such a system is perceived as an amalgamation of democracy and theocracy in which the overarching absolute sovereignty of God is accepted while it is assumed that man has choice and freedom to steer his destiny and the destiny of the society (Ministry of Education 2003). According to the policy papers, the framework of the religious democracy is presented in articles 4, 5, 6, and 56 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (*Article 4*: All civil, penal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on the Islamic criteria. This principle applies absolutely and generally to all articles of the Constitution as well as to all other laws and regulations, and the *fuqahā* of the Guardian Council are judges in this matter.

*Article 5*: During the Occultation of the *Walī al-‘Aṣr* (may God hasten his reappearance), the *wilāyah* and leadership of the *ummah* devolve upon the just

(*'ādil*) and pious (*muttaqī*) *faqīh*, who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability, he will assume the responsibilities of this office in accordance with Article 107.

*Article 6:* In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the affairs of the country must be administered on the basis of public opinion expressed by the means of elections, including the election of the President, the representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and the members of councils, or by means of referenda in matters specified in other articles of this Constitution.

*Article 56:* Absolute sovereignty over the world and man belongs to God, and it is He Who has made man master of his own social destiny. No one can deprive man of this divine right, nor subordinate it to the vested interests of a particular individual or group. The people are to exercise this divine right in the manner specified in the following articles.), within which the ultimate will of God is combined with the will of people (Islamic Revolution). As the religious democracy is a twofold process, it is composed of two sets of principles:

- (a) The social principles through which the requirements of democracy are attained include: social contribution, law centeredness, flexibility, prioritizing professional qualifications and merits over personal relations, social competence, citizenship, choice, freedom, decentralization, civic education, educational justice and equality, transparency, reality-centeredness, emphasis on dialogues and critical thinking to create a tension-free environment and establishment of NGOs and professional unions.
- (b) The spiritual requirements, which are the main components of the religious democracy and of the absolute sovereignty of God over man-made laws include: emphasis on religiosity, exalting human values, escalating Islamic ethics, promotion of spiritual education, encouraging a dynamic and critical view towards religiosity, mystical and ethical approach adopted from Islamic/Iranian heritage to introduce religiosity and the need for religious education as a spontaneous and instinctive process, to introduce religion and religion through aesthetics (through fine arts, etc.), to fulfil the spiritual need of man, and to attain pleasure, optimism, and the blessing of God.

Khatami's notion of Islamic democracy is built upon the plurality of views and the freedom to express them as a condition for the development of an Islamic civil society. He notes, "we cannot expect any positive transformations anywhere unless the yearning for freedom is fulfilled. That is the freedom to think and the security to express new thinking" (Khatami 2000: 85). Furthermore, "transformation and progress require thought, and thought only flourishes in an atmosphere of freedom" (*ibid.*: 90). The decentralization and bottom-up approach was defined as empowerment methods to provide freedom for educational institutions and accommodate the needs of the society rather than ideological commitments.

Despite this rather progressive view, the reform failed to be translated into practices, and education on democracy and human rights remained an infeasible statement on policy papers. The subsequent events as a result of President

Ahmadinejad's extreme Islamization policies disintegrated the reform and tightened the grip over the freedom of expression and social liberties and any such references in education.

Education of human rights has remained at the core of many contested debates among Iranian intelligentsia who argued that the Iranian government, as a signatory of the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal 1993), Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), and United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004), is responsible to provide age-appropriate human rights education in primary and secondary levels. Despite the agreement, human rights education is not part of the curriculum in Iran. On December 26, 2013, President Ruhani argued for the necessity of citizenship rights and human rights education in an official meeting with educational authorities. Albeit this emphasis, his Charter of Citizenship Rights makes no reference to human rights (or citizenship) education.

In 2007 and under the Khatami administration, human rights was offered as an optional one credit point course for students of a bachelor's degree in law. The same year, for the first time, a Master's degree in human rights was offered under the faculty of law in three universities in Tehran (Teheran University, Shahid Beheshti University, and Allameh Tabatabaie University) and Mofid University in Qom. President Khatami in his efforts to reconcile with the international community encouraged collaborations with international organizations and made efforts to open the country for global interaction. In close collaboration with UNESCO, Shahid Behshti University hosted the UNESCO Chair for teaching, research and human rights education, democracy, and peace, which, among other activities, harbored a specialized library and documentation center on human rights, democracy, and peace.

The Master's in human rights was offered as a 32-credit cross-disciplinary program, of which four credits were devoted to thesis work. Table 4 shows the details of the curriculum for the master's degree in human rights.

Addressing a group of university professors and students, on September 2, 2014, Āyatullāh Khāmīnehī, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, harshly criticized the trend of Islamization of the higher education in Iran. He advised the ardent Muslim intelligentsia of Iran to review the curricula for social sciences, liberal arts, and humanities and pursue endeavors to purify the curricula from the content adapted from the West which "spreads seeds of doubts and uncertainty in religion and promotes secularism and disbelief" (New York Times 2014). The address came as a result of a series of riots and social unrests in the aftermath of the Iranian presidential election in June 2013. The event marked the start of the "second cultural revolution" and is the last in a long chain of efforts by the Iranian theocratic regime to dominate education in its quest for the creation of "*homo-Islamicus*." Among other areas, this affected the human rights education in four abovementioned universities. The human rights Master's program was abolished in 2014, as a result of government's growing concern about the rapid increase of NGOs and political activists utilizing human rights discourse for their activities. The latest developments suggest that the Ministry of Science and Higher Education has come to agreement with the Justice Department to initiate a doctoral program in Islamic human rights in

**Table 4** Required and optional content of the curriculum for Master's degree in human rights in Iran

Required credits	Optional credits
Civil law and political rights	Women's rights
Philosophical foundations of human rights	Human rights and cultural diversity
Collective rights	Labor rights
Global human rights organizations	Justice and Legal leadership
Economic, social, and cultural rights	Sovereignty and rights of nations
Islamic perspective on human rights	Children's rights
Regional human rights organizations	Asylum rights
Education of human rights	Human rights and INGOs
International human rights in Iran	Minority rights
Legal texts in foreign languages	Freedom of expression, assembly, and organizations
Human rights violation and individual responsibility	
Thesis	

Source: Iranian Path (2011)

lieu of the former human rights program (IRIB 2016). The decision is made upon the premise that “the Islamic human rights is unique in the world in being attentive on human rights . . . Islamic human rights has the capacity to be promoted internationally. Iranian Islamic human rights should be introduced since Islam is unique in the extent of dignity and human rights (ICANA 2016).”

Education of democracy and human rights in Iran, hence, stands alone in a category of its own, in the sense that it has never targeted primary and secondary levels. At higher level, they are suspended at the moment and lie in wait for an ideologically enhanced version of Islamic democracy, to replace the Western-inspired education of democracy and human rights.

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## Conclusion

Since mass education began, the education of the citizenry has been a cornerstone of the national curricula. How this education is designed and targeted depends on what the government and the nation view as the role of individuals in society and is influenced by a multitude of factors such as religion and forms of government. This chapter has attempted to chart what that education looks like in Muslim contexts with a focus on democratic values with a brief comparison of the approaches in different countries.

What has been revealed is the potential diverse approaches to a universal principle, and the common challenges that countries around the global face with the why and the how of teaching democracy and human rights. Democracy and education in a Muslim educational setting has never been so exciting or so promising.

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# The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, *Ummah* Unity, and Children's Rights to Education

Sameena Eidoo

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## Abstract

Established in 1969 as a permanent forum to address political, economic, and social challenges facing Muslims in countries with large Muslim populations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations (UN), with 57 member states (also members of the UN) in Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. Although based on a state-centric system, the OIC's presence tests the limits of the global polity as a secular construction. The OIC seeks to build “Islamic solidarity” among member states by defining collective interests and encouraging cooperation towards those interests. Through Islamic Declarations/Conventions on the Rights of the Child, the OIC has attempted to provide an Islamic framework for children's rights and

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inspire unity among member states for the sake of children. This chapter presents a brief history and description of the OIC, an overview of Islamic approaches to children's rights and education, and a thematic content analysis of five Islamic Declarations/Conventions on the Rights of the Child, initiated by the OIC from the 1990s to the 2010s. The analysis focuses on articulations of children's rights to education and evolving conceptualizations of "education."

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**Keywords**

Children's rights · Education · Human rights · Islam · Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The largest generation of children and young people in history is preparing to enter adulthood in a rapidly changing world. More than one quarter of the world's two billion children live in the Muslim countries—members of the [Organization of Islamic Cooperation]—where they represent more than 40 per cent of the Muslim population (UNICEF 2005: ii).

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**Introduction**

September 21, 2005, marked the release of a landmark report at the United Nations (UN) in New York entitled *Investing in the Children of the Islamic World*. The report served as the background document to the First Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of the Child, convened by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (On 28 June 2011, the Organization of the Islamic Conference's name was changed to Organization of Islamic Cooperation to reflect its commitment to building "Islamic solidarity" (Pakistan Observer 2011).), its education arm, the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The document reviews the state of the children in OIC member states; assesses progress in areas of health, education, child protection, and HIV/AIDS; and calls for solidarity and cooperation among OIC member states for the sake of the children.

The historic conference took place in Rabat, Morocco, from 7 to 9 November 2005. The aims of the conference were: to provide an opportunity for Ministers to share their experiences and progress made on behalf of children in light of *A World Fit for Children Goals* (The 8–10 May 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children culminated in the official adoption by 180 nations of *A World Fit for Children*, which included 21 specific goals and targets, spanning four key priorities: promoting health lives; providing quality education for all; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.) (UN 2002) and *Millennium Development Goals* (As part of the strategy for implementing its *Millennium Declaration*, the United Nations General Assembly committed to achieving eight international development goals, *Millennium Development Goals*

(MDGs), by 2015: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development.) (UN 2000); to identify priority areas where progress has been slow and where there are opportunities for accelerated action; and to recommend actions to accelerate delivery on the commitments (UNICEF 2005). The conference brought together 57 OIC ministers, as well as experts to focus on issues specific to OIC member states in four major areas: health and HIV/AIDS; quality education and culture; protection against abuse, exploitation, and violence; and leveraging resources within and across the Muslim World (The terms “Muslim World” and “Islamic World” are used interchangeably, and broadly refer to countries with large, not necessarily majority, Muslim populations.) towards those international development goals. The meeting resulted in the formulation and adoption of the *Rabat Declaration on Child's Issues in Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference* (This chapter uses the original title of the *Rabat Declaration*, which was created prior to the OIC's 2011 name change.) (OIC 2005b).

The *Rabat Declaration* marks a notable change in expression and focus in relation to preceding Islamic statements on children's rights. This chapter considers such changes in a thematic analysis of the main Islamic statements on children's rights, particularly the right to education and provisions for access to education. A brief history and description of the OIC and an overview of Islamic approaches to human rights and education are followed by an exploration of evolving conceptualizations of “education” in the Islamic statements on children's rights.

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## The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and “*Ummah* Unity”

The OIC groups 57 Muslim states (Muslim states that uphold the principles of the OIC Charter are eligible for membership. However, the OIC Charter does not define “Muslim state” (Khan 2001). Any state that is a member of the UN and that has a large or majority Muslim population is eligible for membership, which is approved by consensus at the foreign ministerial level (ibid.), spanning four continents: Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. The OIC was established by the agreement of the leaders of the Muslim World at a summit called by the World Muslim Congress (*M'utamar al-' lam al-Islāmī*), established in 1926 (Khan 2001), which took place in Rabat, Morocco, on September 25, 1969, in response to the arson of al-Aqsā Mosque in Jerusalem. Ahsan (1988: 23) notes that these leaders were “aware of the popular desire in their countries for *ummah* unity,” and therefore, “decided to establish a permanent political institution where they could exchange views of Muslim interests” (ibid.).

The origins of post-Second World War era international organizations are attributed to three main ideas: to create a world economy, to promote security, and to protect human dignity and justice (Mundy 1998). While the OIC addresses related political, economic, and social issues, its ideological origins can be traced back to

the beginning of Islam (Ahsan 1988; Khan 2001, 2002; OIC 2011). The Islamic concept of *ummah* (transnational community of Muslims) has, in theory, drawn together the association of nation-states, which comprise the OIC (Ahsan 1988; Khan 2001, 2002). Baba (1994 as cited in Khan 2001: 11) has suggested that the OIC is the present-day version of the institution of Caliphate in the Muslim World,

Every idea is dynamic and shapes itself in relation to changing socio-political realities. Therefore, the same idea can have different places and at different times. This is true of the idea of Islamic unity and brotherhood enshrined in the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth* as well. This idea, even though an integral part of the socio-political philosophy of Islam and its historical ethos, has differently influenced the practical situation in the Muslim World in different historical phases. The most recent manifestation of the unifying thrust of Islam is the OIC.

For Sardar (1985: 51–52), the OIC has,

The ability to bring all the nations of the Muslim World, even those who have openly declared war on each other, under one roof, and to promote cooperation and communication between Muslim people that has not been possible in recent history. Moreover, it has potential of becoming a powerful institution capable of articulating Muslim anger and aspirations with clarity and force.

The OIC describes itself as “the collective voice of the Muslim World and ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim World in the interest of promoting international peace and harmony among various people in the world” (OIC 2011). Its presence challenges the notion of the global polity as a secular construction.

Like the UN, however, the OIC is based on a state-centric system, which has posed challenges for its realization of its main objectives: the promotion and the protection of the transnational Muslim community. The OIC Charter endorses the idea of national sovereignty and the Islamic concept of *ummah* as the basis for cooperation among member states. Ahsan (1988: 23) argues, “these dual bases i.e., the secular concept of nationalism and the Islamic concept of *ummah* pose a threat to the [OIC] itself.” Similarly, Husain (1995: 214) contends, “the OIC succeeds or fails in achieving its objectives according to the dictates of sovereign nation-states which are able on the surface to make common cause, but which all too often pursue national interests that are essentially irreconcilable with the interests of their neighbours and with the OIC.” For Khan (2001: 182), a glance at the governing principles of the OIC testifies to the significance of sovereignty of member states,

It is hardly debatable that Islam had never tried to destroy the social and political identities of the believers. All it purported to do, was to change the hierarchy of their personal loyalties where the *ummah* identity came to the top. This is precisely where the OIC has failed, that is, to change the hierarchy of each member state’s priorities. Hardly any Muslim country has made its interests subservient to the demands of the Muslim world solidarity.

In an argument that seems to parallel the need for Islamic solidarity to deal effectively with issues affecting the Muslim World, Mische (2001: 19) advocates

for the need for a global polity to deal with global issues by highlighting the limits of the UN's governing principles: "the UN, as a state-centric system required to uphold the principle of state sovereignty, has neither the mandate nor means to respond quickly and effectively to protect the sovereignty of peoples within countries fractured by internal warfare, gross violations of human rights, or ethnic cleansings and genocides." Conflict among OIC member states has often hindered the realization of the OIC's objectives. Problems of internal bloc politics – Arab versus non-Arab countries, high-income versus low-income countries, aligned countries versus non-aligned countries – must be overcome in order for the OIC to effectively address these issues (Khan 2001, 2002).

The OIC boasts a multitiered system with numerous secondary organs and institutions, including permanent missions at the UN General Assembly in New York City and Geneva, working towards the achievement of its objectives (Khan 2001; OIC 2015). These various subsidiary organs and institutions carry out the OIC's activities, particularly in the education sector. The OIC's working methods include international conferences and meetings, cooperation with regional organizations and the UN, scholarships, and publications.

The OIC 10-Year Plan of Action, *To Meet the Challenges Facing the Muslim Ummah in the 21st Century*, formulated at a conference of the leaders of OIC member states, reaffirms *ummah* unity, "practical steps towards strengthening the bonds of Islamic solidarity, achieve unity of ranks, and project the true image and noble values of Islam and its civilizational approaches" (OIC 2015). The Plan envisages joint action of member states, including extensive reforms in all spheres of activities, including (but not limited to): plurality of Islamic jurisprudence, combatting terrorism, combatting Islamophobia, human rights, Palestine and the Occupied Territories, conflict resolution and peace-building, OIC reform, and cultural and information exchange among member states. In the field of education, the OIC has the following objectives: to provide free and quality basic education for all children and to encourage the member states to sign and ratify the *Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam* (OIC 1994), the *Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam* (OIC 2005a), the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989) and its annexed optional protocols, and the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (UN 1979) and its optional protocols with regard to the Girl Child.

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## Islam and the Rights of the Child

Islam established "a charter for human rights" 14 centuries prior to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN 1948) (Mahmood-Abedin 2001). Mahmood-Abedin (ibid.: 294) explains difference between modern and Islamic conceptualizations of human rights, "in Islam, human rights are bestowed by God on humans and are inalienable as well as irrevocable. These rights are not obtained after a struggle: they are given as a birth right." Further, she acknowledges, "some of these rights are taken away by state and society in violation of the principle of justice and respect for

the rights of man as guaranteed by God, which forms the fundamental basis of true spirituality in Islam” (Mahmood-Abedin 2001: 294). OIC member states are implicated in human rights violations, including children’s rights violations within and beyond their borders (UNICEF 2005). Ramadan (2004: 149) contends, “to practice one’s religion is to participate in the social endeavour, and so there can be no religious consciousness without a social ethic.” From this perspective, Muslims are obligated to organize structurally the protection of all peoples’ rights (ibid.).

*Sharī‘ah* law encompasses a set of religious obligations as stated in the Qur’ān or as understood from the *sunnah* (sayings and deeds of Prophet Muḥammad) (see chapter ► “[Sharī‘ah and Education: A Brief Overview](#)” in this volume). *Sharī‘ah* regulates personal and public affairs. Contemporary debates on human rights focus on *Sharī‘ah* as contradictory to universal principles of human rights, particularly in relation to the rights of women and non-Muslim minorities, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender (Rajabi-Ardeshiri 2009). The prohibition of female infanticide by Islam in early Islamic society (570 C.E.) is regarded as “the landmark for the Islamic discourse on the Rights of the Child.” In condemning female infanticide as a “grave sin,” and, in effect, calling for the promotion and the protection of newborn female children, “Islam challenged the patriarchal social norms and values of the ancient Arab society” (ibid.: 478). Muslims are defined by related teachings in the Qur’ān, “. . . and do not kill your children for fear of poverty—[for] it is We who shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them” (VI:151). The Islamic approach to childhood contrasts with the universal discourse on children’s rights in the following ways: Islam specifically identifies children’s rights, parental, communal, and societal responsibilities for ensuring children’s well-being (ibid.; Mahmood-Abedin 2001), as well as children’s responsibilities towards their parents. As Mahmood-Abedin (2001: 296) explains, “Islam surely recognizes that ‘it takes a village to raise a child,’ especially in regard to matters of religious practice (from which the child is not exempt) and parental respect and obedience (for which the child is duly responsible).” Human rights work in Islamic contexts has focused primarily on women’s rights and rights to sexual and political freedom, but human rights work in Islamic contexts is beginning to expand focus to children’s rights and wellbeing (Rajabi-Ardeshiri 2009).

## Islam and Education

Islam’s first divine injunction was *iqra’* (read). The Qur’ān makes it clear that the pursuit of knowledge is incumbent upon all Muslims, that those who have knowledge are valued highly by God, but that knowledge must be exercised wisely. This Qur’ānic emphasis on knowledge raises critical questions about “what knowledge” and “ways of knowing” that are deemed valuable in Islam.

Halstead (2004) identifies three interconnected dimensions of Islamic education based on his examination of the Qur’ān, the *sunnah*, and related scholarship on philosophies of education in Islam: individual development, social and moral education, and acquisition of knowledge.

Islamic education for individual development involves growing Muslim children into “good adults,” which requires an understanding of the Islamic concept of the human being. From an Islamic perspective, the “goodness of human beings” entails,

Accepting the obligations of divine stewardship; seeking to take on the divine attributes such as *hikmah* (wisdom) and *‘adl* (justice) which have been clarified through divine revelation; striving for balanced growth of the integrated personality, made up the heart, the spirit, the intellect, the feelings and the bodily senses; developing their potential to become *insān kāmil* (the perfect human being); and, allowing the whole of their lives to be governed by Islamic principles, so that whatever they do, however, mundane, becomes an act of worship. (ibid.: 523)

Thus, the pursuit of knowledge may be understood as a form of worship, and religion must be at the heart of all education. Another aspect of Islamic epistemology is that the pursuit of knowledge should foster children’s moral and spiritual consciousness and guide them toward faith, right action, and certainty. A third aspect of Islamic epistemology is that nurturing children’s spiritual and moral awareness is a special responsibility, and therefore teachers’ personal lives, beliefs, character, and moral integrity are just as critical as their academic expertise.

In a discussion on the right to education, Ramadan (2004) foregrounds a teaching of Prophet Muḥammad: seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim. Ramadan (ibid.: 150) explains, “to be Muslim is clearly ‘to know’ and then right away, almost naturally, to make one’s way toward greater knowledge.” This teaching of Prophet Muḥammad refers to all fields of knowledge, divine, and worldly and makes imperative the provision of education and instruction. The provision of education and instruction is a social responsibility and is intimately connected to humanization processes. As Ramadan (ibid.) argues, “A society that produces illiteracy, whether absolute or functional, scorns the dignity of its members and is fundamentally inhuman.” According to Ramadan (ibid.), the first objective of Islamic education, “education of the heart,” enables Muslims to connect God consciousness and self-consciousness about their responsibilities to their bodies, families, communities, and wider society; the second objective, “education of the mind,” helps Muslims to understand the messages of the Qur’ān and *sunnah*, as well as to understand their socio-political contexts and ways of being Muslim in the context of their lived realities; the third objective, the “joining of the education of the heart with the education of the mind,” enables Muslims to becoming increasingly agentic in their worlds (ibid.: 129). Thus, in addition to knowledge of the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*, law, and jurisprudence, Ramadan (ibid.) contends that the content of Islamic education must also include: “an in-depth knowledge of the environment, adapted for different age groups: mastery of the language, familiarity with the history of the country, knowledge of the institutions, study of the culture, social dynamics, and the political landscape, and so on.” Ramadan (ibid.) seems to propose a framework for Islamic education that is situated in historical and contemporary socio-political contexts and that makes connections to people’s lived realities. Halstead’s (2004) and Ramadan’s (2004) conceptualizations of Islamic education inform this chapter’s analysis of conceptualizations of education in Islamic statements on children’s rights.



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## Islamic Statements on Children's Rights

The *Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam* (OIC 1994) represents the first independent Islamic statement on children's rights in a series of collective efforts, spanning the 1990s through to the 2010s, initiated by the OIC in the field of children's rights. This study employs a thematic analysis of the *Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam*, as well as subsequent Islamic statements on children's rights: the *Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam* (OIC 2005a), the *Rabat Declaration on Child's Issues in the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Conference* (OIC 2005b), the *Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Brighter Future for Our Children* (OIC 2009), and the *Tripoli Declaration: Accelerating Early Childhood Development in the Islamic World* (OIC 2011). The *Rabat Declaration* marks a notable change in expression and focus in relation to preceding Islamic statements on children's rights. The *Rabat Declaration*, the *Khartoum Declaration*, and the *Tripoli Declaration* represent the "second generation" of Islamic statements on children's rights. The analysis pays particular attention to education-related rights and provisions, and more specifically, how "education" is conceptualized in these Islamic statements on children's rights.

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### Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam

The *Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam* (OIC 1994), issued by the 7th Islamic Summit Conference in Casablanca, Morocco, in 1994, is the first independent document proclaiming children's rights in the Muslim World. The DRCCI (*Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam*) calls upon all member states to sign and ratify the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989) and to bring their constitutions, laws, and practices into conformity with its provisions by the end of 1995 (By 2005, all OIC member states had ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989), except Somalia (UNICEF 2005)). The DRCCI recognizes legacies of colonialism, including unequal distributions of wealth, and advances the notion of Islamic solidarity in its calls for "debt relief for developing countries for the sake of child survival and development." Thus, higher-income OIC member states are accorded responsibility toward lower-income OIC member states.

The DRCCI addresses the rights of the family, the fetus, and the infant; the right to lineage, guardianship, and social, health, psychological, and cultural care (The DRCCI defines the right of lineage and guardianship as patrilineal, privileges 'fathers' in child custody, and accords a primary role for men in the family structure.); and the right to ownership and education, and finally, it outlines the rights of children in "exceptional circumstances," such as children who have lost one or both parents, children with disabilities, children born to parents not recognized as lawfully married to each other, children living in conditions of war or natural disasters, refugee children, homeless children, street children, and stateless children.

Evident within the DRCCI are contradictions between secular and religious discourse on children's rights, including education rights. For example, in Article 8, the DRCCI states,

Islam has given every child, male or female, an equal right to at least a free basic schooling and to being educated and informed about the principles of Islam, including the Creed and *Sharī'ah*, besides providing the necessary means for developing his or her mental, psychological and physical capacities. While Islam guarantees Man's freedom to voluntarily adopt Islam without compulsion, it prohibits apostasy of a Muslim afterwards, in view of the fact that Islam is the Seal of Religions and, therefore, the Islamic society is committed to ensuring that the sons of Muslims preserve their Islamic nature and Creed and to protecting them against attempts to force them to relinquish their religion.

The DRCCI proclaims the right of children to free basic schooling within an Islamic framework. It does not distinguish between the education rights of Muslim and non-Muslim children. According to the OIC, the DRCCI was intended to “distinguish the *umma* from other peoples in the world” and to convey “a message to all other peoples regarding the attitude of Islam toward the child” (OIC 1994). The presence of discriminatory themes is evident in the DRCCI's conceptualization of education, in particular against women and girl children (through its privileging of men and boy children, their freedom, and their role in preserving Islam) and non-Muslims (through its focus on apostasy and Islamic education for all children). Regarding the principle of religious freedom for children, Article 14 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989) asserts, “state parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” The only restriction by this convention (UN 1989) in regards to religious freedom is explained in the same article: “freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” Although OIC member states have used such apostasy laws to suppress dissent, the legitimacy of apostasy laws is challenged by Qur'ānic teachings, such as, “there is no compulsion in religion” (Rajabi-Ardeshiri 2009).

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## Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam

The OIC adopted the *Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam* (OIC 2005a) at the 32nd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Sana'a, Republic of Yemen. The CRCI (*Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam*) begins by affirming “the civilizational and historic role of the Islamic *umma* and in contributing to the international efforts on human rights” (ibid.:1), and by acknowledging “the enormous responsibility towards the Child in particular as the vanguard and maker of the future of the *umma*” (ibid.). It draws attention to the plight of children across the Muslim World:

Children, as part of the vulnerable sector of society, bear the burden of the greater suffering as a result of natural and man-made disasters leading to tragic consequences, such as orphanage, homelessness, and exploitation of children in military, harsh, hazardous, or illegitimate labor, and considering also the suffering of refugee children and those living under the yoke of occupation or languishing or displaced as a result of armed conflicts and famines thus fostering the spread of violence among children and increasing the number of physically, mentally, and socially disabled children. (OIC 2005a: 2)

The CRCI calls for increased awareness within the *ummah* of the need for social change and mobilizes the notion of “Islamic solidarity” for the promotion and protection of children’s rights:

The first order of serious work is to gain a conscious insight into the accumulating and expected challenges facing the *ummah*, particularly the adverse effects of economic and social transformations, the waning role of the family, the weakening feeling of belonging, the breaking-down of family ties, the decline of values and ideals, the diminishing health and educational services, the growing illiteracy rate, as well as the effects of the accelerating advances in fields of knowledge and the information revolution in addition to the continuing persistence of negative and old-fashioned cultural models. . . .The *ummah* has sufficient capabilities and resources to ensure a victory over the hurdles facing it, building on the lofty religious and social values with the family enjoying pride of place on the basis of love and mercy as well as human and material resources which afford it a real opportunity for comprehensive and sustainable development. (ibid.: 2)

Like the DRCCI (OIC 1994), the CRCI calls for the sharing of “human and material resources” within and across member states for the health and wellbeing of children of the Muslim World. While the CRCI (OIC 2005a: 4) mobilizes the idea of “Islamic solidarity,” it also re-affirms member states’ sovereignty or “non-interference in the internal affairs of any State.”

The CRCI (OIC 2005a) addresses issues of equality, identity, family cohesion, education and culture, personal freedoms, freedom of assembly, upbringing, rest and activity times, social living standards, child health, children with disabilities and children with special needs, child protection, child labor, justice, parents’ responsibilities, and child refugees.

Towards the beginning of the CRCI, education is foregrounded as one of its main objectives, and it calls for the provision of “free, compulsory primary and secondary education for all children irrespective of gender, colour, nationality, religion, birth, or any other consideration, to develop education through enhancement of school curricula, training of teachers, and providing opportunities for vocational training” (ibid.: 3). In contrast to the DRCCI, the CRCI advances both elementary and secondary education, academic, or vocational and begins to articulate a more expanded and nuanced notion of difference and inclusion. As well, the CRCI emphasizes the importance of curriculum innovation and teacher development.

Article 12, under *Education and Culture*, is comprised of four subarticles. The first subarticle calls for the provision of free compulsory basic education “by learning the principles of Islamic education,” the means to develop their mental, psychological, and physical capacities, and that allows children to be “open to the common standards of

human culture” (OIC 2005a: 7). The DRCCI conceptualizes education as a means for preserving a particular kind of Islamic society. In contrast, the CRCI seems to expand the purpose of education to encourage children’s openness toward universalized norms and standards of human rights and cultural diversity.

The second subarticle calls for compulsory free primary and secondary education, care for children and youth with special needs, increasing access to higher education, increasing student retention in basic education, improving literacy education, and creating teaching and learning resources and spaces, including children’s libraries. This subarticle includes a statement on children’s clothing, particularly the right to wear clothing “compatible with her beliefs, while complying with Islamic *Sharī‘ah*, public etiquette, and modesty” (OIC 2005a: 7). This statement uses the feminine possessive pronoun (in a series of Islamic statements on children’s rights speaking primarily to “sons of Muslims”). This subarticle may be interpreted in different ways: girls may exercise personal and bodily autonomy in their choice of dress or girls may be required to conform to dominant and patriarchal interpretations of *Sharī‘ah*, public etiquette, and modesty that govern the society in which they live. Bodies of women and girls have been the sites through which nationalism or cultural preservation has been contested (Abu-Lughod 2002).

The third subarticle stipulates that children approaching puberty are entitled to “proper sex education distinguishing between the lawful and unlawful” (OIC 2005a: 7). Through this subarticle, the CRCI acknowledges that children need to learn about issues relating to human sexuality. However, the CRCI does not describe the curriculum of “proper sex education.” The final subarticle proclaims,

The provisions of this Article [Article 12] and Article 11 . . . shall not be in conflict with the freedom of the Muslim child to join private educational institutions, provided that such institutions respect the provisions of the Islamic *sharī‘ah* and that the education given in such institutions observe the rules laid down by the State” (ibid.).

The CRCI seems to recognize children as agentic, with the right to express themselves freely in all matters affecting them (ibid.: 6), including their education. The above subarticle establishes children’s right to choose between public and private educational institutions. It references the preceding article under the section, *Upbringing*, which outlines the objectives of children’s upbringing and related educational issues:

To develop the personality, religious and moral value, and sense of citizenship and Islamic and human solidarity of the child and to instil in him/her a spirit of understanding, dialogue, tolerance, and friendship among people,” and “to encourage the child to acquire skills and capabilities to face new situations and overcome negative customs, and to grow up grounded in scientific and objective reasoning” (ibid.: 6–7).

These objectives outline new possibilities for education, calling for teaching religious and moral values, a sense of responsibility toward the well-being of others, a willingness to engage with and across difference, as well as fostering children’s capabilities for resilience in changing circumstances and for critical thinking.

## Rabat Declaration: Child's Issues in the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Conference

The preamble of the *Rabat Declaration* establishes its Islamic framework: member states are “guided by the teachings of Islam which stress the need for taking due care of children and granting them full rights” (OIC 2005b: 1), such as, “the key principle enshrined in *shari‘ah*, the canonical law of Islam, that all children . . . have the right to live and thrive to reach their full potential” (ibid.). Article 1 calls upon all member states “to respect and ensure the rights of each child in our societies without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion or social status” (ibid.: 2). Article 3 calls upon member states “to enhance our common Islamic heritage to increase the awareness of the Muslim youth of the values of Islam, and instil into them a sense of pride in the achievements of the glorious Islamic civilization; and to contribute to more understanding and tolerance among peoples and religions” (ibid.). The *Rabat Declaration* establishes member states’ responsibilities to respect children’s rights, as well as to raise awareness about Islam, particularly through an Islamic education that encompasses divine and worldly knowledge and that promotes young Muslims’ capabilities for coexistence with minoritized peoples.

In relation to previous Islamic statements on children’s rights, the *Rabat Declaration* is remarkable in scope, defining priorities for member states in the areas of health; HIV/AIDS, child protection against violence, exploitation, and abuse; and education and investing in children. As Rajabi-Ardeshiri (2009: 486) notes, “In contrast to the previous Islamic declarations/conventions on children’s rights, which mainly consisted of traditional religious rhetoric on children’s rights, the *Rabat Declaration* is significantly concerned with providing practical solutions towards contemporary dilemmas in the life of Muslim children.”

Following education-related priorities set out in the *Investing in Children of the Islamic World Report* (UNICEF 2005), the *Rabat Declaration* (OIC 2005b: 5) addresses three main educational issues: access to primary education, gender parity in education, and mobilizing resources for quality education. It begins to align with international development goals (e.g., UN 2000, 2002). Article 15 calls upon OIC member states to “double their efforts to raise the quality of primary education and make it available, free and compulsory to all, to progressively work towards making secondary, higher and vocational education and technical training generally available and accessible to all, and to care for the gifted and talented” (OIC 2005b: 5). The *Rabat Declaration* seeks to expand access to education for different purposes, academic and vocational-technical, and to meet the educational needs of students with exceptionalities.

Article 16 requests that OIC member states “reaffirm the commitment to achieve gender equality in education by 2015 . . . with a focus on ensuring girls’ permanent and equal access to full basic education of good quality” (ibid.). This emphasis on gender equality in education aligns with articles (Articles 10, 12, and 13 under the section, *Child Protection Against Violence, Exploitation and Abuse*, propose the elimination of all forms of discrimination against girls and all harmful traditional

practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation; underscore the need for legislative and administrative measures to devise suitable programs to prevent and end violence against women and girls committed in the name of “honour”; and outline special care for women and children during armed conflict, including effective humanitarian assistance that includes access to education (OIC 2005b: 4.) specific to gender-based discrimination and violence in the *Rabat Declaration*. Article 17 calls upon member states to create “child-friendly” learning environments – in which children “feel safe and are protected from abuse, violence and discrimination and encouraged to learn” (ibid.) – and to create educational programs and materials that promote and protect human rights and values of “peace, tolerance, dialogue, and gender equality” (ibid.). The *Rabat Declaration* acknowledges that children may be vulnerable to abuse, violence, and discrimination within existing learning environments and that abuse, violence, and discrimination have no place in learning environments. Further, the *Rabat Declaration* expands the purpose of education to support teaching and learning how to build rights-respecting societies. More broadly, this statement on children’s rights recognizes educational institutions, programs, and materials as integral to redressing issues of health and HIV/AIDS (Article 7 calls upon educational institutions to help “break the silence on the HIV and AIDS epidemic” and “ensure an effective prevention of infections through education and information” (OIC 2005b: 3).). The *Rabat Declaration* conceptualizes education as a practical approach to solving complex problems limiting children’s possibilities for living and thriving to reach their full potential in the contemporary Muslim World.

### **Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Brighter Future for Our Children**

The Second Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood took place in Khartoum, Sudan, from 2 to 3 February 2009. The conference led to the articulation of the *Khartoum Declaration Towards a Brighter Future for our Children*. Following the *Rabat Declaration*, the *Khartoum Declaration* addresses the importance of investing in children: “without adequate investment in children we cannot hope to improve their well-being, advance sustained human development for future generations, and expect the countries of the Islamic world to occupy their rightful place as global leaders” (OIC 2009: 2). It acknowledges that progress toward international development goals still fall short of expectations.

Like the *Rabat Declaration*, the *Khartoum Declaration* is informed by an Islamic framework. In the first set of articles (1 to 12), the latter declaration underscores preserving and enhancing Islamic cultures and values through Islamic education for Muslim children and adolescents, as well as building Muslim children and adolescents’ capabilities for coexisting with diverse peoples; publicizing Islamic values with regard to family, women, and children through mass media and public education campaigns; promoting Islamic solidarity on child’s issues; and integrating commitments to and respect for universal human rights with Islamic values. Also, the *Khartoum Declaration* calls upon member states to adhere to the general

principles of child rights, including nondiscrimination, participation, survival, and development, as well as to reaffirm children's rights "to enjoy all liberties without discrimination based on colour, sex, language or religion" (ibid.: 1). Like the *Rabat Declaration*, the *Khartoum Declaration* condemns discrimination against minoritized peoples within member states.

The *Khartoum Declaration* defines the following issues for advancing children's rights in the Muslim World: child health, education, child protection, and globalization. Articles 18 through to 23 specify educational provisions, such as the right to education; making primary education free and accessible to all; working toward making secondary, higher education and vocational education and technical training available and accessible to all; achieving gender equality in education; creating rights-respecting educational environments, programs, and materials; and laying the groundwork for early childhood education, particularly in remote areas.

In contrast to the *Rabat Declaration*, the *Khartoum Declaration* places an emphasis on aesthetic education. Article 18 proclaims education "a fundamental right," reiterates commitments to provide free and compulsory education, as well as learning environments "for entertainment and artistic activities to all children without discrimination" (ibid.: 4). Article 19 emphasizes children's right to "high-quality education, entertainment, and recreational activities" that are "conducive to unleashing their aptitudes, instilling into them the values of virtue, fairness and beauty, as well as enabling them to interact with others, acquire life skills, and be aware of their identity and their civilizational *raison d'être*" (ibid.: 4). Articles 18 and 19 suggest that education should encourage children's imaginative thinking and creative expression, create opportunities for structured and unstructured learning and play, and encourage social interaction and mutual learning among children.

Another aspect of the *Khartoum Declaration's* statements on education that distinguishes it from the *Rabat Declaration* is its focus on early childhood education. Article 23 calls upon member states to "ensure adequate educational services for early childhood stage, particularly in remote areas . . ." (ibid.: 5). The *Khartoum Declaration* thereby begins to set the agenda for the Third Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood.

The *Khartoum Declaration* recognizes the role of public education in redressing issues of child health, child protection, and globalization. Its focus on globalization is unique among Islamic statements on children's rights. For example, Article 33 calls upon member states to "develop strategies and action plans to address the social, political, environmental and cultural implications of globalization," and to "protect children from its adverse effects to enable them to preserve their cultural and civilizational identity and enhance their contribution to the development of their own societies" (ibid.: 6). The *Khartoum Declaration* seems to suggest that transcultural flows (movements, changes, and reuses of cultural forms within and across national borders) may threaten cultural and "civilizational" identities. Article 34 affirms the importance of facilitating children's access to information and communication technologies to develop their knowledge and enhance their "creative skills and activate their contribution to scientific, cultural, literary, artistic areas" (ibid.). The

*Khartoum Declaration* identifies particular multidisciplinary skills set necessary for building children's capacities for managing change in a globalizing world.

## **Tripoli Declaration: Accelerating Early Childhood Development in the Islamic World**

The Third Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood took place in Tripoli, Lebanon from 10 to 11 February 2011. The Conference culminated in the formulation of the *Tripoli Declaration on Accelerating Early Childhood Development in the Islamic World* (OIC 2011). The *Tripoli Declaration* states:

Early Childhood Development in the Islamic world requires establishing a comprehensive child-centred framework of adequate binding laws upheld by mechanisms and measures to ensure their enforcement, follow-up and assessment, together with the necessary programmes, services and budgets to secure a wide access to a continuum of social services, health care and basic education for children in early childhood. (OIC 2011: 1)

Like the *Rabat Declaration* and the *Khartoum Declaration*, the *Tripoli Declaration* is guided by Islamic teachings urging “due care of children and granting them full rights and require that all children, girls and boys alike, have the right to live in dignity and thrive to reach their full potential” (ibid.).

The first set of articles expands on the above passage by laying down strategic directions for accelerating early childhood development at the national policy level in member states. The remainder defines pathways for accelerating early childhood development in the Muslim World: health care and nutrition, preschool education, community support and parenting programs, and child protection in emergencies. The *Tripoli Declaration* lays down strategies for financing early childhood development programs through Islamic solidarity and international cooperation and for raising awareness through media and civil society sectors about the benefits and importance of early childhood development in the Muslim World. Like preceding Islamic statements on children's rights, the *Tripoli Declaration* concludes by establishing mechanisms for coordination and follow-up.

Articles 8 through to 13 outline provisions for early childhood education. The first part of Article 8 calls upon member states to commit to “scaling up access to pre-school education for all children, boys and girls; especially children of vulnerable families and communities in urban and rural areas, including children with special needs” (ibid.: 3). This first part of the Article reflects a more nuanced understanding of difference among children and draws attention to reaching some of the most vulnerable through education. The second part of Article 8 calls upon member states to “take urgent and effective measures to ensure such equal access for refugee and displaced children, as well as for children under Israeli occupation areas” (ibid.). The *Tripoli Declaration* makes explicit a commitment to promoting and protecting Palestinian children's right to education under Israeli occupation. One axis of Islamic solidarity and cooperation, as outlined in the OIC Charter, is the protection of Palestinians and the liberation of Palestine. As a “stateless” people,



Palestinians lack protections conferred by the national government to its “official” citizens. Palestine refugees are “people whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict” (UNRWA 2015; see also UNICEF 2015). Further, “nearly one third of registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million, live in 58 recognized refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem” (ibid.); and “the other two-thirds of refugees live in an around the cities and towns of the host countries, and in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip” (ibid). The majority of the Palestinian refugee population in Occupied Palestine is comprised of children.

Articles 9, 10, and 11 define preschool education and children’s success as a joint responsibility of parents and caregivers, teachers, and administrators and educational institutions. These articles support collaboration between preschool and primary-school educators to make congruent children’s experiences of preschool and primary school and thereby to ease transition, to curb grade repetition, and to reduce dropout in the first grade.

Recalling the *Khartoum Declaration*, Article 12 of the *Tripoli Declaration* focuses on aesthetic education in its emphasis on the right of children to “educational and recreational activities conducive to unleashing their creative potential, instilling into them the values of virtue, right and beauty, as well as enabling them to interact with others and acquire life skills” (OIC 2011: 4).

Articles 13 through to 17 address the role of community support and improving parenting programs in accelerating early childhood development in the Muslim World. Article 13 recognizes the role of women in children’s education and therefore stresses “the need to legally, economically, socially and politically empower women in Member States’ societies” (OIC 2011: 4). Article 13 recognizes parents and caregivers as educators and calls upon member states to “devise support programmes to help parents, families and institutions of early childhood social care to provide children with the very best stimulating environment that promotes the fullest growth and development of children physically, emotionally and intellectually, based on Islamic teachings” (ibid.). Article 14 calls for public education and counselling on “the need to abandon harmful child-rearing practices and customs such as the preference for the male child” (ibid.), and Article 15 for the adoption of legislation and advocacy to “discourage the violent disciplining of children at home and in institutions of health and educational care” (ibid.). Article 16 calls for educational activities and programs for children of most vulnerable and marginalized families; Article 17 attempts to draw attention to challenges facing children in adolescence and promotes intergenerational dialogue within families to readdress some of these challenges.

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## Discussion and Conclusions

The DRCCI (OIC 1994) and the CRCI (OIC 2005a) are among the first in a series of collective efforts (spanning the 1990s through to the 2000s) initiated by OIC member states, following the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*

(UN 1989). All subsequent independent Islamic statements on children's rights build on the DRCCI the CRCI, as well as international statements on children's rights and internationally established development goals. The *Rabat Declaration* (OIC 2005b), *Khartoum Declaration* (OIC 2009), and *Tripoli Declaration* (OIC 2011) reaffirm commitments to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Millennium Development Goals* (UN 2000) and *A World Fit for Children* (UN 2002).

The DRCCI and the CRCI amplify religious rhetoric of Islam's commitment to children's rights. These three advance specific interpretations of Islamic ways of knowing and being, as well as a more universalized understanding of children's rights. The *Rabat Declaration*, *Khartoum Declaration*, and *Tripoli Declaration* underscore preserving and enhancing Islamic cultures and values through Islamic education for Muslim children and adolescents, as well as building Muslim children and adolescents' capabilities for coexisting with diverse peoples; publicizing Islamic values with regard to family, women, and children through mass media and public education campaigns; promoting Islamic solidarity on child's issues; and integrating commitments to and respect for universal human rights with Islamic values. These three declarations (OIC 2005b, 2009, 2011) include explicit statements on non-discrimination, participation, survival, and development for all children, irrespective of difference. In addition, they address a range of issues impacting children's survival and well-being in the contemporary Muslim World, including child protection against violence, exploitation, and abuse; child protection in emergencies; education; health care and nutrition; HIV/AIDS; globalization; community support and parenting programs; and investing in children.

An examination of the aforementioned Islamic statements on children's rights reveals evolving and expanding conceptualizations of education. From an Islamic perspective, the pursuit of knowledge is required of all Muslims, and the provision of education is a social responsibility (Halstead 2004; Ramadan 2004; UNICEF 2005). Halstead (2004) and Ramadan (2004) further explain that Islamic education should centralize "revealed" knowledge; raise awareness of one's social environment and one's responsibility towards self and society; raise moral and spiritual consciousness; and guide one toward faith and right action.

The DRCCI and the CRCI each includes one article specific to education. The DRCCI accords all children with free access to basic schooling and conceptualizes education as a means to support individual development of children, to inform children about Islam, and to define the individual and collective responsibilities of young Muslims, particularly the "sons of Muslims" in preserving an Islamic society. It alludes to influences that might lead young Muslims away from Islam, but does not articulate how education might assist young people in navigating everyday life in the contemporary Muslim World. Discriminatory themes persist in the DRCCI. The CRCI includes one article with four subarticles specific to education. It sets out educational provisions, such as increasing access to primary, secondary, and post-secondary education; accommodating children with special needs and exceptionalities; improving retention; creating teaching and learning centers and resources, including children's books and libraries; providing access to "proper sex education"

for children reaching puberty; and respecting children's rights to wear clothing compatible with their beliefs and *sharī'ah*. The latter educational provision focuses on girls' bodies – the sites through which nationalism or cultural preservation have been contested. The CRCI begins to conceptualize an education that recognizes different learning needs among children and supports teaching and learning God-consciousness and self-consciousness (based on particular interpretations of the Qur'ān and *sunnah*) and language and literacy learning. In addition, the CRCI connects provisions under *Education and Culture* to provisions on *upbringing*, which provides insight into an understanding of education as a means to support teaching and learning of religious and moral values, citizenship, Islamic solidarity, dialogue, and tolerance.

The *Rabat Declaration*, *Khartoum Declaration*, and *Tripoli Declaration* offer a more expansive conceptualization of education than preceding Islamic statements on children's rights. These three proclaim the rights of all children living in the Muslim World to have permanent access to quality free elementary, secondary, vocational, and higher education and to learn in “child-friendly” learning environments in which they are protected from all forms of abuse and discrimination; to experience curriculum and pedagogy that encourages imaginative thinking and creative expression, creates opportunities for structured and unstructured learning and play, encourages social interaction and mutual learning among children, instills a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others, a willingness to engage with and across difference, an ability to manage change, and promotes human rights and values of peace, tolerance, dialogue, and gender equality. In addition, these Islamic statements on children's rights articulate the importance of public education for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and child protection and in fostering resilience in children in a globalizing world. These three centralize the urgent need for member states to provide children and families with access to education they require to navigate risks to survival and wellbeing in the contemporary Muslim World. In contrast to the DRCCI and the CRCI, these Islamic statements on children's rights present distinctly universalized conceptualizations of education that align more closely with internationally established standards and goals. At the same time, however, the *Rabat Declaration*, *Khartoum Declaration*, and *Tripoli Declaration* develop critical aspects of Islamic education, as outlined by Halstead (2004) and Ramadan (2004), such as Islamic education as a means to raise children's awareness about the societies in which they live and to guide children towards right social and moral action within their societies.

The Islamic statements on children's rights underscore the importance of international and national strategies for promoting and protecting children's rights in the Muslim World. The three declarations ask member states to ensure national legislation, policies, and practices align with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989) and its optional protocols. Ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989) and related legislative amendments by member states is critical for protecting children.

The *Rabat Declaration*, *Khartoum Declaration* and *Tripoli Declaration* call for member states, the international community, civil society, and philanthropic

organizations to work collaboratively to eradicate poverty in member states for children's sake. The *Investing in Children of the Islamic World Report* (UNICEF 2005: 29) states,

The responsibility of industrialized countries to provide agreed-upon levels of official development assistance must be constantly re-emphasized. But there is also a pressing need for solidarity within and between the nations of the OIC, in light of their extraordinary diversity of wealth and resources . . . Some countries have indeed benefited from resource transfers from within the OIC group of countries, but such transfers remain modest in comparison with both the magnitude of needs and the potential of for enhanced aid levels. Furthermore, the bulk of this aid has not been directed to basic social services and to children's needs.

The *Rabat Declaration* names systematic barriers that have hindered some OIC member states' achievement of international development goals: "the current trends suggest that many low-income countries, including those which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation, will not reach these internationally agree-on development goals unless urgent action is taken." (OIC 2005b: 2). The *Rabat Declaration* accords higher-income member states with responsibility toward lower-income member states. The *Khartoum Declaration* calls upon member states to strengthen their solidarity and cooperation on children's issues. The *Tripoli Declaration* sets out a series of articles specific to Islamic solidarity, particularly in relation to financing for early childhood development programs.

Reallocating and redistributing resources within and across OIC member states is regarded as necessary for protecting children's rights. However, the Muslim World remains fractured by warfare and gross violations of human rights. For instance, as of 2015, more than half of the nearly four million registered Syrian refugees are children (UNHCR 2015c); an estimated 350,000 Somali refugees, mostly women and children, living in Dadaab Refugee Camps in Kenya are facing displacement again as Kenya demands closure of camps (UNHCR 2015a) and at least 74 of the estimated 540 casualties of the Saudi Arabia-led strikes in Yemen are believed to be children (UN 2015; UN News Centre 2015). Children are extremely vulnerable in such unstable contexts, and their access to education becomes increasingly precarious and limited. The *Rabat Declaration*, *Khartoum Declaration*, and *Tripoli Declaration* offer glimpses into possibilities for a different kind of a Muslim World, where Islamic solidarity and cooperation for the sake of children is prioritized.

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# Islam, Globalizations, and Education

Holger Daun and Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

There are different types of globalization, and hence this chapter uses the plural form of the term. Two principal types of globalization relevant to this chapter are Islamic globalization and Western globalization each with its variety of forces. The Islamic globalization includes features such as the extension of *ummah*, and the spread of Islamic messages via ICT and migration. The Western globalization

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carries various forces such as market principles and neo-liberalism, human rights, and universal educational models.

Today, Muslims are in a majority or form important minorities of the population in some forty countries; conversion to Islam takes place in many places in the world. In fact, Islam and certain branches within Protestantism have been the most expansive – in terms of new adherents – during the past two decades. At least nonformal Islamic educational institutions exist practically everywhere on the globe. Where minorities of Muslims have settled as immigrants, there also tends to be Qur'ānic educational activities.

Among Muslims, there are different views of what globalizations are, and one may distinguish the followings: (a) Islam as threatened by globalization; (b) Islam as marginalized from globalization; (c) Islam itself as a globalizing force; and (d) Islam as a potential globalizing force. Muslim educational perspectives tend to correspond to one or several of these four views.

From the Western perspective, globalization has resulted in intensive encounters between and mutual penetration of world religions, such as Islam and Christianity, that more than ever before compete and challenge one another. The relativization implicit in or resulting from globalization threatens the Muslim way of life and makes Muslims defend their values and belief systems.

Educational world models are propagated by international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, and others and tend to make it necessary for Islamic educational arrangements to adapt or go through revitalization.

This chapter makes an overview of the different globalizing forces as a context to the changes that take place in Western type as well as Islamic education.

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**Keywords**

Globalization · Islamic education · Islam · Education reforms · Muslims

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## Introduction

In a similar vein as many other social, religious, and cultural phenomena, Islam and its educational practices, institutions, and the manner of organizing them need to be studied in a global context. The world system and globalization processes challenge Islam and its educational institutions in different ways, while at the same time, Islam itself – as a world religion – is also a globalizing force (Beeley 1992; Berger 1999; Center for dialogue n.d.; Haynes 1999). Therefore, one needs to deal with globalizations in plural. Education for children and youth, both secular and religious, has been globalized (Daun 2006; Spring 2009). During the past decades, Islam has been extended to new areas and it has been the most expansive religion in terms of new adherents, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Asia, and Latin America (An-Náim 1999; Berger 1999; Martin 1999). In most contemporary Muslim societies, globalization has produced uneven and differentiated effects (Najjar 2006). Increased human mobility and global connectedness have resulted in greater contact



between Muslims of different orientations and has created significant Muslim communities in the West (Mandaville 2013).

As a world religion, Islam is thus itself a globalizing force. Nowadays, world religions are not bound to territories but are able to take advantage of the virtual sphere and developments within Information and Communication Technology (ICT). As Roy and Myers (2006) argue, “religions which are now effective are in fact disconnected from traditional cultures.” This fact does not make it necessary for “members” of communities to share territory, and these features undermine the reality and idea of traditional community. As missionary world religions preaching universality, Islam and Christianity are spreading globally (Al-Nabulsi 2008). The expansion of Islam takes place through conversion related to Islamic *daʿwah* (proselytism and the call to Islamic belief and practice), which is conveyed via virtual outlets or contacts with migrants in person or their respective transnational communities. Hence, conversion due to virtual *daʿwah* and influences via the Internet is spreading rapidly in many places in the world. De-territorialization of ethnicity, nationality, and cultures and formation of new imagined communities is taking place more than ever (Anderson 1991; BBC 2006; van Bruissen 1995; Haynes 1996; Offe 1996).

In relative terms, the proportion of migrants (of the world’s population) is not larger than before, but in absolute terms, the number of migrants has grown rapidly during the past decades. Substantial numbers of Muslims have migrated from predominantly Muslim countries to Europe, the Americas, and Oceania. This means that Islam might be articulated in ways different from those found in the geographical areas of Islam’s origin, due to glocalization and hybridization (Nederven Pieterse 1995; Robertson 1995).

Those who adhere to *sharīʿah* (see chapter ► [“Sharīʿah and Education: A Brief Overview”](#)) see themselves as belonging to the Muslim community -*ummah*- and whereas the *ummah* at the same time as developing virtually also is spreading geographically (Beeley 1992; Haynes 1999; Turner 1991). While some Muslims are trying to give a territorial dimension to their community of faith, they are not interested in establishing an Islamic state. Despite this, the scope or extension of *ummah* are not possible to demarcate. *Ummah* could be seen as a symbolic or imagined community with which believers identify a transnational one, or even a virtual or digital one, on the cyberspace. Furthermore, according to Roy (2004), “trends are likely to move more and more towards an Islamization of individuals within the context of a global, de-territorialized *ummah* (Religioscope 2004).”

This chapter makes an overview of Islam as a globalizing force and reviews some Western perspectives of world system and globalization and how Islam is seen as both a globalizing force and itself affected by the worlds systems and globalizing forces.

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## Muslim Interactions with the Globalizations

In the modern era, the first interaction of Muslims with globalization was perhaps through trade and colonialism. European colonial presence in the Muslim World had a dramatic impact on the Muslim society. Berkey (2012) argues that, colonialism

provided Muslim intellectuals and enlightened rulers with the grounds for educational reform in their attempt to raise the standards and widen the scope of learning. In the Arab world, the intellectual reform movement of *al-Nihdah* (the Awakening) made important steps in reconciling traditional and modern (Western) areas of knowledge in a spirit of openness while retaining the values of Islam and a Muslim identity. In Egypt Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) called for the reformulation of Islamic doctrine in the light of modern thought, while Qāsim Amīn (d. 1908) campaigned for the liberation of women. Educational reforms were carried out by Muḥammad Bāyṛām (d. 1889) in Tunisia, the Alūsī family in Iraq, and by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ben Bādīs (d. 1940) in Algeria. In Turkey, Atatürk (d. 1938), founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, implemented the idea of secular nationhood in an Islamic country and secularized the country’s education system.

How Muslims perceive and interact with globalization has to do with their religious, cultural, social, and political orientations (see Chapter ► [“Muslim Orientations and Views on Education”](#)), and it is possible to distinguish four directions: secularism, traditionalism, fundamentalism, and modernism. The categories of orientations and their labels are made as so-called “ideal type”, a sort of hypothetical Gedankenbilder, which is made to facilitate studying them. They are formed as Weber (1949: 90) puts it, “by the one-sided accentuation of points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct.”: These orientations integrate locales (national, subnational, and otherwise) into transnational networks of solidarity and mobilization that can create new bonds or confirm old divides, as between Sunnīs and Shī‘īs (Arjomand 2004). It therefore resonates with a historic Islamic approach privileging ties in a global scale. These orientations seem to a large extent to correlate with the views on globalization.

## Secularism

Contentions on the notion of secularism among the Muslims exacerbated ambiguity of the concept. Generally, secularism is often understood to mean the institutional separation between religion and state as per the historical developments in the division of the church and state in the West.

Despite the varieties, as a result of disagreements on the meaning, scope, and inclusion of the term, which have formed different categories of secularists, all have certain denominators in common. They perceive religion as a private matter, separated from the public, “but within an individualistic space and context” (Sadaalah 2004: 40). The secularists also argue for the individual’s own interpretation of the text, and that law is man-made although *sharī‘ah* is its foundation. In regard to education, the secularists see modern schooling and secular education as important. According to Chandan (2007), [institutionalized] secularism stayed for a short time in the Arab world,

... it became the dominant political current for a few decades in the latter half of the twentieth century, and today is seeing a near complete collapse in the political movements struggling for independence and development in the region. ... It was the cultural and political influences from outside the region, in Europe, that influenced modern secular Arab nationalism.

Ameli (2002) distinguishes between two types of secularization: “objective secularization,” whereby religion is segregated from law, education, and the political system, and “subjective secularization,” which implies that religion is segregated from mind. It is a change from religion to non-religion. In such respect, secularism has been defined as the process whose aim is to expose the growing irrelevance of religious traditions in the face of rationality and the scientific method. Lauzière (2013: 489) notes that, while this understanding of secularism entails “the reduction of religion’s role and importance within society, it often assumes that religious beliefs and practices will recede as well. For this reason, it has been a source of great concern among a wide range of Muslims and has sometimes been dubbed “irreligiousness (*al-lā dīnīyyah*)”.

Some scholars use secularism to refer to the modern sociological phenomenon whereby traditional religious beliefs, practices, and identities are reconstructed and individualized. This can lead to the idea that religious belief has become an option rather than a given, which provides a space to interpret, practice, and believe in parts of religion while evading others.

While secularism is often criticized by many Muslims as a borrowing from the West, which does not fit the Islamic context partially due to the absence of institution of church among Muslims, the new generation of Muslim scholars suggests an emic perspective to secularism.

Defending the validity and the necessity of institutional secularism, Soroush (2002: 123–126) argues that political norms and institutions should be open to rational evaluation and removed from the realm of the sacred to prevent rulers from turning their understanding of politics into religious dogma. A similar desire to free Islam from the grip of political arbitrariness can be found in the work of the An-Na'im (2008: 288–289), who maintains that the coercive enforcement of religion contradicts the nature of Islam. Hence, the establishment of an institutionalized secularism (a secular state combined with the use of civic reason and the promotion of autonomous religious spaces) constitutes the best means to guarantee an Islamic way of life (Lauzière 2013).

## Traditionalism

Traditionalism or *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* (*lit.* the partisans of traditions) in Islam manifested itself first in the re-emergence of the old Arabian concept of *sunnah*, the normative custom of the community, which in due course came to be identified with the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, deeds, sayings, silent permissions (or disapprovals) of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Traditionalists claimed the formal traditions from the Prophet and assumed the responsibility for putting into circulation many traditions which purported to go back to the Prophet, and they specialized in collecting, perfecting, transmitting, and studying them; long journeys were made in search of traditions. Schacht (1967) argues that, though hardly any of this material, as far as religious law is concerned, can be regarded as authentic by the standards of historical research, the Muslims, from the ninth century onwards, have accepted its essential parts as genuine. However, through methodological approaches such as *isnād* and *tawātur*, the majority of traditionalists, attempted to discriminate between reliable and unreliable traditions. As a result, as early as the eighth century, the study of traditions from the Prophet became an end in itself, and the science of traditions, no longer opposed but complementary to the science of religious law (*fiqh*), became an important and assiduously cultivated branch of Islamic religious scholarship.

The orthodoxy over the centrality of *ḥadīth* in forming an Islamic lifestyle has created new categories, which are termed as “traditionalist,” “conservative,” “fundamentalist,” and “orthodox” and often used interchangeably. Some scholars, however, make distinctions between those categories. In the present case, traditionalists are those who adhere to the traditional Islamic heritage – be it traditional legal schools of thought (*madhabs*) or traditional way of life. They are reluctant to accept any changes in Islam. For them, true Islam is the one built through tradition (*ḥadīth*). Society should, therefore, be arranged according to this worldview. Other traditionalists are recognized through their rejection of the modern life style (including consumerism). In many places, Muslim groups have resisted the extreme forms of capitalism and consumerism (Coulon 1983; Lubeck 1985). Traditionalism may also refer to the “mystical side of Islam” (Sufism). It implies to a large extent withdrawal from the present mundane world (International Crisis Group 2005: 6).

According to traditionalism, Islamic history and interpretation are limited to the four main historical themes. The sources of order in society stem from the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah*, and the *sharī’ah* as maintained by early interpretation of the four *madhāhib*. Law is God’s Law or the *sharī’ah*, and new or inovative interpretation (*bud’ah*) is not allowed. Modernization and modern society and development are apart from the religious traditional worldview. Prior to the formation of modern western-style schools, education was dominated and steered by the ‘*ulamā*’ for more than a millennium, where core curriculum of the Qur’ānic education was composed of four pillars (Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, *sharī’ah*, and Arabic grammar). This education became focused on Islam as a religion. By the emergence of a strong state-sponsored formal education, Qur’ānic educational institutions were marginalized and survived as an alternative and parallel nonformal educational arrangement. Contemporary traditionalism argues for the separation between religious and modern education.

## Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism refers to contemporary religiopolitical movements that aim to establish the primacy of scriptural authority as a defense against the moral, political,

and social decay that supposedly defines the modern world. According to Euben (1999: 180–181), given this politics of terminology that there was no equivalent for fundamentalism in Arabic, until the need to approximate the English term called for one. *Uṣūliyyah*, derived from the word for fundamentals or roots (*uṣūlī*), - not to be confused with *Uṣūlī* movement within Shī'ism has emerged as an Arabic name for Islamic fundamentalism, but its currency is due to the way it approximates the English fundamentalism rather than any correspondence with aspects of the Islamic tradition. On the contrary, *uṣūlī* is associated with scholarship on the roots and genesis of Islamic jurisprudence, and experts in this discipline are often referred to as *al-Uṣūlīyyūn*. The spiritual leader of Ḥizbullāh in Lebanon, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh, for instance, rejects the terminology of fundamentalism as more revealing of Western projections than Muslim revivalism. Some scholars regard the debate about appropriate terminology as concluded, yet alternatives to the term “Islamic fundamentalism” in use range from “radical Islam” to “Islamic extremism” and “Islamic terrorism” to “political Islam.” Indeed, new names for the phenomenon continually arise. Islamic fundamentalism shares the concern with its Christian counterpart in eagerness to rescue religion and culture from what they characterize as the degeneration inaugurated by “modernism in theology,” “rationalism in philosophy,” and “materialism in life.” Committed to “do battle royal for the Fundamentals,” such warriors for God have launched an offensive against liberalism, Darwinism, and secularism in particular, declaring the text the authoritative moral compass, infallible not only in regard to theological issues but also in regard to matters of historical, geographical, and scientific fact (Euben 1999: 179).

According to Roy (2004) and Roy and Myers (2006), fundamentalism is “a reaction of tradition against modernization and modernity . . . a consequence of the de-culturation of societies and people.” Hence fundamentalist depiction of modernity is a condition of decay or disease evinced by pervasive corruption, disorder, relativism, and immorality. It is a reaction to the deculturation resulting from the Western type of globalization and the steady dominance of Western values. Fundamentalists argue for returning to the origins of Islam (the fundamentals) while meanwhile endeavor to modernize authentic Islam. Indeed, fundamentalists utilize modern means to express and disseminate their messages. They have proven themselves quite fluent in the virtual rhetoric made possible by modern techniques of communication and propaganda, deftly deploying various media to lambaste many of the epistemological premises and methods that made such technology possible.

Islamic fundamentalism has several varieties and two of them may be termed mainstream fundamentalism (also known as reformist) and radical fundamentalism (Sadaalah 2004). They have in common the following basic features. Islam (as derived from the scriptural foundations of Qur'ān and *sunnah*) is a source for a comprehensive social system and way of life (*dīn wa dunyā*) and for politics and government (*dīn wa dawlah*). Law is God's Law (*sharī'ah*), and God is Sovereign. *Sharī'ah* is a guiding system of law. Its application is inherent within fundamentalist designs to establish the Islamic state, the ultimate state for believing Muslims. Opening up for interpretation (*ijtihād*) – albeit contestation in the extent and scope – is necessary. And supreme loyalty should be linked to the *ummah*.

Fundamentalists demonstrate a sense of ambivalence toward modernity and the rationalist epistemology or human-centered theory of knowledge, which in part constitutes it. Fundamentalism could be interpreted as the last gasp of atavistic impulses and archaic commitments, the residue of pre-modern beliefs and practices rendered obsolete by scientific advances, technological innovations, and the economic globalization. Hence as a result, while maintaining the primacy of religious knowledge, education is expected to combine modern and religious subjects. The latter, however, is given a role as a vehicle, central in enhancing the expansion of the fundamentalist movement.

Not only is there variety in Islamic fundamentalism, but Islamic fundamentalism is by no means identical with all the contemporary manifestations of Islam as a universalist religion. Urbanization, developments within the communication (virtual and otherwise), and other contemporary processes of social change, including globalization, reinforce trends toward expansion and intensive penetration of society that are typical of Islam as a global universalist religion.

Muslim fundamentalism partially originated as a reaction to European colonialism and focused on the internal cohesion of the *ummah* and the Islamic civilization. Fundamentalists see Islam as applicable to all times and places, and they have opted for a gradualist approach in a pluralist society. Although religious education is seen as the means to achieve a Muslim way of life, modern schooling is seen as necessary for the intellectual, cognitive, and technological development. Hence, modern education has to take place within the cognitive framework of the fundamentalism.

Another stream within fundamentalism, conceptually divides human societies into two: Muslim and *Jāhiliyyah* (ignorance of divine guidance). The latter is used to label non-Muslim, which most societies in the world are identified as being. The world must be cleansed and purified by means of struggle or *jihād*.

A Muslim cannot seek any source other than God for guidance in matters of faith and in everyday life. Modern education, hence, is considered as an instrument of intellectual infiltration that did away with the essence of Islam. However, a Muslim can learn Western abstract sciences from a Muslim or non-Muslim. The use of IT and technological advances is perceived to help the movement in accomplishing its agenda. Moreover, the radical fundamentalists give priority to nonformal types of education such as study circles.

Traditionalism has fostered a generation of Islamists who believe in the armed struggle (*jihād*) along with *da'wah* against the infidels. What distinguishes Islamists from many other Muslims is the claim to recuperate an "authentic Islam." The Islamist emphasis on the limits of human knowledge, however, requires humility only in relation to God.

## Modernism

Islamic modernism emerged as a response to European imperial expansion and emphasized elements of Western civilization such as central role of state and civil institutions. Modernization has for a long time been assumed to carry secularization. This assumption, however, is now questioned by some researchers since several areas

in the world have been able to combine modernization and a high priority of religious beliefs and values among the populations, e.g., Japan and South East Asia. Parts of Western Europe seem to be the only cases where modernization has been accompanied by secularization (see, for instance, Berger 1999; Davie 1999). Political institutions have been among the modernist movement's most important targets for reform. According to modernists, Western technologies along with their approach to growth and development could be imported to shore up the authority of traditional Muslim states. They particularly emphasize the notion of individual freedom and democracy.

The Modernists argue for innovations and new interpretations in Islam, and that Islam is a religion and way of life. Interpretation is not only the right of the *'ulamā'* but of every individual. Law is man-made but should be inspired by the principles of Islam. Modernists accept Western values and values of modernity when translated into an Islamic framework. Islam as politically neutral is limited to the realm of religion and way of life. Freedom of interpretation is to be extended to laymen. The modernists advocate for a modern educational system, which is inclusive of a clearly defined religious curriculum that enhances the child's development as a Muslim and intellectual being (see Table 1 for the summary of the discussion and various orientations among Muslims).

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## Muslim Perceptions of Globalization

While globalization has expanded far beyond economic relations, it also has prompted unfolding of antiglobal sentiments in particularistic movements, among other places, across the Muslim world. Amir Arjomand (2004) argues that global integration induces many Muslims to emphasize their unique identity within the frame of reference of their own culture, which can be said to be at once universal and local or sub-global. Hence, global integration has made many Muslims seek to appropriate universalist institutions by what might be called Islamic cloning. Notions such as "Islamic science," "Islamic human rights," and "Islamic international system" became more prevalent. Despite these reactions, at least four major views on the relationship between Islam and the Western-style globalization among Muslims could be identified: (i) Islam as a globalizing powerful force affecting other phenomena; (ii) Islam as a potential globalizing force; (iii) Islam is excluded from the favorable globalization processes; and (iv) Islam is threatened by the predominating (Western) globalization forces. Views on globalization correspond to a large extent to the different views noted previously. Some Muslim scholars argue that they do not reject globalization; however, they resent the Western and secular (and immoral) aspects of it. The evolving cultural and communicative dimensions of globalization nurture an Islamic articulation of globalism. However, whereas some Muslims see that as an opportunity to access the wider world, others (like traditionalists) are likely to perceive Islam as a victim of globalization. Hence, while traditionalists and fundamentalists urge on a specific Islamic education, in the view of secularists and modernists, education should be basically of modern type, integrating a well-defined religious curriculum and could thereby handle different aspects of globalization.

**Table 1** Muslim orientations and views toward various issues

Religious orientation	Sphere of religion	Concept of law	Interpretation ( <i>ijtihad</i> )	Sovereignty & political system	Identity & superior loyalty	Activision/ Islamic political implication	Education
<b>Secularism</b>	Private	Man-made	Freedom of interpretation/ extended to layman	Not necessarily Islamic/ Democratic/ pluralistic	National Identity and loyalty as impatiant as the religion	–	Secular & modern
<b>Traditionalism</b>	Public	God's law/ <i>shari'ah</i>	Interpretation restricted to <i>madhāhib</i> and ' <i>ulamā'</i>	Not necessarily Islamic	Religious Identity	–	Specialized ' <i>ulamā'</i> education
<b>Modernism/ liberalism</b>	Public	Law man-made guided by Islamic principles	Freedom of Interpretation/ extended to layman	Not necessarily Islamic/guided by Islamic principles	No conflict between national and religious identity	Islam as politically neutral	Modern integrating a religious curriculum
<b>Fundamentalism/ Islamism</b>	Public	God's law/ <i>shari'ah</i>	Freedom of interpretation/ supremacy of ' <i>ulamā'</i>	Islamic state/ political	Supreme loyalty to <i>ummah</i> /religious Identity	Islam as a source for political activism	Hybrid between modern and religious

Source: Chapter Muslim Orientations and Views on Education



## Islam as a Globalizing Force

Al-Nabulsi (2008) argues that “Islamic values, like values of other world religions, are universal in that they are applicable in different places around the globe.” Islam – through commerce and the pilgrimage – is known for being a discursive force in premodern “archaic globalization” (Luke 2010). With reference to a thirteenth century world-system, Janet Abu-Lughud (1991) argues that historically Islam has been a force within proto-globalization and thus not alien to the notion of globalization. Hence, as Misami (2003) notes, “Islam is not anti-globalization . . . but anti-Westernization.” The assumption is that, Islam is itself a globalizing force.

Since the World War II while a large number of Muslim states have confirmed their membership in the international communities by signing agreements and membership in conventions, several international organizations have been established for the spread of Islam (see Chapter ► “The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, *Ummah* Unity, and Children’s Rights to Education”). For instance, during the 1970s, the Islamic Organization for Education, Science, and Culture (ISESCO) was founded with the aim to establish Arabo-Islamic culture as a uniting worldwide force (ISESCO 1985, 2006a, b) and to create a front against what was perceived as invasion of the Western cultural imperialism. Accordingly, in an endeavor to gain consensus among Muslims and to create an Islamic frame of reference for education, the first World Conference on Muslim education was held in Mecca in 1977. African and Asian Ministers of Education have increasingly participated in the meetings organized by the ISESCO. This organization supports educational efforts not only in Africa, Asia, and Latin America but also in the industrialized countries. These efforts include adult education, teacher training in the Arabic language, support to Islamic/Arabic schools, and similar activities. There are also other global and regional Islamic organizations which have extended their activities among the Muslims worldwide.

## Islam as a Potential Globalizing Force

Some groups of Muslims, especially secularists and modernists, argue that Islam is compatible with features of a modern society, such as Human Rights (Cheref 2005: 2), and that Islam is not yet globalized (and universally adhered to) but has the potentiality to be so. Muslims in this category see Islam as encompassing principles and practices that are consistent with political pluralism.

Inayatullah (2003: 11) suggests that [Western] “globalism continues the ideal of progress, of creating the perfect society, the positivist/scientific world, of forever removing religion and irrationality from human history. . .” However, Islam could be seen as an alternative globalization paradigm or a counter-globalization challenging the Western forces of globalization. Leading Islamic scholars, activists, and technocrats have

called for a vision of the future with five key attributes: self-reliant ecological communities; electronically linked *khalifah* (trusteeship) politically linked; an alternative non-capitalist economics that takes into account the environments and the poor, the *ummah* as world community as guiding principle based on tolerance (ibid.).

## Islam as Excluded from Globalization Forces

This category of Muslims see globalization as a purely Western phenomenon and do not have globalization force of Islam in mind (The Levine Institute 2008a) and perceive Islam as excluded from the global processes. They complain that despite the fact that “some of the Muslim countries have deregulated foreign investments, liberalized their imports. . .emasculated direct the direct socio-economic role of the state, hampered the public sector, and laid off thousands of workers” (Cheref 2005), as suggested in the neoliberal and human rights discourses, they have not experienced economic growth and welfare as promised and suggested in the same discourses.

Muslims have become conscious of the dominance of the West in the world and that they have become excluded from the globalizing forces and therefore have “become inward looking (The Levine Institute 2008a: 2).” According to the Levine Institute (2008b: 4), the principal challenges for many Muslim countries in front of globalization can be met by “a solid, adequate and purpose-driven education constitutes the major starting point for confronting these challenges.”

## Islam as Threatened by Globalization

Ahmed (1992: 177) argues that, ICT and Western mass media are “exposing the everyday world of Islam to the competition of pluralistic consumption and the pluralization of life worlds”. Also, according to Ahmed (*ibid.*: 223), “nothing in history has threatened Muslims like the Western media; neither gunpowder in the Middle Ages . . . nor trains and the telephone, which helped colonize them. . .The Western mass media are ever present and ubiquitous; never resting and never allowing respite.”

Regarding education and the challenges of globalization, some Muslims see purely Islamic (religious) education as a solution, while others suggest a modern *but* moral education as well (Table 2).

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## The West and Globalization

In the Western worldview, the world may be seen as a system in which interdependencies between units situated in different geographical areas around the globe are being extended and intensified (Sklair 1995). Such processes, resulting in or including what today is seen as “globalization,” have a long history, but they passed into a phase of acceleration in the 1970s due to the economic liberalizations initiated in this decade, cheaper transport, the growth of ICT, and later the collapse of the Soviet Union, and waves of migrations. All these factors both facilitate and challenge the spread of Islam and its educational institutions. However, processes of globalization are intertwined, and it is evident that many features of Islamic education are not due to globalization alone but also due to a number of other influences.

**Table 2** Various groups of Muslims and their views toward Islam, the West, globalization and Education

Issue	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
<b>Religion</b>	Is a private affair	Is a family and/or community affair	Is a community affair	Is a community affair
<b>West</b>	Indifferent	Critical	Reject Westernism	Reject Westernism (Westoxication)
<b>Modernity</b>	Affirm	Affirm	Accept	Accept
<b>State</b>	See the State as an instrument for secular affairs	See the State as an instrument for religion	See the State as subordinate to religion	Perceive the State as irrelevant
<b>Globalisation</b>	Are involved and accept	Are involved, feel threat, have a missionary attitude, and want to impose <i>sharī'ah</i>	Are involved, feel threat, have a missionary attitude, and want to impose <i>sharī'ah</i>	Make efforts to escape globalization forces and reject them. Withdraw
<b>Education</b>	Tend to have modern and Islamic education. Education tends to be an individual affair	Tend to have modern or Islamic education. Education tends to be a community affair	Tend to have Islamic education only. Education tends to be a community affair	Tend to have Islamic education only. Education tends to be a community affair

In Western view, two sets of perspectives deal with the global phenomena affecting education: (i) World-System (WS) perspectives and (ii) globalization perspectives. The world-system perspectives include more long term and historical aspects than globalization perspectives generally do (Clayton 2004).

Two world-system perspectives are relevant in the present context: political-economic world system and the neo-institutionalist world perspective. According to the former, the drive for competitiveness, profit, and accumulation is the principal “cause” of or condition for what occurs globally (Dale 2000; Elwell 2006; Wallerstein 1991). According to Elwell (2006), Immanuel Wallerstein defines four different categories of countries or areas (among them peripheral and core areas), but practically all countries are now at least pay lip service to involvement in the drive for competitiveness.

In what came to be labelled as the Third World, differences and inequalities existing after the World War II have since then been reinforced. We now, according to Cardoso (1993) and Castells (1993) have to count with “four worlds”: (i) Winners in the new international division of labor; (ii) potential winners (Brazil, Mexico); (iii) large continental economies (India, China); and (iv) clear losers that could be called the Fourth World. Most of Africa, the not-oil-producing Middle Eastern countries; the rest of Asia; and large parts of Latin America belong to the Fourth World. Many

Asian and most sub-Saharan countries, including those having a substantial proportion of Muslims, belong to the fourth category.

Economically, the position countries have in the world-system may thus vary from marginalized to strongly incorporated into (competitive) world markets (Castells 1993; Foreign Policy 2007; Griffith-Jones and Ocampo 1999). Neoliberal globalization results in economic growth in some countries or places but also in marginalization of other places and increasing gaps between the North and the South (Griffin 2003; Lipumba 2003). High technology activities, growth, and richness are concentrated in certain geographical zones (East and Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States). Countries situated “outside” of the most intensive flows are indirectly influenced; their position in the world-system is more or less “cemented” and their frame of action (even internally) is conditioned by their positions.

Predominantly Muslim countries belong to both the highly involved category (principally oil producing countries) and the marginalized category (Beeley 1992; Daun et al. 2004). From this world-system perspective, education of the Western type is seen as subordinated to the requirement to contribute to competitive human capital.

On the other hand, the neo-institutionalist world-system perspective, as defined by Meyer et al. (1997: 144), assumes the existence of a world polity which is a symbolic cultural construction and a discursive entity including world models consisting of a complex of cultural expectations and tacit understandings of “cognitive and ontological models of reality that specify the nature and purposes of nation-states and other actors.” Although merely consisting of recommendations and suggestions, the world models have enforcing characteristics.

According to this perspective, the world models embody the Western worldview and include features as diverse as, for instance, Human Rights, Children Rights (emphasizing individual autonomy and the like), modern communitarian views (altruism, solidarity, etc.), neoliberal views (the self-interested and utility maximizing man), consumerist ideals, liberal democracy, education as a private and individual good, and so on (Ahmed 1992; Barber 1996; Spring 2009).

Many policy-makers, politicians, and administrators around the world feel compelled to implement or at least to formulate policies that are stated in the world models. The ontological and epistemological foundations of these world models are rarely explicitly formulated, but these models include many features that do not fit certain categories of Muslims (see chapter ► “Islam, State, Civil Society, and Education”).

Thus, the Western set of world models may be seen as containing or representing the *market-oriented* discourse as well as the *modern communitarian-oriented* ideology. In the market discourse, education is seen as a good or commodity. Moral issues and moral education (honesty and other values) are assumed to be acquired through the workings of market mechanisms (Giddens 1994, 2002; Hayek 2001). The communitarian-oriented ideology includes a traditional and a modern branch. The traditional branch is based on the idea that a geographical area and its population form an organic whole. Traditional communities are those in which people are born or are related by religion, family, or

kinship. The adherents to traditional branch aim at restoring community or at least the spirit of community and see education as a holistic matter. Muslims, wherever in the world they live, tend to form communities of the traditional type, communities that are perceived to belong to *ummah*.

Western globalization may be seen as taking place within the framework of a world system. Internationalization is resulting from state as well as non-state actions taken from within countries in relation to other bodies and people in other countries. However, globalization is something more than internationalization; it is something more than the sum of the actions taken by single nations and organizations because it has an existence of its own (McGrew 1992; Sklair 1995).

In the West, there are at least three different views of what globalization is: (i) processes such as compression of the world (in space and time) through ICT, (ii) economic interdependencies and flows of global reach, and (iii) an ideology (Cox 2000) or “the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson 1992: 8).

Globalizations result in intensive encounters between Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The world religions compete and challenge one another, each of them claiming to possess “exclusive and largely absolute truths or values” (Turner 1991: 173). The outcomes of the encounters between Islam and other globalized beliefs and value systems differ from one geographical and cultural area to another.

Neoliberal globalization is principally economic and cultural processes. Although driven mainly by large-scale economic actors, such as transnational corporations (TNCs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank, etc., some global processes also result from states, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and other actors (Boli and Thomas 1999; Jones and Coleman 2005). The requirements of competition result in an increasing pressure on states to struggle for peoples’ willingness and ability to become competitive in a global context. Economic actions and processes aim at and contribute to encouraging or compelling people to enter into commodified, monetized, and priced exchanges as producers and consumers (Saul 1997). Market forces are spreading to most areas of life, among them education. The “market order” on a global scale is country-wise mediated by national and local history and politics (Bretherton 1996a; Cox 2000).

The market ideology and the modern communitarian orientation have a common denominator that largely corresponds to the world models. The core of the policy documents produced in and disseminated from international non-Islamic organizations (e.g., OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank) may be seen as constituting world models, although rarely explicitly. Since the world-system as such does not have an overall physical or material world state, government, or polity, governance is performed not only by nation-states but to a large extent by market forces, the enforcing characteristics of the world models and through the activities performed by a myriad of networks and organizations (Garsten and Jacobsson 2007; Messner 1997; Mundy 2007).

Awareness of one’s rights and demand for them has increased as a result of globalization and civil and human rights have become important themes in the

globalizing discourses and policies (Scholte 2008). Global pressure for human rights and pressure from IGOs and INGOs concerning political freedom and freedom of organization have made many governments organize multiparty elections (Bretherton 1996b; Giddens 2002). However, this has not materialized at any large extent in predominantly Muslim countries (Kurzman 2002).

In the predominating world models, competing features, such as Islam and Buddhism, etc., are not considered in the same way and to the same extent as Western belief and value systems. That is, although Islam is being globalized it does not make part of the Western-oriented world models (Ahmed 1992; An-Na'im 1999; Beeley 1992; Carney et al. 2012; Turner 1991).

From the emic Muslim perspective, globalization and its outcomes in the Muslim intellectual discourse lend themselves to various interpretations. Reacting to the global spread of Islamism and its consequences, and utilizing a right-based approach post-Islamism is an instance of such endeavors. It is a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending the global Islamism. It represents an endeavor, as Bayat (2013: 19–21) puts it, to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on its head by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of a singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures, and the future instead of the past. It wants to marry Islam with individual choice and freedom, with democracy and modernity to achieve what some have termed an “alternative modernity.” Post-Islamism is expressed in terms of secular exigencies, in freedom from rigidity, in breaking down the monopoly of religious truth. Post-Islamism may find expressions in various social practices, political ideas, and religious thought as in post-Islamist urban rationale, youth and student movements, feminist practice, or theological perspectives, locally and globally. Hence, education is perceived a right of an individual, however marginalized, to be provided and funded by the majority or state. Assuming state monitoring over education as intrusion to one's rights; however, they consider the obligation of the state to subsidize education. Using the discourse on individualism, post-Islamists argue that an individual is entitled to maintain the right over the type and composition of the curriculum.

The neoliberal and human rights globalizations and the spread of the Western worldviews and lifestyles (liberal, pluralist, and market-oriented) thus have come to challenge also Islamic beliefs, ideologies, institutions, and way of life, which previously seemed to be valid (Ahmed 1992). Through the diffusion of a “universal culture” (Waters 2001), “traditions have to explain themselves, to become open to interpretation and discourse” (Giddens 1994: 23–24). As Giddens (*ibid.*: 22) argues, “globalization is not just about the creation of larger systems, but about the transformation of the contexts of social experience.” That is, global processes also reach the individual level. Individuals can less than before trust the immediate and experienced past and present (Robertson 1992; Waters 2001).

Culturally, complex and sometimes contradictory processes occur around the world. Culture is the continuously ongoing reproduction and construction of worldviews, visions, meanings, and value systems (views on man, on society, on the state, on knowledge, and on the individual). Traditionally it has tied individuals, social

systems, and territories to one another. The local in this sense implies different (holistic or totalistic) collectives ranging from loose voluntary associations and networks to extended families, lineages, clans, kinships, and fundamentalist groups (Mardin 1995). In areas less influenced by market forces, sections of the economy are driven not primarily by profit-seeking or individual utility maximization but by the need for collective (extended family, clan, tribe, and so on) survival. Economic activities “remain embedded in the social fabric” and have “another logic, another set of rules” (than the capitalist) (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 86). Individuals make part of networks and there is a low degree of individualism (Hoerner 1995). In most villages in low-income Middle Eastern, Latin American, Asian, and African countries, collective or communal rights have clear priority over personal and individual rights (Esteva and Prakash 1998). Associations tend to be multifunctional: for collective survival, distribution of goods and services, identity formation, and so on (Anheier 2007; Ndione 1994).

The spread of Western cultural features has different outcomes, ranging from revitalization of local cultures (Nyang 1993), which is particularization, to the emergence of “syntheses” or what Robertson (1995) labels “glocalization” and Nederveen Pieterse (1995) calls “hybridization”, to the elimination of local cultures (Goontilake 1994; M’Bokolo 1994; Stavenhagen 1994). When glocalization occurs, universal features are transformed and translated into local cultures, while in hybridization the universal and the local more or less merge. Both glocalization and hybridization cover the outcomes of the encounter between global, standardized cultural aspects and local and/or value-oriented cultural aspects.

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## Islam, Globalizations, and Education

Historically, education in the Muslim World was more of an independent private enterprise and was not linked to the ruler to same extent and in the same way as it is linked to the state today. However, a great deal of Islamic education still takes place without state involvement. Formal education that includes secular subjects (foreign/natural sciences, math, etc.) is nowadays seen as a state responsibility. Muslims have repeatedly had to defend their values and belief systems (Berger 1999). They have in different waves reacted to challenges with revitalization, revival, adaptation, or encapsulation of their Islamic educational arrangements. Revitalization and adaptation have to do with changes and innovations to educational arrangements, while revival corresponds to traditionalism and fundamentalism. Encapsulation implies defensive traditionalism. Reforms of Islamic education have taken place in different places around the world, both from below and above, in the former case by the sects, brotherhoods, and teachers themselves; and in the latter by the state.

In regard to the influences of international and global forces on education, it is necessary to make a distinction between: (i) general processes of globalization and (ii) direct and specific educational processes such as educational borrowings (Meyer et al. 1997; Steiner-Khamsi 2004). The former includes general, economic, cultural, and political forces affecting education indirectly, while the latter takes place in the

domain of education and thus affects education directly. In the latter case, the spread of educational policies and models takes place through, for instance, borrowing, learning (from others), and imposition (Dale 1999).

The Western-style modern education has been globalized throughout its massive expansion around the world. The changes within this type of education are taking place in the direction proposed in the world models: in overall goals, educational organization, type of governance, administration, mode of finance, and organization of educational provision and delivery and regulation as well as the curriculum (Daun 2002, 2006; Spring 2009). The culture of Western-style primary and secondary education is increasingly biased towards cognitive and measurable elements, and quality is assessed in terms of achievement on test scores rather than socialization skills, personality formation, or moral training. In such a context, education tends to be seen as a commodity, while moral training and ethical virtues are neglected. Expansions and changes of the curriculum and developments within the aspects of education affect Islamic education in different ways. The expansion of public schools during the past decades has limited the “space” for and changed the functions of Islamic educational arrangements in many places. Where the network of secular primary schools has expanded most, Qur’anic schools have been relegated to the preschool level or have become very ritualistic institutions (Boyle 2004; Eisemon and Wasi 1987; El-Tom 1985; Stewart 1985). On the other hand, revival and renovation and attempts at synthesization of secular and religious subjects and expansion of Islamic education through, for instance, ISESCO or recognition, accreditation financing, or promotion of institutions of Islamic education such as *kuttābs* by UNESCO are taking place. Since The World Conference on Education for All in Thailand in 1990, NGOs and private companies have more than ever before become involved in educational affairs. In the same vein, Muslim or Islamic NGOs too have joined the global struggle for Education for All (Coloquio Internacional 1993; UNESCO 1993).

Western-style education is generally seen as the means to achieve a large number of goals, including development, economic growth, peace, and democracy. The processes of neoliberal globalization generally drive countries to at least attempt to make people technologically and economically competitive; and more specifically to enhance students’ cognitive and technical skills. However, in reality education has different complementary as well as contradictory functions: transformation of society, reproduction of power relations, sorting, selection, qualification of pupils, and so on. Some of these features seem to apply to some types of Islamic education as well, partly because Islamic knowledge is stratified as some groups are not entitled or able to reach the highest levels of knowledge (see Nasr 1975).

The Muslim reaction to the globalization of Western-style education and the spread of Western or neoliberal educational ideas differ greatly. While one group of Muslim scholars (mainly traditionalists and fundamentalists) advocate for complete decoupling from the Western-style education and creation of an alternative system of education based on Islam, others argue for a partial decoupling (Tibi 1995). For the former, modern education is not appropriate for the formation of believing Muslims and Islamic experts and for the reproduction of ‘*ulamā*’. For the



majority of Muslims, however, Islamic moral training is important, whether it takes place in the formal education system or in nonformal or informal socialization arrangements, and if they feel that Islam does not have a proper place in the state-run schools, they enroll their children in nonformal and civil-sphere Islamic arrangements for moral education (Qur'ānic schools or weekend schools). This happens partly since education has in several cases been "removed from religious spheres and authority" (Zubaida 1998).

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## Conclusion

Islam is being globalized; all countries with a Muslim presence have Qur'ānic education organized by and in the civil sphere of society. Most rural areas in the Middle East, parts of Asia, and in Central and West Africa and Africa's Horn have at least one Qur'ānic school and some have *madrasahs* organized by civil forces (UNESCO 1993).

The spread of Western education has resulted in different outcomes and responses from the Islamic educational institutions: renovation, revivalism, ritualism (Gregorian 2001). Efforts at integration between the Western and Islamic types of education have been and are being made in many places in the world (see Part III: ► [Introduction to Part III: Islamic Education Around the World: Commonalities and Varieties](#)). One principal way is when previously established religious (Islamic) schools place secular or "neutral" subjects in the framework of an otherwise Islamic education, and another one is when state schools in Muslim countries include Islamic subjects in the curriculum. In general, Western globalization causes changes in Muslim and non-Muslim societies, while Western globalization of specific educational policies neglect or under-emphasize moral and values education.

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# Information and Communication Technology and Education in Muslim Context

Behnoosh Payvar

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## Abstract

Teaching and learning faced transformations following the rapid but not geographically equal development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Information technology and media engage all value types, and use of ICT for the purpose of education can be challenging in the Muslim context due to Internet content. Interconnection of classroom and cyberspace creates a realm for exchange of meanings. Culture at the education setting is found to be a key element, however with increased access to information and communication tools at the classroom level, often still reflects the pre-ICT educational norms.

## Keywords

ICT · Education · Cyberspace · Technology · Middle East

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## Introduction

Use of modern technology of the era for enhancing education, both in educational experience and the achievements, is reckoned as one of the common features across all countries worldwide. While all countries might share such aspiration and determination, the factual capacities are conditioned by many factors including the infrastructure and resources. Countries vary in their policies toward the use of technology, both for education and in general. Also, the social context can present barriers that hinder the use of ICT for education. Norms and values capture a distinctive position in this regard and can affect the use of ICT, among other contexts in education.

Despite the specificity of the contexts, global mobility of the IT experts presents the information technology as a global phenomenon, both socially and culturally. The “digital gap” is regarded as a new form of social injustice, and all countries endeavor to drawing near with technological advancement to be considered “developed.” ICT literacy is considered among the prime priorities, along with such questions as poverty alleviation, healthcare, environment, and social equality. “Making available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies (ICTs)” is among the targets for such international benchmarks as the Millennium Development Goals which consider the ICT among the basic human rights.

Use of technology in education can contribute to efficiency and achievements; however, cultural characteristics may also present barriers in policy-makings and practices. Considering the fact that using technology for education can be challenging due to policy, culture, or resources available to the context of education, space can play a crucial role facilitating the experience of using technology for learning and teaching. The education setting operates using the valid norms and values in the society; however, the learning and teaching process can benefit from new norms when actual places are connected through technology and cyberspace. In fact, the advantages of travelling to the physical education settings for teaching or learning decrease when there are increasing chances of using technology and cyberspace that facilitate the virtual presence of learner and teacher in the “classroom” setting.

This chapter looks into challenges in using ICT for education in countries with majority Muslim population, where Islam inspires a large number of social values and norms. The chapter will provide a case study of Iran, as one of the intriguing instances of utilizing ICT in a Muslim context. The perspective grown out of findings of an ethnographical research conducted throughout the course “technology and social change in socio-legal research” held in a university in Tehran, Iran (The courses took place in collaboration between the two universities located in Iran and Sweden. These courses, apart from the main instructor, benefited from the lectures of two more Swedish social scientists who participated in the program. It was designed to have one instructor in place at all times, the second instructor joined towards the middle of the course and the third instructor joined towards the end of the course. Technology was one of the main means of teaching for all participants. The course also used pre-recorded lectures of the second instructor in the classroom before he

travelled to Tehran, online lecture from Sweden, used social media means and texting applications to circulate information in relation to the course, power point, videos, and web research.). This chapter focuses on the experience of using technology for learning and teaching throughout the course, to shed light on how *interrelations* concerning cyberspace, technology, and actual physical space of the classroom can make a change in normative structures within the educational setting. This case elaborates the experience of the author as planner and instructor of two courses for social science students at postgraduate level in Iran.

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## Spend on Ticket for “Trip to Future”?

The unknown future trip is planned, but are people living in far regions or some big cities aware of how it looks like? Did they decide to go along this road, or who exactly decided to go this or that way? Is “the best” the same in the north and south? Can geography make a difference and help us to adjust measuring “the best way” or “way of being,” as it affects the cooking time? Advances in health and medicine, and all disciplines of science are most respected up to this point elevating humanity and its dreams. Yet, although many countries come together for coming up with solutions for the world, it seems that the “developed world” has a key role informing perceptions and international policies, and this leads us toward rethinking values used for drafting development plans and policies for the world. A part of this glorious story is lagging behind, and that is the fact that geography introduces variation in regard to taste and color and so is with human and what they value. Now what if the wish for joining the rest in the future requires remaking of a society, a remaking that actually transcends the reflexivity character of the present age? In fact, on “*the way to a better future*,” there is a strong possibility for the fact that people be marginalized based on the way they live, norms and values they inherit, respect, and follow; and this fact raises human rights questions.

If our values define our worlds, and we see and know our environment with those lenses, what happens if we have little choice but to change the values? And nevertheless, is it a jump from a perfect clear picture to a different clear perspective? Or perhaps, this change makes the picture blurry and leads a society to walk the “new way of being,” with the help of others, not seeing what it requires to see completely, as if it is a *blind walk*. In this way, the experience of social environments in different geographies suggests that those who are in the process of remaking would be engaged in a development in their blind walk. What harms does this remaking in the blurry picture cause for the helper and the one that is helped? Ehteshami (2007, p. 124) on his discussion on globalization in the Muslim Middle East asserts,

It was Muhammad Hassanain Haikal who said of the AHDR 2002 that it signalled the region’s ‘last chance to join the trip to the future’. How to acquire the ticket for the ‘trip to the future’ was the subject of the AHDR in 2003. The report observed that knowledge, its accumulation, percolation and distribution, is the way of the future.



While ICT is used to develop expertise in knowledge development as a component of education system, the increasing incorporation of ICT in education globally, has led the education to be an indicator of development potential and also social, political, and economic status for multination and nongovernmental organization. “National education systems serve as national innovation incubators because they create knowledge economy structures, processes, content, and productivity through formal schooling” (Wiseman and Anderson 2012).

The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, adopted by 160 countries during the World Education Forum in May 2015, sets out a new vision for education for the next 15 years. The declaration outlines the goals and policies that directly address ICT in education. According to the declaration, countries are committed to “strengthening science, technology and innovation”; “using appropriate pedagogical approaches supported by appropriate information and communication technology (ICT).” Also it was mentioned that information and communication technologies (ICTs) “must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision” (P. 8). On a different but relevant issue, Wiseman and Anderson (2012) argue, “the widespread use and availability of ICT in social and economic sectors has greatly impacted how nations conceptualize and advance socio-political and economic agendas, but there is no universal model for building innovation infrastructures and capacities because these systems are so closely linked with national economic demands, social norms and value systems.” Accordingly, due to variations in norms and values in the context of education across the globe, the universal goals and policies for the use of ICT in education might not be applicable or face challenges in some countries. Kamrava (2008) argues, “. . . the wrong historical direction, calling on Iranians to look inward – under the auspices of ‘return to the self’ – instead of where they actually ought to have looked, in the direction of modernity.” Musa Ghaninezhad, a French-trained professor of economics, has directed some of his sharpest criticisms at Āl-i Aḥmad (Jalāl Āl-i Aḥmad (1923–1969) was a prominent Iranian writer, thinker, and social and political critic. He popularized the term *Qarbzadigī* (Westoxification) through, among other writings – a book of the same title.), whose “ignorance of the realities of Western civilization,” he maintains, is “truly astounding.” Āl-i Aḥmad advocated the adoption of Western technology but not its norms or its social and human sciences. What he and others like him failed to realize, however, is that the West’s technological advances would not have been possible had it not been for its values and cultural norms. “Technology and the humanities are two sides of the same coin and cannot be separated from each other,” according to Ghaninezhad (1998, p. 55).

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## Access and Values in a Connected World

The cyber era has posed a series of challenges, as Internet content involves different values. Being in interaction with symbols that interact non-Islamic values create an unease environment in an educational setting with Islamic social norms. In this

relation, even the “unfettered relationships between individuals that globalization facilitates, through the Internet and other mobile forms of communication” (Ehteshami 2007), are seen as issues posed to Muslim societies.

It is worth taking into account that in every society people measure the criteria for having a better life based on the values they value in their society. For example, “gender equality” is a concept; however, it can mean something totally different to women in the United States and Scandinavia compared to women in Iran and some other Muslim countries. This is closely linked to the perception of self and others that reflexively constructs the culture of everyday life. The processes that lead the emergence or reproduction of norms and values are context oriented and involve spaces that can change through time in terms of dominant meanings circulating in the interactions of those spaces (Payvar 2015). Globalizing the concepts and the related values, such as *equality*, *access*, *connectivity*, and *autonomy* as much as we are hoping to do so, does not mean that we are actually communicating the same message to different points on the globe – due to the fact that people understand the presented concept with, or with the influence of, their own learned culture and mind setting. Yet, with the power that media and IT hold for bringing change to human conception and motivations, the quality of this change is not completely known as if whether the messages disseminated are grasped as sent or only form an unclear approximate meaning in the receivers’ minds. In fact, trying to make the world more coherent socially and culturally can lead to noncontextual dualities and errors that eventually may cause harm to the so-called globalized culture.

In the study of “Internet use and human values,” Bagchi Kallol et al. (2015) use a value framework, developed by Schwartz to explore the impact of values on patterns of ICT use at the individual level. (For this study, they use the set of developing and developed nations, based on World Values Survey data, and eight nations grouped into two economic/cultural clusters (developed and developing) based on the data from the European Social Survey.) The results indicate that value types “have different as well as similar impacts in developed and developing nations. Similarities and differences also exist within developed and developing nations.”

Values of the education setting may follow the values of the society, in which the institution operates, to a larger extent. Hence, given that values pertaining to education are conditioned by the values of the society at large, the use ICT is contingent on the values surrounding them. Regarding our class on technology and sociological research in Tehran and the kind of procedures, norms, and resistances we observed in relation to the use of ICT in education were closely linked to the culture of the context in which these norms operate.

Dissemination of meanings in relation to values of *tradition*, *security*, and *conformity* encouraged by official culture and media inside Iran takes place through the content of programs produced by the Islamic Republic Broadcasting, book publication, and also legal codes and norms that clarify how these values are put into place (Payvar 2015). These values are *social-focused* and regulate relations with others and effects on them – expressing *anxiety-based self-protection*.

Due to the cultural grounds, religious sociocultural traditions and norms receive high attention in Iran. Tradition values imply subordination to more abstract

objects – and religious-cultural customs and ideas. In the opposite direction, the digital communication tools and the Internet used in an education setting, where Islamic norms dominate, encourage self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism values and are *person-focused* regulating the expression of personal characteristics and interests. These are among growth values expressing *anxiety-free self-expansion* (Schwartz et al. 2008; Schwartz 2006). The tradition values encouraged and enforced by the formal social and legal norms, considering its peripheral location on Schwartz Value Circle, correlate less positively with the values like hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction that are situated on the other side of the circle.

The analyses in the study of Gulf countries (Wiseman and Anderson 2012) indicate that the “culture of schooling and of the school’s community can limit how ICT is used to link student learning outcomes in school to the acquisition, creation and implementation of knowledge in the labour market and wider communities. This is demonstrated both by the cultural factors concerning teachers’ roles in instruction in the GCC as well as the limits on students’ Internet use.”

Considering the prominent and interdependent role of the individual, self-identity, and modern institutions at our present time, we observe values that concentrate specifically on the individual and the *self*. The self-direction values encompass qualities of self-respect, independent thought and action, freedom, exploring, choosing own goals, and creativity, which are useful assets for the learning. Hedonistic values, sharing elements of openness and self-enhancement, are defined as pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself (pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgent). Another value type contributes to the higher-order type, *openness to change*, is stimulation values described as excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (daring, a varied life, an exciting life) (Schwartz and Boehnke 2004). These values, which lead to openness, seemed to be essential part of innovation and production of knowledge, and therefore education.

The conformity values, in the opposite direction, motivate obedience and subordination of self in favor of the imposed expectations in the society. The conformity values are defined by Schwartz as restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or/and norms – seem to put restrictions on qualities of free thinking, explorations, inquiry-based learning/teaching specifically when it involves information technology as world wide web involves and opens windows to all norms and ideas. Wiseman and Anderson (2012) argue, “access to the Internet through schooling is an expectation embedded with Western ideology about individual rights and the value of unrestricted access to information, but this may conflict with norms in the GCC where Internet access is sometimes monitored or even restricted for cultural or religious reasons by families as well as government-sponsored institutions like schools. This is coupled with the perception that students’ cultural identity and religious values may be compromised due to increased access to information via the Internet, when the prevailing belief in the GCC is that schools have a responsibility to embed students’ into their national culture and belief systems.” The higher-order type *openness to change* makes a “bipolar dimension” (Schwartz and Boehnke 2004) with *conservation*, the other higher-order type. This bipolar in case of Tehran, for instance, is created by the difference between the value types, enforced officially inside Iran, which promote

higher-order type of *conservation* and the value types that are interactively communicated via the global mass media and the Internet and entail the higher-order type of *openness to change*.

The influence of norms of all kinds and values including religious values in the context of education on learning and teaching behavior is evident in Iranian educational settings. And yet, by using ICT in education the learner is exposed directly to the values of modern society and qualities that promote “openness” and motivate people to “follow their own emotional and intellectual interests in unpredictable and uncertain directions” including *autonomy*, *choice*, and *connectivity* (Castells et al. 2007) just by using the devices – which do not comply with the conservation values promoted in the context of learning that encourage individuals “to preserve the status quo and the certainty it provides.” These characteristics entitle the individual to certain “rights and space that are provided based on relevant values that characterize the network society. These values interact the essence of their constituting meanings with the users directly and also implicitly through the content of the communication flow. Nevertheless, there might be the case that the social context of individual’s life enforces values that are opposing to the interacted meanings derived from the logic and norms of the network society” (Payvar 2015, p. 68). Hossain Khan et al. (2012) notes that, “although the Government of Bangladesh is committed to implementing ICT in education, the process is hindered by a number of barriers. According to Snoeyink and Ertmer (2001), first order barriers include lack of equipment, unreliability of equipment, lack of technical support and other resource-related issues. Second-order barriers include both school level factors, such as organizational culture and teacher level factors, such as beliefs about teaching and technology and openness to change.”

Choices can be made among “a variety of options” in the context that the “culture promotes the prescribed choices and norms within the society and the local settings” while global settings follow the logic of the modern world. “The reflexivity and globalizing characters of modernity, together with the modern tools of communication, create awareness concerning the ‘options’” (Payvar 2015, p. 152). In this context, learners deal with opposite forces of traditional versus modern cultures, norms, and values. Subsequently, the learning process for the learner that comes from a different normative system of values and culture will be more challenging and demanding compared to the learner that masters the cultural prerequisites regarding logic of digital communications tools and content due to his/her life context. In fact, using digital systems of communication for education provides the learner with more autonomy in regard to “spatial location,” “time constraints,” and also “social and cultural norms” and more control over the communication process (Castells et al. 2007; Castells 2009). Castells (2009, p. 110) refers to “liberalization policies linked to new economic strategies in the context of globalization” and “the rapid technological change that opened up a new universe of communicative capabilities, and the cultural change toward individualism and freedom of choice that weakened the foundations of ideological conservatism, particularly in developed countries.” *Connectivity*, in case of the youth in Iran, means that they are connected to what attracts their attention with less or no restrictions of time and place (Payvar 2015). This quality adds an aspect to

the everyday life, besides other characteristics of network society and communication systems, providing a wider scope for interactions, exchange of messages, and conception of meanings. And yet, *existence of choice*, the “possibility of choosing options,” and “not being forced to admit the predetermined alternatives” provided by new technologies introduces facts about using ICT in education which can attract more students and optimize learning. As such,

the costs and benefits of a norm raised by certain values and meanings, in addition to the consequences of the behaviour, engages the individual in the evaluation and prediction of possible context for the norm. The social and technological changes affect the distribution of costs and benefits associated with actions as they add alternatives to the context of meanings and choices available to the individual. Hence, the results of evaluations made by the individuals concerning the content of the new norm may encourage them to engage in interactions and negotiations in relation to that norm. (ibid.: 153)

In the meantime, the use of new technology has been encouraged in the Islamic contexts, as the theological schools were among the first groups who gained access in Iran. Kamrava (2008) argues that, “significantly, recent years have witnessed consistent efforts by the clerical establishment to revamp and modernize the curriculum of the *hawzah ‘ilmīyah* and other institutions of Islamic learning.” Exploring the case of Iran, Amir-Ebrahimi (2008a) refers to the fact that even before the

middle-class population had any access to the Internet, many theological schools had dozens of computers, with which they were digitizing religious texts and publishing them in the form of compact discs . . . The Internet, quickly showing its benefits for Islam, became for a while one of the most important tools for the spread of Islam . . . An astonishing amount of religious and political content, including the Qur’ān, various propaganda, articles, religious and political texts, and even prayers, was digitized and put online in different languages.

The Internet became a new space to be explored: Amir-Ebrahimi (ibid.) describes the fact that through the Internet religious students in Iran

had access to multiple sources of information that allowed them to have new perspectives . . . and to ask new types of questions . . . From different religious resources and a variety of political news websites about Iran and the world, from chat forums, and, later, from blog writing, online *talabahs* and religious youth were experiencing a new world that was very different from what they had been able to experience in their physical spaces.

Ahmed (2007, p. 60) elaborates on Darul Uloom at Deoband, “. . . established for the expressed purpose of training religious leaders who would be dedicated to mainstream or orthodox Islam in response to the crisis that befell Muslim society in the nineteenth century,” where they arrived at after a long drive, “We stepped out of the van unsure of what to expect. To our surprise, we were greeted by the head cleric himself, Maulana Anzar Shah Kashmiri, and his high command, who whisked us off to one of the main mosques for a speech.” According to Ahmed (ibid.: 66), the individuals studying at Deoband “would become writers, preachers, and teachers who would disseminate their Islamic learning to the community in an effort to

preserve Islamic traditions.” Ahmed notes that the name *Deoband* came to symbolize “not only the spread of Islamic teaching but also the cultivation of an inner spiritual life,” and argues that Deoband “today must respond to globalization even if it desires minimum interaction with the outside world and is reacting with the same instincts and attitudes on which it was founded.” Ahmed (*ibid.*: 67) argues that, Deoband was “unambiguously clear about its self-perception and identity. Its young men – women remain excluded – proudly trace their ideological lineage to Shāh Walī Allāh, to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (they take special pride in showing visitors his handwritten Qur’ān in a special casement of the library), to Ibn Taymiyyah, and straight back to the Prophet of Islam . . . Hence on its website, Deoband describes itself as “the torchbearer of Islamic renaissance.” Ahmed describes the difference between now and earlier times under the British that the “Deobandis completely rejected anything to do with Westernization then, whereas today they have mastered the use of Western technology without compromising their traditional beliefs. Having clear-cuts and goals as a community, they are able to use technology without losing their sense of identity . . . In towns distant from Delhi, however, their daily lives continue to follow the traditional and simple ways based on the study of Islam.” Ahmed (*ibid.*) comments on his observation that, “however much the West would like to comfort itself with the notion of a backward Deoband having a poor understanding of global media, the students and faculty know not only how to use modern technology themselves but also how the outside world uses it as a tool of influence. The computer science department that we saw was up to date; its website was professional and extensive, with discussion pages and information on the religion’s history, philosophy, and political messages.”

The world Values Survey Wave 6, conducted in 2010–2014, regarding “Future changes: More emphasis on the development of technology” in the selected countries by this study (WVS6) (Algeria, Bahrain, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt. The latest data released on Iran is from 2005 and Wave 5 of WVS, and it is not included here because it does not comply with the recent data set.) reports that total 71% of respondents in these countries believe that development of technology is a “good thing,” while only 6.1% regard technology as a “bad thing.” The 85% of respondents with a university-level education and degree believe “more emphasis on the development of technology” is a “good thing” in these countries. This number varies between countries as in Bahrain only 53.4% are *for* this statement, while Qatar has 96.1%. It is intriguing to compare this rate with responses from participants with “no formal education”: A total number of 65.2% of respondents with no formal education in the selected countries believe that it is a “good thing” to have more emphasis on the development of technology in the future. Only 7.4% think that more emphasis on technology development might be a “bad thing” in the future. The variable of “sex: male or female” *does not* affect the total percentage as 74.8% for male respondents and 72.2% female respondents are *for* technology development in the future.

Although the percentage of Female respondents that agree with the idea of technology development can vary between countries as in Qatar and Bahrain with 94.7% and 46.5%, respectively; however, this does not affect the general flow of meanings

that support the idea of “emphasis on the development of technology in the future” as in Bahrain there is 40.3% of respondents that choose “Don’t mind” in this regard.

The statement “Because of science and technology, there will be more opportunities for the next generation” attracted a total percentage of 2 that “completely disagree” and then the percentage grows (from 1 equivalent of *completely disagree* to 10 for *completely agree*) and shows 34% who “completely agree.” The percentage of respondents that “completely disagree” with the idea that *there will be more opportunities for the next generation because of science and technology* varies between the selected countries: Algeria 6.1%, Bahrain 0.2%, Palestine 3.0%, Iraq 1.0%, Jordan 2.2%, Kuwait 2.8%, Lebanon 5.4%, Libya 1.1%, Malaysia 0.7%, Pakistan 1.9%, Qatar 1.7%, Turkey 1.5%, Egypt 0.1%. Only a total of 2.2% of respondents with *no formal education* completely disagree with the idea that *because of science and technology, the next generation will have more opportunities*.

The data shows that the way *future and opportunities for the next generation* is perceived in relation to *science and technology*, among respondents, correlates with perceptions on “development of technology.” As Bahrain shows least interest in emphasizing the development of technology with some 12% of university graduates perceiving this idea as a “bad thing,” only 4.5% of the graduates believe that science and technology can affect the opportunities of the next generation positively. This is while the total percentage that completely agree with the positive affect of science and technology on future opportunities is 44.6%: Algeria has 28.9%, Palestine 21.9%, Iraq 30.9%, Jordan 23.1%, Kuwait 59.2%, Lebanon 21.2%, Libya 73.4%, Malaysia 18.9%, Pakistan 35.3%, Qatar 55.3%, Turkey 34.6%, Egypt 47.4% completely agree with the positive affect of technology and science for the next generation.

WVS6 reports that only 2.1% of respondents “completely disagree” with the fact that “Science and technology are making our lives healthier, easier, and more comfortable,” while this percentage grows (from 1 equivalent of *completely disagree* to 10 for *completely agree*) to 35.4% of total respondents that “completely agree” with the statement. The rest of respondents mostly fall in the range 5–9 with 6.4%, 6.9%, 10.8%, 16.9%, and 15.6%. Among the selected countries, the respondents from Bahrain show the least interest with only 6.7% “completely agree” with the statement “Science and technology are making our lives healthier, easier, and more comfortable,” 0.3% “completely disagree,” and the rest mostly fall in the range 4–9. The respondents from Libya show the highest percentage of 69.3% “completely agree” regarding this statement.

The 3.2% of respondents perceive the world to be “A lot worse off” because of science and technology” while 25.2% think the opposite that it will be “A lot better off.” The data shows that there is not a coherent perception among countries regarding *better* or *worse* off having science and technology in the world. Palestine shows 6.3% and Lebanon has 6.6% who believe that it will be “A lot worse off” while Qatar with 44.8% and Libya 54% show the highest percentage of respondents, among selected countries, who perceive the world as “A lot better off” because of science and technology.

Respondents with no formal education in Algeria with 12.7% and Lebanon with 10.2% show highest percentage that perceives the world “A lot worse off” due to

science and technology. Comparing the countries, Libya with 74.6% and Qatar with 50.1% show the highest percentage of respondents with no formal education who perceive the world being *A lot better off* because of science and technology. However, respondents with university degree in Libya with 54.9% and Kuwait with 43.3% show the highest percentage among other countries in this selection that find the world *a lot better off* with science and technology.

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## ICT and Education in the Muslim Context: Barriers and Challenges

Today, information and communication technology (ICT) has a considerable role in schools, universities, and state organizations across the Muslim world, including the Iranian case. Despite all challenges, the information and communication technology was on Iranian government's agenda with the millennium goals for development. Office of the Deputy for Social Affairs at the Iran's State Management and Planning Organization of Iran (MPO) in cooperation with Institute for Management and Planning Studies and United Nations in Iran delivered the first Millennium Development Goals Report in 2004 entitled *Achievements and Challenges*. The "Increasing access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT)" was one of the main challenges of reaching millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2015 that was noted in this report. The most important challenges in demand of systematic efforts to reach MDGs listed before ICT were: "(a) Reducing both the population under the national poverty line and the poverty gap. (b) Providing the facilities needed for universal primary education in the deprived provinces. (c) Creating job opportunities for women, particularly the educated ones, and their increased participation in the country's decision-making system. (d) Improving qualitatively the maternal health programs. (e) Seriously confronting HIV/AIDS spread, eliminating malaria and controlling tuberculosis. (f) Preventing environmental degradation."

Amir-Ebrahimi (2008a) argues that, "despite the dominant religious state established after the Islamic Revolution, modernization and Westernization have spread in Iranian society, albeit unevenly, with rapid urbanization, higher rates of literacy and education, and burgeoning women's activities, compounded by the recent emergence of new technologies, such as satellite communication networks, the Internet, and mobile phones, in the lives of middle-class Iranians." Sayari et al. (2012) note that the increasing advancement in ICT has caused the development of cyber higher education centers in Iran. According to this study, the "cyber university" is an educational center that offers courses and educational plans via world wide web to the students who can benefit from it from distance. Moreover, the use of ICT has facilitated possibility of educating applicants who live in different regions. One of the reasons for the necessity of organizing cyber universities in Iran was numerous higher education applicants, limitations of resources, and educational capacities. The ICT-based education in Iran, however, has not been able to completely meet the expectations concerning the access to equal educational opportunities. However, the ICT-based education has influenced equal opportunities in education positively by providing the possibility of low-cost education for applicants



that work during the day and also girls at home and using experienced professors and higher educational facilities for deprived regions.

Universities in Tehran are well equipped with technological infrastructures; however, using ICT as one of the main tools for education was not a common norm, when the joint course – mentioned earlier – was conducted. Assessing higher education in Iran, Hamdhaidari et al. (2008) find “two different tales.” For reform aspects, they refer to using a wide range of ICT besides the rapid expansion of higher education and research, widening access, decentralization, and gender equality. However, the shortcomings, their study refers to, include “broad curriculum not addressing rapid change,” “lack of a genuine program for real needs of the workforce,” “failure to establish pre-university guidance committees,” and “failure to expand a participatory and student-centre environment in higher education.” The abovementioned shortcomings were also addressed by the professors and graduate students attending the course in Tehran when different occasions would come up in relation to issues in relation to holding the classes we had.

Ministry of Science, Research and Technology initiated educational information and communication technology (ICT) projects especially in schools, universities, and state organizations (Kousha and Abdoli 2004) aiming to make a significant change in the direction of teaching and learning practices. However, the effective use of ICT in education requires reform in educational methodologies which still are dominated by traditional methods. The government’s plan for promoting ICT in education was focused on development of Iran’s national scientific network to promote web-based information exchange among universities and research centers, developing virtual universities, and also required strategies, policies, organizations, management systems, learning models and hardware and software technologies for this purpose, and providing academic publications in electronic format. The implementation of the policies for promoting the use of ICT in Education, especially in schools, universities, and state organizations made a significant change in the direction of teaching and learning practices (Hamdhaidari, et al. 2008).

In the case of the joined course in Iran, while the university provided full support in terms of administration and permissions for facilitating the technological requirements of holding the course, the administration process was demanding at some points, as the established teaching methods followed a different normative structure that did not require technology and high internet speed as we needed to conduct the course. As a result, accessing the Internet with sufficient speed for holding the online guest lecture required bureaucratic process and communicating with the university headquarters, which took place in a timely, however, effective manner. Tavakol (2011, p. 301) suggests, “The realization of a serious virtual education and higher education depends on the introduction of a new educational system, to surpass the traditional education. Without that ICT application remains at a ceremonial, lucrative, and superficial level.”

Holding the course for two groups of masters and doctorate students was insightful regarding mechanism through which technology can facilitate new learning and teaching norms in a particular educational setting. Tehran has a majority Muslim population, and therefore Islamic social norms comprise the major official culture in public spaces. This fact makes an inevitable challenge concerning teaching and

learning norms when a non-Islamic teaching party is involved in conducting the course. Among these challenges, one may refer to social norms in the classroom and communicating with students, norms around teaching tasks and being aware of the respect for Islamic beliefs and values during the lectures, conflict of student-center rather than teacher-center methods, technology and inquiry-oriented learning and teaching versus traditional textbook-oriented learning. Tavakol (*ibid.*) referring to the “real problems” of using ICT for education in Iran, and realization of higher education “new expectations of social relevance, equity, and national development” argues for the necessity of “change in policy” – a change that concerns higher education from within, and society. “This generation is not satisfied with traditional styles and methods, the classroom and teacher, and individual styles and dogmatic obedience. And this can heavily influence the future changes not only in education but in wider society.”

Hence, factors that restrict introduction of ICT to education in Iran (*ibid.*) include lack of a comprehensive ICT-based educational policy, conservative attitudes, oversensitivity and control over educational matters including organizational, managerial, communication, and content-production matters – including ICT-based education, weakness of IT-literacy among policy-makers, managers, and teachers, lack of complementary and orchestrated software, hardware and management, resulted in a non-structured and partial introduction of ICT into educational institutions, adoption of parallel networks and programs in ICT application, lack of certainty and confidence in projects initiated, and inefficiency of communication backbone and networking, and lack of basic needs of ICT. Sayari et al. (2012), however, note that the restrictions and barriers on the way of using ICT in education in Iran include: non-adoptability of schoolteachers with up-to-date hardware and software; insufficient knowledge of ICT; weak ICT infrastructures and lack of access to high-speed internet in some regions; low-speed internet and filtering the some scientific websites; occasional nonstandard educational content; time issue in electronic education requiring the student to connect to the teacher and class at a specific time; necessity of having actual classes, in some courses, to which attending physically is necessary; and high costs.

Research suggests that countries with majority Muslim population share common challenges in regard to ICT and education. The study by Abdul Razak et al. (2014) draws on the issue of development of science and technology which led to changes in dissemination of information and knowledge in classrooms, by investigating the knowledge, skills, and the use of ICT and attitudes of 70 excellent Islamic education teachers towards ICT in Selangor, Malaysia. One of the findings of this study refers to teachers’ awareness of the importance of ICT as an innovation towards improving the quality of teaching and learning Islamic Education which must be improved in Malaysian context. Also, their study suggests putting efforts to apply ICT in teaching and learning process as it could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning outcomes.

Through the use of ICT as a teaching tool, the process of teaching and learning will be more interesting and effective . . . With the initiation of ICT, teachers can diversify their teaching methods and even can improve the quality of teaching by using various facilities available in ICT. (*ibid.*)

In their study in Bangladesh, Hossain Khan et al. (2012) indicate the following factors as barriers to effective use of ICT in education: social and cultural factors – gender inequality for accessing ICT, as half of the population of Bangladesh are women who are relatively deprived of access to the advantages of technology; corruption; teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about ICT; lack of knowledge and skill; lack of time; political will of the people in the corridors of power; vision and plan; ICT-supported infrastructure and insufficient funds.

Bangladesh is one of the developing countries that lack the resources and appropriate infrastructure for implementing ICT in education. The effective use of ICT would require the availability of equipment, supplies of computers and their proper maintenance including other accessories. Most of the rural areas in Bangladesh do not have electricity and therefore one cannot even run a computer in the first place. (ibid.)

Discussing the policies, perceptions, and ICT use by the teachers in Saudi Arabia, Oyaid (2009) finds time constraints, lack of training, and financial issues as three main factors hindering the teacher’s ICT use. He argues that, teachers’ ICT use is guided by policies: ICT use is more influenced by schools’ policy than Ministry of Education policy which they are either unaware of or do not fully understand because of difficulties in implementing it. Finally, teachers anticipated future changes in their role towards being a facilitator and advisor. Teachers hoped for comprehensive improvement of education, radical curriculum change, and in-service teacher trainings to improve the use of ICT in education.

Wiseman and Anderson (2012) argue that countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates that experienced relatively recent and dramatic introduction of ICT into formal education as part of comprehensive national development strategies, are examples for the “importance of national innovation in the development of whole economies, societies and political systems because of their rapid economic growth and the widespread impact that ICT tools have had on the development of the region and its people.” However, they also indicate that, while there is some international evidence of ICT being used for knowledge development in schools, this trend has not extended to the GCC.

ICT-based education in the GCC does not contribute to the development of national innovation systems nor knowledge production capacity through self-directed knowledge creation, acquisition or implementation among students to the level policymakers and educators expect, nor in response to increasingly innovation-oriented policies and development goals. There is evidence, however, that an infrastructure for innovation development may be developing through national education systems in the GCC, which is focused on the development of teachers’ pedagogy and ICT use . . . (ibid.)

Allocation of budget to ICT for education is an important step; however, previous research shows that the level of expenditure does not solve the problem by itself. Wiseman and Anderson (2012), concerning ICT-integrated education and national innovation systems in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries, found that despite the availability of resources, “teaching and learning in the GCC largely remains the same as it did before ICT was introduced. Instruction is primarily

teacher-centred and focuses on students' development of lower-order thinking skills and processes." Moreover, the development of national innovation infrastructure is likely bound to the degree national education systems incorporate ICT. However, the incorporation of ICT in national education systems "does not necessarily mean that the system transforms to promote innovation. Evidence suggests that education systems in the Gulf that have increased access to ICT tools at the classroom level often still mirror the pre-ICT educational culture (Al-Sulaimani 2010)." Wiseman and Anderson (2012) refer to the fact that policymakers usually think "schools acquiring new technologies" are a "sufficient catalyst for innovation in both internal productivity (e.g., school teaching and learning) and external productivity (e.g., labor market participation and knowledge production)"; However, technology and tools do not create innovation rather it is the ways technology is integrated into learning that creates the opportunity for innovation through students' application and experimentation in real-world situations beyond the classroom.

According to Wiseman and Anderson, if ICT in education is used "in a way that responds to Islamic values and Arab contextual norms while also reflecting the need for institutions to keep pace with international economic demands," it can be used for developing a national innovation system that responds to and guides innovation nationwide, build national research and development capacity through national education system which poses the most potential for nationwide implementation and long-term sustainability. Besides, access to ICT tools alone is not the primary factor in students' development of ICT competencies; classrooms across the GCC are generally not affected by a lack of technology, however, students are not engaged with ICT-based instruction in a way that promotes knowledge production capacity. It is how students use, and learn to use, ICT tools in school that can connect formal education to research development and innovation (RDI) and national innovation systems (NIS) development in the GCC. Their study show teacher-centered instructional practice in GCC science classrooms, and the fact that teachers' engagement in ICT-related professional development has no significant impact on their pedagogical practice, or on student learning outcomes. In fact, as Wiseman and Anderson suggest, "ICT is only used for remediation and not incorporated to engage students in self-directed acquisition, application, or creation of knowledge" outside of teacher-directed instructional tasks. Moreover, culture and gender norms play an important role in how ICT is incorporated in education as culture and the culture of schooling, e.g., across the GCC may limit girls' use of ICT for knowledge development in formal schooling. Moreover, culture of schooling and of the school's community can limit how ICT is used, demonstrated both by the cultural factors concerning teachers' roles in instruction in the GCC as well as the limits on students' Internet use. In order to capitalize on the institutional capacity of national education systems in the GCC to use ICT, dedicated and sustainable teacher training and professional development requires a reorientation of the instructional culture in the GCC to enable teachers to use available ICT resources for innovation.

Mohammadi (2015) in his study of M-learning (Mobile Learning) in Iran concludes that the "ease of use, usefulness, subjective norm, perceived image, personal innovativeness, individual mobility, and self-efficacy" positively affect "users'

actual use – all indirectly and through satisfaction and intention. Subjective norms appear to have a greater positive effect than others” in M-learning adoption. The study conducted by Sarrab (2014) shows that Omani Undergraduate Students have good M-learning awareness and acceptance level, positive attitude, and interest in the use of mobile devices as learning tools. This study was conducted with the purpose of defining the meaning of M-learning and evaluating the student’s acceptance of M-learning among university undergraduate students in computer engineering and computer science at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Islam Khan et al. (2015) discuss constraints in the M-Learning adoptions in terms of the technical constraints including communication infrastructure, software application and content customization, and the non-technical consisting of operational feasibility (trust, awareness, training, and cultural norms) and financial support. Learning is influenced by the social and cultural elements and the cultural factors influencing the adoption of M-Learning cannot be ignored in spite of complexity. The study emphasizes that the “clear understanding of social and cultural norms and practical experience of the region” by policymakers while designing M-learning policies for the Middle East. “Cultural norms and customized contents define how the course material is adapted in order to fit local culture, language, and religious beliefs (for instance; images and symbols should be appropriate for the local culture in order to not be offensive or simply confusing.). Thus, the need of hour is to develop learning contents and websites in the local language for the mobile devices so to address the needs of remote learners” (Islam Khan et al. 2015).

The assessment of ICT literacy of Iranian teachers conducted by Pourkarimi and Nazarzadeh Zare (2016) shows that, “the fundamental training in the field of ICT literacy for teachers is very essential in the education system, because fluency of ICT skills can help them to increase better performance, and subsequently to increase self-value, motivation, feeling of success and productivity in the work environment.”

Whereas many studies focus on ICT in terms of infrastructure and feasibility through training and wide-spread access, limiting access through filtering still remains as one of the main challenges across the Muslim countries. On one extreme is Saudi Arabia, which heavily censors social content; there is substantial political filtering carried out in Saudi Arabia, but it is done with less scope and depth. On the other fringe are Syria and China, focusing much more of their extensive filtering on political topics. Myanmar is also notable for primary focus on political issues. In Iran, filtering is a considerable part of information access today, gaining control over the Internet, a filtering proxy displays a block page when a blocked Website is requested (Delbert et al. 2004).

ICT following the norms of modern society offers choice to the learner, including religious values and interests. Adelpkhan (1998, p. 108) in *Being Modern in Iran* writes, “on a more serious note, the believer concerned to perfect his knowledge of the Book can obtain at least three disks of what should really be called ‘Qur’anic games’-*Ṭūbā*, *Rizvān*, *Ṭāhā*- which can help him to familiarize himself, in an interactive fashion, with the verses of the Qur’ān, religious knowledge and the lives of the saints, in Persian, English or French. There is no reason to suppose that the ‘Qur’anic games’ will supplant electronic games of the ‘Atari’ type which are all

the rage among the young generations. But they show at any rate that Islam has entered the era of mass media and new information technology.” Amir Ebrahimi (2008a) notes, “from the first years of the Internet’s entrance into Iran, the *Hawzah ‘Ilmiyah Qum* (Religious School of Qum) became the first religious center to develop an Internet center for its students (*talabahs*) and to provide them with computers and high-speed Internet. After a while, the *Āstān-i Quds-i Rażavī* in Mashhad also joined Qum, and both offered their low-priced services to the whole country. Early on, many grand *Āyatullāhs* opened virtual offices (*bayt-i majāzī*) in multiple languages on the Internet, where they and their staff answered the questions of ordinary people.”

Despite all the advancements, the incorporation of ICT in national education systems “does not necessarily mean that the system transforms to promote innovation. Evidence suggests that education systems, for instance in the Gulf that have increased access to ICT tools at the classroom level often still mirror the pre-ICT educational culture” (Al-Sulaimani 2010 as cited in Wiseman and Anderson 2012).

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## Conclusion

As a result of information and communication technologies used for the purpose of education, the teaching and learning has faced transformations and new phases. The use of ICT can be challenging in the countries where religious norms largely influence the public spaces, as Internet content involves different values. However, space (classroom, cyberspace, education setting) is a persistent element of ICT and education as hosting the circulation of meanings (e.g., the ideas exchanged) while religion and values play a significant role in forming the space in which learning takes place.

Cyberspace involves many value types if not all, and technology facilitates access and communication of various value types. Today, it is evident that all users can utilize cyberspace for development of their personal projects, ideas, and thinking. Pursuing one’s interest takes accessing material through the web and search engines facilitate the process. However, while it is true that countries try to influence the flow of information by filtering, technology presents endless nodes to reconnect. Hence, cyberspace is an arena for all the values to extremes of any direction either we call it openness or conservation. This is while some values are used and interact with the users more in the cyberspace compared to the rest due to the population and interests of users all around the world.

Actual physical space of the classroom remains an arena for reinforcement of meanings and ideas regarding values brought up during the interactions. The prior normative structure of the educational setting where the classroom is located has a crucial role presenting the types of values that dominate communication. It is worth taking into account that value-formation and norm processes being influenced and connected to the interactions taking place at their geography do not change overnight and require time. Hence, even if we assume that a classroom adopts and pursues new norms in relation to teaching and learning, the preceding norms and culture of education still hold a strong influence communicating incoherent meanings to the learner.

The *interrelations* between cyberspace, technology, and actual physical space of the classroom can make a change in normative structures within the educational

setting if the culture of the context, looking into the newly presented way, finds meanings that are valuable to its promotion and growth. Hence, in the context of Muslim countries, due to the significance of religion and tradition norms it is important to have a “culturally informed” ICT incorporation policy that facilitates use of information communication technology for education while taking into account the nuances of culture and values that engage educators and learners. Yet, as much as reaching this goal does not seem unmanageable, it is challenging. The challenge exists due to the primary differences of the founding values of network society and information technology versus traditional ways, posing opposing axis and counter positions assuming conservation versus openness, self-directed thinking, and actions versus self-subordination and considering others and social expectations. These contra forces in the education setting and classroom affect and put restrictions on inquiry-based learning/teaching, free thinking, and creativity.

The author’s experience through leading joint courses and online lectures in Iran indicate that in spite of all regional and national plans and expenditure on ICT in education, the educational institutions still honor the existing normative structures in regard to learning and teaching. In the Iranian context, the university was equipped with the most of the up-to-date information technology; however, social and bureaucratic norms (Hydén and Svensson 2008) would decide who, how, and when the equipment was used for educational purposes – which was beyond students and instructors’ authority. Hence, although students were eager to use more of technology in their learning, the infrastructures run by conservative norms did not allow an unlimited spontaneous contact, inquiry, and access via Internet. Similar experience in the Gulf context was mentioned by Wiseman and Anderson (2012) who argue that developing “or invigorating a NIS through Gulf countries’ national education systems is fraught with obstacles – both institutionalized and newly formed – ranging from cultural conflicts to individual resistance.” Indeed, whereas ideally ICT in education is expected to function as a catalyst for the national development and enhancing innovation, the reality is much more challenging, and the challenges are far from solely lack of the vernacular technology products for educational use or the “teacher-centered educational culture.” Allocation of budget for ICT research does not take away the teacher-centered methods, while prior attitudes concerning new tools and techniques restrict the expected development. The experiences of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries show that despite the availability of resources, “teaching and learning” largely remained the same as before ICT was introduced and still mirror the pre-ICT educational culture.

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# Education of Religious Minorities in Muslim Countries

Clinton Bennett

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## Abstract

Beginning with a description of the status of non-Muslims in Muslim spaces during the classical period, this chapter surveys current practices in education provision in Muslim-majority states for non-Muslims. Muslim majority states range from states that self-define as Islamic, to states where Islam is the established or state religion, to states that are officially or in practice secular. Opportunities for the education of non-Muslims ranges from no special state funded provision where all students receive the same education to the existence of some special provision – usually in religious education. Or, as in Pakistan, non-Muslims are offered an alternative to Islamic instruction, which is not specifically religious in nature. The first category may deliver secular education (with no religious instruction) or it may include instruction in Islam for all students, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Non-Muslim communities often run their own education institutions, in some instances with state support. Muslims may attend these institutions, some of which are regarded as prestigious. Where there are larger non-Muslim populations as well as more religious diversity,

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special provision is almost always provided. Where there are officially no non-Muslims or where non-Muslims are very few (or are non-citizens) such as in Saudi Arabia and in the Gulf States, no provision exists. Systems of universal, free public education almost all began under colonial rule. Post-independence, secular systems left over from colonialism sometimes exist alongside distinctly Islamic schools, which may be privately funded or receive state funding.

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### Keywords

Algeria · *Ahl al-Kitāb* · Bangladesh · Christians · Colonialism · Convention on the Rights of the Child · *Dhimmī* · Egypt · Gulf States · Hindus · Iran · Indonesia · Islamic rule · Jews · Jordan · Malaysia · Morocco · Nigeria · non-Muslims · Organization of Islamic Cooperation · Pact of ‘Umar · Private schools · Public schools · Saudi Arabia · Senegal · Syria · Tunisia · Pakistan · *zakāt*

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## Introduction

Beginning with a description of the status of Christians in Islam during the classical period, this chapter focuses on the current legal and social situation of Christians living in Muslim majority states. These states range from some that self-define as Islamic, to states where Islam is the established or state religion, to states that are officially or in practice secular. Examples of the former are Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Pakistan. Examples of the latter include Albania and Turkey. Indonesia officially affirms belief in God as a principle of state but effectively operates as a secular society. Bangladesh, which established Islam as its state religion in 1988, was defined as secular in its first constitution (1971), and restored this in the 15th Amendment (2011). One barometer of rights and opportunities for non-Muslims in Muslim-majority states that this chapter explores is whether they enjoy any provision for religious education, and what that comprises, within the public system. Of course, Christians and other minorities often run their own education institutions, in some instances with state support. Muslims may attend these institutions, some of which are highly prestigious.

Where there are larger non-Muslim populations as well as more religious diversity, alternative provision almost always exists and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are often friendly. Where there are officially no or very few non-Muslims or where they are all non-citizens such as in Saudi Arabia and in the Gulf States, no alternative provision exists. Post-independence, secular systems left over from colonialism sometimes operate alongside distinctly Islamic schools, which may be privately funded or receive state funding (for example, Turkey). Most states experienced a transition from the classical to their current status. Depending on whether relations between the Muslim majority and minorities are good or strained, the latter may experience restrictions and hostility. One issue here is that some sources exaggerate or downplay this, depending on whether they want to depict Islam as inherently intolerant of other faiths or whether they dispute this.

Non-Muslim communities may date from ancient times such as Christianity in Syria and Egypt and Hinduism in Pakistan and Bangladesh, or result from more recent times due for example to Christian missionary outreach.

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## Non-Muslims Under Islamic Rule: Classical Status

The rights and status of non-Muslims especially Christians and Jews living under Islamic rule were traditionally defined by legal conventions and statutes concerning *dhimmī* or protected communities, derived from Qur'ānic verses such as IX: 29, "Fight those who do not believe in Allāh . . . who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture – until they give the *jizyah* while they are humbled," from *ḥādīth* or sayings of Muḥammad and from accounts of how he related with Christians, Jews, and with other People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) or Scripturaries. The Pact of 'Umar, dated approximately 717 C.E., often attributed to the second Sunnī caliph, who died in 644 or to 'Umar I (682-720), is also important. Also, relevant are early conventions regulating military engagement, including Qur'an XXII: 40 and Abū Bakr's rules, which protect synagogues and churches as well as mosques from damage and monks, with other non-combatants, from harm.

Classically, People of the Book were permitted to practice their religion, govern their internal affairs, and take part, with certain restrictions, in commercial and civil life alongside Muslims. They were free to nurture their children in their faith, and to establish whatever educational and other institutions they wished to serve their own community, but they could not evangelize Muslims. Leaders of each protected community were appointed with the Muslim ruler's approval. They were responsible for collecting *jizyah* (the poll-tax which is levied on non-Muslims in Muslim states) and represented the community at court. Protected status was in return for paying the *jizyah*, or tribute. The Qur'an names Christians, Jews, and Sabaeans as people of the book. Later, Zoroastrians and Hindus were included. One restriction was that *dhimmī* did not bear arms; thus, payment of tribute guaranteed protection. Actually, despite this, non-Muslims sometimes did serve in the military or fight for Muslim rulers, while Muslims sometimes gained exemption by paying the tribute. In 639, the Christians in Antioch signed a pact that allowed them to serve "in the Muslim army" with all the "rights of soldiers, including a share in the spoils" (Courbage and Fargues 1997: 13). In Andalusia, El Cid (1043–1099) fought for and against Muslim rulers (Fletcher 2003: 89). Often initially fixed by a treaty, the amount varied. Conventions stipulate an affordable level, although non-Muslims usually paid higher taxes than Muslims; both paid *kharāj* (originally, a tax on land paid by non-Muslims; later, a general tax on everyone) but instead of the *jizyah*, Muslims paid *zakāt* (donation to charity) which was usually less than *jizyah*. *Jizyah* was a per capita tax levied on those of military age capable of armed service; priests and monks were thus exempt. Muslim rulers, however, could only spend *zakāt* to alleviate poverty; *jizyah* could offset military and administrative expenses. In the late Ottoman period, with exemptions for non-Muslims whose work, in utilities and administration, were

considered essential, about one third “actually paid the *jizyah*” (Courbage and Fargues 1997: 107).

It was not unusual for non-Muslims to convert in order to pay less tax; in fact, converts were sometimes still required to pay *jizyah* because Muslim rulers needed to collect this more flexible revenue (Courbage and Fargues 1997: 23). Other restrictions included wearing distinctive dress, although this was not always enforced. There were limits on building and repairing places of worship. *Dhimmī*s could teach their religion to their children but not to Muslims; there was also a ban on reading the Qurʾān. Collection of *jizyah* was sometimes accompanied by its bearer being seized by the beard and struck on the head or beneath the ear to indicate their humble or subordinate status, based on an interpretation of Qurʾān IX: 29 (see above) as requiring the debasement or humiliation of *jizyah* payers. Other conventions forbid this. Often, *dhimmī* participated in many areas of life under Muslim rule. Government posts, including senior ones, were available; some Muslim regimes abandoned this policy, removing non-Muslims from office and citing a verse such as V: 51, “do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies.” Caliph al-Mʿutasim (833–842) “had two Christian ministers, one in finance,” while his successor “dismissed all Christians from his administration” (ibid.: 25). At times, *dhimmī*s were even included in the consultative process of *shūrā* that advised Muslim rulers. *Zakāt*, too, could be distributed to *dhimmī*s when necessary. On the one hand, the task of nurturing children in faith was entirely a *dhimmī* responsibility; on the other hand, at times non-Muslims took part in wider intellectual and scholarly life. This was especially true in the early years of Baghdad’s House of Wisdom, where the first chief translator was a Christian, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (809–873), and during the Umayyad period in Andalusia (756–1031). There, Christian scholars from Europe joined Muslims and Jews in Spain in collaborative academic pursuits. *Dhimmī* was often rendered “protected minority”; in fact, non-Muslims were frequently majorities; even in the Fertile Crescent, it took about three centuries before Muslims became a small majority. Despite stereotypical ideas of Islam being spread by the sword, large numbers of non-Muslims continued to live in Muslim-ruled space for very long periods. At times, their numbers increased. For example, in the Ottoman census for Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in 1580 Christians and Jews were 8.1% and 0.9%, respectively; by 1882 they were 24.5% and 1.3% (ibid.: 82). This increase was partly due to higher birth rates, partly (for Jews) due to settlement from elsewhere where persecution was rampant, but it was also a result of *not fighting wars*, which Muslim did and *dhimmī* usually did not (ibid.: 115). At least in the early period, places of worship were at times shared; after the conquest of Damascus, Muslims prayed in half of the Cathedral, Christian in another, while a church in Homs “provided shelter for the services of the two religions for four centuries” (ibid.: 10–11).

It was actually the arrival of Christian Crusaders from Europe that ended this tradition. Until the late nineteenth century, Jewish communities flourished in Muslim-ruled space. This has subsequently changed. Jewish settlement in Palestine from 1881 and later developments especially the creation of Israel in 1948 saw a growth of anti-Jewish sentiment and hostility and many Jews left Muslim space. The *millet-dhimmī* system ended in the Ottoman Empire in 1839, when the *Tanzīmāt*

reforms began. All subjects of the empire became equal under the law. This survey of the status of non-Muslims in Muslim-ruled space establishes that the classical pattern was that while Muslim government made no alternative provision for non-Muslim education, non-Muslims sometimes participated in wider intellectual and civil life.

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### **Transition: From Protected Minority to Equal Citizens**

In almost all Muslim-majority states today, non-Muslims are equal citizens under the law, although some aspects of the classical system remain, for example, non-Muslims may retain responsibility for legalizing marriages, and divorce, and for certain other areas of personal law. Attempting to convert Muslims and defaming Islam may be illegal. In many Muslim states, non-Muslims have served and serve in government; in Bangladesh Promode Mankin, a Christian, was a minister of state from 2009 to 2012 (Christians are approximately 0.3%) and several Hindus (10%) have held cabinet posts. Christians in Jordan serve in senior diplomatic, military, and government office and almost always in the cabinet. Egypt has had senior Christian cabinet members. Saddam Hussein's deputy Prime Minister was a Christian. Pakistan's fourth Chief Justice was a Christian. There may be a constitutional bar on non-Muslims serving as Head of State. Some non-Muslims were never officially *dhimmi*, which is true for non-Muslims in Indonesia, in many parts of Africa while relatively few aspects of the classical tradition applied to non-Muslims under Muslim rule in India.

The experience of non-Muslims varies. In places where their presence dates back centuries, such as Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, they were often also part of the anti-colonial, nationalist struggle, regarded as co-founders of the modern state. Elsewhere, where their presence was mainly associated with colonialism, when Christian missionaries were permitted and sometimes encouraged, their post-independence status is more ambiguous. On the one hand, they are almost everywhere equal citizens. On the other, they may be regarded as alien, out-of-step with the rest of the nation. Following the perceived failure of post-independence, Western-oriented states economically and in such areas as transparency and democracy, some Muslims champion what they believe are Islamic alternatives. Some tarnish non-Muslims with supporting illegitimate regimes and are hostile toward them. Depending on what reforms are introduced and on what shape some states take, current provisions for or absence of provision for non-Muslims' education may change. It is likely, though, that the patterns described in this chapter will persist.

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### **Contemporary Patterns: No Alternative Provision**

In contemporary contexts, the classical pattern continues in those Muslim-majority states that offer non-Muslims no alternative or differentiated educational provision. Examples here include Morocco. There, religious instruction is part of public education; non-Muslims, a small population, and Muslims receive Islamic religious

education. Jews and Christians are less than 1%. Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Another example where all students receive Islamic religious instruction is Saudi Arabia; Saudi is perhaps unique, though, because non-Muslims are not officially recognized. Albania also makes no alternative provision for non-Muslims; however, secular state religious education is presently not part of the curriculum. Algeria provides Islamic religious education to all students, Muslim and non-Muslim (less than 2%), which is a requirement. Private schools were banned after independence (1962) (Jeynes 2011: 16). Existing church-related schools were confiscated. Many Christians left the country. Private schools began opening again in 1990 but only a few have been officially recognized since they were legalized again in 2003. Christian schools report difficulties and hostility including deportation of expatriate teachers and enforced closure. All registered private schools must submit their curricular to the ministry of education. Tunisia also teaches Islamic education to all students in public schools (nine years approximately 1.5 credit hours per week) but Christianity and Judaism are covered in social studies and Islam's tolerance of these religions "is highlighted as an Islamic value" (Faour 2012: 9). The Chief Rabbi's salary is paid by the government which also provides security at synagogues. Jewish students are permitted to spend part of the school day in a Jewish school for Jewish education (there are six primary and four secondary Jewish schools). Two state-run schools accept Jewish students. The Catholic Church (the only officially recognized Christian body; it signed an agreement in 1964 to promote Church-state harmony) currently operates nine schools where many students are Muslim. They aim to teach all students universal values that Muslims and Christians share and to encourage democratic ideals but are allowed to offer Christian instruction for Christians. The United Arab Emirates offer no alternative public provision for non-Muslims. Non-Muslims in the UAE are expatriates; Islamic studies "are mandatory in both public and private schools" and "private schools found teaching subjects that contravene Islam . . . may face penalties including closure" (Briegel 2008: 324). Iran makes no state provision for non-Muslim education. Private religious schools are permitted for Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews but not for Bahā'ī (regarded as heretical), which are funded by the relevant minority community but regulated by the state. Only approved texts are taught. Since 1983, Farsi has been the sole medium for all religious instruction. School directors must be Muslim. Co-ed or mixed sex teaching is illegal; women must observe Islamic dress code (*hijāb*). In pre-1979 Iran, Christianity could not be taught in any secondary school (from 1927) (Van Gorder 2010: 146).

In this category of "no alternative state provision," there are some examples of government hostility to private Christian and non-Muslim education. For example, in the Muslim majority Nigerian state of Kano, schools have been closed, accused of operating illegally; Christian leaders complain that they are being forced to employ Muslim teachers to "indoctrinate" their children (World Watch Monitor 2002). Several other contexts where previously no alternative provision was offered include Turkey and Pakistan, where all students were required to take Islamic religious studies. Changes in the curriculum offered in these two Muslim majority states now accommodate religious minorities.

## Contemporary Patterns: Alternative Provision

This pattern is widespread. It meets the requirements of the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child. In some respects, it departs from the classic tradition that left education in the hands of non-Muslim communities, while the state sponsored Islamic education for the Muslim majority.

The idea that the state has a responsibility to educate all children, regardless of creed, that education should be universal and free, is a relatively recent one. In Europe, this developed in the late nineteenth century. During the colonial period, attempts were made to make education available to all citizens, although in most contexts this effort was limited because either children did not attend or sufficient funds were not available. Also, in most contexts, what was taught was a Western curriculum in a European language as part of a broader policy of making Africans and others as much like their French, English, and Dutch masters as possible. In some places, this policy included state support for privately run Christian schools. In fact, it was often during the colonial period that non-Muslim communities, perhaps with assistance from their fellow religionists overseas, began to build and run primary and secondary schools. Until then, education opportunities were mainly confined to religious institutions that trained Rabbis and priests such as the Jewish academies in Iraq and the Coptic Theological Seminary in Cairo, which traces its origin to the Alexandria Catechetical School of the early Christian centuries. In addition, artisans would teach apprentices their craft. During the colonial and mandate periods, Muslim institutions, previously funded by the state, were neglected, while church-related schools became “quasi state schools.” Thus, in Lebanon and Syria, the Ottoman pattern of Muslim schools receiving state-funds and Christian schools private funding was more or less reversed under the French mandates (Thompson, 2000: 79). What was not taught during this era was anything Islamic, even if Christianity was absent from the curriculum in the public sector. In reaction, post-independence regimes wanted to restore Islamic values and subjects to the curriculum, as well as using public education to nurture a national identity. In contexts such as Algeria and Syria, church-run schools were seen as problematic. In both states, they were nationalized; in Syria, private Muslim schools were nationalized as well as Christian schools. In Syria, however, provision is made for non-Muslims (Christian, Druze) and also for various Muslim groups to receive religious instruction in their own faith (Aldosari 2007: 272). A few private schools have opened since nationalization. They follow the state curriculum. More usually, private Christian schools exist alongside some alternative provision for religious instruction within the state system. Some Christian schools give free tuition; many are fee-based. Church sponsored schools and universities across the Muslim world often attract large numbers of Muslim students. Some, such as the American University, Cairo and Beirut, Foreman Christian College, Lahore and Notre Dame College, Dhaka, among others, are considered premier academic institutions. These may follow a state mandated curriculum or prepare students for overseas qualifications. Private schools are often also subject to state regulation. Several schools, including the American Universities in Cairo and Beirut and Forman Christian



College are accredited with the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States.

Among Muslim majority states that offer religious minorities instruction in their own faiths are Bangladesh, Jordan, Egypt, and Indonesia. Usually, parents have the option of choosing Islamic studies or instruction in their own religion. In Bangladesh, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian studies are taught by a member of the tradition or children are transported to a faith venue (church or temple) for instruction. In fact, most Christian children attend schools run by their faith communities. This is also the situation in Indonesia, which recognizes six religions (Catholic, Protestant, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islam) and children have the option of religious education in their own faith taught by a practitioner of that faith but many non-Muslims attend private schools. Religious instruction is a compulsory subject. Most private religious schools are Christian - four provinces are majority Christian - although some are run by Hindus and Buddhists. In Egypt, a Ministry of Education initiative commissioned scholars from al-Azhar, Cairo's ancient seat of Islamic learning and from the Coptic Church to produce an Ethics curriculum stressing common values among Jews, Christians, and Muslims and to "promote ethical norms and citizenship" (Sayed 2006: 35). This new curriculum was introduced in 1993 (Leirvik 2010: 1043). Christian studies had been offered Christian students in public schools in Egypt since 1907, when it was introduced in schools that had at least 15 Christian students. This was paid for by the Christian community. Since 1951, Christian studies became available to all Christians in public schools. In return, Muslims attending Christian schools receive instruction in Islamic studies. A requirement in the 1930s that all secondary school children during the first two years take an examination on the Qur'an met Christian opposition; Christians were then exempted. In Egypt, all schools are regulated by the state and must teach the same official curriculum; this applies equally to private Islamic schools, such as those run by the Muslim Brotherhood. Some Christians in Egypt complain that while their tax supports Islamic education, Christian schools do not receive any state support. In Bangladesh, some complain that those teaching non-Muslim religions lack appropriate training or that they are not practitioners of the religion being taught. While Christianity is presented favorably in the new Egyptian curriculum, which Christians helped prepare, references to Jews tend to reinforce stereotypes about their inherent deceitfulness (Leirvik 2010: 1043).

Another departure from the classic pattern of minorities running and funding their own provision is where Muslim-majority states fund or partly fund church schools. This is the position in Malaysia and in Senegal. In Senegal, the majority of students attending state aided church schools are Muslim (Kuru and Stepan 2012: 99). A new development in Indonesia sees some Christian students attending private Muslim schools, which are cheap and achieve high standards. Reversing the more common trend where the majority of students in a Christian-run school are Muslim, in several schools run by Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization, Muḥammadiyah, between half and three-quarters of students are Christian. These parents are "unconcerned that learning in a Muslim school would pose a threat to their children's religious beliefs" (Rohman 2012). Jordan introduced the option of Christian studies

for Christians in 1997 (Leirvik 2010: 1043). As elsewhere, private Christian schools in Jordan are highly regarded by Muslims; as a deliberate show of commitment to interfaith relations members of the royal family have attended these schools.

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## Contemporary Patterns: The Turkish and Pakistani Curricular

Turkey and Pakistan represent two contexts where minority communities have limited involvement in designing or delivering the alternative curriculum offered to them within the public education system. Islam has a very different legal status in these two states but both alternatives include a focus on nurturing citizenship and national identity. Founded as a secular state, Turkey did not include religious education in the school curriculum. Until 1950, religious education was “banned” at all levels. After 1950, when multi-party politics began and religiously based parties were allowed, Islamic instruction was introduced as a compulsory subject. Non-Muslims could withdraw. However, no alternative instruction was offered. Turkey’s non-Muslim population is very small, about 0.2% (Courbage and Fargues 1997: 115). In addition, state-funded Islamic schools were introduced as alternatives to secular education. There are no state-funded non-Muslim schools in Turkey, but Christians and Jews run some private schools. In 1982, a new mandatory Religious Culture and Ethics Knowledge course replaced the older curriculum, which taught Islam as a monolithic, monochrome system (Ḥanafī Sunnī Islam). Indebted to scholars at the University of Ankara, the curriculum is more interested in cultural aspects of Islam and includes “non-Islamic religions” (Kaymakcan 2006: 457). North Cyprus adopted this curriculum, too. The current syllabus, introduced in 2011, added some non-Sunnī versions of Islam, namely, the *Alevi* (*‘Alawī*) and *Caferi* (*Ja’farī*) traditions. Non-Muslim students are now catered for in terms of religious instruction but within a curriculum that mainly focuses on Sunnī Islam, which, as the dominant religion, shapes Turkish culture. Some Christians and Jews are happy to identify with many aspects of an Islam-shaped, or “Islamicate” culture and choose to attend these classes even though they can apply for an exemption. 2011 saw recognition of the right of Jehovah Witness parents to withdraw their children. Private non-Muslim schools must also teach the curriculum but can emphasize their own faith tradition. Exemptions from attendance by non-Sunnī Muslims are available but are very difficult to obtain. Bahā’ī children cannot withdraw. Children who do receive exemptions report bullying and discrimination, and because of this, they withdrew from religious classes.

Pakistan, founded as a state for India’s Muslims, was actually conceived by Muḥammad ‘Alī Jinnāh (1876–1946) with Turkey as a model; it would be secular but its ethos, laws, and values would be Islamic. In the early period, there was a quota system that made places available for Christians and Hindus in higher education, as well as in the military and government service. However, under President Zīā al-Haq, an Islamization process began. In 1972, some village-level Christian schools were nationalized. One result of this was that fewer Christians had access to education; elite Christian institutions remained private. The prestigious Forman

Christian College (a Chartered University) in Lahore was also nationalized (1972) and run by the state until 2003, when it was handed back to the Presbyterian Church (United States). Islamic education was compulsory for all students, Muslim and non-Muslim in state schools. Islamic Studies remains mandatory for Muslims, including those studying in non-Muslim schools. Since 2009, a new policy allows non-Muslims to take an alternative course in Ethics and Pakistan Studies from the third grade up. This had been available in grades 9 and 10 since 1981. Minorities complain that Muslim perspectives dominate the curriculum, with little reference to other religions and that the alternative to Islamic studies should be Hindu and Christian studies, not ethics. However, the Aga Khan University's 2008 Higher Secondary School Certificate Curriculum for Ethics includes sections on Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christians and how prominent representatives have contributed to the well-being of society and on such personalities as Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa and their roles in promoting ethical values (Aga Khan University 2008). This is a private university. Since 2001, Pakistan has required all religiously affiliated schools to register with the government; the challenge has been registering Islamic schools, not those run by minorities. Minorities complain that texts used in Islamic studies contain negative references to Hindus and Christians, according to a 2009 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom report (Leo 2009: 93).

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## Conclusion

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has 57 member states of which 47 have Muslim majorities (others and five observer states have large Muslim populations). This chapter has not described the situation involving the education of non-Muslims in all 47 Muslim majority contexts. Those contexts that have been described were chosen because of the availability of information. However, *vis-à-vis* contexts that were not described or analyzed, it is likely that one of the patterns discussed above exist, that is, either there is no government-funded provision but non-Muslims may provide their own educational opportunities, or government-funded alternative provision exists which may or may not involve non-Muslim involvement in the design and delivery of curricular.

Iran, where non-government funded schools must have Muslim directors, may be a unique case. Based on the available data, it can be argued that where non-Muslims represent a larger and/or more socially involved segment of the population, the predominant pattern is that alternative or differentiated provision for religious studies is available. This is true for Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, and Jordan. Where non-Muslim communities are small, such as in Algeria, there is likely to be no government funded provision or alternative. In most cases, the alternative is an option for children to study their own faith traditions. Exceptions to this pattern can be seen in Turkey and Pakistan, where the alternative represents a type of civics and values education. It is also usually the case, where no provision is made, that relations between non-Muslims and Muslims are strained or hostile, which is true in Algeria and Tunisia although post Arab Spring relations are improving in the latter

(see Maksan 2014). Almost all Muslim-majority countries permit non-Muslim private schools, with relatively few exceptions. Exceptions include two very different states, secular Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which self-defines as an Islamic state. Almost universally, such schools are highly regarded for their educational standards and often have large numbers of Muslim students. Some Muslim majority-states offer financial support to non-Muslim schools (Senegal, Malaysia) but this is almost certainly the exception, not the rule.

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# Islamic Fundamentalism, Terrorism, and Education

Val D. Rust and Carine Allaf

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## Abstract

This chapter provides a critique of why a clear-cut equation and relation between fundamentalism, terrorism, and Islamic education is difficult to demonstrate. Fundamentalism is a concept that was originally associated with Protestant religious groups and has only recently become connected with Islam. Among Muslims, this association is highly contested. Terrorism, also an elusive term having many definitions and contextual meanings, has recently become closely associated, but cannot be exclusively connected, with Islam. This chapter argues and urges that fundamentalism must not be equated with terrorism. Indeed, informal, nonformal, and formal education may all play, and not play, some role in inciting terrorism. We raise the issue of the role fundamentalist education

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might be playing in imparting values and teachings that lead to extremism, but after examining a number of studies that explore connections, we conclude that it is not possible to show a clear-cut relationship between specific forms of Islamic education and terrorism.

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**Keywords**

Fundamentalism · Terrorism · Informal education · Nonformal education · Formal education · Extremism

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## Introduction

In a post-9/11 world and more than ever today, the words Islam, fundamentalism, and terrorism have become household names; however, each of these words is loaded with a variety of meanings and connotations. Writing about these topics, Douglass and Shaikh (2004) caution that “public discussion should build on a foundation of accuracy and differentiated discourse, since attempts to reform what is poorly understood are bound to fail or backfire.” One aim of this chapter is to move away from the universalizing notion of such words as Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism and situate them into relevant contexts. Furthermore, while a growing body of literature can be found concerning Islamic fundamentalism and its relationship with terrorism, the role of education in this relationship is less clear (Norval 2001; Gabriel 2002). Another task is to draw education and schooling into the conversation.

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## Fundamentalism

The term “fundamentalism” emerged in the 1920s among Protestant Christians, who rejected the philosophical skepticism that held sway over academic and social thought and advocated a return to the fundamentals of Christianity. They advocated that American Christians return to their “theological roots” and adopt a small set of religious fundamentals (Gelvin 2005, p. 294). Those adhering to these fundamentals were labeled fundamentalists.

From its inception, fundamentalism has been associated with religion. Marty and Scott Appleby (1994, p. 3), in their comprehensive study of fundamentalism, applied the term to various religious movements that “adopted a set of strategies for fighting back against what is perceived as a concerted effort by secular states or elements within them to push people of religious consciousness and conscience to the margins of society.” They argue that the ultimate ideal of contemporary fundamentalism is to obtain a heaven or paradise, and even though movements such as Peru’s Shining Path, Germany’s Baader-Meinhof gang, or even Marxism could claim to be “secular fundamentalist,” they lack the motivating tag line that “God or an eternal award awaits them” (ibid.:18).

As late as 1985, the term “fundamentalism” remained identified by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* exclusively with Protestant Christianity (1985, volume 5). Even though from its inception Islam has fundamentalist-like features, intending to provide the unadulterated word of God to the believer, which gives answers to the basic questions of life, it provides a moral and legal code of conduct, and mandates a specific set of religious practices (Milton-Edwards 2005; Tibi 2002).

There is in Islam a tradition of reawakening, of returning to its roots. However, terms such as Islamism, normative Islam, or traditional Islam have been applied to this Islamic tradition rather than the term fundamentalism. The Ḥamīdian period toward the end of the nineteenth century, for example, “attempted to standardize Islamic belief, intermix state and religious institutions, and associate loyalty to the state with loyalty to Islam” (Gelvin 2005, p. 135), and the Young Turks’ government established an Islamic political party as a “defensive developmentalism to safeguard Islam from European imperialism” (ibid.: 137). The Iranian Revolutions from 1911 to 1979 put “Islamic politics” in the spotlight and the 1970s and 1980s marked “the beginning of a golden age for Islamic political movements throughout the region” that promoted a common agenda of returning to “Islamic values” and “Islamic norms” (ibid.: 290). Even in the West, the term “fundamentalism” was not universally applied to Islam. The French, for example, preferred a term that had been coined by Voltaire, *Islamisme*, in reference to the religion of Muḥammad. It had fallen out of favor during the past century as Orientalists tended to replace it with the term Islam. However, *Islamisme* was resurrected in the late 1970s in an attempt to reference the new politically inspired radical Islamic movements (Kepel 1985; Rodinson 1998; Burgat 1988).

The Iranian Revolution signaled the first general connection of the term “fundamentalism” with Islam, as correspondents and journalists adopted the term to label traditionalists among Muslims, who had taken over the rule of Iran. However, each Islamic movement differed greatly in terms of its own political agendas and issues and each must be studied separately to be fully comprehended. Such groups include the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ḥizbullāh, Ḥamās, Ṭālibān, al-Qāʿidah, and Islamic Jihād. More recently, ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), an offshoot of al-Qāʿidah established in 2004, now poses a threat to the entire region, if not the world. Its goal is to establish a new Islamic caliphate that will be recognized as the successor to the original Islamic Prophet, Muḥammad, across the entire Middle East.

The identity of Islam with the term fundamentalism would quickly change. By 1990, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Allen et al. 1990, p. 628) connected the term with “the strict maintenance of ancient or fundamental doctrines of any religion, especially Islam”. Although Islamists and Islamic movements advocate the return to Islamic law and values, many Middle Eastern and Muslim scholars argue against the use of the term fundamentalism because of its Western origin and the “circumstances surrounding the emergence and growth of the two movements [Christian and Muslim fundamentalism] are so different” (Gelvin 2005, p. 295). Terms such as militant, extremist, or fanatic have been used at times to replace fundamentalism, but, in the end, all these terms carry meanings and origins that are

controversial and can be contested. It is critical that each term is contextualized in order to comprehend its meaning and implications.

One thing so-called fundamentalist groups have in common is their belief that there once existed a perfect moment (an Islamic state) and they must fight the threats (leaders in their own countries and outside influences) in order to regain the idealized state (even if the ideal never actually existed) (Burek and Norton 2001). Fundamentalist leaders then “must be perceived as acting and interpreting within the bounds of tradition” (Marty and Scott Appleby 1994, pp. 21–22) and adhering to “Islamic law” and “who are tagged as authorized agents of God because they properly interpret the word.” This facilitates recruitment efforts, which allow such movements to strive and succeed.

The notion of interpretation is critical to the understanding of fundamentalism in Islam. According to Islamic teachings, any interpretation of Islam by humans is imperfect and as a result no human act or construct can be deemed purely Islamic (Douglass and Shaikh 2004). Fundamentalist groups that engage in violent activities such as suicide bombings, like the attacks against the United States Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the 9/11 attacks in 2001, or the more recent ISIS beheadings and other mass executions in Syria and Iraq, appeal to the Qur’ān in justifying their actions. Many Muslims argue that using Islam to justify violence is actually anti-Islamic (Burek and Norton 2001).

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## Terrorism

Even though terrorism has been practiced throughout history in all parts of the world, the roots of the term itself come from the French Revolution and are associated with the French word *terreur*. The term was connected with the new regime following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1789 as it established control through a “reign of terror” in France. The term was largely associated with government actions. During the twentieth century, this sense of terror continued to be identified with totalitarian states. In recent years, terrorism has come to be associated with quite a different set of enemies, particularly so-called Western powers that supported colonialism and imperialism. In the process, the term has become highly contested and now represents attempts to destabilize conditions through state-sponsored as well as revolutionary groups.

With the flaws and variety in interpretation, violent actions are executed in the name of a myriad of things. With the US-led invasion of Iraq, the discourse surrounding Iran and Pakistan’s nuclear programs, the ongoing Palestine-Israel conflict, and the current Syrian crisis (to name just a few of the ongoing conflicts), Islam, fundamentalism, and terrorism seem to be tightly intertwined and related. However, it would be foolish to equate fundamentalist-driven terrorism with one religion, in this case Islam. Ginsberg and Megahed (2003, p. 201) note, “there is nothing inherent in any religious or cultural tradition that prevents it from being used to motivate violence or terrorism.” Due to the difficulty of a pure interpretation of Islam, it is critical to remember that there is not a single vision of Islam and as a result



“it is inappropriate to condemn or applaud Islam based on the actions of one group that identifies itself as Muslim” (Arkoun 2000, p. xiii).

Krueger and Maleckova (2002, p. 33) suggest, “to use education as a part of a strategy to reduce terrorism, the international community should not limit itself to increasing years of schooling but should consider the content of education.”

There are more than 100 diplomatic and scholarly meanings of the term terrorism (ibid.) and the definition changes depending on context. Terrorism is like beauty, it is in the eye of the beholder (Ginsburg and Megahed 2003). Another perspective is that “one man’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter” (Krueger and Maleckova 2003, p. 3). In this vein, there is a fine line between terrorism and resistance. One must look at specific events and judge them according to the intentions of those engaged in the events (Kelsay 2007). For instance, one might clearly judge the 9/11 attacks and the bombings of the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 as acts of terrorism. But one could also argue, as Sluka (1999, p. 9) does that “structures, tactics, and technology of state terror have been diffused, in fact aggressively marketed and exported as a form of ‘military aid’ to developing countries,” is a form of terrorism as well. As a result, it is imperative that terrorism is viewed as a bi-directional force. It not only happens to the United States, England, and France, but these countries can engage in terrorism in other countries, and terrorism can also take place within any country for that matter, without any foreign influence.

In spite of the various meanings of the terms terrorist and terrorism, United States President George W. Bush (2001) exclaimed in an address to a joint session of Congress soon after the 9/11 attack, “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” In this speech, President Bush universalizes terrorism and does not contextualize nor deconstruct the term. And more recently, 2016 Republican candidate for the United States presidency, Donald Trump’s campaign includes a strong stance of a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States. He too conflates terrorism with one religion (Donald J. Trump Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration, 2015). The defining of such terms is necessary for any productive discourse. As such, for the purposes of this chapter, terrorism and acts of terror will be defined as attempts to destabilize conditions either through state-sponsored actions or those of independent groups.

Would it be safe to assume, then, that fundamentalism leads to violence? Marty and Appleby (1994) would argue that this is not necessarily so and point out that numerous fundamentalist Muslims have seats in parliaments in Jordanian, Indonesian, and Malaysian governments who condemn violence in the name of fundamentalism. The action of few, then, should not be used to define the ideology and view of the Muslim religion as a whole.

If fundamentalism does not necessarily bring about terrorist actions, then where does *Islam-related* terrorism come from? Haddad and Khashan (2002, p. 814) allude that “the destruction of the Islamic Caliphate some 80 years ago, the inception of European colonialism in Muslim and Arab lands, and Western endorsement of the

creation of a Jewish state in Palestine seem to better explain political Islam's grudge against the West." Historically, however, most Islamic fundamentalist movements have focused on local, confined goals. For example, Iraqi attempts to eradicate segments of its Kurdish population or the Indonesian suppression of East Timor in the 1960s or even the assassination attempts by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egyptian leaders had confined and specific aims. However, the Iran revolution of the late 1970s and 80s shifted terrorism to the international stage.

Claude Berrebi (2003) collected evidence about the link between education, poverty, and terrorism among 335 Palestinian terrorists, which he located using *shahīd* (martyr) websites and online journals of Ḥamās, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). He found that poverty is inversely related and education is positively related with becoming a Ḥamās or PIJ terrorist. Berrebi further found that 96% of the terrorists had a high school education and 65% had some kind of higher education. They also tended to be young unmarried men who came from urban areas.

Bergen and Pandey (2006) conducted a study examining 79 terrorists that were responsible for five terrorist attacks from 1993 to 2005 and found that the leaders of the individual attacks all held university degrees and did not attend madrasahs. Of the whole sample, only 11% had actually attended a madrasah, more than half had taken university-level courses and almost half attended Western schools.

Krueger and Maleckova (2002) investigated the connection between education, poverty, political violence, and terrorism in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Lebanon. Their findings concluded that hate crimes were not significantly related to economic conditions and that Palestinian support for violence against Israeli targets is as great among those with higher education and higher living standards as it is with unemployed and illiterate. However, their most interesting and relevant findings were regarding the determinants of participation in Hezbollah in Lebanon. They found that education and poverty were statistically insignificant indicators, but that living above the poverty line and a secondary-school education or higher were indeed positively related with participation in Ḥizbullāh. Krueger and Maleckova insist that their findings be considered tentative and exploratory but provide caution against the generalization that poverty and low education levels have direct impacts on terrorism.

Marc Sageman (2004) thoroughly studied the biographies of 172 terrorists and also collected data on another 400 terrorists. He found that approximately 300 of them came from the upper or middle class, but 90% came from what he describes as "caring, intact families." In fact, he concludes that social bonds were the main driver and it was social networks that inspired alienated young Muslims to join the *jihād*, rather than the assumed factors such as poverty, trauma, or ignorance.

Nasra Hassan (Hassan 2001) interviewed nearly 250 people who participated in camps in which suicide bombers fighting for the Palestinian cause are trained. She reported that her interviewees did not resemble the typical profile of the suicide personality, namely poor, uneducated, desperate, and depressed. Rather, she found that most were middle-class citizens and that two were even sons of millionaires.

Marty and Appleby's (1994) description of educated Algerian men in the 1980s and 1990s that were un- or under-employed and seeking "Islam as the solution" illustrates Krueger and Maleckova's results. These Algerian men had educational backgrounds in applied sciences and technical fields which, Marty and Appleby (*ibid.*; 20) argue, might explain why "fundamentalists tend to read scriptures like engineers read blueprints - as a prosaic set of instructions and specifications."

These findings suggest that lack of education and poverty do not necessarily contribute to terrorism but rather that the opposite is occurring – higher levels of education and socioeconomic status might be more accurate descriptors of those that would engage in terrorist activities. Mohamed Atta, one of the suicide bombers of the 9/11 attack, for example, came from a middle-class Egyptian family and possessed a bachelor's degree in architectural engineering from Cairo University and a master's degree in city engineering and planning from the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg in Germany (Fouda and Fielding 2003). Mohammad Sidique Khan, the eldest of the July 2005 London bombers, was born in Leeds, England, to Pakistani parents and graduated from Leeds Metropolitan University. Christine Fair (2008, pp. 70–71) suggests that studies citing the relationship between terrorism and education have a built-in bias because terrorists who commit violent acts that warrant international attention are screened and only the most qualified, which possess certain criteria, are selected to undertake a mission. In other words, less qualified people are usually removed from the selection process.

Berrebi notes, "highly educated individuals may be more aware of situations of injustice and discrimination, and may be more aggravated by their implications, again inducing them to participate in terrorist activities" (Berrebi 2003, pp. 17–18). Educational content, strong reasoning skills, and a high sense of social responsibility were also cited as additional motivational factors for a highly educated individual. Therefore, with such varied findings, it is critical to further investigate the role of education and schooling in Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

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## Education

In order to investigate the role that education systems play in the fundamentalism and terrorism equation, education will be circumscribed into three overlapping learning systems: informal, nonformal, and formal educations.

### Informal Education

Informal education consists of processes whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge from daily experience – from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the market place, the library, mass media, and religious observance (Coombs and Ahmed 1974; LaBelle 1976). Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory looks at interactions between the individuals and their

environment at four different levels: the macro system (societal and cultural belief system), the exo-system (community and neighborhood factors), the micro system (family factors), and the ontogenic level (individual factors) – which are all potentially strong influences in the informal education of an individual. Therefore, investigation of this multitude of influences is critical to understanding the actions of people. Furthermore, it is important to study the relationship between formal and informal education, “to grasp the contradictions and conflicts within the society and their significance” (Khoi 1986, p. 16).

From the early stages of Islam in the seventh century, the Qur’ān has served as the written source of God’s revelation, as the source of educating Muslims to the word and values of God, and as a form of discipline to regulate themselves according to the code of conduct dictated by God (Eickelmann 1978). There are approximately 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, with only about 20% living in the Arab world, and the largest concentration residing in Indonesia. All Muslims, however, adhere to common Muslim practices (These practices, however, can also differ depending on sectarian beliefs and interpretation), which can be viewed as a unifying role in this culturally and ethnically diverse religion. *La Turquie*, the semi-official paper of the Ottoman Empire, declared, “Islam is not only a religion, it is a nationality” (Gelvin 2005, p. 134). Many Muslims proudly proclaim that Islam is not a religion but a way of life. It is difficult, then, to distinguish between the various mitigating factors to clearly tease out whether culture, tradition, nationality, religion, or a number of other reasons are playing a role in the informal education of individuals. Studies have associated Islam’s ordained practices with the daily rituals and beliefs of Muslim families such as praying, fasting during the holy month of Ramaḍān, making the pilgrimage to Mecca, marriage rituals, and even dietary restrictions (Hawley 1994; Singh and Khan 2001; Demant 2006).

## Nonformal Education

Nonformal education is a more intentional, structured activity than informal education that is practiced outside an established formal education system. It tends to be short term, non-credential based, practical, flexible, and learner centered, taking place outside the state system of education.

Qur’ānic educational institutions school the faithful as well as serve as centers of advanced learning (Talbanī 1996). The most common name attached to these institutions today is the *madrasah*. *Madrasah* can mean two things, the everyday meaning of school or it can refer to a nonformal educational institution that offers instruction on the Qur’ān, the sayings (*hadīth*) of the Prophet Muḥammad, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and law (Blanchard 2007, p. 62).

Even though there are great exceptions, Qur’ānic or Islamic schools, including *madrasahs*, might generally be labeled as nonformal institutions, mainly because the archetypal nature of these schools is a traditional institution either in one room or even in an open area run by a strict, learned master instructing the young of various ages the teachings of the Qur’ān (Boyle 2006).

## Formal Education

Formal education is generally seen as a hierarchically structured, chronologically graded educational system running from early childhood to adulthood that includes academic studies, specialized programs, and full-time technical and professional training (LaBelle 1976; Coombs and Ahmed 1974). They may be state-sponsored or private, but those that are religiously sponsored are inevitably state-regulated and provide both religious and secular subjects.

In every country, including Muslim countries, there is a formal state-sponsored school system that attempts to impart a modern educational curriculum. These formal institutions inevitably have features that resemble modern Western educational institutions (Dalín and Rust 1996), especially in those Muslim countries that are former colonies of England or France. At the same time, these schools that satisfy formal education criteria are generally committed to Islamic doctrines and practices and make provisions for teaching the youth to appreciate and commit themselves to Islam. Such a commitment leads from time to time to tensions between Islam and secular ideals (Kadi 2006).

The term *madrasah* has been used as a “catch-all phrase” to refer to any school that has an Islamic education component (making it more a part of the nonformal education system); however, in some national and educational contexts, it can also be considered as part of the formal education system.

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## Education and Terrorism

Informal, nonformal, and formal education in the Islamic world all play some role in imparting values and teachings that some may use to justify their violent behavior. There is little empirical evidence that informal education does or does not contribute to terrorism. Anecdotal evidence, however, can be used to illustrate the possible effect of informal education on terrorist activities, such as suicide bombings. For example, the mother of a Palestinian *shahīd* (martyr) was asked by a London-based Arabic-language daily newspaper what role she had in her son Muḥammad becoming a suicide bomber. She answered: “Allāh be praised, I am a Muslim and I believe in *jihād*. *Jihād* is one of the elements of the faith and this is what encouraged me to sacrifice Muḥammad in *jihād* for the sake of Allāh. . . . Because I love my son, I encouraged him to die a martyr’s death for the sake of Allāh.” Another example is that of Palestinian Authority president Yasser Arafat’s wife Suha, who stated in an interview on April 12, 2002, that if she had a son, there would be “no greater honor” than for him to be a suicide bomber (Berrebi 2003). Contrary to these perspectives, when a mother of a *shahīd* in the Gaza Strip was asked what she would have done if she had known her son was about to partake in a suicide mission shared, “I would have taken a cleaver, cut open my heart, and stuffed him deep inside. Then I would have sewn it up tight to keep him safe” (Hassan 2001).

A practical response to the issue could be that because Muslims do not differ from other religions in their views of terrorism or in their engagement in terrorist activities, the

informal education some Muslims receive could potentially be seen as one contributor to the inclinations of those who, for whatever reason, might tend toward violence and terrorism. The informal education some Muslims receive may provide the kind of discipline necessary to belong to military-like organizations, or it might incline some believers to see the world in binaries, truth, and falsehoods, rather than nuanced perspectives. However, such inclinations and tendencies can be found in all religions.

As a reaction to the events of 9/11, much attention was given to nonformal education, particularly that the *madrasahs* of the Muslim world serve as breeding grounds for terrorists (Rastegar 1988). Ironically, *madrasahs*, as connoted by the media, are rarely found in the Arab world with the exception of Egypt and Yemen, but rather are housed throughout Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and part of West Africa (Anzar 2003). Several months after the events of 9/11, on July 29, 2002, the International Crisis Group published a report uncovering the details of *madrasahs* in Pakistan. This report, *Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military*, was one of the first reports on *madrasahs* post-9/11 and has been blamed for the sensationalism surrounding this topic. However, according to the Carnegie Council, the original version of this article used a gross miscalculation of the number of Pakistani children that indeed attend *madrasahs*. The number has been since corrected, but the results and concluding comments have not been altered. Andrabi et al. (2006, p. 158) thoroughly investigated *madrasah* enrolment figures in Pakistan and concluded that reported enrolment rates were “highly exaggerated” and that even their own “. . . most liberal estimate is still below the lowest estimate in newspaper articles and policy reports.” According to news and popular media, enrolments in *madrasahs* in Pakistan were reported to be anywhere from 500,000 to 1.7 million children. Based on these exaggerated figures, former Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (2003), in a memo dated October 16, 2003, wrote, “Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the *madrasahs* and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?” clearly pointing the finger at *madrasahs* as training posts for terrorist activities. Another form of nonformal education is the use of cartoons. Examples of this include ISIS introducing young children to the Arabic alphabet by using “militaristic mnemonics like guns, ammunition, tanks, and rockets,” and Hamas using the Mickey Mouse character in a TV show on Al-Aqsa TV to encourage violent resistance (Guardian 2016).

Prior to 9/11, Jeffrey Goldberg (2000), a journalist for the New York Times, spent months in the Ḥaqqānīah Madrasah, located 2 h east of the Khyber Pass, in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. His account of what takes place inside the *madrasah* might lead some to believe that these institutions are truly “jihad factories,” but he does not recount details of any formal teaching of a terror-creating nature. Instead Goldberg relays that Ḥaqqānīah is comprised of boys, ages 8–35, strictly learning and reciting the Qur’ān. A Brookings Institution Analysis Paper (Singer 2001), in making a point under the subheading of “School Violence,” declares that the Ḥaqqānīah Madrasah shut down in 1997 and sent its entire student body to help the Ṭālibān succeed. Although Goldberg writes of this event, he also recounts, “I never saw a weapon at the Ḥaqqānīah Madrasah . . . . And I never heard a lecture about bomb making or marksmanship” (Goldberg 2000, p. 3).

Rastegar found that in and near refugee camps located near Afghanistan and Kashmir, certain *madrasahs* became training grounds for young militants who would dedicate their lives to the liberation of these two areas. The schools failed to provide the traditional curriculum but became part of the political mobilization process by distorting concepts such as *jihād* (striving and struggling in the face of persecution) and turned that concept into one of struggling against any enemy through violence and vengeance (Rastegar 1988). Boyle (2006, p. 479) notes that a (miniscule percentage of the overall number [of Islamic schools] . . . seek to indoctrinate students with a one-sided, narrow-minded, and often pro-violence understanding of Islam.”

Alexander Evans (2006) claims that *madrasahs* are under-studied and inaccurately represented in research. He cites that India is believed to have anywhere from 3000 to 30,000 *madrasahs* with approximately 1.5 million students enrolled in them. Similar ranges of numerical representations are given for *madrasahs* and enrolments in Pakistan and Bangladesh, which are also based on ungrounded and unscientific findings. The USAID (2004) report also emphasizes that there is limited reliable information available on Islamic schooling. Evans (2006) further rebukes numerous myths surrounding these institutions: *madrasahs* do adapt and change with the times and they receive funding from a variety of sources, the minority being “fundamentalist” in nature.

A 2004 USAID report mentions that the quality of both secular and Islamic educational systems in all 12 countries studied as an area of much needed improvement. Curriculum, pedagogy, teacher training, achievement results, multiple languages of instruction, and large class sizes are just a few of the problems cited. Yamani (2006, p. 5) writes of the education reforms taking place in Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), two countries that include Islam in their educational policies. She argues that KSA is constricted by “the religious Wahhābī institution that feeds its legitimacy . . . And since the conservative religious establishment controls the whole Saudi educational system, from primary to university level, the government cannot simply undertake sweeping modernization efforts with regards to education reform.” Qatar, on the other hand, recently adopted the “Education for a New Era” (EFNE) initiative to build a “modern” school system by establishing “Independent Schools” and undergoing yearly student assessments and surveys to monitor student progress, although this reform has recently been terminated. Although both countries are undergoing reforms in various ways at different paces, the important thing is that they are taking the time to reflect on their educational practices and to make changes, within their own acceptable boundaries. Landis (2003) discusses Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad’s promises to reform Syria’s education system, including the curriculum of Islamic education which he describes as “rigid, traditional, and Sunnī.” However, he points out that despite these promises, little has been changed in the seven grade levels of Islamic Education school textbooks he used in his study (ibid.)

Formal education might also contribute directly to violent behavior. Most of the literature emphasizes formal education as a primary mechanism for instilling democratic, participatory values in youth. In fact, formal educational institutions are

defined as hierarchical, authoritarian, and even patriarchal in nature. Important educational decisions in the formal educational structure are typically made at the upper levels of this hierarchy and are passed down to lower levels where teachers and students form the lower levels. And teachers are all too often considered the specialists, who are expected to impart their knowledge to the passive youth in a top-down fashion. Formal schools in the Muslim world are no different from schools in other parts of the world, and like the rest of the world, including the United States, teacher quality and training are areas of needed investigation and research.

The pedagogy used in most Islamic and nonreligious schools throughout the Muslim and Arab world relies on memorization and recitation techniques. Giroux (2001, p. 49) argues, “students get defined in reductionist behavioural terms, and learning is reduced to the transmission of predefined knowledge,” when such a teaching methodology is used. Paulo Freire (1989, p. 72) opposes this “banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.” According to Freire, such a concept perpetuates the role of the teacher as an oppressor, “those who consider themselves knowledgeable,” and the student as oppressed, “those whom they consider to know nothing” (ibid.). Boyle (2006, p. 494) would argue, however, that memorization is simply the first step of a true Islamic education and not the sole goal. She explains, “In the Islamic tradition, memorization of sacred, revealed knowledge is an appropriate first step in the process of learning, understanding, and in developing reason and discipline” (ibid.).

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## Conclusion

“The moral framework for a Muslim is good intention, and to ensure that the means for achieving good or avoiding evil are in themselves good and not evil means. Education gives a person the knowledge to recognize the task, the moral foundation to know what to do, and the personal resources to carry out the task” (Douglass and Shaikh 2004, p. 15). Numerous studies have been conducted looking for the relationship between terrorism, fundamentalism, and more specifically Islam. This chapter has provided an in-depth critique of why such a clear-cut equation and relationship is impossible. With the inherent diversity of the Muslim religion, it is difficult to make sweeping statements. “Any society educates” (Khoi 1986, p. 16) and the work and writings of one’s surrounding environment and social structure must be studied and contextualized in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of an individual’s circumstance. As a result, it is crucial that the terms Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism are not used independently, with the danger of carrying numerous implications, but rather, must be situated in a framework that holistically describes each term. Education can then be brought into the discussion as a lens to see how views, ideas, and beliefs are perpetuated in individual societies. With a shift in the current mainstream paradigm of using loaded terminology such as fundamentalism and terrorism, perhaps we can come a little closer to a better and fairer understanding of the Muslim world.



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# Traditional and Modern Muslim Education at the Core and Periphery: Enduring Challenge

Tahir Abbas

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## Abstract

This chapter provides a general theory of the salient concerns affecting Muslims in education across the globe today, from Muslims in Muslim majority countries to Muslims as minority citizens. From concerns around resource investment in educational infrastructure to anxieties over curricula and pedagogy, matters affecting Muslims in education differ the world over, where Muslims in education can often conjure up more uncertainties than positives. The experience affects not only young children at the nucleus of the attention but also parents, teachers, education managers, as well as wider society. In rationalizing the political and sociological milieu in different societies, it emerges that the themes of religion, ethnicity, and gender are as significant as ideology, culture, and policy, but that they are set within the context of secularization, desecularization, sacralization and the re-sacralization of Islam in the public sphere. In order to generate a philosophical, spiritual, and intellectual evaluation of Muslim education across the world, this chapter synthesizes the apprehensions that are internal and external, local and global, and which affect all Muslims, minorities and majorities.

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**Keywords**Muslims · Education · Localization · Globalization · Modernity

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**Introduction**

In the world today, a focus on Muslims in the East or in the West is never far away. Ever since the events of 9/11 in the United States, the bombings in London in 2005, the Cartoons Affair of 2006, and the Islamic State attacks on France and Germany in 2016, to name the most prominent, associations between fundamentalism, extremism, and violence with Islam and Muslims are swiftly constructed. At the same time, the problems of Islamophobia are especially rife among Muslims in the West, with poorer and marginalized groups most likely to experience the brunt of anti-Muslim violence and oppression (McGinty et al. 2013). In one of the most momentous ages of our human history, as global power bases shift, particularly given the rise of the East, namely, China and India, and with the role of ICT enabling individuals and communities never before imagined, the educational needs, aspirations, and expectations of around 25 million Muslim minorities in the European Union and around 1.6 billion Muslims across the world remain crucial to grasp. Yet, the events of 9/11 signaled a negative renaissance, where fundamental Muslim cultural values are endlessly brought into question. The awkward supposition here is that these values originate in education systems in the various regions of certain so-called *Islamic fundamentalist* countries (Griffin 2006). This notion is unwieldy in many senses as it assumes that education is created in a vacuum. From there, it is then idealized. Rather, education in Muslim lands, and for Muslim minorities, is highly contentious and often intensely exigent. It is largely to do with resources and capacity as much as it is with ideology, theology, and culture (Abbas 2011).

In the situation of Muslim minorities in the West, systems of multiculturalism often tend to operationalize notions of tolerance and secularity through the popularization of a form of *multi-culture* that racializes the civilized, modern, or backward in the construction of national identities (Haque 2010). As Haw (2010, p. 360) states in a study on the intergenerational changes experienced by British Muslims in education, there are “significant question for debates around issues of multiculturalism: when did diversity and difference become conflated with the difficult and dangerous?” There is also the real phenomenon of Islamophobia (Sayyid and Vakil 2011), which prescribes limits on how societies ought to display respect toward differences contained within them by focusing on cultural boundaries while deemphasizing structural disadvantage and racism (Joppke 2009). In this, education is a major tool for change, but the principal message from findings suggests that the education practitioner is struggling with problems that do not seem to abate. Meanwhile, the world is being divided further as it rearranges itself in the face of new global hegemonies rising from the East, competing for a stake at the high table, and as the wearied post-war powers make last-ditch efforts to retain their privileges. However, in local area communities, east and west, north and south, rural or urban, Muslim minority or Muslim majority, young children are being educated in

schools that under-prepare them for their lives ahead. Existing research highlights the continuing importance of Muslim identity politics, for minorities and majorities, and how the nature of the various education systems in which they find themselves are all vital considerations. The independence, resource levels, modes of assessment, as well as the nations and states, in which different educational structures are localized, remain further important factors (Abbas 2008). In the final analysis, the wider world watches anxiously as it waits to witness how modernization, secularization, integration and benign (or malignant) multiculturalism can lead to prosperous and peaceful outcomes, and how relations between Muslims and non-Muslims can be systematically improved. It is imperative to comprehend more fully the nature and extent of these challenges so that better insights can help inform the praxis.

There is a comprehensible difference between the ways in which Islamic education issues are deliberated in secular liberal democratic contexts in relation to Muslim minorities compared with this experience in Muslim majority countries which are democratic but also Islamic in ethos and orientation (Zia 2007). The balance between secular democratic educational systems and religious aspirations regarding theological identity is a crucial one. It permeates the entire focus of the claims in this chapter, which are that while there are obstacles at the center, namely, the heartlands of Islam. There are also complications within the peripheries of those very same centers *and* among the migrant, diasporic, and transnational Muslim communities of the East and in the West. Rather, Muslim educational experiences are problematic the world over and due to the misappropriation of the spirit of Islamic praxis and the politiconational contexts rather than the principles of education in Islam, for it is these identical philosophies that produced the Golden Age of Islam (750–1258 BCE). For a literary religion, the rates of illiteracy among Muslims across the world remain alarmingly high. Much has been misplaced, and it is argued that the core has ideologically, philosophically, and theologically seized the periphery, the reasons being less to do with religion but more to do with geopolitical machinations that have artificially strengthened the center.

This analysis provides an overview of the many educational challenges facing Muslims across the world, as minority or majority citizens. First, there is a synopsis of the political and ideological framework of Muslims in education. Second, there is a summary of aspects of the Middle Eastern experience and an evaluation of Muslim minority discussions in the West. The conclusions provide a concentration on the major topics and the prospects going forward.

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## **Education, Knowledge, and Power across the Muslim World**

The concept of *‘ilm* (knowledge) is a central tenant of the faith and one that remains foremost in Islamic education. It is an Islamic duty for all Muslims, men and women, to pursue education “from cradle to the grave” and even if it means going as “far as China”: two prophetic sayings that are consistently emphasized. There are more than 800 references to the idea of *‘ilm* in the Qur’ān. Indeed, the word Qur’ān comes from the Arabic root word “read.” Historically, Islamic education relied upon the Qur’ān

as the single most authoritative source of knowledge. In the early phases of Islamic history, respected and committed Muslims attended educational institutions termed the *kuttābs* – an Islamic elementary school often amalgamated to a mosque where young men were instructed in the Qur’ān. These *kuttāb* served an essential function in the community, as they were the only way in which young men could acquire an education that was free to all. These institutions purported to serve the basis of an Islamic education system that remains in many Muslim countries to this day. These schools are analogous to the idea of *madrasahs*, which have entered widespread recognition in the context of the post-1990 struggle against the Ṭālibān (Sunnī Islamist students of Afghan heritage) in Afghanistan (Jones 2007; Spink 2005). In these *kuttābs* and *madrasahs*, corporal punishment is a recognized part of teaching and learning. Students memorize rudimentary passages of the Qur’ān and then graduate to a more focused approach to the entire book. Memorization is a central component of learning and scholarship in these educational institutions, past and present. While the *kuttāb* evolved during the ‘Abbāsīd period to become sites where science, logic, philosophy, and mathematics (Abdeljaouad 2006) could be learned, towards the end of the Golden Age *madrasahs* were often used for political purposes, as a way in which to systematize against the Crusaders and due to internal Shī‘ah and Sunnī struggles for power and authority (Rahman 1982).

During the twelfth century, Islam came to Europe and Asia. Across the central and eastern hemisphere of the globe, the religion of Islam was a dominant force until the colonial era led to the subjugation of many in these regions. From the beginning of the decline in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries until the colonial era in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, cultural obduracy weakened the Muslims (El-Sanabary 1992). The Ottomans ruled great swathes of Muslim lands until the nineteenth century, but they also founded secular schools from 1875 to 1920. Subsequently, Europeans supplanted Ottoman rule in the Muslim world. These colonials interfered with indigenous Muslim education, forcing traditional Muslims into retreat, while late nineteenth century modernist-reformers such as Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Syed Ahmad Khan were limited in number and constrained in reality. During the twentieth century, these countries gained independence and became nation-states, often with close relations to the older powers that were once conquerors. Tensions between traditionalist and reformist modes of Islamic education have remained ever since. During the 1970s and 1980s, resurgence of Islamic political activism in opposition to secularization within certain Middle Eastern and Asian states smoldered into enduring violence and conflict (Tamuri 2007; Wattana 1996; Weiss 2005). In this time of political disorder and chaos, many Muslim conservatives started to seek the Islamification. This is the process of bringing the method of Islam into every aspect of the lived experience of all individual and group political, social, cultural, religious and economic subjects of society and its institutions, especially education, while secular Muslims favor democratization and secularization. Since the end of the Cold War, Muslim nations have experienced various degrees of Islamification, while Western capitalism has become the global dominant economic, political, and cultural order.

As the Islamic world was in the ascendancy, Europe was in a dark, inward-looking abyss. Intellectual leadership flourished in the Muslim world, with significant development to the physical and social sciences, arts and philosophy, and science and technology. Muslims took what was known of the world and began to dissect it further. This process included reviewing existing knowledge from the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Chinese, Indians, and, most notably, the Greeks. The notion of *ijtihad* (individual judgement) was central to this success, but over time, the ‘*ulamā*’ (dominant religious and learned class) began to presume an authority over all knowledge, suffocating Islam of the oxygen it once thrived on. Muslim leaders began to look inwards while Christian Western Europe became stronger and more powerful (Sardar and Malick 1990). In the colonial era, in places such as present-day Egypt or Pakistan, the emphasis on secularism had an extensive impact on Muslim majorities. Many found it incompatible and even contradictory to Islam. It ultimately led to major differences between religious and secular modes of educational development, with little to bring the two worlds together. Since the colonial era, Muslims in Muslim lands have simply been unable to contend with the rational, objective, and scientific paradigms of the Western secular educational model. In certain postcolonial Muslim majority contexts, specific ethno-sectarian Muslim groups are resistant to engaging with the “other,” internally and externally. For example, in India (Sikand 2005) and Pakistan (Nelson 2006), the Deobandi tradition dominates, and it has a particular function in reinforcing a traditionalist Islam that places loyalty to the religion before that of nation. In some countries, the Deobandis are active in politics, for example, in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, namely, through the *Jamā‘t-i Islāmī*, although in Indonesia the experience of Muslim women in education is attained within a depoliticized milieu (Srimulyani 2007). The branch of Islamism that is inspired by a dominant doctrinal approach followed and promoted by what is now Saudi Arabia, and originated by the eighteenth scholar Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, remains the most ubiquitous due the centralization of the Saudi regime and the financial power that rests behind it.

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## Muslim Education at the Core and at the Periphery

In the current period, Muslims in the Middle East are increasingly discovering the importance of education for social and economic mobility in order to build character, self-confidence, self-esteem, to raise awareness of the “other”, and to determine the range of skills and competencies that will establish individuals and communities for life. This is the context of the global market place for jobs that is now increasingly the norm in many parts of the world, certainly intra-regionally if not always inter-regionally. However, many Middle Eastern countries face a critical set of questions about their future, given their regional and cultural significance (Herrera and Torres 2006). Class divisions, gender, curriculum content, professionalism of teachers and managers, and the wider social setting in which pupils, parents, and teachers find themselves remain as weighty now as they have

always done. Power, politics, and ideology and how they impact on the schooling and educational process is juxtaposed with the reality of how poverty and disadvantage bite hard when state-enforced education apparatus encourages a more utopian world-view that is not at all the lived experience of pupils, parents, or teachers. There remains a distinct need to democratize education in the Middle East, to encourage wider participation and engagement, and to provide a fair, open-ended, liberalized system of education that accesses the urban dwellers as well all as villagers in equal numbers. Education ought to be a goal for all, in what are rapidly changing societies, and given all the internal and external contestations facing individuals and groups.

It is noteworthy to observe how education is seen in Iran, where, for some, education is regarded as a system of social control (Mehran 2003). The Shah used it to instill loyalty to the state and his autocracy, while Khomeini used it to further Islamicize Iran after 1979. The extent to which education is as a political project in Iran is well documented (Arjmand 2004). Turkey is also a notable case study. With a population of over 70 million people and a skilled, pliable, and youthful workforce, Turkey is generally keen to embrace the EU project. There are, however, many who voice disquiet at the thought of a significant Muslim country entering what is essentially regarded as a “club of first world Christian powers.” Nevertheless, it is in Turkey where there is perhaps the first real indication that Islam is coming to terms with globalization and modernity; and where religiosity and community activism go hand-in-hand. Some of these actions, even so, create consternation within Turkey, where the view that most women can choose to wear the veil is seen to be an unacceptable form of conservatism as Turkey makes considerable efforts to be seen to be embracing secular Europeanism. What is interesting is the extent to which Turkish Muslim minorities in Western Europe have adopted aspects of the Said Nursî-inspired philosophy, helping to shape a pro-integration approach to their lives as ethno-religious minorities (Agai 2006). In parts of the lower Gulf, some countries are not quite able to take advantage of postcolonial opportunities, particularly in cases where there is an additional need to rely on aid and resources from neighboring states, for example Kuwait (Davidson 2008). While there is significant expansion to the provision of education in this region, there remain quality issues.

Schools have a distinctive role to play in the development of the intellectual, spiritual, and moral character of individuals, communities, and nations, but in the present climate, they can disengage organizational and pedagogical matters from wider societal concerns of dominant media, culture, and globalization. Muslims, for whom Western modernity is not a familiar experience, remain suspicious of the West, but at the same time do not always recognize that in the past Islam had its own challenges around modernity and coped with it rather well (for example, during the ninth century ‘Abbāsīd period). However, the problem with the Arab Muslim world is that since the defeat of Egypt by Israel, to restore the status of Egyptian Islam back to its gloried standing before 1967, Egypt sought an emphasis to return to God. The political context has shaped a more literalist interpretation of Islam. This is not just in Egypt but also across entire swathes of the Middle East (Fandy 2007).



As a case study of Muslim minority experiences, in exploring ethnic and religious identities in Britain, it appears that the nature of social relations and the perceptions of the “other” held by the dominant “other” remain crucial anxieties. While there are useful insights from social research that provide a perspective on educational process, including dynamics relating to home-school links, curriculum content, and the values placed on inherent differences among different South Asian groups (Basit 1997; Bhatti 1999; Abbas 2004), why is there still an issue among young South Asian Muslims in English schools today? After 70 years of post-war immigration, settlement, and adoption, these communities continue to face racism, prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination in the education system. It affects educational outcomes and issues of identity politics (Ijaz and Abbas 2010). Moreover, because of the role of wider society and its changing dynamics for an increasingly visible Muslim and South Asian minority in various British towns and cities, it must also be related to the nature of these communities themselves, and when adaptation to and incorporation into society has simply not happened. This is not to argue that social and cultural integration is the key to success per se, but rather to state that there are internal and external factors that are forcing communities apart rather than together and occasionally they work in opposite directions. Nevertheless, while there is some indication that Muslims in education in Britain wish to move to a position that emphasizes a coherence and interdependency between Muslimness and Britishness (Meer 2009), it would be far too simplistic to essentialize Muslims into a single category as there are myriad differences between and within groups in Britain (Tinker and Smart 2012) and elsewhere in Muslim diasporas across the Western and Eastern worlds (Daun and Walford 2004). There remains an opportunity to mobilize Muslims as a bottom-up political identity that contests the dominant negative paradigms, in the process expanding the reach of the concept of “Muslim” among both empowered as well as marginalized groups (Adamson 2011).

Leadership among Muslim minority groups is a serious area of discussion, and there is a genuine case made for the importance of recognizing the role of the interaction between teacher and learner as much as the process of education itself (Shah 2006). The situation is further problematical given the hindrances to career progression experienced by some Muslim male teachers in certain minority contexts (Shah and Shaikh 2010) and among Muslim young men in education struggling to reconcile their faith-based identities with their national, ethnic, or cultural allegiances (Bhatti 2011). Muslim schools, nevertheless, are especially germane in the United Kingdom, when in 1997 New Labour gave the go ahead to the state funding of Muslim schools in the face of a diverse society and government rhetoric toward multiculturalism (Parker-Jenkins 2002). These affairs are also of huge interest in the United States, with its own rich but quite different history of Islam and Muslims (Metcalf 1996; McCloud 2007). For migrant, diasporic, and transnational communities, being a Muslim minority is both charged and tested, and there are complex issues beyond the simple dividing rhetoric of Muslim and non-Muslim. There are persistent negative societal, attitudinal, and behavioral trials facing a diverse minority community of communities who are often on the receiving end of sustained destructive political and media attention (Salih 2004).

## Discerning Questions and Concluding Thoughts

Islam has its origins in Arabia in the seventh century and from there it expanded across Asia, Africa, and Europe. A primary issue therefore is the question of education in the areas in which Islam first came to and how matters have evolved since then, or not as the case may be. It is remarkable to observe that many of the tribulations facing Muslims in education are concentrated in precisely these regions of the Arab world and Africa (Hunwick 2004). North African Muslim countries, including Morocco (Ennaji 2005), Algeria (Heristchi 2004), Tunisia (Lee 2008), Libya (Pargeter 2006), and Egypt (Gesink 2006) all provide valuable case studies on educational experiences in postcolonial societies (Abdeljalil 2004), while Saudi Arabia (Prokop 2003), Yemen (Hafez 2008), and Iraq (Al-Khaizaran 2007) are also striking because of the wider ongoing indigenous sectarian differences and ethno-political tensions found there. In other African Muslim countries, such as Sudan (Breidlid 2005), Nigeria (Ikoya and Onoyase 2008), and Somalia (Abdi 1998), there are also vital concerns to address in order to generate a profile of education in the Arab world and in Africa in general. Moreover, it is also necessary to appreciate the issues affecting Muslims who are minorities in advanced liberal secular democratic nation-states, when matters of identity, culture and gender, social class, effects of educational institutions, and the wider social milieu in which these forces are played out are significant matters for research, policy, and practice. This is especially critical given that there are over 7 million Muslims in North America and over 25 million Muslims in the European Union (Alsayyad and Castells 1997).

The analysis of educational practice in Saudi Arabia is potentially hopeful regarding the latest developments to its universities. It may help to democratize the country and increase a more critical engagement with existing 'Abd al-Wahhāb and āl-Sa'ūd allegiances; however, the evidence on outcomes is far from clear (Bosbait and Wilson 2005). The study of Turkey is in the setting of approaches made toward further modernization and secularization, and, given the importance of the Turkey question for the future of the European Union (Uzer 2011). Observations in the Philippines, France (Limage 2000), and England suggest the importance of the conceptualization of multicultural societies, which develop outside the realm of education but affect them and become affected by them at the same time. Here too matters such as the consumption of alcohol are important in the configuration of Muslim minority identities and Muslim-non-Muslim relations in general (Fletcher and Spracklen 2013). In Australia, research is beginning to demonstrate the importance of Islamic faith schools for Muslims in the diaspora (Clyne 1998), although it is only able to suggest primary findings that indicate a growing desire and a sense that such schools can provide the balance between religious and secular values (Hassen 2013). Other research has demonstrated that Muslim minorities in Western schools can positively utilize Islamic faith principles to demonstrate the importance of the education of Muslim women in majority schools when minority culture may have had a major role in limiting the prospects for these very same women in earlier generations (Ijaz and Abbas 2010). Moreover, these Islamic schools can provide not

just room for specific faith-based teachings but also the occasion to challenge racism in wider society (Shah 2012). There are many similar dilemmas that bring together different liberal secular democratic Western nation-states in relation to the experience of Muslim minorities in education and the challenges and opportunities they face. Most are as much a function of individuals, communities, society and the state as they are about Islam and the nature of different political and cultural norms, values, expectations, and aspirations.

To advance Islam and education on the global stage, there is a need to produce worldly citizens able to deal with the contestations and engage with the openings. The question, however, is how. It remains relentlessly pursued by various scholars and practitioners (Hatina 2006). In spite of all the encouraging rhetoric and the considerable intentions of children, parents, teachers, researchers, and practitioners, there remains a great deal to do to improve matters relating to Islam and the question of Muslims in education. The core of the Islamic world is steeped in conservatism and absolutism, and it is within the margins of these societies that the more extremist voices can be heard. In the Muslim diaspora, especially in the West, there is a tendency to align Muslim education in the direction of this very same conservatism. Within these non-Muslim majority states it is also possible to find extremist Muslim voices, some of whom can engage in violent extremism in their own countries of birth. The core-periphery duality is played out locally and globally, and the main cause is the centralization of influence among the Islamic world. Aspects of the periphery do provide opportunities for positive engagement with modernist approaches to education, within Muslim majority states and without, but these tend to be the exception not the norm. Thus, the core and the periphery are a deep worry for Muslim education across the world.

Yet, although there are internal challenges, there are external too. There is the structural nature of Islamophobia which affects the core and the periphery, and it encourages Muslims to look within Islamic scriptural reasoning as a way in which to deflect the negative attention. This has a systemic effect on Muslims across the world. The events of 9/11 were a catalyst for change, but they have placed the Muslims in a weaker position, given the global anti-Muslim hegemony that has become more pronounced in the West and in the East. Inside the Muslim world, the wider global Islamic perspective is one of a great internal struggle and conflict, which enforces the desire of people to hark back the past to look to the future, and the political ideological motivations of certain Islamic communities (*tarīqah* or *jamā'ah*) to over-run the spiritual, philosophical, and intellectual contribution and progress of a more worldly nature.

The East is merely catching up with the West. After a period of decline over the last five centuries or so, parts of the East are on their way to getting ahead. The West has run out of all new ideas, but how the West looks at the East is affected by an intellectual discourse on what is reasoned about Muslims in education and in relation to questions of Islam and Muslims in general (Ehteshami 2004). There is a form of common ethical learning (Hefner 2013) that is missing in the West because of the move toward secularist thinking. Although the East has it in abundance, it is possibly compromising it in the race toward neoliberal economic and social policy while

many Muslims remain in unequal, unstable, and corruptible societies that do more to regress rather than progress communities. There remain many contestations facing Muslims across the world today.

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# Migration, Diaspora, Muslim Transnational communities, and Education

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## Abstract

The Western World (especially Europe) is struggling to cope with one of the largest waves of human migration ever. Majority of the migrants are Muslims with traumatic experiences as a result of enduring wars, violence, and various forms of suffrage. The unique feature of this migration is the number of unaccompanied minor Muslim migrants with an unprecedented rate in human history. All these pose new challenges to European societies not least to accommodate the needs and meet the demands of Muslims for moral and religious education. While European education systems fundamentally rest on a rather monolithic worldview, inspired by Christianity and based on secularism, they need to adapt to the realities of the postmigration era. The Muslim transnational communities in West complicate the matter even further as they pose new challenges in the notions of identity and belonging of the younger generation of Muslims in diaspora. The new mode of policy-making in the face of the migration and multiple transnational communities is to create and foster an education system to respond to the needs of Muslims in the West while enhancing the process of integration and

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teaching the western-style notion of citizenship. Sex education, religious extremism, terrorism, and pluralistic values are among the challenges that education systems in the West need to alter both in policy and practice.

### Keywords

Migration · Migrant education · Transnational Muslims · Islamic education

## Introduction

The 2016 crisis as a result of war in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan which resulted in the mass migration of millions of people mostly from Muslim countries to the West has once again sparked the enduring debate on the clashes of the moral and religious values. Muslim immigrants are targeted as a source of discontent, fear, and instability across many countries in Europe, America, and Australia. Whereas many Muslims hold the West accountable for the events which lead to the exodus of Muslims from their homes, the perception of Western public on the Muslim migrants is shaped in the light of a series of events. One may recall a series of incidents which left the impression on shaping the mentality of the Western general public to perceive Muslims as a group of people reluctant to abide western values and sources of terror and fear. Iranian Revolution (1979), and subsequent Iranian Hostage Crisis (1979–1981), Rushdie Affair (1989), Gulf Wars I and II (1990 and 2003), Bosnian War (1992), emergence of Taliban (2001), 9/11 and emergence of al-Qaida (2001), murder of Theo Van Gogh (2004), Danish Cartoon Crisis (2006), Syrian War (2011), rise of Boko Haram and The Islamic State ISIS (2014–2016), Paris events and Charlie Hebdo (2015), and Nice and Brussels (2016), not but to mention a few. Many of these events resulted in waves of violence and mistreatment of rival religious groups and sexual and ethnic minorities across the Muslim countries, followed by waves of migration to West. This was in parallel with the period of demographic changes in Western Europe, as result of the collapse of Eastern Bloc and rise of such discourses as the “clash of civilizations,” “culture wars,” “religious wars,” and “Islamophobia,” as well as with the reinforcement of restrictive migration policies and territorial border security *vis-à-vis* the nationals of countries outside the European space (Kaya 2009).

Migration (*hijrah*) is not an alien concept among Muslims. In many ways, the *Hijrah*, emigration of the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions from Mecca to Medina in 622, is “Islam’s most enduring symbol” (Mandaville 2001:113), which marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In such strictly hierarchical clan-based society as early Islamic Arabia, *muhājirūn* (migrants) appeared collectively as position comparable to that of one of the distinguished Arab clans of Medina. The status of *muhājir* came to be greatly prized, perhaps sometimes placing people in a higher category in the *dīwān* or stipend-list, and the status was granted to others than those who had actually journeyed from Mecca to Medina. (*Dīwān*, is a “register,” or logbook, and later a “finance department,” “government bureau,” or



“administration in Islamic societies”. The first *dīwān* appeared under the caliph ‘Umar (634–644) as a pensions list, recording free Arab warriors entitled to a share of the spoils of war. Out of rents and property taxes extracted from conquered farmers and landowners, hereditary pensions were assigned to warriors entered in the *dīwān*. Later the term came to signify a financial institution, and, by the time of the caliphate of Mu‘āwīyah (661–680), it meant a government). The *hijrah*, hence, was introduced as a solution to deny suppression and exercise the *da‘wah*. The migration was established as an individual and sometimes collective strategy which made the rapid expansion of Islam possible.

Islam possesses its own rich vocabulary of travel and migration. Apart from the *hijrah*, there is also *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), *riḥlah* (travel in quest of education), *isrā’* (the Prophet’s nocturnal journey to *mi‘rāj*), *zīyārah* (the visitation of saintly shrines and graves), and *mujāvirat* (migration to stay close to a sacred shrine) (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990, p. xii). As Mandaville (2001: 112–113) notes, the *hijrah*, moving from paganism, tribalism, and unbelief, into a community of monotheistic faith is a symbol whose resonance can still be heard in the name of Islamist groups today. The call for Muslims to quit “un-Islamic” lands still finds adherents and often figures heavily in the rhetoric of those religious leaders who seek to discourage Muslims from living in the West. The argument was used, among other groups, by ISIS which proclaimed an Islamic caliphate, that “Muslims can no longer justify living in the West and must join the caliphate (ISIS 2016: 4)”. The connotations of the *hijrah*, however, have been subject to diasporic arbitration. For instance, Ismail al-Faruqi (1987: 56) sought to reverse the rhetoric by calling on Muslims in the West – of which he was one – to regard themselves as having made a *hijrah* to the West. Faruqi, a scholar-activist trained at the famed al-Azhar in Cairo as well as at a number of secular institutions, encouraged his fellow Muslims in diaspora to live their lives as companions of the prophet Muḥammad, as if they had just arrived in the city of the Prophet: “Now that you are in Madina, what is your task? . . . Your task. . . is the saving, the salvation of life, the realization of the values of dignity, of purity, of chastity, all the nobility of which humans are capable” (Mandaville 2001). A similar trend is observable in the treatise produced by a religious scholar (*‘ālim*) in Mecca in response to Algerian students enquiring what Islam had to say about Muslims staying in West, which argued that in some senses travel to these countries is actually obligatory for Muslims. He cites the importance of education and the acquisition of advanced science and technology, without which the Muslim world would be dependent on the West. Also noted is the fact that circumstances in the West are such that the proper practice of Islam is in some senses easier there (Masud 1990: 43).

Arguments of this nature provide partial explanations for the establishment of the transnational community of Muslims in the West. Decisions on where to invest, materially and symbolically, might constitute a field of negotiation or contestation since transnational practices eventually lead to deeper anxieties on where “home” is and where, thus, one is supposed to build a future for children and their education, to acquire something more than material objects, that is a long-term symbolic capital. Analyzed from this perspective, transnationalism and ongoing

movements do not seem simply to reconcile fractures, but may exacerbate anxieties about the future and amplify insecurities. While keeping a simultaneous relationship with their country of origin, Muslims paradoxically also increase their need for territorialization and secure identities (Salih 2002: 65). Education and socio-economic backgrounds are among the most important factors in facilitating the engagement in transnational practices (see Chapter ► [Muslim Orientations and Views on Education](#)). There is also a substantial difference between the migrants from former colonies who manage the lingua-franca and those who lack such connection and have to learn a foreign language. Those who are educated and master the language by and large, much better prepared for finding their feet in a totally new environment and to create a life across borders. In the same vein, “those originating from urban areas tend to be more flexible, mobile and prone to transcend boundaries of cultures, political entities and economic systems than those who lived in rural areas (Al-Ali 2002: 114)”.

Allievi (2003) argues that transnational Islam is in effect the two things: it is an *internal* social actor, but it is also *externalized*, for two different reasons. The first one is that it is effectively *in a relationship* with the countries of origin and the different kind of “centers” (centers of production of knowledge and education, symbolic centers of the prayer and the *hajj*, and organizational centers of movements and *ṭuruq*) which are situated outside the West. The second one is, even when Islam is situated in West, culturally in terms of externality and extraneousness it is something which should “naturally” be outside. Hence, the Islamic transnationalism is “comprised of numerous ‘traveling Islams’ that recognise and are constituted through hybridity, internal difference and translocalised diaspora identities, and whose generally informal organising capabilities both influence and are transformed via the processes of cultural and economic globalisation (Levine 2003)”.

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## Education of Muslim Migrants

Education of the children of Muslim immigrants across the Western countries has never been more challenging than today. The voluntary nature of previous waves of migration made immigrants prone to integrate into the mainstream and take advantage of school system, training their religion and language on the side. Many perceived the migration temporary and endeavored to maintain their culture and language by educating their children in home country; others preferred home-schooling. Postwar immigration into Germany, for instance, did not challenge education for a long time due to the fact that work migration was regarded temporary until 1970s. So was the situation more or less in other European countries. When workers began to settle – mainly as a result of the enforced stop of recruitment in 1973 – education had to deal with the situation of migrant children attending schools in large numbers. The first answer to this new challenge was the concept of migrant education (Ausländerpädagogik). Multicultural education (intercultural education in the German diction) was developed in Germany rather reluctantly in the

1980s as a second answer to this challenge when the concept of migrant education was no longer regarded as an adequate one by many educationalists in practice and research. Multicultural education finally got some recognition in the 1990s, when it was partly connected with international education like European aspects or global learning. Europe, but also further developments in migration, led to a new type of short-term migration and further newer forms of migration, which have not fully been taken into consideration in education (Luchtenberg 2004: 40).

The cultural and educational – both formal and nonformal – reproduction within the Muslim transnational neo-communities in west are more facilitated than ever. In practice, this means that rather than the creation of Western (European and American) Islam, the original form of Islam in practice in the original centers of its production – Middle East and North Africa – is emulated and practiced. The transnational nature of the Muslim communities in West also makes inter-connection and transition from one sort of Islam to another much easier and acceptable. The outcome of such an interconnection is seen, for instance, in the cases where European converts or non-Arab Muslims advance their Qur’ānic and Islamic studies in such institution as al-Azhar or Zaytouna, anywhere from Morocco to Saudi Arabia and Iran. Another example may be the members of some movements who go for their training to the centers of these movements, unrelated to their ethnic origin (so, an Arab can go to India for a *Tablighī* course, etc.). New waves of Muslim extremism in the West could be attributed to such development between various groups and networks of Muslims. The same can be said of the members of several brotherhoods, who travel to the country where they have their center for a certain period, and again what is new is that in Europe it is not unusual for an Asian (or a European) to become a member of a brotherhood that did not even exist in his country of origin. Also, there are Muslims who come to Europe for a period of training in Islamic studies, not only with Muslims but also in academic and even Christian or secular institutions (Allievi 2003: 22–23). Through this interaction, Islam has become increasingly “scriptualized” since the nineteenth century. The growing tendency of “scriptualism” is manifested in an increasing emphasis on Qur’ānic teaching, Islamic education, mosque-building (Gellner 1992), and now on digitalized *ummah*. In diaspora, the scripturalist tendency comes at the expense of the folk Islam of saint worship, healing, Sufism, and local brotherhoods. The tendency of clericalization becomes more evident in the migration process. When Islam leaves its original setting, what travels with it are not the shrines, local rituals, folk practices, and guilds, but the Qur’ān and Qur’ānic teachings. As Pieterse (1997) argues, the Qur’ān becomes *portable Islam*. The return of scriptures, on the one hand, underlines the return to the fundamentals and, on the other, is itself a mode of modernization, because it makes cultural reproduction independent of local circumstances (Kaya 2009: 193). This results in various forms of educational arrangements to teach Qur’ān, often in a form of after school Islamic activities, weekend schools, or adding religious subjects as electives in mainstream private Muslim schools.

While ICT is used as an active platform to promulgate Islam (both as an Islamist ideology and a religion of peace and co-existence, and otherwise), the world of

information and communication produces one of the important realities involving Islam, in the West, namely “mediated reality”, the world *in which* and *through which* Islam is perceived. Such mediated reality of Islam and Arabs is discussed thoroughly by Edward Said (1994), Jack Shaheen (1997), Hamid Dabashi (2009), and others. The core concern of the discussions by those scholars is that the mediatization of Islam has contributed significantly to the process of “othersization” of Muslims in the West. Saunders (2015: 120) notes how an essentialized constructed image of the “Muslim other” is shaped through a process “invention of the Muslim,” as

When they got off the airplane, they weren't “Muslims.” They were Indians, Turks, Arabs, North Africans, Baghdadis, Persians, Nigerians, Asians. . . . Islam may have been the religion of these twentieth-century arrivals, but in general their faith was just part of the background of their lives. It wasn't the way they thought of themselves, it wasn't something they sought out in others. . . . By the time their Western-born children came of age, however, they had become Muslims. At the beginning of the new century, that was how the world had come to describe these immigrant communities, often fearfully. For some, it had become the way they chose to describe themselves, because their religion had become their default affinity in a polarized age, the one non-shameful source of self-identification.

Classic theories of migration often explain what determines people move, whereto and what consequences the mobility of people might have both on the individual and on the society from an economic prism. Individuals are defined as self-interested actors who apply principles of rational calculation (cost-benefit analysis) of the gains of moving with regard to, e.g., employment, income, education, political rights before making decisions to migrate. Along with the concept of “economic man,” there are socio-political factors in different contexts (“push and pull” factors) both at the individual and collective levels. In (neo-) classic theories of migration, the migration is perceived as a market with a supply side including differential incentives of individuals for migration based on their ability, skills, and motive for migration and with a demand side of need of labor force, mechanisms for allocation of visas, and the enforcement of immigration law, and the likes. Whereas economic objectives are certainly part of the explanation of the migration of Muslims, it is often the outcome of policies and political crises. Some scholars have maintained that internal and international migration, defined as the movement of people between geographic (and, thus, automatically social) spaces, would – if it did not stop entirely – cease to be a force behind change and challenge in modern, “established” societies and in a global order based on nation states (Luchtenberg 2004: 30). In any case, it was assumed that the nomadic way of life, in which movement between places itself represented a *form of social being*, and not only a geographical shift between two *places of social being*, would disappear (Simmel 1983).

The educational needs of the children of Muslims in the West exposed a fundamental tension at the core of the western educational mission. On the one

hand, educational systems are expected to provide students with an education appropriate to their adult lives. Operating within the context of highly differentiated labor markets and inequalities in earnings, school systems inevitably play a major role in determining how young people will be sorted across the socioeconomic spectrum. Since studies show that educational outcomes for all students reflect social origins to a greater or lesser extent, it is not surprising that schools also tend to reproduce inequalities, at least in the aggregate, between native and immigrant origin students (Alba and Holdaway 2013). On the other hand, educational systems are charged with ensuring fair opportunities and the potential for social mobility for children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many children growing up in immigrant Muslim families fit in this category, for example, those whose parents are low-wage workers with low levels of education when judged by the standards of the receiving society. In the most rudimentary sense, all the school systems of receiving societies do provide such opportunities: it is common for the second generation to make a large step beyond its parents in educational terms, if only because its members are growing up in societies where the legally mandated period of school attendance is far longer than in the societies from which immigrant parents came (*ibid.*).

In examining educational opportunities for Muslims in the West, Schweder (2008) argues that in liberal societies, four key values are both strongly held and potentially in conflict: autonomy and freedom of expression, “the merit-based allocation of benefits and fair assignments to statuses and positions in society,” equal opportunity to “become qualified for valued positions in society,” and “equal safekeeping from arbitrary or unfortunate harms.” New waves of Muslim migration to West starting from 1980s onward was mostly due to humanitarian causes as a result of wars, ethnic conflicts, and cleansings and appearance of various forms of religious extremism in the Middle East and North Africa. This group was often marked by their lower socio-economic background, lower level of education, and unskilled labor and arrived at the post-industrial Europe, where there was a surplus of unskilled labor force. In the absence of any integration policies, many ended up in Muslim-dominated urban neighborhoods or public-housing blocks that were rife with poverty, unemployment, petty crime, and welfare dependency. This is true of most poor immigrants; however, Muslims tend to attract extra attention (Saunders 2015). Such segregation was perceived by many as an act of self-ghettoizing and was conceived as the creation of “parallel societies.” Muslim immigrants were perceived as a group who lacks interest in integrating with the wider society and economy around them. The consequences were visible among other areas in education of the second generation of the immigrants.

The mandatory school attendance in western countries on the one hand and exposure of Muslim students, especially girls on the other hand, left policy makers no option but to introduce new forms of schools, while maintaining the national curricula and rights to monitor the schools. Some countries proposed policies with the ambition to create equal conditions for all pupils and give more resources to schools with a comparatively large proportion of disadvantaged children

**Table 1** Islamic religious education (IRE) in public schools in selected European countries and the United States

	IRE in public schools	Publicly funded Muslim schools	Publicly funded teacher education for IRE- teachers
Austria	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes
Finland	Yes	No	Yes
Spain	Yes	No	Yes
Sweden	No	Yes	No
United Kingdom	No	Yes	No
France	No	No	No
United States	No	No	No

Source: Berglund 2015.

(children with learning disabilities, immigrant children, etc.). For instance, in England, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden, supplementary resources are allocated to areas or schools that have a certain proportion of immigrant children (Daun and Arjmand 2005: 409).

While the school attendance of children, at least at the compulsory level, is not an issue among Muslim immigrants, early school leavers are overrepresented among immigrant children in general compared to natives (see Table 1), a problem for Muslim immigrant children alike. Also, it is evident that disproportionately many children have a significantly lower level of achievement on knowledge and skills tests in OECD countries due, among other things, to the fact that education in the “host” country is conducted in that country’s own predominant language(s) and few (if any) efforts are made to base teaching in and on cultural and/or socioeconomic conditions (OECD 2015). While there is an over-representation of migrant children in general in lower-level vocational education streams and under-representation in higher-level academic courses which provide opportunities for pursuing tertiary education at university, it is certainly true about Muslim pupils. Migrant children are often also more likely than the general population to leave school with no qualifications (Heckmann 2008).

In all European countries, in comparison of children of Muslim immigrants with average children in the respective country, the children of Muslim immigrants typically appear to be performing poorly in school. However, in a comparison between children from families with the same level of incomes, the gap often disappears (The Open Society 2009: 93).

The diversity within the actors and their objectives are reflected in the performance of the Muslim schools. There are as much discrepancies between Muslim schools as between Muslim schools and mainstream schools. In the United Kingdom, where a longer and more elaborated tradition of private

Muslim (independent) schools has developed to the extent that the across to Muslim schools for all groups with the wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds are possible, some Muslim immigrants' children perform poorly, while others are among the top performers. For instance, Mazahirul Uloom, a secondary boys' school that professes to teach the National Curriculum and Islamic Sciences, along with some other schools of similar profile, face "the criticism that too much of the curriculum 'focuses solely on Islamic theme'" and judged inadequate by the Department of Education. Pupils believed it was wrong to learn about other religions, were not taught art, music, or drama, and had a "narrow view" of women in society. Some students told inspectors of the Department of Education, "women stay at home and clean and look after the children. They cook and pray and wait for us to come back from school with homework (Richardson 2014)". On the other hand, there are Muslim schools which perform highly. For instance, for the second consecutive year over half of Muslim schools featured in the British Department of Education league have surpassed the national average of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs (The General Certificate of Secondary Education). Eight independent Muslim schools were featured in the top 50 of the examination in 2014 (Buaras 2015). Even "in comparisons of the academic performance of students eligible for free school meals (an indicator of poverty), Pakistani and Bangladeshi students perform significantly better than their white British counterparts (Saunders 2015)". Statistics show that while new immigrants from Muslim countries on average receive considerably less education than other people in their host countries, their children narrow the gap. French-born Muslim children receive about the same number of years of education as ethnic French kids, German-born Muslims receive on average only 1.9 years less education, and British-born Muslims receive an average of 1 year more education than white British kids (Algan et al. 2010).

In the Netherlands, second-generation children appear to be splitting into two groups. Those who drop out of secondary school, at a rate more than twice the national average are very likely to fall into unemployment and benefit dependency. Of the smaller group who stay in school, more than 40% end up in higher education (though more often in technical colleges than universities). A large-scale Dutch study (Crul and Heering 2008) of second-generation success found that there is "a considerable group that stays behind and an equally large group that performs remarkably well." This is the same pattern seen in Britain: Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people are overrepresented among those entering higher education and at the same time overrepresented among those leaving school without qualifications. In other words, there is a polarization within ethnic groups – something which is not unique to Muslim immigrants and seen equally in other groups of immigrants. This is, in a way, reassuring. It means that Muslim immigrants are on the path once followed by other religious-minority immigrants, encountering the same mix of opportunities and obstacles. But it also means that many school systems are failing them (Saunders 2015).

However, according to an OECD report (2015: 230–232), progress in performance among immigrants at school is noticeable, both over time and with greater experience of the host country. In non-EU OECD countries, native-born children with two immigrant parents perform on average as well in reading at the age of 15 as children with two native-born parents. In contrast, foreign-born students lag behind. In the European Union, both foreign-born pupils and natives with two immigrant parents show average outcomes that are well below those of children with two native-born parents. Between those of mixed and native parentage, there is generally no difference. School performance improves the longer pupils reside in the host country, with the native offspring of foreign-born parentage outperforming immigrants who arrived in childhood.

That said, despite progress over the decade, a significant share of students with a migrant background lack basic skills. In 2012, an average of 30% of foreign-born pupils across the European Union lacked basic reading skills at 15, compared with around 25% of native students born to immigrant parents and 14% of native children of mixed parentage and of children of native-born parents. By contrast, comparable average shares of around 17% of native-born pupils of native- and foreign-born parents struggled with reading literacy at 15 years old across the OECD (*ibid.*) (see Table 2 in the Appendix for further details).

On the other hand, while the first generation (the new immigrants) earn far less than natives do, their children, the second-generation Muslims, who have the same language fluency and have achieved levels of education that are the same or better than those of the native population, do not manage to narrow the wage gap. British-born Bangladeshis do twice as well as their parents in the labor market – but that is still far worse than British-born Britons. German-born Turks actually earn less than their Turkish-born parents, despite having more years of education (Algan et al. 2010). Or, as The Open Society (2009) Institute study concludes, “human capital accounts for some of this disadvantage; other factors include social networks, knowledge and understanding of the labour market and language fluency.” But even after all that has been taken into account, it appears that children of Muslim immigrants face both an ethnic and a religion penalty in the labor market.

Across all OECD countries disproportionately many immigrant children have a significantly lower level of achievement on knowledge and skills tests, due, among other things, to the fact that education in the “host” country is performed in the country’s own predominating language(s) and few (if any) efforts are made to base teaching in and on cultural and/or socioeconomic conditions (Brandsma 2005; OECD 2015). It has been found that “education (in a broad sense) is neither the sole cause nor the sole solution for social exclusion (Brandsma 2005: 23). One of the principle conclusions of the synthesized findings from educational research is that education policy initiatives have only limited success in removing barriers to inclusion if they are not continuously articulated with policies that address wider economic inequalities.

Educational outcomes for Muslim immigrants are in part discussed in the light of the long-term socioeconomic, political, and social consequences of



education. That is, the consequences for the individuals some years after their departure from the educational institution/arrangement, which among others, affected by globalization, migration, inclusion/exclusion, and participation. Social exclusion may be seen as *constellations of disadvantage* which implies complex interrelationships between socio-economic, institutional, and individual factors (Walther and Pohl 2005: 38–39). The failure in inclusion is most often ascribed to factors resulting from cultural differences such as language problems, religious, or traditional family values. While these aspects clearly play a role, it should at the same time be taken into account that most Muslim immigrants have a lower socio-economic status that affects school performance and leads to a situation of segregation or exclusion. Social exclusion is associated with *long-term unemployment*. However, countries with both low and high early school leaving have high rates of long-term unemployment, which means that other factors need to be taken into consideration.

Education is generally a key driver of the labor market integration of immigrant offspring and of immigrants who arrive as children, although less so among women than men. According to OECD (2015), in the European Union, young immigrant offspring with two immigrant parents are four percentage points more likely to be neither in employment, education, or training (NEET) than those with no migrant background. In contrast, in the non-European OECD countries, such youth have similar NEET rates than their peers with native-born parents. Also, in the European Union, the youth unemployment rate among native-born offspring of immigrant parents is almost 50% higher than among the young with native-born parents. In non-EU OECD countries, rates are similar.

The analysis conducted by OECD (*ibid.*) also suggests that, since 2007–2008, youth employment rates among those of migrant background have deteriorated more than ever before, and the disadvantages of youth with a migrant background have extend beyond education and labor market outcomes. One-fifth of young people born in the host country to foreign-born parents report belonging to a group that is discriminated against on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, or nationality in the European Union (ESS 2016). In 2012, nearly one in two children (aged less than 16 years old) living in a migrant household in the OECD countries was living below the relative poverty threshold, compared with less than a quarter of those in a native-born household. Shares are the highest in the United States, Greece, and Spain (OECD 2015).

Hence, Muslim immigrants who do complete a good education and seek a place in Western society can encounter devastating barriers. One study of four European countries (Zimmermann 2009) suggests that among the Muslims with higher-than-average educational achievement, the optimism is reversed as soon as they try to enter the workforce. A recent review of the labor-market integration of ethnic minorities in Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Britain found that they “typically have significantly higher unemployment rates, lower labor income, and they are less likely to find and keep their jobs than the majority population.” The proportion of the population of Belgium living below the poverty line is 10% for native Belgians, 59% for Turkish immigrants, and 56% for Moroccan immigrants

and in Amsterdam, 32% of Turkish households and 37% of Moroccan households (Saunders 2015; The Open Society 2009).

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## Education of Muslim Immigrants: Problems and Solutions?

Educational systems nowadays tend to be caught between two principal demands. On one hand, processes of globalization drive countries to make people technically and economically competitive generally and to enhance students' cognitive and technical skills more specifically. On the other hand, Islam is itself a globalizing force (Daun and Arjmand 2005); the number of Muslims who have migrated from the "core" areas is increasing. At the same time, the international discourse legitimizing religious and multicultural demands on education is being globalized (Karic 2002). Most Muslims prefer their children to have an education that includes at least some religious instruction concerning morals and values. For the educational systems in Europe and other areas that are not historically Muslim, it is a challenge to find an optimal balance between these two principal demands.

Religious education of Muslims in Europe and the North America has become a subject of contention and disagreement. Many argue that "their states are doing too little or too much to shape the spiritual beliefs of private citizens. State response to this concern ranges from sponsoring religious education in public schools to forgoing it entirely policies vary according to national political culture (Berglund 2015)."

In Germany and Austria, public schools may teach Islam to Muslims as a subject within a broader religious curriculum and parents are legally entitled to choose religious education on Islam for their children. Germany and Austria have also started to provide teacher training for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in public universities. The policy reflects Germany and Austria's legal and religious contexts, in which officially recognized religions may enter into cooperation with the state (*ibid.*).

In the United Kingdom and Sweden, public schools teach all religions including Islam to all pupils as an academic subject. Teachers are trained in comparative religion in the respective universities. In both countries, Muslims have been awarded the same rights as Christians to receive public funding for religious schools. Both the United Kingdom and Sweden have an established national church; however, non-Christian religions are now accorded equal opportunities and rights.

French and American public schools do not teach religion, although there is an opportunity to teach *about* Islam in school subjects such as art, history, or literature. The policy comports with the national political culture in both countries, which maintain a rigid separation between church and state (*ibid.*) (see Table 3).

Study of Islam as a religion is not the only concern of the Muslim parents. For many Muslim immigrants, other than coping with the school culture, sex education proves a challenge. Sex education (with variations in arrangement and syllabi) is a mandatory subject across public schools in OCED countries and is placed within the

national curricula across. It is one of the major areas of contentions and source of disagreement among Muslim immigrants and the hosting Western countries. For many Muslims, the decline in spirituality and the tendency of the West to embrace materialism is partially an outcome of the rationalization and adherence of such perpetual attitudinal changes lies in the Western notion of sexuality and sexual pleasure. For many Muslims, such attitudes and behaviors are normalized through sex education which solely promulgates sex as purely physical, which lacks moral and spiritual dimensions. Hence, many Muslim immigrants in the West argue that their children would be better off without the sex education offered in schools. Upon the request of parents, Muslim Parliament of Great Britain issued a *fatwā* which argued, “what today passes off as ‘sex education’ is laden with a ‘hidden agenda’ by which libertine values are being imposed upon impressionable children (Halstead 1997).” For many Muslim parents, what lies behind these anxieties is the conviction that current practice in sex education is in serious conflict with Islamic teaching. The Muslim Parliament, then, strongly recommended that all Muslim parents seriously consider withdrawing their children from sex education classes.

The nature of Muslim objections to the sex education lies in the following premises: (1) They argue that some of the materials used in Western sex education in schools offend against the Islamic principle of modesty and decency (*hayā*), an attribute which encourages believers to avoid anything objectionable by observing the inherent shyness and a sense of modesty. (2) Western-style sex education tends to present certain behavior as normal or acceptable which Muslims believe is sinful. (3) *Shari‘ah* provides clear guidance about what is acceptable and unacceptable for Muslims regarding their sexual behavior, and marriage is a religious duty and the only legitimate institution for sexual relationships, which should take place between a man and a woman; and homosexuality is regarded a capital sin. (4) Western-Style sex education undermines the Islamic concept of family life-style and encourages Muslim youth to follow Western sexual normative rather than Islamic.

Despite the fact that Muslim immigrants in general are adapting quickly to the social values, reflected often in the formal curricula, and many also adopt the fertility patterns of the West (Saunders 2015), and they generally become enthusiastic supporters of the state and democratic institutions, many Muslim migrant parents are faced with a dilemma: they can either withdraw their children from sex education in mainstream schools, or they can allow their children to attend such classes and supplement the teaching with a specifically Islamic viewpoint at home or in some other Islamic setting, as recommended by other Muslim leaders. A larger group of Muslims argue that in lieu of sex education, the children are better off if encouraged to observe the Islamic life style which contributes to protection against HIV/AIDS and other problems such as STIs without necessarily promulgating moral decadence.

Mosques and Islamic associations and centers play a significant role in the education and training of young people. They struggle against juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior, namely, alcoholism, prostitution, violence, and drugs. These efforts are appreciated by both the Muslim population and local authorities alike.

The motivation for this work of civic education is primarily the religious healing of individuals who may have gone astray (Ennaji 2016: 81).

A chapter of this length, obviously, cannot but to scratch the surface of such a topic as the migration of Muslim in the West. One should also be aware of the in-group variations in the Muslim communities in the West. Muslim diasporic communities are heterogeneous and extremely diverse. They are divided by class, gender, education, geography, working and living conditions, social status, socio-cultural background, rural-urban differences, age, language, and color (Moghissi and Ghorashi 2010).

The new wave of refugees from Muslim countries (except for Afghanistan) as distinguished from the previous groups is markedly distinct from the earlier generation for higher level of education and expertise. Unlike the first migration wave, which was economic, this one was political. This will introduce a new dynamic to the Muslim transnational communities in the West and, as Ramadan (2005) anticipates, would promote a pluralist Islam among Muslim communities in the West.

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## Conclusions

Despite the significance of migration among Muslims and the role of Muslim migration in the formation of archaic globalization, in quest for realization of Muslim *ummah*, the situation of Muslim migration today is far less glorious than past. Muslim migrants in West struggle with a wide array of problems from attaining the residence permits to living *halāl* and educating their children in increasingly hostile diasporic milieu. Formation of Muslim transnational communities has introduced a new dynamic to the Muslim migrants in West. Muslim parents, however, on one hand are concerned about the extremist Islamism which is growing exponentially in the light of discriminations in the competitive labor market and on the other hand to protect and educate their children in some increasingly hostile host societies.

Majority of Muslim migrant children take part in the mainstream schools in the host countries whose arrangement for the study of Islam varies from one country to next. Religious education takes place in the form of after school classes or weekend Islamic schools and/or combination of both. In some countries, private Muslim schools are permitted which using the flexibilities of the national curricula to teach Islam as part of the curriculum. The informal and nonformal religious education take place in mosques and Islamic centers which despite divisions across sectarian or national lines more often than not promote and promulgate the culture of coexistence and pluralism.

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## Appendixes

See Tables 2 and 3.

**Table 2** Early school leavers among 15–24 year-olds, differences in percentage points with native-born offspring of native-born (2013)

	Native-born with 2 foreign-born parents	Native-born with mixed background	Foreign-born arrived before 15	Other foreign-born	Native-born with 2 native-born parents	Native-born offspring of foreign-born	Native-born with a mixed background	Foreign-born who arrived as children	Foreign-born who arrived as adults
<b>Canada</b>	5.0	7.2	5.5	7.4	10.2	-5.2	-3.1	-4.7	-2.8
<b>Australia</b>	4.1	6.6	6.2	-	9.2	-5.1	-2.6	-3.1	-
<b>United Kingdom</b>	5.6	7.7	4.9	22.9	8.3	-2.7	-0.5	-3.4	14.6
<b>Israel</b>	5.4	4.0	5.8	22.4	7.4	-2.0	-3.4	-1.6	15.0
<b>Luxembourg</b>	7.8	8.3	9.3	22.8	8.2	-0.3	0.1	1.1	14.6
<b>United States</b>	8.7	7.6	12.5	23.6	8.8	-0.1	-1.2	3.7	14.8
<b>OECD total (16)</b>	9.9	9.3	14.0	24.4	9.7	0.2	-0.4	4.3	14.7
<b>Sweden</b>	9.8	10.3	15.2	13.4	9.4	0.4	0.9	5.8	3.9
<b>Norway</b>	14.9	14.5	18.0	14.9	14.3	0.6	0.2	3.7	0.7
<b>EU total (10)</b>	11.4	10.0	17.1	26.2	9.9	1.6	0.1	7.2	16.3
<b>Netherlands</b>	8.8	6.6	7.8	18.2	7.2	1.6	-0.6	0.5	10.9
<b>Spain</b>	22.6	18.3	31.1	32.9	18.6	4.1	-0.2	12.5	14.3
<b>Germany</b>	10.8	5.0	14.4	24.4	6.4	4.4	-1.4	8.0	18.0
<b>France</b>	12.9	8.7	14.4	29.7	7.6	5.3	1.1	6.8	22.2
<b>Switzerland</b>	30.5	22.9	28.2	23.9	25.0	5.5	-2.1	3.2	-1.1
<b>Denmark</b>	18.1	14.6	21.9	3.9	12.5	5.6	2.1	9.4	-8.6
<b>Austria</b>	14.6	8.9	15.7	23.7	4.2	10.4	4.7	11.5	19.5

*(continued)*

Table 2 (continued)

	Native-born with 2 foreign-born parents	Native-born with mixed background	Foreign-born arrived before 15	Other foreign-born	Native-born with 2 native-born parents	Native-born offspring of foreign-born	Native-born with a mixed background	Foreign-born who arrived as children	Foreign-born who arrived as adults
<b>Finland</b>	32.1	25.4	34.5	51.1	17.6	14.5	7.8	17.0	33.5
<b>New Zealand</b>	-	-	3.8	-	10.3	-	-	-6.5	-
<b>Portugal</b>	-	-	21.0	26.6	23.0	-	-	-2.0	3.6
<b>Ireland</b>	-	-	15.4	15.9	13.7	-	-	1.7	2.2
<b>Belgium</b>	-	-	20.6	31.8	13.9	-	-	6.6	17.9
<b>Italy</b>	-	-	22.3	52.9	12.7	-	-	9.6	40.3
<b>Greece</b>	-	-	29.1	59.5	12.2	-	-	17.0	47.3

Source: (OECD 2015).

**Table 3** Islam in public schools in selected EU countries

	Religion in National Curriculum	Islam could be taught in public schools	Confessional	Islam as an elective course	Private Islamic Schools	State subsidizes Islamic schools (fully or partially)
<b>Germany</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Y/N <sup>a</sup>	Yes	Yes
<b>France</b>	Yes <sup>b</sup>	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>UK</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Italy</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Netherlands</b>	Yes <sup>c</sup>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Spain</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Belgium</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Greece</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Austria</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Sweden</b>	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Norway</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Czech</b>	Yes	No	Y/N	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>a</sup>Decisions are taken in *länder*s level

<sup>b</sup>Only in secondary schools

<sup>c</sup>Upon request of parents

Source: (Musharraf 2015).

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# Islamic Children's Literature: Informal Religious Education in Diaspora

Torsten Janson

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the brand of Islamic children's literature produced in diaspora, in order to discern how this supplementary educational tool has responded to key concerns of Islamic education. How is Islamic faith staged in diasporic literary depiction? What innovative formats are employed and how does such innovation affect the content? Rather than understanding this literature in terms of mere adaptations of novel formats, Islamic children's literature is explored as a mode for cultural negotiation in and of itself. It ambiguously balances between a defensive-exclusive and offensive-inclusive cultural stance. On the one hand, and in its early phases, it has been formulated as a defense of religious principles in a sociocultural context defined as threatening, in face of which Islam is mobilized as a safety mechanism. In such aspects, Islamic children's literature has essentially reproduced cautious and socio-conservative

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literary patterns in the Arab and/or Muslim world at large. On the other hand, the format as such subverts traditional forms of Islamic education and rote learning practices, in favor of a religious pedagogy through which Islamic creed and practice is highlighted as a rational and culturally flexible matrix for life. Currently, the literature is set in a process of rapid development. Core religious virtues are increasingly staged through vivid narrative and graphic representation, and in inclusive appropriation of Euro-American literary formats such as the detective story, the world of sports, the comic book, the fable, and fairy tale. Such innovative formats invite culturally inclusive depictions of diasporic existence, in an open and vulnerable exploration of what Muslim identity and Islamic faith may mean for a young mind. In the process, the borders are currently becoming less distinct between the brand of Islamic children's (established since the 1970s) and an emergent literature depicting the lives of young Muslims with less explicit religious or ideological purposes.

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### Keywords

Islamic children's literature · Picture books · *Da'wah* · Diaspora · Religious pedagogy

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## Introduction

The brand of "Islamic children's literature" found its distinct shape in Britain from the 1970s, devised as a conscious strategy of religious socialization. It was launched as an educational alternative to "non-Islamic" children's books in the English language, that is, as distinct not only from children's literature in general but also from books depicting Muslim identity and culture without the intent to foster an explicit and active religious identity. Already here, a clarification on the use of the terms "Muslim" and "Islamic" is in order. They suffer from considerable vagueness and are used differently in news, debates, as well as within academia. In this chapter, "Muslim" is used as a neutral, descriptive, and ethnographic concept referring to everything that may be ascribed to *Muslims* as people, organizations, and societies: "the Muslim world"; "Muslim debates on gender"; etc. "Islamic" is used as an overarching concept referring to thoughts and practices that can be ascribed to Islam as a system of ideas: "Islamic law"; "Sunnī Islamic norms of representation"; etc. It should be used with caution within academic studies, since the Muslim debates about what is to be regarded as "Islamic" or "un-Islamic" are highly normative – as illustrated by the concept of Islamic children's literature.

The genre of Islamic children's literature in English has its background in ventures of *da'wah*, the "invitation" to Islam (the Islamic concept of mission or edification), formulated in the context of the European minority situation (Janson 2003). Islamic children's literature thus is understood in its normative sense, that is, "in line with correct Islamic principles" (as defined by the publishers). A recurring concern of this literature is its preoccupation with "the Muslim child," understood not in cultural or ethnic terms, but as an incomplete religious subject, in need of

fostering and guidance in order to attain its full religious potential – becoming “Islamic” (Janson 2017).

For example, when the pioneering United Kingdom-based publisher Islamic Foundation launched its successful *Muslim Children's Library* during the early 1980s, this brand was presented as books “with a difference, for children of all ages.” According to the editor and author Khurram Murad (1982a), children's books in general aim only to entertain or to train without any place for God or the guidance of prophets. Such entertainment and skills are devoid of value and meaning:

Such books, in fact, rob young people of access to true knowledge. They give them no unchanging standards of right and wrong, nor any incentives to live by what is right and refrain from what is wrong. The result is that all too often the young enter adult life in a state of social alienation and bewilderment, unable to cope with the seemingly unlimited choices of the world around them. (Murad 1982a: 3)

In this sense, the general concepts of “Muslim” and “Islam” are tied down to a specific, ideological horizon, building on an activist and socially committed vision of Islam as an integral “part of everyday life” (Murad 1986; for a discussion, see further Janson 2003). It should be underscored that this activist interpretation of Islam is far from representative for Muslims in general, but is typical for a moderate Islamist understanding of religious identity and social agency. Indeed, the publisher Islamic Foundation was set up in 1973 as an independent offshoot of the South Asian reform movement Jamā'at-i -Islāmī, founded by one of the towering figures of Sunnī moderate Islamism during the nineteenth century, Abū al-'Alā' Mawdūdī. The Jamā'at-i -Islāmī lacks significant popular following in Britain, controlling a mere 3% of the 1500–1600 mosques of Britain. But the entrepreneurial initiative of the Islamic Foundation and its sister organizations (originating from the Jamā'at-i -Islāmī) grants the movement an informal position outmatching its popular mandate. Formally, the Islamic Foundation is an independent research and education branch, affiliated with British Universities and research centers and has earned considerable attention and credibility as a bridgehead between Muslim and non-Muslim interests in Britain – while in some quarters the Jamā'at-i -Islāmī background also spurs suspicion (see further Janson 2003).

This publisher remains one of the leading actors on the market of Islamic children's literature in English but has been followed by several similar publishers in the United Kingdom, India, Australia, South Africa, and the United States. While Islamic children's literature today is produced in multiple languages, the genre of was originally conceived in a British, English language format. The first and henceforth dominant diasporic publishers consciously chose to publish in English, rather than Arabic, Urdu, or other native languages, in order to accommodate the needs of new generations of Muslims in minority. Therefore, English remains the most important language for Islamic children's literature in diasporic settings – even though the production of books in other European languages also is expanding and the development of diasporic children's literature indeed reflects tendencies in current Arabic literary production (see further below).

The following chapter will deal with Islamic children's literature in the specific sense outlined above, and the concept of "Islamic children's literature" will thus be reserved for English pedagogical-literary products with the explicit religio-ideological purpose of preserving, disciplining, and adjusting young religious identity in accordance with the needs of diasporic minority existence. As shall be discussed in the following, however, the line is gradually becoming less distinct between Islamic children's literature in this stricter sense and a more "general" literature depicting Muslim characters and subjects, as the market is expanding and the religiously motivated publishers are becoming more market adjusted and literarily mature.

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### **Islamic Children's Literature: A Crossroad of Local Concerns and Transnational Tendencies**

The question of religious socialization has been a core concern of European Muslims ever since the establishment of significant Muslim communities in the 1960s. How could Muslim religious identity be preserved in a cultural context perceived as Christian at best, and, at worst, defined by secularism, immorality, and cultural decay? Children in particular were regarded as exposed to majority norms through secular public education, cultural consumption, and peer relations. In the United Kingdom, where the brand of Islamic Children's literature emerged, Muslim leadership remained fragmented, since British Muslim mosque organizations largely mirrored ethnic and sectarian affiliations of the motherland left behind. As a rule, British mosque organizations have relied on traditional forms of religious socialization and instruction for children, focusing on a mimetic learning of prayer and Qur'ānic recitation, while disregarding deeper questions of religious and cultural identity. In this context, small but industrious organizations such as the Islamic Foundation recognized the need for renewed methodologies in religious socialization – and children's literature was launched as a key strategy to this end.

In this sense, Islamic children's literature should be regarded as an informal supplementary provision in response to (and commercially targeted for) religious educational needs in Muslim diasporic communities. This literary genre and its conceptualization of "true knowledge" is intimately connected to Muslim minority experience, geared at safeguarding religious socialization in a culturally threatening context (Janson 2003). In this sense, the fictional and idealized "Islamic child" of the religious literature aspires to put the actual multicultural Muslim child within the grasp of Islamic institutions – and to make it less threatening (Nodelman 1992; Janson 2017).

Having said this, it would be mistaken to think of this literature as solely a product of local factors in Muslim diasporic communities. Islamic children's literature produced in Europe or in the United States reflects larger, transnational tendencies in the Middle East and Arabic speaking world at large. Indeed, the "Middle East" and the "Arabic speaking world" are also problematic concepts. The concept of the Middle East has its historical background in a colonial and orientalist description of

the world, often resting on highly problematic assumptions about its specific cultural, political, or religious identity – with very unclear borders. In this chapter, the concept is used conveniently only, as a loose geopolitical concept referring to the states of North Africa, the Arab peninsula, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. “Arabic” is used as a linguistic concept – which in turn denotes standard Arabic (*fushah*) as well as multiple spoken dialects (see further below). “Arabic children’s literature” in this chapter thus refers to children’s literature written in the Arabic language(s). As an example of such transnational tendencies, the narration and representation of “Islamic knowledge” of Islamic children’s literature produced in diasporic settings partly stages and renegotiates the constraints of figurative representation of traditional Sunnī-Islamic theology (Janson 2012; Janson 2017). And as will be clear in the following, the genre similarly reflects and renegotiates pedagogical norms and cultural sensitivities underpinning children’s and youth’s literature in the Muslim world at large, as observed in research on Arabic children’s fiction (Starrett 1996; Mdallel 2004; Dünge 2011; Elabd 2015).

The present chapter aims at identifying the gradual unfolding of central topics and tropes in the emergence of the genre of Islamic children’s literature produced in diaspora, in order to discern how this supplementary educational tool responds to key concerns of Islamic education. How is Islamic faith staged in diasporic literary depiction? What innovative pedagogical, aesthetic and narrative formats are employed and how do such appropriations affect the content of the literature? What topics are dealt with confidently and innovatively and what themes are met with caution or avoided altogether?

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## Patterns of Religion and Morality in Arabic Children’s Literature

Before discussing the specific brand of diasporic Islamic children’s literature, it is informative to explore the state of the arts of children’s literature and its appropriation in pedagogy in the Middle East – and the Arab world more specifically. As mentioned above, the genre of Islamic children’s literature took shape and developed in a Euro-American Muslim setting. In several respects, however, the diasporic literature displays stylistic and topical characteristics similar to the children’s literature in the Middle East and has emerged in a negotiation with similar pedagogical, religious, and sociocultural sensitivities.

The interconnectedness of children’s literature with pedagogy is by no means unique to the Arabic speaking world. To the contrary, international research and theory has commonly contemplated children’s literature’s inherent relation to pedagogy. Literary discussion has commonly taken place from a distinctly normative position, attempting to define what literature is *suitable* for children (Nikolajeva 1996). Such debates are formulated from religious as well as secular points of departure.

For instance, there is a Christian, religiously oriented debate on the utility of children’s literature for educating religious norms. What is, for example, the religious-pedagogical value or harm of fantasy books such as the *Narnia*, *Lord of the Rings*, or *Harry Potter* series? Other debates concern the explicitly confessional

literature, such as the expanding market for children's Bibles and Bible storybooks. What are the criteria for a "good children's book?" According to a particularistic orientation, a book has value only if it is explicitly Christian. A more literary line of reasoning maintains that a poor book never can be pedagogically useful, irrespective of its purposes or confessional nature. Many Christian books are regarded to be so poor in literary quality that they deter rather than stimulate religious identity among children (see further Naranjo 1999; Hutchens 1999; Stan 1995; Shannon 1999). As shall be clear, similar Muslim debates have recently emerged about confessional Islamic children's literature.

From a secular-pedagogic perspective, we find equally intense discussions on the potential of "multicultural" or "global" literature to familiarize children with cultural diversity or to provide means for self-identification. There is, for instance, an abundance of studies, handbooks, and literary resource collections discussing and suggesting how children's literature can be used in classrooms, in order to handle cultural plurality (Lamme 1996; Fredricks 2000). The same holds true for the utility of fiction in dealing with or conflict and trauma, such as literature on "Arabic" or "Muslim culture" in response to Islamophobia and cultural stereotypes in an American post 9.11 context (Schwarz 1999; Ward et al. 2010; Al-Hazza 2006, 2010; Al-Hazza and Lucking 2006). Ideas on the pedagogic instrumentality of children's literature thus remain strong also in a Euro-American context, despite the increasing academic interest in children's literature *qua* literature and the pleasure of reading as a means to its own end (Nodelman 1988; Nikolajeva 1996).

In the Arabic speaking world and the Middle East at large, the pedagogical overtones in the discussion about children's literature have been further advanced by the centralization of the educational system and the state control in the authorship and publication of children's literature and textbooks for school. Indeed, one of the problems inhibiting educational reform in the Middle East has been the interconnectedness of public education and vested political interests, which have used the educational system as an instrument for establishing ideological hegemony (Owen 2004: 29f). This has had profound and negative effects on the development of children's culture in the Middle East (UNDP 2004).

Gregory Starrett's (1996) observations on Egyptian school textbooks remain relevant for much of the Middle Eastern children's literature: it is intimately interconnected with patriarchal values, underscoring the importance of the domestic sphere and respect for elders. Secondly, school practices of memorization, recitation, and question and response are taught even before writing has been mastered, adding to the authority of the state-sanctioned, written text, rather than the mediating pedagogic authority of the instructors. And thirdly, education is connected to the sacred history of Islam. This is achieved through the linking of events from religious history to the contemporary, familiar setting, and by the connection of religious education with other school subjects.

Petra Dünge (2011) draws attention to similar tendencies in current Arabic children's literature. It remains characterized by didactic ambitions to impart values such as patriotism, the love of Islam, the appreciation for Arabic culture and Arabic

languages. It also remains socioculturally conservative, heavily moralizing, stylistically dry and nonappealing in terms of graphic profile and illustrations. In terms of literary motives, recurrent are traditional stories from a classical Arab heritage; stories from the life of Prophet Muḥammad; tales of Medieval Arab scientists and travelers in the Middle Ages; and political core topics such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the last decade or so, however, new tendencies are emerging, with an increasing literary focus of mundane life and psychologically credible depictions of the daily joys and sorrows of contemporary children. There is also an emergent development in the gendered depictions, gradually introducing new, socially active roles of women in society and more nuanced representations of fathers. There is also a new attention to and improvement of illustrations, hitherto “grossly underrated” (Dünges 2011). This development goes hand in hand with a rapid establishment of innovative publishing houses in many quarters of the Middle East.

Another development concerns language. Arabic children's literature has usually been written in standard Arabic (*fushḥah*), rather than spoken national dialects. And as pointed out by Dünges (2011), standard Arabic is commonly associated with dry style and boring school lessons and difficult vocabulary. Recently, however, increasing numbers of authors rely on various dialectical forms of Arabic in children's literature, in search of a renewed, vernacular, and localized literary address, for stylistic as well as pedagogical and identity building reasons (Bizri 2012). As Lebanese author Nadine Touma has put it, if children never encounter dialect as written knowledge, they tend to conceive of their own, spoken diction and formal, written Arabic as two distinct languages (Chahinian 2012). Or to quote Chahinian's interview with Touma: “[N]otre cerveau perçoit l'arabe dialectal et l'arabe littéraire, la *fushḥah*, comme deux langues complètement différentes, comme si on parlait l'anglais et l'espagnol. Conclusion: si l'enfant qui apprend le dialectal ne voit pas cette langue écrite, il ne comprendra pas que la *fushḥa* et le dialectal sont deux formes de la langue arabe” (Chahinian 2012). Hence, standard Arabic literature risks being conceived as a distinct literary form and disconnected from children's everyday language, with potentially alienating effects.

All in all, despite a growing recent interest, “images of children and childhood in modern Muslim contexts have not received detailed scholarly attention,” as pointed out by Karimi and Gruber (2012: 291). This holds true also for international research on Middle Eastern children's literature. With the current expansion of literary production and establishment of innovative publishing houses, however, scholarly attention is increasing. The topical renewal in the genre, the improvements in the literary address, and the updated attention to qualified illustrations are all signs that children's literature no longer is disregarded: “Didacticism and moralizing still dominate in many books, but others show that reading can be fun, pure, and simple” (Dünges 2011: 179). As shall be clear from the following, Islamic children's literature produced in diasporic contexts appears to be in the forefront of such renewal and innovativeness, as a direct effect of the perceived need of updating a functional literary address of the child in a Euro-Muslim and American context.



## Children's Literature as an Updated Format for Islamic Education

The pedagogic commitment to produce a specific Islamic children's literature, taking shape from the 1970s, built on the dissatisfaction with the methods of Islamic education dominating much of the Muslim world – as well as the methods of the major faith organizations in Muslim diaspora. According to Islamic Foundation and similar organizations, Islam can only be fully grasped and realized through personal reflection and active application of religious identity in everyday life – not through formalistic, mimetic observance. This in turn calls for a literary staging of Islam from a localized, cultural point of view. Hence, the narration of Islamic faith and pedagogics in diasporic children's literature stimulates a rethinking of what Islam is or could be.

During the last decade or so, the market of Islamic children's literature has rapidly expanded. Publishers in Britain and the United States maintain a lead in this field, but Islamic children's literature today is a global phenomenon, including books written in multiple languages. In the process, market identities and boundaries become less and less distinct. While Islamic children's literature as a rule still expressively aims at formulating doctrine and religious ethics for children, today several such publishers produce less ideological material as well, aiming at depicting various aspects of Muslim identity, history, and religion in descriptive ways. But this is a recent and slow development.

It may be noted, for instance, that award-winning Canadian children's literature author Rukhsana Khan, active in the debate about the literary representation of minorities in multicultural society, chose not to “endorse” any explicitly Islamic books in her *Muslim Booklist* of recommended readings on Islam and Muslim faith and experience – but only ambivalently so (Khan 2013). For instance, in an article published on her webpage, Khan discusses Linda Dedago's *Islamic Rose Books* series (Muslim Writers Publishing). Degado herself describes her authorship as “Islamic fiction,” representing “Muslims living as a minority in a multicultural and diverse society in a westernized country / . . . / in a non-preachy way. Rather than telling the readers about Islam, the author showed the readers, through the book character dialogue and action how Islam can be relevant in the lives of Muslims today” (Islamic Rose Books 2013). In her *Muslim Booklist*, however, while underscoring the fact that she finds distinct values in the *Islamic Rose* series, Khan decided not to recommend it since “such stories belong in the same category as Christian publishing. They are books specifically aimed at their religious markets so I had to leave them off” (Khan 2013). Such reflections illustrate both the increasing complexity of the market of Islamic children's literature and the lingering sensitivity associated with religiously informed picture books.

Being one of the first and most influential publishers on this market, the Islamic Foundation (and its publication branch Kube Publishing) remains one of the dominant actors. It is therefore useful to follow the development of this publisher during its first decades. Its production of children's literature falls into two major phases. From the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, production mainly consisted of books relating sacred history, most notably stories about the life and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Almost all authors of this first phase were male and tightly connected to the organization itself. The books all had characteristics of in-house

production, with long descriptions of the publisher and the pedagogic purposes of the books and low in production values: many, for example, were stapled books of poor paper quality. By contrast, from the mid-1990s, authorship became highly diversified, and the topics shifted from sacred history to stories about contemporary British Muslims. During this phase, the design of the books radically changed, as the publisher embraced different formats and styles of production and improved the material quality of paper and production processes. Strikingly, the preoccupation with contemporary Britain of this phase coincided with the use of domestic settings for the stories, which were almost exclusively authored by female writers.

While the Islamic Foundation has been highly successful in carving out this niche market and attaining an intermediate social position despite its ideological marginality, this was not achieved overnight. The early material certainly was innovative in certain respects, but in other ways it remained cautious in its rethinking of religious pedagogy. For instance, *The Children's Book of Islam (Part One)* of 1979 was among the very first English Islamic children's books to reach a significant audience (11 reprints during the first 20 years, with 7000–11,000 copies per printing). This nonfiction, 56-page textbook explaining (Sunnī) Islam for 8- to 11-year-olds imparts doctrine in short chapters consisting of simple sentences:

A Muslim is an individual who accepts Islam as a way of life.

Islam is the faith and the path to follow.

A Muslim believes in what Islam tells him or her to believe.

A Muslim acts as Islam tells him or her to act. / . . . /

Therefore, we worship only Allāh and only upon Him do we call for help. (Ahsan 1979: 9)

Here few attempts are made to catch the imagination of the reader by either narrative or graphic means. The book's images consist of some calligraphy, a couple of figures illustrating theology and prayer times, and a photograph of the *Ka'bah* in Mecca. There is also a decorative golden frame surrounding the short sentences, rendering a strict and solemn impression not unlike the layout of many Qur'ān editions. The only interactive element of the book is a workbook section, with questions corresponding to each chapter: "1. Who is Allāh? 2. How many gods are there? 3. Is God alone? 4. Does Allāh have a son or a family?" (ibid.: 44). Despite such interrogative elements, the text hardly invites the child to any active dialogue or reflection. The questions are to be answered by merely repeating statements in the textbook. The book, thus, retains the authoritarian, pedagogical technique of rote memorization, in which the child is presented with an undisputed and essentially monologic truth. In this sense, it is primarily the format that makes *The Children's Book of Islam* something new: the very idea of a printed manual of religious doctrine directed at children. In other respects, the contents of the book remain quite faithful to a traditional approach to religious teaching.

After the publication of a few successful nonfiction books, however, during the early 1980s this publisher expanded its horizons. It took recourse in the rich tradition of Muslim history and storytelling, realizing that religious norms may be more efficiently conveyed to young readers through literary depiction rather than blunt

injunction. Or to quote the suspenseful opening lines of Khurram Murad's *Love Your God* (1982b: 6):

The night was dark. It was already past midnight. In a few hours the first rays of sunlight would appear. Then the Quraysh would realise that Muhammad, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him), had slipped through their fingers and then the chase would be on.

Most books published within the *Muslim Children's Library* series during the 1980s consist of illustrated stories about the Prophet Muḥammad and the early Muslim community of Mecca and Medina. It is hardly incidental that the organization chose to tell stories inspired by sacred tradition when embarking on the venture of publishing literature for the purposes of religious socialization. Apart from providing captivating and exciting stories, thus meeting basic pedagogic demands, the narrative employment of early Islam conforms to central tenets of the modern Sunnī Islamic movement. These are not just any exciting stories. The book series' preoccupation with sacred history signifies the principle of "returning to the sources," so central to thinkers of the Sunnī Islamic movement and here accommodated to the children's book format. The historical canon not only functions as an inspiration for individual piety and morals; it also serves as a blueprint for an ideal society. Indeed, as pointed out by Eric Hobsbawm (1983: 1–14), it is precisely in the face of rapid social change that societies tend to look to the (real or imagined) past for authoritarian symbols and models. The claim to represent and preserve values of the past becomes an efficient strategy for carving out a new entrepreneurial niche in the present, thus inherently subverting traditional concepts of religious pedagogy. For publishers such as the Islamic Foundation to normatively employ the paradigm of the Prophet's life and early Islamic history signifies a claim to present British Muslim children with "real" and "uncorrupted" Islam, all the while accommodating religious pedagogy to an entirely new, Euro-American format of children's literature.

Khurram Murad's *Love Your God* (1982b) illustrates the interwoven benefits of teaching doctrine and historical knowledge through narration. It relates the popular story of Muḥammad's dramatic journey from Mecca to Medina, together with Abū Bakr, the Prophet's closest companion and later the first Caliph of the Muslim community. As the story goes, the two refugees flee through the hills of al-Hira and hide in a cave. The Meccan persecutors manage to track them down only to find the entrance of the cave covered with an apparently ancient cobweb, and thus conclude that no one could have entered for ages. Inside the cave, Abū Bakr nervously hears the enemies approaching, but the Prophet reassures him:

"Why are you fearful, Abu Bakr?" he chided softly. "There are not just two of us, Allah himself is the third.' /.../ There was not the slightest sign of worry on the Blessed Prophet's face, so real and intense was his faith in Allah, in His presence, in His succour. He saw with certainty that Allah was there with him, even though no material or physical help was in sight. (ibid.: 11)

The towering figures of the Prophet and the first Caliph of Islam are thus employed to illustrate central themes present already in *The Children's Book of*

*Islam*: a defining characteristic of a true Muslim is to accept Islam as an active way of life and to rely on the omnipresence, power, and benevolence of God.

Abū Bakr and Muḥammad nevertheless do provide religious and moral standards in different ways. Abū Bakr incorporates the principles of friendship, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. He relentlessly protects the Prophet, scouts for enemies, and secures the cave before letting Muḥammad enter. The Prophet, on the other hand, remains impeccable in his composure and elevated calm (*hilm*) and pious God-conscience (*taqwā*). His behavior actually demonstrates that Abū Bakr's efforts and worries were unfounded, however loyal and praiseworthy they may have been. Ultimately, the threat from the Meccans is devoid of substance and the danger is illusory, for God will keep His servants safe provided that they completely surrender to His protection.

In the stories published during the 1980s, it is first and foremost the Prophet himself who displays elevated pious composure in the face of (apparent) danger. Instructive as he may be as an illustration of the principle of *taqwā*, the Prophet remains an unattainable ideal, the embodiment of a supreme principle. The same holds true for a range of less dramatic stories, relating how the Prophet, "in the midst of his great task," devotes attention and care to children (Kayani 1981: 7). Here, he serves less as a model for personal identification and emulation for children, and more as an advocate for children's rights. Therefore, while the stories of the 1980s took the first steps towards a narrative address of the child in the formulation of religious principles, they also retained a strong authoritarian component in their depiction of early Islam.

As noted above, the Islamic Foundation has sought out an intermediary position between the Muslim community and the cultural demands of the encompassing non-Muslim majority society. At first, the children's books were solely preoccupied with early Islamic history. This should partly be understood as illustrating the importance devoted to sacred tradition. Perhaps even more importantly, however, this historical preoccupation underscores the challenges of contemporary minority Muslim existence. For organizations preoccupied with safeguarding Muslim faith for diasporic children and youth, depictions of sacred history has provided an initial, didactic safe haven. It is a very different challenge, however, to write psychologically convincing and socially relevant stories about contemporary young British-Muslim minority identity. This challenge brings to the fore a range of highly sensitive issues, such as the stakes of cultural inclusion in multicultural society, consumerism, gender relations, religious education, racism, Islamophobia, and ethnic tensions. It is indicative that the Islamic Foundation's first stories relevant to the lives of contemporary British Muslim immigrants (published in 1993 and 1994) tell the story of how the young protagonist Adam finds and consolidates his Muslim identity during his visits to *Egypt*, his parents' country of origin (Omar 1993, 1994). The reader is however not invited to follow how Adam applies his newly confirmed Muslim identity in the diasporic setting. In fact, it took the publisher 20 years to produce its first story about a contemporary Muslim child, actually set in Britain.

Since the late 1990s, however, contemporary issues have dominated in children's literature. This change marks a drastic rethinking of religious pedagogy and the very

concept of Islamic children's literature, folding it into the preoccupation with formulating Muslim identity in a Euro-American multicultural setting. Leaving the safe haven of sacred tradition aids in cultural navigation and negotiation. The difficulties are apparently outweighed by the pedagogic gains, since the contemporary setting provides opportunities for the literary depiction of mundane, everyday characters, with whom Muslim reading children can identify.

From a stylistic point of view, the contemporary focus also allows for the books to strike an entirely different chord:

He stopped and raised his gun. At that moment, I felt the whole world fall on top of me. I thought of my Mum and Dad and my brother and sisters. I wanted to cry. Then I thought of God, Who had made me and Who had power over everything. I calmed down. It seemed like Flinn was moving in slow motion as he raised his gun towards Gary. Suddenly a thought came to me, *bismillah*. I picked up a small log that was beside me and flung it at Flinn. What if it missed Flinn? Would he shoot me first in his anger? *Al-hamdulillah* it hit him with full force on the head and he staggered backwards. "Run!" I shouted. (Radwan 2001: 67)

This is the dramatic climax of *Rashid and the Missing Body* (2001) by Hassan Radwan. Together with a Christian and a Jewish friend, 13-year-old Rashid exposes a murderous conspiracy but manages with cleverness and courage to bring the villain to justice. In several respects, this book is very similar to most detective stories for youngsters, but there are particularities that tie the story to an Islamic horizon, quite similar to the stories of the Prophet. Rashid's sudden composure and agency may be read as the direct effect of his thought of God as his creator. Here the text indirectly draws on the same theological notions of *taqwā*, pious God-consciousness, and *hilm*, the elevated calm resulting from confidence in God. There are several points in the story where Rashid (rather than his otherwise sympathetic Abrahamic compatriots) relies on his Islamic identity for practical guidance to solve the crime. In this sense, the theological framework is identical with the books discussed above. Rashid himself is a perfect example of a contemporary British youngster who "accepts Islam as a way of life" and who acts in accordance with the principles and injunctions explicated in *The Children's Book of Islam* as well as in the historico-soteriological epic about the Prophet cited above. Yet, in *Rashid and the Missing Body* such principles remain implicit in the narrative. Rather than pinpointing theological notions and imposing moral standards on the child, the religious pedagogy of *Rashid* confidently relies on the literary depiction of a young boy to illustrate the practical benefits of being a religiously active and morally aware Muslim today. It also relies on the intellectual and emphatic abilities of young Muslim readers to draw mature, moral conclusions.

All in all, the three literary examples above illustrate the main phases in the development of producing pedagogic material specifically guided to the needs of the diasporic Muslim minority existence. First, the literature set out in a format similar to a traditional monological and mimetic pedagogy of presenting the child with a fixed set of doctrine and ritual, as illustrated by the solemn injunctions of *The Children's Book of Islam*. During a second phase, the realization of the benefits of a literary, narrative address, designed to meet the demands of contemporary Muslim identity formulation among children, led to an inventory of sacred tradition. Apart from serving the purpose of

conveying knowledge of an ideal Islamic society, the historical narratives functioned as a transfer zone towards the ultimate challenge of the third phase: depicting contemporary Euro-American Muslim existence for youngsters. The following sections will explore how this challenge has invited a rich narrative and graphic creativity in the re-imagination and diversification of Islamic children's literature, but also a lingering and delicate negotiation process of cultural and religious boundaries, norms and sensitivities.

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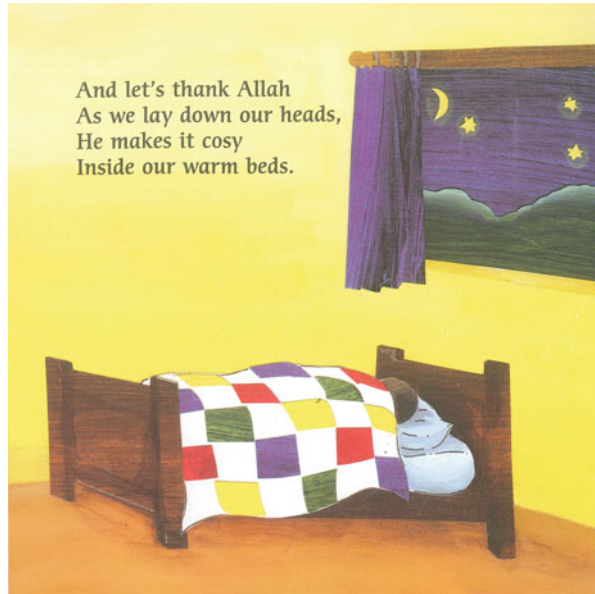
## Islamizing Diasporic Space through Narration and Graphic Depiction

In the picture books produced from the mid-1990s, the narratives as well as images undergo a radical transformation. From this point, the books are filled to the brim with images of humans: pictures of adults and children, of males and females, Muslims and non-Muslims. Significantly, this coincides with a topical shift from sacred history to stories about contemporary British Muslims. Even so, public Britain remains strikingly absent in the stories published during the 1990s. And the few books that in any way touch upon public life tend to picture British institutions (such as schools and hospitals) and social relations with non-Muslims as problems and threats to Muslim identity. In contrast, the stories take refuge in the narrative and graphic staging of a number of Islamic spaces of virtue as a means of defense against social ills. The spaces of virtue consist of family ties, religious ritual, Islamic history and role models, God-created nature, the pious Muslim home, and the social space of Muslim peer relations.

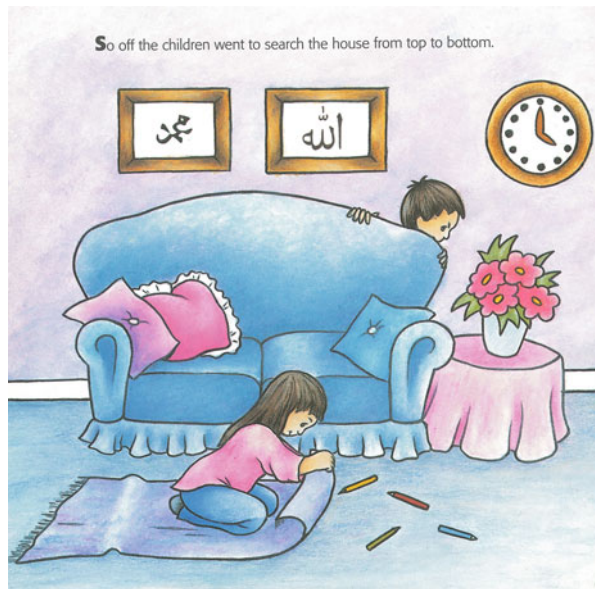
The mundane depictions of school, of home and neighborhood gardens, of toys and desserts after dinner, and of the warm bed at night are all staged for the Muslim child as blessed by God's caring presence (Fig. 1). By implication, the images suggest the child's proper attitude of gratitude and piety in relation to everyday life. The effect is a sacralization of mundane space, through which everyday life becomes no less sacred than the act of praying, visiting the mosque, or reciting scripture. Graphically, this profoundly alters the entire scheme of composition. The religiousness of the earlier images was marked by a pious absence of human beings, reflecting traditional, Sunnī-Islamic theological norms of representation (Janson 2012). In the recent books, children are not only depicted but exposed as the very centerpiece of the images, as individual agents in the center of the world, inviting active identification for the reading child. But they are all staged in the midst of virtuous acts, emotions, and rituals, as examples of Muslim children *Islamizing themselves*, incorporating a distinctly religious agency. The images, in short, have a distinct disciplinary effect, underscoring codes of proper religious attitude and behavior for the reading adult as well as child (Janson 2017).

Graphically, such virtuous spaces are commonly marked with references to sacred Islamic tradition. For instance, calligraphic panels sometimes decorate the walls of the domestic settings, such as the Arabic panels in the living room in *Maryam and the Trees*, reading "Allāh" (right) and "Muḥammad" (Fig. 2). To draw on Fischer and Abedi (1990), they function as "minor media," semiotically asserting an overarching

**Fig. 1** Divine presence and gratitude. Illustration by Asiya Clarke in *Thank You O Allah!* (Bint-Mahmood 2000) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)



**Fig. 2** Semiotic assertions of Islamic space. Illustration by Terry Norrige, in *Maryam and the Trees* (El-Magazy 2000) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)



meta-narrative about God's presence in the world. Quite literally they are signs, signaling "Islamic space." Or to draw on Nietzsche's reflections, they function as visual parables (*Gleichnisse*), as "names for good and evil: they do not speak out, they merely wave" (Nietzsche 1993 [1883]: 98, my translation). In this sense, the

calligraphic panels may be analyzed as both playful and deeply relevant sacralizations of physical locus, inscribing religious meaning, familiarity, and purpose into an alien, secular landscape. They signal that the activities occurring here consist in “promoting the good and rejecting the evil” (*al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*), while decreasingly taking expressive recourse to such favorite formulas of Sunnī Islamic revivalism (Janson 2003). As such, the calligraphies balance the iconic depiction of living beings.

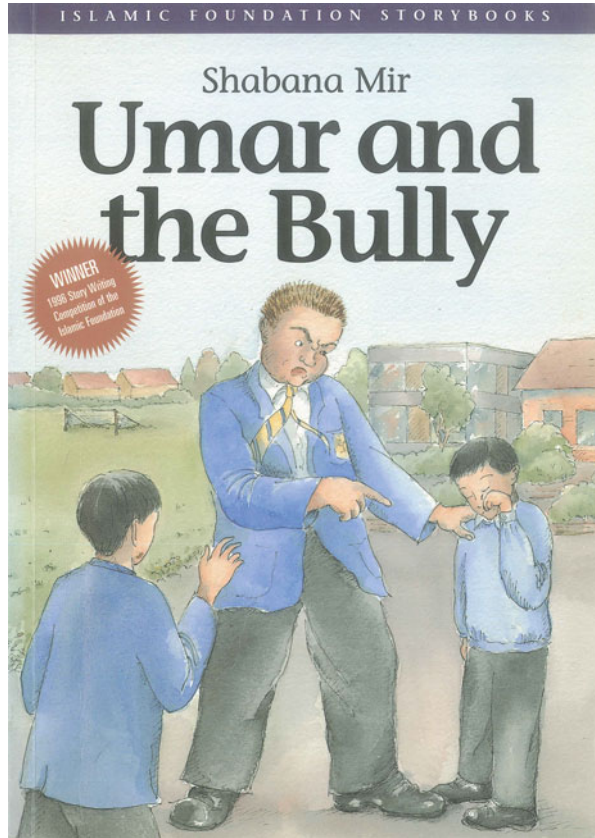
Yet, the panels are never referred to in the text, creating a dynamic *counterpoint* (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001), or in Nodelman's (1988) terms, an *ironic relation* between the written and the graphic texts of the books; that is, words and image do not completely overlap but provide complementary narrative information. Why are there calligraphies on the wall? What do they mean? Without any explicit facts or leading questions inserted into the narrative, such calligraphies invite children to explore (and dialogue with the reading adult on) central religious tenets about God and His messenger: “What does Islam mean for me?” Having said so, it appears evident that such contrapuntal or ironic relations between written text and images remain rare in Islamic children's literature. As a rule, images serve as illustrations to the written story and rarely contain co- or counter-narrative elements.

Several picture books relate tales of Muslim youngsters helping other Muslims (and sometimes non-Muslims), thus staging virtuous social spaces for Muslim peers – in implicit critique of inadequate social security provisions of modern, diasporic societies. In stories such as *A Caring Neighbour* (Bouroubi 1996), *A Gift of Friendship* (Imtiaz 1997), *The Muslim All-Stars: Helping the Polonskys* (Muhammad 2012), and *Captain Ali and the Stormy Sea* (Ali Gator 2013), Muslim protagonists fall back on their religious ethics to come to the assistance of (Muslim or non-Muslim) peers, neighbors, or school mates. Such stories set in the present sometimes also rely on historical paradigms. One example is *Umar and the Bully* (Mir 1998), where the young protagonist takes his namesake Caliph 'Umar as his precedent, for daringly facing the local (non-Muslim) school bully in order to save a younger Muslim schoolmate (Fig. 3). This is a creative means of combining tales about sacred history and an activist understanding of religious identity, with a story dealing with the pressing British social issues of racism, community relations, and bullying. Muslim identity and proper Islamic conduct here are formulated in relation to problems, predicaments, risk: a sociocultural “wild” outside of Islamic virtues. Literary genres such as detective fiction and the “team spirit trope” of the sports story are also increasingly employed for such purposes, as in the detective books about Rashid (Radwan 2001, 2002) and Ibrahim Khan (Farheen Khan 2009, 2011a), or the football series *The Victory Boys* (Orme 2011, 2015).

The relevance of sacred history thus remains strong in Islamic children's literature, even when representing contemporary Muslim experience. Lately, picture books have sought out a variety of new ways of reinventing sacred past from the vantage point of the present, with increasing attention to attractive graphical designs, such as in Zanib Mian's recent *Migo and Ali: Love for the Prophets* (Muslim Children's Books). Here a young boy and his bear friend explore suspenseful Qur'ānic traditions about the long line of Islamic prophets, following up the stories



**Fig. 3** Historical precedence. Illustration by Asiya Clarke in *Umar and the Bully* (Mir 1998) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)



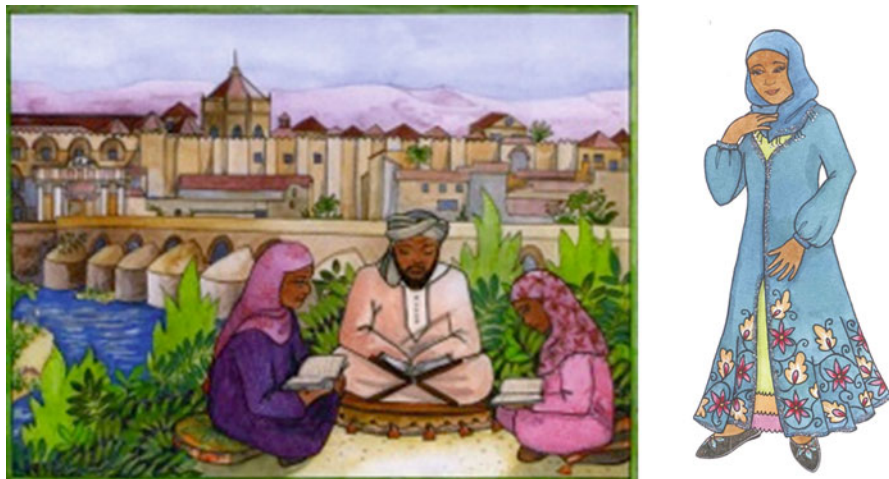
with personal and humorous conversations between boy and bear (Mian 2016a). Another inventive narrative means to educate about Qur'ānic traditions takes everyday situations and dilemmas as a point of departure and resolves them with reference to Islamic role models. In *The People of the Cave* (2001), a father mildly and pedagogically admonishes his thoughtless sons by recourse to the popular Qur'ānic tale of the "Sleepers" (originally a Christian-Syrian tradition dating back to the second century). The story is illustrated with images of human beings, but all of the protagonists are pictured with faces turned away. Only one person's face is depicted from the front (if blurred): the evil and Godless king of the legend, threatening the young faithful heroes of the tale (Fig. 4). While the piety of Muslims is represented by downplaying individual features and depicting them with modestly downcast gazes, the ignorance and arrogance of the evil king is graphically marked by his front-facing position, and the position of his arrogant gaze above the pious Muslims. One may note the similarity here with the depiction of the bully in *Umar and the Bully* (Fig. 3) discussed above. Pride and arrogance are distinctly pejorative terms in a Qur'ānic framework, used to describe the misguided, ungodly attitude of kings and pharaohs who resist the prophets of God.



**Fig. 4** Modesty versus arrogance. Illustrations by Terry Norrige, in Al-Albani's and Qalaji's *People of the Cave* (Al-Albani and Qalaji 2001) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)

Other “sacred pasts” are also reinvented for the means of educating religious norms. An interesting case in point is Fawzia Gilani's Islamized adaptations of the European fairy tale canon. Largely faithful to the basic story lines of *Cinderella* and *Snow White*, an abundance of Islamized names, religious concepts, pious idiomatic phrases, and references to Islamic rituals tie the stories to an Islamic horizon (Gilani 2011, 2013). The function of such references is similar to the calligraphic panels discussed above: semiotic markers of Islamicness, but also pedagogic tools of religious learning and reflection. The books contain glossaries of Arabic terms and references to sacred texts. The moral character of the protagonists is indicated much in the same way as in the originals, underscoring their meekness and dutifulness. Adding to this, Islamic Cinderella and her parents everyday “would read the Qur’ān, and they never missed a prayer” and the images of *Cinderella* are set in medieval, Islamic Andalusia (Fig. 5).

As described by the author Fawzia Gilani, the Islamic adaptations originated from a pedagogical project in a Canadian preschool. As a professional educator, Gilani had noted the overwhelmingly Anglocentric orientation among the Muslim pupils, who never referred to their cultural and religious heritages in their schoolwork: “These children were not visible in their own writing” (Gilani-Williams and Bigger 2010). On closer scrutiny, however apart from the adaptation to new historico-cultural settings, the Islamized books also adjust certain aspects of the normative or ideological underpinnings of the originals. We see this in the staging of gender roles and how social spaces are informed by Islamic virtues, but also in the foundational ontologies of the tales. In *Snow White*, for instance, the protagonist lives with “seven dwarf sisters-in-faith” (Gilani 2013: 15). And Cinderella and her vicious sisters are not invited to any ball, but to celebrate the first day of *‘Eid al-Adhā* in the king's palace. Hence there is no dancing taking place, but the observance of



**Fig. 5** Islamizing the Grimm Brothers. Illustrations by Shireen Adams in *Cinderella an Islamic Tale* (Gilani 2011) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)

religious rituals. Again, the Prince certainly notices Cinderella's beauty but is equally impressed by her *taqwā* (piety). And instead of a fairy, Cinderella's long lost Grandmother turns up and provides her "with a dress, a green *abayah* [cloak], a headscarf, and two glass slippers" (Gilani 2011: 24) (Fig. 5). Thus, the magic component of the story is replaced with religious observance and morality, leading to the eventual vindication of Cinderella as an effect of her Islamic virtues. The story is tied to a theistic worldview, blessed by God's caring presence, but devoid of magic.

The perhaps most notable example of the recent employment of fantastic or fairy tale literary formats is the comic series *The 99*, published by the Kuwaiti media company Teshkeel Media Group (TMG) from 2006, deeply inspired by the narrative and graphic profile of Marvel Comics (Fig. 6). This is an intriguing example of the current blurring of religious and secular borders in innovative literary-cum-educational products, primarily but not solely targeting a young Muslim audience. Clearly, the comic draws on Islamic motives, in reference to *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* (the 99 names of Allāh). Yet the storyline of the series keeps aloft of distinct and exclusive religious norms, aspiring to formulate universal ethical mores. The comic became an immediate success and attracted global media attention, but has also incurred critique and been banned as blasphemous by religious authorities in Saudi Arabia (for detailed analysis, see Deeb 2012).

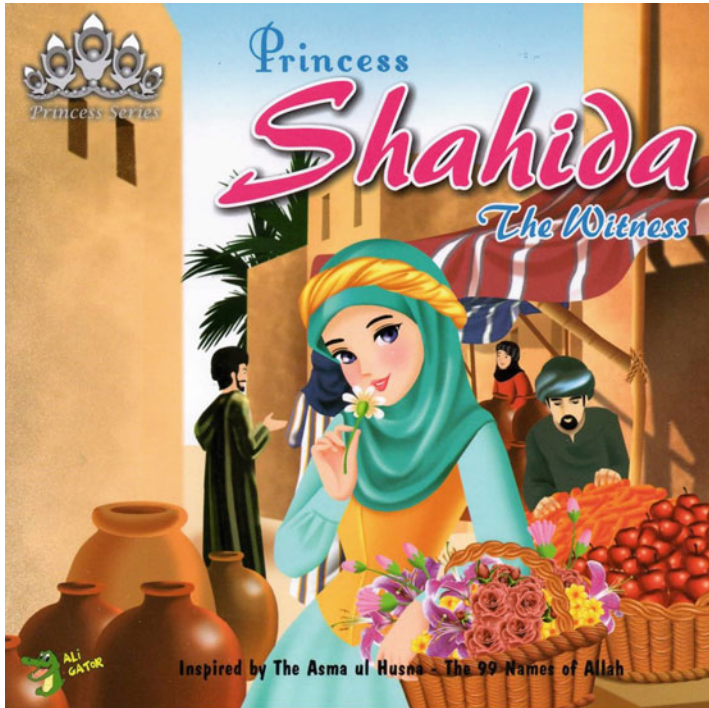
The narrative of *The 99* takes the Mongol sacking of Baghdad in 1258 as its point of departure, when the literary treasure of the library was tossed into the Tigris. Through alchemy, however, the wise of the city were able to save the essence of the caliphate's wisdom in 99 gems, the Noor stones, "crafted to absorb the very light of reason, the very depths of a culture's collective soul" (Al-Muwata et al. 2006). The power of the stones is eventually transferred to 99 young, contemporary heroes from all corners of the world, powers that are employed in face of current problems,



**Fig. 6** The 99: Islamic superheroes incorporating global ethics. Illustration by June Brigman, Roy Richardson and Monica Kubina. Image courtesy of Teshkeel Media Group

conflicts, and disasters. Notably, however, superpowers and violence alone is never enough to solve the problems. The main theme of *The 99* is teamwork, and the heroes of Jabbar the Powerful, Noorah the Light, or Hadya the Guide are not idealized as any morally perfect role models but are depicted as regular young individuals with complex personal histories, human flaws, and weaknesses. Neither are all of them Muslim: The 99 heroes comprise a worldwide network of young, human responsibility and activism, held together by universal ethics, compassion, and team spirit. Noteworthy is also the variety of clothing codes among the Muslim heroines. Whether unveiled, clad in hijab or burqa, all underscore the idea that “what people wear is not important. What is important is how they behave and how they treat others” (Deeb 2012: 406).

We find something of a combined version of the Islamized Cinderella and *The 99* in the *Princess* series produced by the Australian publisher Ali Gator. Designed for a young audience (recommended for 0–5 year olds), and graphically inspired by Disney rather than Marvel Comics, this series of eight picture books are presented as “inspired by the *al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā*, the 99 names of Allāh.” In each book, a princess heroine resolves a worldly challenge and succeeds through relying on the moral and religious virtue associated with her name – each referring to one God’s 99 attributes. Thus, Princess Karima (The Generous) hastens to a remote corner of her kingdom to rescue her people from an earthquake (Ali Gator 2014a). Princess Shahida (The Witness) witnesses how evil horsemen raid the local market place and mobilizes in force of her name the courage to face the villains, embodying the Islamic principle of *ḥiṣbah* (accountability/verification), the protection of public moral (Ali Gator 2014b). From a gender analytical point of view, the series comes



**Fig. 7** Female social agency? Picture courtesy of Ali Gator

across as ambiguous. On the one hand, the divine principles empower the heroines' public, moral agency, thus breaking the pattern in most Islamic children's literature where girls are depicted as emotional rather than active or courageous (Janson 2003). Then again, visually the books display all the characters of a glossy, stereotypical "princess-aesthetics," with over dimensioned eyes, flashing eyelashes, and rosy cheeks (Fig. 7). The images tend to centerpiece the princesses' physical attributes more than their worldly agency. This is only further underscored by the marketing strategy of the publisher, where the books are marketed with plastic, silver-colored prayer beads and entirely pink "Princess" party merchandise.

Despite the increasing interest for fantastic or fairy tale literary staging, the bulk of recent Islamic fiction for children remains set in domestic space and in nature. The home is staged and depicted as a primarily feminine sphere, revolving around the catering, mild, and deeply pious Mother. Female characters are pictured with headscarves even when at home (Fig. 8). Adult male characters are almost completely absent in domestic space. And when fathers, male school teachers, or other adult male characters occasionally enter the scene, they do so by exercising justice or by teaching sacred tradition (as in *The People of the Cave*). Individual piety and ritual observance stand in the center, but it should be underscored that it is the *domestic* setting that is presented as the primary stage for learning and enacting

**Fig. 8** Pious Mum.

Illustration by Rukiah Peckham, in *My mum Is a Wonder* (Messaoudi 1999) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)



religious virtues – not the mosque. The Muslim child matures into an active, aware Islamic child through the disciplines of mundane, everyday life.

As mentioned, socio-conservative and stratified paradigms remain prevalent in the staging of gender norms in most Islamic children's literature. Returning once again to the detective story *Rashid and the Missing Body*, this book mainly revolves around the friendship of Rashid and two non-Muslim boys, Christian Chris and Jewish Gary. The problem at hand is entirely external: one missing body. However, a secondary narrative in *Rashid and the Missing Body* revolves around problems in the domestic sphere. Rashid's rebellious older sister, Nur, disagrees with their father on Islamic dress codes. Rashid is depicted as active, rational, and heroic, moving up and down the town until he ultimately solves the crime. In contrast, his sister is exclusively depicted in the domestic environment, screaming, raging, and ultimately failing to come up with a functional negotiation of her Muslim and British self. Indeed, her father is depicted as equally incompetent, incapable of making the (favorite revivalist) distinction between "Islam" and "culture" and clinging to a "traditionally Pakistani" idea of proper dress code. In the concluding pages of the book, it is little brother Rashid who manages to solve this conflict:

"And you, Nur," I interrupted, "you are right when you say this country is your home, but that doesn't mean you have to reject everything about our parents' culture, now does it? Surely it would be better to take the good from both cultures and come up with a sensible balance." Nur and Dad stared at me in shocked silence. Finally, Nur spoke up. "Since when did you become the voice of reason?" she said. I just smiled. (Radwan 2001: 80)

These are the final words of the book. We have not been told anything about the boyish triumph of catching the crook. Rashid neither receives nor seeks any

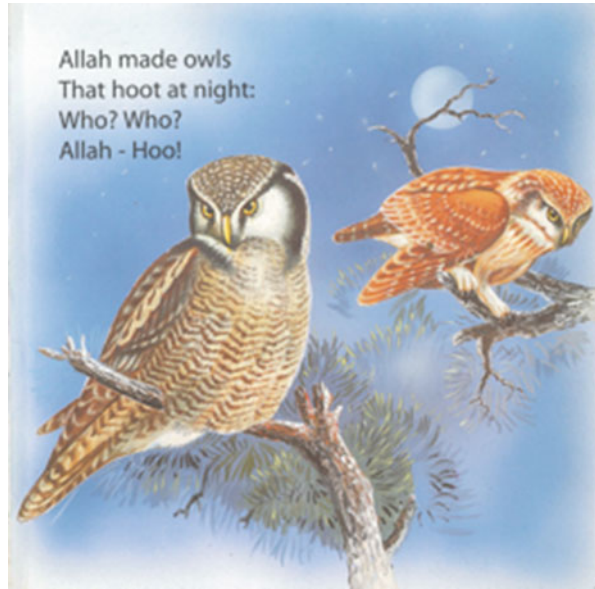
recognition for solving the mystery at hand. Instead, his moment of triumph arrives here, in the living room, in relation to his sister and father. The adventurous experiences pay off in the form of (adult enough) abilities of intercultural negotiation. The secondary narrative thus channels the cultural negotiation at play and connects it with the central narrative. An originally playful, boyish adventure has been converted into a moral tale of a maturing male British–Muslim identity. The driving force in this process of conversion is, not surprisingly, Islam itself. From a gender perspective, the pattern is obvious enough: the female of the domestic sphere *incorporates* the problem. The male remains committed to worldly agency but occasionally enters the domestic sphere in order to settle any dispute with logical thought based on sound Islamic principles (Janson 2003).

But also in this field there are tendencies towards more nuanced depictions of female piety-cum-agency. In Michelle Khan's *The Hijab Boutique* (2011b), female protagonist Farah despairs on how to match her schoolmates' presentations of their glamorous mothers in the school assignment for International Women's Day. Through the assignment work, she however comes to realize her mother's skill as an independent business woman. The story thus semiotically remains within a pietistic and disciplinary motive of proper dress codes but expands the denotative scope from the domestic space to a semi-public sphere of Islamic entrepreneurship and retail.

Nature (created by God) is another recurring didactic stage for the narrative and graphic representation of Islamic virtue. The images of living creatures underscore divine presence in the world. The central idea of God as the creator for all life thus is upheld in the books on nature, but with inventive narrative and graphic means. Instead of imbuing the depiction of nature with normative constraints, naturalistic depiction is converted into a celebration of God's creative powers – interconnected to religious pedagogics. Protagonists explore nature in search of both scientific and religious knowledge, thus blurring the border between religious and scientific studies. Or, rather, implying that scientific, natural knowledge is in complete harmony with, and ultimately is subordinate to, Islam. One example is El-Magazy's *Maryam and the Trees* (2000), where the protagonist is educated by her grandfather about how nature testifies to the glory of God, through a combination of religious principles conveyed by examples from the life of the Prophet, TV science programs, and Maryam's own, active research when exploring the house for "things made of trees" (see Fig. 2 above). Other books employ similar narrative techniques. In *A Day with the Dinosaurs* (1998) published by Seerah Foundation, a fossil find inspires two children to explore God's creation (Shamsi 1998). Also fable like formats are employed. In Kube Publishing's seven books of the *Hilmo the Hippo* series (2002–2007), the savannah becomes the stage of universal, Islamic values (Norridge 2002, 2003a, b, 2004a, b, 2005, 2007), and in *Aisha Goes in Search for Colour* (Dhar 2008) the creationist worldview is explored from a caterpillar girl's perspective.

Creationism also underpins picture books for the very youngest. Farah Sardar's *Animals* (1997) introduces an assortment of animal species in lovely, naturalistic images. The only difference to non-Islamic picture books is the narrative, creationist

**Fig. 9** Testifying owls.  
Illustration by Vinay Ahluwalia, in *Animals* (Sardar 1997) (Image courtesy of Kube Publishing and The Islamic Foundation)



prefix added to each picture: “Allah made squirrels” and “Allah made elephants,” etc. In the final image of the book, two owls are depicted not only as examples of God’s creation (Fig. 9). They also carry a specific message to the child, a message that is part of their very nature, implied in the hooting itself: *Allah-Hoo*. In Islamic mystic traditional and rituals of Sufism, *Allāh-hū* (literally meaning “God is”) is used as a repetitive formula in meditative chants (*dhikr*), meant to incur a heightened awareness of God’s existence, not least in the South Asian *qawwālī* musical meditations. In this sense, the depicted owls are essentially no representations or replicas of nature, for God is the sole creator of nature, the only *muṣawwir*, the shaper of life. This is an image of the glory and benevolence of God itself, and, by implication, an image of the child and its role as a *khalīfah*, the dutiful caretaker of God’s creation. The picture book thus inherently interconnects theological teachings about God and nature with a disciplinary message to the child: As a Muslim, you inhabit a glorious and beautiful world created by God but also the virtuous social space of Islam. Accepting an affirmative, Islamic identity implies taking the witnessing owls as your example. Through virtuous conduct you fulfill your duty as a caretaker – for nature, family, and friends.

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## An Islamic Diction for Everyday Life

As illustrated above, publishers of Islamic children’s literature increasingly have taken recourse to fiction and a narrative and graphically updated format for Islamic education. This does however not imply that nonfictional literature has been abandoned as a pedagogical tool. To the contrary, a visit to any Islamic online book

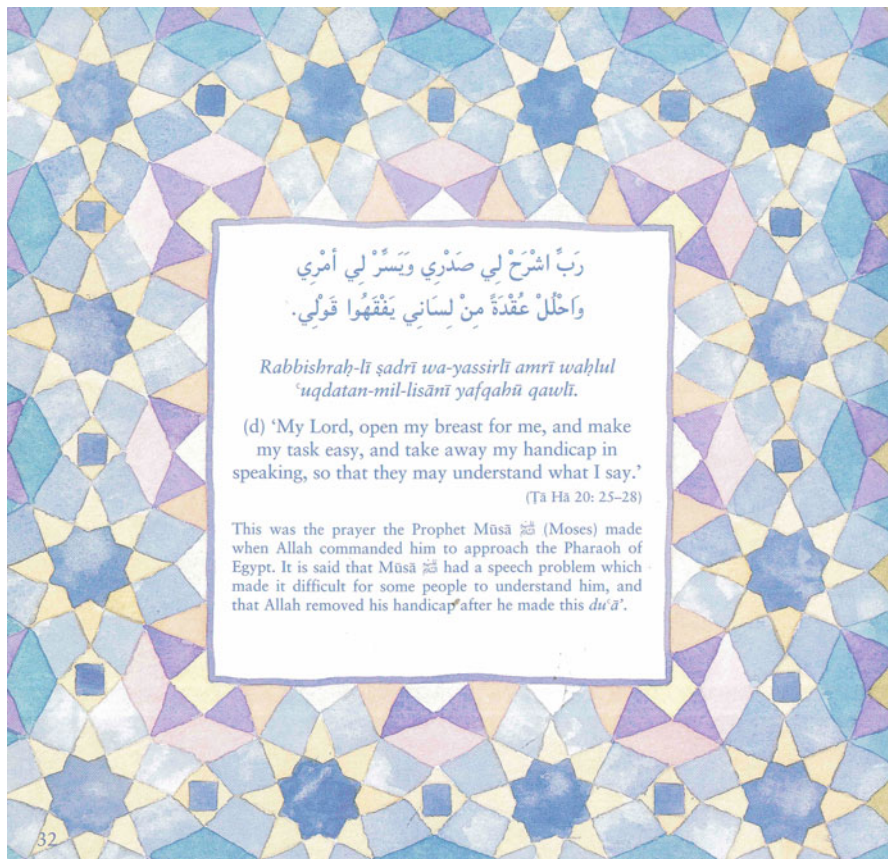


retailer illustrates the prominence of nonfiction intended to educate young people about Islamic doctrine, ritual, history, and ethics (*akhlāq*). Such books employing a more formal educational address of the child do however also testify to interesting literary developments in the staging of virtue in Islamic pedagogy and didactics. A recurrent tendency is the disciplinary ambition to formulate life ethical principles based on Islamic creed, going beyond rote learning and ritualized religious behavior associated with traditional Islamic education.

Apart from early textbooks such as the previously discussed *The Children's Book of Islam* (Ahsan 1979) or Ahmad von Denffer's *Islam for Children* (1981), both of which describe Islamic faith and principles through factual (if normative) diction, other books employ innovative means of educating children in central religious tenants and moral conduct. A recent publication is *30 Hadith for Children* (Mian 2016b), introducing the moral precedent of the Prophet in simple texts and vivid imagery for 5–7-year-olds.

Another innovative literary format introduces *ad'īyah* (prayers, sing. *du'ā*) for daily use, both idiomatic formulas such as the greeting phrase *al-salāmu 'alaykum* and more complex prayer formulas. Noorah Kathy Abdullah's *What Do We Say... (A Guide to Islamic Manners)* (2000 [1996]: 4, 6) poses on each page a question, answered with an appropriate *du'ā*, to the following effect: "What do we say when we begin something? We say Bismillah (Bism-i-llah)"; or "What do we say when we finish eating? We say Al-Hamdulliah (Al-Ham-du-lil-lah)." Simple graphical elements indicate the depicted children's Muslimness: all the boys wear caps; all the girls wear *hijāb* and sometimes Islamic calligraphies decorate the walls. Otherwise the sceneries are mundane, quotidian, and neutral: a kitchen, a bus stop, a boy playing with Lego at a table. Notably, the text refrains from presenting the literal meaning or the theological implications of the *ad'īyah*. This renders the narrative an airy and swift character. Then again, the foreword declares the intention not only to teach children suitable expressions but "to instil into their mind and heart the Islamic worldview, the Islamic value system, and above all, the consciousness that whatever they think or do, they should be guided all along by the Islamic teachings" (ibid.: 2). Thus, despite the narrative's absence of theological explanations, the book carries expressive educational, if pedagogically mimetic, purposes. It is concerned with *what* to say and *when* to say it, leaving any reflections on what the *ad'īyah* actually can be taken to mean to the curiosity of the child or the explanation of the reading adult.

The sequel, *What Should We Say? A Selection of Prayers for Daily Use* (Kidwai and D'Oyen 2002 [1999]) targets an older reader and explicates the meaning of each *du'ā*. It is more adult both in tone, content and in design. Instead of referential illustrations, the book is beautifully decorated with innovatively designed mosaics and arabesques. The aquarelles make the edges of the patterns somewhat uneven yet symmetrical, and the surface of each mosaic element is slightly diffuse. The result is a living, luminous texture, which simultaneously is "modern" in inventiveness and "traditional" in reference (Fig. 10). The book offers *ad'īyah* for a number of situations, both ritual and mundane ones: what should we say when we start ritual ablution (*wudhū*), when we go to the toilet, when we get dressed, when we get sick, etc. In this sense, the book functions as a manual for prayer for the young, but also,



**Fig. 10** Innovating arabesque. Illustration by Stevan Straford in *What Should We Say? A Selection of Prayers for Daily Use* (Kidwai and D'Oyen 2002 [1999]) (Image courtesy of Islamic Foundation and Kube Publishing)

given its beautiful design and decorations, as a ritual object as such, for use in religious contemplation and active prayer.

## Qur'ānic Revelation Made Relevant for Children

As illustrated earlier, there are several examples of how children's literature has sought out innovative formats for narrating Qur'ānic traditions. But how can the Qur'ānic text itself be presented in a pedagogically adjusted form for a young diasporic audience? Producing English translations of the Qur'ān was a primary purpose of many Euro-American organizations such as the Islamic Foundation from the 1970s. In 1993, this priority intersected with the publication of children's literature, resulting in the publication of *The Qur'an in Plain English. Part 30*

with *Surah al-Fatihah*. This is an English translation specifically designed for children of the last 37 of the 114 *sūrah*s of the Qur'ān, plus the opening *sūrah* (*al-Fātiḥah*). The “Part 30” of the subtitle refers to the way the Qur'ān is edited. After the opening *surah al-Fātiḥah*, the chapters are (roughly) edited according to length in falling order. Normally, Muslim children learn *al-Fātiḥah* first, being a mandatory part of *ṣalāt*. After this, they learn the shorter *sūrah*s towards the end of the scripture. Those *sūrah*s thus compose the book at hand. So far, no other parts have been produced, and it seems unlikely that the Qur'ān will be published in its entirety in any children's version. The introduction declares that the book aspires to provide “a simple, fluent translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān in contemporary English,” allowing “the young readers to grasp fully what they recite and remember” (Torres al-Haneef 1999 [1993]: 7, 8).

Hence, the author formulates an implicit critique of a traditional pedagogic of mimetic recitation in much Islamic education. According to the author, available Qur'ān translations are “written in formal ‘Shakespearean’ English which not many young people today understand, with a vocabulary which can even be unclear to many adults” (ibid.: 9). The author thus implicates that everyone should have access to the Revelation. The Qur'ān must be *comprehensible*, not only translated correctly. Accordingly, generous notes explain difficult words and ambiguities, with reference to the views of established Islamic scholars. In addition, the author introduces the context, basic motives, and topics of each *sūrah* in one to three pages, thus providing a rudimentary, child-adapted, yet unmistakable *tafsīr* (interpretation). For instance, when the author introduces *al-Nab' a* (Sūrah LXXVIII, translated as “The Awesome News”), the author explains that the Meccans refusing Islamic conversion had reacted against the notion of resurrection, and therefore this *sūrah* ensures God's omnipotence and purpose. Here the author becomes a mediator, conveying the (alleged) meaning of the text, and by extension, of life itself:

Look around you! See the earth with its firm mountains, grain, vegetables, and plentiful rain, the heavens above and the blazing sun, the changing of night and day which allows us to work in light and rest in dark. Is it possible in a world in which everything has been made so perfectly, with so much care, that the whole purpose of life is simply to eat, drink, sleep, work, marry, grow old and die? No. This life is rather a test; those who pass it will be richly rewarded, and those who fail will regret it bitterly. (ibid.: 21)

Islam is intended for humankind. Islam contains nothing strange or alien, neither excessive nor disproportional. The notion of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, Islam as “the natural religion for humankind,” is prominent. Interconnected with this is the notion of the Qur'ān's relevance and immediate applicability for contemporary issues. When Sūrah LXXXI (*al-Takwīr*) condemns the murder of baby girls, the author interconnects this with the issue of abortion (ibid.: 52). Similarly, God's omnipotence and eschatological purpose becomes a critique of mundane, secular values: the reverence of money, strength, power, and beauty. Such comments serve to hermeneutically familiarize the child with a reflection of the *meaning* of the Qur'ān, rather than stressing its sacredness as a mere object of veneration. The Qur'ān essentially provides an education for life.

## Navigating Diasporic Adolescence: Multiculturalism and Sex Education

Such moral, applied components in the commentary of the Qur'ānic text are the immediate topic for books on Islamic ethics for the young, specifically addressing questions about how to lead life in diasporic communities. As previously noted, the challenges of multicultural society have been an important mechanism behind the very genre of Islamic children's literature. However, such challenges not only present organizations rethinking educational methodologies with problems but also with opportunities. Innovative organizations may also be thought of in entrepreneurial terms, as producers of religion for fastidious, independent, and flexible Muslim consumers (Luckmann 1974; Turner 1991). Religious products must be designed and marketed in compliance with the demands of contemporary markets and models: it is both a strategy for survival and a factor of success (Rubinstein 1998). Active and entrepreneurial rethinking of Islamic transmission of norms thus find a specific niche precisely as an effect of marginality, and groups inclined to move beyond traditional sectarianism also conceive of the emerging religious market as "liberating, empowering and creative," as pointed out by Gregory Starrett (2003). The consumption of new religious commodities serves important functions in late modern Muslim community formation and the imagination of Islamic identity. Just as importantly, however, Muslim identity is also formed through the consumption of *non-Islamic* products, which are incorporated into an Islamic superstructure (ibid.).

As illustrated above, publishers of Islamic children's literature have built their vision of Islamic pedagogics from the vantage point of diasporic society, in active affirmation of its sociocultural and political bedrock. Following thinkers such as Tariq Ramadan (1999), they reject isolationism and apologetics, while relating to diasporic experience as an opportunity for formulating an updated and contemporary interpretation of Islam. This in no way means abandoning core Islamic principles, but opens for a continual cultural negotiation process. But what are the limits of such negotiations, and how far may new interpretations go? Some answers are found in the literature attempting to formulate and literary stage Islamic norms specifically for a diasporic, Muslim adolescence.

In *The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook* (2007), coauthored by Dilara Hafiz and her two children Imran and Yasmine, the authors apply a direct, personal address of their readers, raising a long list of situations and problems one may encounter as a Muslim teenager in the contemporary United States. It provides reflections and solutions in a candid and sometimes humorous way, with ironizing references to prevalent stereotypes about Islam in the United States. Its approach to "Western vs. Muslim culture" may be illustrated with the list of "Muslim food": pizza and hamburgers, shwarmas/gyros, rice and curry, Chinese food, Italian food (Hafiz et al. 2007: 104). In short, the book maintains, there are no "cultural" constraints for what constitutes Islamic tenets or a Muslim way of life. This said, certain Islamic principles remain nonnegotiable, such as *halāl* food provisions and abstaining from alcohol and premarital sex. Such principles are however not solely justified with reference to Islamic rules but are staged as a remedy to social ills such

as drug abuse, alcoholism, and teenage pregnancy. Overall, however, the manual imparts, Islamic faith as such never provides any obstacle for immersing in current American society. To the contrary, again implicitly drawing on the idea of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, Islam facilitates life, assists the young with moral standards for navigating the complexities of multicultural society, and provides a solid foundation for life.

Sexuality remains a taboo in Middle Eastern education as well as a trope in Arabic children's literature (Mdallel 2004). And in diasporic communities, sex education has commonly been perceived as deeply problematical, sometimes considered to encourage premarital sexual relations and generally in conflict with norms of decency and modesty (see further chapter ► "Islam, Sexualities, and Education" in this volume). All the more notable is Fatima D'Oyen's, *The Miracle of Life: A Guide on Islamic Family Life and Sex Education* (2000). Reflecting such taboos, the author goes at length to justify the book in the foreword. She does so in reference to new communication technology and diasporic Muslim children's exposure to secular education "where discussions of condoms and AIDS are part of the curriculum." Moreover, in everyday life, young Muslims witness "explicit commercials and billboards" as well as "teenagers who fondle each other in the streets and people who use profanity in almost every sentence" (D'Oyen 2000: 2). Parents have no prospects of protecting children from such exposure and "threats of hell or punishment may have little effect." Rather, the author maintains, children growing up in "liberal" societies need basic and correct information about sexuality and reproduction, in order to be able to handle the environment.

The book is divided in two sections: "The Life Cycle" and "Growing Up." In the first part, the book sets out from a cosmological perspective. The question of the section "How it all began" is answered with an account of Qur'ānic ideas on God's creation of the world. Already here we see an attempt of negotiating Qur'ānic ideas with scientific observations or perspectives. The book emulates an air of documentary and facticity, while simultaneously providing a normative, creationist critique. Despite being presented in books and on TV as a fact, the theory of evolution "was made up by scientists, most of whom do not believe in Allah." Contrary to this, "a Muslim is certain of the Qur'ān," while keeping an open mind about other ideas, for "Islam is not against science," according to the author (ibid.: 18).

From this cosmological perspective the author discusses biological reproduction. D'Oyen sets out with an emotionally detached and frank description of the reproduction of animals. When it comes to human reproduction, the frankness prevails in the depiction of the *physical* aspects of sex, without shunning descriptions of sexual arousal, erection, or intercourse. The author argues that sexual lust is a God-given pleasure and, as such, *ḥalāl*. The normative, pejorative component is rather found in the perspective and framework, putting human sexuality in a normative, social framework. The narrative means are sometimes subtle: "When a young man and woman are ready for the responsibilities of family life they look for a suitable marriage partner" (ibid.: 22). The pejorative perspectives are elaborated in the discussion of adolescence, gender relations, and sexual maturity. Friendship is depicted in terms of "meaningfulness" and an ideal of "healthy, clean fun" (ibid.: 54), while discarding "falling in love" as an overestimated liberal myth. Just as in the

*Teenager's Handbook*, the references go beyond religious injunctions. Thus, premarital sexual relations are described as “forbidden by Islam (and many other religions) because of the terrible social problems it creates” (ibid.: 66). Premarital pregnancy is described as a “disaster for her and her child, and a disgrace for her family.” And as an argument against premarital sexual relations, the author resorts to drastic analogies: “Which would you rather have: / . . . / Your own ice cream cone or an ice-cream that a stranger has already licked? A present which has been beautifully gift-wrapped, or a present already out to the package” (ibid.: 67). Family honor, venereal diseases (“Allāh’s punishment”), and the risks of receiving “harsh punishment” based on the *sharī‘ah* are presented as other arguments for refraining from premarital sexual relations.

All in all, *The Miracle of Life* indeed is innovatively challenging taboos in its very recognition of young sexuality, yet remains deeply socio-conservative in its elaboration of adolescent ethics. While we see examples of a culturally inclusive stance in recent Islamic literature with regard to topics such as food and clothing, as illustrated with the *Teenagers Handbook*, alcohol consumption, nonheterosexual and otherwise “illegitimate” young romance and sexuality so far remain taboo in nonfictional Islamic educational resources.

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## Conclusion: Beyond Islamic Children's Literature

As pointed out in much literary theory, a defining quality of all children's literature, whether secular or confessional, is its dual literary-pedagogic nature. It is meaningless to separate its literary and pedagogic elements (Nodelman 1988, 2000). In this sense, children's literature provides “a specific semiosphere, or system of signs, which is heavily stratified and emerges and develops in interaction with mainstream literature” (Nikolajeva 1996: 7). Children's literature has always reflected the cultural history of *adults* (Rhedin 1992: 21 f.). And as elaborated by Karimi and Gruber (2012: 290), discussing the image of the child in the Middle East, the study of children's culture is “fundamental in enhancing our understanding of the implicit and explicit meanings of not only the condition of childhood but also the way in which power structures operate /.../.” However, children's literature cannot be understood only in terms of a passive reflection of political, religious, or sociocultural values, but should be thought of as “one of the central means through which we regulate our relationship to language and images as such,” to quote Jaqueline Rose's (1984: 138f.) analysis of *Peter Pan*.

In line with this, rather than understanding the examples discussed in this chapter as mere adaptations of new literary formats for the purposes of religious education, Islamic children's literature provides an important mode for cultural negotiation in and of itself. Taken as a whole, this literature ambiguously balances between a defensive-exclusive and offensive-inclusive cultural stance.

On the one hand, the literature is employed as a defense of religious and moral principles in a sociocultural context defined as threatening and subversive. This is highlighted in the literature's recurrent preoccupation with Islamic creed and ritual;

the semiotic references to Islamic particularism through clothing codes, greeting phrases, and calligraphy; the topical preoccupation with individual moral, civic duty and modesty; the references to Islamic sacrosanct history; and the narrative contextualization of the stories in gendered, domestic space or the sphere of divinely created nature. And just as observed in normative Christian children's literature from the first part of the twentieth century (Toijer-Nilsson 1976), Islamic children's literature often depicts young Muslims as idealized precedents, of higher moral stature than adults. Another tendency is the depiction of Muslims as victims of various types of social or cultural ills, in face of which Islam is mobilized as a safety mechanism, whether in detective stories, moral tales of virtuous social agency, or nonfiction about proper ethics. In all these aspects, Islamic children's literature produced in response to diasporic needs and concerns essentially reproduces literary patterns in the Arab and/or Muslim world at large.

Precisely such tendencies are however increasingly called into question in internal Muslim debates about children's literature. In a piece on the market of Islamic children's books, the Islamic-feminist blogger "wood turtle" strongly objects to the traditional gender roles, the general preachiness, and the (most often archaic) Arabian setting of the bulk of this literature:

Books intending to teach 5 years olds how to make ritual ablutions before prayer, or encouraging them to fast, were littered with secondary dialogue on how to be a "good Muslim" or having characters shouting, "I love being a Muslim!" from the rooftops. I bristled each time. (Wood Turtle 2013)

The blogger calls for another kind of literature, depicting Muslim identity and Islamic principles connecting to actual, lived Muslim experience, without the explicitly normative components defining much of the Islamic children's literature so far produced. Wood Turtle commends how newer books such as Na'ima bint Roberts' *The Swirling Hijaab* (2002) avoid gendered stereotypes in depicting, for instance, its protagonist as a "warrior princess." This blogger voices concerns she shares with many religiously active Muslim debaters today, who insist that traditional gender roles are not part of Islam. Islam, in terms of institutions and social values, is always in a process of change, and the interpretation of the Qur'an must be adjusted to the ideals and politics of equal rights and opportunities for men and women (Ahmed 1992; Badran 2002).

Indeed, Islamic children's literature is currently set in a rapid process of development, reflecting the attitudes of a new generation of Muslim authors in Europe and North America. Apart from gender aspects, this new generation underscores the necessity of formulating Muslim identity and Islamic tenets from the *point of departure* of diasporic existence and experience. Indeed, in several respects, diasporic Islamic children's literature produced for means of informal, supplementary religious education provides an internal, religious critique in and of itself. The very format calls into question not only non-Muslim, secular norms and practices. It also subverts (or complements) traditional forms of Islamic education and rote learning practices, in favor of a religious didactics through which Islamic creed and practice is

highlighted as a practical and rational matrix for life. The sacred scripture of the Qur'ān, the normative canon of *ḥadīth* literature, as well as *du'ā* prayer formulas are represented through innovative, hermeneutical formats, underscoring reflection and practical implementation. Increasingly, core religious principles and virtues are staged through vivid narrative as well as graphic representation, and in inclusive appropriation of popular Euro-American literary formats such as the detective story, the world of sports, the comic book, the fable, and the fairy tale.

Such appropriations go beyond formal, instrumental adaptation. The innovative formats also invite culturally inclusive depictions of diasporic existence. In recent Islamic children's literature, the non-Muslim, secular, multicultural setting is decreasingly portrayed as a threat in face of which a predefined notion of Islamic faith is mobilized as a rigid, monolithic safety mechanism. Increasingly, Islamic literature confidently represents diasporic space in an open and vulnerable exploration of what Muslim identity and Islamic faith may come to mean for a young mind.

In the process, in recent production the borders become less and less distinct between the Islamic children's literature and books representing the lives of young Muslims with less explicit religious purposes, very much in line with wood turtle's critique cited above. A recent example is Kube Publisher's romance story *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014), authored by Na'ima bint Robert (who also wrote *The Swirling Hijaab*, praised by the blogger). This teenagers' novel about the love of Amirah and Ali has won considerable praise for its innovative exploration of young love in relation to religious identity and complex family relations – and is promoted by *The Guardian* (2014). Somewhat ironically, such successful blurring of borders renders the notion of Islamic children's literature increasingly problematical, both as a distinct brand of Islamic entrepreneurship and as an academic, analytical category. Then again, this may also be thought of as the literary-cum-pedagogical coming of age of Islamic children's literature. The literary staging of young Muslim diasporic experience in less ideologically constrained artistic explorations promises to bring out the full potential of the genre as a resource of informal Islamic education.

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# Islamic Educational Spaces: Architecture of *Madrasah* and Muslim Educational Institutions

Reza Arjmand, Masoumeh Mirsafa, and Zeinab Talebi

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## Abstract

The mosque (both as *masjid* or *jāmiʿ*) is recognized as the first Muslim educational space for formal and informal learnings, for children and adults alike. Although the mosque remained as one of the primary centers of Islamic studies

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in various disciplines to this day, the Muslim cities from the Middle Ages onward have witnessed the emergence of specific institutions for Islamic education. *Kuttābs* or *maktabs* were primary education institutions often small scale but, in some instances, housed in a specific building consisted of a large, domed, unadorned hall in which all the pupils sat cross-legged on mattresses in a rough semicircle, usually next to low desks. Such buildings were generally erected by philanthropists and informed by the traditional architecture in form and structure. The first turn in formation of a specific Islamic higher education space was the *majid-khan* complex in which *hujrahs* (dormitories) and *madras* (study spaces) were built adjacent to the mosques. *Madrasah* buildings were formed in eastern lands of the Muslim World inspired by Khurāsāni vernacular architecture. With the selection of Isfahan as the capital of Ṣafavīd in 1722, the city was labeled *Dār al-ʿIlm* (The House of Knowledge) and reached fame in the Islamic world for its educational institutions. Among other achievements, Isfahan is credited for the innovation and design of an Islamic educational space. Isfahani architects utilized classic Persian architecture with its internal garden, formerly used extensively in Persian style mosques, to *madrasah* buildings. The model spread later to most of the Muslim world as the classic model of *madrasah* building.

The design of the *madrasahs* like any other architectural structure of the Islamic world was informed by Islamic rules and principles and reflects the social, political, and economic values of the Muslim society. Despite the diversity of the architectural typologies among various Islamic societies, such principles have resulted in formation of common spatial qualities in Islamic educational spaces.

This chapter provides a cross-disciplinary review of the architectural foundations of the Islamic institutions of education. Through a review of various models of *madrasah* architecture in different historical eras, the chapter provides an account on the development, taxonomy, and common characteristics of Islamic educational spaces in various parts of the Muslim world.

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### Keywords

Islamic architecture · Educational spaces · *Madrasah* · *Īwān* · Four-*īwān*

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## Introduction

The *madrasah* as an independent institution of Islamic education was a response to the specific needs of the Muslim community. It was a custom-built structure tailored to serve an institution which was itself a deliberate innovation, the creation of a self-confident, well-established civilization near the peak of its achievement (Hillenbrand 2004: 173). The *madrasah* developed especially in the eastern lands of the Muslim world, in Iraq, Persia, and Transoxiana, and contributed greatly to the formation of a standard architecture for the educational space based on a Persian architectural model. Such an idea was first and foremost the reflection of the importance of education in Islam, which pronounces the persuasion of knowledge and education a lifelong obligation for every Muslim.

As an outcome of the strong presence of educational activities in mosques – the first institutions of learning in Islam – the two functions of education and boarding eventually diverged, and the result was the collegiate mosque or *madrasah* (for details see Chapter ▶ “Islamic Education and Development of Educational Traditions and Institutions”). In later periods, the *madrasah* system emerged to perform the function of the mosque as a school and social club for the community outreach. Considering all majors of science forming a cohesive unity, *madrasah* physically symbolized the Islamic notion of *ummah*, which combined religious and secular activities in a totality of religious observance (Mortada 2003: 92).

The emphasis on education in Islam as a lifelong commitment and knowledge persuasion as a religious obligation resulted in the arrangements in Muslim cities to provide equal access to education. Hence, as Mortada (ibid.) argues, “the traditional location of *madrasahs* adjacent to mosques not only signified the religious and social role of education but also supports the principle of equal and proportional distribution of educational resources. As the mosque was accessible to all members of the society, so was the school.” The Muslim-institutionalized education was “open to all Muslims who sought it (Makdisi 1981: 281)”, and while the educational facilities were usually privately owned, properties were endowed for a public cause and functioned based on *waqf*, the Muslim charitable trust (for details see Chapter ▶ “*Waqf* and Financing Islamic Education”).

Through a cross-disciplinary study of the architectural characteristics of the schools and spatial qualities of the Islamic educational spaces in countries which represent distinct architectural models for *madrasah* buildings, this chapter aims to identify the architectural development, the taxonomy, and common characteristics of Islamic educational spaces in order to enhance understanding on the interactions among space, education, and Islamic learnings.

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## Islamic Architecture: Roots, Rules, and Characteristics

Despite the fact that at the abstract level the term “Islamic architecture” has proven useful, it has constantly been contested and challenged. Islamic architecture is an artificial genre introduced by art historians in the nineteenth century to categorize and study architectural works produced by Muslims ever since its emergence in Arabia in the seventh century. Islamic architecture is defined as a set of architectural and spatial features, such as introspection, that are inherent in Islam as a cultural phenomenon (Grube and Michell 1995) or the built environment by Muslims, for Muslims, in an Islamic country or in places where Muslims have an opportunity to express cultural independence (Grabar 1987). This also includes the “hidden architecture” – an architecture which actually exists but is not perceived monumental or symbolic. Those architecture which only are seen when entered, penetrated, and experienced from within. Despite its variety, the “hidden architecture” which stems from the lifestyle and belief of the Muslim inhabitants may be considered as one of the genuine forms of the Islamic architecture (ibid.).

Indeed, the study of the architecture of the Muslim world was a post-enlightenment European project. It started with architects, artists, and draftsmen who traveled to “the Orient” in the wake of the first European interventions in search of adventure, employment, and the thrill of fantasy associated with those mysterious lands. They visited cities and sites, where they measured and illustrated buildings, examined the ruins, and published catalogues to introduce the rich architectural heritage, which was hitherto unknown to Europe. In the absence of a model to understand and situate the architecture they were studying, they toyed with various Eurocentric, open-ended, and casually loaded terms such as “Saracenic,” “Mohammedan,” “Moorish,” and, of course, “Oriental,” before settling on “Islamic architecture” as the most appropriate term at the end of the nineteenth century. This set the stage for the development of an historical discipline which cast Islamic architecture essentially as a direct and formal expression of Islam. This was a crude essentialization of a heterogeneous and diversified Islamic world, which was to become the first contentious issue in the self-definition of the field of Islamic architecture. “It still forms the background of every major debate within the field, or in the larger discipline of art history as it tries to accommodate its structure and epistemological contours to the age of post-colonial criticism and globalisation (Rabbat 2012)”.

The somehow unclear geographical boundaries of the Muslim world and the influence of local architectures and cultures make an overarching and inclusive definition of the Islamic architecture impossible. Even with limited territorial scope of Islamic architecture, still great diversity in terms of social divisions, ethnic, and linguistic is involved. Climatic characteristics of the broad Muslim world also left a serious impact on Islamic architecture (Hillenbrand 2004). Despite this, however, there are certain principles and common denominators which inform the Islamic architecture and could be utilized to study the “ideal type” Islamic architecture.

Islam is a religion and a lifestyle ordered around monotheism, based on submission to Allāh (*tawhīd*) the prophecy, through divine revelation (*wahy*), recorded in the Scripture (the Qur’ān), and enforced by the tradition (*sunna*). The notion of monotheism (*tawhīd*) is reflected in the “unity in multiplicity” of both the form and the essence. The notion of unity within the Islamic architecture owes its idiosyncrasy and splendor to the faith and a perennial way of life which is based on *tawhīd*. As a result, the fundamental principle of Islamic architecture is to reflect the unity of the Divine Principle and the dependence of all multiplicity upon *tawhīd*.

The reflection of the concept of *ummah*, a transnational community of the Muslim believers based on social solidarity, lends itself as an essential principle to planning and regulating the Muslim-built environment. The configuration of the urban components (e.g., streets, open spaces, and land uses) is based on the principles of solidarity informed by the unity in multiplicity. In the absence of corporal paintings and sculpture, geometry is a sacred art form due to its fundamental association with the creation’s principal laws. The visual expression of the order of these laws is best represented through the discipline of geometry, whose quantitative dimension regulates the order and construction of design forms, and its qualitative nature sets the proportions of design forms and represents an expression of the order of the universe

as a visual representation of the truth. Each figure or geometric shape, when seen from the perspective of its symbolic meaning, represents an echo of unity and a reflection of the values and principles within the larger frame beyond that unity (universal unity) (Ardalan and Bakhtiar 1999). The use of geometry, both in design as a tool for the functional division and in the performance, is also a rendition of the Muslim hierarchy. Various interpretations such as the natural order, random order, linear order, cluster order, and geometric order in the Muslim buildings are the representations of such hierarchies (Hillenbrand 2004).

The reflection of solidarity of *ummah* has been explicit in the traditional Muslim city. The rendition of *ummah*, in the traditional environment, targeted a communal result of the collective objectives and aspirations. Hence, as Bianca (2000: 189) notes, the fundamental difference between the planning traditional Muslim cities and using contemporary planning paradigm is the shared values, the religious consensus and the social interdependence between the members of the traditional Islamic societies are strong enough to coordinate individual decisions in a natural and flexible way – thus producing an organic whole out of a sum of individual buildings. There is no formal scheme which would give in advance a picture of forthcoming developments.

Symbolically, Islamic architecture is an expression of the unity of *tawhīd* and *ummah*, whose function is to lead man to the higher stage in being, to transform the invisible notions into a visible forms, to convey the perennial truth into the physical realm of manifestation, and to exemplify, through symbolism, the primordial images and archetypes. Through such symbolic elements, Islamic architecture achieves what could be called an “architectural alchemy,” epitomizing Islamic principles and traditions into functions.

The abstract language of the Islamic architecture denotes, on the one hand, its role in transmitting concepts which cannot be communicated through mere physical form and on the other hand, is a result of the Muslim architects understanding of the symbolism of forms, and to fulfill the meaning of symbols. Physical forms characterize the metaphysical truths, and it is these features which instill a timeless quality in those forms. The abstract perception of form, as seen in Islamic architecture, elevates the interpretation of reality from the corporeal realm. Therefore, a contemplative state of mind and a profound insight incorporates into the language of symbolism, of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. As a result, the language of symbolism marks the threshold between the corporeal/physical and the abstract/metaphysical. This comprehensive vision not only embodies the heavenly archetypes of the imaginal world but also indicates the universal harmony of the symbolism of architecture as a manifestation of the all-pervasive order of the universe (Nasrollahi 2015: 91).

One of the most striking features of all Islamic architectural monuments is their focus on the enclosed space of the inside as opposed to the outside façade or the general exterior articulation of a building (Grube and Michell 1995: 10). At all times and in all regions of the Muslim world, one can find instances of such “hidden architecture.” Despite the exceptions, the “hidden architecture” may be considered the main and dominant form of truly Islamic architecture (ibid.: 11). This in turn is



the rendition of *hijāb* – any veil placed in front of a person or an object in order to hide it from view or to isolate it from the gaze of those which are not entitled. In ‘*irfāni*’ discourse, it symbolizes “a curtain interposed between the novice and his desire” (Massignon 1955: 69). Ibn Khaldūn (1967: 111–113) argues that the notion of *hijāb* acquired new dimensions with the development of the state. One among several is instituted *hijāb* which allows only those who are initiated into the customs and etiquette of an institution to have any communication within a sovereign circle. A divide between familiars and intimates and those outside.

The interpretation of the notion of *hijāb* in architecture has resulted in the principle that a façade should be unrelated to the interior of it fronts. This has become the most important element of Islamic architecture and has led to a common practice among Muslim architects to form the enclosed spaces, to be defined by walls, arcades, and vaults. This is emphasized not only by the phenomenon that little attention is paid to outside appearance or even visibility of any structure but especially by the fact that most decoration is reserved for the articulation and embellishment of the interior.

Closely related to the concept of a “hidden architecture” is the striking and almost total absence of a specific architectural form for a specific function. There are very few forms in Islamic architecture that cannot be adapted for a variety of purposes; conversely, a Muslim building serving a specific function can assume a variety of forms. The paramount example of this phenomenon is the four-*īwān* courtyard structure of Central Asia and Iran, which is also found in other parts of the Muslim world. These structures function equally well as palace, mosque, *madrasah*, caravan-serai, bath, or private dwelling (Grube and Michell 1995: 12). The multipurpose institutions such as mosques and *jāmi*’ assuming educational functions (for details see Chapters ▶ “Introduction to Part I: Islamic Education: Historical Perspective, Origin, and Foundation” and ▶ “Islamic Education and Development of Educational Traditions and Institutions”) are explained through this practice and widely used in the design of *madrasahs*. A *madrasah* courtyard can be viewed as a scenario with the façades broken at intervals by the huge axial *īwāns* in which the rhythm of the rows of small *īwāns* culminates, since they describe the same outline but on contrasted scales.

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## **Madrasah and Formation of Muslim Educational Architecture**

The establishment of *madrasah* as an institution of Islamic learnings was an endeavor to respond to the educational needs of the Muslim community. As discussed in Chapters ▶ “Islamic Education and Development of Educational Traditions and Institutions” and ▶ “Islamic Education in Iran” the earliest forms of *madrasahs* recorded are those of eastern Iran in the early tenth century which institutionalized education both in structure and curricula and shaped *madrasah* institution around the Muslim world. *Nizāmīyyah* which was initiated in Baghdad and spread among other areas to Nishabūr (founded in 1058) in Khurasān was among the earliest documented instances of the formal educational spaces among Muslims (Bulliet 1972). Sponsored by the government through the institution of

*waqf*, *madrasah* started to flourish as an institution for formal Islamic education. Hillenbrand (2004) argues that the sustained financing and “carefully calculated location [of *madrasahs*] in the major cities [gave the impression] that each was designed to serve as a provincial center with a wide catchment area embracing the smaller towns and villages of the region. Such a function presupposes buildings of considerable scale and capacity.” Makdisi (1970) notes the development and proliferation of the *madrasah* combining the functions of the *masjid* and its nearby inn (*khān*), in the tenth and eleventh centuries C.E., as exemplified in Seljuq era by Nizām al-Mulk’s foundation of a great network of *madrasahs*.

Nizāmīyyah which was intended to preserve the Shāfi‘ī school of thought (*madhab*) triggered other *madhāhib* to establish their respective institutions to promulgate their thoughts. As in 1055 C.E. Baghdad turned into the education center of the Sunnī orthodoxy, the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ism established *madrasahs* in Qazvin (Iran) and Al-Azhar in Cairo (founded originally in 970), against the caliphate. The movement of building *madrasahs* to reinforce Twelver Shī‘ism (*Ithnā ‘Asharī*) was followed in the major centers of the Shī‘ite world, including Isfahan, Ray, Qom, Kāshān, Varāmīn, and Sabzivār (Massignon 1909). Despite the variation in the ideological underpinnings of the *madrasah* establishments, there is no indication to suggest any major structural differences between Sunnī and Shī‘ite *madrasahs*.

The architecture of the early *madrasahs* was based on an eccentric orientation of the structure and its equally atypical emphasis – by means of the differential size of the *īwāns*. The shortage of space which had conditioned the characteristic local exterior façade ensured that in residential *madrasahs*, the cells were disposed on two or even three stories. There is even a case of a *madrasah* being extended over the roof of an adjoining *ribāt* (Jawharīyyah Madrasah 1440 C.E.). In such cramped conditions, it is not surprising to find that the four-*īwān* plan used on more spacious sites is apt to be reduced, for example, by the suppression of lateral *īwān*.

Architecturally, a typical *madrasah* is usually composed of teaching rooms, a library, a mosque, and accommodations for teachers and students (Parihar 1992: 176). *Madrasah* buildings are categorized as religious due to the fact that the teaching originally involved mainly Islamic law and theology, although later the mundane subjects also found their ways into *madrasah* curriculum. *Madrasah* buildings like many other phenomena across the Muslim world are affected by local cultures and integrated parts of indigenous architecture. To study various models of *madrasah*, this chapter follows a taxonomy of *madrasah* architectural models in various parts of the Muslim world. It must be acknowledged that the models are solely created to provide a better understanding of the *madrasah* architecture affected on one hand by Islamic educational and scholastic methodologies and on the other hand by local cultures and traditions. While the taxonomy proved useful as an analytical and comparative tool, the categories are far from mutually exclusive. The taxonomy includes (1) Persian architectural model of *madrasah* under which Iran, Greater Khurāsān, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iraq are discussed; (2) Anatolian/Ottoman model which also includes *madrasah* architecture in Syria and former Ottoman colonies in Balkan; (3) the Cairene/Egyptian model; and (4) Moorish/Maghribī model which includes Morocco, Tunisia, and Andalusia.

## Persian Architectural *Madrasah* Model

As recognized by various scholars (Makdisi 1961; Bartold 1964; Hillenbrand 2004), the apparently eastern Iranian origin of the *madrasah* makes that the obvious area in which to seek the architectural origins of the institution. Hillenbrand (2004: 174) provides a detailed account on two major possibilities for the Persian origin of the *madrasah*; the first, espoused by Bartold (1964), links the origin of *madrasah* with the Buddhist *vihāra* as attested in the Greater Khurāsān, a historical region lying in the northeast of Iran today. In pre-Islamic and early Islamic period, the term “Khurāsān” frequently had a much wider denotation, covering also parts of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Khurāsān, in its proper sense, comprised principally the cities of Balkh and Herat (now in Afghanistan), Mashhad and Nishabūr (now in north-eastern Iran), Merv and Nisa (now in southern Turkmenistan), and Bukhara and Samarkand (now in Uzbekistan). Some argue that at certain times, Khurāsān covered a wider area, which included parts of Transoxiana, Soghdiana, Sistān, and extended to the boundaries of the Indian subcontinent. This area had been saturated in Buddhism in the centuries immediately preceding the Muslim conquest, and it seems not surprising that a Buddhist institution combining the functions of worship, education, communal life, and burial should have flourished in the almost very area associated with the earliest *madrasahs*. Bartold’s (1964) study on Ajinah Tepe in Ṭukhārīstān provided an extensive study of a Buddhist school in the seventh to the beginning of the eighth century, which bears similarities to *madrasah*.

Litvinskī (1984: 704) notes that Ajinah Tepe embodies the attainments and strivings of Central Asian architects closely intermingled with those of the architectural schools of neighboring provinces and countries. Some features of Iranian Sasanid architecture are also reflected. Analogies can be traced with the great palace of Fīrūzābād in (1) size, (2) two-part construction, (3) use of *īwāns* (Pr. *ayvān*), (4) the connection between the two halves of the edifice being given the form of domed chambers with *īwāns* facing both courtyards, (5) precise planning along a lengthwise axis with bilateral symmetry, and (6) vaulted passages adjoining the dome (known in a number of Sasanian monuments). The architectural ideas found in Ajinah Tepe proved productive not only for further development of Buddhist architecture, but also the idea of a four-*īwān* edifice, fully developed in Ajinah Tepe, became one of the dominating ideas of the medieval Muslim architecture of Central Asia and eastern Iran, e.g., *madrasahs* and caravansaries followed this plan.

Bartold (1964: 30) suggests that the *madrasahs* owed their origin to the influence of Buddhism and that the first *madrasahs* appeared on territories on both sides of the Āmū Daryā (Lat. Oxus) attached to Balkh. The excavations and documents bear direct witness to the fact that as early as the eighth century (726 C.E.), there were “many Buddhist monasteries” on the territory (Meissner 1938: 452). Ajinah Tepe with its four-*īwān* composition can be regarded not only as the starting point of the development of this highly important (for the next thousand years) method of architectural planning but also evidence for a genetic link between the Muslim theological school – the *madrasah* – and the Buddhist monastery and of the probable first appearance of the *madrasah* on the territory of Ṭukhārīstān.

Some other architectural sources provided by Hillenbrand (2004: 175) argue that the Persian *madrasah* is in fact the extension of the typical Khurāsāni house. Godard (1951) maintains that there is an unbroken continuity of tradition between the medieval and the modern house of the area and compares this domestic form with that of later *madrasah* and concludes that it was the private structure that had extended to the public one. While the literary evidence gives ample warrant for the functions of a *madrasah* being carried out in private houses, no such house which can be shown to have served this function has survived. Despite those pieces of evidence, and as Hillenbrand (1986) puts it, “whatever conclusion is reached, it is regrettable that the undoubtedly seminal role of Iran in the early development of the *madrasah* is so unjustly obscured by the lack of early surviving specimens whose claims to be *madrasahs*” are not disputed.

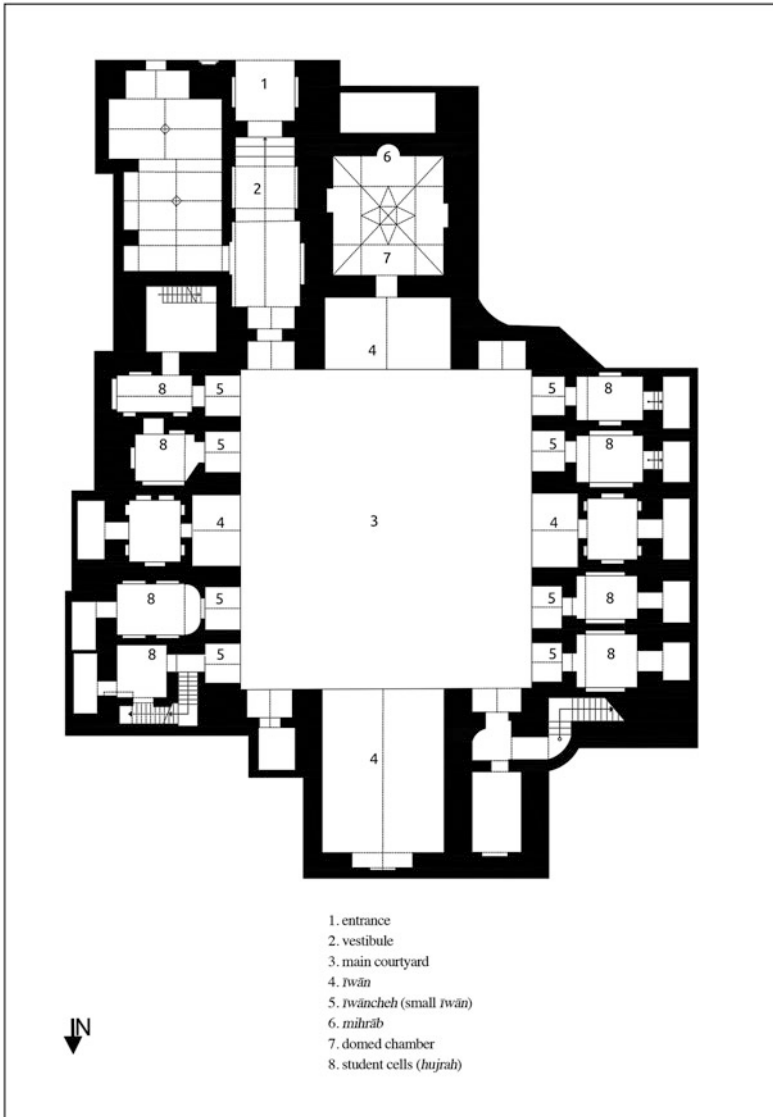
Grube and Michell (1995: 24–38) note that the *madrasah* plan, which seems to go back to the houses of Khurāsān, resembles the Iranian mosque layout: a rectangular courtyard with an *īwān* in the center of each side. Teaching takes place in the *īwāns*, and the students live in cells arranged along the intermediate walls. The typical Khurāsāni house was cruciform in plan, with four arched openings, known as *īwāns* (*ayvān* in Khurāsāni dialect), off a central courtyard. This layout coincided with the ideal framework within which to teach the four legal schools of orthodox Islam that enjoyed canonical status: Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfi‘ī traditions. The space between each *īwān* and the corner of the courtyard could be extended to accommodate the students in cells arranged in one or two stories. The typical Khurāsāni *madrasah* consisted of two tiers of cells, or *hujrahs*, preceded by diminutive *īwāns* running around a courtyard, each side of which was punctuated in the middle by an *īwān* rising the full height of the façade or projecting in a frame above the line of the roof.

The Madrasah Imāmī in Isfahan is a significant instance of one of the earliest *madrasahs* of the Persian model still in existence and functioning. Dated to 1325, this baked brick structure is built around a courtyard in typical Seljuq style, with four *īwāns* or vaulted halls in the center of each elevation. It adjoins the more famous tomb of a respected theologian named Bābā Qāsim, erected by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāmghānī in 1340–1341.

The two-storied *madrasah* measures 92 by 72 m, and each side of the internal court consists of cells for student accommodation, flanking a central common space for prayers and study. This functional arrangement is expressed in the four nearly identical courtyard façades as series of continuous niches that engulf a central *īwān*. The archetypal nature of the building however recedes as one notices significant modifications. The *īwāns* interrupt the flat roofline but are not the dominant visual feature; instead, the *mihrābs* (or niches) form the elevation’s principal accent (Fig. 1).

Decorative mosaic tilework marks the earliest phase of the transformation from purely geometrical design to intricate floral patterns, which was later perfected under the Timūrīds in the fifteenth century.

It was the Madrasah Imāmī and the custom-built *madrasah* added to the Friday Mosque of Iṣfahān from 1366 to 1367 that best expressed the officially approved



**Fig. 1** Various functions in ground floor plan, Madrasah Imāmī, Isfahan, Iran

layout of such buildings, a two-*iwān* courtyard structure. This model was emulated in various parts of the Persian world, and examples of this dictum could be traced among other places in Ziyā' al-Dīn Madrasah (Zindān-i Iskandar) and Madrasah Shamsīyyah in Yazd and with some minor moderations in numerous *madrasahs* in Mashhad, Fīrūzshāh at Turbat-i Jām, Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqarā *madrasahs* in Herat, in Ulugh Beg Madrasah at Bukhara, and various *madrasahs* in Isfahan (Archnet 2013).

## An Example of Persian Architectural *Madrasah* Model: *Madrasah Chahār Bāgh* in Isfahan, Iran

*Madrasah Chahār Bāgh* (aka *Madrasah Mādar-i Shāh*) in Isfahan built during the Ṣafavīds (1706–1714) provides one of the best envois to the Persian *madrasah* architectural model. It is longitudinally conceived and, with their miniature garden courtyards, makes a delightfully bijou impression, to exploit the available space to the full for student cells. The *Madrasah Chahār Bāgh*, sited in an originally idyllic environment fronting the *Chahār Bāgh*, injects a new dynamism into the traditional four-*īwān* layout by means of a large extra dome chamber in each of the diagonals, and the cells, too, are unusual in their tripartite division: a vestibule and a terminal recess bracket the cell itself (Hillenbrand 2004: 234). *Madrasah Chahār Bāgh* marks the Ṣafavīd architecture par excellence and informs the Isfahan School of Architecture, known for its elaborated and decorative buildings inspired by floral and human pictorials – otherwise perceived *harām* (prohibited) in other parts of the Muslim world – and identified as a distinct example of Islamic traditional urbanization model.

The glorious era of Ṣafavīd architecture started when Shāh Abbās I assumed Isfahan as the capital of the Shī'ite dynasty of the Ṣafavīd. A new urban plan for the capital city was designed and implemented to stand as an explicit expression of space symbolism and urban organization which came to be recognized as Isfahan School. The Isfahan School was a manifestation of Ṣafavīd utopia, and it was embarked to emphasize the socioeconomic and cultural landscape based on the Shī'ite ideology. The Isfahan School reproduces the utopian patterns and integrates the organic design with rational methods to form a new domain in spatial design. In the Isfahan School, the spatial-structural combination is utilized as a prevailing architectural syntax and a technical expression for memorial complexes and their surrounding spaces; and spatial hierarchy is arranged from the largest to the smallest structural scale where every scale reflects particles of the universe (a genuine rendition of the notion of *tawhīd* explained earlier). Hence, despite the outwardly chaos, there exists a sense of inner discipline. Combinations of light and shadow, soft and hard surfaces, water and stone, earth and sky, contraction and extension, and moisture and aridity are employed in order to connect human – the microcosm – and the universe, the macrocosm.

In Isfahan School, a human scale of the space is emphasized and demonstrated throughout the dimensions, measurements, openness, and closeness of the space. Humans shall pass through the space without being intimidated of its scales; and in every turn within the space, a new centrality – wherein the geometrical centrality is truncated against idealistic one – is established and a new outlook is opened. Such idealistic centrality in Isfahan School is borrowed from sociocultural, political, and religious aspects of the surrounding life (Fig. 4).

*Madrasah Chahār Bāgh*, a sublime instance of Isfahan School, is located on the side of the historical *Chahār Bāgh*. Avenue, a grand public boulevard of the Ṣafavīd Isfahan which has survived to this day and serves the function like any modern urban plaza-mall complex. The *madrasah* is a part of an urban complex of the *Mādar-i Shāh* (*lit.* Mother of the King) including a caravanserai, a bazaar, and the *madrasah*

and situated within the urban fabric which extend to squares, the royal polo court, mosques, and palaces (Fig. 2). The proximity of the *madrasah* to the centers of power – administrative, economic, and social – seen in Chahār Bāgh Complex is known as the typical structure of an Islamic city. While *madrasah* was used as a center for specialized education of religious knowledge, the domed prayer chamber (Fig. 5) with two minarets also functioned as a public mosque for daily prayers and made the outreach of the religious knowledge possible to the general public. Numerous sources point out the centrality of the Chahār Bāgh, both in past and still today, as a hub to connect a wide variety of social and urban functions and activities. Hence, one may assume a central social role for Chahār Bāgh as not only a place to socialize, meet, and enjoy the vicinity of nature but also its utilization as a connection route to other urban functions. In Isfahan, all significant urban functions of an Islamic city including bazaars, *madrasahs*, mosques, coffeehouses, the royal polo yard, and royal palaces were built around the rectangular formed Chahār Bāgh (Arjmand 2016: 19). Here is Jean Chardin who visited Isfahan in 1666 explaining Chahār Bāgh Avenue in his travelogue,

We pass through the Chahār Bāgh, taking a course over its alleys of unequal plain trees, stretching their broad canopies over our heads, their shade being rendered yet more delightful by the canals, reservoirs, fountains, which cool the air, and reflected the flickering light through their branches. Thickets of roses and jasmynes, with clustering parterres of poppies, and other flowers embank the ground; while the deep-green shadows from the trees, the perfume, the freshness, the soft gurgling of the waters, and the gentle rustle of the breeze combining with pale golden rays of the declining sun, altogether form an evening scene, as tranquilizing as it was beautiful (Chardin 1811: 118).

Main functional spaces of the Chahār Bāgh Madrasah are consisted of the semi-public entrance and vestibule which function as a buffer zone between the outer public space of the street and the confined inner space of the *madrasah*. Entering from the Chahār Bāgh Avenue to the *madrasah* courtyard takes place in three stages: linkage, transition, and arrival. The spatial exchange occurred through the utilization of lights and shadows, and while it provides a direct visual access to the courtyard, two parallel curved corridors in two sides of the vestibule provide an indirect and gradual physical access to the courtyard. The transition from the grand scale of the outer urban fabric to that human scale of the *madrasah* – to symbolize the humbleness of those in quest of knowledge against the mundanity of the world outside – is done by reducing the sizes and light arrangement of the vestibule. The transition is also an architectural interpretation of the spatial continuity to connect and unite the particle to the essence.

Reflecting the image of the Celestial Garden (*Firdaws*) on Earth, the Persian Garden (*bāgh*) is perceived as a visual articulation of the divine paradise on Earth. Persian gardens have been an integral part of Iranian architecture at micro- and urban planning at macro scales. Two principal natural elements of any Persian garden are water and sunlight which, in combination with the diverse greenery of various shades and shapes, form the space's main structure. Those elements and their respective impact on a space have always been taken into consideration in designing the buildings inspired by Persian vernacular architecture. The Chahār Bāgh



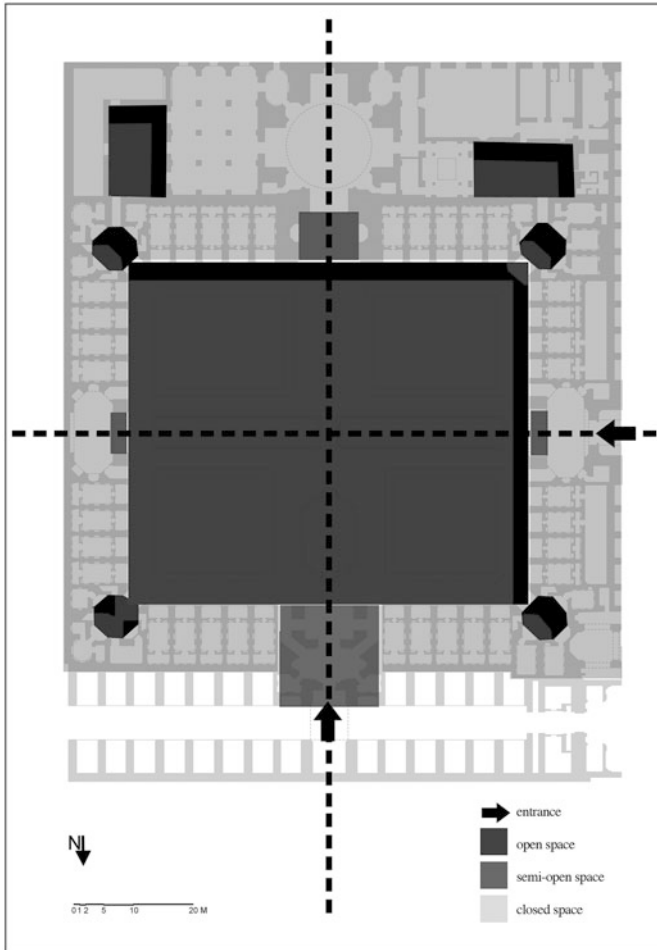


Madrasah courtyard is inspired by the Persian garden to create a microclimate in otherwise arid climate of Isfahan. The courtyard is also utilized to configure the spatial division of *madrasah* based on the *chahār bāgh* model. The main elements of the Persian garden in the *madrasah* courtyard are executed through the existent water stream as a main axis in the east-west direction and contributed greatly to creating the tranquilizing milieu, the greenery and vegetation. The open space of the courtyard which is used for gatherings, meetings, and discussions (*mubāḥiṣah*) lends itself to a sense of equality and improves the quality of academic life for boarders of the *madrasah*. The courtyard also functions as the main hub and central point of the *madrasah* and enhances vitality and spatial variety, while it lends itself to “sense of place” to both residents and visitors. A pathway and a pool divide the courtyard into four miniature gardens, perhaps intended as a graceful echo of the wider Chahār Bāgh outside. Aesthetically, the *madrasah*'s arcades are a delightful compromise between the plainness of the *maydān* arcades (Naqsh-i -Jahān Square) and the somewhat oppressive overall tilework of those in the Masjid-i Shāh (*Jāmi* ‘*Abbāsī*)-also called Imām Mosque after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The interiors are whitewashed, with vaulting lines picked out in blue, while their court façades are tiled. The dome chamber, on the other hand, is in elevation so close a copy of the great dome of the Masjid-i Shāh (Hillenbrand 1986). Two stories of continuously niched façades are located around the courtyard, behind which the cells for student accommodation, with the principal accent of the elevation and engulf the central *īwān* on each side are placed (Fig. 5).

“Four-*īwān* model” used in Chahār Bāgh Madrasah – with its symmetrical structure throughout positioning four *īwāns* around a courtyard – is a standard Persian plan to organize such spaces as mosques, palaces, *madrasahs*, and houses and is utilized to indicate main educational spaces (*madras*) in *īwāns* from other parts (Fig. 3).

*īwāns* are also functioning as intermediate spaces to link different spaces and domains within the *madrasah* and are used to hold lecture sessions and group discussions during the summer. The southern *īwān* at Chahār Bāgh Madrasah is marked with two minarets which highlight the *qiblah* direction. The *madrasah* and adjacent caravanserai are orientated along the same due eastward axis, marked by the entrance portal of the *madrasah* and continued in the pools of both buildings, pools which extend even to the stables closing off the complex at the east end (Fig. 2). Hillenbrand (1986) argues that “the Chahār Bāgh Madrasah bears all the marks of a blueprint conceived on a drawing board and executed without special reference to its setting. Its plan is so similar to that of the adjoining caravanserai that it is tempting to regard them as the work of one man. Seldom has the flexibility of the four-*īwān* plan been more clearly demonstrated.”

*Madrasah* is known for its boarding facilities both for students and teachers. Student cells (*hujrhas*) in Chahār Bāgh Madrasah are built around the courtyard for the maximum usage of the ground. The structure follows a hierarchical flow from an open space (courtyard) to semi-open space (small porch) and closed space (*hujrah*) (Fig. 3). *Hujrhas* are simple in spatial organization which reflects the humble life of the religious scholars, and unlike the outer spaces, it lacks any ornamentation. The

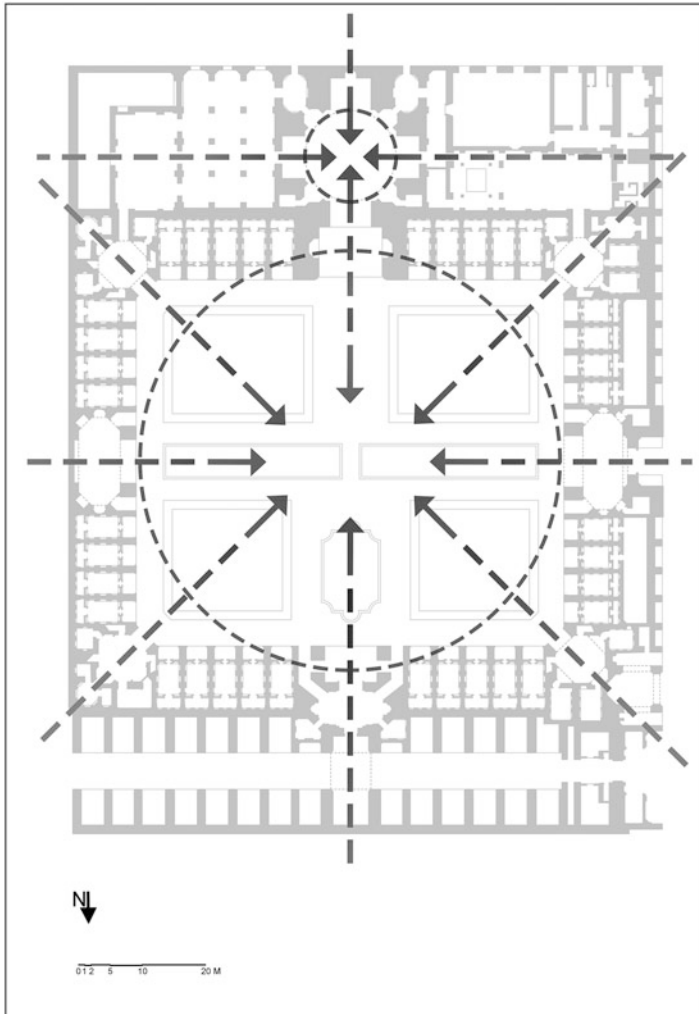


**Fig. 3** The spatial organization in Chahār Bāgh Madrasah

priority of function over the form has resulted in a modest accommodation facility in the *hujrah* and often shared by two or three students.

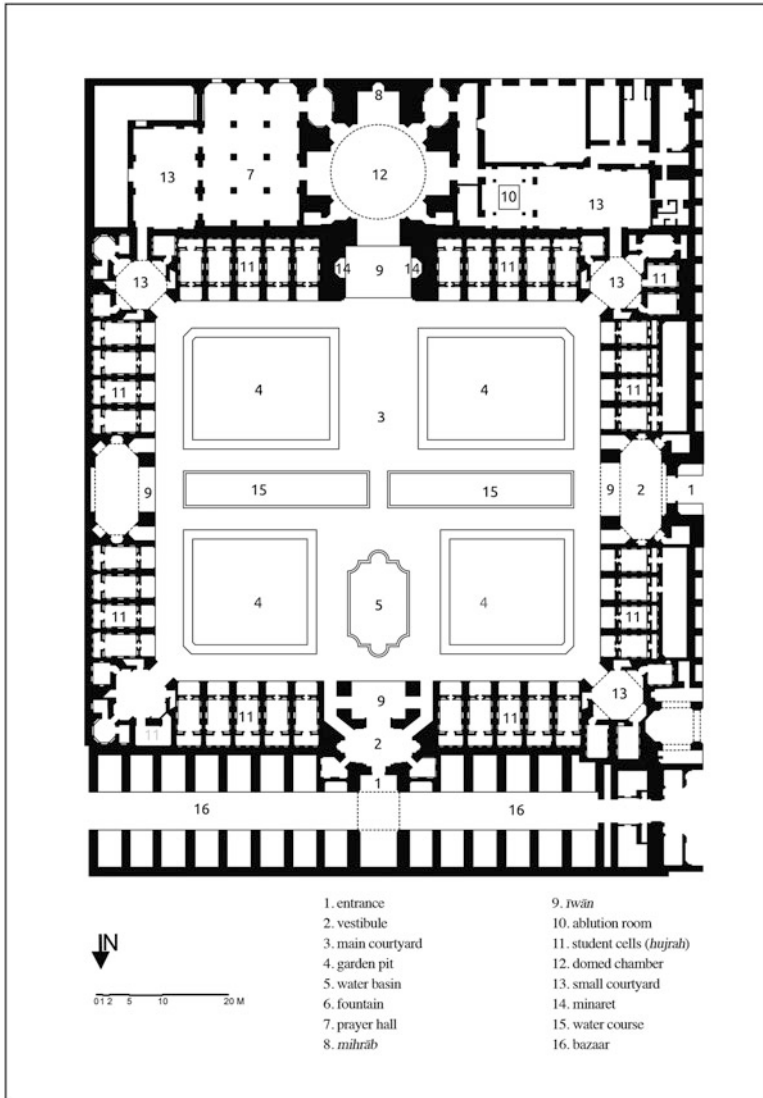
Chahār Bāgh Madrasah lacks a large lecture hall and instead has polygonal, usually niched, chambers opening on the axes and diagonals; it is hard to suggest a specific function for so many such chambers. Those on the bevelled diagonals are repeated at first floor level. The intervening areas on both floors are filled with narrow double cells. (Hillenbrand 1986: 810)

Dearth of wood and stone in central and southern parts of Iran, on one hand, and the existence of termitidae which can cause structural damage, on the other hand, encouraged Iranian architects to develop the vernacular mud or fired brick arches and vaults. For covering larger spaces, domes were used on a squared base by various



**Fig. 4** Centrality in design at Chahār Bāgh Madrasah

corner-making methods, to transfer the square to octagon and then to other polygonal shapes with 16, 32, and 64 sides and finally circle (Fig. 4). The domed chamber – as an architectural articulation of the heaven and a basic element in Persian architecture – accentuates prayer spaces in religious buildings. A domed prayer chamber with *mihrāb*, *minbar*, and minarets in *qiblah* side of Chahār Bāgh exhibits that the building is a mosque-*madrasah* complex and can host the public for the prayers. Structurally, the Chahār Bāgh Madrasah dome is a double-shelled construction which fulfills a twofold function: while it provides an urban scale visibility from outside and puts *madrasah* as a significant urban landmark, it also creates the human scale inside the prayer chamber.



**Fig. 5** Various functions in the ground floor of Madrasah Chahār Bāgh

The most used decoration in Chahār Bāgh Madrasah is *haft-rang* (rainbow) tiling, which was popular during the Ṣafavīd era due to its easy preparation and speedy installation. Rarely any other forms of tiling such as embedded tiling (mix of brick and tile or *mu'aqalī*) were used, and mosaics (*mu'arraḡ*) are solely used in *muqarnases*, the dome, minarets, and ceilings. Other ornamentations include geometric patterns (such as *giriḥ chīnī*), plain line patterns (such as arabesques), wooden latticework (*giriḥ*), and

stone and stucco decoration. Wooden latticework is used in doors and windows as *mashrabīyahs* (carved oriel windows) to provide privacy and allow light to *hujrahs*.

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## Anatolian/Ottoman *Madrasah* Architectural Model

An examination of the surviving *madrasas* of modern Turkey and Syria reveals an incontrovertible architectural identification of *madrasahs* discussed throughout this chapter as the Anatolian/Ottoman *madrasah* model. The earliest example of this genre, according to Pedersen et al. (1986), is the Gümüştiğin Madrasah in Boşra, which bears the date 530 C.E. and is located in Syria. Hillenbrand (1994) argues that the Anatolian *madrasahs*, built in an area culturally dependent on Iran and geographically close to it by patrons who themselves sprang from Great Seljuq stock would be likely to reflect the Seljuq *madrasahs* of Iran, whose decisive role in the formation of the genre has never seriously been questioned. Iranian influence may in any case readily be detected in the plan types, brickwork, and tile decoration of much of Rūm Seljuq architecture. Hence, this historical background encourages the assumption that it is precisely in these vanished Iranian Seljuq *madrasahs* that the essential original lineaments of the official *madrasah* are to be sought. Many of their features are duplicated in contemporary Syrian *madrasahs*, which may be seen as a parallel and coeval group.

Most Syrian *madrasahs* are diminutive; their external dimensions do not exceed  $20 \times 17$  m. On this tiny scale, there is scarcely room for a proper courtyard, and the space which would normally be designated as such is domed, a feature which was to recur a century later in some of the Seljuq *madrasahs* in Konya and elsewhere (Koroglu 1999). Typically, two lateral *īwāns* open off the space, while a prayer hall and a kind of narthex to the south. In such single-story buildings, the only space left over is the area flanking the prayer hall, which yields two rooms per side. The total number of students accommodated in these *madrasahs* can scarcely have exceeded a dozen. Such a building will simply not fit the popular image of officially sponsored *madrasahs* located strategically throughout the Seljuq Empire (1037–1194) and serving, at least in part, significant political ends.

Hillenbrand argues that, it is in fact these Anatolian buildings which provide the best evidence of the multifunctional nature of the medieval *madrasah*. In so doing, they are a reminder that the form of these buildings is not an infallible guide to their function. Many buildings now conventionally termed *madrasah* were actually intended to serve as a medical school, a mental hospital, an *īmāret*, or an observatory, and it frequently allotted substantial space to a mausoleum. The two former functions may be combined in the sense that each is discharged in separate but adjoining premises. Nothing in its layout would exclude its identification as a *madrasah*. In the case of long-disaffected, anepigraphic buildings, therefore, a “*madrasah*-type” layout should not automatically be taken to signify that the building really was a *madrasah* (Hillenbrand 2004).

In some *madrasahs*, a whole cluster of rooms of varying shapes and sizes mirrors the uncertainties of the architect. In many of these buildings, too, the notional

purpose of a *madrasah* – to house students seeking a theological education as a first step to joining the *‘ulamā’* – obviously comes a poor last to such other functions as providing a place of prayer, an elaborate façade, a mausoleum (or even two), a minaret, a bath, a fountain, or halls for public gatherings. Not surprisingly, the cells are usually tiny, a scant three paces per side. But it is their paucity that is most striking. Even the most splendid of all domed Anatolian Seljuq *madrasahs* that built in Konya in 611 C.E. has no more than a dozen cells (Mustafa 2015).

Seljuq Anatolia shows just as clearly as do Syria, Egypt, or Iran the growth of the multipurpose foundation, and several Anatolian *madrasahs* were built in conjunction with structures serving another purpose altogether. Thus, some *madrasahs* have caravanserais which adjoin them. Presumably as in the case of similar though later joint foundations (those in Baghdād and in Işfahān, discussed earlier), the revenues of the commercial endowed (*waqf*) establishment were intended to finance the running costs of the *madrasah*. It was common enough, too, for a *madrasah* to adjoin a mosque.

Any attempt to characterize the medieval Anatolian *madrasah* must therefore reckon with a very varied background. Anatolian *madrasahs*, thus, are either the open type, with a courtyard, or the closed type with a domed area replacing that courtyard. That the open plan should dominate is only to be expected, given the popularity of this form in non-Anatolian *madrasahs* and the fashion for courtyard houses in the medieval Iranian world which produced the earliest *madrasahs*. The closed, domed *madrasah*, however, may have anything from one to four *īwāns*, very occasionally has two stories, and may or may not have a portico around the central space.

Certain generalizations about Anatolian *madrasah* buildings may be made. It is clear, for example, that the typical rectangular *madrasah* kept the façade short in relation to the sides. This had the advantage of concentrating student cells on the long sides and separating them physically from the rooms serving other functions. Most cells had a fireplace and a cupboard, but sanitary facilities were communal, and there was usually no provision for meals to be cooked on the premises. Equally characteristic is a tripartite division of the building parallel with the major, that is, the longitudinal, axis, as in contemporary caravanserais. At the far end of that axis, marking the *qiblah* and continuing the major chord first sounded by the portal, is a wide *īwān* or dome chamber serving as the mosque and frequently flanked by a subsidiary vaulted or domed room on either side. In four-*īwān* plans, the *qiblah* *īwān* is typically the broadest and the most richly decorated of all, and it has a similar preeminence in two-*īwān* *madrasahs*, in which the *īwāns* are confined to the longitudinal axis. However, the form of the *īwān* within these buildings – as distinct from their exteriors – does not follow Iranian precedent, in that its façade comprises the arch alone without a framing *pīshṭāq*.

Ottoman *madrasahs* inevitably look somewhat tame when measured against the output of the preceding centuries, but what they lost in unpredictability they amply made up for in symmetry and scale, characteristics hitherto undervalued. Long, uncluttered façades are preferred, and this change is symptomatic of the severity in architectural ornament. The typical Anatolian Seljuq *madrasah* was a self-contained

foundation, even if its *raison d'être* was as often funerary as educational. With the advent of the Ottomans to supreme power, the joint foundation – typically a mosque-cum-*madrasah* but frequently a still larger complex – becomes commonplace, and sometimes several *madrasahs* cluster around a mosque; such an ensemble is conceived as an architectural unity and often executed in a single building campaign (Pedersen et al. 1986). These changes left their mark on the *madrasah*. Its function as a place of prayer was now positively subordinated to its role as an educational institution, and this change is swiftly mirrored in its architecture. The *īwān* is demoted and by degrees removed and in its place appears the dominant dome chamber; with its compact, square layout focussed on a central courtyard, ideally adapted to a cruciform *īwān* plan; but the *īwāns* no longer dominate the arrangement, for behind each of them rises a powerful, foursquare domed unit. (Creswell 1979).

Hillenbrand (1994) argues that, perhaps the most important change of emphasis in Ottoman *madrasahs* vis-à-vis their predecessors lies in the hugely increased numbers of student cells. The designer had a free hand and did not have to tailor his plan to an awkward and immutable site, so that as a result, perhaps, space is used quite prodigally; the cells are now domed and often have two windows apiece. The courtyard has not only a central pool or fountain but is also planted with trees, possibly in an attempt to minimize the sense of regimentation which the plan exudes (Bāyazīd II Madrasah in Istanbul). In their size, their internal logic, and their simple square or rectangular silhouettes, these Ottoman *madrasahs* bear the unmistakable imprint of imperial patronage; hence, their architects had no need to grapple with the intractable sites that had put earlier architects on their mettle.

A cursory examination of the Syrian *madrasahs* is enough to establish that the provision of student accommodation – much like *Anatolian madrasahs* – was not a major priority. Despite the lack of information, the Boşrā *madrasah* and other Syrian *madrasahs* suggest in the gross disproportion between public and private space that the structure was purpose-built to accommodate no more than a handful of students from its surrounding area. For instance, the Nūr al-Dīn's Dār al-Ḥadīth in Damascus seems to have had no more than four rooms, and although the other surviving Syrian *madrasahs* are more generously provided with student cells, not one of them approaches the larger Maghribī *madrasahs*, let alone those of Iran, for capacity. One is driven to the conclusion, therefore, that the patronage directed toward the building of *madrasahs* in Syria was deliberately kept on a small scale, possibly because nearly all of them were built to serve a single *madhab* or, else, they might have been meant more as oratories for the daily use of the local population than as *madrasahs tout court*, a practice recorded in Maghribī *madrasahs* (Péretié 1912).

Perhaps the main distinguishing feature of Syrian *madrasahs* is the inclusion of a mausoleum (*qubbah* or *turba*). Indeed, it is doubtful whether the connection between the *madrasah* and the mausoleum was ever closer than it was in Ayyūbīd (1171–1260) Syria. Once again, epigraphy provides a clue for this, for inscriptions in the Sulṭāniyyah and Atābakiyyah *madrasahs*, located in Aleppo and Damascus respectively, refer to the recitation of the Qur'ān there (Pedersen et al. 1986). Provision was made for this recitation to be unceasing. Burial in a *madrasah*, then,

was – like burial in the neighborhood of a saint – intended at least in part to confer *barakah* (blessing) upon the dead. It was in Syria that the exaltation of the mausoleum at the expense of the *madrasah* proper can first be traced; time and again, it is the mausoleum which has the favored site of the street façade, with the *madrasah* modestly tucked away virtually out of sight. In sheer surface area, the mausoleum is apt to rival, if not exceed, the *madrasah*. It has even been suggested that the terms *turbah* (mausoleum) and *madrasah* were interchangeable in this period. On the other hand, the notion of ensemble which underlies a modern term like “funerary *madrasah*” is belied by the epigraphic evidence, which suggests that the *turbah* element and the *madrasah* element both had their own foundation inscriptions (ibid). This practice has often obscured the original intention of the founder, for it has resulted in many now freestanding *turbahs* being identified as simple mausolea rather than as part of a funerary *madrasah*.

Syrian *madrasahs* of the Mamlūk period were built in significantly smaller numbers than under the Ayyūbīds, because under the Mamlūks, the emphasis of patronage shifted to mausolea and funerary mosques. There is no significant difference in layout between the tomb of Shaykh Nakhlawī (730 C.E.), the funerary mosque of Sīdī Shu‘ayb (ca. 800 C.E.), and the funerary *madrasah* of Shaykh Ḥasan Rā‘ī al-Himma (863 C.E.), all in the same city. Single-tomb structures combined with a much larger laterally developed *muṣallā*, sometimes with a vestibule, continued to be built, and these could equally well bear the name mosque. Thus, in Mamlūk as in Ayyūbīd times, the term *madrasah* did not connote exclusively one kind of building or one particular function (Mustafa 2015). Some *madrasahs*, incidentally, combines in a new way many of the standard features of earlier Syrian *madrasahs*: around its spacious central courtyard are disposed a *muṣallā* (prayer hall) extending the entire width of the *qibla* side, arched colonnades with rooms above on the two long sides and a huge *īwān*, presumably for teaching, occupying all the north side. The role of mosque played by many Mamlūk *madrasahs* in Syria is advertised by the addition of a minaret, seen, for instance, in Madrasah Saffāḥiyyah built by the *qāḍī* Ibn al-Saffāḥ in 869 C.E. and Madrasah Anṣāriyyah, both in Aleppo.

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## Cairene (Egyptian) *Madrasah* Architectural Model

The Fāṭimid era (909–1171) in Egypt is regarded as the glorious period of Islamic art and architecture. Hillenbrand (2004) argues that since the Fāṭimids were officially Shī‘ah, it was impossible for the explicitly Sunnī *madrasah* movement to establish itself anywhere in the Fāṭimid domains, before the fall of that dynasty in 565/1170. Within 5 years from that date, however, under the militant orthodoxy of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, there were already as many *madrasahs* in Cairo, swiftly to be followed, no doubt at least partly for propaganda reasons, by examples at Mecca and Medina.

The building of *madrasahs* in Cairo gathered new momentum with the coming of the Mamlūks (1250–1517). The largely vanished Zāhiriyya Madrasah (660–662) was a gigantic four-*īwān* structure with a stalactite portal probably of Syrian



inspiration, a theme repeated in the deep niches with *muqarnas* hoods which articulated its façade. This building inaugurates the distinguished tradition of Cairene *madrasahs* with splendid façades and interiors to match.

This notable degree of splendor can be explained on both political and economic grounds. Mamlūk *madrasahs* in Cairo are overwhelmingly the product of royal or high official patronage, a fact consistently reflected in the names they bear and in their lavish decoration. Outward splendor would be the natural corollary of such patronage. Many of them were endowed far more generously than their size and therefore the scope of their activities dictated (Pedersen et al. 1986).

Several prestigious Mamlūk buildings in Cairo, such as the various funerary *madrasahs* of Sulṭān Sha'bān and his family, followed the lead of the Sulṭān Ḥasan ensemble (explained in detail in the following section). But its principal impact on later buildings was through its four-*īwān* schema, which henceforth was to be repeatedly used for mosque architecture until the Ottoman conquest. In other words, the architecture of the *madrasah* had now come to influence that of the mosque; indeed, the unprecedented expansion of the *qiblah īwān* into a full-scale *muṣallā* in later Mamlūk buildings can only be explained by such a process. Presumably, the decisive factor was that the mosque thereby gained a large unbroken space for the *muṣallā*, which – unlike mosques with arcaded or columned *muṣallās* – allowed all the congregation to see the *imām*. Moreover, a set of domed bays forming miniature compartments take up the areas normally reserved for *īwāns*. The liturgical distinction between the *qiblah īwān* and the subsidiary ones was expressed in architectural terms too. The former was vaulted and thereby given the illusion of still greater spaciousness, while the scale of the latter was reduced, and their ceilings were now flat.

For the *madrasah* to influence mosque design was indeed a momentous change; it signaled a new relationship between the two buildings (Hillenbrand 1994). Henceforth, however, these two institutions could combine their functions within a single building (which was highly desirable given the chronic shortage of space in Cairo) and with minimum trespass of one upon the other. It is noticeable that in the Sulṭān Ḥasan Complex, a novel solution for the *madrasah* has been devised: not only does each *madhhab* occupy a corner of the building, but certain aspects of the traditional full-scale *madrasah* are retained even on this miniature scale. Usually, the cells for students are clustered on two sides of a diminutive courtyard. The small size of the student cells meant that their numbers and dimensions could be readily adjusted to fill the space available, thereby obviating the need to encroach on the mosque proper. Presumably, however, the four *īwāns* were used for teaching purposes outside the hours of prayer; the association between *īwāns* and teaching had been rooted for a good two centuries in Syria and then Egypt; thus the Mamlūk historian al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442), in his description of the mausoleum and *madrasah* of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, lists the four lecturers – one from each *madhhab* – who were first appointed to teach there and specifies the *īwān* allotted to each one. The lack of subsidiary *mihrābs* in the lateral *īwāns* is sufficient indication that their role as places for prayer was not paramount (ibid).

These remarks should not be construed to suggest that Cairene *madrasahs* served exclusively educational, religious, or funerary proposes. A casual reminiscence set

down by al-Maqrīzī (1854) indicated that the *madrasah*-mausoleum of the Amīr Ḳarasunḳur was used as a hostel by couriers of the *barīd* (mailing) service preparing for their return journey to Syria and elsewhere. The same source mentions a *ribāṭ* for women attached to the *madrasah* and mausoleum of the Amīr Sunḳur Saʿdī (715/1315). But above all, the *madrasah* provided a focus both for the relentless emulation of the Mamlūk *amīr*'s in architectural projects and for their desire to make financial provision for their descendants (Pedersen et al. 1986).

The ensemble of Mamlūk *madrasahs* takes form in part to the exigencies of the site and designed or equipped accordingly. The main space of the Cairene *madrasahs* is a large assembly hall (*majmaʿ*) with an arcade enclosing the *ḥaram*, where the judges, *fuḳahāʿ*, and other notables connected with the *madrasah* are congregated. The use of an open-air terrace (*sāḥa*) around which the rooms were located is also traceable in many *madrasahs*, used often by lecturers (*mudarrisūn*) a jurisconsult (*faqīh*), the Qurʿān reciters (*qurrāʿ*), and muezzins (Hillenbrand 2004). Hillenbrand (1994) notes that the architectural form, known as *maqʿad* or *tārimah*, has a wide distribution in domestic architecture throughout the Near East and may parenthetically be compared with similar forms in contemporary Renaissance architecture; it underlines yet again the deep roots of the *madrasah* in domestic prototypes. But this development, for all its domestic flavor, also had religious implications, for the view from this loggia was over one of the holiest sites in the Islamic world.

There are several key factors in the space production process of Mamlūk era. One is the multifunctional public urban complex; the Baḥrī Mamlūk, beginning with that of Sultān Qalāwun, erected a series of such multifunctional urban complexes. Unlike their predecessors, the Mamlūk did not build entire new cities, grand palaces, or great mosques devoted to a single cause, military, domestic, or religious; instead, they concentrated on public structures with a more complicated agenda. In new complexes, there was an attempt to integrate *madrasah* with other structures, serving both the ruler and the ruled. A new orientation in public service called for a program encompassing devotional, civil, and memorial elements. Along with the program of the *madrasah*, the hospital rendered public charitable services, and the mausoleum of the founder was incorporated to provide commemorative and ceremonial functions. By the middle of the fourteenth century, buildings evolved to integrate mausoleums, *madrasahs*, and *khānqāhs* (Al-Harīthī 2001).

Hypostyle mosques continued to be built during the Mamlūk period but were no longer freestanding. In the already crowded urban setting, their plans generally lose their regularity. For example, the main entrance is no longer on the axis of the sanctuary (Behrens-Abouseif 1989), and the urban mausoleum gained the momentum as the second architectural type that played part in the production of space. To restore the importance of the mausoleum, which had lost its significance and “became a symbol of conspicuous consumption,” the Mamlūks built them inside the city and attached them to prestigious institutions, a practice well established in Syria but new to Egypt. It became a sign of respect to bury sultans in the city rather than in the cemetery. The mausoleums multiplied in number as sultans and *amīrs* built their future burial chambers and attached them to *madrasahs*, *khānqāhs*, and

even mosques (Al-Harithy 2001). The mausoleum dome was built to enhance the founder's prestige, and its location was therefore important. Ideally a mausoleum attached to a religious building had to be oriented to Mecca and at the same time accessible from the street to attract more visitors.

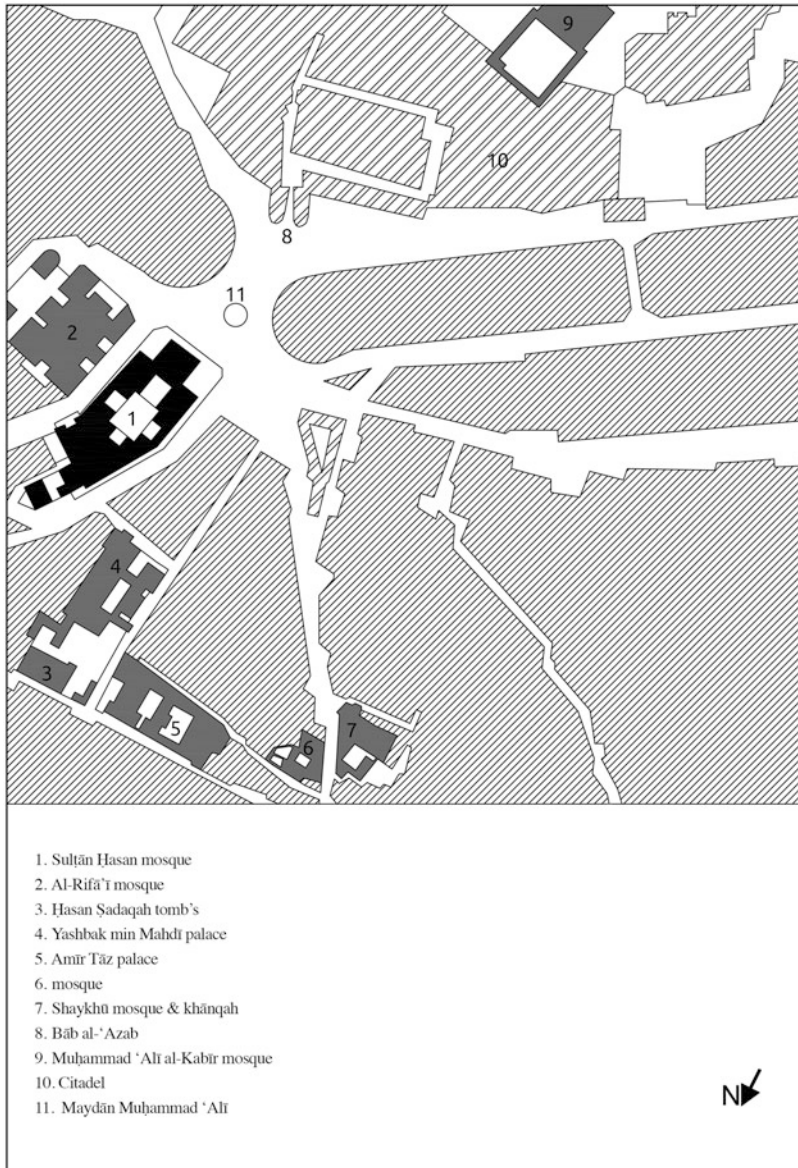
### **An Example of Cairene/Egyptian *Madrasah* Architectural Model: Sultān Ḥasan Madrasah in Cairo**

The *madrasah*, mosque, and mausoleum of Sultān Ḥasan is the largest complex built by the Bahārī Mamlūks or any Mamlūk sultan ever. Its construction began in 1356 and finished in 1362–1363. As noted earlier, a notable number of multifunctional urban complexes including *madrasahs* were established in Mamlūk era. Despite the fact that al-Maqrīzī (1854) states the craftsmen “from all over the world” came for building the Sultān Ḥasan complex, it is considered Mamlūk in style. Muslim, Christian, and Anatolian influences are obvious in the complex architecture and decoration. Even Chinese lotus and chrysanthemum patterns appear on its walls. The art objects such as porcelain and silks were imported from the Far East, and thanks to the flourishing trade routes, those objects brought inspirations to Cairo and local craftsmen around Egypt. By common consent, the masterpiece among the Mamlūk ensembles, and certainly the largest of them, is the mosque, *madrasah*, and mausoleum of Sultān Ḥasan. Its lofty portal, originally designed to have flanking minarets, and with a spacious vestibule behind it, bears the unmistakable imprint of Anatolian Seljuq architecture, but most of the detailing within is typically Cairene. At first sight, the layout seems focussed as it is on an ample four-*īwān* plan. But – and here again foreign influence, this time from Iran, must be taken into account – this cruciform plan is employed, exceptionally in the case of Egypt, for a mosque, while each *madhhab* has its own *madrasah* in one of the corners between the arms of the cross. The sultan's own mausoleum, a gigantic domed chamber, extends the full width of the *qiblah īwān* and is placed (emphatically not in Iranian fashion) directly behind the *qiblah* wall. It therefore usurps the position of the domed sanctuary in the classical Iranian mosque. The building thus epitomizes the vitality and versatility of the traditional four-*īwān* formula (Fig. 9).

The Sultān Ḥasan Complex is situated at the eastern end of the southern extension of the city of Cairo, across the Maydān of al-Rumaila from the Citadel end on the eastern end of Muhammad Ali Street.

It was thus one of the most prestigious sites in Cairo and the centerpiece of the panoramic view from al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq with its huge gilded window grills. The entire architectural conception of this gigantic building responded to the privileged character of the site. Its location was, however, also a liability, for with its massive walls and proximity to the Citadel, it suffered in ways that no other mosque in Cairo did (Fig. 6).

In the Sultān Ḥasan Complex, four *madrasahs* are combined with a *sabīl-kuttāb*, a hospital, a mausoleum, and a congregational mosque. *Sabīl-kuttāb* was a charitable structure composed of a *sabīl* (drinking fountain) on the ground floor and a *kuttāb*



**Fig. 6** Location of Sultān Ḥasan Complex in urban context, Cairo

(Qurʿānic school for boys) on top, which was usually a room open on all sides. In the Sultān Ḥasan Complex, *sabīl-kuttāb* was destroyed by the collapse of the first of two minarets that were intended to frame the portal. The *madrasahs* within the complex are dedicated to the teachings of the four Sunnī schools. According to the *waqf* document, the largest of the major *twāns*, that of the *qiblah*, is dedicated to the

Friday sermon (*khutbah*), the recitation of the Qur'ān, and to hold meetings of the Shāfi'ī students with their professors or to conduct their general public lectures. The remaining three major *īwāns* are approximately equal in size. The southwestern *īwān* was dedicated to the sessions of the Ḥanbalī, the northwestern to the Ḥanafī, and the northeastern to the Mālikī school. Each *madrasah* has a private teaching *īwān*, a courtyard with a fountain, latrines, living units, and a large room above the *īwān* that may have served as a library. The living units range in size. The average room has an area of 10 m<sup>2</sup>. The Ḥanafīte Madrasah has 56 living units, the Shāfi'īte 52, and the Mālikīte 44, while the Ḥanbalīte has only 22 units. Its *īwān* has an area of 30 m<sup>2</sup> compared to the *īwān* of the Ḥanafīte, which has an area of 67.5 m<sup>2</sup>. It is clear that though the *waqf* document treated the four *madrasahs* equally, the design seems to have accommodated the site conditions and the sizes of the *madrasahs* in a more hierarchical fashion that responded more to the actual following of the four *madrasahs* in Egypt. The Ḥanafīte was the most popular, and the Ḥanbalīte was the least popular at the time (Al-Harithy 2007) (Fig. 9).

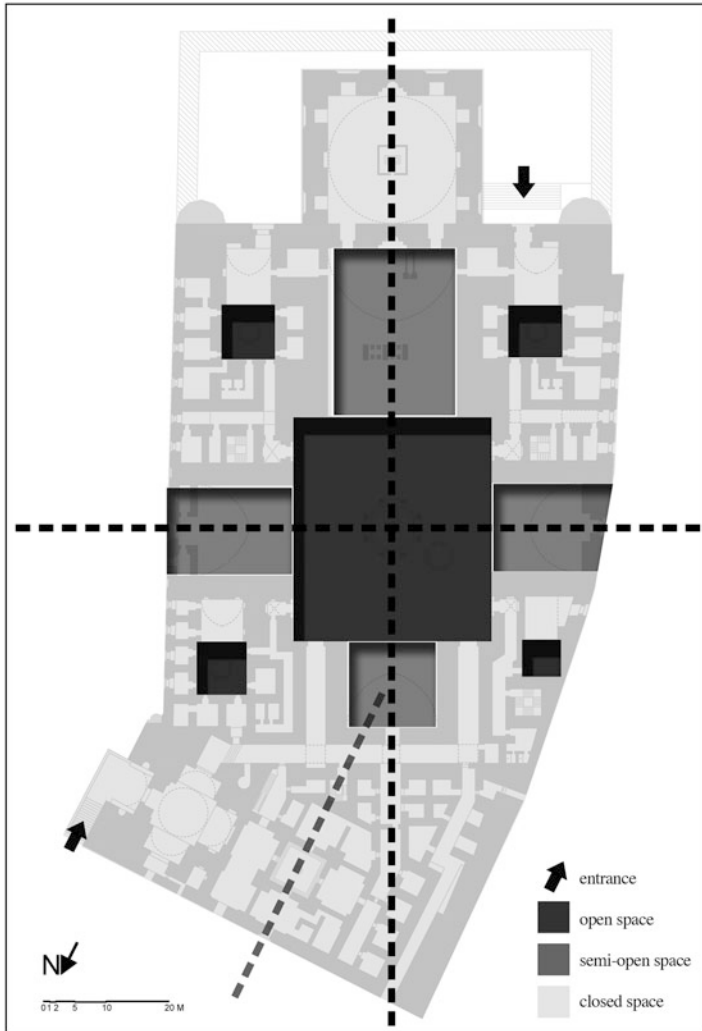
The major organization of the complex is based on a monumental version of four-*īwān* (cruciform) plan, and single-*īwān* type is used as minor order in four *madrasahs* in corners. In the major four-*īwān* pattern, some features such as symmetry, concentration, and hierarchy are used in organization of the spaces (Fig. 7). The plan distinguishes the public zone from the private ones of each of the *madrasah* unit and adjusts scale and accessibility. The public zone includes the *jām'i*, the major teaching *īwāns*, and the mausoleum, while the *madrasahs* and their living units remain separate and private.

The main functional spaces of Sultān Ḥasan Complex are as follow:

*Entrance and vestibule:* The degree of fluidity of the space was controlled by transitional spaces, which became the main elements responsible for resolving the conflict between the public urban space and the private parts of the complex.

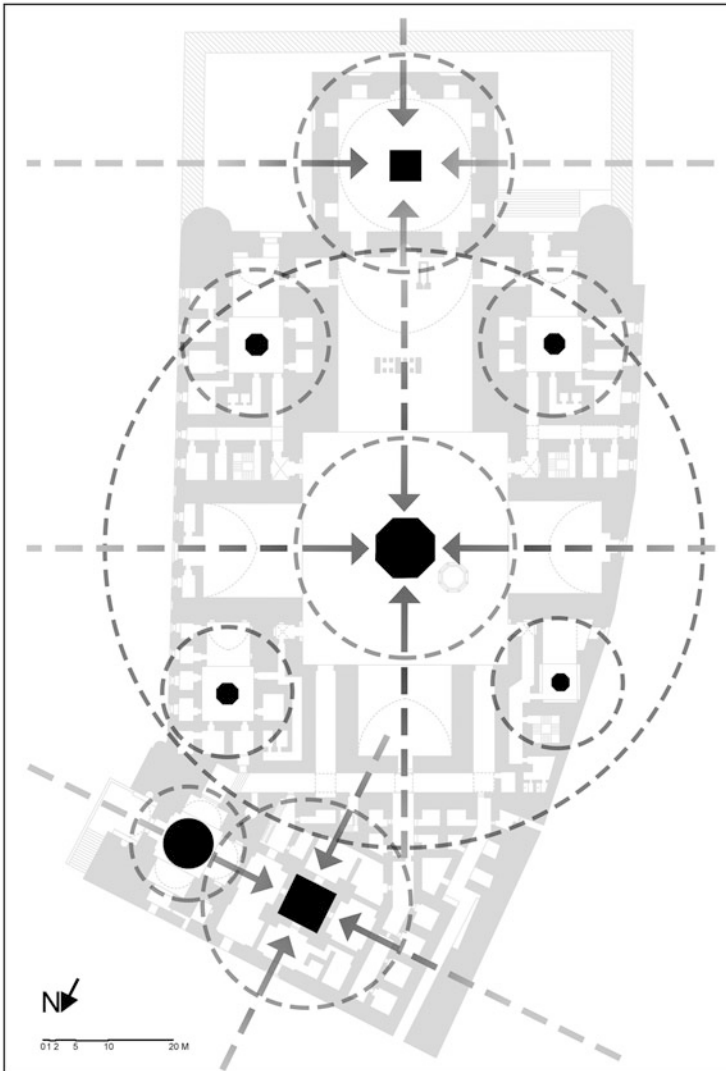
This task assigned a new importance to the design of transitional spaces and gave rise to a new spatial sequence composed of entries, vestibules, and corridors. Long, bent, and dark corridors were transitional spaces that controlled the experience one had inside the building.

To correspond with the multifunctionality of the buildings that included religious, civic, and domestic activities, the Mamlūks borrowed various elements from military, religious, and domestic architecture and used them in various combinations of portal, *darqā'ah* (vestibule), and *dihlīz* (corridor). *Darqā'ah*, derived from Persian *dargāh*, functioned as an entry space which gave access to the raised *īwāns*. It was usually enhanced by highly ornamented floor patterns and a central fountain integrated into the floor. The space above the *darqā'ah* extended vertically across the surrounding volumes of the house, creating a central void which was usually covered by a pyramidal roof on a pierced polygonal drum, allowing light and air to penetrate. The private living rooms in the upper floor, located above the *īwāns* or around the vertical shaft of the *darqā'ah*, often had screened windows overlooking the central space of the *qa'ah*, which permitted the female group of the family to watch activities in the mole reception room (Bianca 2000: 88–89). The emphasis which is placed on portals and transitional zones may also have a defensive purpose. These buildings



**Fig. 7** The spatial organization of spaces in Sultān Ḥasan Complex

were often used for refuge and protection: designed as security gates, they could be reinforced by a gatekeeper around the clock (Al-Harithy 2001). The most elaborate sequence is found in the complex of Sultān Ḥasan. In dark and brightly lit corridors, respectively, static and dynamic spatial units alternate to act as psychological displacements, detaching the visitor from the outside world at one moment and referring him/her to it in the next. This linear progression does not stop upon arriving at the great court in the heart of the building but continues into the mausoleum to arrive to the *qiblah* wall punctuated with windows that form the ultimate visual connection with the urban space beyond.



**Fig. 8** Centrality in design of Sulṭān Ḥasan Complex

*Courtyards:* There is a major courtyard in the center and four minor courtyards in four corners of the complex (Fig. 8). There are four stories façades around the courtyards, behind which the cells for student accommodation were located. The onlooker in the courtyards of the complex does not perceive the impressive four-story structures, which dominate the façades, concealed behind the inner walls. The dwellings were conceived as an outer shell.

An important point of the courtyard is the airflow and the amount of natural light. Visiting the Sulṭān Ḥasan Madrasah at different times of the year, one gets

immediately aware of the temperature difference between the outside and the inside of the courtyard. During the hot summer months, the interior of *madrasah* is considerably cooler than the outside. Every courtyard has a fountain in the center that helps to condition the thermal comfort within the interior spaces.

*Īwāns*: Four great tunnel-vaulted *īwāns* flank the great courtyard of which the *īwān* of the *qiblah* is the largest. As noted earlier, and according to the *waqf* document, this *īwān* is dedicated to the Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*), the recitation of the Qur'ān, and the meetings and lectures of the Shāfi'ī professors and students. This complex was, therefore, the first to incorporate a congregational mosque into the program of the *madrasah* in Mamlūk period. The other three *īwāns* that flank the courtyard are approximately equal in size. Teaching sessions were assigned to each of the *īwāns* (Al-Harithy 1996) (Fig. 7).

*Living spaces (student cells)*: The four monumental *īwāns* fully dominate the courtyard of the mosque, with no living units to share the inner space. Unlike previous *madrasahs*, where living units overlook the courtyard, the residential space in Sulṭān Ḥasan Madrasah is totally separated from that of the public Friday mosque. This separation may be related to the double function of the complex, as a *madrasah* dedicated to the academic activities and the Friday mosque which shall be accessible to the general public (Fig. 9).

Each *madrasah* has a courtyard with ablution fountain, a *qiblah*-oriented *īwān*, and four stories of living units (Figs. 8 and 9). Some cells are larger than others, and a number of latrines are included in the living quarters. Each cell on the street side has two large windows, one above the other, providing natural light to the interior and giving the inhabitants a view toward the outer space.

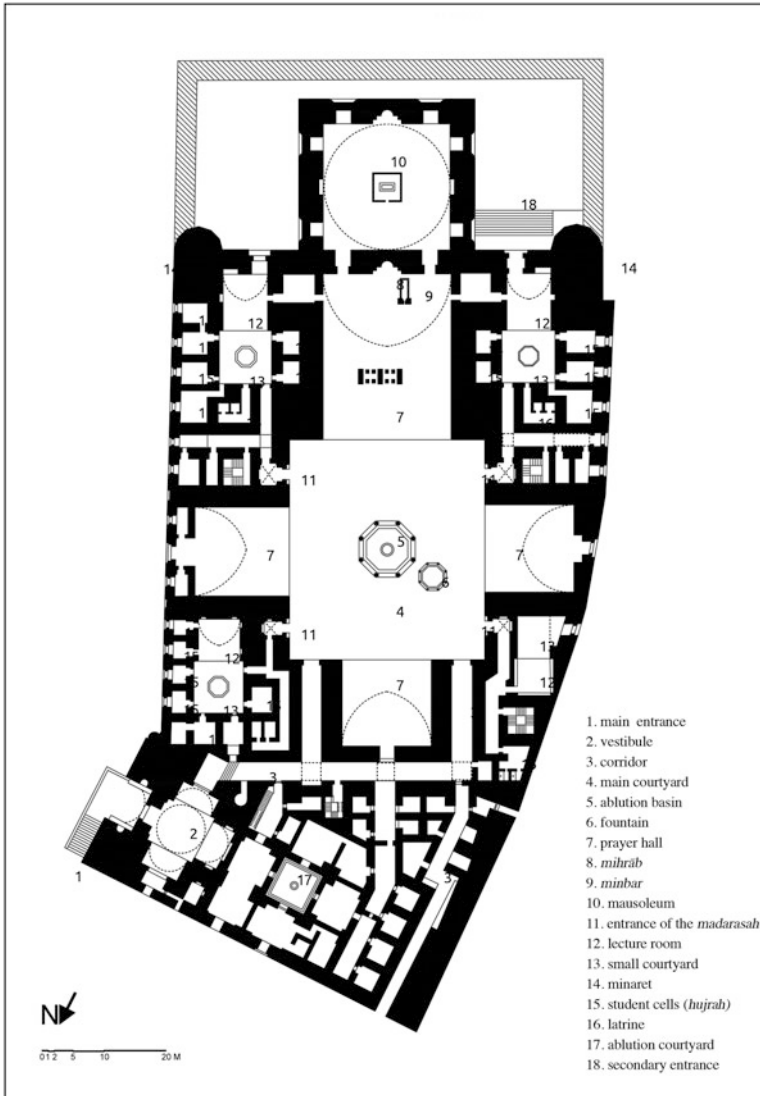
*The mosque*: The *īwān* served as the *muṣallā* (prayer hall), and the *mihrāb* and surrounding *qiblah* wall are paneled in marble slabs of contrasting colors. To the right of the *mihrāb* is a marble *minbar*, much praised contemporary, and in front of it is an equally fine *dikkah*, or tribune, for the official charged with repeating the daily prayers so that all worshippers could hear and follow the service. Around the *īwān* at the springing of the vault is a superb stucco band with a large Qur'ānic inscription carved in monumental Kufic against a floral arabesque ground. Doors flanking the *mihrāb* lead to the tomb beyond.

*The minarets and the dome*: The minarets are on the southeast side of the complex framing the mausoleum façade. The positioning of the mausoleum between two minarets was a further novelty, adding a new dimension to the Cairene art of juxtaposing the dome and the minaret.

The configuration of the mosque's edge takes full advantage of the streetscape: the jagged corner of the building and the volumetric position of the portal allow the street to expand to form an urban pocket in front of the entrance. The main northeastern facade features the portal, the minaret, and the dome, which are visually joined as one approaches the mosque to emphasize the space further. The mausoleum façade is symmetrical with the large dome in the center and the two minarets on either side.

It is visually coupled with the dome, giving the building maximum exposure from a distance and enhancing its presence on the street. The dome, however, was made





**Fig. 9** Various functions in the ground floor of Sulṭān Ḥasan Complex

higher by increasing the height of the drum and using stepped squinches so as to make it more visible, given the growing density of the urban fabric (Al-Harithy 2001).

*Decoration and ornamentation:* In decoration, stucco is increasingly used on the exteriors of minarets and domes. Façades built of stone have carving and also inlaid marble, especially at the joggled lintels and in inscriptions above portals. Not much marble survives from pre-Mamlūk times, but in the Mamlūk period, it was

customary to panel walls with polychrome marble (*dado*), and marble gradually supplanted the stucco used in prayer niches (*mihrāb*). Panels with marbles and stones and mother of pearl inlaid in minute patterns characterize Bahrī Mamlūk wall and prayer niche decoration. In addition to the pre-Islamic and the Islamic bell-shaped capital, capitals sometimes have carved stalactites, as at the Sulṭān Ḥasan Mosque. Stalactites on minarets decorated each ring of balcony, each ring having a different pattern. Stalactites also adorn the recesses of façades, but in interiors, we see them mainly in the transitional zones of domes. Window grills are no longer geometric but floral patterned and quite intricate, often including colored glass. There are also several beautiful wooden grills (Behrens-Abouseif 1989).

*Mausoleum:* In general, tombs attached to complexes in the Mamlūk period were given maximum exposure from the street by projecting the mausoleum into the surrounding space and by endowing the façade with a degree of transparency. Gaining visual dominance by projecting the mausoleum into public urban space was an idea that had been introduced (El-Akkad 2013).

The domed chamber of the mausoleum is reached by a door on the left side of the prayer niche and is thus located just behind the sanctuary, an unusual plan in Cairo. Usually, if attached to the *qiblah* wall, the mausoleum is to one side of the prayer hall so that worshippers do not pray toward the founder's mausoleum (Fig. 9).

The Sulṭān Ḥasan Madrasah Complex lends itself to a strong social semiotic. The placement of the four *madrasahs* is an architectural translation of the education in a diverse and tolerant society. The incorporation of a congregational mosque, a venue in which the general members of society gather, reinforces the outreach function of the *madrasah* and stands as a symbolic attribute of the closure of educational institutions to laymen and the society at large. The unorthodox placement of the mausoleum behind the *qiblah* wall and its projection outside the main block of the complex is probably the most symbolically charged gesture. As the one element most associated with the founder, its positioning and treatment accord with the reading of the complex. The mausoleum takes its place in a hierarchy over other elements of the complex, acquired not only by projecting beyond the rectangular mass of the main block but also by its more elaborate and distinct decoration. To decipher the symbolism, one may come to the conclusion that the coalition of the Sulṭān and the public lent the Sulṭān Ḥasan the authority and the public protection and safety.

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## Moorish/Maghribī Architectural *Madrasah* Model

As noted earlier, the *madrasah* as an architectural genre is first recorded in the eastern Islamic world in the late ninth century, it was not for another 150 years and more that the full weight of official backing had resulted in *madrasahs* being erected in most major towns of Maghrib. Theoretically speaking, the fashion could have spread to the Maghrib around that time (Hillenbrand 2004). However, in the literature, not only is there no mention of the building *madrasahs*; it seems, rather, that *ribāṭs* assumed many of the educational functions which were later performed

by the *madrasahs*. It is argued that the name of the Almoravids (*al-Murābiṭūn*) eleventh century imperial dynasty of Morocco suggests an explicit reference to *ribāṭ* a (fortified monastery, serving both religious and military functions) as a major institution of various social and spatial functions. The Almoravids were crucial in preventing the fall of Al-Andalus to the Iberian Christian kingdoms in 1086 and among other influences were transmitted the Maghribī architectural style to Andalusia and other parts of the Iberian Peninsula. Another reason which affected the late arrival of *madrasah* in Maghrib is ascribed to the dominance of al-Muwaḥḥidūn (the Almohads 1121–1269) who took an active stand in protest against the anthropomorphism and the religious orthodoxy of the era and its respective institution, the *madrasah*.

Hillenbrand (1994), in his discussion on the reciprocal architectural influence of Maghrib and Iberian (Andalusian) *madrasahs*, argues that “since the *madrasah* movement was primarily an eastern Iranian one which by degrees moved westwards, it would be only logical to assume that in this particular genre of building it was atypically the Maghrib that influenced Andalusia.”

The Ṣaffārīn Madrasah in Fās (Fez), founded by the Marīnid (al-Marīnīyūn) sultān Abū Yūsuf in 670 C.E., is the earliest Maghribī example of *madrasah* to survive. Moreover, the majority of some 1700 *madrasahs* in Morocco are the work of the Marīnids and were erected between 670 and 757. Several Algerian *madrasahs* – a building type which had hitherto been virtually unknown in the area – belong to the same group. Marīnid *madrasahs*, being effectively a new genre, underlined the orthodoxy of their patrons and thus provided a counterweight not only to Shī‘ism and to the Almohad movement but also to the increasingly popular Ṣūfism. Indeed, a crucial epigraphic document indicates that the Marīnid sultans were actuated by motives which had much in common with those of Nizām al-Mulk over two centuries earlier. Ṣaffārīn *madrasah* in Fez (670 C.E.) mentions in its foundation inscription the need to resurrect the forgotten religious sciences.

These *madrasahs* all obey a well-defined schema. Their dimensions are smaller than those of any other groups of *madrasahs* elsewhere in the Islamic world. According to Pedersen et al. (1986), perhaps, their exclusive use by a single *madhhab* made larger buildings unnecessary. Around a central courtyard, a mosque, galleries facing each other along the lateral axis, and an entrance vestibule which is frequently open onto the courtyard along its entire length are grouped on the ground floor. Unlike the universal practice elsewhere in the Islamic world, the courtyard façades of these various halls are not marked by colonnades or *īwāns* but are fenced off by an unbroken surface of wooden panels. On the first floor, a narrow gallery overlooking the courtyard gives on to the cells in which the students lived; sometimes in the earlier *madrasahs*, these cells are also ranged behind the galleries on the ground floor.

No *madrasahs* with facilities for all four *madhhabs* incorporated into their ground plans are known in the Maghrib. The Mālikī school maintained a virtually unchallenged dominion over the Maghrib throughout the medieval period. Perhaps this exclusiveness, which made it unnecessary for architects to provide separate teaching areas reserved for other *madhhabs*, was the factor which kept the

*madrasahs* of this area small. Given the role of the *madrasah* in training the politically influential Mālikī ‘*ulamā*’, it is not surprising that the patrons of these buildings – when their names are recorded – should include the sultans themselves and their high officials and that they should have been lavishly endowed, as their luxurious decoration indicates (*ibid.*).

Thus, it seems that the principle of separate premises for separate courses was accepted even when there was no question of different *madhhabs* being accommodated within a single building. For all their strong local character, then, these Maghribī *madrasahs* attest the strength of eastern Islamic influences in this genre of building.

The diminutive size of the *madrasahs* gives such buildings an essentially human scale which well expresses the student-centeredness in the Islamic education institution. They are made inward-looking and cloistered by the downward pitch of their roofs as seen from the courtyard (Fig. 11). Yet the organization of space within the building is by turns ingenious and dramatic. On the first floor, the needs of circulation and accommodation are admirably dovetailed; the corridor which encircles the courtyard and gives access both to individual cells and to the corner staircases is kept so narrow that two people can barely squeeze past each other in it. This frees extra space for accommodation. At the same time, it is no mere walkway but has some aesthetic distinction. The openings at regular intervals along its shaded length allow the viewer to catch partial glimpse of a courtyard bathed in sunlight. Most Moroccan *madrasahs* have a central pool with a fountain. Given the somewhat cramped dimensions of these courtyards, the presence of rippling water sets space into motion to a degree that would not be possible in larger expanses. This introduction of nature into the ordered, man-made world of architecture is typically Islamic. These fountains serve a further, more directly scenic, function too. For anyone within the halls bordering on the courtyard, the view into that courtyard is firmly directed by the act that the only entrance to these halls is a single arch. On the major axes of the *madrasah*, this arch frames the fountain, which thus becomes the centerpiece of a carefully calculated composition.

Like other genres of religious architecture in Islam, the Maghribī *madrasahs* are often situated in the midst of bazaars – though there seems to be no connection between the *madrasah* in a particular quarter of the bazaar area and its endowment. Thus, while certain trades or crafts might singly or in concert put up the money for a mosque, the foundation of *madrasahs* seems to have been the result of official patronage of *waqf*.

In many cases, the connection between a mosque and a *madrasah* is so close that the obvious conclusion to draw is that the mosque served *inter alia* as the oratory for the *madrasah*. Conversely, the oratory of many a Maghribī *madrasah* served as the mosque for the quarter where it was built. Accordingly, many of these *madrasahs* have minarets, and one even has a *minbar*, thereby qualifying it to be a *jāmi*’. It has even been suggested that the *madrasah*, by dint of becoming the most typical and widespread structure of the later medieval Maghrib, began in its turn to influence the layout of the mosque itself, specifically in its preference for square rather than rectangular courtyards, shallow rather than deep prayer halls, and monumental

portals on the major axis of the building. Something of the same process has been noted in Mamlūk Egypt, where the cruciform plan developed in the *madrasah* was subsequently adopted quite widely for mosques.

Although the casual visitor to these Moroccan *madrasahs* is apt to believe, after walking around half a dozen of them, that they follow a standard pattern, such an impression is quickly modified on closer examination. Their layouts suggest that while the architects in question had a firm grasp of the essential constituent elements of a *madrasah*, they were unable to impose a preconceived solution on the sites allotted to them (Hillenbrand 2004). These *madrasahs* are located within an extremely cluttered urban setting, and so they commonly betray the various shifts of their designers to make the most of a difficult site. In these circumstances, it would be idle to expect to find a model which was more or less faithfully copied or even a consistent, rational development of plan in these *madrasahs*. Even so, all the Moroccan buildings of the genre share an emphasis on interior rather than exterior façades in that they focus on a central courtyard and their decoration is extraordinarily consistent in medium and ornamental repertoire alike. In these respects, then, it is justifiable to point to their marked generic similarity, which easily asserts itself over such contingent factors as site and size (Péretié 1912).

Externally, their most striking characteristic is a negative one: they lack a monumental façade. This is no novelty in Islamic architecture, but it is a feature which recurs so consistently in these buildings that it seems justified to regard it as a deliberate principle. The only exception is itself so consistent that it proves the rule: virtually every *madrasah* has an elaborate portal, usually a densely carved overhang or hood on brackets, a kind of awning executed in wood. By its marked projection – sometimes as much as 2 m – and its commanding height above the bustle of the street, it signals the entrance of the *madrasah* from a distance. The tortuous alleyways of these Moroccan towns would discourage any more marked emphasis on the façade; there is simply no point of vantage from which a general view of the building could be enjoyed. Most of these *madrasahs* abutted on to the principal streets of the town, streets that were nonetheless so narrow that even a slightly projecting porch would have created an obstacle to traffic (Pedersen et al. 1986).

Several *madrasahs* have minarets, and this may serve as a reminder that the institution often served as an independent place of prayer. Often enough, it was located very close to a mosque so that there was no need for a separate minaret. Indeed, the interplay between mosque and *madrasah* was close and continuous. Just as the *madrasah* functioned as an oratory, so too did the mosque function as a place of teaching. This is especially relevant when it is remembered that most Moroccan *madrasahs*, indeed, in some sense, acted as an overflow facility for the earlier and more prestigious institution.

Most Tunisian *madrasahs* are found in Tunis itself, where the students could benefit from the teaching offered in the other great Maghribī university-mosque, the Zaytūnah. To concentrate the teaching function in a single urban center in this way obviously made good sense from the economic point of view, and it meant also – since in both cases the center in question was also the capital city – that the educational activity of mosque and *madrasah* alike would be directly under the

eye of the sovereign. Once again, then, the inherently political nature of the *madrasah* asserts itself.

The placing of the chambers for students varies quite markedly. In the earlier *madrasas*, all the living accommodation was confined to the ground floor (Şaffārīn Madrasah; Madrasah of Fās al-Jadīd). In the following decades, it continued to be standard practice for the more commodious *madrasahs* to provide, in addition to the main accommodation at first floor level, at least some student accommodation on the ground floor. It is here that the ornate wooden latticework screens known as *mashrabīyyahs* come into their own. Placed between the arcades or other openings of the court, they close off from the public gaze the sections of the *madrasah* which serve for student accommodation. The bleakness of the latter area is therefore masked by a lavish exterior. Symbolically enough, it is only the outer, namely, courtyard, face of these *mashrabīyyahs* that is richly carved; the inner face is plain as perhaps befits the sparse facilities offered to the students. Between these screens and the cells runs a corridor, for all the world like the cloister of some medieval western monastery. These screens continue on the upper stories where their principal function is obviously to decorate the interior façade rather than to seal off the student cells. Sometimes the corridors or galleries are located only along the lateral walls of the courtyard (ʿAṭṭārīn Madrasah, Fez; Taza Madrasah), but they often extend to three sides, especially in the later examples of the genre, and there is even an isolated case of a *madrasah* with student cells arranged unevenly but on all four sides of the ground floor (Sabīn Madrasah, Fez). The extra height required for a suitably imposing prayer hall meant that there was frequently no room for student cells above it, and there is even a case of a prayer and assembly hall located on the first floor (Mişbaḥiyyah, Fez) (Péretié 1912).

Moorish *madrasahs* also provide boarding facilities for students and teachers. Pedersen et al. (1986) argue often that the statistics of the number of student cells are confused with the number of students which the *madrasah* could accommodate. According to some estimates, a typical cell can hold as many as seven or eight students. However, this is clearly an inaccurate guide for rooms at the smaller end of the scale; indeed, cells measuring no more than  $1.50 \times 2$  m are quite frequently encountered, and it would clearly be difficult to accommodate more than one or at the most two persons in such a room. That many cells were intended to house only a single occupant is clearly indicated by the custom that the student “paid” for his room by buying the key for it from his predecessor. Within a given *madrasah*, moreover, the size and layout of individual cells will often fluctuate quite markedly. This is especially apt to occur when the *madrasah* has walls built at acute angles because of the spatial constraints of the site. While windowless cells are known, it was standard practice to provide tiny windows, often with metalwork grilles, opening on to the corridor, the main courtyard, a subsidiary courtyard, or even – though rarely – on to the street.

The Spartan fittings of these cells do suggest that the provision of maximum sleeping space was a priority of the designer. There is no bedding to clutter up valuable space. Students often sleep on projecting shelves below the ceiling which function as bunk beds with a blanket and a mat. Pedersen et al. (1986) noted that sometimes a small table was provided – the students were, after all, issued with

paper, pen, and ink. A narrow slot beside the door permitted the daily ration of flat bread to be distributed with maximum speed. Since that ration was fixed at one piece per student, the amount of bread set aside per day for the *madrasah* provides the necessary clue in calculating the maximum occupancy for which the building was designed. This quantity of bread was made available daily, according to the requirements of the *waqf* which financed the institution, irrespective of whether the building was fully occupied or not; in practice, therefore, it often happened that at least some students would have extra rations.

The largest of the medieval *madrasas* in Morocco is the Mişbaḥiyyah, for which a tally of 117 rooms has been proposed, with 23 on the ground floor alone and the balance in the 2 upper stories. However, the Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah – which is studied in the following section in detail – whose capacity has been estimated at 100 students, is more representative of Moorish model. These are large numbers for buildings designed on such an intimate scale, especially when it is remembered that the prayer hall of such a *madrasah* could serve as the *masjid* not only for the students and staff but also for the people of the area. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the students lived a hard life – frequently cold, cramped, and underfed (Pedersen et al. 1986). Various methods are employed to single out the role of the prayer hall in Maghribī *madrasahs*. It was the constant concern of the architects to give this hall pride of place in the overall layout, and the majority of them achieved that aim by axiality. The entrance, courtyard, and mosque were all disposed on the major chord of the building, and in the former case, even the elongated rectangular pool played a spatial role (Hillenbrand 1994: 247).

No other group of *madrasahs* elsewhere in the Islamic world displays a comparable richness of ornament. Perhaps the small size of these buildings recommended such a practice and made it financially viable. Externally, however, their most striking characteristic is a negative one: they lack a monumental façade allowing the building to proclaim itself from afar (Hillenbrand 1994: 244).

### **An Example of Maghribī Architectural Madrasah Model: Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah in Fez**

Madrasah Bū-ʿInāniyyah in Fez (Fās), Morocco, is perhaps one of the most celebrated examples of the Maghribī *madrasah* model founded by the Marīnids. The *madrasah* is constructed between 1350 and 1357 C.E. and bears the name of its founder, the Marīnid Sulṭān Fāris Abū ʿInān al-Mutawakkil. As mentioned earlier, despite the fact that the fashion of building *madrasahs* reached the Maghrib in the late twelfth century, the desire to introduce Fez as an intellectual center, the sultans prided themselves on being men of learning and attempted to build many *madrasahs* and several libraries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Characteristically, the Moroccan *madrasahs* of Marīnid era are smaller in size than elsewhere in the Muslim world since they were less expensive to build. Moreover, as noted earlier, the exclusive use of the *madrasah* by a single *madhab* made erecting larger buildings unnecessary. With the dimensions of 39 × 34, the

Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah is rather small indeed. Such diminutive size provides spaces for an institution with human scale which well expresses the informality of teaching in the medieval Islamic world in this part of the world.

The type of architecture represented by Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah seems unique to the area of Morocco and Western Algeria. Perhaps the outstanding feature of these Moroccan *madrasahs* is their lavish decoration (Hillenbrand 1994: 242). Typically, most *madrasah* buildings in Maghrib became a widely frequented congregational mosques. In some cases, similar to the Cairene *madrasahs*, while the educational infrastructures of *madrasahs* are no longer in usage, it is still utilized for religious purposes. Its prayer hall can be found at the end of the courtyard, with a beautifully sculpted *mīhrāb* and the *imām* facing Mecca to lead prayers. Despite this twofold function, the *madrasah's* layout is not complex; all such various functions of *madrasah* are accommodated in a symmetrical plan in which student rooms, the prayer hall, and domed lecture halls surround a large courtyard (Fig. 12).

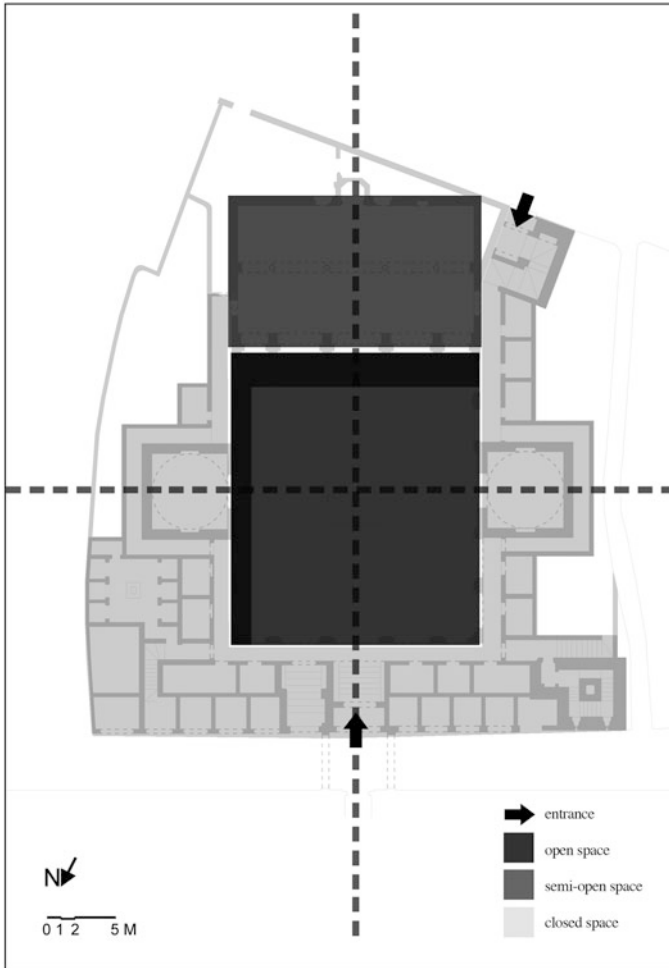
Similar to the other Islamic architectural spaces, Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah's design is focused on the enclosed space of its interior. As explained earlier, such hidden architecture is perceivable when one enters the building and experiences the inner space (Figs. 10 and 11). In the case of Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah, the minaret is the only single element that distinguishes the *madrasah* from its surrounding and is a sign to represent its function as a public, educational, and religious space. Enclosed space, defined by walls, arcades, and vaults, is the most important element of Islamic architecture. This is emphasized not only by the phenomenon that little attention is paid to outside appearance or even visibility of any structure but especially by the fact that most decoration is reserved for the articulation and embellishment of the interior (Grube and Michell 1995: 14).

The courtyard is one of the main features of the building. Entering the *madrasah* after walking through the main domed entrance hall inspired by Iberian architecture, one will face a rectangular shape courtyard surrounded by two large lecture halls on both sides and open onto a prayer hall at the end. The lateral lecture halls of the Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah in Fez also seem to be a Maghribī interpretation of the *īwān* scheme (Fig. 12).

The prayer hall is consistently the largest unbroken covered space in Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah, and its impacts are intensified by the cramped proportions of all the other rooms. Despite the limited space and the small size of the school, the large area of the prayer hall emphasizes its importance in both physical and functional character of the space. In addition to the large area devoted to the prayer hall, other methods are employed to further single out the role of the prayer hall in Maghribī *madrasahs*. It was the constant concern of the architects to give this hall pride of place in the overall layout, and the majority of them achieved that aim by axially. The entrance, courtyard, and mosque were all disposed on the major chord of the building, and in the former case, even the elongated rectangular pool played a spatial role (Hillenbrand 1994: 247) (Fig. 10).

The minaret, located at one end of the façade, is yet another element to announce the outreach function of the *madrasah* as a community congregational mosque, and its water clock regulated the times for prayer for other mosques in the city.

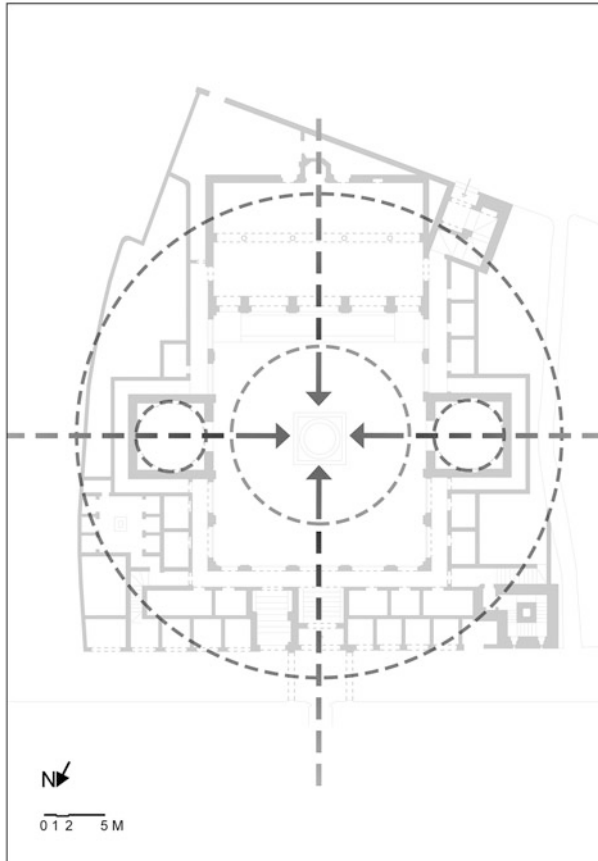




**Fig. 10** The spatial organization in Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah in Fez

On each side of the marble courtyard, the stairs lead to the upper floor, where the student cells were located. It is estimated that the Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah had the capacity of 100 students. Bearing in mind that the *madrasah* has a small size with a rather large prayer hall that could serve as the *masjid* not only for the students and staff but also for the people of the area, one can imagine that the students' cells were so small to provide accommodation for some 100 students (Hillenbrand 1994).

In addition to their primary role as religious schools, the *madrasahs* functioned as important centers of community life. Furthermore, the courtyard, as the most public of the spaces within the *madrasah*, was a focal point for the social life of students and teachers as well as the neighboring community.

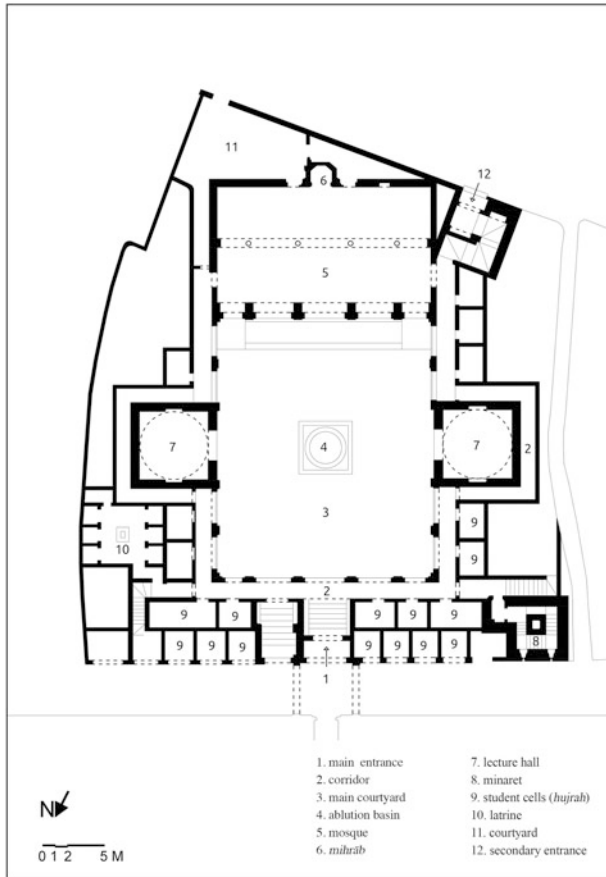


**Fig. 11** Centrality in design of Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah

The sumptuous decorative program of the courtyard, for which the Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah is celebrated, shows the characteristic Marīnid interpretation of Naṣrīd palatial materials and techniques into a religious context. Glazed tile dadoes, carved wood, and panels of finely carved stucco decorate every surface of the courtyard façade. Wooden *mashrabīyyah* screens separate the marble-paved courtyard from the arcaded corridors leading to the student rooms. Although the visual debt to the Naṣrīd palace of the Alhambra is obvious, the extreme delicacy and abundance of the decorative treatment and its setting in a religious institution are characteristic of Marīnid architecture.

The contrast between sumptuous ornament in the courtyard and the Spartan accommodations for the students at the Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah and the other Marīnid *madrasahs* may reflect the multiple functions of these buildings.

A first-time visitor is often left in astonishment by the fashion in which various materials are combined in building the Bū-ʿInāniyyah Madrasah, to create such



**Fig. 12** Various functions in the ground floor of Bū-'Ināniyyah Madrasah

coherent elegant structure. Mainly, the tiles stand up to 2 m high on the walls, marble on the floor, white stucco, wood on the upper areas of both floors and on doors, and green roof tiles. The combination of various materials in creating a holistic harmony is an architectural interpretation of the notion of “unity in multiplicity” as an overarching Islamic concept inspired by *tawḥīd*.

## Conclusion

Islamic architecture is a visual manifestation of the Islamic culture formed based on the requirements of the Muslim societies. With the expansion of the Muslim territories, the Islamic architecture adopted the vernacular styles and created new interpretations based on Islamic notion of *tawḥīd*. Perceived as “unity in

multiplicity” and “multiplicity in unity,” *tawhīd* promoted and encouraged the diversity in style and respect for local arts and cultures.

*Madrasah* as an institution of education for Muslims is a product of a trifold process of combining functions of the *masjid* and *khān* in one architectural unit. The earliest recorded *madrasahs* are those of eastern Persia in the early tenth century and aimed not only to institutionalize the architectural structure but also the curricula. The fundamental unit of residential construction in the eastern Persian tradition – *īwān*, in its various arrangements of one, two, three, or four – lent itself to the architectural structure of early *madrasahs*. The four-*īwān* cruciform, hence, remained as the most dominant form for *madrasahs* across the Muslim world. This chapter discussed various forms of *madrasah* buildings affected by both climatic and cultural factors:

1. Persian architectural model, inspired by the Khurāsāni architecture, uses the four-*īwān* model for *madrasahs* in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.
2. The Anatolian which served as the foundation of the subsequent Ottoman model was developed in Turkey, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan.
3. The Cairene/Egyptian model – affected by the ‘Abbāsīd architecture – was developed under the Fāṭimids and Mamlūk in Egypt.
4. Moorish/Maghribī model with its diminutive size spread across the Maghrib: Morocco, Tunisia, and transferred to Andalusia.

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# Sunnī Higher Education: Can It Be Liberal?

Adeel Khan

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## Abstract

Research on university experiences has been neglected by anthropologists and social scientists. As more and more young people leave their homes to study and work, a better understanding of the spaces that they inhabit, universities are essential for understanding transitions to adulthood. In this spirit this chapter undertakes the study of one such educational institution, the International Islamic University of Islamabad, Pakistan. The chapter seeks to highlight how in many ways the experiences of Islamic University students are similar to those of students in higher education elsewhere, i.e., in learning to live with each other's differences. The chapter also highlights the factors which make the experiences of Islamic University students distinctive given the plethora of Sunnī revivalist movements active on the university campus competing for adherents. At the Islamic University, students learnt to live by the wisdom, and practice the rituals, inspired by Islam and the Islamic knowledge traditions that they studied. These shared experiences led them to feel part of the global Muslim community *ummah*,

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while other factors like educational and cultural background, political (sectarian) inclination, and gender pulled them apart. The chapter is an investigation of how students balanced these opposing forces of harmony and dissonance in their everyday lives at the university.

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**Keywords**

Pakistan · Islamic higher education · Educational space · Islamic pedagogy · Islamic student life · Educational experience

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## Introduction

This chapter presents a case of higher Islamic education by describing and discussing the everyday lives of students and teachers of the International Islamic University of Islamabad, Pakistan (IIUI) (The fieldwork for this chapter was based on doctoral research conducted between 2005 and 2007, and additionally the author made multiple visits to the university since 1999). IIUI identifies itself as different from traditional institutions of higher Islamic education (*madrassahs*). It sees itself as inclined towards a contemporary approach to education. This is obvious in the way the university offers subjects other than the classical Islamic sciences with an Islamic orientation. It is also obvious as to how the university teaches the classical Islamic sciences through textbooks rather than through close reading of the classical texts – a practice still continued in other traditional institutions.

The Islamic University was created as a social experiment, inspired by Muḥammad Iqbāl (the poet-philosopher who was the inspiration behind the creation of Pakistan) among others, to raise the “*ummah* consciousness” - the feeling of belonging to the global Muslim ecumene -for Muslims from non-Arab areas of the world. Arab teachers were meant to teach the Islamic tradition here, in the strategic location of Islamabad, accessible to Central Asian, Afghan, and Chinese Muslims. It was from here that Islam was meant to be intellectually defended against communist and capitalist ideologies. The institution was a testament to the spirit of Islamic Revival of the 1980s and before.

Since that time, it has served Muslims from many other regions of the world, including Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Indonesia, and Nigeria. This institution of Islamic higher education has created an environment where multiple, culturally and historically rooted, visions of Islam coexist adjacent to each other. The classrooms and hostels of the Islamic University of Islamabad are important venues where the intellectual diversity of the Islamic *ummah* could be experienced -for more detailed discussion of the meaning and significance of *ummah* in Islamic studies see Khan (2017).

The experience of the university is more than just what is learnt through texts and teaching. There is also the very important sphere of cultural learning that takes place outside the classroom in student hostels, university hallways, cafeterias, and virtual communities. This chapter endeavors to highlight some of the salient features of these interactions.

## Pedagogy

The expectations that students carried with them to the Islamic University of Islamabad regarding their future teachers concerned the nature of the relationships they might develop with their teachers, rather than the content of the lectures. In various languages spoken by Muslims there exists Sūfism-inspired poetry that eulogizes the role of the guide in a believers' life. This relationship, between the *shaykh* (guide) and the *murīd* (the one guided), is two-sided, initiated by the guide, usually by inspiring someone through their action or their speech. Those guided in the process would be in search of inspiration, being prepared for it through the poetic tradition that is well-integrated in everyday life in many Muslim cultures and in many languages spoken by Muslims. It is with this background of anticipation that students in the Islamic University approach their teachers as potential "guides." This conception of "guide" is not just the limited notion of transmitter of knowledge about a particular subject that may be taught by the teacher, but also a much more general notion on being guided on life and how to live it well.

Many Islamic University students share this notion of searching for a "guide for life." They would use metaphors of travel to explain their existential state, as "being on a journey," "travelling through life." The question is what notion of personhood is associated with these ideas of "guidance." A person is incomplete until he finds someone to be guided by. A notion of "wholeness" is linked with meeting and following the wishes of the guide. This becoming "whole" or "complete" suggests a prior partiality in personhood. So the traveler person, who is in search of a guide, is a partial person yet to be completed by meeting and following the guide.

It is also intriguing that the one who is guided has willful subservience, not as a negative quality but as a positive attribute of the relationship. This wish to follow should not be confused with a general wish to be subservient in all relationships. To the contrary, this specific subservience celebrates a masculinity that is willing to be tamed, in the presence of a higher and better being. This is also a type of masculinity that celebrates love between two men. Yet this love is not considered taboo and is verbalized as love for God since the "guide" is considered a representative of God in the life of the one guided. This would allow us to look at this relationship as enabling rather than disabling. What kind of agency does such a guided subject have in relation to the guide?

This relationship can best be described as an "enabling subservience." The tree analogy is useful since it is also used in Punjabi *sūfī* poetry to describe the experience of being guided. There, being guided is described as a seed planted in the soul of the chosen one. The seed of inspiration or of love grows into a plant and reaches a stage where it too can inspire others. This analogy best describes the path of the one who chooses to be guided. The role of guide, thus conceived, entails quite a responsibility. The guide is looked upon as a moral exemplar as well as an embodiment of sacred knowledge.

However, there is a conflict of interest in who may be an appropriate guide. Often guides from outside the university from a students' previous institution are looked down upon by their peers and some *madrasah* graduates were even mocked for



being under the undue influence of their previous mentors. They were called upon to transform themselves in this new educational environment and shed the past. Teachers would often comment on the inferiority of the traditional *madrasah* teaching as “personality-centric” while the university pedagogy was claimed to be “knowledge-centric.” *Madrasah* students would never confront such slights on their mentors because of their tremendous respect for the university teachers. Teaching and preaching religion were professions/tasks considered to be *mīras* (inheritance) of the work of the Prophet’s (Henceforth the Prophet refers to Muḥammad, the founder of Islam) since they transmit divine knowledge to people of their time. The students often argued that a “true” *‘ālim* (scholar- plural *‘ulamā’*) or *dā’ī* (preacher) must only be motivated to serve God and not be distracted by the attractions of the world, like accumulating wealth or power.

A common criticism made by university teachers and Jamā‘at-i -Islāmī (Islamist) activists was that *madrasah* teachers had made their own little empire generating funds in the name of religion from local communities and Muslim donors around the world. These empires were claimed to be hereditary, with the management of the *madrasah* passing from father to son, without accountability to any external religious or state authority. *Madrasah* students would explain in response, often outside class, that *madrasah* management was accountable to the local community and business leaders through the institution of mosque/*madrasah* committees, which would not only help out in financial fallouts but would often be important decision makers in management-related issues. *Madrasah* students claimed that the *‘ulamā’* dedicated their days and nights to teaching and learning with very little time available for their families. They claimed that it was the dedication of *‘ulamā’* that guaranteed their sustenance since “God took care of those who did His work.”

Students from *madrasah* backgrounds had to get used to several new approaches to learning in the university, one of these was the use of textbooks. Their prior training was mostly focused on reading classical texts under the guidance of a qualified reader of the text, i.e., someone who has an *ijāzah* (certificate to teach the reading of a text). They believed that the reading of a text was transmitted through an unbroken chain of transmitters (*isnād*), and in this way the divine blessing (*barakah*) and divine inspiration (*ilhām*) of the text was also transmitted.

The university textbooks, written by contemporary authors, were summaries of classical works from the early Islamic period organized according to themes or disciplinary areas. The reading technique was, at times, similar to what *madrasah* students are used to, i.e., line by line reading in class, with explanations from the teacher on difficult words and concepts. It was easier for students from non-*madrasah* backgrounds who were used to textbooks in their previous training to appreciate Islamic University teaching methods. *Madrasah* students often found this approach technically and spiritually inferior to their previous learning – without *barakah* (*Madrasah* graduates from *Bar‘ilwī madrasahs* seemed to be more accepting of Islamic University pedagogy than their *Deobandī* counterparts. More on the distinction between the different Sunnī inclinations later on in the chapter. *Deobandis* seemed to be more obsessed with the critique of the environment of the university as un-Islamic and westernized, and they also were critical of the university

administrators in not implementing what they considered proper Islamic attire among faculty and students: unshaved beards, unbuttoned sleeves, and uncollared shirts. They considered these important symbolic markers of a true Islamic identity.).

Young men from *madrasahs*, who would be enrolled in courses at the university, preferred not to mix too much with non-*madrasah* students. Even political parties had their dedicated groups for *madrasah* graduates, as they had for women. The similarity did not end there. Jokes were often made about how *madrasah* graduates were not “real men,” that they had become “effeminate” and too “soft” after their many years in seclusion in *madrasahs*.

*Madrasah* graduates could be identified by their dress. They would always wear the Pakistani *shalwār qamīz* with a cap or turban and would most likely have an untrimmed beard. After a few years in the university environment, some had begun to wear trousers and trim their beards. Their behavior and language were even more distinctive than their demeanor. They would never talk in the urdu slang, rather would prefer to speak in clear urdu. They would never joke or “hang around” with other students. They kept their distance from other students, and were often seen as arrogant towards others. When confronted, they would speak in the softest of manners.

The limits of masculinity were talked about much in the university, as machismo was recognized and valued by most students. Men who held their ground in group interaction, argumentation, and in physical contest would be considered “real men.” As mentioned earlier, *madrasah* graduates would even be provoked in classroom settings by some lecturers, where *madrasah* pedagogy would be called archaic, for being centered around the devotion to the “personality” of a teacher. It is this confrontational attitude which was the dominant mode of masculinity on campus. Men would get together in groups and denigrate the weakest, shiest member of their group as a pastime. This practice of denigrating each other, showing each other up, was considered to be a quality of a “real man” among some. Those who would stay quiet, not retaliating or fighting back, would be considered “soft,” hence *khasī* (effeminate), i.e., placed between a man and a woman. This is how the attitude of the *madrasah* graduates was also seen because of their nonconfrontational attitude and their often times lack of interest in defending their institution against criticism.

There were different ideas of manhood at play here. *Madrasah* graduates had been exposed to a different set of values, which they related to being a man, as compared to students who had been in “secular” institutions. It would be obvious from these interactions that everyday mannerisms in *madrasahs* were quite different to those in mainstream educational institutions. Socializing in the Islamic University setting caused great distress for these *madrasah* graduates, who were now exposed to a very different way of relating to manhood from that prevailing in their earlier institutions (for links between Pakistani *Madrasahs* and *Ṭālibān* see Rashid (2000)).

Laughter and jokes were important means of communicating in the Islamic University. Even classrooms of Islamic education, which have been observed to be austere environments, were active spaces of humor and wit. There would be many reasons for cracking a joke in the classroom setting. The most common reason would be to entertain the students and make the learning process fun. At other times, to say things that could not be normally said would be mentioned in humor. This could be

criticism of someone behind their back, which is considered a sin in Islam. Or it could be to criticize the incumbent regime, which would draw attention to the person making the joke, if he were to make the comment seriously otherwise.

Lecturers for grammar did their best to make classes as entertaining as they possibly could with examples from the language textbook and those they created impromptu. Some of these were examples from the Qur'ān and others were references to everyday student life. In one such class, the lecturer made the students practice the different declensions of the noun *ṭālib* (student); he pointed at a student saying “who are you?” and the student responded “*ana ṭālib*” (I am a student), and then he asked pointing at two students “Who are the two of you?” and the students responded “*naḥnu ṭālibān*” (We are two students). The lecturer gasped and said, “Do not say that too loud even walls in this place can hear.” We were often reminded that we were in “Musharraf’s university.” The faculty were not necessarily pro-*Ṭālibān*, since most considered them a marginal phenomenon intellectually and often referred to them as “half-baked scholars with archaic knowledge.” However, there was hardly anyone in the university who would celebrate Pakistani government’s support of NATO’s War against the *Ṭālibān* that was often labeled as “America’s war” and sometimes even as a “Christian Crusade” against Muslims. Many of the faculty members did not like to be pressured to support or attack a group, towards which they had mixed feelings. They were pressured to “make heroes” out of the *Ṭālibān* at a time when the Pakistani, Egyptian, and Saudi official positions were in their favor and, when the tables turned, the faculty were expected to demonize them. Most students and teachers preferred an apolitical stand on the issue of the *Ṭālibān*, in line with a long tradition of “political quietism” among “*ulamā*’.” (For political quietism among Ḥanafī *‘ulamā*’ see Khalid (2007). Also see argument against this in Zaman (2002).) In private conversation, however, most scholars were comfortable with a critical stance against all incumbent regimes in “Muslim” countries.

The “fears” of faculty members do become clear with this type of humor about the *Ṭālibān* and other similar instances of mocking conspicuous consumption of kings in stories from the language textbook, alluding to Pakistani military elite and the Saudi royal family, but always in good humor! The fear of being listened to and watched was often mentioned directly or eluded to indirectly in several contexts. It was a “well-known secret” that the Pakistani intelligence services had a special interest in the day-to-day affairs and internal politics of students, bureaucracy, and teachers, since the university was considered a “sensitive area.”

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## Hospitality

As students arrive for the first time at the university they receive the hospitality of senior students from their region of origin. This is usually in the form of regional tea in the hostel rooms. The senior students consider it their duty to introduce their juniors into the Islamic way of life and its benefits. They especially highlight the spiritual benefits in pursuing the classical Islamic sciences. Most foreign students arrive at the university to undertake these courses. They have to go through a

foundation course in Arabic and Islamic studies which prepare them for courses in the various Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) programs.

Many of the students were on a spiritual quest in the age-old Islamic tradition of traveling to gain sacred knowledge – *ṭalab al-‘ilm* – from those possessing it, the *‘ulamā’*. The *ḥadīth* (Prophet Muhammad’s discourse) literature reminded the believer that the search for knowledge is intimately tied to the physical act of travel. In this regard, several themes recurred in the principal *ḥadīth* collections: teachers and the learned as the only valuable human beings, the high merit of seeking and spreading knowledge, traveling in order to gather it, and the possession of knowledge as a sign of grace which reduces distinctions of birth and rank among Muslims. The best known *ḥadīth* on the subject – i.e., “the seeking of knowledge is a *farḍ* (obligation) incumbent upon every Muslim” – is coupled in the collection of Ibn Majah’s *Sunan* (1972, I, no. 224) with the admonition that “He who places knowledge with those with whom it does not belong is like he who gives jewellery, pearls, and gold to pigs.” The report elevates *ṭalab al-‘ilm* to the status of ritual obligation and stresses the care one must take in disseminating knowledge. The ideal company for a Muslim, according to these traditions, is the learned, for they represent a life-giving (and sustaining) force within the community. If indeed they are the best company, we can assume from this *ḥadīth* that the believer should seek the presence of the *‘ulamā’*, wherever they are, hence, the importance of travel for the sake of attaining knowledge possessed by them.

Senior students considered it obligatory to practice Islamic hospitality even though this might be a burden on their purse. They believed that if they spent in the way of God, God would take care of them in future. They would often remember the hospitality of the *Anṣār* of Medina who received their fellow Meccan Muslims who were expelled from Mecca in the lifetime of the Prophet (for more information on this historical event see Khan (2017)). The students had every meal collectively in the cafeterias or the many hotels in Islamabad. Usually the seniors insisted that it was their duty to pay and that the juniors would have other opportunities to do the same for their juniors in future.

The language spoken in these gatherings would be a mix of regional languages and classical Arabic. At times at the presence of someone in the group from outside the region the language would be restricted to Arabic in order to include the guest in the conversation. Discussions would range from international politics affecting Muslim countries to the merits of different lecturers, from qualities of Pakistani cuisine to regional politics.

Students would learn to identify as Muslims from their own region. However, it was important for them to highlight that they shared the same religion with people from different regions of the Muslim world. This would be the central theme of the “Cultural Week” celebrations held annually at the university which celebrated the singular “Islam” in various countries of the world. This was an important lesson in cultural awareness as well as cultural difference. Islam became a paradigm by which cultural difference could be transcended. However, there were other experiences in the everyday life of students which cemented cultural difference. Students would often talk about people from other regions sometimes in a nonnuanced way about

their characteristics, e.g., the Chinese food smells, East-Africans love to quarrel. The “Cultural Week” was an opportunity for students to interact with those belonging to other regions than their own.

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## Spouse-Searching

An important experience of the university for male students was getting to know women students, and vice versa. Usually first contacts were made through interest group meetings like the various political/sectarian parties operating on the university campuses, here e-mail addresses would be exchanged. Although located in the same area, the women and the men campuses were completely segregated. Even the buses were segregated. And even the university central library had women-only and men-only days.

The virtual lives of students would be private and often difficult to know about. Information about them would be shared with the closest companions. A common joke about these online communications between men and women was “how is your *da’wah* doing?” *Da’wah* or calling to faith/proselytizing would be the justification for communicating between unrelated men and women, otherwise considered sinful according to those adhering to strict Islamic norms. If the other person could be convinced of the ideas about religion this could lead to an intellectual companionship that could lead to possible marriage. So the women who the men would be interacting with online would be referred to as his “*da’wah*.”

Some of these encounters would lead to amorous relationships that would mature through speaking on the telephone and less frequently by meeting in person in the many cafes of the city. Students were very careful of keeping these interactions secret since they would not want to bring ill-repute to their reputations. Students invested a lot in maintaining the utmost austere demeanor.

It was important for these young men to be always on the look-out for “like-minded” women who could be their spouses, since in order to become a complete *mo’min* man (a man with complete faith), one had to experience marriage since half the Islamic laws are for married people. Sūfism inclined Muslims would suggest that love between man and woman had to be experienced in a legitimate way if one was to appreciate better a believers’ love for their God.

However, few of these amorous university relationships would lead to marriage. Often cultural difference was blamed. Although motivated by *ummah* feeling – feeling united due to shared religion – some of these cross-cultural marriages ended up in divorce. Another way of getting married was being introduced to a woman through a male friend related to the woman. This type of marriage would cement a cross-cultural male bond between two friends. The general failure of these marriages, however, led students to realize the importance of cultural distinctions. This was yet another important, though harsh, lesson in cultural difference.

We can generally suggest here that male interaction with women, online and through mobile phones, led them to a more informed view about women and their expectations from a marital relationship. Hence we can say that there was a

masculinity emerging in the university that was “better-informed” about women’s lived experiences, albeit still being limited.

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## Collective Action

We saw earlier how students would be helped to integrate socially into the university by participating in region-based groups. Students would get together in these groups to speak in the regional vernacular and to eat the regional food and drink. Other sources of support for incoming students were the two rival Sunnī organizations: the Islāmī Jam‘iyat-i Ṭalabah (IJT) and Anjuman-i Ṭalabah-i Islām (ATI). IJT and ATI attracted students adhering to different Sunnī inclinations, *Deobandi* and *Barēlwī*, respectively. However, they both claimed to be nonsectarian and ecumenical organizations, and were both competing to represent the interests of Muslim students in general.

These student groups provided important socializing networks, as well as services like help in entrance exams and in gaining accommodation and dining rights at hostel cafeterias. Due to the very high number of students in the university requiring these services, ATI and IJT played an important role as mediators and pressure groups to make accommodation and dining rights available for their sympathizers and members.

Public prayer in the university was a sort of collective action that was nonsectarian and ecumenical. This was a rather unique experience that the university provided, since most mosques in the country would be associated with one sect or another, attracting mostly people inclined towards that sect only. Students in their everyday life, outside public prayer, would participate in the activities of various Sunnī groups. As noted earlier, students of differing Sunnī tendencies would be attracted to ATI and IJT, respectively. ATI does not profess to be *Barēlwī*, but if asked, members would call themselves Sunnī and proclaim interest only in the love of the Prophet as their guiding light and ideology. It is historically only their Sunnī opponents, the scholars of *Deoband* and their sympathizers, who have used the label of *Barēlwī* for the scholars of *ahl al-Sunnah* (people of the Prophet’s way - those who claim to be Sunnī), who are the source of inspiration for the ATI. Sanyal (1996: 334) explains how it was “important for both sides to play up their differences in order to grow organizationally, for if they seemed too similar their separate existence would make no sense. Differences of degree were thus highlighted until they appeared to be insurmountable differences of kind.”

ATI and IJT competed for influence on campus by organizing *jalsay* (public gatherings). Students participated in these events with much interest. The two organizations also provided services to students by maintaining contacts with members of the administration who, in turn, also depended on good relations with these organizations. ATI and IJT contributed to the experience of sectarianism in everyday university life. While in other contexts Sunnī-Shī‘a sectarian tension has been observed, the Islamic University exhibited a strong presence of intra-Sunnī sectarianism.

There is complex theorization in anthropological literature about the role of laughter and mimicry in *mahfils* (“private” gatherings) as perhaps a collective mechanism of releasing stress, when the momentary inversion or dissolution of authority is experienced. Such collective acts have been theorized as “reproducing emotional anxiety” (Marsden 2005: 147) while simultaneously reproducing dominant narratives of authority by highlighting the gap “between seeming and the really knowing of social reality” (Gilsenan 1996: 304).

An ATI *jalsah* that I attended was full of impassioned and fiery speeches that kept us listeners on the edge of our seats. The orators used their rhetorical techniques, punch lines, and different tonalities to raise emotion in their listeners. They littered their speeches with lines of poetry from widely read and known Urdu poets, like Iqbal. The use of poetry for the appropriate sentiment can inspire praise from the audience according to Kashmiri (2005: 32). It was the anti-colonial, Muslim nationalist, Iqbal, who still resonated among these young postcolonial men, imagining a foreign foe to fight and resist against. One young speaker claimed how the righteous students had to defend “true Islam” against attacks from Wahhābīs, from the West, and from traditionalists. It was this middle ground between these poles that the ATI sympathizers seem to identify with.

The chief guest, Imran Khan, made a reasoned argument for focusing on intellectual stagnation of the Muslim *ummah* that it had to “catch up” to the “West.” In this way he differed from most of the other speakers, who saw in the West a foe against which Muslims had to defend themselves in a war of “cultural imperialism.” He also encouraged students to focus on their intellectual pursuits and made anti-government comments. In this sense, the gathering was part of the Pakistani counter-public where sentiments against the incumbent regime were expressed (Hirschkind 2006).

Although ATI was organizationally independent, its members highly regarded the opinions of *ahl al-Sunnah ‘ulamā’*, especially those aligned politically with Jamā‘at-i ‘Ulamā’-i Pakistan (JUP). They wanted the JUP to separate itself from the coalition of ‘ulamā’, MMA (Mutaḥidah Majlis-i ‘Amal). Hence ATI supported those members of JUP who favored this breaking away from MMA to strengthen the anti-Musharraf movement and opposed any compromise with those in power until Musharraf gave up his office as the President of Pakistan (which he was forced to do in August 2008 by the political opposition movement against him).

The two Sunnī groups participated in and reproduced intra-Sunnī sectarianism in the lives of Islamic University students, but, while both organizations claimed not to be sectarian, students socialized in Pakistan brought to these organizations the sectarian condition which Naveeda Khan (2003) writes about in her research. In her study, Khan distinguishes a sectarian condition from sectarian politics, by showing this condition to be a response to such politics, containing its excesses so as to allow Pakistani Muslims to maintain a minimal commitment to Islamic ideology. However, this condition, she suggests, inadvertently engenders violence. Sectarianism has been usually understood as theological controversies, religious militancy, or ethnic politics in the guise of religious struggle which she instead groups under the rubric of sectarian politics and violence. Sectarianism according to Naveeda Khan is a historical condition comprising certain dispositions (cynicism);

practices (vigilance, retreat from the world, and repudiation of self and others); and grounds for these dispositions and practices (hypocrisy and duplicity), which has the potential to exacerbate sectarian politics and violence in everyday life.

Anthropological literature knows of *jalūs* as the religious procession of *Barēlwīs*. Although there were students in the Islamic University inclined towards the *Barēlwī* sect who might participate in such practices – commemorating the *viṣāl* (material death but spiritual ascent) of saints – the more common practice of *jalūs* was for far more mundane, worldly concerns of a non-sectarian nature. These concerns would be those affecting students in general and would cause a mass mobilization of students to protest in the form of a procession to express their grievance. There were several such occasions when students would go on strike either against the university administration or the city administration. These events were full of excitement and “fun” for students, with slogans being chanted. IJT and ATI office bearers played the role of policing such events, so that students would remain within the limits of decency. This would not stop students from expressing their true sentiments about the grievance that had occasioned the protest.

Various incidents of public protest that took place at the university while I was there – and formed part of the collective action of the students – one such event will be discussed here. This one took place due to the water supply being cut off from the male hostels. After a whole night and day without water, students decided to attract the attention of the city’s water administration. A procession of students hijacked a university bus and created a road block on the main super-highway, passing a mile away from the university, connecting the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The roadblock was maintained for a few hours until late into the night. It attracted the attention of journalists and there were photographs of the bus blocking the road in the newspapers, the following day. The police had also got involved and injured a few students with their batons, for disrupting the flow of traffic.

On occasions of protests chanting slogans occupies a central position, helping organize the procession in unison. Chant leaders exhibit the poetic skill of making creative slogans that are easy and fun to respond to. They must also have an *āvāz* (voice) that may be heard over a large distance. These slogans have nothing at all to do with the reasons for protest, but instead are deployed as a strategy, to unite the audience through the chanting, to demonstrate their strength to onlookers and to pass the time in an enjoyable way. There were those from the audience, who cheered on the chanter, by acknowledging his creative selection of slogans.

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## Mourning

The October 20th (According to the Pakistani police the twin bombings at the International Islamic University in Islamabad on October 20th, 2009, were caused by suicide bombers. At least six people, including three women, were killed, and as many as 29 people injured, 25 of them women.) twin bombings at the Islamic University were repeatedly labeled as “cowardly” in a newsletter published by the university. How can such an act be considered cowardly? There is no doubt that it is



indeed a cowardly act to harm innocent civilians. However, if we see the perspective of those who are at war with the Pakistani state and its institutions then the suicide attack would not be considered cowardly; it might actually be considered heroic, however misguided. It might be seen as an act by morally strong individuals who are willing to die in order to kill those who are supporting a system that has waged war against them, their families, and their way of life. The Islamic University is seen very much as an institution of the state and the modern intelligentsia who at best are quietest since they hardly comment on the ongoing civil war that has engulfed the country. As the very active student leaders of the university often announce, if truth is not spoken to power then we are guilty of colluding with an evil system, a system sponsored by what is often proclaimed as “imperialist” America and that acts in its interest rather than in the interests of the ordinary people of the country, a system that has waged war against the ordinary citizens of the country and their way of life.

Faisal Devji, while deconstructing the logic of al-Qā’ida discourse, explains that according to its logic, desire for global equality and security should be enjoyed by all or by none. Equality of death through terror is the only way freedom and equality are now available according to the discourse of al-Qā’ida (Devji 2008). In this discourse the deployment of self-sacrifice is particularly interesting since it exhibits an inextricable connection between action and passion or “resoluteness of released engagement” (Dallmayr 1993: 58–59). It is not dying in a passive/active sense nor killing in a simple, active sense. Self-sacrifice is the limit act of committing oneself to the liturgical order and hence of confirming, establishing, and realizing it through one’s being (Rappaport 1999: 117).

In explaining sociological factors underlying suicide bombing Lawrence Rosen (2008) explains how the bombers belong to a category of the dead where they are beyond the need for human reciprocity. Since God and his angels sing praises for the martyr the prayers of mere mortals are unnecessary. Moreover, he pleads for those attempting to explain suicide bombings not to focus on solely reasons of faith and politics but also to bring to account social strains underlying that nourish this form of the attacker’s quest for immemorial identity. These social pressures dealing with reciprocity in everyday life are part of the wider cultural experience that lead people to perform their network identities. Self-destruction in this context implies the validation of all modes of building relationships. Taken as a form of exchange by which one becomes linked to others as if bound in face-to-face contacts, the martyr simultaneously shared perspectives and proves others’ attachment to him as if their ties had moved from the ineffable to the inviolable.

In his essay *On suicide bombing*, Talal Asad (2007) clarifies that the Islamic tradition has described several ways of dying as *shuhadāh* (martyrdom) that are not connected with war. Thus, he disentangles the modern association between martyrdom and *shuhadāh* and reconnects the meaning to its original root of witnessing. The *shuhadāh* die while witnessing to their faith. Thus to be struck by a fatal calamity, whether natural or human, is to be constituted as a sign of human finitude in the world created by an eternal deity. It is this category of death that gives them

immortality hence the title “the living martyrs.” The university bombings victims were remembered under this category of the *shahīd*.

The poems and other speeches in the university newsletter reproduce a community in mourning. They give a snapshot of the condition of the Muslim community which undergoes this mourning and is perplexed by the violence inflicted upon its body politic. The victims of the attacks are heralded as heroes and heroines and their deaths are differentiated from ordinary death, thus gaining the status of martyrs. Yet, they are also memorialized as unfortunate, tragic losses. It is lamented how cruelly their life has been snatched away from them, in the prime of their youth. Creative people like poets and youth leaders come to terms with the incident of the suicide bombing of 20th October 2009 at their university through rituals of public mourning. They seem dumbfounded by this incident not able to comprehend why the war has been brought to their seat of learning.

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## Conclusion

Students came to the Islamic University usually with expectations of finding Muslim unity and sameness there. However, from the very beginning of their reception into regional groups in the student hostels and coming across different ideological persuasions competing in the university classrooms, they had to come to terms with a reality different from their perceived ideal. This competitiveness was shown in this chapter to be a quality of the everyday experience in the university. This experience leads me to argue that the Islamic University was a place where an agonistic (or possibly liberal) Islam was in the process of developing and maturing. Here, multiple historically rooted visions of Islam collided and interacted with each other. In this way, the university students developed a tolerance towards internal difference within Islam.

This development is at odds with ethnographic findings in other contexts where single cultural or ideological viewpoints on Islam are usually studied. In the case of Chitral, Marsden (2005) develops a unique case study where village Muslims discuss and debate various versions of reformist Islam, competing for dominance in the village. In that context, it was shown how village Muslims engaged intellectually with these movements, without being completely seduced into their fold. The Islamic University can also be argued to be such a space where dialogue and contestation were a matter of everyday experience. The university in this way can be seen as part of the “Muslim public sphere” that has been argued, elsewhere, to be a new development in the Islamic world, in which traditional approaches to religion and authority are questioned (Eickelman and Anderson 1999).

This competitiveness of the everyday challenges the notion that Islamic education is based solely on ideological transmission and rote learning (Eickelman 1978). There is ample evidence presented in this chapter for the conclusion that the experience of Islamic education at the Islamic University was based on transmitting a plurality of positions and viewpoints within the discursive tradition that is Islam.

This was an “accidental” outcome of the competition of various ideological positions in the university.

However, this diversity was not always considered a positive value. There were many concerned Muslims who considered the cleavages among Muslims to be detrimental to Muslim unity. This relationship to everyday competitiveness was fraught with anxiety for such Muslims who imagined an “ideal Islam” that was united and free of internal strife. Most Muslims negotiated differences between themselves to come to a common understanding of collective problems. This often led to the development of unhelpful stereotypes of shared adversaries. These common adversaries were thought of as Western knowledge and the representatives of Western interests in Muslim countries, i.e., the ruling elite. Thus we see here developing a de-colonial cosmopolitanism based on the ties formed at the university between Muslims of diverse backgrounds.

This chapter has highlighted the multitude of ways in which Muslims of differing ideological persuasions debated and interacted with each other. They came to a more nuanced understanding of their differences and learnt from each other’s experiences. At times the differences were transcended and other times the differences were cemented. All this contributed to experiencing their shared religious tradition in new and exciting ways.

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## **Part III**

# **Islamic Education Around the World: Commonalities and Varieties**



# Introduction to Part III: Islamic Education Around the World: Commonalities and Varieties

Holger Daun

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## Abstract

This introduction takes a comparative perspective, which implies that certain elements of the various types of Islamic education around the world are compared. This perspective focuses mainly on the development of Islamic education in interaction with the state and state-funded education. Such perspective may be made at the cost of other similarities and differences, resulting in omission of certain aspects. The aspects studied here are the following ones: (a) whether compulsory education is allowed to take place in non-recognized private Islamic education; (b) whether the schools are regulated, monitored, or inspected; (c) whether Islamic schools are subsidized by the state; (d) whether Muslim and other private schools have to apply a national curriculum; (e) whether students in private (including Muslim) schools acquire a diploma that is valid for further

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education in other schools or in the labor market; and (f) whether state-run schools teach Islamic subjects.

The introduction includes the countries presented in Section III but also compares these countries with some others, such as Islamic education in Australia.

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**Keywords**

Comparison · Islamic subjects · Muslim/Islamic education · Private schools · Public schools · Recognized schools · Regulation · Subsidy

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## Introduction

The spread of Islam, through migration of Muslims and conversion, has resulted in the emergence of Islamic educational institutions around the world. At least since the 1980s, Islam is the most expansive religion (An-Náim 1999; Beeley 1992; Berger 1998), and the proportion of Muslims varies from small percentages in the southern part of Africa, Americas, Australia, and most countries in Europe to 100% in the Arab states, North Africa, and some sub-Saharan and some Asian countries.

Islamic educational institutions and models are rather homogeneous in regard to content, but since the early expansion of Islam, a great deal of variety has emerged, due to development of different branches and schools of Islam, different patterns of colonialism, varying development strategies applied after independence, and different local cultural, political, and economic conditions (Ayubi 1991, 1999; Gregorian 2001; Hjärpe 1979; Saadallah 2004). Colonialism brought the spread of the European model of education (Western-style education) (see Chapter ▶ “Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Islam, and Education”). Now globalization contributes to making the issue of Islamic education more and more complex (see Chapter ▶ “Islam, Globalizations, and Education”).

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## Some Concepts and Patterns

First, it would be useful to present a simple overview of some of the most common terms denoting Islamic educational arrangements. This is made in Table 1.

In some places, the massive enrollment in state-run primary education has pushed the Islamic education to the preschool level, while in other places, there are Qur’anic schools (given different names) as well as *madrasahs* at the elementary level. On the other hand, there are also *madrasahs* at the intermediate level, and traditionally, the most advanced *madrasahs* include some type of higher education.

More analytically and for reasons of comparison, and in order to capture the similarities and differences in Islamic education, we need to make a second distinction, namely that between formal, nonformal, and informal education and the third

**Table 1** Different names of schools and different levels

Preschool level	Elementary level	Intermediate level	Higher education level
	Qur'ānic ( <i>daara, kuttāb, maktab</i> , mosque school)	Traditional <i>medrese (madrasah)</i> mosque school or modern <i>madrasah école arabe</i> (Arabic school)	
Qur'ānic, <i>maktab kuttāb, mektep</i>			Islamic university
Qur'ānic <i>daara, kuttāb</i> , Mosque school	Traditional <i>madrasah (medrese)</i> , mosque school Modern <i>madrasah école arabe</i> (Arabic school)	See the two varieties above	

one between different types of relationship and interaction between the state and the different types of Islamic educational institutions. Formal education (e.g., primary and secondary education) takes place in institutions specifically established for educational purpose and is organized in a very structured way with explicit objectives, methods, contents, and procedures for examination. Formal education is generally seen as a hierarchically structured, chronologically graded educational system running from early childhood to adulthood and includes academic studies, specialized programs, and full-time technical and professional training. These schools may be state sponsored or private, but those that are religiously sponsored are not always state regulated, providing both religious and secular subjects.

Informal education consists of processes whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge from daily experience – from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library, mass media, and religious observance (Coombs and Ahmed 1974; LaBelle 1976).

Nonformal education is a more intentional, structured activity than informal education that is practiced outside an established formal education system. It tends to be short term, non-credential based, practical, flexible, and learner centered. Nonformal education is organized by actors in the economic sphere (by employers) or in civil society by organizations, associations, religious interests, etc. and is less structured. In nonformal education, examining the achievement of the participants and delivery of a diploma or certificate is not very common.

Qur'ānic educational institutions are elementary as well as centers of advanced learning (Talbani 1996). The most common name attached to these institutions today is the *madrasah* (pl. *madāris*). *Madrasah* can refer to a nonformal educational institution that offers instruction on the Qur'ān, the sayings of the Prophet Moḥammad (*ḥadīth*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

Today, the Western type of education (primary and secondary schools) is present everywhere. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions need to be seen in this context; Islam is interacting with the state and its educational institutions. In countries with a tradition of a comparatively large proportion of Muslims, at least the following categories of educational varieties have emerged (see Table 2). (For the sake of simplification, the terms “Muslim country” and “non-Muslim” country are



**Table 2** Various combinations of Islamic and Western-type education

	Formal education			Nonformal education	
	Secular schools	Secular schools with Islamic elements	Muslim/Islamic schools	Secular	Muslim
<b>State</b>	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	<sup>a</sup>	(iv)
<b>Private</b>	(v)	(vi)	(vii)	<sup>a</sup>	(viii)

<sup>a</sup>Non-existing or not relevant here

(i) Formal secular state schools.

(ii) Formal secular state schools which teach some Islamic matters.

(iii) Formal Islamic state schools.

(iv) Nonformal Islamic state-sponsored arrangements.

(v) Private secular schools.

(vi) Private schools which teach some Islamic matters.

(vii) Private Islamic schools, which deliver diploma recognized by the state and the formal labor market.

(viii) Private nonformal schools (Qur'ānic schools).

used. The latter means a country which traditionally does not have or have comparatively few Muslim inhabitants.)

Some of the varieties exist also in areas which are predominantly non-Muslim. Combination (i) is the most common situation or option for Muslims in the diaspora, while (ii), (iii), (vi), and (vii) exist in Muslim countries, but the last mentioned exists in the diaspora as well. (viii) are Qur'ānic schools or *madrāsahs* which are not recognized by the state. In Australia, England, and the United States, for instance, complete private Islamic schools are allowed, while in, e.g., France, New Zealand, and Sweden, schools which do not follow the national curriculum are not allowed to function as primary or secondary schools (see Chapters ► [“Islamic Education in France”](#) and ► [“Islamic Education in the Nordic Countries”](#)). *Kuttāb* or *makhtab* belong to category (iv) or (viii), while *madrāsah* can be of type (iii), (iv), (vii), or (viii).

Qur'ānic schools are in official educational contexts seen as nonformal, because they do not depend on the state or any other formal administration and institution for their operation but are often organized by teachers or other members of the local community or the *'ulamā'*. Teachers are supported by the local community, parents, or other stakeholders in different ways: students work for the teachers (in trade or farming) or parents pay in cash or produce (Keynan 1993; Nicolas 1981). Furthermore, in some places in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, Qur'ānic education is also seen as a good preparation for primary schooling (William and Amer 1988).

Islamic educational institutions show some similarities and some differences throughout more than 50 countries where Muslims traditionally form majorities or important minorities (see, for instance, ADIMIA 2004; Islam for Today 2006). The similarities have to do with the features inherent in Islam: the idea of the Muslim community (*ummah*), extent to exercise *sharī'ah*, and the widespread desire among Muslims to have their children trained in Islamic moral values and norms. Generally, countries with a Muslim presence have Qur'ānic schools or *madrāsahs* (nonformal

or formal education) organized by and in the civil sphere of society. The Islamic educational institutions then differ in (a) the extent to which public state schools include Islamic matters and (b) the extent to which educational institutions in the civil sphere are recognized, regulated, and subsidized by the state. In countries where Islam traditionally has been *the* religion, official religion, or the dominating religion, Islamic matters constitute an important part of primary and lower secondary education, while in other countries, the public schools are purely secular.

In every country, including Muslim countries, there is a formal state-sponsored school system that attempts to impart a modern educational curriculum. These formal institutions have features that resemble modern Western educational institutions. Kadi (2006), however, claims that:

... new forms of Islamic institutions of education have emerged in postcolonial Islamic societies. Though they are basically Islamic, they conceive themselves not as alternatives to the secular public schools of governments, but as complementary to them. In other words, secular education is no longer viewed as an imported, foreign, and illegitimate form of schooling that must be rejected but rather as a legitimate, useful, but deficient system that must be completed.

A USAID report, *Strengthening Education in the Muslim World* (2004), provides a clear example of the various meanings of terms related to Islamic education. This report briefly summarizes secular and religious educational systems in 12 Muslim countries. (Countries included were Uzbekistan, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal.) However, the term *madrasah*, Islamic school, and Muslim private school are used synonymously.

In some countries (e.g., Indonesia and Lebanon), Islam and the state had to adapt to the fact that Christian minorities were rather influential during and after the colonial period (An-Náim 1999; Ayubi 1991), and these countries came to allow different types of schools owned and governed by religious interests. Most villages in the Middle East, parts of Asia, and in Central and West Africa and Africa's Horn have at least one Qur'anic school and some have a *madrasah*, organized by civil forces (Daun 2000; Daun and Arjmand 2002; Islam for Today 2006, 2008b, c, i; Nyang 1993; UNESCO 1993).

In non-Muslim countries, where there is Islamic tradition only in, e.g., Russia, the conditions for Islamic educational opportunities differ (Baltanova 2002). Practically everywhere, primary and often lower secondary education is compulsory, while Qur'anic education during leisure time is a nonformal complement to (compulsory) primary and lower secondary education. Such education is by some Muslim minorities seen as one of the important means in the struggle for the maintenance of the Muslim lifestyle and identity in an otherwise secular, Buddhist, or Christian environment. On the other hand, in several places in the South (e.g., West Africa and some areas in Asia), Qur'anic education is sometimes the only type of education chosen by the parents for their children (Daun 2000).

Since many Islamic educational institutions in the world are seen as a non-state (or private) affair, and many formal educational institutions include Islamic subjects, some further conceptual clarifications are in order.

## Islamic Educational Institutions and Their Interaction with Western-Type Education

Against the background of the interaction between basic Muslim values and Muslim lifestyles, on the one hand, and globalization and its pressure for human capital-oriented education contributing to competitiveness, on the other hand, it is often a challenge for some Muslim parents today to find an education that they see as appropriate for their children. Countries tend to have a specific pattern of regulations and subsidization of compulsory (generally primary and lower secondary) and upper secondary education in private schools.

Some parameters set by the state are strategic for the appearance and contribute to the shaping of the nature of Muslim educational institutions as well as the demand for such schools:

- (a) *Recognition*: Whether compulsory education is allowed to take place in non-recognized private education. Recognized schools are public schools and those private schools that have an agreement or contract with the state, which implies that they can deliver diploma accepted by formal educational institutions providing further education and by the labor market. In countries where there are non-recognized schools, there are also usually avenues, such as standardized tests, which students can take in order to gain state validation of their education. Rules for recognition of schools vary by country. Non-recognized private religious schools (without state subsidies) are legitimate alternatives for compulsory education in some countries but not in others. This is the case of certain types of, for example, Catholic schools in Catholic countries and Islamic schools in Muslim countries.
- (b) *Regulation, Control*: Whether the schools are regulated, monitored, or inspected. Practically, they are controlled almost everywhere since this is the precondition for receiving subsidy regulation which implies that certain criteria have to be met before a school can be recognized, while control takes place after recognition, including things such as quality of the premises, student admissions, teacher qualifications, administration and budget, curriculum, certificate, examinations, minimum number of students, etc.
- (c) *Subsidies*: Are the schools subsidized by the state? Most often, private schools to get subsidies have to accept a great deal of control or inspection. Most schools recognized by the state are controlled and inspected and many, but not all, recognized schools are subsidized. In some countries, schools can establish different contracts with the state and the subsidies vary according to the type of contract established with the state. Some countries (e.g., Australia, Indonesia, and Pakistan) are exceptional in that private schools may be subsidized although the state does not control or monitor them. However, in some non-Muslim countries, this applies only to Christian-oriented schools.
- (d) *National Curriculum*: Whether Muslim and other private schools have to apply a national curriculum. In some countries, they have to teach the whole curriculum (e.g., Sweden), while in others (e.g., England), they can replace or omit some components.

Practically, all countries regulate what can and cannot be taught in compulsory education. They usually have a national (core) curriculum, a national curriculum framework, or national educational goal formulations. The proportion of school time dedicated to religious education differs considerably; it is highest in some Muslim countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia).

- (e) *Certificates*: Whether the students acquire a diploma that is valid for further education in other schools or in the labor market. Generally, when schools have been recognized and receive subsidies from the government, they also deliver certificates that are valid for further education and in the labor market. The validity of certificates provided by private Muslim schools tends to vary by country and in relation to state regulation and subsidies.
- (f) *Islamic Elements in the Curriculum of State-Run Schools*: Whether state-run schools teach Islamic subjects. In many Muslim countries, the curriculum of the state-run schools includes Islamic elements, while this is not the case in non-Muslim countries.

Traditional *kuttāb* or *makhtab* and *madrasah* as well as modernized *madrasah* exist in parallel with formal schools in many places in the Islamized countries in the Muslim countries. In some countries, after independence, the state maintained Islamic schools in parallel to public schools and private Islamic schools. In Afghanistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, for example, elementary and intermediate levels of Islamic education are given in schools that are under the “state umbrella” (they are subsidized and are, in some cases, allowed to certify their students). The modernized *madrasah* has established curricula, syllabuses, time tables, and classes, and it tends to teach secular subjects as well. Modernized *madrasahs* exist in Middle East, North Africa, some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and some Asian countries (see Chapters ► [“Islamic Education in Iran,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in Egypt,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in Morocco,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in West and Central Africa,”](#) and ► [“Islamic Education in South Africa”](#)). On the other hand, in some of these areas, Western-style schooling has expanded rapidly since the 1950s. Qur’ānic schools have been relegated to the role of preschool institutions or institutions solely for initiation into Islam (Boyle 2004; Eiseimon and Wasi 1987; El-Tom 1985).

In sub-Saharan Africa and some countries in Asia, modern *madrasahs* (Arabic schools, *Écoles Arabes*) started to expand in the 1970s with the support from Middle East countries (Abbas and Kabani 2007; Anzar 2003; UNESCO 1993; William and Amer 1988). From the beginning of the 1990s, this trend was reinforced when UNICEF (via Muslim NGOs) started to investigate the possibility for such schools to contribute to Education for All (UNESCO 1993).

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## Opportunities of Islamic Education in Muslim Countries

Muslim countries differ in a number of aspects that condition Islamic education and primary and secondary education. In Muslim countries or countries with a large proportion of Muslims, we find different combinations of Islamic and Western type of schools (see Table 2):

- (a) The state-run schools have Islamic matters in their curriculum. Apart from this, there are other schools under the state; they are privately owned and governed but receive subsidies from the state, are monitored/regulated by the state, and provide certificates that are valid for continued education in the state system or for the labor market. Small percentages of students attend such schools in Afghanistan (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Afghanistan”](#)), Egypt (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Egypt”](#)), Malaysia (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Malaysia”](#)), Indonesia (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Indonesia”](#)), Saudi Arabia (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia”](#)) and Turkey (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Turkey”](#)) (Islam for Today 2008a, f, k).
- (b) A pattern similar to (a) except one thing: private Islamic schools are neither regulated nor monitored by the state. In Pakistan, a small percentage of children attend *madrasah* of this type (see Chapter ▶ [“Islamic Education in Pakistan”](#)).
- (c) Apart from the state-run schools teaching Islamic matters, there are schools not belonging to the state system, and they have conditions similar to those in category (b) except the fact that they have not been formally recognized and their certificates are not automatically or unconditionally defined as valid in the formal labor market or for further education in the state system.
- (d) State-run schools teach Islamic matters, while there are also private Islamic schools that do not have any links to the state. In some places, they have to follow the national curriculum. Such a situation exists in several Muslim countries.
- (e) State schools do not include Islamic matters but there is a sector of private schools run in parallel to the state schools. These private schools are Islamic, are subsidized by the state, and give valid certificates.
- (f) The Islamic schools are monitored and have in principle to apply the national curriculum but have no other relationship with the state. Such schools exist in China.
- (g) This type exists, for instance, in Indonesia. The state schools teach Islamic matters and are monitored by the state.
- (h) are found in Ghana; they engage with the state but are not subsidized.
- (i) are Islamic schools which offer primary and/or secondary education which is not recognized by the state, or such schools for compulsory education are not allowed.

In all, Islamic nonformal educational institutions in the civil sphere seem to be comparatively frequent, where the state is secular and state-run schools do not teach Islamic matters.

## **Middle East and North Africa**

The countries belonging to this region differ in some important regards, such as incorporation into globalization and economic level. The Gulf states share the common idea that education should be based on *sharī‘ah*. According to the agreements, The Charter of the Arab Cultural Unit, established in Baghdad in 1964 and

the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALESCO), all the Arab countries should have the same educational aims and goals (Zouain 1998). Today, in most of these countries, one of the overriding aims of formal education is the maintenance and reinforcement of Islam.

Selected examples illustrate some of the developments in the Arab countries. The proportion of religious subjects is comparatively large, and all the countries allow and subsidize certain private Islamic schools (Ben Jaballah and Lamine 1998; Hussein 1998). In addition to this, a large proportion of Islamic matters is taught in primary school; there are in many of these countries Qur'ānic schools that function as a complement to modern primary schools (Eickelman 1989; see also Chapters ► [“Islamic Education in Iran,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in Egypt,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in Turkey,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia,”](#) and ► [“Islamic Education in Morocco”](#)).

Several features stand out in the case of the Saudi system of education (see Chapter ► [“Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia”](#)). For example, the education policy in Saudi Arabia aims to promote the “belief in One God, Islam as a way of life” (Yamani 2006: 2), and according to public plans, education should reinforce Islamic values (Saudi Arabia, 2008a). This country introduced Western-type schools comparatively late, and educational efforts were mostly focused on *kuttāb* (Al-Baadi 1998). In addition to this, there were until 2003 two different education systems under the state umbrella, one for boys and one for girls. Education of girls was not placed under the Ministry of Education, but under a specific council steered by the *'ulamā'*. In 2003, the General Presidency for Girls' Education was dissolved and its function was taken over by the Ministry of Education (Saudi Arabia, 2008a). The Ministry is divided into two sections, each under a deputy minister, one for boys' education and one for girls' education (Saudi Arabia, 2008b). Both sexes follow the same curriculum. At the elementary level, there are two different types of schools: public primary schools and primary schools for learning the Qur'ān. Apart from an even greater proportion of religious subjects than in public primary schools, the latter category follows the same national curriculum. Also, this education is only for boys (Sedgwick 2001; see also Chapter ► [“Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia”](#)).

In Oman, the first public elementary Western-type school was established in 1940. As in Saudi Arabia, there are separate public schools for boys and girls. The first public school for girls opened in 1981 (Arabian Professional Development Center 2003). In Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, private schools (among them Islamic schools) have to use the same curriculum, teaching methods, and examination systems as those used in public schools (Hussein 1998; Yamani 2006).

Parallel education systems exist in Egypt in that there is a secular education system and a religious education system. Three to four percent of all primary and secondary students attend the latter type of schools, which follow the same curriculum as schools in the secular system but spend more time on Islamic matters (Anzar 2003; Mahrouse 1998).

In North Africa, the dissemination of the Arabic language accompanied Islami- zation, but the colonial powers implemented French as the official language (in the case of Libya, the Italian language). After independence, both Algeria and Tunisia

formulated development policies implying radical change through modernization, and Islamic educational institutions did not have any strong position in these policies. In Algeria, for example, private schools were abolished in the 1970s but later on, there was Islamic revival, and private schools were allowed again in 1990 (Algeria Education 2008; Ayubi 1991). During the colonial period, Tunisia had three different types of education: the traditional Qur'anic schools, the French colonial schools, and *Sadiqi*, which was a mix of both. At independence, the country opted for the third model. Morocco developed and expanded the state system of schools, while Islamic educational institutions were maintained by civil forces in the non-formal sector (Boyle 2004; Chapter ► “Islamic Education in Morocco”). In all three countries, Islamic matters are taught in both primary and secondary schools a couple of hours per week. Qur'anic schools have continued to exist mainly as preschool institutions or nonformal institutions run by civil society forces (Ben Jaballah and Lamine 1998; Boyle 2004, 2006; Clark 2006a, b).

## Other Muslim Countries

In Central Asia, large areas were Islamized long before they were occupied by tsarist Russia and were then integrated into the Soviet Union. Religion and culture were “frozen” during the communist period and Islamic formal education was not allowed. As a legacy of the Soviet period, the level of Western-type literacy is very high in all of the countries, as compared to other countries at the same level of GNP per capita. However, when these countries became independent nation-states in the beginning of the 1990s, Islam and its educational institutions were revived and revitalized. Several of these countries started to change the orientation of their external relations more toward Turkey and the countries of the Middle East than Moscow. According to surveys conducted by the International Crisis Group (2003), four fifths of the population in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan considered themselves as Muslims. The revival and expansion of Islam and Islamic education have been supported by Muslim NGOs (e.g., Aga Khan) based in, for example, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey (Niyozov 2003; Zainiddinov 2010) (see Chapters ► “Islamic Education in Tajikistan” and ► “Islamic Education in Russia”).

In Turkmenistan, the teaching of Islam and knowledge of the Qur'an and religious values were made part of the compulsory education after the collapse of the Soviet Union as a way to contribute to people's Turkmen national identity (Akbarzadeh 2001).

In Kyrgyzstan, the predominating religions are the Russian Orthodox and Sunni Islam, and both of them have to some extent been revived after 1990 (International Crisis Group 2005; UNDP 1997). However, many individuals do not consider themselves as being adherents of a specific religion. Private schools have been allowed since the beginning of the 1990s, and several of these schools have an Islamic profile and are supported by Turkey (Asian Development Bank 1996; International Crisis Group 2005).

## South and East Asia

In Pakistan, all schools have an orientation toward Islam, but there exist two parallel education systems – one secular and one religious (Ghafor and Farooq 1998). According to Anzar (2003: 14), there are three main types of religious educational institutions: (a) Qur'ānic schools (teaching only religious subjects), (b) Mosque schools (teaching both secular and religious subjects), and (c) *madrasahs* (teaching only religious subjects). The number of *madrasahs* is not known, but according to Singer (2001), it is evident that it increased tremendously at least until the year 2000. It is estimated that 10–11% of all primary school-age students attend *madrasah*, most of which are state subsidized (Anzar 2003). Many of the new *madrasahs* are supported from abroad (mainly the Gulf states).

In Bangladesh, there are two types of *madrasahs*: *Quomi* and *Aliya*. The former teach only religious subjects, while the latter are under state umbrella and teach secular subjects as well (Anzar 2003: 12).

In Indonesia, state schools teach values education – *Pancasila* – which is a state philosophy or ideology, emphasizing loyalty to the state, morals, good behavior, etc. One of its principles is belief in one God (Allāh). In grades 1–6, almost 10% of the national curriculum in the state schools is allocated to *Pancasila* and the same percentage to religious education (Moegiadi and Jiyono 1998). However, this proportion does not satisfy many of the Muslim parents and organizations. There are *madrasahs* supported by the state and those that are not. All of them teach according to the curriculum but many of them teach Islamic matters in extracurricular classes. Even the non-supported Islamic schools are monitored by the state (ibid.). The great majority (90%) of the schools at the primary and lower secondary levels are privately owned and operated, while others operate under the Ministry of Religion (ibid.: 10). 10–15% of all school-age children are enrolled in Islamic schools (Anzar 2003: 11) (see Chapter ► “Islamic Education in Indonesia”).

In Malaysia state-run schools also teach religious matters if this is demanded by the local community (Aziz and Maimunah 1998). There are five types of religious schools: (i) federal religious schools, (ii) state religious schools, (iii) schools run by the state's Council of Islamic Religion, (iv) people's religious schools, and (v) private religious schools. The two latter types teach the national curriculum but are otherwise independent. The fourth type survives due to community donations, alms, and small grants from the state. After classes in state schools, Islam is taught. Traditionally, Islamic education is rooted in the local population in the form of religious boarding schools (*pondoks* or *pesantren*). These schools were supported and financed by local communities. During the colonial period, schools of the Western type expanded, and they in varying degrees taught Islamic matters. With the expansion of primary and secondary education, the only way for *madrasah* to survive was to modernize and include secular subjects (see Chapter ► “Islamic Education in Malaysia”).

Islam has been present in China since its early arrival to East Asia. Information about the number of Muslims varies a great deal according to different sources, from 20 to 70 million (see, for instance, Armjio 2007; Winters 1984). By number, most



Muslims are found among the Hui majority but, otherwise, Muslims are concentrated to the Western and Southwestern provinces (e.g., Xinjiang). The majority are Sunnī, but in the areas bordering the South and Central Asian countries, there are Shī'ahs as well. In the beginning of the twentieth century, there were Islamic educational institutions in various places in the country, but mostly in the provinces bordering the Central Asian countries. Islam and its educational activities were hampered by the 1949 revolution and the socialist politics but still more so by the Cultural Revolution, when mosques and educational institutions were closed. Islamic education was clandestinely run in the homes of the Muslims. Coinciding with the introduction of the market economy in China in the end of the 1970s, something of a revival of Islam and Islamic educational institutions occurred (see Chapter ► [“Islamic Education in China”](#)).

However, in 1996, religious activities for individuals under 18 years of age were forbidden – in theory, because in reality, the provincial and local authorities differ in their approach to such activities in general and in education in particular; some do not prevent but monitor Islamic educational activities (Allès 2006; Armijo 2007). Due to different Islamic orientations but also to the different approaches to Islamic education among the province and district authorities, there is a great deal of heterogeneity and diversity. Some local authorities control and subsidize otherwise private Mosque schools (at the *madrakah* level). There are mosque-based educational institutions even with computer labs and there are private Arabic or Sino-Arabic schools. Also, there exist state-sponsored and controlled Islamic colleges for training of Islamic teachers and imam (Islam for Today 2008f).

The state has several reasons for not preventing Islamic educational activities (Allès 2006; Armijo 2007; Winters 1984). Islamic forces are difficult to stop, and they are more easily controlled if they are allowed to act. Moreover, according to The Economist (2007), the Communist Party has tacitly accepted that the authorities at province and lower levels cooperate with Islamic interests in order to get access to some shares of the funds created from donations from Muslims within China as well as abroad.

## Sub-Saharan Africa

In sub-Saharan Africa, the portion of Muslims varies from 100% in Mauritania and Somalia to a few percentages in South Africa. Their number is increasing although the world religions often have been only partially assimilated and in many instances in their utilitarian or instrumental aspects (Haynes 1999; Islam for Today 2008b). Religions of African origin as well as Islam and Christianity have, during the past decades, been revived and reinterpreted (Haynes 1999; Masquelier 1999) (see Chapters ► [“Islamic Education in West and Central Africa,”](#) ► [“Islamic Education in East Africa,”](#) and ► [“Islamic Education in South Africa”](#)).

During the colonial period, Islamic institutions in sub-Saharan Africa were nonformal and organized by civil society forces (see, for instance, Idrissu 2005; Santerre 1974; Trimmingham 1968). For tactical reasons, some colonial authorities

established a few *madrasahs* as a way to encourage Muslims to send their children to schools teaching also secular subjects (Anzar 2003).

There are three types of Islamic educational institutions: (i) Qur'ānic schools, (ii) elementary *madrasah*, and (iii) post-elementary *madrasah*. Arabic schools of the second type emerged after the Second World War and may be seen as a modernized type of Islamic education, partially replacing Qur'ānic education (Coloquio Internacional 1993; Nyang 1993; UNESCO 1993). In several sub-Saharan countries, Muslim or Islamic schools compete with primary schools for students in that they have classes daytime.

Generally, state-run schools do not include Islamic matters, but there are some exceptions such as Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. In these countries and in Niger and Senegal, for example, there exist a number of schools of a mixed type (Franco-Arabic schools), and they are subsidized by the state (Daun et al. 2004b; UNESCO 1993).

Nigeria had three education systems in 1990: indigenous education, Qur'ānic education, and European-style education. The government took over all private schools in the 1970s but allowed them again in the 1990s (Daily News 2008). A network of Qur'ānic schools in Northern Nigeria has been established by younger. They are Western-trained '*ulamā*' who make efforts to modernize these schools and the *madrasah* (Umar 2002).

In the Northern region of Ghana, the independent government introduced Islamic matters to be taught by Muslim experts in the public sector in 1960. This was a way to attract more Muslim students to otherwise secular schools. In 1974, the government started to encourage Islamic schools teaching secular subjects. For example, in 2001–2002, there were 265 Islamic primary schools with some 35,000 students and more than 40 junior secondary schools with some 7,000 students in this part of Ghana (Idrissu 2005).

In the drive for "Education for All" (see Chapter ► "Islam, Globalizations, and Education"), UNESCO organized seminars in Africa in order to explore to what extent Islamic educational institutions could be used in the struggle for increased school enrollment. UNESCO and UNICEF started to support Islamic schools economically (Coloquio Internacional 1993; UNESCO 1993). According to Anzar (2003: 7), some of these schools are called "Improved Qur'ānic Schools," and they include some secular matters and may substitute for compulsory state schools. Middle Eastern countries support the sub-Saharan countries in many ways; for instance, teachers are sent to these areas to staff the Arabic schools, local teachers are trained with outside support, and textbooks are provided (ISESCO 1985, 2006a, b; UNESCO 1993). Some combinations are shown in Table 3.

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## Opportunities of Islamic Education in Non-Muslim Countries

Where there are substantial numbers of Muslims, there are also Islamic educational institutions, at least nonformal ones. The permanent presence of Islam in Europe, North America, and Oceania is a reality today; a large number of Muslims have lived

**Table 3** Principal educational institutions in countries in the Muslim countries having large proportions of Muslims

	Recognized	Regulated/ monitored	Subsidized	National curriculum compulsory	Students acquire formal diploma or certificates	Islamic elements in state- run education	Examples
(a)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Varies	Yes	Yes	Afghanistan, Egypt, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey
(b)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Egypt, Pakistan
(c)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Varies	Yes	Gambia
(d)	No	No	No	Varies	No	Yes	Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Gambia, Iran, Kuwait, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey <sup>a</sup>
(e)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia China, Gambia, Mali, Senegal
(f)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	China
(g)	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Indonesia
(h)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, partly	Yes	No	Ghana
(i)	No	No	No	No	No	Varies	Qur'ānic teaching everywhere where there is a certain number of Muslims

NB: It should also be mentioned that some Muslim countries have a national curriculum while others do not. Some countries have two or more of the combinations. Afghanistan, for example, has state-run schools teaching Islamic matters and there are some modernized madrasah which are "under state protection" (combination a). In addition to this, there are a large number of mosque schools and other types of Qur'ānic schools which do not have any links at all with the state (combination d)

<sup>a</sup>Not in mainstream state schools

for generations in the diaspora, and during the past decades, new immigrants have then increased their number. Since the 1980s, Islam, at least in Europe, has emerged from the private and invisible sphere as a cultural and religious phenomenon in the public discourse (Euro-Islam 1995; IHF, 2005; Limage 2000). General processes of both de-secularization and religious revival and secularization are taking place also among Muslims in Europe. At a deeper level of values, there is at least in Europe (a) an increased technocratic understanding of education (principally as formation of human capital and the view of students as human resource to be developed) and (b) an emphasis of education as contributing to countries' competitiveness (European Commission 1997; Islam for Today 2008e; Olivier and Myers n.d.).

The education systems in the non-Muslim countries vary in the opportunities they make available for Muslim children to have a modern and Islamic moral education. First, the immigration policy of countries differs. Apart from educational policies in themselves, immigration policies are relevant for the understanding of Islamic education in the North, and one of the determinant factors is the pattern of immigration. In countries with a small proportion of Muslims (such as the Eastern European countries and Finland), no formal Muslim schools have been recognized although demands for recognition have been made (Daun and Arjmand 2005) in, for example, the Czech Republic. Still in 2005, the proportion of students with immigrant backgrounds varied from less than 1% in Finland and Poland to 15 or more percent in Belgium and Germany (Walther and Pohl 2005).

In Western Europe, traditionally, the pattern of Christianity seems to have been the major factor in the demand for private education, at least at compulsory level (Daun 2008; James 1991). Beyond this general level, the West European countries differ in their tendency to accept variety (Kamali 2000), and some other dimensions are conditioning the opportunity for Muslims to have an education that is both moral *and* leads to economic competitiveness.

In Western and Central Europe, modernization and then "post-industrialization" were accompanied by secularization and a declining importance of traditional religious values (Berger 1998; Davie 1998; Norris and Inglehart 2004). Muslims have historically been present in Albania, northern Greece, and parts of Spain and former Yugoslavia. In Greece, for instance, the Muslim minority in the northern part of the country has for a long time had two educational options: either to enroll their children in ordinary state schools (teaching, among other things, Christian matters and in Greek) or to enroll their children in minority schools (teaching Islamic matters apart from other subjects and in Turkish) (Benincasa et al. 2004).

There are different rules and regulations and different levels of subsidies to private Muslim schools. Recognized religious schools (among them Muslim schools) with large subsidies exist in Australia, Belgium, and the Netherlands, while confessional schools are integrated into the public sector in England, Germany, New Zealand, and Sweden in that they are private only when it comes to ownership and governance but have to follow the curriculum established by the state and are also controlled and evaluated by state bodies (OECD 1994; see Chapters ► "Islamic Education in the

Nordic Countries” and ► “Islamic Education in the Netherlands”). In many places in non-Muslim countries, Islamic or Muslim schools are unprivileged compared to Christian and Jewish schools in that they are less likely to be recognized and subsidized by the state (Islam for Today 2008e, g, h).

The possibility to establish Muslim schools varies; some countries require all types of private schools to follow central regulations (e.g., a national curriculum and national inspection), while others do not; some allow non-regulated and non-subsidized private schools for compulsory education, while others do not. The different approaches to the provision of education and the fact that Muslim minorities in Europe constitute a heterogeneous group with diversified demands result in different educational options and outcomes (Karic 2002). European countries also differ in the extent and way in which public schools include religious matters. In some countries, students are taught *about* different (world) religions, but teaching *in* a particular religion is not allowed. Religious teaching has to take place as an extracurricular activity in the state-subsidized schools after the ordinary school day or in Qur’ānic education organized by Muslim associations outside of the school. Also, in some countries, all parts of the curriculum are, in principle, compulsory, which means that Muslim students have to participate in sexual education and different subjects related to art, for example.

In some European countries, e.g., France, Italy, and Spain, majority of the Catholic schools can have one type of contract or another with the state, implying different degrees of control and different levels of subsidy. However, in 2009, France had not recognized any such contracts with Muslim or Islamic schools (IHF, 2005: 113 Islam for Today, 2008h) (According to BBC (2003), there were no recognized Muslim schools in France until the autumn 2003.) (see Chapter ► “Islamic Education in France”). In England, there are many private Muslim schools, but very few of them are within the state-maintained sector. The Dutch case is more generous; the Netherlands is the country having the highest number of recognized and state-subsidized Muslim schools among all countries in the North. When minority religious groups meet the required criteria (which are mainly in terms of the number students expected to attend), the municipalities have to provide buildings and full costs. The Muslim schools in the Netherlands are better funded than the average Dutch school, as the funding formula gives more to children from ethnic minorities and from homes where the parents have low levels of education (see Chapters ► “Islamic Education in France,” ► “Islamic Education in England,” and ► “Islamic Education in the Netherlands”).

However, even in the favorable situation in the Netherlands, most Muslim parents do not want their children to attend separate Muslim schools, and part of the reason is general dissatisfaction with the academic quality of these alternative schools. Most Muslim parents would prefer their children to attend good, ethnically mixed state schools which take account of some of the special religious needs of their children.

In Eastern Europe, the societal and educational changes after the collapse of communist system were conditioned, to some extent, on the particular pre-socialist characteristics of each country and their interplay with that monolithic politico-economic

system; important elements of the pre-communist cultures survived the decades of communist regime (Inglehart 1997; Norris and Inglehart 2004) (see Chapters ► [“Islamic Education in the Balkans”](#) and ► [“Islamic Education in Eastern Europe”](#)).

Apart from Belarus, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine, the East European countries do not have any important tradition of Muslim presence. Only some of these countries or parts of them were occupied by the Ottomans, and before the collapse of the Soviet Union, they did not have any important immigration of Muslims (see Chapter ► [“Islamic Education in Russia”](#)). The Muslim minorities do not in practice have the same education privileges as other, traditional, minorities. The Czech Republic, for example, has traditional minorities with special rights. They are allowed to organize education in their own languages, while the Muslims do not in practice have the right to establish schools recognized by the state (Rýdl and Uiberlayova 2004).

Russia has historically Muslim minorities not only in the southern parts but also in the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In Russia, since the beginning of the 1990s, Islamic education has experienced a period of revival and there at all stages of religious education (Islam for Today 2008j). After the revolution in 1917, the Islamic education system was practically destroyed and replaced by the Soviet type of schools with total atheism; education was separated from religion. The creation of the Council for Islamic Education in 2005 was an important step for the formation of an Islamic education system. One of the most important results of the council’s activities is the development of the concept of Islamic education in Russia.

*Americas:* With the slave trade, Muslim Africans were brought to the Americas. Minorities of Muslims have continued to exist, and after the Second World War, waves of immigration of Muslims have taken place. In the United States, there is no national curriculum and, according to the constitution, confessional schools cannot receive state subsidies. Thus, private Muslim schools are neither controlled nor subsidized by the state. Also, such schools do not lead to diplomas or certificates that are automatically valid for further education or for employment in the formal sector of the economy. Students from religious schools might have to take tests before they are admitted to further education or have to prove their knowledge when they seek employments in the formal sector of the labor market. The 1990s witnessed a large increase in the number of full-time Islamic schools in the United States (Islam for Today 2008i), from some 25 schools in 1990 to more than 200 in 1999. The increase came as a response to the increasing number of Muslims in the country. At least until September 11, 2001, Islam was the fastest growing religion in the country. In the beginning of the new millennium, approximately 1% of the school-age children attended private Muslim schools (see Chapter ► [“Islamic Education in the United States”](#)).

Canada has had a massive immigration since the 1980s, and many of the immigrants are Muslims. Canada shares some similarities with England and Australia when it comes to the relationship between the state and private schools; there are private Muslim schools which are recognized but do not receive subsidies, and there are schools that do receive subsidies, for example. As in Australia, there is

variation between the different states in Canada, but principally Muslim recognized and other Muslim schools exist (Azmi 2001).

*Australia:* Some Muslims arrived to Australia already in the nineteenth century, but the largest proportions have come as immigrants after the Second World War. Approximately 2% of the country's population are Muslims. Mosques have been established in different parts of the country. In the beginning, Qur'ānic education was limited to the classes given in these mosques, but from the 1980s, regular primary and secondary Muslim schools, like other non-state schools, receive state subsidies, and they teach the same subjects as secular schools but also Islamic religious subjects (ADIMIA 2004; Shariff 2006). In New Wales, for example, state schools have "special religious instruction," meaning that adherents to different religions are invited to give lectures. However, Muslims complain that Islam and Muslims are unprivileged compared to Christian and Jewish interests and schools (Buckly 2008). In 2007, there were some 20 Muslim schools in the whole of Australia, and they enrolled of 2.5% of the Muslim student population (Islam for Today, 2008d).

In non-Muslim countries, the parameters according to which Muslim parents can make the choice of school for their children differ considerably between the countries; especially, the opportunity to establish private schools in general and confessional schools in particular differs considerably.

Combinations (a) and (b) in non-Muslim countries have been found in the Muslim parts of northern Greece, Anglophone countries, and the Netherlands. In combination (c), Muslim schools have to follow the national curriculum, and they are recognized and subsidized. On the other hand, non-recognized schools for compulsory education (no contract with the state) are allowed in France but not in the Czech Republic and Sweden. In France, the amount of regulation and monitoring as well as subsidies vary according to "degree" of recognition – type of contract with the state (see Chapters ► "Islamic Education in France" and ► "Islamic Education in the Nordic Countries").

Combination (d) exists in some states in Anglophone countries and Russia. Muslims are allowed to run their own schools without involving the state, but students with certificates from such schools often have to prove their knowledge on tests or in some other way, when they apply for continued education or formal sector employment (see Chapters ► "Islamic Education in England" and ► "Islamic Education in Russia"). Combination (e) is rare and is the case of Islamic educational institutions organized by associations or private persons in Denmark – often as an after (primary or secondary)-school activity. Combination (f) contains schools that are private, and in Italy and Spain, they are "standby" schools, waiting for full recognition and for being subsidized by the state. It is not known whether any of these schools is an Islamic or Muslim school. Finally, combination (g) includes what may be called purely private nonformal schools, e.g., Qur'ānic schools having classes in the evenings or during days when there is no teaching in formal primary or secondary schools.

Muslim educational demands are diversified for many reasons: Muslims belong to different branches and orientations of Islam; many of the Muslim minorities in the

diaspora are secularized to different degrees; and there are different reasons for their coming to the non-Muslim countries – some as refugees, others for finding employment, and so on. What they have in common is the Islamic foundation and the preference for an education that includes at least some elements of religious, moral, and values education. For many of these parents, Islamic moral training is important. If it does not take place in the formal education system, they enroll the children in nonformal educational institutions (Qur’ānic classes) as a complement to formal education (Euro-Islam 1995; IHF 2005). If Muslim formal education exists, to choose such education to some extent seems to be conditioned by the lack of moral and values education and the racism and neglect of multicultural and multi-religious Muslim parents perceive to exist or have experienced in public schools (see, for instance, Brattlund 2009; Daun et al. 2004a; OECD 1994; Walford 2004). And according to Siddiqui (n.d.):

The strongest argument in favour of sending children to Muslim schools is the presence of an Islamic environment. Muslim kids in most of these schools pray, interact with other Muslim children in classes and during breaks. . . less exposure to sex, drugs, alcohol and violence.

Finally, that there exist laws in non-Muslim countries supporting the right to establish a private school in the North does not mean that the laws are automatically applied. This is the case in some Eastern European countries but also in England and France in the case of recognition for Muslim schools. Even when Muslim schools live up to the stated requirements and are formally eligible for subsidy, they are not recognized to same extent as Christian and Jewish schools (Islam for Today 2006) (Table 4).

The vocabulary in the column to the extreme right (Examples) is that used by the different governments or ministries themselves. See, for instance, Eurydice (2000). *Private Education in the European Union: Organization, administration and the public authorities’ role*. Brussels: Eurydice. Available online at [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org)., accessed on August 20, 2015, and Eurydice (2006). *Private education in Europe*. <http://www.eurydice.org>. Accessed on August 20, 2015.

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## Conclusion

There are Islamic or Muslim schools practically all over the world. There are similarities as well as differences between them. What they have in common is the teaching of Islamic matters. Then there are differences in what and how they teach this, differences which are determined by variations in the interpretations of this religion but mostly by political, cultural, economic, and religious varieties as well as the laws related to educational institutions. Attempts at synthesized education combining Islamic matters with modern, secular knowledge have been made in many places. Also, different “educational ladders” exist in many Muslims’ lives: those who start with some years of Islamic education and then enter secular



**Table 4** Principal combinations of educational policies in relation to the demand for private religious schools in the OECD countries (primary and lower secondary levels)

Combination	Recognized	Schools are monitored by the state	Schools are subsidized by the state	National curriculum compulsory	Students acquire formal diploma or certificates	Islamic elements in curriculum in state schools	Examples
(a)	Varies (i)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Private Muslim schools in the northern part of Greece. Muslim schools in the Netherlands. Some Muslim schools in Australia
(b)	No	No	Yes	No	Yes (ii)	No	Private Muslim schools in some states in Australia
(c)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Private state-maintained Muslim schools in Canada, Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Russia, and Sweden
(d)	No	No	No	No	Yes (iii)	No	Private Muslim schools in some states in Australia, some states in Canada, England, Russia, and the United States
(e)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Some Muslim schools in Denmark
(f)	No	No	No	No	No	No	Finland (none-authorized), Italy ("transition" private, fully private), the Netherlands, Spain (non-aid-granted) (v)
(g)	Varies (iv)	No	No	Varies	No	No	Nonformal Qur'anic education in several countries and nonformal Madrasa schools in some countries

(i) Yes in Greece. Varies in the Netherlands according to the "contract" with the state.

(ii) Varies according to type of Muslim school but also between the different states in Anglophone countries.

(iii) In England, and in some cases in the United States, the students have to take tests or examinations in English before they are admitted to further education in the public system or before they are regarded by employers as "employable," at least in some branches of the formal sector.

(iv) Since they are nonformal schools, they are in many non-Muslim countries not allowed to give compulsory education.

(v) According to the data that have been possible to collect, there are among these schools Muslim schools only in the Netherlands.

education, those who start with secular primary education and then enroll at an Islamic secondary school, and so on.

For the majority of Muslims, Islamic moral training is important, whether it takes place in the public education system or in nonformal socialization institutions. If Muslims feel that Islam does not have a proper place in the state-run schools, they enroll their children in nonformal and civil sphere institutions (Qur'ānic schools) for complementary moral training.

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# Islamic Education in Iran

Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

With the arrival of Islam in the seventh century, Iran developed as the center for Shī'ite education, and Iranians contributed significantly to the institutionalization and expansion of Islamic education both in form and content. For centuries, clergies were regarded as the custodians of education running preprimary and primary education in *maktabs*; postprimary and higher education were carried out and institutionalized in *madrasahs*.

Iranian *madrasah* played also a significant role in promoting knowledge and sciences, both religious and nonreligious. With the establishment of Qom theological seminary (*hawzah 'ilmīyah Qom*), however, Islamic education and its respective institutions (*madrasahs*) revitalized and started a new era and played a pivotal role in the formation of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Operating under the institution of *waqf* and other forms of religious taxes, *hawzah 'ilmīyah* today is a network of *madrasahs* and other educational institutions, active both through traditional methods and in the virtual world to foster the Shī'ite communities worldwide.

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The Iranian Revolution of 1979 is considered as one of the instances in running a modern society based on Islam and contributed significantly to the revival of religious ideologies across the world. Iranian theocratic government planned a shift from a Western model of social order and education to a one deeply rooted in Islamic beliefs and values. To achieve the goal to intellectually nurture generations of committed Muslims as the human capital of Muslim *ummah*, among other measures, a larger proportion of the formal curricula is devoted to education of Islam, while religious education also occupied a significant status both in curricular and extracurricular activities.

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### Keywords

Shī'ism · Iran · *Hawzah 'ilmīyah* · *Maktab* · *Madrasah*

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## Islamic Education in Iran: A Brief Historical Account

Despite the lack of documented sources about education in pre-Islamic ancient Iran, there is consensus among the scholars on the high value Persians attached to education. Zoroastrianism – the dominant pre-Islamic religion in Iran – considers education so vital that ancient religious texts (Amuzgar and Tafazzuli 2000) emphasize that human beings ought to raise themselves to illustrious positions by acquiring worldly knowledge and education, which enables them to read and write. Achaemenids (ca. 550–330 CE), who are regarded as the founder of the Persian Empire, laid the cornerstones of a centralized administrative and bureaucratic system with a comprehensive network of infrastructure. Despite the wealth of literature in many aspects of life under Achaemenids, there is not enough evidence to argue that there existed a formal education in Iran in the Achaemenid era, there is extensive evidence that the Egyptians and Babylonians under the Persian Empire continued to follow their traditional education with scribal schools (Oppenheim 1977). The Achaemenidian curriculum was composed of reading, writing, grammar, mathematics, and astronomy, and the schooling was intended solely for boys.

In the strictly hierarchical administrative system during the Sāsānīd dynasty (224–651 CE), however, education was a privilege only for the elite (nobility, clergy, and secretaries). Urban merchants were familiar with writing and numeracy, while peasants in rural areas were mostly illiterate. The training included not only hunting and the arts of war but also social manners and etiquette. The teaching methods relied heavily on memorization of the sacred texts and following the instructors in their practices.

With the arrival of Islam in the seventh century, Iranian boys came to attend elementary schools (*maktab*), while girls participated in homeschooling. The sessions for boys took place at the neighboring mosque and on some occasions in the homes of the parents and teachers. Students paid tuition fee for the education they received. Lecomte (1954, p. 324) argues that “there is some evidence that the structure and teaching methods [of the *maktabs*] were modeled on the Byzantine primary school,” while the curriculum was modified to suit the Islamic context and



to fulfill the local demands. The structure of *maktabs* varied from one context to next as many local elements integrated into these institutions. Some scholars (Goldziher 1908) argue that the *maktabs* were also been applied to Jewish *heder* schools – the old-fashioned elementary school for teaching Judaism in which secular subjects were also taught.

“The early *maktabs* was an important agent for socializing different ethnic groups into the Islamic faith and its way of life” (Landau 2003, p. 567). In Iran, *maktabs* and their traditional approach to education survived to the 1920s when they were replaced by modern elementary schools. *Maktabs*, however, continued to survive as an extracurricular institution long after their removal from the formal educational scene and played a vital role in the absence of a functioning formal preschool system. They were the main centers of religious teachings and for learning to recite and memorize the Qur’ān.

In the same vein, the history of postprimary education in Iran could be traced back to the time of the Sāsānīd dynasty when King Shāpūr I (241–272 CE) established the first medical academy known as Academy of Jundīshāpūr, a leading research institution and scholarly sanctuary of the time. With the Islamization of the country, the extensive establishment of mosques and *khāns* (boarding facilities) created an academic campus. Development of such institutions, especially in larger cities and cultural centers, was an essential requirement for the scholars of traditions (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), and it facilitated the mobility of students in the quest for knowledge. This, in turn, necessitated the establishment of *madrasahs*, which appeared as independent entities in the early tenth century and grew rapidly all over the Islamic world. In the eleventh century, when Niẓām al-Mulk (1018–1092) introduced *madrasah* as an Islamic institution of education, Iran turned to one of the main hubs of this new institution in the Muslim world. By the mid-thirteenth century, the Shī’ite version of *madrasah* had developed and was established all over the country. According to Zaryab (1997), already at this period, there were a number of well-known *madrasahs* in such cities as Qom (eight), Ray (seven), Kāshān (four), Sāveh and Varāmīn (two in each), as well as in Sārī and Sabzivār, some of them were only local and did not contribute to the constitution of a unitary system of *madrasah* education. Niẓāmīyyah, as a network of Islamic higher education institutions, were spread all over the Islamic world and became the research centers attracting scholars and scientists of the time. *Madrasahs* contributed extensively to the advancement of Islamic sciences especially narrative sciences (*‘ulūm al-naqlī*).

The rise of Ṣafavīds and the empowerment of a Shī’ite state in Iran was a significant contribution to the growth of the Shī’ite *madrasahs*. With the selection of Isfahan as the legendary capital of Ṣafavīd (which lasted for 140 years), a new chapter started in the history of the city. The city was called Dār al-‘Ilm (The House of Knowledge) and reached fame in the Islamic world for the supreme quality of its educational institutions. Also, in terms of innovation and design of the educational spaces, Isfahan has gained a significant status. Isfahani architects used classic Persian architecture with its internal garden, formerly used extensively in Persian-style mosques, to *madrasah* buildings. The model spread later to most of the Islamic world as the classic model of *madrasah* building (for details

see chapter ► “Islamic Educational Spaces: Architecture of *Madrasah* and Muslim Educational Institutions”).

The empowerment of Ṣafavīds provided a favorable climate to the Islamic intellectual disposition in Isfahan, which led to a series of intellectual traditions. As “in their relentless quest for self-legitimacy, the Ṣafavīd monarchs needed the Shī‘ite jurists and dogmaticians, as well as preachers and clerics, to propagate the ideological foundation of their state (Amir Arjomand 1984, pp. 109–121).” Hence, a new generation of jurists emerged who provided new theories of state through the revision and reinterpretation of the Shī‘ite political theories. For instance, in philosophy, Mīr Dāmād (1041–1631) established the “school of Isfahan,” in spite of the fact that “Islamic philosophy has never had any institutional foundations except at the clandestine peripheries of the *madrasah* (Dabashi 2001, p. 599)” which brought Islamic philosophy into the spotlight. The tradition was followed, among other figures, by Mullā Ṣadrā who created the school of Transcendental Theosophy (*al-Ḥikmat al-Muta‘ālīyah*). The modification and revision of the Shī‘ah theories of state took place among the religious scholars during Ṣafavīds initiated a series of developments in various fields of science.

With the monopoly of ‘*ulamā*’ as the custodians of education, *madrasahs* remained the main institution of education in Iran up until the end of the Qājār era in the late eighteenth century. *Madrasah* education in Iran, however, was revived in early twentieth century in the city of Qom as the main center of Shī‘ite Islam. The city is shaped around the shrine of the Shī‘ite holy figure Fāṭimah M‘asūmah, who died and was buried in Qom in 816 CE in the pursuit to meet her brother.

Qom owes its fame, more than anything else, for being the intellectual foster land of the Shī‘ism and its leading educational center. The theological seminary of Qom, known as *hawzah ‘ilmīyah Qom*, in its modern form was founded by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm Hāyerī Yazdī (1859–1937) in 1922 to stand as a rival to Iraqi holy city of Najaf which was assumed to be the main Shī‘ite educational magnet of the time. The phenomenon is recognized as the “migration of *ijtihād*” from Iraq to Iran.

Ayatullāh Brūjirdī, who represents “the ‘conservative’ wing of the ‘*ulamā*’ (Akhavi 1980, p. 102),” was the first religious leader in Qom who believed in the need for the reform, renovation, and revitalization of the Islamic education and its respective institutions. Brūjirdī, the charismatic Shī‘ite leader, was a controversial figure in many ways: on the one hand his global ideas about the spread of Islam and unification of Sunnī and Shī‘ah are highly appreciated among a diverse groups of Muslims, while on the other hand, his refusal to involve in politics in one of the critical moments of Iranian history and his specific approach to reform in the Islamic education institutions are criticized. He seemed to have temporized and lacked commitment when it became a question of changing the *madrasah* curriculum. Curiously, despite his own extensive learning in *tafsīr*, *rijāl*, *ḥadīth*, and *tārīkh*, he did not allow these subjects to wax in the *madrasah*. Consequently, *fiqh* continued to be the queen of the sciences of the theology (Akhavi 1980, p. 122). The notion of religious leadership for Brūjirdī was not merely limited within Iranian borders. He sought leadership over the Muslim community worldwide. For the first time in history, he implemented the notion of the “Shī‘ite missionary” by building a network of

mosques and Islamic centers all over the world, particularly in Europe and the United States. A generation of clerics was consigned to run these institutions, clerics who had their training both in the Islamic traditional educational institutions and the modern Western style universities and whom demonstrated competence and mastery over the Western languages. Later, these people played a significant role in introducing Islam to Western societies. Some engaged in the academic career in the West, like Mehdi Haeri “the religious ambassador” (the title used for the Shī‘ite missionaries in the West) in Washington, who became a professor of Islamic Studies at Harvard, and Abduljavad Falatouri, founder and professor of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences at Hamburg University, Germany. With such profile, *madrasahs* in Qom stood as rivals to the universities in the fields related to Islam and Islamic sciences. As a result of Brūjirdī’s work, not only did the spread of Islam in non-Islamic communities become an important agenda for Muslim religious leaders, but also religious scholars and clerics were encouraged to educate themselves to sustain their dominance in modern secular educational institutions, operated under the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education. As a result, in Iran (as well as some other Muslim countries), a large number of schools opened and operated, following the national curriculum, and thus were entitled to be subsidized by the state. This was the start of a new type of public schools with a religious profile. ‘Alavī School (established by Rizā Rūzbih in 1956) in Tehran and Dīn va Dānish (established by Sayyid Muḥammad Bihishtī in 1954) in Qom are among the products of this movement. Those schools contributed greatly to the training of a large number of highly educated and religiously committed intellectuals who played a significant role in the revival of religion in Iran, who were active in the course of the Iranian Revolution and assumed a series of key positions after the revolution. With its aim to train a Muslim elite, against the seculars, ‘Alavī School played a significant role in Iranian politics. ‘Alavī School graduates assumed key positions after the revolution, and the school holds a symbolic significance. Upon his return to Iran after 14 years in exile, Ayatullāh Khomeini used the ‘Alavī School as his residence and the headquarter to lead the revolution to victory. The School was also utilized as the courtroom for the trial of the Pahlavi-affiliated high-ranking generals and politicians, and, allegedly, the school roof was used as a site of execution.

In 1925 Reza Shāh introduced reforms in many aspects of Iranian life. He attempted to modernize Iran through the introduction of new technology and industrialization of the country. During the 16 years of his reign, the government made a systematic effort to secularize the country. The new education law was introduced in which the education was delegated to the newly established Supreme Council of Education. This was an effort to shift the responsibility of education from the religious authorities to the central state. Reza Shāh put emphasis on education, to the extent that he did not hesitate to employ coercive means to expand the new education against the traditional religious education by ‘*ulamā*’. The secular modern education started to grow, and the Ministry of Education was recognized as the main responsible institution for education in the country. In 1927 the budget of the Ministry of Education was doubled; [and] expenditures on education rose from 10.4 million Riyāls, 4% of total government outlays in 1926, to more than 20.8

million, 5.9% in 1929, and to 159 million Riyāls, 4.5% in 1941 (Ashraf 1989), which affected the enrolment rate in schools. Reza Shāh endeavored to regulate the ‘*ulamā*’, lead religious education, and maintained religious education as part of the formal curriculum. The introduction of a new formal education system faced the opposition of the religious leaders who considered it a threat to the religious and moral values of the Muslims. The ‘*ulamā*’ argued that the education system under the state would lead to secularization and to the establishment of Western and nonreligious values.

However, despite the restrictions of the government, *madrasah* – with the centrality of *hawzah ‘ilmīyah* in Qom – continued to exist alongside the formal education and contributed greatly to the training of the generations of the religious clerics and ultimately the Iranian Revolution.

Alongside the traditional approaches to Islamic education practiced through *madrasahs*, a series of reforms were also introduced. One such an instance is Dār al-Tablīgh Islāmī (House of Islamic Propagation) which was established in 1963 by Ayatullāh Sharī‘atmadārī (1905–1986) – a high-rank *faqīh* and rival to Ayatullāh Khomeini in religious authority who suggested a peaceful approach to Islam and deceased under the house arrest by the Islamic regime. Dār al-Tablīgh Islāmī was created as a modern institution faithful to traditional curricula utilizing a traditional approach to the role of ‘*ulamā*’ in the state. While it assumed the responsibility to propagate and educate scholars and educators within various topics related to Islam, it urged on an apolitical role of ‘*ulamā*’ in the society. Despite this, Shī‘ite *madrasahs* in Qom are considered the ideological cradle of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. It was in Fayzīyyah Madrasah of Qom in 1963 that Ayatullāh Khomeini initiated his ideological and political battle against Pahlavis. During the revolution and thereafter, Qom with its extensive network of *madrasahs* and Islamic centers has served as the ideological and scientific reservoir of the revolution and after that as its ideological foster town.

Today’s *hawzah ‘ilmīyah* in Qom is an international center for Shī‘ite education and research where students and researchers from more than 75 nationalities are studying Islamic sciences. Qom is a special city in many ways. The city is predominately populated by clerics who are considered as a special class to be treated differently, sometimes beyond the civil law. Therefore, among other institutions, the city has its Special Clerics Court (*Dādghāh-i Vīzheh-yi Rūhānīyyat*) which deals with the cases by clerics, as for them the ordinary courts are regarded ineligible. The city also has its own military unit (*Tīp-i Imām Šādiq*) composed of clerics in all ranks. There are some 200 *madrasahs* and Islamic research centers in Qom (All the statistics on Qom are from Qom Information Centre [www.qomict.ir](http://www.qomict.ir); Qom Management and Planning Organization [www.mpo-qm.ir](http://www.mpo-qm.ir); Qom Yellowpage: <http://rahnama.noornet.net>; and [www.balagh.net](http://www.balagh.net), unless specified otherwise). Throughout building and expanding of electronic databases and production of digital educational materials (such as online products, DVDs, and CDs) and an active presence on cyberspace, *hawzah ‘ilmīyah* is providing access to online materials and services and plays a pivotal role for the Shī‘ite community worldwide.

## Islam in Iranian Postrevolutionary Formal Education

Iranian Islamic Revolution is regarded as one of the latest attempts to interpret and implement a religious discourse in a modern social and political setting leading to the establishment of a theocratic system. Among religious authorities in Islamic Iran, education is considered the foremost means for the reproduction and expansion of Islamic culture and the shaping of the ideal Muslim believer: a potential member of the global Muslim community of *ummah*. To meet such an objective, Iranian Islamic government imposed substantial changes to the Iranian life including education. Iranian postrevolutionary education is an intriguing instance to study the implementation of a religious discourse through de-secularization of the educational content in curriculum, hidden curriculum, social control, and domination of the society in an effort to form the religiously committed Muslim (*musalmān-i mut'ahid-i maktabī*): the incarnation of Islamic (Shī'ite) ideology. The dominance of religious and moral leadership and ideological objectives of education in postrevolutionary Iran have resulted in the creation of an extensive apparatus to maintain the dominance of the religious elite. The notion of formation of the committed Muslims through education, among other effects, contributed to the formation of the religious intellectuals which as organic intellectuals of the Iranian theocratic system were expected to legitimize the rule of the religious elite.

Shortly after the revolution on October 24, 1979, the Iranian Islamic constitution was adopted which stipulates that it was the responsibility of the government to provide free education for all up to secondary school and to expand free higher education to attain self-sufficiency of the country (Article 30, cf. Art. 3 and Art 43). The revolution was followed by a Cultural Revolution which in turn resulted in the establishment of The Higher Council of Cultural Revolution in 1980, aiming to modify Iranian education. The Cultural Revolution necessitated the reestablishment of the philosophy, objectives, policies, and assessments of education in both basic and higher levels in accordance with Islamic principles. The four ideological tenets of the Islamic Republic of Iran were informed as (a) inseparability of religion and politics, (b) Islamic revival, (c) Islamization of the society, and (d) the creation of the committed Muslim. These are considered among the primary objectives of the postrevolutionary education. The goals set for basic education were the emphasis on ideological principles along with accepting the absolute authority of the jurisconsult (*vilāyat-i muṭlaqih-yi faqīh*); fortifying and supporting the political, economic, and cultural unity of Muslim community (*ummah*) and oppressed people (*mustaz'afin*); rejecting any form of oppression, suffering, and domination; and strengthening of the country through military training in the values of independence and territorial integrity (Ministry of Education 1983). Such objectives manifest the politicized ideological doctrines set for integration in a global society beyond what was perceived as arbitrary racial, geographical, and ethnic boundaries. To fulfill the promise, education was expected to be developed to increase productivity, to achieve social and national integration, to cultivate social, moral, and spiritual values, to strengthen the faith of Islam, and to expand them to the global society of *ummah*. The first fundamental educational reform introduced by the revolutionary

government aimed at the transformation of the curriculum, initially through revision of textbooks, especially those in social studies, humanities, and religion. The objectives were claimed to be to “demonarchize” the curriculum and to replace “colonial and tyrannical” topics with Islamic and revolutionary subjects (Mehran 1989, p. 221). In fact, this was the first step of a series to dominate education so as to control the channels of knowledge production.

In the reformed postrevolutionary education, the structure – which was borrowed from the American education system prior to the revolution – remained intact, while the content transformed into an Islamic-inspired curriculum. The changes started with the content of the curriculum and continued with replacing old textbooks, increasing the hours devoted to religious topics, and introducing the Arabic language as the language of Islam. In the process of transformation, schools were expected to inculcate values and beliefs appropriate to the Islamic community (*ummah*). According to Goldstone et al. (1991, p. 123), it was the specific changes in the nature of the state, the position of the elites, and the conditions of popular groups that combined to create the revolution. However, while in the process of the revolution, the nonreligious (nationalist and leftist) groups were among the main contributors, the new education system disregarded any set of values other than Islamic ones. The nationalist forces were seen as the supporters of the secularism, and it was said that the previous regime had “fostered them in order to achieve the dual goals of increasing government control and of destroying the power base of the religious establishment.”

A body (The Organization of Textbook Research) was created in the Ministry of Education, which was mainly composed of members of the religious authorities (*‘ulamā’*). The role of this newly established institution was to regulate, monitor, and control the ideological content of the textbooks as well as the trend of Islamization. In the new textbooks, secular figures like scientists, writers, poets, and political personalities were never presented as role models, whereas Persian religious figures, prophets, and the Shī‘ite Imāms have been elevated into figures for emulation (Ferdows 1995, p. 334). Nafisi (1992, p. 119), in his comparative analysis of pre- and postrevolutionary Iranian education, notes that “the Pahlavis emphasized the pre-Islamic Persian heritage to legitimize their rule, similarly, Islamic Republican textbooks concur with other ideological statements in emphasizing the Islamic era of Iranian history, the pulpit, and the faith itself as sources of legitimacy.” The revolutionary government revised the books to focus solely on the Islamic history of the country as a way to reinforce the Islamic ideology. It was argued that the textbooks should strengthen an Islamic worldview according to which “one single focus: the development of a thoroughly committed individual to one God (Shurish 1988, p. 62)” was emphasized. School children were presented with “a sharply defined image of the world, divided into pious, brave, uncompromising, honourable, morally superior Muslims and secular, unjust, greedy, inhuman, oppressive ‘Westerners’ and ‘Westoxicated’ intellectuals” (Mehran 1989, p. 289).

The theocratic regime continued the Islamization through the process of purification in which the textbooks in use before the revolution had been “purified” and cleared of “the misguidance and decadence of the despotic former regime,” as well

as foreign “cultural influences.” “700 topics from 636 primary and secondary school textbooks had been changed, especially in social sciences, humanities, and religious studies (Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari 1996, p. 339).” All teachers in Iran were forced to pass a strict process of purgation in which approximately 8000 professors, about half the total university faculty members, were fired from their jobs. The study of religion was emphasized from primary grades through college, and teachers were forced to ensure that only those who understood the “true meaning of Islam” could complete their education or continue beyond the secondary level. Codes and regulations for behavior and dress, conforming to Islamic tenets, were established, and the pupils were compelled to follow them in the schools and beyond. Pupils were exposed to a comprehensive Islamic environment and were expected to establish a relation with this environment. In order for the students to habitualize appropriate actions, they were provided “patterns of conduct” and “social control.”

The Iranian “textbook-based instruction” in the formal education is inherited from the traditional Islamic education practiced in *maktabs*, Qur’anic schools, and elementary levels of *madrassahs* and is based on the memorization of the sacred texts especially the Qur’ān. Along with the strict examination system, the use of these textbooks has been the predominant approach in Iranian education, supporting the internalization of the new values in forming an Islamic consciousness.

Iranian Islamic government emphasized the role of the intellectuals and underlined religious commitment as the necessary requirement for their admittance as the elite of the Islamic society. The new so-called committed intellectual was shaped as an alternative to what was labeled as “Westoxicated intellectuals” and was an effort to prevent the impact of secular intellectuals and to maintain the power of the ruling elite (*‘ulamā*) in Iran. The emergence of this new faction entitled “religious intellectuals” or “religiously committed intellectuals” (*roshanfikir-i mut’ahid-i mazhabī*) was partially a by-product of the rapid economic growth during the Pahlavi era, in which a large group of rural inhabitants moved to the cities. The migration of many traditionally minded peasants, marginalized in large cities, played a significant role in supporting the revolution and the revival of religious values, albeit 50 years of efforts of Pahlavis to secularize the country.

The school was considered the main platform for the Iranian Islamic system to establish, promote, and enhance the normative qualities in children through both the textbooks and activities of the committed Muslim teachers in an entirely Islamic milieu. The school, teachers, and students were regarded as the human and cultural capital of both the country and the Islamic *ummah*, through which it would be possible to “recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination (Lzere 1977, p. 755).” The extent of the efforts to attain the new consciousness and “ideological conformity is evident from the government’s attempts to encourage students to spy on their own parents (Goldstone et al. 1991, p. 131).” Postrevolutionary education has to some extent succeeded in transforming the new generation of Iranians. Those who were born in the early 1970s have not experienced adult exposure to the “imperial” system. The change in the education has been so successful that now “kids teach parents revolutionary values (ibid.).”

Teachers selected through a rigorous ideological screening are expected to monitor the development of an ideological indoctrination process. They function as the organic intellectuals who are formed “in connection with the dominant social group. . .to assimilate [the pupils] ideologically (Gramsci 1972, p. 10).” The schools are the instrument through which the “intellectuals of various levels are elaborated (ibid.)”

The reconceptualization of intellectualism based on religious values and the creation of new intellectuals based on Islamic and revolutionary principles are instances through which one can trace the role of intellectuals in forming the new normative in postrevolutionary Iran. “It is not an exaggeration to suggest that never before in Iran has the teacher been as important a role model for students as in the Islamic Republic today (Ferdows 1995, p. 327).” School children, especially those from the lower middle class families – the main group supporting the revolution – met a dominant official ideology at school to which they could find their live representations through their family life and social relations. This synchronization saturated the pupils in a complete circle of Islamization: they read the books, observe the behavioral codes and practices, and internalize the values that the authorities in the society, teachers in schools, and parents in the families – through practicing such values – function as their role models (Arjmand 2008).

The traditional Islamic preprimary education, which gradually disappeared from the educational scene of the country due to the Pahlavis nationalized and secularized education, could never gain back its glory. Despite the Islamization of the society and life at all levels, the postrevolutionary government retained the modern structure implemented by Pahlavis and did not reestablish the traditional nonformal preprimary and primary institutions. Hence, at the elementary level (preprimary and primary), parents were left with no alternatives other than formal schooling which claims to be Islamic in content and modern in structure. However, as noted earlier, the religious higher education practiced in traditional seminaries (*hawzah ‘ilmīyah*) and *madrasahs* at both undergraduate (*sath*) and postgraduate (*khārij*) levels was accredited by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education equivalent to higher education degrees to be continued in universities. In this period, Islamic education institutions grew in fields such as theology and religious law at the advanced levels, partially since “the revolution gave clerics the opportunity to assume the central roles that they had played in the courts and legal education prior to secularization reforms of 1920s (Mayer 2000, p. 343).”

After a long period of absence from international and comparative studies, first in 1992 the Iranian government agreed to join the Third International Mathematics and Sciences Study (TIMSS). TIMSS was conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in some 45 countries from 1992 to 1997. The result showed that the average performance of Iranian fourth grade primary school children in the respective tested age groups was 18–22% lower than the average performance of students in 24 other participating countries (Arjmand 2004). Also, the average performance of children in fifth grade was 17–25% lower than students in 26 out of 28 participating countries (ibid.).



The poor results of Iranian students were partially attributed to lower educational level of teachers in Iran, higher students/teacher ratio, shorter academic year due to mandatory attendance in the extracurricular ideologically driven activities, lack of books and other educational/cultural means available for families, and lecture-based educational methods heavily relied on the textbooks (Martin et al. 1999). As the authorities had emphasized the ideological criterion for employing teachers, the scientific merits became of secondary importance, and thus the number of scientifically unqualified teachers (however ideologically qualified) increased. The extracurricular activities, which were largely devoted to religious and ideological events, on many occasions extended even to the hours intended for science. In the same period, despite the rapid population growth, the amount of expenditure on education decreased from 2.7% of GNP in 1990 to 2.4% in 1991 and 2.2% in 1992.

In the same vein, the number of hours devoted to the religious studies boomed from 9.3% for primary and 5.9% for lower secondary level in the pre-revolutionary period to more than 20% in the postrevolutionary era (Ashraf 1989, p. 194), while new subjects such as the testament of the supreme leader Ayatullāh Khomeini and military training were introduced to the curricula. The process of Islamization favored only religious forces and supporters of the revolution, while it demonstrated the regime's intolerance to any criticism. Criticisms are considered as heresy and as questioning the principles of Islam and are treated by the Islamic law of *sharī'ah*. More than two million Iranians, mostly intellectuals and well-educated critics of the government, had fled abroad. In year 2000, some 1800 Iranian full professors were teaching only in universities in the United States, while the estimated entire number of professors in Iran at this period hardly reached 1000. Among 61 developing countries, Iran is ranked as the first in terms of brain drain and exodus of its highly educated elite (Kadivar 2003), a trend which has continued for more than a decade. Undoubtedly, the processes of migration as well as the restriction of domestic counter-hegemonic forces through limiting their access to scientific infrastructures, banning newspapers, and arresting or imprisoning the intellectuals have had devastating consequences for the economic, scientific, and intellectual development of Iran.

Globally the Iranian Islamic Revolution in this period contributed to the rise of religious fundamentalism (both Islamic and non-Islamic) in the world, and a substantive number of Islamic movements have appeared thereafter. However, the Iranian Islamic model of education has not been emulated by any other country. In the eyes of many, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a failure as an Islamic state, due to its specific Iranian (or Shī'ite) character. The national character of the Iranian Revolution, though, stimulated an Islamic nationalism and demonstrated "the capacity of Islam to symbolize a social identity which has been merged into national feeling (Juergensmeyer 1993, p. 47)." In the last three decades, Islam has been the driving force behind many national, ethnic, and political movements in the world. The Iranian Revolution has contributed to the growth of religious nationalism in the global arena more than any other phenomenon in recent years.

On the other hand, Iranian postrevolutionary education was observed by many Muslims worldwide as an example of education in an Islamic state and offered the

grounds and opportunities for observing a practice of Islamization of knowledge in a modern society. Success of such a system and the scientific achievements through it could lead to similar demands in many Islamic countries. The first ideology-driven reform which was implemented immediately after the Islamic Revolution and focused on the de-secularization of the education and the introduction of Islamic subjects into the curriculum content was perceived by many Muslims as an instance of the Islamization of education and “Islamists from Morocco to Indonesia, was demanding change similar to Iran’s (Reid 1995).” However, after more than three decades, evaluation of the reform and its achievements in international and comparative studies demonstrated the failures of such a system and paved the way for the revision of the goals of Iranian education, and the necessity of yet another reform – with more emphasis on scientific achievements – became more obvious than ever.

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### Islamic Education: Curriculum and Methods of Instruction

The *madrasah* has been known as a learner-centered institution of education based on needs of an individual and according to one’s pace in which formal examinations and grading system are absent. The instruction is predominately based on a lecture by a professor followed by group discussions (*mubāḥiṣah*) among the students.

While the traditional *madrasahs* continued the traditional curricula and structure, the “modern” *madrasah* incorporated some non-Islamic subjects (such as foreign languages, Western philosophy) into the traditional curricula for the religious studies. The graduates of *madrasah* are expected not only to function as the high-rank executive bureaucratic body of the Islamic government in Iran but also as missionaries abroad and teachers and professors of religious subjects in schools and universities.

Iranian traditional *madrasah* system known as *ḥawzah ‘ilmīyah* system (seminary style) is composed of three levels; each has an elaborated and comprehensive curriculum:

1. *Muqaddamāt* (introductory stage) in which learning the Arabic language (grammar and syntax), basics of logic, and rhetoric is focused (see Table 1 for details).
2. *Saḥḥ* (intermediate) where *fiqh* (Islamic law), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (methods of deriving religious rulings), philosophy (with metaphysics in focus), *kalām* (theology), *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur’ān), and some optional subjects from *‘ulūm al-‘aqlī* (rational sciences) such as arithmetic, *hay’at* (astronomy), and geometry are focused (see Table 2 for details).
3. *Khārij* (advanced) which aims at expanding the ability of the students in deriving the rules of the law from the texts. The *khārij* is an intensive period of analysis, discussion, and commentaries on the *‘ilm al-uṣūl* and *fiqh* aspiring to achieve the degree of *ijtihād*.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, *ḥawzah ‘ilmīyah* system of education continued to exist in two parallel tracks: a smaller faction of traditional scholars who were persistent in practicing the old traditional approach in a more informal

**Table 1** A detailed modern Shī'ite *madrāsah* curriculum at introductory level in Iran

Introductory stage ( <i>Muqaddamāt</i> )	
Accredited as equivalent to bachelor's degree	
Rank ( <i>pāyeh</i> ) one through four (takes up to 3 years full-time study)	
Title awarded: <i>Sighat al-Islām</i> (Trustee in Islam)	
Subject	Textbooks
Arabic grammar ( <i>ṣarf</i> )	al-Fārābī, <i>Niṣāb al-Sibyān</i>
	Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī, <i>al-Amthilah</i>
	Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī, <i>Ṣarf-i Mīr</i>
	Abd al-Wahhāb Zanjānī Shāfi'ī, <i>al-Taṣrīf</i>
	Sayyid Muḥammad Rizā Ṭabāṭabāyī, <i>Ṣarf-i Sādeh</i>
	Rashīd Khurī Shartoonī, <i>Mabādī al-'Arabīyyah</i>
	'Abd al-Raḥmān Suyūṭī, <i>Sharḥ al-Alfīyah</i>
	Ibn Hishām Anṣārī, <i>Muqṇī al-Labīb</i>
	Mullā Muḥsin Qazvīnī, <i>al-'Awāmil fī al-Naḥw</i>
	Abu al-Qahir Jurjānī, <i>Sharḥ al-'Awāmil fī al-Naḥw</i>
	Abd al-Jalīl Qazvīnī, <i>al-Hidāyah fī al-Naḥw</i>
al-Zamakhsharī, <i>al-Anmūzaj</i>	
Arabic syntax ( <i>naḥw</i> )	Shaykh Bahāyī, <i>al-Ṣamadīyah</i>
	'Abd al-Raḥmān Suyūṭī, <i>Sharḥ al-Alfīyah</i>
	Ibn Hishām Anṣārī, <i>Mughnī al-Labīb</i>
	Abd Allāh ibn 'Aghīl, <i>Sharḥ-i ibn 'Aghīl</i>
Rhetoric ( <i>ma'ānī va bayān</i> ) or ( <i>'ulūm-i balāghī</i> )	Kahaṭīb Qazvīnī, <i>Talkhīṣ al-Mifīāḥ</i>
	Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī, <i>al-Muṭawwal (Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-Mifīāḥ)</i>
	Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī, <i>Mukhtaṣar al-Ma'ānī</i>
	Aḥmad Hashimī, <i>Javāhir al-Balāghah</i>
	Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī, <i>al-Kubrā fī al-Manṭiq</i>
	Mullā Abd Allāh Yazdī, <i>al-Hāshīyah</i>
Logic ( <i>manṭiq</i> )	'Alī ibn 'Umar al-Shāfi'ī, <i>Shamsīyah</i>
	Mullā Hādī Sabzivārī, <i>al-Li'ālī al-Muntaẓimah</i>
	Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), <i>Kitāb al-Manṭiq</i> from <i>Kitāb al-Shifā'</i> and <i>Kitāb al-Ishārāt</i>
	Muḥammad Rizā Muẓaffar, <i>al-Manṭiq</i>
Theology ( <i>kalām</i> )	Faẓīl Mighdād, <i>Sharḥ-i Bāb Hādī 'Ashar</i>
	Allāmiḥ Ḥillī, <i>Kashf al-Manṭiq Murād</i>
	Muḥammad Rizā Muẓaffar, <i>'Aghaāyid al-Imāmīyah</i>
	Muḥsin Kharrāzī, <i>Bidāyat al-Ma'ārif</i>

setting; and the formal *madrāsah* education, closer in form and structure to Western higher education, run and controlled by the state. Throughout the years following the revolution, the Iranian Islamic government has been attempting to institutionalize and control *ḥawzah 'ilmīyah* education. A group of independent scholars, through their mastery on *fiqh* and other Muslim scholarly disciplines, however, has appeared as an articulate voice of intellectual resistance and acted as counter-hegemonic forces against the hegemony of the Islamic regime over Islamic education in Iran.

**Table 2** A detailed modern Shī'ite *madrasah* curriculum at intermediate level in Iran

Intermediate ( <i>saḥ</i> )	
Accredited as equivalent to master's or licentiate degree	
Rank ( <i>pāyeh</i> ) four through ten (additional 6 years)	
Awarded title: <i>Hujjat al-Islām</i> (lit. "Authority on Islam" or "proof of Islam")	
Subject	Textbooks
Islamic philosophy	Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāyī, <i>Bidāyat al-Ḥikmat</i>
	Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāyī, <i>Nihāyat al-Ḥikmat</i>
	Ibn Sīnā, <i>al-Ishārāt va al-Tanbīhāt</i>
	Mullā Hādī Sabzivārī, <i>Sharḥ al-Manzūmah</i> (parts on philosophy)
	Ibn Sīnā, <i>Kitāb al-Shifā'</i> (parts on metaphysics)
Theosophy ( <i>ḥikmat</i> ) ( <i>'irfān</i> )	Mullā Ṣadrā, <i>Aṣfār al-'Arb'ah</i> (parts on <i>nafs</i> (soul) & <i>ḥarakat</i> (movement))
	Shahīd Thānī, <i>Tamhīd al-Qawā'id</i>
	Ibn al-'Arabī, <i>Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam</i>
	Muḥammad b. Ḥamzah Rūmī, <i>Miṣbāḥ al-Ons</i>
Qur'ānic exegesis ( <i>tafsīr</i> )	al-Zamakhsharī, <i>al-Kashshāf</i>
	Amīn al-Islām Ṭabarsī, <i>Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'</i>
Methodology of deriving religious rulings ( <i>'ilm al-uṣūl</i> )	Shahīd Thānī, <i>Ma'ālim al-Uṣūl</i>
	Mīrzā Abu-al-Qāsim Gīlānī (Muḥaqqiq Qomī), <i>Qawānīn al-Uṣūl</i>
	Mortizā Ansārī, <i>Kitāb-i Rasā'il</i> (aka. <i>Farā'id al-Uṣūl</i> )
	Moḥammad-Kāzem Khurāsānī, <i>Kifāyat al-Uṣūl</i>
	Muḥammad Rizā Muẓaffar, <i>Uṣūl al-Fiqh</i>
	Muḥammad Bāqir Ṣadr, <i>Durūs fī 'Ilm al-Uṣūl</i>
Jurisprudence [Shī'ite] ( <i>fiqh</i> )	Zayn al-Dīn 'Āmelī, <i>Sharḥ al-Lum'ah</i>
	Allāmeḥ Ḥillī, <i>Tabṣirat al-Mota'alimīn</i>
	Allāmeḥ Ḥillī, <i>Mukhtaṣar al-Nāfe</i>
	Shahīd Thānī, <i>al-Rozāt al-Bahīyyah</i>
	Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī, <i>Shar'iyi' al-Islām</i>
	Shaykh Murtizā Anṣārī, <i>al-Makāsib</i>
	Akhūnd Khorasānī <i>Kifāyat al-Uṣūl</i>
	Moḥammad Kāzīm Yazdī, <i>al-'Urwat al-Wuthqā</i> ( <i>'ibādāt</i> )
	Ayatullāh Khumaynī, <i>Tahrīr al-Vasīlah</i>
	Ḥurr 'Āmelī, <i>Vasā'il al-Shī'ah</i>
Moḥammad Ḥasan Najafī, <i>Jawāhir al-Kalām</i>	

The revolution brought about a series of changes into the *madrasah* system in Iran. As an endeavor to institutionalize Islamic *madrasah* education, a series of measure were imposed and implemented, including strict regulations, a structured curriculum, examinations, and an accreditation system. As a result, the *madrasah* education in postrevolutionary Iran expanded the curricula to include foreign languages and various topics within social sciences and humanities. Another notable development is the attendance of female students in the institutions of Islamic education in Iran. Among many initiatives, one may recall Jāmi'at al-Zahrā an all-female institution of Islamic education in Qom (with a free nursing facilities

and kindergarten) which has more than 12,000 alumni specialized in various areas of Islamic sciences from *fiqh* to *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*. Jāmi‘at al-Zahrā includes students from more than 70 nationalities.

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## Islam as a Policy Tool in Iranian Education

The growth of the population, shortage of infrastructure and classrooms, as well as the poor performance of Iranian students in the international benchmark that Iran takes part in after the Revolution served as the basis of the argument in favor of a new reform in education during President Khatami’s years in office (1997–2005). The reform was an effort to reappropriate Islam and use it as a means to reform the structure and content of Iranian education.

With a series of endeavors to liberalize the revolutionary tenets, Khatami’s education reform is considered a new era in Iranian postrevolutionary education. In the social scene, he started to loosen restrictions and provide a political open space and reconciliation with the world with aim to regain the trust of the international community in Iran. Khatami’s administration criticized previous postrevolutionary education reform as merely ideological and argued that it imposed a system “based on traditional, non-scientific and ineffective methods. . .[in which] the reality of the Iranian educational situation was ignored. . .[education was] overemphasizing theoretical and abstract knowledge. . .[and] the actual usage of education in the real life was neglected (Ministry of Education 2003a, p. 8).” Utilizing the scandalization strategy to provide a ground for a substantial reform in education, failure of the Iranian students in international comparative arenas was extensively used by the reformist government. The reform bill, however, met the resentment of the religious conservative groups in Iran who perceived it as a return to secularism. To improve the quality of education was regarded the main objective of the reform. Among other areas, the reform targeted changes in the examination system and participation to enhance critical thinking among pupils. Khatami argued that the Iranian society was in the process of rapid transformation and education system ought to be able to provide adequate education and training for the human and intellectual capital of the country.

The reform was argued to inhabit Islamic values with modern theories of education. Indeed, the reform used many of the most recent discourses and paradigms in educational literature of the time. Issues such as democratization, parental choices, decentralization, privatization, capacity building, and lifelong learning were used extensively and appropriated into the Islamic tenets. Throughout the reports and policy documents of the reform (Ministry of Education 2003a, b, 2010), references were made to the previous postrevolutionary educational reform as the one in which the theoretical grounds were absent. To prove that the new reform was in line with scientific and pedagogic principles, the policy documents of the new reform devoted a comprehensive section to theoretical foundations of the reform and the way those theories were appropriated to Islamic pedagogy and “adjusted to the cultural, social and religious realities and

requirements of the Iranian Islamic society.” Among other topics, the reform appropriated Islam in a few areas to fit into the new international discourse on education policy-making. One such concept is “religious democracy” which was perceived contradictory by many critics.

“Religious [Islamic] democracy” was regarded as the first principle of the reform based on the sovereignty of God and governance of the people. Such a notion is a combination of democracy and theocracy in which the all-encompassing absolute sovereignty of God is accepted, while it is assumed that man has free choice and freedom to steer his destiny (Ministry of Education 2003b). According to the policy papers, the framework of the religious democracy is defined based on the ultimate will of God combined with the will of people, crystallized in such events as the Islamic Revolution. The social principles through which the requirements of democracy are attained include social contribution, law centeredness, flexibility, prioritizing professional qualifications and merits over personal relations, social competence, citizenship, choice, freedom, decentralization, civic education, educational justice and equality, transparency, reality centeredness, emphasis on dialogues, and critical thinking, to create a tension-free environment and establishment for NGOs and professional unions. On the other hand, the spiritual requirements, which are the main components of the religious democracy and of the absolute sovereignty of God over man-made laws, include emphasizing religiosity, exalting human values, escalating Islamic ethics, promoting spiritual education, encouraging a dynamic and critical view toward religiosity, mystical and ethical approach adopted from Islamic/Iranian heritage, introducing religiosity and the need for religious education as an intuitive and instinctive process, and teaching religion through means of aesthetics (fine arts, etc.) to fulfill the spiritual need of man and to attain prosperity, optimism, and blessings of God.

Another example is the notion of “lifelong education” which is formulated as a practical “guideline” for education of Muslims based on a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet Muḥammad and includes “lifelong learning,” “lifespan learning,” and “life-wide educational capabilities of man.” Using methods of appropriation, the Islamic notion of lifelong education is synchronized with the international educational discourse on “lifelong learning,” “adult education,” and “sustainable learning.” The idea includes the development of adult education based on the latest achievements in the field, introducing functional literacy, adapting to the changes and developments through in-service training, integrating ICT and using technology, and enhancing active methods in learning and learner-centered education.

The religious nature of the Iranian education, however, created a series of complications both in formulation of the reform bill and the implementation. One such problem was the definition of minorities and hence the accommodation of their needs – among other issues – in education. While demographically Iran is composed of various ethnic groups with their distinct cultures and languages, the Islamic constitution solely recognizes religious minorities as such and provides possibilities for education of other religions based on the Islamic (Shīʿite) creeds. The consequence is that Zoroastrianism, albeit not being *ahl al-kitāb*, is entitled to their schools and religious education, but Bahāʾīs not.

With the baby boom in the 1980s as a result of lack of any structured family planning policy, Iranian education system faced a crucial problem in providing the required infrastructure and skilled manpower. The Ministry of Education urged that the education sector could not merely rely on the government budget to cover the ever-increasing costs of education and suggested “participation” as a solution. Borrowing the notion of participation which had turned fashionable in educational and policy circles worldwide, the Ministry intended to introduce privatization, which was a contested issue and perceived as a failure of the Islamic state to provide education to its people. Hence, the Ministry cautiously proposed the “delegation of the leadership of the educational institutions” and clarified it as “to engage the private sector in the education . . .to be encouraged to establish new schools or to own and run public schools. . .to the extent that to be able to employ their own teachers (Ministry of Education 2003b, p. 24).” Once again religion came to help to justify and legitimize the policy. Thus, participation was labeled as a *jihād* (sacred struggle) of the parents and benevolent people in building schools, either through constructing school buildings and handing them over to the Ministry of Education or providing cash. To implement this policy, a new organization *jihād-i madrasah sâzî* (The Sacred Struggle for Building Schools) was established to channel all the efforts in the field and encourage more volunteers to build schools. *Jihād-i madrasah sâzî* was also provided with the power to short-cut the bureaucratic formalities for those who intended to contribute to building schools. Through the negotiations with religious leaders, policies were adopted in order to channel charities, donations, religious taxes, and *waqfs* (religious endowment) to building schools (for details see chapter ► “*Waqf and Financing Islamic Education*”). Schools built through *jihād-i madrasah sâzî* and charities were, however, regarded public, controlled by the state and the Ministry of Education and were not treated as private institutions. The vision of the reform was to eliminate schools running with more than two shifts and succeed “to increase the participation rate from 12.5 percent in 1997 to 25 percent in 2000 and some 19 percent in 2014 (Raeiyat 2015; Ministry of Education 2003a).” As a result of such participation within the period of 1997 to 2000, “1,982 construction projects were completed which added a total of 10,786 classrooms and replaced 1,500 temporary schools in poor and disadvantaged regions with proper school buildings (Ministry of Education 2003a, b).” Also, throughout “privatization as participation,” the private sector was encouraged to build and run nonprofit and not-for-profit private schools.

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## Islam in Formal Curriculum in Iran

One of the early endeavors of the Iranian postrevolutionary government was to adapt the curriculum to the principles of the revolutionary Islamic ideology. As part of the Islamization process, major changes were introduced to the content of the curriculum, and proportion and hours devoted to religious subjects were increased substantially. The hours of religious studies and Qur’ān increased from 6% in prerevolutionary period to some 13% in 2015, which is four times more than the

global average (Damavandan 2014). While Islam and Qur'ān assumed a larger part in the curriculum, in other subjects such as Persian language and literature, frequent references were made to religious topics and Muslim figures that have replaced the secular role models throughout the textbooks. These were part of the “purification” process in which the prerevolutionary science and math textbooks were revised substantially to be in line with religious doctrines, while new books were prepared for social sciences and religion.

Through the Organization of Textbook Research (*Sāzmān-i Kitābhā-yi Darsī*) in the Ministry of Education, run by clerics, a strict process of ideological monitoring and control is applied on regular basis. The importance of religious education is visible in the latest educational reform under the Ahmadinejad administration (ratified in 2010 and implemented since 2012). The aim of education as put forward by the reform bill is:

... We are in need of an education system capable of materializing *Ḥayāt-i Ṭayyibah* (the ideal Islamic life), universal justice and Islamic-Iranian civilization. In light of such a sublime human capital, humanity shall be prepared for realization of a global reign for perfect mankind and under such governance the talents and potentials of the mankind shall boom towards perfection (Ministry of Education 2010, p. 6).

Hence to achieve such an ideal, the Iranian theocratic regime has diversified religious subjects in the curriculum and has increased the hours of religious studies and Qur'ān (Tables 3 and 4). As noted earlier, this comes often at the expense of lesser allocation of time and resources to subjects such as science and math, which has been visible in achievements of Iranian student in the international studies that country has attended after the revolution. The larger allocation of the curriculum to religion has recently intensified further when the supreme leader of Iran showed his resentment of the slow pace of Islamization of knowledge. He specifically targeted humanities and social sciences and advised the ardent Muslim intelligentsia of Iran to review the curricula for social sciences, liberal arts, and humanities and bestow endeavors to purify the curricula from the content adapted from the West which “spreads seeds of doubts and uncertainty in religion and promotes secularism and disbelief.” This marked the start of the “second cultural revolution” and is the last in a long chain of efforts by the Iranian theocratic government to dominate education in its quest for the creation of “*homo-Islamicus*,” the ideal Muslim man.

**Table 3** Percentage of religious subjects<sup>a</sup> in Iranian curriculum (pre- vs. postrevolutionary period)

	Religious subjects 1970	Religious subjects 2012	Religious topic in other subjects
Primary	7	17	24
Lower secondary	5	11	26
Average (all levels)	6.4	12.7	25

Source: Peyvandi (2014)

<sup>a</sup>Qur'ān and religious (Islamic) studies



**Table 4** Detailed table of religious subjects in Iranian formal curriculum

Subjects	Grades	Primary					Lower secondary			Upper secondary- natural sciences and math			Upper secondary -social sciences and humanities			Upper secondary- Islamic studies							
		G.1	G.2	G.3	G.4	G.5	1	2	3	1	2	Precollege	1	2	Precollege	1	2	Precollege					
Qur'ān		1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2						
Religious Education				2	2	2	2	2					1	2	2								
Divine Gifts				2	2	2	2	2															
Arabic										2	2	2	1			3	3	3	5	6	5		
Divine Messages										1	1												
Islamic Ethics																			2	1			
Theology ( <i>Uṣūl-i- aḳā'id</i> )																			3	3	5		
History of Islam																							
Islamic Creeds ( <i>Aḥkām</i> )																			2	2		2	2

## Conclusion

With the arrival of Islam in the seventh century, Iranian education witnessed the inception of new institutions of learning based on Shī'ite school of thought. At the preprimary and primary education, children attended *maktabs*, where students paid tuition fee for their education in a form of cash or various services or merchandise. The erection of *maktabs* in private homes made even education of girls possible. The curriculum was heavily based on memorization and was modified to suit any given Islamic context and to fulfill the local demands for literacy (religious and otherwise) and numeracy.

Iranians also contributed significantly in the institutionalization and expansion of *madrasah* both in form and content. Among other efforts, establishment of *Niẓāmīyyah* introduced the unified curricula, a tradition which was followed thereafter across the Muslim world. Also, inspired by classic Persian architecture with its internal garden used extensively in Persian-style mosques, Iranian architects during Şafavīd era set a new standard for *madrasah* buildings and Muslim educational spaces. The model spread later to most of the Islamic world as the classic model for *madrasah* buildings.

Iranian *madrasah* which was established to contribute to Shī'ite education played also a significant role in promoting nonreligious knowledge and sciences. However, due to the rapid waves of modernization in Iran and introduction of state-sponsored formal education, *madrasahs* lost their glory and importance as custodians of education in Iran. With the establishment of Qom theological seminary (*hawzah 'ilmīyah Qom*) in 1961, however, Islamic education and its respective institutions (*madrasahs*) revitalized and started a new era. Known as the migration of *ijtihād* (scholarly religious argumentation), *hawzah 'ilmīyah* became the center of religious education and with its network of *madrasahs* and mosques played became the spiritual source of Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. During the revolution, Qom served as the beating heart of the revolution and after that as its ideological home. *Hawzah 'ilmīyah* today, financed through *waqf* and other forms of religious taxes, composed of more than 70 nationalities, with more than 75 *madrasahs* in Qom alone which releases more than 150 scholarly journals in an extensive range of Islamic subjects from *kalām* to *tafsīr* and political science in various languages experiences a new resurgence. Once reluctant to any form of innovation and modernization, *hawzah 'ilmīyah* is also present in the virtual world and the Internet. Creating electronic Islamic databases, production of electronic educational media, being available and active through various online platforms, *hawzah 'ilmīyah* plays a vital role to foster the Shī'ite communities worldwide.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 contributed extensively to the awakening of the religious revival, calling for a shift from a Western model of social order to the one deeply rooted in Islamic beliefs and values. The four ideological pillars of the Islamic Republic, i.e., inseparability of religion and politics, Islamic revival, cultural revolution, and creation of a committed Muslim, have had a direct impact on the content of education in postrevolutionary Iran. A larger proportion of the formal curricula is devoted to education of Islam, and religious education also occupied a significant place both in curricular and extracurricular activities.

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# Islamic Education in Egypt

Reza Arjmand

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## Abstract

Islamic education in Egypt thrived during the seventh to tenth centuries when Islamic schools were established both as primary *kuttāb* and subsequently advanced to al-Azhar system. *Kuttāb* as educational institutions emerged as natural, and spontaneous product of the Muslim society at grassroots level, often connected with a mosque, Islamic education was built around an individual rather than an institution, and this helped the spread of education in the Muslim world. While al-Azhar built by Ismā‘ilī Shī‘ite Fā‘imīds in Egypt to confront the hostile ‘Abbāsīds of Baghdad, it ultimately held strong religious and political directions based on Sunnī Islam. Al-Azhar with its vast endowed residential facilities fostered training of generations of learned class of ‘*ulamā*’. Female students had access to education where a series of facilities and classes were devoted to them.

Driven from Islamic dogma, the al-Azhar developed the curriculum based on theology, grammar, and rhetoric through memorization, with the intention to

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foster a sense of religious obedience among students and to reinforce teachings of Sunnī Islam. The educational target is to achieve independent judgment on various issues concerning the Muslim society.

### Keywords

Egypt · Islamic education · Al-Azhar · Fāṭimīd · Mamlūk · *Kuttāb* · ‘*Ulamā*’ · Mosque

## Introduction: Al-Azhar and Institutionalization of the Islamic Education

Any study about Islamic education and its institutions, in one way or another, would find its way to a discussion about al-Azhar (*lit.* The most brilliant) and its role in fostering the intellectual and educational traditions of Muslims in general and Sunnīs and Arabs in particular. A thorough study of al-Azhar, hence, not only enhances understanding about Islamic education in Egypt but also gives insights into the development of a pedagogical paradigm within education in Islam. A comparative analysis between al-Azhar and *ḥawzah ‘ilmīyah* in Iran (detailed in chapter ► [“Islamic Education in Iran”](#)) would provide an understanding about the role of a specific Ismaic school of thought and the impact of contextual characteristics on the formation of a given educational tradition including the practices and content of the curricula.

Al-Azhar is one of the principal grand mosques (*jāmi‘*) of the Muslim world, has been a distinguished seat of learning, and founded by Ismā‘īlīs during the Fāṭimīd reign in fourth/ninth century. The construction was begun in 970 (359), and completed in 972 (361) (for details see chapter ► [“Islamic Educational Spaces: Architecture of \*Madrasah\* and Muslim Educational Institutions”](#)).

The Ismā‘īlī underground movement, which was organized against ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate in Baghdad, was established in North Africa by Fāṭimīds in 909 CE. They constructed al-Azhar to serve as the congregation mosque (*jāmi‘*) of a new dynasty, and its grandeur would send a statement to the Caliphs of Baghdad that marked the leadership of the Muslim world. The mosque, however, assumed more roles than serving as a place for prayers and assemblies. Several times a week, there would be held court sessions in the colonnades, as well as gatherings for the drawing up of tax agreements. Archives were stored in the inner parts of the building, while classes were held in the sanctuary and the courtyard. Worshippers often used the sanctuary for the five daily prayers and for recitation and memorization of the Qur’ān. Also, al-Azhar was utilized extensively for an entire epoch and played an important role in Fāṭimīd propaganda (Jomier 2012). The primacy of the notion of *da‘wah* among Ismā‘īlīs increased the significance of al-Azhar not only as an educational institution but also as a center to institutionalize the *da‘wah* and promulgate it. Information on the early methods of instruction in al-Azhar are fragmentary and incomplete.

The persons responsible for the *da'wah* (Fāṭimīd movement) used to learn the sciences of grammar, philosophy, logic, astronomy and the fundamentals of jurisprudence at al-Azhar. Then when their interest in science waxed keen, they moved to *Dār al-Ḥikmah*, where they were taught the basic principles of the established dogmas, which were the important matters of the movement. (Saram al-Din Ibrahim 1994: 165)

According to Dodge (1961), this is an indication that in addition to the Qur'anic studies, subjects like philosophy and astronomy were also taught at al-Azhar.

One of the principal ways of promoting the Fāṭimīds' prestige was by means of their legal system, which was permeated with their special ideology. Similar to Nizām al-Mulk who unified the *madrāsah* curriculum to ensure the promulgation of Shāfi'ī school, Caliph al-Mu'izz, the conqueror of Egypt, introduced initiatives to train jurists, able to persuade the people to substitute Fāṭimīd law for their older Sunnīte codes. It was during the Ya'qūb ibn-Killīs' time as a Fāṭimīd vizier (979–991) that al-Azhar started to form an educational structure which would last for centuries to come. The vizier employed scholars and artists assigning stipends for all of them and established a close collaboration between the court and scholars.

Offices were assigned to scholars at the court to have the scholars at the disposal at all times. He composed textbooks on jurisprudence and on Tuesdays held meetings, attended by scholars of the *fiqh* and *kalām* and the students of polemics, who engaged in debates. On his Friday meetings, he read his compositions to the audience, often judges, scholars of jurisprudence, *kalām*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, grammarians, and authorities and then provided his arguments while sparking criticisms and debates (al-Maqrizi 1995). It was at this period that Azharīte tradition of Islamic higher education took its shape against the *madrāsah* system, developed in Baghdad and Nishābūr. And it was at this period that 35 professors were employed and put on a monthly payroll. Also, living quarters were built beside Jāmi' al-Azhar in 988 CE to facilitate the access to the classes, which often started after the morning prayer and would last until the afternoon.

“Two years later ibn-Killīs persuaded the Caliph to make the classes ‘universal’ (*jāmi'ah*)” (Yunus and Tawfiq 1946: 73), which may refer to the admission of students other than the original group, or to the adopting of a complete program of studies to take the place of the original law course. It is not unlikely that it refers to both of these things (Dodge 1961: 13). As noted earlier, beyond mere educational motives, it was the ideological incentives which formed the structure of al-Azhar. Fāṭimīds have earned the fame for religious tolerance and a pluralistic perspective to allow all schools of thoughts practiced, taught, and discussed in al-Azhar, so long as they did not actively oppose their rule. The remarkable effort of the Fāṭimīds in both sacred and secular culture is especially evident in the *Dār al-Ḥikmah* founded by al-Ḥākīm bi-Amr Allāh in 395/1005, which became the cultural hub in Cairo at this period (Maqrizi 1995: iv, 158).

*Waqf* was used for financing education, which often meant that the revenue from *waqf* was used specifically to finance a specific school of thought or religious tradition – a tradition which is prevalent to present day. The ‘*ulamā'* also used their influence to change the law in order to benefit education and its respective institutions. For instance, in 784/1382–3 a decree was issued that students should

inherit the property of those of their friends who died without heir (Jomier 2012). Al-Maqrīzī, on the events of 818/1415–6, mentions 750 provincial or foreign inhabitants, ranging from Maghribīs to Persians, as residing in the mosque, grouped according to strict *riwāqs* (*lit.* arcade), a group analogous to the “nations” of the mediaeval universities in Europe (“Student nations” or ellipsis “nations” from Latin: *natio*, *lit.* native are regional corporations of students at a university. Once widespread across metropolitan universities in medieval Europe, they are still in practice in Sweden (Uppsala and Lund) and Finland (Helsinki and Aalto), in part due to the violent conflicts between the nations in university towns in other countries. Although it is of a more symbolic gesture today, students who were born within the same region usually spoke the same language, expected to be ruled by their own familiar laws, and therefore joined together to form the nations). Each *riwāq* read and studied the Qur’ān and devoted themselves to *nahw*, *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and *tafsīr*, to meetings devoted to preaching and to *dhikr* according to their specific schools of thought (Maqrizi 1995: iv, 53–54). It is often said nowadays that al-Azhar was the Egyptian Muslim university *par excellence*, in fact, in the Cairo of the Mamlūks, bursting with life, it was an important center of learning, but one among many others (Jomier 2012). Al-Maqrīzī’s writing in the fifteenth century makes mention of more than 70 *madrasahs* in Cairo (*ibid.*, 191–258) and mentions 40 odd *ḥalqas* (study circles or courses) in that of Ibn Ṭūlūn, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, courses in the law of the 4 schools and a course in medicine (*ibid.*, iv, 40–41), in that of al-Ḥākim, in the same period, law courses in the 4 schools (*ibid.*, iv, 57). Moreover, there were *ṣūfi* teachings in the convents or *khānqāhs*. Ibn Khaldūn, for example, from the time of his arrival in Cairo in 784/1383, taught at al-Azhar, which he later left in order to teach elsewhere (Ibn Khaldun 1960: 248).

Al-Maqrīzī (1995: 55) records how the designation of *waqf* for al-Azhar and other educational institutions in the form of properties, buildings, and shops, or other investments in perpetuity contributed greatly to sustain the education independently over and during various eras. As a result of the secure and sustainable financing, not only the life of institutions and personnel was economically guaranteed, but all of the lecture halls were beautifully decorated, some of them being devoted to women. When the scholars were not expected to pay dues, they instead were provided with paper, ink, pens, and other stationaries. The institute was divided into sections for linguistic, legal, religious, mathematical, and medical studies. Revenues from the royal estates supported teachers for all of these subjects, as well as for the astronomy and metaphysics. Students were able to attend lectures and classes, at the same time they were using the library. The library was of great importance, as the Caliph filled it with books from the palace, procured additional volumes, and had many other manuscripts purchased or copied with the funds which he provided (*ibid.*).

The historical sources reveal three kinds of classes arranged in different ways, for various groups of audience and ranging from nonformal to formal. In the first place, there were the groups of pious people, who attended al-Azhar to the sessions where Qur’ān was recited, explained, and interpreted. In the second place, there were *ḥalqas*, circles of students sitting on the floor, while their teachers on low chairs dictated to them and answered their questions. In the third place, there were formal



*majālis al-ḥikmah* (sessions of wisdom), lectures which were often delivered by the chief *dāʿī* himself on Mondays for the general public and on Thursdays for a selected group. There were also some sessions arranged specifically for women. Arithmetical studies were limited to that elementary technique necessary for apportioning an inheritance, and astronomy to that which allowed the times for prayer, or the beginning of the lunar months (*mīqāt*) to be determined.

Morning lectures were reserved for the most important subjects of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh*, then at noon the Arabic language; other subjects were kept over for the afternoon. At the end of each class, the students kissed the hand of their teacher. The Azharīs lived meagerly on the regular issues of food (*jarāyāt*), supplemented by that which came from his family, and would often work in order to earn a little more, by giving readings from the Qurʾān, copying manuscripts, etc. (Jomier 2012). There was no examination at the end of the course of study. Many of the students were well advanced in years. Those who left obtained an *ijāzah* or license to teach; this was a certificate given by the teacher under whom the student had followed courses, testifying to the student's diligence and proficiency (see more details in Chapter ► "[Ijāzah: Methods of Authorization and Assessment in Islamic Education](#)"). Teacher-pupil relationships had a rather patriarchal aspect, disturbed only by rather rare rebellions. Quarrels between rival cliques of students were more frequent. A proctor (*jundī*) was responsible for the administration of the rules, for the care of the books, and for distributing the provisions in kind; he had a staff of some size under his command.

The language of the lectures was elegant and poetic and well suited to educated audiences. As the discourses were brief, they were evidently followed by periods of informal discussion. Although the material was chiefly composed of moral exhortations connected with the Qurʾānic ordinances, allegorical interpretation was used. Dodge (1961: 18–19) excerpts an elaborated account on the curriculum for Islamic education in the Fātimīd era and in al-Azhar through Nāsir Khusraw's travelogue, as he spent a number of years in Egypt during mid-eleventh century and became a *dāʿī* (for details about *dāʿīs* and educational processes to attain the title see Chapter ► "[The Learned Class \('Ulamā'\) and Education](#)"), which also illustrates a typical Muslim education from primary to higher levels. After memorizing the Qurʾān before he was 10 years old, Nāsir Khusraw spent 9 years studying the Arabic language, grammar, prosody, poetry, etymology, and methods of calculation. At 14, he started to study astronomy, astrology, the geometry of Euclid, and the classic work of Ptolemy. Between the ages of 14 and 17, he also studied jurisprudence, the traditions of the Prophet, Qurʾānic commentaries, intonation of the Qurʾān, history, and literary composition. At the age of 32, he learned the languages of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Gospels, after which he spent 6 years in studying these Scriptures. Nāsir Khusraw then studied a Persian work on natural and divine knowledge and the great medical text of Avicenna. After that he took up transcendent mathematics, commercial and political economy, and the magic square. Finally, at the age of 44, he entered upon 6 additional years of study devoted to the Cabala magic, sorcery, and the teachings of Jesus. It is not likely that Hebrew and Greek, with studies in the Old and New Testaments, were taught at al-Azhar. Different forms

of magic were undoubtedly not dealt with in the Mosque, as the Fāṭimīd conception of esoteric learning did not include the occult sciences. Medicine was probably taught at one of the hospitals in Cairo instead of al-Azhar, while knowledge in commerce and advanced mathematics almost certainly had to be acquired from private teachers. On the other hand, it is reasonable to believe that the linguistic, literary, legal, and Qur'ānic studies, as well as logic, a certain amount of mathematics and astronomy were taught in al-Azhar.

In the middle ages, the office of *nāẓir* (superintendent) was held by a person of high rank. Moreover, each *riwāq* and each faculty had its own head (*shaykh*, *naqīb*). From Ottoman times al-Azhar had its *shaykh* (rector), who remained in office until his resignation, dismissal, or death. The *shaykhs* of the different departments were subordinate to him, and he was directly responsible to the government (Jabartī 1975). Al-Azhar maintained its multireligious profile, among other means through the *riwāq* system. In 1293/1876, the distribution of the 361 teachers and 10,780 students according to schools was Shāfi'īs, 147 teachers, 5651 students; Mālikīs, 99 teachers, 3826 students; and Ḥanafīs, 76 teachers, 1278 students. The Ḥanbalīs were poorly represented: 3 teachers, 35 students. The students were grouped into 15 *ḥāras* (regions) and 38 *riwāqs* (Maqrizi 1995: iv, 28).

As an institution of learning among many others in the Mamlūk era (1250–1517), it benefited from the almost complete disappearance of all the Cairo colleges under Ottoman domination and became the only stronghold in the capital where the study of the Arabic language and religious subjects could be maintained. From the eighteenth century, in spite of the decadence of its intellectual methods, its organization, becoming consolidated, gained the dignity of a harmonious whole, at once a school and a university; and it can be considered from that time as the principal religious university of the Islamic world. In the twentieth century, outgrowing the framework of its mosque, it began to acquire a whole network of establishments of Islamic education.

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## Al-Azhar in Modern Era

While al-Azhar from the time of its initiation has never loosen its grip on religion and religious knowledge, especially that of the Sunnī school of thought, it has proved to be one of the major players in the politics. From time to time, the Azharīs came out into the streets to took part in social and political events. For instance, during the French invasion and occupation of Cairo under Napoleon Bonaparte, al-Azhar remained as the last bastion of resistance and was profaned by the troops and ultimately bombarded (Jabartī 1975). Again, in 1882 and also in 1919 (against the British) the classes at al-Azhar were rescinded temporarily.

Like in many other countries, Muḥammad 'Alī Pāshā (1769–1849) began modernization of education in Egypt with professional schools for army to train officers, engineers, doctors, veterinarians, and translators. Ismā'īl Pāshā (1830–1895) followed his grandfather Muḥammad 'Alī's modernization with a top-down reform within primary and secondary education. Despite these efforts, the education

remained divided: a small number of elite “primary” schools were created which attracted economically well-off families, while the general Egyptian primary education took place in *kuttābs*, through which the most fortunate ones might have found their ways into al-Azhar.

Although by time al-Azhar turned into a university with various faculties in social sciences, humanities, and also natural sciences such as medicine, it owes its fame to its prominent religious mission and its historical origins in the classical *madrasah* system. The al-Azhar model is indebted to intellectual currents in *al-nahḍah* (lit. Awakening) -a cultural renaissance that began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Egypt, then later moved to the Ottoman-ruled Arabic-speaking regions including Lebanon and Syria- thought and continues to exhibit and to balance the tensions inherent in the reformist stance of Muḥammad ‘Abduh on the one hand and that of Rashīd Riḍā’s and the intellectually oriented (rather than political action oriented) wing of *Salafīyyah* movement on the other (for details on the movement, see ► [“Introduction to Part I: Islamic Education: Historical Perspective, Origin, and Foundation”](#)). This view holds that literature and history are handmaidens of the religious sciences but that mastery of modern science and technology should be encouraged as necessary requirements for national development (Heath 2011). The *madrasah* system still prevails in parts of al-Azhar, despite the modernization in the 1930s, as a result of which the al-Azhar traditional structure was changed, and the modern installations and classrooms with desks and benches were introduced. Taha Hussein (1889–1973), a distinguished al-Azhar alumnus, scholar, visionary educationalist and minister of education (1950–1952), who among other efforts introduced free education and education of girls to Egypt is one of those who has critically reflected on education in al-Azhar. In his autobiography *al-Ayyām (The Days)* which is not only praised as one of the masterpieces of modern Arab literature but also as one of the comparative studies about education in Egypt, Hussein illustrates the setting and the method for education of *ḥadīth* in the following manner,

The boy [Taha Hussein] sat beside the pillar, toying with the chain and listening to the *shaykh* on tradition. He understood him perfectly, and found nothing to criticise in his lesson except the cascade of names which he poured forth on his listeners in giving the source and authorities for each tradition. It was always “so-and-so tells us” or “according to so-and-so”. The boy could not see the point of these endless chains of names, or this tedious tracing of sources. He longed for the *shaykh* to have done with all this and come down to the tradition itself. As soon as he did so the boy listened with all his heart. He memorised the tradition and understood it, but showed not the slightest interest in the *shaykh*’s analysis, which reminded him too well of the explanations given by the *imām* of the mosque in his country village and the *shaykh* who used to teach him the elements of law. (Hussein 1997b)

Given the al-Azhar’s fame and historical role in educating generations of Sunnī ‘*ulamā*’ and its programs of training students in the religious sciences exposes them to numerous aspects of the classical Islamic intellectual legacy. The series of reforms that have occurred at al-Azhar since the beginning of the twentieth century have systematically pushed the university’s programs toward instruction in modern

technical and applied disciplines. As a result, its educational offerings have increasingly come to resemble those of other major Egyptian national universities (Gesink 2007). The scholarship, however, with the Islamic education and related disciplines still consists of learning by heart a traditional corpus of material, encumbered by all that successive generations had added to it. Instead of the direct study of those texts which were capable of engendering noble thoughts, they substituted the studies of manuals of commentaries (*sharḥ*), marginalia on the commentaries (*ḥāshīyeh*) and sub-commentaries on these glosses (*taqārīr*). All the energy of the students was absorbed by the effort of memory necessary to retain by heart this complicated learning, which was presented with no pedagogical method whatsoever.

Taha Hussein, in his comparative account on education between al-Azhar, Cairo University, and Sorbonne in Paris, marks how the textbooks in al-Azhar were composed of literature produced in early periods of Islam. He particularly notes the example of *A Correct Reformulation* [of the first principles of law], a work which was written in the fifteenth century and still in use in al-Azhar:

... he was compelled to listen without understanding. Time and again he would turn over some sentence or other in his mind on the chance of finding some sense in it. But he achieved nothing by all this, except perhaps a greater respect for knowledge and a deeper reverence for his teachers, together with modesty as to his own powers and a determination to work harder. (Hussein 1997a)

Hussein finds al-Azhar disappointing. The daily routine, punctuated by the five prayers rather than the hours of a clock, seemed unbearable:

The 4 years I spent at al-Azhar seemed to me like forty, so utterly drawn out they were. . . . It was a life of unrelieved repetition, with never a new thing, from the time the study year began until it was over. After the dawn prayer came the study of *tawḥīd*, the doctrine of divine unity; then *fiqh*, or jurisprudence, after sunrise; then the study of Arabic grammar during the forenoon, following a dull meal; then more grammar in the wake of the noon prayer. After this came a grudging bit of leisure and then, again, another snatch of wearisome food until, the evening prayer performed, I proceeded to the logic class which some *shaykh* or other would conduct. Throughout these studies it was all merely a case of hearing reiterated words and traditional talk which aroused no chord in my heart, nor taste in my appetite. There was no food for one's intelligence, no new knowledge adding to one's store. (Hussein 1997a)

Consequently, the well-to-do families were abandoning al-Azhar partially due to older pedagogical methodologies and partly because of contracting career opportunities. Hence, the '*ulamā*' had lost their near-monopoly on the legal profession and teaching and had to compete for posts with graduates of the new schools. European-inspired law codes and courts and new state schools demanded judges, lawyers, and teachers with qualifications Azharīs did not have. Changing over to the secular track often had nothing to do with ideology, and many families cast a wistful glance behind them, sending one son to al-Azhar and the others to state school. This loss of employment opportunities became the most powerful internal incentive for reform in al-Azhar towards the end of the twentieth century.

**Table 1** Occupations of fathers of Cairo University and al-Azhar students in 1962 (in percent)

	Cairo University	Al-Azhar	Percentage of Egyptian adult male population in 1960
Professional, technical, executive managerial	33	18	4
Clerical	23	7	4
Private enterprise	29	20	8
Manual labor	6	2	28
Farming	6	46	54
Unclassified	3	8	2

Source: ('Arawi 1974: 110, cited in Reid 1990: 180).

To most people the Egyptian university stood for the modern, the secular, and the Western and al-Azhar for the traditional, the Islamic, and the indigenous. “The university that ‘had no religion but knowledge’ offended Azharīs for whom knowledge, society, and life itself were a seamless Islamic web” (Reid 1990). The establishment of Cairo University, which divorced knowledge from any religious matrix and compartmentalized learning into specialized departmental segments, with its respect for the methods of imported knowledge by infidel professors was a reproach to al-Azhar, with its stress on memorization, recitation, and received Islamic authority. Nor did al-Azhar appreciate the relentless pressure to remake itself on the Egyptian university model, with written examinations and grades, emphasized on original research and specialization. Hence, against the waves of graduates from universities, a new social division appeared in Egyptian society. While the secular education attracted the urban middle class, those with rural backgrounds were attracted to religious education in al-Azhar, who ended up working within the religious establishment, often in institutions subsidiary to al-Azhar. (See Table 1). Professors at the pinnacle of the al-Azhar system were poorly paid compared to state-school and university teachers. The average state primary teacher had a higher salary than the teaching *‘ālim* in the al-Azhar system. The very lowest rung (mostly graduate teaching assistants) of university/higher school pay overlapped with al-Azhar’s highest rung (ibid.: 139–140). This affected the willingness of new students into al-Azhar to the extent that “al-Zawāhīrī [Shaykh of al-Azhar] lamented in the early 1930s that good Cairo families no longer sent their sons to al-Azhar, and a young graduate discovered that even his professors did not” (Eccel 1984: 294).

Al-Azhar today asserts a symbolic importance, sometimes with real practical impact. The head of the institution, the Skaykh of al-Azhar, has effectively a lifetime appointment as the leading religious official in the country; a set of structures attached to his office afford him a prominent national and international role, especially among the Sunnīs worldwide. Despite the fading grandeur, al-Azhar plays an important role between religion and state. With more than a millennium educational tradition, al-Azhar is now a state entity that has evolved into a behemoth running large and dispersed parts of the religious and educational apparatus of the country. In

the aftermath of Arab Spring uprisings, a quiet but intense argument is taking place over the governance and role of al-Azhar in the country, its structure, and the role it plays in public life.

Brown (2011: 3–4) notes that nobody in Egypt is arguing for separation of religion and state; disputes center around the terms and ways in which they will interact. There is a surface consensus that al-Azhar must become more independent, but participants in that ostensible agreement are far more aware of their differences than their commonalities. They have sharply contrasting visions of how al-Azhar should be governed and what role it should play in Egyptian society and politics. Al-Azhar's prestige makes for a complex and ambivalent relationship with the Islamist movements in the country. Much of the period since the re-emergence of Islamist movements in Egypt in the 1970s, al-Azhar has been part of these movements and this seems not to be limited to the Muslim Brotherhood. This created a problem both among the public and in the Egyptian administration which has further marginalized al-Azhar.

Today, al-Azhar's traditional role as a custodian of education in Egypt is delegated to the state. Islam is also taught as a part of national curriculum in formal school system, subsidized, regulated, and monitored by the Ministry of Education. Many mosques in the country are state owned and are managed through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Al-Azhar, however, maintains its influence through the *Dār al-Iftā'* – an institution responsible for issuing *fatwās* upon requests and when the need arises. The modern-day al-Azhar has also benefited from the advancement in technology. Other than campuses in other parts of the Islamic world (for instance, in Gaza and Doha), the al-Azhar virtual university has a cyber-campus which provides distance education across the world. Similar to joint ventures of American universities in Arab countries such as UAE and Qatar, where a satellite campus is created to make Western education possible in their backyard, so has al-Azhar initiated partnerships and joint degree programs, among other places with the Faculty of Islamic Studies of Europe in Germany and British Council in the United Kingdom. A modernized detailed curriculum of al-Azhar in Germany is presented in the Appendix (Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5), which shows how the curriculum has changed to accommodate needs of a modern society.

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## Islamic Education in Egyptian Formal Curriculum

Traditionally, education of children in Egypt took place in *kuttābs* (for details see chapter ► [“Introduction to Part I: Islamic Education: Historical Perspective, Origin, and Foundation”](#)). Heavily based on sheer memorization, children in *kuttābs* were taught reading, writing, numeracy, grammar, and Islamic studies such as *qirā'at* (Qur'ānic recitation). Despite its main focus on Qur'ān and religious education, it served as an institution for mass education and literacy in Egypt and the wider

Muslim world. As part of his educational reform in the 1820s, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pāshā started to utilize Egyptian rural *kuttābs* as the recruiting grounds for his newly established preparatory and technical schools. One of the unexpected consequences of this system of recruitment was that enrolment in *kuttābs* plummeted. Parents refused to send their children to study at local *kuttābs*, which, by making them literate, would now subject them to impression into distant technical schools that were little more than auxiliary branches of the military.

Timothy Mitchell (1988: 86) argues that schooling in nineteenth-century Egypt began to be replaced, rather than reformed, by a modern system of education which was characterized by classrooms, desks, discipline, and order. Unlike the village *kuttābs* or mosque schools, the “new order” schools, as he refers to them, separated “the world into things in themselves on the one hand, and on the other, their meaning or structure.” Schools, along with other institutions such as the military, became increasingly important agents of the modern state for they had the task of training and cultivating “modern” subjects. However, what Mitchell and others who have written on formal education overlook is that, concurrent with the rise of “modern” education in Egypt, a process which undeniably resulted in a degree of rupture with institutions of the past, there was also a regenerative, fusing process of “old order” values and systems with the new (Herrera 1999: 151).

Today, religious education is mandatory in Egyptian formal education curricula. It amounts to about 3 h per week at the primary level (6 years, children aged 6–12 years old) and 2 h each week at the preparatory (3 years, children aged 12–15 years) and secondary levels (3 years) (Neill 2006). Muslim students take courses in Islam, whereas Christian and students affiliated to other religions take classes of their own religion. The Muslim teachers of religious studies are often graduates from al-Azhar and are paid staff employed by the Ministry of Education, whereas teachers for Christian or other religious minorities are mostly volunteers. After the Arab Spring, the country is more divided than ever: while some argue that Egypt shall remain secular following a national vision, others insist on the Arab and Islamic identity of the country. With the dysfunctionality of the state institutions as a result of uprisings in 2011 and the events’ aftermath, many teachers, especially in the areas with stronger religious ties, teach their own religious curriculum, rather than following the state and Ministry of Education’s directives. There have been some instances when teachers teach *nashīds* (Islamic songs performed often in choir without music) instead of the national anthem, which they regard as a Western invention. In other cases, teachers were forcing school girls to cover their hair or separate Christian and Muslim students in class.

According to Ministry directives, schools should not alter the national curriculum in any way, for example, by adding extra courses or changing the content of the textbooks produced by the Ministry of Education. However, a main feature of private Islamic schools is that they offer additional classes in religion. At some schools, there are three to four extra periods of religion class per week in addition to the two periods a week which are part of the Ministry curriculum. The extra course is

taught by a religious scholar, an elderly *shaykh* who has a long graying beard and who customarily wears a prayer cap and the traditional white *galabīyah* (Herrera 1999). He teaches in the style of the *kuttāb*, and neither he nor the students work from a written text. Instead, the teacher relies solely on his memory to teach the children verses from the Qur'ān which they repeat in unison, lesson after lesson, until a particular verse is memorized. Instead of the students sitting around him on the carpeted mosque floor, however, they face him in their navy uniforms from their desks arranged in rows in the school classrooms (ibid.).

The *shaykh* is also responsible for calling the children to the afternoon prayer – another feature of the school. The children perform their ablutions at the end of the morning break. On hearing the call to prayer, they go directly to the makeshift mosques. Girls go to the roof which serves the double function of basketball court and mosque, while the boys descend to the schoolyard. Both places are lined with green mats for prayer which are promptly removed when prayer time is over. The entire process takes roughly 20 min, and classes are scheduled around it (Herrera 1999).

A thorough examination of formal education in Egypt reveals that it is essentially Islamic in character. The curriculum is inherited from early Arab/Islamic education, theology is the controlling interest, memorization and recitation are the primary modes of learning, and outside control and lack of community involvement characterize Egyptian education today (Cook 2000: 7). Or will it be the Islam of the moderate Islamists who take the religion of Islam as their reference point and from that determine that the role of the state – and the state-run education system – is to advance the ideals and goals of Islam? (Neill 2006). The empowerment of Muslim Brotherhood and short-lived presidency of Muḥammad Mursī and the popularity of different Muslim groups, both militant and missionary, among the Egyptian public could be an indication that Islamic studies and education on Islam will remain popular for a time to come. It will be, however, changed and reformed in the wake of national and global changes.

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## Conclusion

With an educational legacy which stretches over a millennium back in the history, al-Azhar remains arguably the most influential institution of Islamic education across the Sunnī Islamic world. Various reforms within al-Azhar reflect the spirit of any given era. The adaptability of al-Azhar to the social and political changes has contributed to its survival to this day. Today, there are two parallel educational systems in Egypt, the secular or state-controlled system (consists of both public and private schools) and the al-Azhar system, which is a system of Islamic schools. While curriculum in al-Azhar is entirely based on Islam, all secular schools, both public and private, follow the government curriculum. Religious education in Egyptian schools is mandatory.



Undoubtedly, Islam will continue to mark its presence in education in Egypt in the future. The efforts to prioritize national vision over religion have not fully uprooted or controlled Islamic education in Egypt. Despite the endeavors to make religion subordinate to the state and hence to legitimize political objectives, Islamic education has lived its own life, sometimes with help of state initiatives and policies and other times despite them.

Islamic education in Egypt as most other Muslim countries is modernized and equipped with modern technologies to expand its influence and maintain its significance. Virtual al-Azhar is part of the global educational landscape for Muslims and remains as one of the choices in a highly competitive educational market worldwide. While these alternatives may satisfy the appetite of an educated generation of Muslims abroad, traditional al-Azhar continues to attract students with more traditional and religious ties.

## Appendix

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

**Table 2** Al-Azhar curriculum for Islamic studies. First year (first and second level)

No.	Course title	Credit	Requirement
1	The holy Qur'ān 1	2	–
2	Rhetoric	2	–
3	Jurisprudence 1	2	–
4	Dogmatic contemporary issues	2	–
5	Exegesis 1	3	–
6	<i>Tawhīd</i> 1 (divinities)	3	–
7	<i>Hadīth</i> studies 1	2	–
8	Syntax 1	2	–
9	Linguistic skills 1	2	–
10	Computer 1	2	–
11	History of literature	2	–
12	Jurisprudence 2	2	Jurisprudence 1
13	Computer 2	2	Computer 1
14	Qur'ānic sciences 1	3	–
15	Logic 1 (apprehensions)	2	–
16	<i>Hadīth</i> 1	3	–
17	Etymology 1 ( <i>ṣarf</i> )	2	–
18	Linguistic skills 2	2	Linguistic skills 1
19	Prophet's biography	3	–
20	The holy Qur'ān (2)	2	The holy Qur'ān 1

Source: (Fachwesen Islamischer Theologie 2016)

**Table 3** Al-Azhar curriculum for Islamic studies. Second year (third and fourth level)

No.	Course title	Credit	Requirement
1	The holy Qur'ān 3	2	The holy Qur'ān 2
2	Rhetoric 2	2	Rhetoric 1
3	Jurisprudence 3	2	Jurisprudence 2
4	Philology	3	–
5	Exegesis 2	3	Exegesis 1
6	<i>Tawhīd</i> 2 (prophecies)	3	<i>Tawhīd</i> 1 (divinities)
7	<i>Ḥadīth</i> studies 2	2	<i>Ḥadīth</i> studies 1
8	Syntax 2	3	Syntax 1
9	Linguistic skills 3	2	Linguistic skills 2
10	History of caliphs	2	–
11	History of literature 2	2	History of literature 1
12	Jurisprudence 4	3	Jurisprudence 3
13	Islamic economics 1	2	–
14	Qur'ānic sciences 2	2	Qur'ānic sciences 1
15	Logic 1 (affirmations)	2	Logic 1 (apprehensions)
16	<i>Ḥadīth</i> 2	3	<i>Ḥadīth</i> 1
17	Etymology 2 ( <i>ṣarf</i> )	2	Etymology 1
18	Linguistic skills 4	6	Linguistic skills 3
19	Sociology	2	–
20	The holy Qur'ān (4)	2	The holy Qur'ān 3

Source: (Fachwesen Islamischer Theologie 2016)

**Table 4** Al-Azhar curriculum for Islamic studies. Third year (fifth and sixth level)

No.	Course title	Credit	Requirement
1	The holy Qur'ān 5	2	The holy Qur'ān 4
2	Rhetoric 3	2	Rhetoric 2
3	Jurisprudence 5	2	Jurisprudence 4
4	Sects and creeds 1	2	–
5	Exegesis 3	3	Exegesis 2
6	<i>Tawhīd</i> 3 (unseen)	3	<i>Tawhīd</i> 2 (prophecies)
7	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 1	2	–
8	Syntax 3	3	Syntax 2
9	Sufism	2	–
10	Computer 3	2	Computer 2
11	History of Philosophy 1	2	History of literature 1
12	Jurisprudence 6	2	Jurisprudence 5
13	Islamic economics 2	2	Islamic economics 1
14	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 2	2	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 1
15	Geography of Muslim world 1	2	–
16	<i>Ḥadīth</i> 3	3	<i>Ḥadīth</i> 2

(continued)

**Table 4** (continued)

No.	Course title	Credit	Requirement
17	Etymology 3 ( <i>ṣarf</i> )	2	Eymology2
18	Semantics and lexicography	3	–
19	Islamic civilization	2	–
20	The holy Qur’ān 6	2	The holy Qur’ān 5

Source: (Fachwesen Islamischer Theologie 2016)

**Table 5** Al-Azhar curriculum for Islamic studies. Fourth year (seventh and eighth level)

No.	Course title	Credit	Requirement
1	The holy Qur’ān 7	2	The holy Qur’ān 6
2	Rhetoric 4	2	Rhetoric 3
3	Jurisprudence 7	2	Jurisprudence 6
4	History of literature 3	2	History of literature 2
5	Ethics	2	–
6	Orientalism	2	–
7	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 3	2	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 2
8	Syntax 4	3	Syntax 3
9	Contemporary <i>fiqh</i> issues	2	–
10	Research methodology	2	–
11	History of philosophy 3	3	History of philosophy 2
12	Jurisprudence 8	2	Jurisprudence 7
13	Islamic economics 3	2	Islamic economics 2
14	Sects and creeds 2	3	Sects and creeds 1
15	The holy Qur’ān 8	2	The holy Qur’ān 7
16	History of Muslim world 2	3	History of Muslim world 1
17	Etymology 4 ( <i>ṣarf</i> )	2	Etymology 3
18	Contemporary <i>fiqh</i> issues 2	3	Contemporary <i>fiqh</i> issues 1
19	Islamic systems	2	–
20	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 4	2	Principles of Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> ) 3

Source: (Fachwesen Islamischer Theologie 2016)

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# Islamic Education in Turkey

Elisabeth Özdalga

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## Abstract

This chapter contains a description and analysis of religious education in Turkey in historical perspective. It covers the first modernizing reforms of the nineteenth century, which form the background to the more deep-going educational reforms of the republican period. As a result of a secularization program initiated from above with highly authoritarian means, religious education almost came to a stop during the inter-war period. The reaction to this hostile attitude toward religion on part of the Kemalist leadership made itself heard in the first free elections in 1950, which brought the more liberal Democratic Party to power.

Religious education has continued to be a very sensitive issue in contemporary Turkish politics. It was on the question of the rising interest in Imam Hatip

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schools that the government led by the pro-Islamic leader Necmettin Erbakan was forced from power in 1997. These and other issues (e.g., Qur'ān courses, obligatory religious education in primary and secondary schools) are analyzed in the light of various recent statistical data.

### Keywords

Islamic education · Turkey · Imam Hatip · Religious education · Endowments

## Historical Perspectives

Turkey went through substantial educational reforms in the 1920s. The most important step in this reform program was the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu* from March 2, 1924, i.e., the law that secured the centralization and unification of education in Turkey. This law was not only a product of the revolutionary sentiments of the early 1920s but was preceded by discussions and reorganizations stretching over a century. Starting already before the *Tanzīmāt* (initiated in 1839), educational reform had been on the political agenda. As a matter of fact, Ottoman leaders were particularly inclined to look for remedies to the predicaments they faced in their encounter with Western modernity in educational reforms. This tendency was related to the role education historically had played in the Ottoman practice of selecting and maintaining a well-trained elite, known for its slave-like loyalty to the ruler.

The classical Ottoman system knew three different educational institutions: *mektep*, *medrese*, and *Enderun Mektebi* (Palace School). *Mekteps* represented the most basic level of education, offering teaching of the Qur'ān. The first schools of this type were attached to mosques, but gradually they spread and existed separately. They were supported by *vakıfs* (endowments) and were not compulsory. Popular education was thus not the responsibility of the state in classical Ottoman society, but was taken care of by religious institutions (Kazamias 1966: 31–32). *Medreses* provided more advanced religious instruction. Except for theology, grammar, syntax, logic, metaphysics, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, and medicine were taught. These schools occupied an important position in Ottoman society. They trained the teachers, including those teaching at the Palace School, and all the '*ulamā*'. To the extent that the '*ulamā*' performed duties other than purely ritual or religious, for example, in the judiciary, public administration, diplomacy, and politics, the *medreses* were as important as the Palace School in training the top staff of the state (ibid.: 32–33).

The Palace School, which was established soon after the conquest of Constantinople, was based on the *devşirme* institution, i.e., recruitment was based on merit, rather than on family. Boys from different parts of the Empire were brought to the capital, sometimes in the form of tribute, in order to be trained for different duties within the state administration and/or the army. Instruction was broad in scope. It included Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, etiquette, riding, archery, wrestling and sword practice, music, and mathematics. The emphasis was more on practical skills than intellectual qualification (ibid.: 27–30). The Palace School and the *medreses* were not separate from each other. Even though the Palace School mainly trained soldiers

and administrators, and the *medreses* judges and learned men, the different educational institutions interacted and supported each other (ibid.: 33).

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, under the rule of sultans Selim III (r. 1789–1807) and Mahmud II (r. 1809–1838), education became the subject of reform. To begin with military training got into focus, but other areas of education followed suit. *Sübyan* (primary) and *Rüşdiye* (secondary) schools, controlled by the state, were suggested in 1824 (Although according to Kazamias (1966: 53) there is no evidence that any *Rüşdiye* school was established until 1847). The purpose of these schools was to serve as a preparation for various military, naval, and medical schools and for government offices. In 1833, *Tercüme Odası* (Translation Chamber) was established at the Palace in order to train competent interpreters. An important objective of these reforms was to centralize state power, thus increasing control over local forces, including the '*ulamā*' (ibid.: 52–53). These ideas were implemented and further advanced during 1839–1876 period, especially during the first half of this period. In 1856 a Ministry of Education was set up with the purpose to control and coordinate the *medreses* and other educational institutions (ibid.: 61–62). The result of these reforms was that new educational institutions mixed with older ones. *Sübyan* and *Rüşdiye* schools developed parallel to *mekteps* and *medreses*. In addition to that, there were a large number of schools belonging to the non-Muslim, Christian, and Jewish minorities, which were run according to their own regulations. Missionary groups from different European countries were also active in establishing schools open not only for the Europeans but for the Turkish population as well (Somel 2005). After the Young Turk Revolution in 1909, some of the old *medreses* were reformed, so that they could offer education more in line with the times. Thus, at the time of the Kemalist Revolution, there was not only a mixture of state and religious, Islamic, and Christian schools but also different forms of Islamic *medreses* (Akşit 1991: 158–159).

With the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu* (1924), all educational institutions were brought together under the same regulation, controlled by one centralized administration, the *Maarif Vekaleti* (Ministry of Education). This process was by no means simple. As a matter of fact, from 1924 to 1938, fourteen different Ministers of Education held office, which means in average of one minister per year. This frequent change of ministers of education continued until the 1990s (Sakaoğlu 1996: 29–30). This administrative unification was combined with other reforms as well. In 1928 the Arabic script was abandoned in favor of the Latin alphabet. One of the carrying ideas behind this change was that a simpler and more phonetic script should facilitate the campaign to increase literacy. This idea was not new. Already in the debates of the nineteenth century, the idea had been conveyed that the Arabic alphabet was inappropriate to the Turkish language. Mehmed Münif Pasha (1828–1910), publicist and public servant, raised the question of a script reform in a speech held at the Ottoman Scientific Society in 1862. There he raised the question of a reform in the alphabet as a condition for the dissemination of science. Ottoman orthography was, according to him, difficult to learn and to teach. What was more, it was inaccurate and could even mislead, instead of inform the reader (Lewis 1961: 426–427). It is against the background of such considerations that the script reform should be evaluated. The 1927 census, which showed that 90% of the population was illiterate (see next

section), made the need for change obvious. Simplification of the script was directed toward rallying *all* citizens for the literacy campaign.

Abolishing the Arabic script also served the purpose of cutting the Turkish people off from the language of the Qur'ān. This highlights the fact that secularism was one of the cornerstones of the new educational program. Cultural reforms were tightly integrated with reforms aiming at setting religion under state control. The caliphate was abolished in 1924, and in 1928 Article 2 of the first Constitution of the Republic, which had made Islam the state religion, was removed, and in 1937 the principle of secularism was incorporated in the Constitution. In 1927 religion was removed from the school timetable (Sakaoğlu 1996: 25–27, 42), and in 1933 education of theologians, *imāms*, and *hatips* came to an end due to lack of student population. Arabic and Persian had been cancelled from the curriculum in 1929 (Kazamias 1966: 186).

An important rationale behind these reforms was the nation building project. Unification of education as well as simplification of the script served the purpose of setting the foundation of the Turkish nation. Members of the new Turkish community had to speak the same language in more than one sense. A common standard education would secure that everybody was imbued with the same basic cultural values.

To sum up, the educational reforms of the early 1920s concentrated on the following issues: state, not '*ulamā*' (religious), control of education; unification of education, which meant that the same curriculum should be followed in all branches of education all over the country; concentration on raising the level of literacy; and fostering of secularist and nationalist values.

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## General Education in Numbers

According to the first post-Ottoman census in 1927, the literacy rate was at a low 10.6% (The population was 13.6 million. In 2016, it exceeds 79 million. 68 million according to the last census in 2000. During the last 30 years of the twentieth century, the population almost doubled: from 35.6 million in 1970 to 68.8 million in 2000 (TÜİK 2008). After that the literacy rate increased according to Table 1.

Concerning women, almost half of the population was still illiterate in the 1980s, but literacy has increased tremendously from the 1990s. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the Turkish people fairly recently have learned to read and write. In terms of spending on education as percentage of the country's GNP, there has been an increase since the 1990s. This is given in Table 2, which shows the average spending on education in selected years as percentage of GNP.

Another indicator of the relatively slow, but still clear, improvement is secondary school attendance, which has grown from around 38% of the relevant population (ages 10–17) in 1997–1998 to 56% in 2006–2007. Secondary school net enrolment rate in year 2012 was, respectively, 81.4% for male and 86.2 for females (UIS 2016). The proportion of students entering any kind of higher education (including postal and/or Internet tuition) has increased from 10% to 19% during the same period. Thereby, the number of accepted students in 2005–2006 was 608,000 out of around 1,731,000 applicants, according to the Institution for Selection and Placement of



**Table 1** Literacy rate by sex for adult population (above 15 years of age), Selected years 1927–2015.

Year	Total	Men	Women
1927	10.6	n.a.	n.a.
1935	18.7	30.8	8.0
1945	28.5	44.3	13.5
1955	38.8	56.3	21.3
1965	46.2	64.7	27.6
1975	61.6	77.5	45.1
1990	79.2	89.8	68.5
2000	86.5 <sup>a</sup>	94.4	78.5
2011	94.1	97.9	90.3
2015	95	98.4	91.8

Sources: (TURKSTAT 1923–2006). The figure from 1927 (Sakaoğlu 1996: 22); Figures for 2011 and 2015 (UIS 2016).

<sup>a</sup>The literacy rate for the total population above 6 years of age is 87.4%

Students in Higher Education in Turkey (ÖSYM 2016). The number has been in steady increase thereafter.

There is a striking difference between what is achieved in the public and the private spheres of education. In contrast to governments, who have been late in translating words into deeds, families spend a lot on their children's education. The number of secondary school students (Grades 6–11) attending a private school has increased from 52,000 in 2002–2003 to 86,000 in 2006–2007, an increase of around 65% in 4 years. The total number of students from the same age groups increased from 3,024,000 to 3,387,000, around 1.2%. In spite of this relative increase, the figures show that the share of private school to public school students still is relatively small, approximately 2.6% (TÜİK 2008: 108).

What the aggregate of private investments in education really amounts to is not known, but the number of private schools and examination training centers (*dershane*) has grown tremendously during the last four decades. This is illustrated in Table 3.

The number of private universities is also increasing; from 1987 to 1994, there was one private university; in 1995 there were three; in 2000 there were 20; and in 2007 the number had increased to 30 (YÖK). The number of students increased in both public and private universities (see Table 4).

There were, in 2008, 85 state universities and 30 private or endowment universities. In terms of units, private universities constitute 26%, while in student numbers, they do not constitute more than 4.4%.

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## Religious Education

Primary and secondary level religious education in Turkey is pursued within three different institutions: (1) vocational schools, i.e., schools training *imams* and *hatips*, (2) Qur'ān schools, and (3) ordinary public schools, where it is part of the

**Table 2** Spending on education (including higher education) as percentage of GNP, selected years 1981–2013

Year	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008	2012	2013
% of GNP	2.42	2.75	1.74	1.67	1.74	2.90	3.72	2.30	2.81	3.50	3.53	3.81	4.18	4.3	4.2	4.07	4.77

Source: (YÖK 2005). The figures from 2006–2008 are from (Ministry of Education 2008). Figures from 2008–2013 are from (UIS 2016).

**Table 3** Private preparatory schools (*dershane*): Number of establishments and enrolled students, selected years 1975–2012.

Year	Number of establishments	Number of students in thousand	Number of teachers
1975–1976	157	46	1384
1980–1981	174	102	3826
1990–1991	762	188	8723
1995–1996	1292	334	10,941
2000–2001	2002	589	20,112
2005–2006	3620	941	41,031
2007–2008	3986	1071	47,621
2009–2010	4262	1174	50,432
2011–2012	4099	1234	50,209

Sources: (YÖK 2007b; MoNE 2012).

**Table 4** The number of students in endowment and state universities by year (selected years 1986–2014)

Year	Number of students			Endowment university students as % of total university students
	Endowment universities	State universities	Total	
1986–1987	426	481,174	481,600	0.09
1990–1991	5846	689,864	695,710	0.84
1995–1996	9103	1,141,034	1,150,137	0.79
2000–2001	46,022	1,454,209	1,500,231	3.07
2005–2006	95,782	2,055,973	2,155,170	4.44
2013–2014	293,547	3,405,757	3,699,304	7.9

Source: (YÖK 2007b; ÖSYM 2016).

curriculum. Higher education is pursued within the Faculties of Theology (*İlahiyat Fakülteleri*).

## Imam Hatip Schools

The Imam Hatip schools are creations of republican Turkey. The first schools were set up in 1924 to compensate for what was lost in terms of religious education, when the old educational institutions of the Ottoman Empire, the *mekteps* and *medreses*, were closed. As a matter of fact, the first Imam Hatip schools were set up in 1913 (Dinçer 1998: 39 f). However, since the period between 1913 and 1924 was dominated by the Balkan Wars, the First World War and the Independence War, it is better to take 1924 as a starting point. It is only after that date that the more durable establishment of the new form of education takes form. The first Imam Hatip schools were exclusively vocational, aiming at training ritual leaders for the mosques, lacking any higher aims of learning. This limitation in scholarly ambition hampered the interest in this form of

**Table 5** Number of Imam Hatip schools, students and teachers, selected years 1951–2015

Year	Number of Imam Hatip schools		Number of students		Number of teachers
	Junior	Senior	Junior	Senior	Junior/senior
1951–1952	7			889	27
1961–1962	19	17	4200	1175	388
1973–1974	58	71	10,398 +124	23,823 +137	n.a.
1981–1982	374	336	123,984 +23,087	63,723 +6070	9512
1991–1992	406	390	157,940 +71,630	85,789 +31,917	13,581
1999–2000	–	600	–	66,736 +67,042	16,095
2001–2002	–	558	–	38,719 +32,864	8482
2006–2007	–	455	–	58,500 +62,168	9099
2014–2015	1219	378	158,442 +162,594	29,194 +35,600	17,325

Sources: (Sarı 2008; MoNE 2016).

Note: The figures showing the number of students consist of “boys + girls.” It is worth noticing that the proportion of girls to boys has been steadily increasing. According to the figure from 2007 onwards, the number of girls even outweighs the number of boys.

education. The result was a continuously decreasing student population, and after less than a decade, the training of religious personnel came to an end. Thus, between the years 1933 and 1948, there was no official education of *imāms*. What was left of Islamic learning was mainly taught in the Qur’ān schools.

The first steps toward resuming education of religious personnel were taken in 1948, when courses covering 10-month training were opened in ten provincial centers. In 1951 this activity was further institutionalized, when a vocational program covering 4 years of junior high school and 3 years of senior high schools was opened in seven different provinces (Uzunpostalıcı 1995: 124–125). After that the number of junior Imam Hatip schools increased, while the number of senior Imam Hatip schools has decreased since 1999–2000 (see Table 5).

During the 1980s, growth almost came to a standstill, just to continue a fast increase during the 1990s. The fact that the ratio of Imam Hatip school students to ordinary secondary school students changed from 1 to 37 in 1965 to 1 to 10 in 1985 illustrates the magnitude of change (Akşit 1991: 147). An important reason behind this increase in Imam Hatip schools was the enthusiasm for this kind of education within certain conservative religious groups. The result was a considerable allocation of private resources to these schools through various endowments (*vakıfs*). Four different periods can be discerned concerning the development of Imam Hatip schools since they were reopened in 1951. The first period, 1951–1971, was marked by a seven-year curriculum: 4 years of junior high school and 3 years of senior high

school. During this period, the regulations were such that a student could drop the program at the end of junior high school and join any other ordinary senior high school program. However, a completed 7-year program in the Imam Hatip schools did not allow the students to take up university studies, including the Ankara Faculty of Theology, which was set up in 1949, and for more than 20 years it was the only institution offering a university degree in theology. In order to offer further education opportunities for students majoring from the Imam Hatip schools, special institutes, so-called Yüksek İslam Enstitüsü (Institute of Higher Islamic Learning), were established in 1959–1960. In order to get round existing regulations, Imam Hatip school students would enter the final examinations of an ordinary high school and thus get a second diploma, with which it was possible to take up university studies. These loopholes allowed anyone interested in a religious education, also those who did not consider going into the religious profession, to study at an Imam Hatip school. Thanks to these arrangements, the Imam Hatip schools grew into a popular alternative to normal high school education, especially for those who wanted to acquire deeper insights into their own religious and cultural heritage.

The regulations of the Imam Hatip schools approximately remained the same from 1951 until the military intervention in 1971. This year thereby marks the second period in the history of Imam Hatip schools, through which they became subject to new and restraining legislation. In a law issued in 1971, the junior high school part of the previous 7-year program was cancelled, and restrictions enforced concerning the choices available for further university education for students with Imam Hatip school diploma (Dinçer 1998: 122). The effect of these measures was a relative decline in enrolment. These arrangements went on until 1974, when the civilian government following upon the military interregnum – a coalition of the social-democratic Republican People's Party and the Islamist National Salvation Party – reverted to the applications of the 1951–1971 period. Additionally, a graduate from the Imam Hatip schools was now for the first time granted the same status as a student from any ordinary (non-vocational) high school in entering the university.

The third period starts with the military intervention of September 1980. Without touching previous regulations, the military leadership under General Kenan Evren confined itself to rigorous restrictions concerning the opening of new Imam Hatip schools. As a result, the number of Imam Hatip schools almost remained the same between 1980 and 1988. The effect of these policies was that the generous regulations from 1974 were left untouched, while the opening of new Imam Hatip schools was strictly limited.

The fourth period is marked by the meeting of the National Security Council on February 1997. The Council demanded more rigorous regulations of the Imam Hatip schools. Starting from August the same year, Imam Hatip education was restricted to 4 years. Students from these schools were also burdened with higher requirements in university entrance examinations.

The curriculum of the Imam Hatip schools combines the requirements of an ordinary high school program with a number of additional courses, such as Qur'ān reading, Qur'ān exegetic (*tafsīr*), Muslim canonical jurisprudence (*fikh*), Arabic,

history of religions, etc. Critical voices claim that the Imam Hatip schools, by offering a different program, challenge the spirit of the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu, i.e., the law of comprehensive education from 1924. According to this critique, it is not the vocational education of imams itself that challenges the spirit of this law but the fact that a large number of students choose the Imam Hatip program as an alternative to ordinary education. Public educational institutions in Turkey should not raise different types of educated people, but basically one type. To allow for two types of high school instruction – one secular and the other religious – implies taking a step back to the situation prevailing in pre-republican times, when the old *medreses* competed with modern, secular schools, a situation the Kemalist founders of modern Turkey had strongly opposed. Against this critique, various Islamic groups claim that the Imam Hatip schools are, just like any other ordinary school, controlled and administrated by the Ministry of Education. What is more, these schools do not offer a completely different, only a reinforced and more demanding, program. According to pro-Islamic groups, the request for deeper religious learning is a legitimate claim.

The key subject in the debate over the Imam Hatip schools has been how to interpret the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu and, underlying that, the meaning of Turkish secularism. These concerns have not only been raised in relation to the Imam Hatip schools but also in relation to another form of religious instruction, namely, the Qur'anic Schools.

## Qur'anic Schools

To read the Qur'an is a religious duty and is recognized as worship (*ibadet*). In the Ottoman times, the elementary *mektep* education mainly consisted of learning the Qur'an. The education was completed when the student was able to read the Qur'an from beginning to end (*Kur'anı hatm etmek*). In the new primary schools of the *Tanzîmât* era (*sübyan mektepleri*), there was no place for Qur'an reading. These traditions were therefore carried on within the framework of the old *mekteps*.

During the early republican era, the Qur'an schools gained special significance. When the Imam Hatip schools, introduced in 1924, run out of students and were closed down altogether in 1933, the only institutions left providing religious education were the Qur'an schools. In this situation, the government demanded that the Qur'an schools should be drawn under the domain of the Ministry of Education, but the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) -the official institution responsible for mosques, religious personnel, religious education (Qur'an courses), pilgrimage, etc. DIB was set up on 3 March, 1924, i.e., the same day that the caliphate was abolished, and is responsible to the Prime Minister's Office. Directorate of Religious Affairs managed to keep the Qur'an courses under its own supervision. The number of courses increased, especially between 1980 and 2013 (see Table 6).

Starting from 1950, however, the number of Qur'an courses increased remarkably. To become a Qur'an course teacher, no other qualification than a certificate substantiating competence in reading the Qur'an was required. It was especially the

**Table 6** Number of Qur'ān courses and students (in parenthesis), selected years 1932–2013

Year	Number of courses with number of students in parenthesis
1932–1933	9
1936–1937	16
1940–1941	56
1949–1950	127
1972	977
1980	2610 (59806)
1990	4998 (146606)
1996	5241 (158446)
2000	3119 (85106)
2005	4447 (155285)
2006	4951 (158437)
2007	5654 (184983)
2008	(273876)
2009	(201368)
2010	(205553)
2011	(290818)
2012	(908589)
2013	13021 (1116509)

Sources: (Sari 2008; Ankara Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü 2016).

followers of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan, the “Süleymancı,” who engaged themselves in teaching the Qur'ān. Before 1946 the Süleymancı had carried out these courses in secret. That is also the reason why some of their leaders fell foul of the law. Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan was born in Silistre (in today's Bulgaria) in 1888. His father had been a prominent member of the *'ulamā'*. Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan also got a solid Islamic training and served as teacher in a *medrese*. When the traditional schools were closed in 1924 he went into business for some time. During the 1930's he was enrolled in the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and was appointed to Istanbul as *vaiz*, or preacher. It was from here that he started to work on his special mission, namely to teach the young generation the Qur'ān. After 1946 the regulations were liberalized, and anyone qualified was permitted to set up such courses. The Süleymancı increased their activities, and a growing number of people from this community (*cemaat*) enrolled in the Directorate for Religious Affairs as teachers of Qur'ān courses.

The fact that the Qur'ān schools came under the control of the Süleymancı created uneasiness in official secular circles. Of 256 teachers active in 1952, 108 were employed by the Directorate of Religious Affairs, i.e., 36%. The rest were initiated by private persons, foundations, or communities. A comparative figure from the late 1990s was 27% in villages and 42% in urban areas. There, therefore, seems to have been a slight decrease in courses based on private initiatives (Interview with Nuri Ömer at the Research and Planning Coordination Department at the DİB, 20 October, 1998). This was not only caused by the fact that a freely organized religious

community thereby gained influence. The tension was also related to the fact that the Imam Hatip schools started to turn out their first graduates during the 1950s. Those people were more qualified than the ones trained within the framework of the Qur'ân courses and were therefore preferred to the old instructors. In line with these developments, a law was passed in 1965, which required that anyone enrolled in the Directorate of Religious Affairs should have a university – Faculty of Theology – or an Imam Hatip school diploma. This decision stroke hard against the Süleymancıs.

Another setback came in October 1971, when the military controlled government passed a law, which put all the Qur'ân schools under state control. Some schools remained in the hands of the Süleymancıs, but a large number of school buildings and dormitories were expropriated and put under the control of the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

After the military intervention in 1980, a similar confrontation was prepared. This time the military leadership considered putting all the assets of the Süleymancıs under the control of the Ministry of Education. Realizing that this would amount to an indefensible encroachment, the decision was abandoned. Still, the then leader Kemal Kaçar (Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan had died in 1959) and a considerable number of followers were tried in court and sentenced to 2 years of prison. These sentences were later acquitted by the Supreme Court of Appeal (Çakır 1990: 127–133).

As long as the Qur'ân courses were run by organizations outside of the direct control of the state, they were questioned on the grounds of challenging the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*. As just mentioned, a closer supervision was introduced in 1971. Still, this was done by means of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which would display greater sensitivity to values and sentiments of various religious orders and communities than other state institutions, including the Ministry of Education. The fact that the military in their campaign against the Islamist prime minister Erbakan in 1997 demanded the Qur'ân courses to be submitted under the Ministry of Education was therefore a sign of tightened control over this part of religious education.

The tension between the Süleymancı community and the leading cadres of the Directorate continued throughout the 1970s. During the 1980s, many of the establishments (meeting places, dormitories, shops) belonging to the Süleymancı community were put under heavy pressure by official authorities and media. Some of their enthusiasm to teach the Qur'ân to young generations thereby seems to have ebbed out. This is reflected in Table 6, where the 37% decrease between 1991–1997 can be compared to the 91% increase between 1980 and 1990. In terms of the number of students enrolling in Qur'ân courses, the figures are even more striking. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of students increased in average 14.5% every year, while during the period 1991–2000, the average yearly decrease was 4.1%. Similar trend could be traced in the first decade of the twenty-first century and up until 2016.

In all, the rates of literacy as well as enrolment have increased, and this applies also to participation in some types of Islamic education.



## Obligatory Religious Education

One of the implementations of the military interregnum in 1980–1983 was obligatory religious instruction in primary and secondary schools, a practice still in force. As mentioned above, religious instruction had been abolished from the timetable during the mid-war period. This elimination had been realized step by step. Thus, until 1928 religion had been taught on all levels, both primary and secondary. In 1928 it had been taken away from secondary schools, but still taught in primary schools. In 1933 it was also taken away from primary schools and taught only in the village schools. During the academic years 1938–1939, it had been abolished altogether (Bilgin 1995: 98).

Religious instruction was reintroduced again in 1948, but this time on a voluntary basis. To begin with, it was placed outside of the regular program, but after the Democratic Party had come to power in 1950, it was included in the regular program.

In 1974–1975, under the coalition government of the Republican People's Party and the Islamist National Salvation Party (The predecessor of the Welfare Party. All parties were outlawed in 1981), a subject called "*ahlak dersi*" (morals and ethics) became compulsory. Religious instruction was still voluntary. In 1982, however, before the National Security Council had yet allowed normal democratic procedures to function again, religious instruction was made obligatory (Sakaoğlu 1996: 109–115). As the name *Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi* (Religious Culture and Ethics) indicates, it was meant to constitute a combination of the compulsory ethic and voluntary religion courses from the 1970s.

Obligatory religious education has been criticized from two opposite directions. For children coming from families with secular inclinations, these courses most often offer nothing but a burden of lessons learned by heart. For the pious, however, it is far from giving any satisfactory insight into the wisdom of religion. Consequently, it does not quench the demand for the kind of in-depth knowledge offered by the Qur'ān courses or the Imam Hatip schools. For the religious-minded groups, therefore, it does not constitute an adequate alternative to more profound religious instruction.

Another important criticism comes from the Alevi minority. This group, which constitutes around 15% of the Turkish population, is an 'Alī-oriented sect, which in many respects is more close to Shī'ah than Sunnī Islam (Shankland 2003). Especially during the last couple of decades, when the Alevis have become more conscious about their identity, the Sunnī-dominated obligatory religious instruction has been seriously questioned (Bozkurt 1998: 85).

## Higher Religious Education

Against the background of the increased demand for higher qualifications of primary and secondary school teachers and various religious personnel, a few words should be added concerning the development of higher religious education. The present Faculties of Theology were established after the Second World War. The first one

was established in Ankara in 1949 and the second one in Erzurum (northeast) in 1971. Due to the fact that these two institutions were unable to meet the demand for higher religious education (especially students majoring from the Imam Hatip schools, who wanted to pursue an education in theology), eight Yüksek İslam Enstitüsü (Institutes for Higher Islamic Learning) were established between 1959 and 1979. In 1982 these institutes were upgraded to university faculties, and in 2008, there were 22 Faculties of Theology in Turkey.

To be sure, the theologians of today are very different from the *'ulamā'* of traditional Ottoman society. It is true that to a large extent modern theologians study the same sources, the same traditions, and the same exegetics as their Ottoman predecessors, but in spite of these similarities in learning, their functions are very different. While the traditional *'ulamā'* served as judges in the courts, modern theologians have nothing to do with the judicial system. Law is administered by the Ministry of Justice, and prosecutors, judges, and lawyers all have their education from the Faculties of Law, which are strictly separated from the Faculties of Theology. Instead of judicial duties, today's theologians serve as university staff, high school teachers, public servants in the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and *imāms* or *müftüs*. Their position is closely watched over and limited to purely religious affairs. The relative independence of the Ottoman *'ulamā'* vis-à-vis the political power is gone. Neither do the theologians of today have any control over education. On the level of the classroom, instructors of religion lack any special status. In fact, in relation to the teachers of more substantial subjects, such as mathematics, science, and literature, they are in a minor position, meaning that they often have to put in an extra effort in order to enjoy full respect by their colleagues.

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### **Ideological Controversies: The Obligatory Eight-Year School Reform of 1997**

After the heavy blow staged by the military in Turkey against civilian politics in 1980, the Turkish Islamists under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan and the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), sooner than any of the other parties banned in 1981, managed to recuperate. Polling 7.2% in the general elections of 1987, the party increased its vote in 1991 to around 11%, and in the December 1995 elections, the Welfare Party came out as the biggest party. Due to the general fragmentation of political parties in Turkey, 21.4% of the votes was enough to raise the Welfare Party to a leading position.

The first coalition government after the 1995 elections, which consisted of the two center-rightist parties – the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party – collapsed after only a couple of months. The next government, set up in June 1996, consisted of the True Path Party and the Welfare Party, with the Islamist Necmettin Erbakan as prime minister. The Welfare Party-led government was met with great suspicion and put under special surveillance, and in February 1997, the military issued an open warning against the government. After the regular monthly meeting

of the National Security Council, a list of complaints was lodged against the government, which must be effectuated; otherwise, so it was said, other means of pressure would have to be considered.

The most important charge concerned extended compulsory school attendance. Compulsory school attendance in Turkey at that time was 5 years. The demand called for was to raise it to 8 years. This requirement was all in line with Turkey's needs to improve its educational records, but hidden behind this alleged will to reform lured the aim to sow discensus into the sitting government and eventually force it from power. This is also what happened. After 4 months of governmental agitation, Necmettin Erbakan handed in his resignation.

In the debates following upon the meeting of the National Security Council in February 1997, none of the two government parties was against raising compulsory school attendance to 8 years. On the contrary, in government circles, voices were raised for even longer compulsory education. What the government parties, and especially the representatives of the Islamic Welfare Party, opposed against was that the Imam Hatip schools were kept outside of the first 8-year compulsory school attendance. The effect of the proposal was that students should not be eligible for Imam Hatip education before they had completed their first 8 years of ordinary education. The controversy therefore boiled down to a question of whether obligatory school attendance should be eight continuous years of ordinary (secular) education or eight plus 3 years, i.e., first 5 years of ordinary obligatory school and then the possibility to complete the remaining 3 years in an Imam Hatip school. The controversy could thus be summarized as one between those who, in support of the military, pressed for the "8" formula and those who, like the Islamic Welfare Party, defended a "5 + 3" formula. The "eight-year obligatory continuous education law" was enforced in August 1997, 2 months after Erbakan's resignation, without allowing any really open debate.

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## Conclusion

Religious education has been the source of deep-going controversies in modern Turkish history. As a matter of fact, this issue represents one of the most fragile fault lines in the country's public life. Discussions have often focused on the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*, i.e., the law of comprehensive education from 1924, but beneath clashing interpretations of that law lie concerns over the secular character of the present regime.

As has been reflected throughout this chapter, the main dividing line on these fundamental issues goes between the secularist establishment, i.e., the military, the higher echelons of the state bureaucracy, and parts of the upper middle classes, on the one hand, and representatives of the popular masses, rural and urban, on the other. The pro-Islamic parties, which have pressed for stronger emphasis on Islamic values in education, have done so as mouthpieces of values and sentiments of the lower classes.

The controversy around the questions of religious education thus reflects a deep mistrust between an anxiously secular-minded and mundane upper urban elite and a more religious-minded and in that way more culturally conservative part of the common people. This mutual mistrust has hampered the development of a sound debate on educational issues. That partly explains the fact that ordinary education for so many years has been pushed into the background of various reform programs. Looking back over the last few years, however, change seems to be in progress. Falling rates of illiteracy, especially in the eastern, Kurdish areas, more girls enrolled in primary education, smaller classes, wider use of modern equipment (especially computers), and, overall, a larger allocation of means to education are indications pointing in that direction.

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# Islamic Education in Saudi Arabia

Shireen Abdul-Rahman A. Marghalani

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## Abstract

The Saudi Arabian education system is unique in certain regards: (i) it emphasizes and is informed by the Islamic *tarbīyah*; (ii) it is highly centralized; and (iii) it has separate schools for boys and girls. Until 2002, the Ministry of Education managed education for boys, while girls' education was managed by the General Directorate for Girls' Education. Since 2002, however, these two entities have been merged and all formal, state run schools are run according to the same curriculum.

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This chapter provides an overview of the historical development of Islamic education in Saudi Arabia and the different types of Islamic education institutions and arrangements that exist today in the country, from primary education through the higher education.

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### Keywords

Saudi Arabia · Islamic education · *tarbīyah* · *kuttābs* · Qur'ān schools

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## Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is an Islamic and Arabic country, with Islam as the official religion and Arabic as the official language. The constitution of the kingdom, its system of government and activities of daily life are all reflections of the great influence of Islam, and as it was stipulated by the Prophet Muḥammad, the pursuit of knowledge and education is regarded an obligation for every Muslim. As a Muslim, understanding God's laws and living in accordance with them entails being able to practice one's duties as a servant to Allāh. Therefore, policies and objectives of education in Saudi Arabia, and across all educational institutions, are based on Islamic beliefs and dogma. Islam and Arabic language are inseparably linked. As such, they are integrated in courses throughout the curricula and syllabi in all levels across various institutions. Their proportions and concentration, undoubtedly, are conditioned in accordance with each educational level and type of specialization. Four distinct features prevail in education in Saudi Arabia: (1) great emphasis on Islam and accordingly Arabic, as the medium for dissemination of knowledge about Islam; (2) a highly centralized system of education; (3) gender segregated schools; and (4) education as a state-sponsored enterprise.

In the context of a Muslim society where Arabic is the lingua franca and Islam is strongly present in all aspects of daily life, to define and specify the Islamic education is not an easy task. The nature, substance, and form of the Islamic education in Muslim societies in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, fall under the Islamic notion of *tarbīyah*. From the Arabic root word (*rab*), *tarbīyah* is a process of raising, teaching, educating, and training children. Hence, all schools in Saudi Arabia are considered Islamic schools, and Islamic *tarbīyah* is perceived as the cornerstone of the pedagogy at all educational levels to varying degrees of focus and concentration. These and a host of other meanings of the term, all are included to convey education. It is, thus, deemed evident that the Islamic *tarbīyah* make up the core concern of this chapter. Against this brief introduction, this chapter will define the *tarbīyah* and to explain its semantic load and its applications in policy-making and practices.

Also, apart from what has already been alluded to briefly above, analysis of Islamic *tarbīyah* in Saudi Arabia helps provide more information about content and proportion of Islam in curricula at various educational levels. The correlation between content of curricula and the extent of Islamic *tarbīyah* is far from straightforward and content of the curricula to achieve *tarbīyah* is varied at different levels

from preschool, and general education to higher education. There are also variations within the same educational level and/or identical institutions, which creates diverse types of educational institutions, with similar aims and ambitions. Despite this variation and use of different methods, all institutions target one and the same goal, to achieve Islamic *tarbīyah*, be that through formal curriculum or Qur'ān schools known as Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān (Schools for the memorization of the Qur'ān).

The content of *tarbīyah* in public and general education has undergone major reforms and has been revised recently. For instance, a large project in Saudi Arabia – King Abdullah Al-Saud project for improving general education – is launched to attain *tarbīyah* in a modern sense, utilizing modern means. The project, explained later in detail in this chapter, is part of a larger educational reform in Saudi Arabia implemented since 2011.

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## Islamic Education as Islamic *Tarbīyah*

As a result of the spread of the Western ideas across the world, whether through colonialism or the western hegemony over science and culture, a set of new terminologies are created to emphasize the cultural differences. Hence, terms such as Islamic culture, Islamic literature, Islamic economy, Islamic media, and Islamic *tarbīyah* became popular to suggest a worldview based on Islam.

Islamic *tarbīyah* a multifold process of education and upbringing, which involves various measures including the education of the Islamic sciences, relying on Islamic heritage, and at the collective level formulating and implementing policies to train generations of Muslims in accordance with religious values and norms, which often in the Muslim countries overlap with national identities and interests. Such processes deserve due attention for two main reasons: (1) They are the common denominators among most Muslim countries (Al-Jin 2007); and (2) Saudi Arabia's education is formed based on these processes in an endeavor to achieve *tarbīyah* in its Islamic sense. It, thus, leads to accommodate a whole host of Islamic subjects Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, *tawḥīd*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *ḥadīth* in order to achieve that end.

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## An Account on Education in Saudi Arabia

Following the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a modern state in 1932, a national system of education was formed based on Islam. The policies for education in Saudi Arabia are put forward by the Higher Committee of Educational Policy and stipulate that education in KSA is to (1) strengthen the Islamic faith; (2) promote an Islamic worldview based on Islamic ontology; (3) understanding the Islamic faith based on the Muslim notion of eschatology; (4) to extend the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (*sunnah*) through education; (5) to instill and inform Islamic ideals; (6) to impregnate faith in human dignity; (7) to reinforce the duty of each Muslim to seek education and the duty of the state to provide education at various



stages within the state capacity and resources; (8) to incorporate religious education in order to promote Islamic culture at all educational levels; (9) to integrate Islamic knowledge in such otherwise secular disciplines as education, economics, sociology, psychology, medicine, law, etc. To attain the latter, any given educational scheme at all levels, from primary through higher education include study of the Qur'ān, Islamic theology, traditions (*ḥadīth*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

Undoubtedly, although the general guidelines for education in KSA are formulated by the Higher Committee of Educational Policy, there are many other forces, organizations, and bodies which contribute in the formation and implementation of education and curriculum in Saudi Arabia, which all share two main premises: (1) as stipulated in the constitution of the Kingdom, the main source to inspire and inform education, both in form and in the content is the Qur'ān; and (2) as birthplace of Islam and the site of the holiest Muslim shrines, there is no separation between state and religion in Saudi Arabia. Hence, the relation between state and religion is aimed to be maintained and reinforced.

The objectives of education to promote Islam are achieved through three types of arrangements: (a) through the promotion of Islamic education and building expertise by studying the Qur'ān, *tawhīd*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, etc., (b) through the extra-curricular religious activities, and (c) through involving Islam in all other subjects such as Arabic language and literature, mathematics, science, geography, history, and art.

## Historical Overview

Long before the foundation of Saudi Arabia as a state, the Islamic education prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Sallom 1991). Hence, the premodern education in Saudi Arabia – the period between 1880s and 1925, prior to the establishment of the Ministry of Education – is studied under three categories:

1. *Traditional Islamic education at mosques and kuttābs (Al-katā'ib*. (plural for *al-kuttāb*) in Arabic.) Among Muslims, the mosques are not only used as venues for prayers and supplications but also as educational institutions. Thus, the most famous early centers of Islamic education were created in the two mosques in Mecca and Madinah. *Kuttābs* private institutions of primary education were often created and sponsored by the communities and parents of the students. In some areas such as the western part of Arabian Peninsula, *kuttābs* laid the cornerstones for the private schools. As an institution for primary education, based on the content of their curricula, there were three distinct types of *kuttābs*: *Kuttāb* for Islamic education, *kuttāb* for both Islamic education and reading and writing teach also Arabic language and *kuttāb* that in addition to Islam, reading and writing to teach also numeracy and math.
2. *State-sponsored formal education*. Formal education was formed and managed in Arabian Peninsula by the Ottoman Empire, during the colonial domination. Schools that were established around 1883 and existed until about 1917

(Al-Hamid 2005). Although they were the only formal schools, they were not very popular partially because the language of instruction was Turkish.

3. *Private education sponsored and managed by the Muslim communities and/or individuals in Mecca and Madinah.* Islamic education and Arabic language were the main subjects taught there. It was formal education but not free, and thus, regarded as private education. Some of these schools – such as al-Falāḥ School, established in Jeddah in 1906 – are still in function (Al-Hamid 2005).

In 1954, the Ministry of Education was established; however, the first policy document for education was released in 1970 (Ziyada 2005). The document stated that, “the objective of education is to understand Islam as a comprehensive and right way to human life, and to provide students the Islamic principles and guidelines towards various types of knowledge and skills, to prepare them as active and responsible members in building the society” (ibid.: 71). The main objective of education has been to develop and enhance the spirit of loyalty to Islam. This was used as the basis for the objectives, content of the curricula, and justified the educational means and methodologies at all levels by the Ministry of Education.

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## Education System in General Education

Saudi Arabia was the first Arab country to provide free education at all levels from primary to higher education (Mursi 1995; UNESCO 2008). Every Saudi citizen is entitled to free education. As part of the free education scheme, pupils are also provided with free textbooks and health services. An indication for the government’s substantial commitment to education is the allocation of over 23% of the annual state budget to education sector in 2016 (Alturki et al. 2015). The acceleration of the economy in the past few years has influenced the educational sector and contributed to its financial improvement (MOE 2008). However, education is not compulsory and this has resulted in dropouts and decrease in enrolment rate. To implement compulsory basic education is among the serious challenges for the government, which is intensified by the nomadic lifestyle of the Bedouin population who live in far-reached and inaccessible parts of the Arabian desert in Saudi Arabia. Despite obstacles, a reform was launched in 2004 to introduce and implement compulsory education by the year 2013 (Deheish n.d.). Free compulsory basic education is also one of the Millennium Development Goals to which KSA is signatory, which further motivated the Saudi government to set a 10-year plan to accomplish it by the year 2014 (UNESCO 2008). In reality, however, the task proved far more difficult, yet to be achieved.

Formal general education in Saudi Arabia consists of 12 years schooling. Children start primary education at the age of six and finish at 11 (Al-Yehya 2004). The first 6 years of primary education are followed by 3 years intermediate education. Upon the completion of the intermediate level, children attend secondary education at high schools for 3 years. All public and for-profit private schools have to follow the national curriculum at all levels. For-profit private schools were established to

provide formal education prior to the establishment of public schools in Saudi Arabia (Al-Baadi 1998; Al-Hamid 2005). Schools in those two categories receive subsidies from the government according to certain criteria. The more equipped schools are entitled to the more subsidies. Hence, general education both public and for-profit private schools are funded, monitored, and regulated by the Ministry of Education (Al-Hamid 2005; MOE n.d.). However, despite the historical presence of the for-profit private schools, the public education sector attracts the vast majority of the pupils (Farsi 2001).

As noted earlier, a major administrative reform was introduced in 2002, and put an end to this parallel system, merging the General Directorate for Girls' to the Education Ministry of Education (Al-Hamid 2005; UNDP and MEP 2005). The merge also provided an opportunity to introduce a series of changes mainly to the content and curriculum of the general education. Following the reform, in 2003, a unified curriculum for both boys and girls in general education was introduced and implemented (Lal and Al-Gundi 2004).

Upon the lack of 2002 reform, a comprehensive reform for general education was introduced in 2010. This reform resulted in changing the entire textbooks at the general education level. It also aimed at revising the content of the Islamic education literature. The revisions targeted changing not only the textbooks and content of the curriculum but also introducing new methods in teaching Islam in schools (Shedukhi n.d.).

## Public and for-Profit Private Schools

The national curriculum is to be followed equally at public and for-profit private schools. In the latter, however, elective subjects such as English language and computer could also be provided at the first 5 years of primary level. Islamic education is not only a core subject in curriculum but also is introduced through extracurricular activities. A morning ritual is held in school yards every morning and starts a day of study with the recitation of the Qur'ān. The ritual is exercised with care and precision, where pupils are queued according to their classes. The ritual takes some 5–10 min, including brief performances and speeches by teachers, invited speakers, and students. The ritual always starts by the recitation of the Qur'ān, followed by commentaries related to the topic of the selected *sūrah*s. The topic is often about various moral questions, seeking knowledge or encouraging creativeness and innovations. The extracurricular activities also include school press, library visits, various excursions and trips, etc. all should with Islamic substance and in line with Islamic education objectives.

Islamic education is also included in all other subjects at general education level. A typical lesson in Saudi Arabian schools starts or ends by saying some prayers. It is also considered normal to find and read *sūrah*s from the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*s related to the topic of the lesson, in classes such as science, geography, or Arabic language.

The proportion of Islamic subjects at general level has changed since the first national curriculum was introduced and applied (Al-Hegail 1990). Beginning in 1929, out of 14 subjects provided at elementary level, four were Islamic subjects. In

1930, the number of subjects increased to include six Islamic subjects out of 21. In 1968, it was five Islamic subjects out of 19. From 1979 to 1980, Islamic subjects remained five but the total number of subjects was reduced to 18 in boys' schools (Al-Hegail 1990). Hence, the proportion varied: increased to 28.5%, dropped to 26%, and increased again to 27.7%. As noted earlier, in addition to specific Islamic subjects such as Qur'ān, *tawhīd*, *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and *tajwīd*, Islam was kept in all other subjects like general science, mathematics, history, geography, art, and civic education. This maintained Islam as the core of both formal and hidden curricula in Saudi Arabia. Arabic language is also perceived as an important part of the curriculum to include four to seven subjects.

At first glance, the content of Islamic subjects at different levels of general education gives the impression that the topics of these subjects are almost identical and seldom differ from one level to next. One should note, however, that the differences lie in the depth of conceptualization and the means and methods of teaching them. For instance, teaching students how to pray starts at the elementary level and continues through intermediate and secondary. However, the topic is perfected gradually. While teachers may start by practicing the prayers in class or taking the students to a mosque at the primary level, the same topics are presented in an elaborated manner and in an in-depth and much broader fashion at more advanced levels.

### **Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān (Qur'ānic Schools)**

There are two main types of Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān, formal and nonformal. The Ministry of Education is responsible for all the formal but only some of the nonformal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān schools. Others are mostly regulated and sponsored by nongovernmental organizations. The main aims of both formal and nonformal schools teaching the Qur'ān, its recitation (*tilāwah*), its memorization (*ḥfīz*), and its interpretation (*tafsīr*). Hence, graduates will earn the expertise and knowledge to work as Qur'ān teachers (under specific rules) and *imāms*.

### **Formal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān**

Formal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān is a parallel track to general education at all three primary, intermediate, and secondary levels. Like the regular schools, they are financed, regulated, and monitored by the Ministry of Education. The general education curriculum is modified by the Ministry of Education to accommodate the focus on Islamic subjects in the Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān. For instance, among other specialized courses, they also teach *'ilm al-qirā'at* –the science for different ways of recitation of the Qur'ān (Lal and Al-Gundi 2004). The composition of Islamic subjects at Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān is as follows. At the primary level, similar to regular primary education track, five out of total 16 subjects are Islamic. This, however, changes at the intermediate level. Students at Madāris Taḥfīz

al-Qur'ān study about 10 Islamic subjects out of 19, whereas the proportion in regular schools is five out of total 18 (Metwalli 2005). Lately, however, the intermediate level of general education has witnessed a change in which the number of Islamic subjects has decreased while the hours per week have increased significantly.

Upon the completion of studies at Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān, the graduates were expected to be able to recite the entire Qur'ān by heart, which along with other specialized training, made them eligible to be employed as *imāms*. In order to be able to monitor the process of training religious leaders, among other measures, the government has introduced monthly allowances and stipends – and hence harder control – for students at the formal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān at all levels.

As noted above, number of hours for Islamic subjects per week as % of total number of hours per week at intermediate level of Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān has been higher than its parallel track in general education. After September 11, 2001, a series of changes were introduced and implemented by the Ministry of Education, including the modification of the content of the curricula and closing the gap between two parallel tracks by increasing the number of Islamic subjects in the general education.

A recent study (Al-Husain 2011) reveals that, partially due to the difficulties of the graduates of Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān to attend universities after graduation, some 86% of students at Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān prefer to study science and math alongside the memorization and recitation of the Qur'ān. Some students transfer from Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān to the general education track, at secondary (or the last year of their secondary education) to avoid complications in entering universities.

## Nonformal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān

Nonformal schools are institutions for learning the Qur'ān, open to all interested individuals at any age. Some nonformal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān, known as al-Madāris Masā'īyyah (afternoon schools) which are open during afternoon hours, are monitored by the Ministry of Education. The government allocates rewards for attendees of these schools to encourage memorization of the Qur'ān (MOE 2011). Some nonformal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān are monitored by the Ministry of Education, while others are run by such nongovernmental organizations such as Jam'īyat Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān (the Qur'ān Memorization Association), which in turn are regulated and monitored by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments. Jam'īyat Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān are active domestically in Saudi Arabia and internationally across the Islamic world. In year 2000, 16 Jam'īyat Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān were established to which attracted a large group of students. Generally, the classes are held at mosques. According to Jam'īyat Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān, during the King Fahd bin Abdulaziz reign more than one hundred thousand mosques in Saudi Arabia admitted students for the memorization of the Qur'ān, within the framework of nonformal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān (Basfar 2008).

Distribution and locations of the nonformal Madāris Taḥfīz al-Qur'ān vary across Saudi Arabia. In some instances, they are located at the local school of general

education. In such case the school building accommodates both institutions in different shifts, morning to noon as a formal general school and afternoon as *Tahfīz al-Qur'ān* school. Alternatively, local mosques, traditionally as venues for studying the *Qur'ān*, function as the nonformal *Madāris Tahfīz al-Qur'ān*. Sessions often are held following the afternoon prayers. While some mosques are equipped with special rooms for teaching the *Qur'ān*, in other teaching often takes place at the same area as prayers in the mosques, where students are divided into groups, memorizing various *sūrah*s by repeating them. One student from among the group is often appointed to maintain the order within the group and report any misconduct to the teacher. Teachers at nonformal *Madāris Tahfīz al-Qur'ān* are not necessarily certified teachers and hence not qualified as such. The main criteria for their recruitment is to be able to recite *Qur'ān* correctly and teach that.

As noted earlier, *Jam'iyat Tahfīz al-Qur'ān* is also active internationally and are established in some Muslim countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Yemen, and among Muslims in non-Muslim countries like Russia. In such cases, they are often monitored by International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). Saudi Arabia has also established a number of institutions and colleges for specialization in the *Qur'ān* sciences abroad and hosts or sponsors international competitions of recitation and memorizing of the *Qur'ān* (Basfar 2008).

### **Al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah (Institutes of Science)**

Upon the inauguration of the Islamic University of Imām Muḥammad bin Saud in 1974, the subsidiary institution of *al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah* was suggested to be established and operate under the university auspicious. The aim was to establish and facilitate the exchange of ideas between scholars and faculty at various subjects in Islamic studies at the university. Since then, *al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah* has been associated with the University of Imām Muḥammad bin Saud. In 2007, a royal decree was issued to keep them monitored by the university. *Al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah* is considered a parallel track to general education which entitles its graduates to receive a certificate equivalent to that of general education. Unlike the general education track, however, the curriculum at *al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah* focuses mainly on Islamic subjects and Arabic language, and is only provided at intermediate and secondary, but not primary level. Hence, the applicants to *al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah* are expected to apply to these institutions after completion of the primary level. In addition to intensive Islamic studies and Arabic language, students *al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah* also learn science, mathematics, English, history, geography, and computer. Since 2010, the curriculum at the intermediate level was composed of five subjects in Islamic studies and four in Arabic language out of total sixteen. And at the secondary level, six to seven Islamic subjects, and four to five Arabic language subjects out of total 17. At the secondary level, neither science nor mathematics is provided. Also, at intermediate level, the number of the courses both for Islamic studies and science and mathematics match the same level as in general education. There might be differences, however, in the content or time allocated for each

subject. In 2011, a reform was introduced to reduce the number of Islamic and Arabic language subjects and introduce science and math in the curriculum of the secondary level. The main emphasis in al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah is on the memorization and in-depth knowledge of Qur'ān, for the entire 9 years of their studies. Other subjects should be of the secondary priorities.

With their major in Islamic sciences and Arabic language, the graduates of al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah can continue their studies at the Islamic University of Imām Muḥammad ibn Saud as expert in Islamic studies; or alternatively in such disciplines as science, medicine, or computer science after passing complementary studies or specific procedures which qualifies them for such institutes. In a rapid expansion, the number of al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah in Saudi Arabia reached 2138 in 2013 and has been in rise since then.

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## Islamic Higher Education

Islamic *tarbiyah* and Arabic language were the core subjects within the higher education, which was provided in the two grand mosques in Mecca and Madinah and subsidized by the government in 1929 (Al-Hamid 2005). In 1949, the Sharī'ah College – the first formal institution of higher education specialized in Islamic studies – was established in Mecca. Sharī'ah College was merged into the newly established Umm-al-Qurā University in 1980, and until this date it has maintained its unique status in providing courses in Islamic studies as part of its curriculum.

Nowadays, there are two main universities with specific focus on Islamic education. The first is the University of Imām Muḥammad ibn Saud in Riyadh, which focuses mainly on the study of Islamic sciences and the Arabic language. As mentioned earlier, it assumes the responsibility of monitoring some 62 al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah throughout Saudi Arabia and more in other countries such as Japan, the United States, and United Arab Emirate (Al-Hamid 2005). The second university is the Islamic University in Madinah, which monitors two al-Ma'āhīd al-'Ilmīyyah, two institutions for the study of *ḥadīth* in Mecca and Madinah, and an Islamic institution in Senegal that provides general and higher Islamic education. The university is renowned for its large number of international students. Only 15% of students are from Saudi Arabia (*ibid.*). Both universities conduct research in Islamic studies, and disseminate their scholarly efforts through translation and publication. They also play an active role in maintaining the Islamic heritage, among other endeavors through collecting, commenting, and publishing.

All institutions of higher education in Saudi Arabia (except for some such disciplines as medicine) are gender segregated, and four subjects related to Islam are mandatory for all higher education institutions. There are also Islamic Tarbiyah departments at all state universities. In teacher training courses, students are required to define at least one Islamic goal in each class, to be evaluated accordingly by peers and instructors. The procedure is followed strictly even at such departments as English language education (For example, during her internship at a secondary school, the author was denied some points by her supervisor, since she failed to

mention an Islamic aspect of the topic related to English grammar lesson. The supervisor noted, had the author written a sentence including such an Islamic “word or expression as a pray,” the full grade would have been granted.).

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## Globalization and Reforms in Islamic Education

Saudi education in Arabia is highly centralized and the Ministry of Education is the only authority to formulate, introduce new policies, make decisions or implement reforms at the national level. All changes in the curriculum shall be done under the supervision of the Deputy Prime Minister. Hence, at some occasions, to satisfy various local needs and preferences is a hard task to fulfill.

During the twentieth century, a number of educational reforms were introduced (Deheish n.d.), mostly focusing on the school system and such components as the curriculum, grading system, etc. Since 2005, however, a comprehensive reform project was launched by King Abdullah Al-Saud (Tatwir 2010). It has been planned to be completed in four stages. In 2011, the second stage was completed. The project includes substantial reforms to improve general education, with the main focus on the improvement of the content of the curriculum, including Islamic subjects.

Among other impacts, globalization has resulted in the modification of the curriculum and introduction of new topics. For instance, topics such as human rights, global community and the like have been added to courses such as *ḥadīth*. This is unprecedented. One may argue that the scope and significance of Islamic *tarbiyah* has increased in the contemporary era, as a result of globalization. And traditional subjects within Islamic studies pay more attention to modern issues and are concerned with questions at global level.

Still, a series of obstacles and complications are yet to be tackled and surmounted. Reforms have been focusing on both spreading and improving education, and a growing tendency has been to improve the curriculum. However, the latest reform known as Tatwir endeavors to tackle the problem through four committees for editing, credibility control, quality control, and expert control by a group of professors, teachers, and ‘*ulamā*’, supervised by the Deputy Prime Minister (Al-Gamdi 2011).

At the class level, teachers has to define an Islamic goal in every lesson, as advised by the Ministry of Education. In many cases the actual content that is being delivered in classrooms is strongly slanted to conform to some radical views. Under the guise of “Islamization” of content, some “zealous” teachers have experimented with and played a major role in inculcating opinions that are characterized as radical or representative of only a very small minority of Muslims. Despite those topics being not part of the curriculum, nevertheless they could be introduced as part on the teacher’s own initiative, exploiting the Islamic goal for the lesson.

Globalization has also resulted in a growing pressure on the state to allow the participation of various Islamic perspectives in setting the curriculum of Islamic education, not only at general but also in higher education. Recently, there have been



some voices calling for “moderation.” In other words, “extremism” has become too costly to maintain.

In addition, the reforms would be effective if the outcomes were studied and evaluated carefully. Longitudinal studies on education in Saudi Arabia are not available to suggest improvements as a result of the changes and reforms. The evolutions are limited to those with consultative natures or informal enquiries. As noted by al-Ba’adi, the general supervisor of education from 2005 till 2010 (Al-Bately 2011), lack of formal and comprehensive evaluation of education in Saudi Arabia has made it impossible to grasp the extent of the problems and improvements. The research is only limited to those who provide a general overview about some indicators, for instance indicators that suggest a positive trend in achievements in universal literacy, or negative trends which show a noticeable poor performance of students, increasing school dropouts, and poor discipline that governs students, teachers and school administrators.

Despite this, education in Saudi Arabia has come a long way. Against all odds, reforms have managed to combine Islamic and modern subjects to the curriculum. Education is still heavily inspired and informed by Islam and the Islamic notion of *tarbiyah* is the cornerstone of education in all levels in the country.

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## Conclusion

Education in Saudi Arabia is inspired by Islam, and Islamic education is not only gained through specialized studies of Islam but also through a range of formal or nonformal educational institutions. Islamic education is attained through: (a) all subjects of the curriculum such as science and mathematics, (b) extracurricular activities, (c) nonformal education, and (d) other everyday life activities. All the above can be regarded as sources for Islamic education given that Islamic education is made a goal and frame of reference for them all.

Globalization and interaction with the world, as much as they affect the socio-economic status of people, provide also opportunities for exchange and make some changes, among other areas in education, inevitable. Such changes could be traced in recent reforms within Saudi Arabian education at various levels.

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# Islamic Education in Morocco

Helen N. Boyle and Abdenour Boukamhi

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## Abstract

Islamic education in Morocco has changed dramatically over even the last 50 years. It has also flourished and grown even as public schooling has become increasingly available and has seen dramatic increases in enrolment. Traditional Islamic schools – Qur’anic *kuttābs* – in Morocco have changed and repositioned themselves in the education sector, introducing innovations to make these schools more appealing to parents, who seek to imbue their children with traditional values and culture, at the same time ensuring they get a modern education that will lead to economic advancement and success as adults. This chapter explores the pre-university Islamic education sector in Morocco, looking at some of the major developments in school curricula, staffing, organization, and purpose.

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**Keywords**Morocco · *Kuttāb* · Islamic education · Qur'ānic schools

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**Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the role of contemporary Islamic schools in Morocco, with particular emphasis on Qur'ānic preschools, the most prevalent form of traditional Islamic education. These schools usually focus on Qur'ānic memorization although, increasingly, many of them add in some alphabetic learning and some basic arithmetic. Data informing this chapter comes from the dataset collected in the course of an ethnographic study on Qur'ānic schools in 1998 in Morocco, review of literature, and interviews in 2013 with a small sample of Qur'ānic preschool teachers, parents, and one *fqih* (*faqīh*) or traditional Islamic school teacher in the town of Chefchaouen. These latter interviews focused on the evolving mission and specific practices within contemporary Moroccan Qur'ānic schools.

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**Moroccan Islamic Education in the Precolonial and Colonial Periods**

The philosophical underpinning of Islamic education, in Morocco and elsewhere, is that knowledge comes from the development of the whole person: the physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the person. Thus, formal education in Islam puts a great deal of emphasis on developing the essence of the human – i.e., the soul (Bin Omar 1993). This is in contrast to more recent European and American traditions where the intellect is often emphasized as the primary focus of formal education. Education – the quest for knowledge – for Muslims necessarily includes religious study; spiritual knowledge is as important as scientific, empirical knowledge and indeed complements it (Ashraf 1985).

Prior to and during the period of French colonization (1912–1956), Moroccan Islamic schools tended to be loosely organized from an administrative point of view, usually supported and run by community members and, in the larger cities, by wealthy patrons. In this sense, they were genuinely community institutions, responsive to community needs and values without being highly centralized or overly bureaucratic (Wagner 1983b). Institutionally, the types of schools that existed included *kuttābs*, *madrasahs*, and mosque-universities, all of which still exist today. In precolonial and colonial times, *kuttābs*, both rural and urban, served young children as their first educational institution, often constituting the only formal education a child would receive. The curriculum was largely Qur'ānic memorization. *Madrasahs* and to a large extent mosque-universities were generally only located in cities. *Madrasahs* usually served somewhat older children who had distinguished themselves in the *kuttāb* or whose parents were wealthy enough to send them to the city and

support their studies. At the *madrasah*, students studied a wider variety of subjects including grammar, *fiqh* (jurisprudence or *sharī'ah* law), *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis), etc. Mosque-universities were sites of higher learning in the subjects offered in the *madrasahs* and additional subjects including philosophy, history, etc. A general description of the structure of learning in Islamic higher education in Morocco portrays it as very open and well rounded, emphasizing choice, autonomy, access, and personal development:

... its internal structure nevertheless showed an originality which made, for example the Qarawīyyīn University comparable to an American college. This originality could be seen: (a) in the material organization of education since the place of learning was open both to the student (in the restricted and classical sense of the term) and also to the ordinary citizen who wished to deepen his knowledge of theology without being hindered by strict and paralyzing administrative procedures; (b) in its independence from the administrative and political authorities; (c) in educational terms, for real importance was attached to the periods of training being imposed, emphasis was placed on the freedom of choice of the student and on continuing individual efforts to acquire knowledge; and (d) in that the notions of backwardness, wastage, failures, and maladjustment to school, so important in an educational network subject to the modern demands of production were not considerations in this system of education. (Lahjomri 1985: 3417)

In large part, these characteristics could also be used to describe *madrasahs* and even *kuttābs* to a certain extent.

Students in these Islamic schools in Morocco studied and progressed at their own pace in mastering material. There were no set school year and no formal tests. In their emphasis on students learning at their own pace, absent notions of uniformity and failure, Islamic institutions had put into practice centuries ago many educational ideals that we embrace today as positive, holistic, and student-centered.

In terms of actual classroom activity at the *madrasah* and *kuttāb* levels in particular, students copied and memorized. *Kuttāb* students copied Qur'ānic verses onto wooden *lawḥs* which were flat wooden slates with a whitewash applied to them that allowed them to act almost like chalkboards. Students wrote on them with pens dipped in a black inky mixture. When they memorized the verse they had written out, they cleaned the *lawḥ* and began writing and memorizing another verse (Abu-Talib 1987). Teachers coached students individually or in small groups, listening to them recite and correcting their mistakes both oral and written. After memorizing the Qur'ān, students who stayed in school moved to other subjects and other texts and on to a *madrasah* if possible. Methods also evolved to include more explanation.

Traditionally, teachers of the Qur'ān and Islamic studies were given great respect in Morocco, and there is a proverb that says when Moroccan fathers brought their sons to the *faqih* (traditional teacher) to learn the Qur'ān, they would tell him “if you kill him I will bury him” meaning that the *faqih* had free reign with the child. This also points to the great prestige associated with learning the Qur'ān. It was considered so important and sacred that learning it was worth almost any punishment. Another folk saying goes “any part of the body struck while memorizing the Qur'ān will not burn

in hell” (Wagner 1983b: 184). Traditional Qur’ānic schools did rely heavily on corporal punishment to discipline students, to “correct” mistakes and to “motivate” students to learn better.

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## A New Type of Moroccan School: The “Modern” Public School

During the colonial period (1912–1956), the French introduced an alternative model of schooling into the Moroccan context, primarily designed to educate personnel to serve in the French colonial administration. However, it had lasting repercussions, beyond the simple supply of labor to sustain the French administration. Since French principles of colonization involved strong tendencies toward assimilating natives into French culture (Watson 1982), the institutions implanted in the colonies were replicas of French institutions in France. In Morocco, not surprisingly, French (not Arabic) was the language of instruction. In the days immediately following colonialism, the system left behind by the French was deepened and expanded and, eventually, Arabized, especially in terms of the language of instruction.

The underlying assumptions that permeated colonial and postcolonial public education in Morocco were based on French educational values and ideas, which had little in common with the Islamic assumptions and values of the original system. For example, the French school system was based chiefly on the *encyclopedist* principles of *rationalism*, *universality*, and *utility* which called for a centralized, standardized curriculum imparting a scientific outlook (as opposed to a more spiritual or intuitive one) and the offering of a broad base of subjects, without early specialization or concentration (such as on the Qur’ān). Moreover, students were to acquire knowledge in the same order, at the same pace nationwide. Grade promotion was based on a system of national examinations, which were also completely standardized to ensure uniformity and fairness (Holmes and McLean 1989). These precepts were very different from the traditional Islamic method of having students progress at their own pace, based on mastery of material, as opposed to test results.

The principal of utility mandated that rational knowledge be applied for the improvement of society. This was very much in line with Islamic educational thinking, where the goals of schooling and community life were typically closely linked. However, the application of this principle, which justified many forms of vocational education, was never viewed as highly as the more theoretical focus of study by the French themselves or the Moroccans afterward. That said, during this period of independence, public school education did lead to jobs and to greater economic prosperity. The new government employed almost all university and high school graduates, many of them as teachers in the new Moroccan educational system. Thus, modern education was seen as having utility; it was an avenue not just to acquire individual prosperity but an avenue toward national development. Hence, demand for public education grew, as the demand for traditional Islamic education waned.

## Adaptation and Complementarity

### Adaptation

Some *kuttābs*, most *madrasahs*, and all mosque-universities like the al-Qarawīyyīn were eventually drawn into the government system (a process started by the French), and they evolved into a separate religious track of schooling offered under the auspices of the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs. Together, these schools teach a broader array of subjects, and they award formal credentials equivalent to those from the public school and university system. In an interview with the newspaper *Asharq Alawsat* (Middle East) (2012), the Director of Traditional Education in the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs (MERA) reported that there were 499 MERA traditional Islamic schools in Morocco, 68.47% of which were in rural areas, according to official ministry statistics for the school year 2010–2011. Of these he reported that only five were fully sponsored and managed by the ministry, while the ministry provided grants and compensation to the students and the teachers (respectively) of another 156 schools. The rest of the schools were supported by philanthropists/benefactors from the communities. These schools are analogous to Catholic schools in the United States or Europe, for example. Like those schools, most of these traditional schools in Morocco are privately supported and run. In terms of location, 67% of these schools are annexed to mosques, and some of the classroom spaces lack water, proper sanitation, and electricity. Most (almost 80%) are in reach of telephone lines, and 13% even have Internet. There are approximately 30,000 students (around 13% of whom are female) enrolled in these 499 schools (*Asharq Alawsat*, No. 122008, May 1, 2012.).

In general, these schools still encompass the teaching of Qur'ānic memorization but also offer more formalized study of Islamic topics as well as secular subjects. The Director of Traditional Education in the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs further stated in the same interview that these schools were brought under the MERA in 2001 because the King wanted traditional education to become more formal in terms of its exam system, its own regulations and supervision structure, and its diplomas/certificates. For example, the enrolment age in the traditional educational stream has been changed to age 6 which is the same as the public schools. (It should be noted as well that many countries sought to impose greater regulation on Islamic schools in the wake of 9/11.)

In April of 2004 in an official speech, King Mohamed VI said: "...we are interested in improving the traditional schools and preserving the memorization of the Qur'ān; we will protect these schools from any threat as they are part of the Moroccan identity. We are also providing training and integrating the graduates of traditional schools into the public education system. We are committed to avoiding closed thinking and a closed mentality while being open to other cultures." The King's choice of words is also significant. *Madrasah* simply means school in Arabic; public schools in Morocco are, therefore, *madrasahs*. The term that the King and MERA officials used to describe Islamic schools can be translated as "traditional" or "old" schools *al-madāris al-'atīqah*. Indeed, the King seems to



prefer to use the term “traditional school” rather than *madrasah* by itself, most likely to ensure that Moroccan Islamic schools are not associated with radical Islam in the way that the term *madrasah* might connote in other contexts. Under the directorate of traditional education in the MERA, reforms in the formal Islamic educational stream opened up more opportunities for the graduates, who, under the old system, mostly became village preachers and received very meager annual compensation, which was often in the form of the main product of the region and a little money. Now, the graduates are officially qualified to perform a wider variety of jobs including religious counselor, *imām*, and a wider variety of religious preacher positions, some with regular monthly salaries. In addition, the students who get a baccalaureate from an Islamic traditional school can continue their education at a Moroccan university and earn a B.A. or a master’s degree. Graduates of the traditional Islamic educational stream often choose majors that are closer to their diploma such as Arabic language, Islamic studies, and history. With these degrees, however, the graduates are qualified to apply for a much wider variety of jobs, including teaching and other government and private sector posts.

While some *kuttābs* were drawn into the government stream of Islamic education described above, many were not. Those that remained were faced with a dilemma, in that their ability to attract pupils had started to decline. Ever resourceful, most of these *kuttābs* transformed themselves into Qur’ānic pre-schools, a role encouraged and endorsed by the monarchy as well. Pupils spent a year or two in a *kuttāb* and then went on to first grade. In addition and alternatively, *kuttāb* teachers opened religious summer schools, so that children could continue to memorize the Qur’ān in the traditional way, even after they enrolled in public school. In these two forms, *kuttābs* continued to have a robust presence on the educational landscape in Morocco. Indeed, in the late 1980s and the 1990s, Wagner estimated that in Morocco, approximately 80% of all children still attended some form of Qur’ānic school for a portion of their school years (Wagner 1998).

King Hassan II endorsed Qur’ānic schools as pre-schools in 1968 in a speech where he attested to the value of the *kuttāb* as a Moroccan tradition and laid out the idea that the *kuttāb* should be a preschool for children (Bouzoubaa 1998). This speech explicitly referred to a social benefit in sending a child to the *kuttāb*, with its primary focus on memorization. The king’s argument was that if one memorizes one can pray. If one prays one goes to the mosque. If one goes to the mosque, one engages with the community of practice in one’s town, one’s country, and even the global *ummah*. Hassan II expressed it as follows:

... but the importance [of going to mosque and seeing people pray] lies in the fact that they see the greatness of Muslims and their togetherness. Also, they adopt that impression [of togetherness] that will always remain engraved in their minds.

These Qur’ānic pre-schools (which are usually simply referred to as *kuttābs*) are encouraged and regulated to a certain degree by the government in that they receive some oversight from the Ministry of Education and are considered part of the school

system, although the ministry does not provide any financial support at the operational level.

Research on Moroccan *kuttābs* over the last 40 years attests to how well they have adapted to a context in which public schools are the main source of education for children and to how they have taken on a role in preparing children for public schooling. Qur'ānic preschools teach children to sit in rows, recite in unison, recite individually, socialize with other children, respect the teacher, and learn to count and recognize numbers and learn to recognize and write letters and sometimes even words (Wagner 1989). Qur'ānic pre-schools initiate children into the culture, behavior, and expectations of formal schooling, possibly making them more ready to learn and succeed in school. Adaptation extends beyond the behavioral to the content areas as well:

As it happens, many indigenous schools provide, as a by-product of religious training, language, cognitive, and social skills very similar to those which are taught in the contemporary secular school system. (Wagner 1989: 7)

Qur'ānic pre-schools in Morocco are often cited as sources of literacy in Arabic. Traditionally, the idea of literacy in the Qur'ānic school context included the ability to recite the Qur'ān, although not necessarily the ability to decode words and sentences. However, even using the “modern” conception of literacy as encompassing the ability to read and write, Qur'ānic schools do provide literacy education:

...Qur'ānic school includes a number of common features for literacy instruction: oral memorization of the Qur'ān; emphasis on correct (that is, accurate and aesthetic) oral recitation; training in the Arabic script; and strict authoritarian instruction. (Wagner 1983a: 81)

Wagner also raises some questions as to whether rote learning – a common feature of Qur'ānic preschools – is as detrimental as previously thought. He cites evidence from work he has done with the Morocco Literacy Project which suggests that prior memorization is a help to reading acquisition in Arabic. He also cites work by Chomsky which suggests that being able to orally recite passages before having to decode them helped children who normally had trouble with reading fluency (Wagner 1983b: 187).

Recently, the Ministry of Education did put forth basic objectives for pre-schools, including *kuttābs*, which are counted as part of the Ministry of Education's system, encouraging them to ensure that their pupils:

- Memorize several Qur'ānic verses
- Begin to learn the basic principles of Islam
- Prepare for admission to the first cycle of primary education
- Acquire educational habits and concepts of spatial organization and guidance
- Educate children's senses and cultivate their ability to pay attention and express themselves
- Develop fine motor and physical skills, especially through drawing and writing (Moroccan Ministry of National Education (n.d.) [http://www.men.gov.ma/Lists/Pages/cycles\\_ens\\_presco-prim\\_prog.aspx](http://www.men.gov.ma/Lists/Pages/cycles_ens_presco-prim_prog.aspx))

These goals effectively encourage Qur'ānic pre-schools to adapt and expand their curriculum beyond Qur'ānic memorization, something many *kuttābs* have done over the last 15 years. According to teachers interviewed in 2013, parents have started asking for new subjects, in addition to Qur'ānic memorization, such as learning the alphabet and writing, numeracy, and even familiarization with the French alphabet and vocabulary. Only 10 years ago, *kuttāb* teachers use to teach three *ḥizbs* (sections) of the Qur'ān, but this has been reduced to only one *ḥizb* (the Qur'ān is made up of 60 *ḥizbs*). The Qur'ān is taught for 2 hours each day (1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon), and the rest of the school day (about 3 hours) is given over to other subjects as described above. Though the ministry has not adopted a specific textbook for *kuttābs*, teachers were advised through trainings offered by the provincial delegations of education to use the My Daily Activities textbook because it is oriented toward achieving the above goals, including numeracy lessons, the Arabic alphabet, and some drawing and coloring.

Indeed, the rise of public schooling has had a profound effect on the pedagogy in Qur'ānic preschools and not just the curriculum. While they are changing, Moroccan public schools still tend to adhere to the idea of the teacher as the giver of knowledge, a figure of authority not to be too overtly challenged. Methods tend to be lecture, “chalk and talk” as opposed to really interactive or student centered. Qur'ānic preschools have tended to imitate these methods more and more, having children sit in rows, sometimes at desks and chairs, use blackboards, pencils and paper, and listen to the teacher lecture. Indeed, many of the pedagogical techniques found in *kuttābs* 50 or 100 years ago could be described as student-centered and cooperative. Group work, peer tutoring, independent work, and mastery learning are all things that have gained prominence and approval in current educational discourse, as educators learn more and more about how children learn and what sorts of techniques and environments foster learning. In this sense, Qur'ānic schools in Morocco have valuable lessons to offer to public schooling, both in Morocco and elsewhere, but these lessons have been ignored and continue to be ignored, even by the Qur'ānic schools themselves (Boyle 2004). The wisdom of *kuttābs* increasingly turning to the public school model of teaching for inspiration is perhaps questionable, and the impact of the shift away from Qur'ānic memorization and traditional pedagogy remains to be seen. However, as much as *kuttābs* adapt to public school methods and ways, it is important to note that from the perspective of Moroccan tradition and the development of children's cultural identity, Qur'ānic preschools play a greater role than simply preparing students for public school.

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## Complementarity

Qur'ānic preschools have been able to survive and adapt to the current and overwhelming demand for public schooling not only because they have taken on an explicit role in preparing children for public school but also because they are valued for things that public schools – and secular kindergartens or nursery schools – do not

do or are not perceived to do well (Boyle 2004). Part of their persistence relates to the complementary role they play vis-à-vis the public schools.

First and foremost, they facilitate memorization of some of the Qur'ān at an early age, when children are most able to memorize and retain. Memorization of the Qur'ān, even in this abridged form, is significant not because children understand what they have memorized, nor because it is a step on the road to memorizing the full Qur'ān, but because this relatively brief exercise in learning has the lasting effect of embodying the Qur'ān in the beings of these *kuttāb* students. The embodied Qur'ān preserves not just the words or the grammar, which are not in danger of being lost or mixed up these days, but the living spirit of the document vis-à-vis Moroccan practice. A part of the Qur'ān is engraved in the mind of these pre-school children. To extend this metaphor, engraving is subject to erosion from the elements; and so too are Qur'ānic verses engraved on the human mind subject to erosion from social elements. However, the wind and rain and other elements that erode the carving on a piece of stone have to work twice as hard if the material is deeply engraved. In Morocco, conventional wisdom suggests that Qur'ānic verses can be more deeply etched on the pliable material of the child than on the more brittle, less malleable material of the adult. Thus, the effort expended to memorize the Qur'ān at an early age is worth the effort since the verses engraved on the young child are less susceptible to erosion by the elements in adulthood and the Qur'ān remains embodied within the person.

Indeed, Qur'ānic memorization is emphasized in Moroccan learning traditions more so than in other Islamic countries (Eickelman 1985). Embodiment casts Qur'ānic memorization in a decidedly more positive light than referring to it as mindless rote learning that leads to a blind acceptance of certain ideas and tenants, as has been done in the past (MacDonald 1911; Michaux-Bellaire 1911; Miller 1977; Zerdoumi 1970; Talbani 1996) and partially explains the continued popularity of *kuttābs* in Morocco.

That said, there is, of course, a path that community members and parents would like to see their children take, and this is the path of Islam. However, they see Qur'ānic memorization as a way of giving children a source of direction to this path, but not a way of guaranteeing their children's adherence to this path (Boyle 2004). Indeed, the memorized Qur'ānic verses are thought to act as a point of reference, a compass, as children grow older, understand more of what they have memorized, and make decisions about the direction of their lives. This aligns to the notion in Islamic education that memorization is the beginning of learning and not the end goal (Boyle 2006). Parents and community members want their children to follow the path of Islam and to be good citizens in their immediate communities and also in their national and global communities. The compass acquired in the Qur'ānic school helps the growing child to navigate along the paths of tradition and modernity, to find direction and orientation, and to make decisions about which way to go and which path to choose (Boyle 2004).

In addition to memorization, Qur'ānic preschools provide traditional discipline for children, keeping them from the idleness of the street and explicitly teaching them culturally valued forms of behavior, including how to be polite, how to greet elders, how to pray, how to wash for prayers, and other aspects of traditional knowledge and behavior. Parents in Morocco really want to see their children internalize and exhibit these traditional behaviors, even though they want them to

go to public schools and learn math and science and French (Boyle 2004). The *fqih* (traditional Islamic teacher) whom we interviewed in 2013 affirmed that teachers from public schools still acknowledge to him the good behavior and diligence of students who attended the *kuttābs* for preschool.

Finally, Qur'ānic preschools offer students the opportunity to participate in a very Moroccan rite of passage, one that their parents and grandparents probably experienced. As Qur'ānic memorization was particularly emphasized in Moroccan pre-colonial educational traditions, this exercise of memorizing the Qur'ān in the contemporary Qur'ānic school still allows students to partake of this way of learning. Maintaining tradition is an important aspect of social life in Morocco. This is especially true given the proximity of Morocco to Europe and the often overwhelming exposure to Western values, customs, and cultures that comes with this proximity (Boyle 2000).

At the national level, Qur'ānic preschools (as the most prevalent form of traditional education) embody the continuation of a valued traditional institution – the Moroccan Qur'ānic school – and thus represent a link with times past, with cultural roots, and with Moroccan identity. Qur'ānic schools are one source of forming a Moroccan Islamic identity in children, something critical to the political culture in Morocco at the national level, where the monarchy draws its legitimacy from its ancestry from the Prophet Muḥammad. Because they offer a tangible link to the past and render a service, especially to lower-income parents, they are a source – one among many, to be sure – of political stability (Boyle 2000).

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## Conclusion

By creating the directorate of traditional education within the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs (which can be considered as a major reform related to Islamic education) and by encouraging the use of Qur'ānic preschools (and drawing them under the Ministry of Education), Morocco is moving toward creating a unique model in the MENA region to promote modern Islam and to preserve its tradition of Qur'ānic memorization. This model takes Islamic education as its main foundation but uses public school pedagogy and a mixture of religious and modern curricula. The religious stream in the public education system and the *kuttābs* themselves open avenues for students to pursue public education and public higher education, if they do well in school, while grounding them in their Moroccan, Islamic identity. Even the religious stream of public schooling now offers various trainings and career pathways after graduation, linking it to economic productivity and the ability to earn a living.

Indeed, Morocco has managed to integrate two very different educational traditions (religious and secular or modern) into a system of education that encompasses both. In encouraging the use of its traditional system of Qur'ānic schools in a “new” way (as preschools and supplemental schools), Morocco has maintained a link with the basics of a hallowed Moroccan tradition and fosters a sense of educational continuity with the past. Further, by channeling this tradition, in the form of the Qur'ānic preschools, into a means of support to the public education sector in

general, the two systems become linked in a shared mission to promote education, school success and literacy, as well as religious practice and Qur'ānic knowledge. While the Islamic schools have been the ones to by and large adapt themselves to the current situation, their survival points to the complementarity of these two disparate educational traditions in Morocco. Indeed, by promoting Islamic education in this new way, the government preserves Morocco's own distinct tradition of memorization of the Qur'ān while encouraging openness, tolerance, and the complementarity of both religious and modern knowledge.

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# Islamic Education in West and Central Africa

Helen N. Boyle

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## Abstract

Islamic schools in West Africa, *madrasahs* (*medersas*), continue to evolve and flourish, playing an increasingly significant role in the education of children. As school enrollment increases in the region, public schools are increasingly overcrowded. Related to overcrowding, but also to teacher preparation, curriculum, and the availability of learning materials, public schools face challenges in ensuring the education provided is of high quality, as recent studies (such as the early grade reading assessment and others) demonstrate. For Muslim communities in West Africa, Islamic schools have responded to parents' dissatisfaction with educational quality and their desire to ensure that, in a rapidly changing world, children are strongly attached to and educated in their faith. This chapter draws on three studies that have been conducted in West Africa – in Nigeria (2003/2004), in Ghana (2006), and in Mali (2009/2010) – by the author, with funding from the US Agency for International Development, as well as other recent literature on the topic. This chapter looks at the characteristics of

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*madrasahs* in these countries and trends in the *madrasah* sector in light of the educational environment and needs to which these schools are responding, while also bringing in examples from other countries. Key topics touched on include school leadership, pedagogy and teaching, curriculum and parental preference, and involvement.

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### Keywords

*Madrasah* · West Africa · Islamic Education · Islamic Schools

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## Introduction

Although African Islam is sometimes described as “overlooked” from an academic standpoint (Ware 2014), the durability and vibrancy of Islam in West Africa are evident in its Islamic schools and in the increasingly influential role they are assuming in the public education sector (Bleck 2015; Boyle et al. 2007; Ministère de l’Éducation 2010; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Tsimpo 2014). Presently, Islamic schools across West Africa vary in type, and have different local names, including *makaranta* or *madrasah* or *Islāmīyyah* schools (depending on the country). (In the context of the francophone, African countries *madrasah* is spelled *medersa*. For the sake of consistency, however, the Arabic transliteration is used throughout this volume.) They can be found across West Africa, in diverse contexts such as Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and elsewhere (Boyle 2004a; Boyle et al. 2007; Boyle and Toyin 2004; Brenner 2001, 2007; Easton 1997; Iddrisu 2005; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Reichmuth 1993; RTI 2014; Tsimpo 2014; Ware 2014). Indeed, while traditional Qur’ānic schools continue to be present in villages and neighborhoods, to ensure that children memorize some of the holy Qur’ān, West Africa has seen the development of a range of “new” Islamic schools over the past 40-plus years. In addition to Qur’ānic schools, these include private, exclusively religious schools that use “modern” methods, private schools that incorporate some secular and religious subjects, and government-registered, integrated schools that follow a government curriculum, while still teaching religious subjects.

These latter schools – government-registered, integrated Islamic schools – are especially significant and constitute the principal focus of this chapter because they are a leading example of the force of globalization in West Africa and its interaction with West African Islam and Islamic education. These schools reflect their communities – in particular parental preferences – relative to education; they also reflect the growing realization by governments in the region that they may need help in meeting the demand for education (Bleck 2014; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013). Studies suggest that parents want transferability; they want choice and options, and most of all they want an education for their children that is both “modern” and “traditional,” one that includes secular subject to facilitate employment and civic participation in the “modern” state and one that at the same time promotes piety and correct Islamic practices for personal development (Boyle et al. 2007; Ministère de l’Éducation 2010). Indeed, with these dual objectives in mind, they have stepped in where the

state has largely failed, to try to leverage government support, market forces, and Islam to offer children a quality education, by their own definition.

This chapter first gives a brief overview and some context relative to the types of Islamic schools in West Africa and then discusses the significance of the integration and registration of religious schools as public schools. The chapter draws on both scholarly work and reports coming from field research funded by international donor organizations on Islamic schools. Donors have generally been interested in Islamic schools because of their potential role in increasing both access to and quality of basic education in West Africa. Relative to the latter in particular, this chapter draws on reports from three field studies conducted in the 2000s (2004, 2006, and 2009) in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali, respectively, by the author and others, with USAID funding. Finally, this chapter discusses the evolving and changing role of Islamic schools in relation to the government and the education of children across these countries.

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## **Background: Islamic Education, Colonialism, and the Growth of Public Schools**

### **Islamic Education**

As Islam spread across what we now call the Middle East, as well as North and West Africa, schools modeled on the *halaqah* (learning circle) followed to teach locals the core beliefs and practices of Islam, including memorizing some (or all) of the Qurʾān as a first and central step in the learning process (Boyle 2004b). Formal learning began with what is most important and certain: the word of God. Qurʾānic schools in West Africa proliferated and led to the establishment of higher-level schools and the evolution of many great centers of learning in the region, including Tombouctou, Djenne, Gao, Kano, Kanem, Sokoto, Ilorin, etc. These centers rose and fell with the various empires that helped to establish them, but it is fair to say that by the late 1500s, Islamic schooling and scholarship were firmly established in West Africa (Brenner 2001; Ware 2014).

The basic school day activities in a Qurʾānic school had students memorizing verses from the Qurʾān. Usually, there was one classroom space with students of mixed ages sitting on the floor with the teacher. In terms of teaching methods, the teacher typically worked one-on-one with the children, listening to each one in turn and correcting his (or her) pronunciation during recitation and the written verse on the slate (Boyle 2004b; Boyle et al. 2007; Brenner 2001; Diallo 2012; Iddrisu 2005; Ministère De L'Éducation 2010; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Ware 2014).

The teacher was usually a religious figure – an *imām* or a *shaykh* – who had himself memorized the Qurʾān in this traditional way. He would have had a letter (an *ijāzah*) from his teachers attesting to his level of study (in Islamic subjects) and upon this basis was qualified to teach. In terms of operations, Islamic schools were generally very community-based and autonomous; there was not a formal system for establishing and running a Qurʾānic school. There were no formal administrative requirements or overarching rules that were followed, with the exception of the

curriculum; this included fidelity to proper recitational form and, as a child got older and moved beyond memorization, a focus on traditional Islamic subjects and seminal texts (West Africa generally follows *Warsh* recitational style.). At most, schools formed a loose network, and each school director was autonomous in his decision-making and accountable to his community (Boyle 2004b; Brenner 2001; Easton 1997). (There are some examples of schools for girls run by educated women but by and large Qur'ānic schools were established and run by men.)

## Colonial Education in West Africa

Across West Africa, the colonial presence (the British in what are now Ghana and Nigeria and the French in what are now Senegal, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire) introduced new forms of schooling. In the larger "Soudan Francais," as the region was referred to by the French, the colonists tried to establish French *madrasahs* for children of the elite in order to groom a generation of local colonial administrators; likewise, the British encouraged the spread of English language missionary-run schools across what was called the Gold Coast. These schools formed the precursors to the "modern" public school systems now in Mali, Ghana, and Nigeria.

The "Western" model of education introduced by the colonial powers and missionaries (on their behalf) was quite different in terms of structure, content, and values than the traditional schools they began to replace (Brenner 2001; Iddrisu 2005; Reichmuth 1993). In particular, the early focus on memorization was often misunderstood by colonial administrators and officials, who thought it useless (Boyle 2006; Brenner 2001, 2007; Ware 2014). Colonial schools were run centrally and mimicked systems in France and Britain. The curricular focus expanded early on such that children studied foreign languages, math, and science in addition to European history and literature in the later years.

It should be noted though that Muslim populations in the Northern areas of Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria, for example, were not as quick to adopt colonial schooling as other groups and in some cases stuck to traditional Qur'ānic schools. These communities were suspicious of colonial schools (French schools in Mali, Gambia, and Senegal, British or missionary schools in Ghana and Nigeria). In some cases, parents saw these schools as tools of Westernization and feared children would lose their religious identity and beliefs.

## Public Schools and Education for All

Postindependence, many of the schools established by the colonizers were drawn into or formed the basis of the newly independent country's public system. West African public schools represented a path to economic prosperity for many citizens across the region, and education in these new schools was pursued (Brenner 2001; Reichmuth 1993). Qur'ānic schools continued to exist and in some cases adapted

themselves and their schedule to serve children who pursued education in the public schools. However, even after independence, Muslim parents were slow to use the public schools.

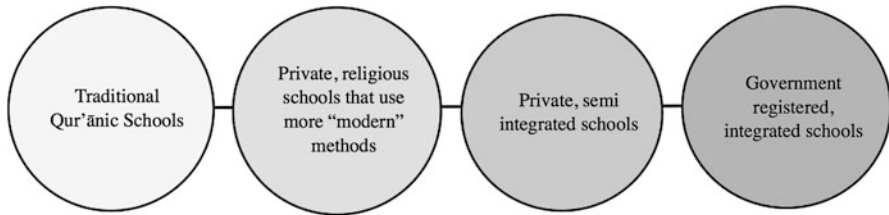
Many countries in the region, including Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria, have signed onto the Education for All (EFA) agreement, which focused initially quite intensely on access to schools. In concert with EFA, many Muslim parents and leaders in West Africa began to change their position on utilizing the public schools, as they saw that the lack of “Western” education and the inability to speak the official language and often language of administration (English, French, Portuguese) left Muslim communities more marginalized in terms of political and social influence and economic development (Boyle 2004a; Boyle et al. 2007; Ware 2014).

Public school populations grew in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s and classrooms became overcrowded; hastily organized teacher certification programs got teachers into classrooms to try to keep up with the influx of students; however, quality declined as class size rose. EFA is now balancing out its focus on access with a concomitant focus on quality, as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (see <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>). However, by the mid-2000s, parents in countries across the region were expressing frustration with their respective national school systems. International and national tests suggested that public schoolchildren were not reading at appropriate levels in Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal (see: <https://www.eddataglobal.org/documents/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubDetail&id=849> to download a copy of the report) (RTI 2016). States are under pressure to do better but they do not necessarily have the resources to make needed systemic improvements.

## Islamic Schools in West Africa: The Current Landscape

The figure below lays out on a continuum four major types of Islamic schools currently found in the region presently. These categories are rather more liminal than absolute. For example, in all of these sorts of schools, there would be Qur’ānic memorization. Differences emerge in terms of subjects taught, methods used to teach, qualifications of teachers, autonomy and government oversight, as well as sources of finance. These in turn can differ by country and local policy (see also “Introduction”) (Fig. 1).

*Traditional Qur’ānic Schools:* Qur’ānic schools are still very much a presence today; most neighborhoods in cities or villages in rural areas with concentrations of Muslims have a Qur’ānic school. The introduction of public schooling across the continent did not displace these schools although it did in many cases force them to adapt to the evolving wants and needs of the community. Adaptation came in several varieties, including becoming preschools, evening schools, weekend schools, or summer schools – i.e., supplementary schools attended in addition to public schools. Nevertheless, there are still some full-time Qur’ānic school students (Bleck 2015; Boyle 2004a). One particular type of full-time traditional Islamic school is the al-Majri school. These schools are privately organized, and pupils usually are sent from their



**Fig. 1** Four major types of Islamic schools in West Africa.

homes to board with the teacher; one part of their studies includes begging for alms to support themselves and the teacher (Hoechner 2011). In sum, traditional Qur'anic schools still exist and serve diverse communities of Muslims in West Africa (Brenner 2001, 2007; Easton 1997; Iddrisu 2005; Reichmuth 1993; Sey 1970).

*Private Religious Schools that Use Modern Methods:* They grew out of an effort around the turn of the nineteenth century to “modernize” Islamic schools. Islamic scholars felt that the structure of learning needed to be more akin to what was used in the West (Brenner 2007; Ware 2014). These schools maintained a fully religious curriculum that went beyond the Qur’ān and grouped children into classrooms, by age. The more student-centered pedagogy of the Qur’anic schools gave way to what we might call a more “Western” method, with children all expected to learn at a similar pace and to pass milestones as a group. Like the Qur’anic schools, these schools had a good deal of autonomy from state regulation and interference, although the past 20 years have seen an increase in the desire of states in West Africa to regulate all private schools to some degree. The teachers in these schools could be a mix of traditionally trained *mallams* and teachers returning from Egypt or the Gulf states with a more “modern” education themselves and perhaps some formal teacher training and/or a diploma or certificate (Boyle 2006; Boyle et al. 2007; Brenner 2007; Ministère de l’Education 2010; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Reichmuth 1993; Tsimpo 2014).

*Private, Semi-integrated Schools:* They have grown in presence and attendance. Semi-integrated refers to the fact that the schools do combine religious and secular subjects. These schools might include, for example, the teaching of an official language, such as French or English, and some math and science along with religious topics and Qur’anic memorization. They do not generally follow the full government curriculum; however, they are responding to the growing market for schools, in light of the perceived poor quality in public schools in these countries. Consumers in this market want both Islamic and secular subjects so that children will become good Muslims and productive citizens. Some of these schools aspire to become registered, integrated schools (see below) but do not have the capacity to make required improvements or changes. There is a wide variation in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and overall quality in these schools (Boyle et al. 2007; Brenner 2007; Ministère de l’Education 2010; Moulton 2008; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Reichmuth 1993; RTI 2014, 2016; Sey 1970; Tooley et al. 2007).

*Registered, Integrated Islamic Schools:* The word “integration” here refers to the school curriculum, which is made up of both “secular” and traditional religious

subjects. Further, if a school is “registered,” it has usually agreed to follow a government-approved curriculum and submit to some government regulation. That is to say, in most countries, these schools are now considered “public” and are often counted as such in government statistics (Bleck 2015; Boyle et al. 2007; Brenner 2007; Ministère de l’Education 2010; Moulton 2008; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; RTI 2014, 2016; Sey 1970; Tooley et al. 2007). Indeed, in Ghana and Mali, for example, they fall into their own subcategory of schools under “public.” They are regulated to a certain degree but generally operate with far greater autonomy at the school and classroom level than public schools. In Ghana, these schools receive full capitation grants from the state; in Mali and Nigeria state support is less regular and might come in the form of books, sitting for national exams, perhaps secular teacher salaries and things like this. In Mali and Nigeria, parents do pay fees as the government support is usually not enough to cover all costs. (Fees are generally not prohibitive; in Mali, for example, school directors categorized 69% of their students as “poor” (Ministère de l’Education 2010).) Registered, integrated schools offer parents the security of knowing that their children can sit for ministry examinations and be promoted from one level to the next. Usually, transfer between registered, integrated Islamic schools and public schools is possible since they are both under the government umbrella. Likewise, certificates of graduation from registered Islamic schools are recognized by public institutions (junior secondary and senior secondary, of course, but also universities, colleges, and training institutes).

One could argue that the largest changes in Islamic education in West Africa have occurred or are occurring in the registered, integrated schools, which have submitted to state regulation and the use of a government curriculum in exchange for some state support. In an increasingly globalized world, their focus has expanded from religious and spiritual development to include the secular subjects that will lead to employment. Formerly, these schools operated, as the others mentioned above, as part of a loose network of schools with no overarching administrative system and a good deal of autonomy from government interference or oversight (Boyle and Toyin 2004; Brenner 2001, 2007; Easton 1997; Iddrisu 2005; Ministère de l’Education 2010; Moulton 2008; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Reichmuth 1993; Ware 2014). As such, this chapter takes a closer look at some of the features of these hybrid schools.

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## **Registered Islamic Schools: A Hybrid Model that is Growing in Popularity**

While the hybrid model of an Islamic school is not new, the involvement of the government in a supporting and regulating capacity is relatively new and parallels a shift in parental and community thinking, wherein “secular” subjects have gained acceptance and are eagerly pursued in a religious educational context.

*Resources and Infrastructure:* While *madrasah* numbers appear to be on the upswing in West Africa, the physical state of many of these fee-charging schools is frequently very poor. Nigerian Islamiyah Schools working with the LEAP (Literacy

Enhancement Assistance Project) project in 2004 appeared extremely under-resourced, in some cases lacking walls between classrooms and frequently lacking toilet resources, particularly for girls (Boyle 2004a). A nationwide survey of a sample of almost 10% of *madrasahs* in Mali registered with the government in 2009 highlighted the fact that the schools, although growing in popularity, occupied makeshift spaces and had very few physical amenities to offer students. Schools lacked supplies, basic infrastructure, toilet facilities, divider walls, electricity, running water, safety features (multiple exits), and furniture. In contrast, registered religious schools in Ghana had to meet minimum building standards to be able to register as a GES (Ghana Education Service) Islamic school, so the situation there seemed better in terms of school facilities. Still, a sector assessment done for USAID in 2006 likewise highlighted the lack of amenities (Boyle et al. 2007; Iddrisu 2005; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013). On one hand, one might query parents as to why these schools are appealing when they appear so under-resourced. It is clearly not the facilities that parents are paying for. On the other hand, public schools are often similarly lacking in amenities so the difference may not appear as stark to parents and children on the ground.

*Curriculum:* The curriculum is at the heart of the appeal of registered Islamic schools. In all three studies mentioned (in Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria), enthusiasm was high for the integration of subjects across a variety of stakeholders including intellectuals ('ulema or thought leaders) and parents (Boyle 2004a, b; Boyle et al. 2007; Iddrisu 2005; Ministère De L'Éducation 2010; Owusu-Ansah 2008; Reichmuth 1993; Tsimpo 2014).

Although there was great enthusiasm for integrated schools in Ghana, there was some grumbling by the early adopters about decreasing time for religious subjects. Indeed, in these integrated schools there is definitely a trade-off, but this trade-off is one that parents and Muslim intellectuals are very willing to make (Boyle et al. 2007). Mali provides a similar example. In 2002, the MEALN (Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Alphabétisation et des Langues Nationales) drafted a standard curriculum for registered *madrasahs* to use. By 2009, 85% of school proprietors in Mali reported following this curriculum (Ministère De L'Éducation 2010). As in Ghana, these schools had broad-based support, from the '*ulamā*' sector, the MEALN, and parents themselves. One *ālim* from Kati (who also ran a *madrasah*) summed up the mood of the parents:

In my opinion, [traditional] Qur'ānic schools are becoming less and less popular; there is less interest in them because in our time you could count up to 1000 students, but today, if French is not taught in your *madrasah*, it is difficult to have even 300 students. Before, parents sent their children so that they would understand the religion. But today, these children become their parents' [financial] responsibility because they cannot find work. I can use myself as an example: I have nine classrooms built and we taught religion here; there came a time when my *madrasah* had a very low enrolment and when I held consultations with parents, I realized that it was time to change our teaching practices and to add French to enable the students to have a way forward in their lives. Since that change, I often have to refuse students [because all our places are taken]. (Ministère de l'Éducation 2010: 21)

The process of integration in Nigeria has been less standardized than in Ghana and Mali, perhaps due to the highly federated nature of the Nigerian government.

Decisions and policies are principally made at the state level and these vary across states. Nonetheless, the registration of Islamic schools with state educational authorities has been steadily occurring over the past 20 years at least, and indeed interaction between “Western” and Islamic learning has been occurring for decades (Reichmuth 1993).

*School Governance, Autonomy:* Across the three countries, school leadership appeared to be an important factor in school survival and success. Easton (1997) pointed out in that Qur’anic school teachers and headmasters were often quite entrepreneurial, weaving educational and commercial networks together. The same trend, in a different format, can be seen today. Across the three countries, school directors displayed a similar entrepreneurial spirit. As parents themselves and community members, many school directors/proprietors sensed the demand for an alternative to public schools, combined with a strong desire to preserve and indeed bolster a strong Islamic culture and identity, one characterized by piety and observance within the next generation. There was also a keen awareness on the part of school directors in all three countries that demand was high for “secular” subjects and that communities saw the mastery of national languages (French in Mali and English in Ghana and Nigeria) as important to expanding students’ future economic prospects, as well as the Muslim community’s influence at a national level in Ghana and Nigeria (Boyle 2004b; Boyle et al. 2007; Brenner 2007; Iddrisu 2005; Ministère De L’Education 2010; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Owusu-Ansah 2008; Reichmuth 1993).

Interestingly, especially for countries with very centralized systems like Mali, a school’s movement to fall under the state umbrella did not limit the school director’s autonomy in the same way as it did for public school directors. Across the three countries, school directors or proprietors retained a good deal of decision-making power at the school level and at the financial level. As such, in Mali, for example, directors could act more decisively to solve problems, buy supplies, or redirect resources than their public school counterparts. Perhaps the state presence was most heavily felt in Ghana which had a more extensive regulatory system, at least in terms of building standards, teacher qualifications, and the like (Boyle et al. 2007; Ministère De L’Education 2010; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013).

*Financing:* Financing arrangements vary for Islamic schools, according to the school type. For example, registered Islamic schools in Ghana receive capitation grants, and the GES pays teachers’ salaries, which is by far the biggest expense. Government funding (for IEU schools) is more comprehensive than in the other countries although there are still issues. In Mali, the government offers a few system supports, including an Arabic Section within the national ministry and Arabic pedagogical counselors/supervisors in the districts where there are registered *madrasahs*. However, the ministry does not assume a significant share of the cost of running the school. In Mali, registered *madrasahs* charge fees, which are managed by the school director/proprietor and school-based management committee and are used to support the school. The same is true in Nigeria where support varies by state. The studies mentioned above, as well as others, suggest that Nigerian Islamiyya schools are supported by student fees, more so than the state (Boyle



2004a; Boyle et al. 2007; Moulton 2008; Reichmuth 1993; RTI 2014). The model of parents paying fees for educational services extends to a variety of forms of Islamic schools in West Africa, including traditional Qur'anic schools and private mixed (religious and secular) that are not registered with a ministry of education.

The benevolence of proprietors is another factor in the financing of Islamic schools in the region. In many cases wealthy individuals would establish or endow a school; communities often supported teachers with in-kind contributions instead of money. Donations from school alumni and especially those who have gone abroad were cited as a source of income for schools in Mali (Ministère de l'Éducation 2010). However, by and large, school fees/parental contributions seem to be the primary source of support across all of the types of Islamic schools.

*Teachers and Pedagogy:* Across the three countries, teacher qualifications were uneven. On average, the level of education of teachers was not high, by public school standards. In Ghana, many teachers boasted higher education credentials from Arabic-speaking countries, but at the time, these were not recognized by the central government, and there was a great deal of resentment on this score. Overall though, in Ghana, over 50% of the official teachers – from private as well as IEU schools – had some postsecondary education. In Mali, the majority of *madrasah* teachers (officially registered *madrasahs*) had a junior secondary certificate (DEC). In Nigeria, state education offices provide teachers of secular subjects to Islamiyya schools that are registered with the government. In Nigeria, a diploma from a teacher training institution is the minimum qualification; hence, state-supplied teachers to Islamiyya schools are likely to have this diploma but a teacher of a traditional subject less likely has a “Western” type of qualification (Boyle 2004b; Boyle et al. 2007; Ministère de l'Éducation 2010).

Although perhaps not holding the highest credentials, *madrasah*, IEU, and Islamiyya school teachers did consistently express a sense of mission though – a sense that their work was important and that there were spiritual and moral rewards coming to them for this work. When asked about why he taught in a registered Islamic school in Ghana, one teacher summed it up this way:

Both [secular and religious subjects] are important for everybody to learn on this earth. Since they are profitable in this world and the hereafter. Even the prophet of God said, *ṭalab al-'ilm farīḍah-tun 'alā kull-i muslimin wa muslimah* (Seeking knowledge is a must for every Muslim male and Muslim female.) It is secular education that will enable us live well on earth while Qur'anic education will lead us to our Creator. It is therefore better to learn both. (Teacher Interview, Wa)

Teachers across the three countries often expressed a sentiment of themselves as caring for their pupils' souls as well as their intellects, which is traditionally a very Islamic view of education. Despite originally having a pedagogy and philosophy of education very different from what came to be common in the West, for the most part, registered Islamic schools in West Africa have not retained those practices. Generally, they have elected to hew more closely to the “Western” notion of age grouping and examinations and more teacher-directed work (i.e., with the teacher at the front and everyone listening, choral recitation, etc.) It is not frequent to see

students move at their own pace, mixed age classes, and one-on-one tutoring or peer/group work that one might have seen in schools of old. Hence, the teaching methods observed were not very different from public schools. One appealing factor to parents may have been smaller class size. Islamic school classes were generally smaller than the public school class sizes in these countries. In Mali, in 2009, there was a mean of 32 pupils per teacher in registered *madrasahs*, while World Bank figures put the average ratio of pupils to teachers at 48:1 (Ministère de l'Éducation 2010).

*Girls' Education:* There is also an aspect of “girl friendliness” that was significant in these “new” or “modern” Islamic schools across West Africa. Female enrollment was generally strong. Parents reported that these schools were good educational options for girls as they were safe spots for girls. Female honor is very important in Islam, and Islamic schools offered spaces that parents felt were more attenuated to their concerns about honor and more apt to ensure their daughters' safety.

A survey of teacher attitudes across the three countries (Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria) suggests that for the most part, teachers do believe that boys and girls are equally capable of learning and that they were gender sensitive or aware in the classroom, not favoring boys over girls (Boyle 2004a; Boyle et al. 2007; Ministère de l'Éducation 2010). This is not to say that as public school teachers believe or teach differently; however, there have been many cases of sexual harassment or abuse documented in public schools in West Africa (and indeed worldwide). Because those schools often employ teachers from other regions of the country, they are less rooted into the local culture and web of community relationships and are perhaps less accountable.

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## Discussion and Conclusion

Current state support for the registration of Islamic schools in West Africa initially developed from two directions: (1) the post-9/11 sentiment that Islamic schools might be a threat to governments and as such should be watched more closely and indeed monitored and (2) the recognition on the part of states that public school enrollment was increasing, quality was declining, and commitments, such as universal primary education (UPE) and education as part of the millennium development goals (MDGs), were not going to be realized by 2015.

In terms of the former, this suspicion of Islamic schools was perhaps more extreme outside of West Africa. In some Asian countries, the government shut Islamic schools and endeavored to regulate what and how they taught. West Africa has not been immune to aspects of this trend; however, the movement toward registration of Islamic schools in these countries proceeded 9/11. Indeed, the biggest and most prominent of the Islamic schools in the North of Ghana, Nad'ha, Anbarriya, and Nuriyya had all integrated secular subjects into their curriculum well before the Islamic Education Unit was set up in 1987 (Boyle et al. 2007; Iddrisu 2005; Owusu-Ansah et al. 2013; Owusu-Ansah 2008). In Nigeria, the notion of registration came about in the 1980s, a policy for registration was not laid out until

1998 (Moulton 2008; Reichmuth 1993) and in Mali has been happening since at least the 1980s (Brenner 2001, 2007; Ministère de l'Éducation 2010). Thus, state motives in registering Islamic schools in West Africa did not derive from unease or suspicion.

In terms of the latter reason – commitments to universal primary enrollment – states were (and still are) hard pressed to provide a quality education to all children in the face of ever-increasing demands; ministries saw in Islamic schools, especially those that had already integrated some secular subjects into their curriculum, a means of helping governments reach their commitments to universal primary education. With some degree of regulation and standardization to ensure a full curriculum and some support in the form of teachers and/or textbooks, graduates from these schools could be counted in national enrollment and completion totals. As such, the process of registering Islamic schools within the orbit of state education authorities was in part to assist them in expanding and standardizing their curricular offerings and to boost Education for All (EFA) or universal primary education (UPE) counts in these countries.

What do these modernization efforts mean for traditional Qur'ānic schools? As a separate genre, are they likely to disappear? In Ghana, *'ulamā'* predicted that Qur'ānic schools would become less relevant as integrated Islamic schools grew in numbers (Boyle et al. 2007). Attitudes were perhaps a bit more conservative but likewise positive toward the registered *madrāsahs* in Mali. However, despite these predictions, Qur'ānic schools continue to exist as a robust presence in Muslim communities in West Africa as many parents who send their children to public schools also want to secure some religious education for their children. These schools also represent a connection to the past and to the West African Muslim communities' social, cultural, and spiritual history.

However, a case study of traditional Qur'ānic school pupils in Kano, Nigeria, suggests that attitudes have changed as regards older pupils who pursue Qur'ānic studies fulltime. Nigeria has a tradition of al-Majri, itinerant students who are sent by their parents to live with and study with a Qur'ānic *mallam* or master. Hoechner writes a compelling account of the increasing marginalization these students suffer as ideas of what is appropriate for children, what education should look like, and what it should contain are very much changing, “the push by Islamic reform movements for the formalization of religious learning has furthermore intensified struggles over the legitimacy different avenues to sacred knowledge” (Hoechner 2011). She talks of the institutionalization or perhaps co-optation of Islamic schools as contributing to an “exclusionary modernity” in Nigeria. What was once a prestigious avenue to learning, education, and power is now looked down upon; al-Majri are now street children not seekers, orphans not children sent to receive a valued spiritual education. Hardship was an educational goal of al-Majri – they learned to do without to strengthen their social and moral character. Now they are characterized as neglected as opposed to initiates. In Nigeria, estimates of children in traditional Islamic schools (i.e., not registered and not necessarily following and approved curriculum) are high: “enrollment in Qur'ānic schools all over Nigeria is estimated to exceed 9.5 million, with more than 8.5 million in the Northern part of the country” (Universal Basic Education Commission, Nigeria 2010; Hoechner 2011).

In conclusion, while Qur'anic schools continue to exist in great numbers across West Africa, and memorization of some of the Qur'an is still a necessary part of Muslim education (formal or nonformal), the philosophy and values relative to traditional Islamic education are changing. For example, foreign languages are useful, and parents want their children to be able to take advantage of the opportunities to gain this knowledge. Seeking knowledge "even as far as China" has always been a Muslim value; this is not new. However, the connection of education with economic development and employment and the greater systematization and structuring of Islamic education at the early years is a newer development. Where once, the Qur'an was the beginning and other subjects followed as a child grew, today's parents and governments in West Africa want the other subjects started right from the beginning. Hence, the growth of integrated Islamic schools, especially those registered with the government, unites some "secular" or Western notions of education with a line of thinking that acknowledges God's presence in the creation of knowledge and the development of humans.

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# Islamic Education in East Africa

Jonas Svensson

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## Abstract

During its prosperous phase, Islam spread to North Africa, where a total Islamization and Arabization took place, and the coastal areas of East Africa, where a new synthesis of the Perso-Arabic and Bantu languages and cultures emerged. East Africa has considerably higher rate of enrolment in primary and secondary education, and therefore Qur'anic schools have tended to be relegated to complementary nonformal education or preschool institutions. In the former case, a deterioration has sometimes taken place so that the teaching and learning processes consist of rituals including a large proportion of pre-Islamic elements. Also, a prolongation of schooling has occurred in some places, a fact implying that children first attend Qur'anic education for a couple of years and then primary (and secondary) education or vice versa. Most of the Qur'anic teachers do not have any other income than the produce supplied by the pupils in their

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fields and the gifts they receive from the parents of the pupils. Qur'anic schools are sustained by and continue to operate and expand due to the help of the community and parents.

A few, more sophisticated or developed institutions of Islamic education may be found in East Africa; the *dirāsahs* in Tanzania and some Qur'anic schools in Uganda may be mentioned as examples. Islamic education in a district of Kenya will serve as an example illustrating the nature of such education in East Africa.

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**Keywords**

Islamic education

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## Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of Islamic education in East Africa based on previous research, complemented with notes on the contemporary situation in the form of a case study. The latter focuses the formal school subject Islamic religious education (IRE) in the local context of Kisumu, Kenya. (The case study is based on research conducted by the author between 2003 and 2006, within the framework of the SIDA/SAREC-sponsored project *Islamic Education and Social Development in Kisumu, Kenya*.)

In the present context, East Africa includes Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The focus will be on Kenya, and this is for several reasons. There is scarce information on Islamic education in the postcolonial states of Tanzania and Uganda. It is therefore important to note that the situation in Kenya is not representative. On the contrary, the way in which Islamic education within the formal school system is organized in the three countries differs.

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## Islamic Education in Precolonial East Africa

The coastal areas of East Africa have seen a Muslim presence since maybe as early as the end of the eighth century, with gradual expansion until the early sixteenth century when the coastal culture had become firmly Islamicized. The precolonial history of the religious culture is characterized by the interplay of local developments and external influences as a result of trade and waves of immigration. One important feature of the latter is the influx of settlers of south Arabian descent, from the thirteenth century and onward. Another is the Omani Arab establishment in the nineteenth century of Zanzibar as a base for an economic and political empire incorporating both Oman and the East African coastal areas. Different forms and features of Islamic learning and education form part of this development.

The precise features of precolonial Islamic education, at least prior to the eighteenth century, are difficult to outline. According to historian Randall Pouwels

(2000: 257), the sources indicate that the number of *'ulamā'* with advanced training in the religious sciences was low in the coastal towns. Most religious knowledge was highly local in origin, character, and relevance. Pouwels states that "nothing in any sources prior to the eighteenth century mention locally available forms of religious tutelage." Still, some connections to the "great" tradition of Islamic learning, particularly in South Arabia, were upheld through trade and travel among elite sections of the population: Arabs with Ḥaḍramī origin and an "Arabicized" (by attachment or descent) local population. One aspect of Ḥaḍramī influence, similar to many other areas within the Indian Ocean region (Clarence-Smith and Freitag 1997), was the general spread of the Shāfi'ī school of law.

Although influence from the outside, particularly through trade, was continuous, it peaked during periods of South Arabian immigration. It can be noted that a massive influx of Ḥaḍramī settlers into the northern coastal towns of Lamu and Pate in the sixteenth century, settlers who were first and foremost traders but also carried with them a tradition of religious knowledge, resulted in the area rising to become the center of Islamic learning. Eventually it spread southward giving rise to religious renewal. Pouwels (2000: 261) sees this development as the first regional example of a "scholarly tradition in the advanced religious sciences." The tradition associated with the settlers, which came to coexist with an established local Islamic religious tradition, bore the marks of its origin. Albeit the main reason for immigration was trade, it brought with it both influences from a religious scholarly tradition and a system of religious charisma associated with the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, the *shurafā'*. Competence in the scholarly tradition was combined with a system of inherited charismatic authority and ability to mediate *barakah*, "divine blessings." The latter feature has come to characterize much of East African coastal Islam (Pouwels 1987: 37–42).

Access to Islamic education, at least at a higher level, was restricted and closely related to social hierarchies. Literacy in Arabic was low. The large majority of Muslims had access only to rudimentary training in Arabic and in reciting parts of the Qur'ān in order to perform the basic religious duties, taught in "Qur'ān schools" (*vyou*). Higher education, necessary in order to reach the status of a religious authority (*waalimu* or *wanavyuoni*), was reserved for elite groups belonging to the upper classes of Arab immigrants or locally born nobility among the "free" town dwellers, *waungwana*. Those aspiring to a career as religious professionals attached themselves to individual masters who took on private, restricted tutoring. A successful student would after having mastered a specific corpus of knowledge receive a certificate (*ijāzah*) from the master and from that continue with further studies or commence his professional career. Women only rarely passed beyond the level of memorization of the Qur'ān (el-Zein 1974: 34; Nimtz 1980: 51; Pouwels 1987: 80; Chande 1998: 164; Pouwels 2000: 264). Studies relied mainly on oral tradition, a mixture of elements from the "great tradition" and locally developed religious knowledge. Religious texts were rare, and those books, *vitabu*, that existed were in the exclusive possession of particular families and open for study only for those belonging to that particular lineage (Pouwels 1987: 87–88). Learning was a combination of procurement of skills in the religious tradition and of other forms of locally



“useful” and related skills within fields such as local traditional medicine (*uganga*), divination, and diverse ways to in which to secure *barakah*, “blessing,” through, e.g., the production of amulets (*ibid.*).

## Precolonial Popularization of Religious Learning

The “esoteric” religious knowledge reserved for an elite may be distinguished from what Pouwels (1987: 172–173) terms “publicly available knowledge” concerning the religious tradition obtained in a more informal way through everyday social interaction or in connection with public celebrations, such as “myths, fables, and traditional lore.” It is possible that Islamic legendary materials, poems, and sayings in the vernacular Kiswahili, of which written evidence can be found from the early seventeenth century onward, were part of an orally transmitted and more generally available religious culture. The epic poetry in the Swahili language (*utenzi*) connected to ritual settings, such as those of *mawlid* celebrations, often had a didactic content. The materials transmitted in these forms are, according to Jan Knappert (1967: 11), “not entertainment, they are *elimu*, knowledge for all who want to lead a righteous life” containing information on morals, ritual, and “sacred history.” Considering the internalization of information contained in material, such as proverbs, orally transmitted legends and narratives, and everyday sayings and wisdom as part of “education” in a wider sense, also includes taking a gender perspective on the issue. What is recorded in the written sources is mostly public, and often male-cantered, aspects. What went on in private settings, in child-rearing, in informal gatherings, and in everyday conversation is part of the hidden history that is difficult, if not impossible, to assess.

The establishment of Omani rule in Zanzibar, followed by political and economic expansion, eventually saw the rise of the island as a center for Islamic religious learning, attracting an increasing number of scholars locally and regionally from the first half of the nineteenth century onward (Ameir Issa 2006: 343–344; Hoffman 2006). The number of *vyuo* increased manyfold, offering a more general access to basic religious education, and increased level of literacy and knowledge of the basics of an Islamic written tradition. However, the higher levels of religious education were still reserved for an elite (Pouwels 1987: 131; Pouwels 2000: 264). Still, other centers for religious learning such as Mombasa and the Lamu archipelago continued to be of importance (*ibid.*: 263). In Lamu, the Riyadhha Mosque College was started in 1889 by the *‘ālim* Ḥabīb Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Alawī, a *sayyid* (descendant of the Prophet) but born on the Comoro Islands. What was first a modest *madrasah* expanded to become one of the largest and most influential institutions for higher Islamic education in East Africa, focusing on *fiqh* (within the Shāfi‘ī tradition), Arabic, and mathematics. Importantly, it recruited students from a wider section of the population than had previous forms of elitist education (Nimtz 1980: 62, 70; Pouwels 1987: 198–199; Bakari 1995: 171; Khitamy 1995).

There were several important changes brought about during the Omani rule affecting religious learning and teaching. More than before, Arabic language and

culture became associated with high culture and “civilization.” During the second half of the nineteenth century, a new class of religious scholars emerged, not least on Zanzibar. Pouwels notes the differences compared to the scholars during earlier periods. The new ‘*ulamā*’ received their training in a more translocal manner than before. They traveled extensively to obtain *ijāzahs* from masters outside of East Africa, however still with a strong connection to South Arabia. Their training was usually not general, as was the case of the town *walimu*, but specialized in a particular field of religious knowledge (e.g., *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, or *tafsīr*) often based on extensive text studies in Arabic. The emergence of this new religious elite, often closely tied to the administration of the Sultanate, resulted in a new terminology to denote differences in status between scholars, and in particular the use of the Arabic ‘*ālim*’ for those at the top, as distinguished from ordinary *wanavyou* (Pouwels 1987: 149–150). Arabic language and Arab culture became, more than before, an ideal for many, mirrored in the change in the Kiswahili word for “civilization,” from *uungwana* to *ustaarabu* and adoption of *nisba* endings to names.

The local influence of the “great” tradition contained in classical literary works in Arabic increased, resulting in conflicts with what for a long time had been viewed as “Islamic knowledge” in the local setting (Pouwels 1987: 132–133, 158–162). This is a conflict that since has reemerged continuously in the area, up till the present time, between locally established practices and beliefs with a history, and reformist tendencies of religious “purification” inspired by contacts with traditions of other parts of the Muslim world, and/or late also a tendency of de-territorialist, scripturally focused neo-fundamentalist or Salafī Islam, deeming every belief and practice without clear foundation in the scriptures to be *bid’ah* (Roy 2004).

The learned elite studied works in Arabic belonging to an “Indian Ocean Corpus” of Shāfi’ī-scholarship, manuals of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* collections, works on theology (*tawḥīd*), and Sufism. They also produced their own works within this tradition (Pouwels 2000: 264) and translated works into Kiswahili for the purpose of more general instruction into the basics of the faith. Printing made possible the wider distribution of written material, as compared to an earlier situation when text on religious issues was a rare commodity. A tradition of publishing instructional pamphlets and magazines in the vernacular Kiswahili on basic beliefs and rituals for wide distribution to the Muslim populace has since then been an important aspect of the popularization of religious knowledge in the region (Pouwels 1987: 131–132), continuing up till the present time.

Another trend of the popularization of Islamic knowledge, particularly on present-day mainland Tanzania, is usually connected to the influence of certain *ṣūfī* orders, *ṭuruq*, toward the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Brotherhoods with a missionary zeal (mainly *Shādhilīyyah* and *Qādirīyyah*) provided religious instruction on their teachings also to segments of society that hitherto had been excluded from it, to men among the lower segments of the Muslim population, the poor and women, and to non-Muslims. Individuals from social segments of the population previously excluded from advancement within religious hierarchies could reach high positions within the *ṭarīqah*. Some orders contributed to the expansion of religious schools that, like the Riyadhha Mosque at

Lamu mentioned above, recruited students also from outside of the previous elite, which raised the general level of literacy. The content of their teaching, and the rituals, *dhikr*, were at times not in line with the religion of the ‘*ulamā*’ and occasionally met with criticism. Scholars agree that these missionary *turuq* facilitated the spread of Islam among the lower segments of the population in the coastal areas as well as in the interior (Nimtz 1980: 62–71; Lodhi and Westerlund 1999: 101–102; Dunbar 2000: 404–405; Pouwels 2000; Ameir Issa 2006). One particularly important aspect of the popularization of Islam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, associated with the *turuq*, was the transformation of the celebrations of the birth of the Prophet, *mawlid*, from a private affair of the *waungwana* elite to a more general festival open to larger crowds, by the introduction of new elements of recitals in Kiswahili and drumming. These celebrations quickly became a hallmark of East African coastal Islam (Ameir Issa 2006: 356–359).

However, it is important not to construct a dichotomy between Sufism as “popular Islam” and a scholarly tradition as “high Islam.” Sufism, in terms of a mystical tradition of religious thought, was very much part of the literary corpus studied by the learned elite, of whom most were members of *ṣūfī* orders, often more than one. Likewise, not all *turuq* were vessels of popularization of Islam. The ‘Alawī order, locally important in Lamu, is clearly elitist, allowing only *shurafā*’ as members and reserving instruction of the orders’ teachings to this group (Nimtz 1980: 70; Bakari 1995: 171; Khitamy 1995).

The outline above has focused the coastal areas. The reason is fairly simple. The interior of East Africa came into contact with Islamic beliefs and practices only at a late stage in the precolonial era, as a result of the expansion of inland trade during the Omani rule. Even then, the impact in terms of the spread of Islamic religious knowledge was, with a few exceptions, limited. The spreading of the faith was not the prime concern for the traders. One exception, though, is the Kingdom of Buganda, a centralized kingdom in present-day Uganda (from which the nation received its name). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the rulers took a keen interest in the religion that arrived with traders from the Coast, and sources have it that they also arranged for at least rudimentary education (Sperling 2000: 291–293).

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## Islamic Education, Colonialization, and Religious Reformism

Several important changes occurred in the East African region from the late nineteenth century onward. East Africa came under the political control of the colonial powers Great Britain and Germany, and it also became an area for Christian missionary activities. Although the system of education outlined above endured, there was eventually a change both concerning a more general public access to information about Islam and ways in which this was distributed as well as a diversification of Islamic knowledge and a widening of the concept as such.

At an early phase of colonialization, sections of the coastal Muslim population filled an important role in the colonial administration. The system of rudimentary

religious education had resulted in a level of literacy among Muslims that was higher than among non-Muslims. Both the British and the German colonial administrations initially employed Muslims as low-level administrators, tax collectors, interpreters, and soldiers. This situation eventually changed through the introduction of new systems for education, in Kenya and Uganda mainly as a result of the Christian missions (Pouwels 1987: 172–173; Chande 1998: 166; Lodhi and Westerlund 1999: 99; Sperling 2000: 293–295).

The colonial period still remains a reference point for the discourse on Muslims and education in contemporary East Africa. In particular, as an explanation to a low level of education among Muslims compared to mainly Christian groups, commentators often mention a suspicious attitude among Muslims toward the changes in education brought about by colonialism. Mission schools were established under British colonial rule in East Africa, and the secular-oriented education of the indigenous population was until 1911 the sole responsibility of these schools, an education which they combined with preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of the local population. Many Muslim parents were reluctant to let their children partake in education dominated by the missionaries. Most mission schools were established in areas not dominated by Muslims in the Muslim-dominated areas (particularly the coast) (Pouwels 1987: 173, 186; Chande 1998: 166; Trimmingham 1971: 171–172; Oded 2000:95).

The importance of the Christian missions in relation to education needs some regional qualification. In German East Africa, where the elementary primary education was catered for in government schools, there was some competition with Christian missionary educational facilities, not least since the government schools had a policy of religious neutrality (for German educational strategies, see Chande 1998:166–174). According to Nimz (1980: 88), there was also, and maybe consequently, somewhat less resistance among Muslims in Tanzania compared to those in Kenya to partake in modern secular education. The German government schools of the coast used Kiswahili as their language of instruction, in opposition to missionary schools of the interior that used vernacular languages (Lodhi and Westerlund 1999: 99). Nevertheless, the mission schools dominated education during the colonial period, also in the area of today's Tanzania, particularly after the British takeover from the Germans. In schools which were under the colonial government control, there were at times concessions also to the Muslim religious tradition within an otherwise secular syllabus. One example is the British inclusion of education in *mawlid* in the primary school syllabus in Zanzibar from 1943 (Ameir Issa 2006: 358).

The educational initiatives from Christian missions and the colonial administration soon gained the upper hand over traditional Islamic religious education. This was one of the main themes in the East African Muslim reformist movement which gained momentum in the first half of the twentieth century. Reformist thinkers voiced concern over the lack of education and enlightenment among ordinary Muslims and called for action. One landmark in the regional Muslim awakening concerning education was the establishment of the East African Welfare Society (EAWS) in 1945, on the initiative of the Khoja Ismaili'a leader the Aga Khan some

10 years before. One of its aims was to promote the well-being of the Muslims in East Africa through education. The Aga Khan was involved with the British colonial power in the mid-twentieth century in plans to establish an Islamic university in Mombasa or in Zanzibar, plans that were never realized. A Muslim academy was however established in 1951–1952, with the help of the British colonial administration, in Zanzibar, as a training college for students in Arabic and Islamic education. It was closed down in 1966 (Nimtz 1980: 35; Lodhi and Westerlund 1999: 102–103; Bakari 2006: 364). Initiatives such as these did stress the need for educating *Muslims*, in order to secure their development and progress. It did not necessarily concern specifically *religious education* (Trimingham 1971: 172–174).

The reformist agenda was much directed at what was considered backward and deviant beliefs and practices from which East African Islam needed to be cleansed. In order to achieve this, the Muslim public must be made aware of the “true” Islamic tradition. It is in this context one should place what Kai Kresse has termed a trend of “Swahili enlightenment” in East Africa. Reformers in the first half of the twentieth century strove to “enlighten” the Muslim public in East Africa, as individuals, on religious issues. Unless Muslims understood and acted upon Islam on a personal level, no reform of the Muslim society as a whole would be possible. One way of enlightening Muslims in East Africa in the field of Islam was the production and widespread dissemination of inexpensive pamphlets, books, and magazines in the vernacular Kiswahili, on basic topics of faith and practice, such a pillars of faith, important persons in early Islam including the Prophet, prayers, pilgrimage, and fasting (Kresse 2003: 285–286).

In a sense, this was a continuation of the popularization of religious knowledge from the late nineteenth century but with more focus on the Islam of a modernist, scripture-oriented scholarly tradition. As such, it was also a challenge to the authority and position of the traditional religious scholars, based on an elitist tradition concerning access to religious knowledge and in particular the connection between authority, learning, and lineage. Many of the pamphlets produced by these reformers are still available but have been complemented with another bulk of didactic materials, stemming from quite another source, which will be dealt with in the next session.

One particularly noteworthy contribution to the reformist activities was al-Farsy’s translation of the Qur’ān into Kiswahili, the first chapters of which was published in 1950, and as a complete edition in 1969. It is important, since it represents a shift in views on the purpose of religious education, in line with the notion of religious “enlightenment.” Traditionally, the study of the Qur’ān for most Muslims had meant rote learning of portions of the text, in some cases the whole text, for *ritual purposes*, e.g., for the use in daily prayers and ritual recitation. It was a matter of practical knowledge. Studies that involved the *interpretation* of the *meaning* of the Qur’ānic text in terms of *tafsīr* were reserved for an elite and only after being introduced to more basic “sciences” such as *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* (el-Zein 1974: 34). It is noteworthy that opening up religious teaching to new sections of the population in the abovementioned Riyadhha Mosque College in Lamu received the fiercest criticism when this teaching came to include also *ḥadīth* (Pouwels 1987: 199). The Qur’ān

was not primarily a text with a message but a text with *power* that could be utilized for diverse purposes: healing, protection, securing good fortune, etc. The Arabic language was a sacred language, because the Qur'ān was written in Arabic. Reformers in the twentieth-century East Africa thought differently. There was a criticism of traditional basic teaching of the Qur'ān, reducing students to “parrots,” reciting the text without knowing its meaning. Al-Farsy, albeit still stressing the importance of the Arabic language, claimed that the needs to educate the public on the content, and the correct understanding of the Qur'ānic message, justified its translation. Understanding of the Qur'ān, at least on a basic level, did not require knowledge of Arabic. This of course constituted a challenge to traditional religious authority, particularly on lower levels, since that authority rested, to a large extent, on the exclusiveness in knowledge of the “secrets” of the sacred text. Not surprisingly, some traditional Muslim leaders reacted strongly against the translation (Lacunza-Balda 1997: 97, 113–114).

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## Postcolonial Islamic Education

When discussing reforms and changes in the context of religious education during the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is important to remember that traditional forms of education did not cease to exist. Elementary educational facilities in the form of Qur'ān schools, *vyou*, focusing on basic skills in recitation and mastering of the Arabic alphabet and basic grammar still exist, as is the case all around the Muslim world (Landau 2009). An alternative local term is *madrasah*, a word which in other Muslim contexts rather denote institutions for higher Islamic education (Chande 1998: 164). While most children who attend only spend a limited period during early childhood in these classes, there are still possibilities for the most talented to advance within this traditional system, attaching themselves to masters who will provide private tutoring on higher levels. Today, one also finds private initiatives for teaching grown-ups, particularly women and new converts, who did not have access to this basic education during childhood, these elementary forms of religious knowledge. At times, elementary religious education provided by *vyou* competes over the students' time and attention with the system of modern, secular education. Religious education in its traditional form usually takes place outside of ordinary school hours and on weekends.

Arguably, there has been and still is a less formal transmission of “practical” religious knowledge in the sense of training of experts in traditional medicine and divination. This training occurs in a less formal manner, in the form of a student attaching to a master to learn the practical aspects of what is essentially a profession, a profession that still today attracts client in need of consultation and help on everyday practical matters (Faki, et al. 2010).

Nevertheless, there are also new forms of religious education that have emerged during the twentieth century, differing from traditional education in form, access, and content. Two important trends are worth noting. Firstly, the postcolonial situation saw the emergence of centralized state-controlled educational systems. The role

of religious education and instruction within this framework became a topic for dispute, particularly in Uganda and Kenya. Secondly, the East African area as a whole, particularly from the 1970s, also became part of a larger worldwide Islamic awakening with its center on the Arabian Peninsula, an awakening which also affected the field of Islamic education locally.

At large, the trend has been toward a diversification of Islamic education, in terms of content, structure, participants, providers, motives, and ultimate goals. Key interrelated aspects of change have been the diversification of views on “correct” Islamic belief and practice and the objectification of Islam (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004). The changes are the result of both internal changes within East African Muslim communities and external influences. Among the internal factors, one can note the expansion of state-controlled and more general education, raising the general level of literacy and hence facilitating access to diverse, and sometimes contradictory, information on Islamic issues. This information is also spread in novel ways. The production of inexpensive printed material as part of a reformist “enlightenment” project has been noted above. Since particularly the 1970s, this has been supplemented with additional material stemming from large, international publishing houses, sometimes (as in the case of the UK-based Islamic Foundation) establishing local branches. The Iranian revolution saw an increase in Twelver Shīʿah propaganda distributed for free through, e.g., the organization Bilal Muslim Mission. On the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, Saudi Arabian and other Gulf states have likewise contributed with much pamphlet material, through organizations such as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. Apart from written material in English or Kiswahili, there is also a wide distribution of audiovisual material, and access to the Internet is increasing throughout the area. Much of this material, available, for example, in bookstores connected to the mosques, has a clear didactic content, focusing basic pillars of faith and practice. However, there is also material that is more clearly related to the multireligious context of the region. Hence, pamphlets and audiovisual material dedicated to “comparative religion,” in the sense of proving the superiority of Islam over and above particularly Christianity, are common, as is material “proving” the miraculous character of the Qurʾān and Islam in general in relation to modern scientific discoveries. Among the former, particular mention can be made of the writings and video lectures of the late South African preacher Ahmed Deedat and his organization the Islamic Propagation Centre.

Independent, semi-independent, and state-controlled organizations such as the World Muslim League and the Islamic Development Bank originating from other parts of the Muslim world have also sponsored or established new educational facilities in the East African region. *Daʿwah* organizations have also provided, for example, correspondence courses, seminars, public lectures, “awareness” meetings, and training camps directed both at Muslims and potential converts. Of particular importance has been the provision of scholarships for gifted students to receive religious training abroad. Most of local religious authorities before the expansion of Islamic education during the Omani period were trained locally. A few, particularly among the “Arab” elite, traveled to other centers in the Muslim world, particularly

the Hadramawt. However, from the 1970s and onward, the role of external centers for education has been taken over by some Gulf states, offering scholarships to study at, for example, Madinah University. This has also affected the local discussion on Islam. The period from the 1970s and onward has seen the emergence of a new group of religious scholars, who have received not only training but also ideological influences from the puritanist, Salafī educational institutions in the Gulf countries. With a staunch scripturalism and a highly critical, if not hostile, attitude toward locally flavored forms of Islam without immediate foundation in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, considered by them as filled with illegitimate innovations, *bid'ah*, these “new *‘ulamā’*” (Bakari 1995) and those who are inspired by their teaching have had highly noticeable influence on local discourses and practices and also given rise to local conflicts and disputes over what constitutes “correct Islam” (Beckerleg 1995; Chande 2000).

The public character of different forms of religious instruction and the availability of inexpensive, and sometimes free, religious instructional material constitute a continuation and not least considerable expansion of the process of popularization of religious knowledge that started already in the late nineteenth century. This popularization is made possible through the increase in levels of literacy, particularly in English, the lingua franca of contemporary transnational Islam. Another aspect of this popularization is the inclusion of Islamic education as part of a public educational system, an inclusion that is parallel to, but not isolated from, the process outlined above, at least in Kenya and Uganda.

Common to all three postcolonial states of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda is that issues of furthering education for the Muslim population as part of a state policy have been high up on the agenda of the national Muslim associations (Constantin 1995). It is a widespread notion that Muslims in general, and Muslim women in particular, are lagging behind other religious groups in the area (Issa 1995; Mazrui 1995). This is also an issue that has engaged prominent individual Muslim academics such as Mohamed Bakari and Saad Yahya in Kenya, both at the University of Nairobi (Oded 2000: 99). Similar to earlier initiatives, such as the ones mentioned above in connection with EAWS, the scope has been wider than that of religious education. Concerning the place for *religious education* within the state-controlled educational system, the three differ from one another.

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## Religious Education in Government Schools

In the early 1970s, there were joint efforts between Uganda and Kenya in establishing Islamic religious education as part of the state curriculum. A common syllabus was constructed for IRE in secondary schools in Kenya and Uganda in 1972 and put into effect in Kenya, which will be further discussed below. The situation in Uganda differs from that in Tanzania, in that Islamic religious education is part of the curriculum, but only at the level of secondary education. General religious education is offered at the primary level. Both subjects are optional, although this situation was under debate in 2007, when a new educational bill was discussed by parliament. In a



joint effort, Christian and Muslim organizations demanded that the subject of religious education should be made compulsory, with reference to the need of furthering public morals. This, however, was rejected. General religious education in primary school and diversified religious education in secondary school were kept as optional subjects in the bill that was passed in May 2008. In fairness, one should note that there were also voices raised in favor of the abolishment of religious education as part of the curriculum altogether.

In Tanzania, the country with the largest percentage of Muslims in the population, there is no religious education in the public, state-controlled primary and secondary curriculum. This situation has a historical background. As mentioned above, British colonial rule in particular favored the establishment of mission schools. In 1970, mission schools in Tanzania were nationalized under Nyerere, and one of the expressed reasons for this was to lessen the religious influence on education, in line with the *ujamaa* policy of national unity. However, since the 1990s, private schools run by Islamic voluntary organizations, following the state curriculum but adding to it religious instruction, have been established (Lodhi and Westerlund 1999: 103). Education has also been a main topic for diverse other Islamic religious organizations, local and international, active in the country (Westerlund 1997: 324; Lodhi and Westerlund 1999: 106–108; Loimeier 2007: 143–145).

Islamic organizations also provide postsecondary Islamic college education, mixing, e.g., computer training with religious training. In Tanzania, private Islamic universities financed by external organizations were established in Zanzibar in 2002 and in Morogoro in 2006. The case has been made for a state-affiliated Islamic university in Kenya (Hyder 1995), to cater for the educational need of Muslims in the coastal region. During the 2007 presidential and parliamentary campaign, President Mwai Kibaki promised to look into the issue, but so far there has been no such initiative taken. Uganda is the only country in the region that can boast with a state-affiliated “Islamic” university. The Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) in Mbale was established in 1988, funded and owned by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (previously Organisation of Islamic Conference), but part of the Ugandan system of higher education. Judging from the homepage (<http://www.iuiu.ac.ug>), the “Islamic” is found in the stated overall aim. The university aims to be an academic institution “based on Islam and love of the country [...] promoting and enhancing the civilization and scientific influence of Islam” and to “produce morally upright graduates with sound character.” The students and the teachers are not all Muslims. The university has faculties of arts and social sciences, law, science, education, and management studies. In the presentations of each of these, faculties did not contain any direct references to Islam but rather stressed the high academic standards. There is, however, also a faculty of Islamic studies and Arabic. From what can be deduced from the earlier version of the homepage, Islamic education proper appears to be limited in this faculty. The faculty caters for the training of *imāms*, provides some basic instruction in *sharī‘ah*, and in particular focuses on the training of *da‘wah* personnel, for the propagation of Islam locally. The subject of “sociology” which is included in the Islamic studies program is explicitly aimed at “Islamic propagation methodology and techniques.” Hence, it is not a training facility for

'*ulamā*' in the traditional sense. Admission to the study of Arabic or *sharī'ah* does consequently not require basic training within the madrasa system. *Madrasah* education at the secondary level is equated with O-level or A-level certificates.

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## Case Study: IRE in Kisumu

### A Brief Outline of IRE in Kenya and Kisumu

In Kenya, Islamic religious education was established as a subject in the state-sanctioned curriculum in 1971. It was introduced as an alternative within the framework of *compulsory* religious education, established in 1968 as a Muslim counterpart to the already existing Christian Religious Education (CRE) after complaints from Muslim pressure groups, demanding recognition within the general educational system. It is noteworthy that the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims suggested in 1971 IRE to be made a compulsory subject in all schools within the public educational system, in order to reinforce understanding and tolerance among religious groups in postindependence Kenya. This did not happen. A commission to establish the subject of Islamic Religious Education in secondary schools was set up in 1970 by the Ministry of Education. The first draft syllabus for IRE in secondary schools was a result of a joint effort between Kenyan and Ugandan Muslim scholars and educationalists, and it was put to effect in some secondary school classes in Kenyan schools in 1972 and was taught from that year onward. Eventually, the subject was also introduced in primary education (Oded 2000: 97–98; Said 2004). The Kenyan Institute of Education ([www.kie.ac.ke](http://www.kie.ac.ke)) has continued producing syllabi, with the help of specialized panels of scholars and educationists as well as representatives from Muslim interest groups, of different sectarian orientation. The last revision was made in 2002.

The establishment of IRE as part of the national curriculum in the early 1970s can be seen as a concession to and a recognition of the significant and long-established Muslim minority in the country. However, there are still voices that view this as half-hearted. The status and the role of IRE is still an issue under debate in Kenya. Contemporary Muslim activists claim that the authorities discriminate against IRE compared to its "sister subject" CRE. Several grievances can be highlighted.

Since there is no obligation that schools offer IRE to Muslim pupils, but at the same time religious education is compulsory in primary and in the two first years in secondary school, some pupils may have to take CRE instead. In an article on Christian-Muslim religions in Kenya, Maina (1995) notes how this may be problematic in relation to the Kenya *Education Act*, section 26 (1): "Parents of children attending a public school have right to demand that their children do not undergo religious instruction, worship or ceremonies that they do not ascribe to." While this refers to the parents, a similar right for the pupils themselves is stipulated in the same act, section 78: "No person attending a place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or take part in or attend a religious ceremony or observance if that instruction or observance relates to a religion other than his own." This is what is

happening when religious education is compulsory, in combination with lack of resources to provide IRE. In Kisumu, IRE was offered only at four secondary schools, and at five primary schools, a clear minority.

Apart from the problem of nonexistence of the subject in many schools, critics point out as a problem the lack of *trained* teachers. Again, Muslim activists blame the government and view this shortage as part of a discriminating policy (Maina 1995: 130–131). Fieldwork in Kisumu revealed that the educational background and training of IRE teachers, particularly in secondary school, could be quite diverse. Among five secondary school teachers, two had had academic training in the field of comparative religion, and one had been trained at a teachers' college. Of the two remaining, one had some postsecondary training in business accounting, a short internship as a teacher, some sporadic courses at college level, and private studies in Islam. The last teacher had a fairly interesting background, with no formal education above secondary O-level certificate, but with a substantial involvement and training in what may be termed a transnational *da'wah* movement. He particularly mentioned participating in training offered by the Kuwaiti-based WAMY, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, on topics such as “the Qur’ān and me.” Two out of the three teachers with a formal teachers' training, and the only ones with university degrees, were both Christians, a fact that points to a second aspect of criticism concerning IRE teachers, apart from lack in training.

Maina (1995) notes a suspicious attitude among critics toward non-Muslim teachers of IRE. He states that “some Muslims do not comprehend how a Christian could teach IRE. unless he (she) has a hidden agenda of discrediting Islam” (130–131). Some uneasiness relating to this matter was encountered during fieldwork in Kisumu. However, it was not a matter of a general view. The Muslim and non-Muslim teachers of IRE appeared to cooperate well. The two non-Muslim teachers themselves did not see any problems in teaching IRE as non-Muslims. They brushed aside the criticism as reflecting a conservative attitude among some members of the local Muslim community in Kisumu. Interestingly, in their view, IRE was a subject just like any other school subject, and they even made efforts to attract non-Muslim students to take the subject in order to learn more about Islam. They had not been particularly successful in this, however. And the claim is not that easily substantiated, as will be evident when we now turn to the content and structure of the subject, as well as the actual teaching.

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## IRE in Theory and Practice: A Short Description

This chapter would be so bold as to claim that IRE (as well as CRE and HRE) is *not* entirely like any other school subject. In particular, it has a double explicit objective. Like other school subjects, it should result in the pupils acquiring basic *formal* knowledge of “facts” on Islam as a religious tradition: its core scriptures and their content, its historical development, and its basic rituals. However, it also has the objective of molding students into “good”-believing Muslims and, since it is part of a *national* school system, good *Kenyan* Muslims. The secondary school syllabus of

2002 states: “Islam is not merely a set of beliefs and rituals but a way of life. This syllabus is therefore designed to nurture the spiritual, moral, social, emotional and physical well-being of the learner” (Ministry of Education 2002b: 78). The language of instruction is formally English, albeit fieldwork revealed that the conversations in class often used Kiswahili, especially when topics that engaged the students were discussed.

IRE as a religiously “molding” subject overlaps with other forms of religious instruction outside of the school system, such as the *madrasah/chuo* system mentioned above, also in content. *Madrasah* instruction, institutionalized or private, is focused, at least for the majority of children attending, at securing very basic skills in Qur’ānic reading/recitation and ritual competence, in order to be able to fulfill the basic religious requirements. Elements of such basic knowledge are present also in the primary school syllabus. In the general objectives for IRE, it is clearly stated that the students should learn to read and write the Qur’ān in “its original scripts [SIC]” (Ministry of Education 2002a: 5), i.e., Arabic. In standards 1–4, the students are to be taught the basics of the Arabic language, in order to be able to read and write some selected *sūrah*s. During the course of the 8 years in primary school, they are supposed to learn by heart al-Fātiḥah and the 22 shorter concluding *sūrah*s of the Qur’ān. The students are also supposed to be taught how to use these *sūrah*s in their daily prayers (Ministry of Education 2002a: 183–206). However, compared to traditional forms of Islamic education, the scope of IRE is much wider, also in primary school, but in particular in secondary school. The Qur’ān is not only meant to be memorized but also understood, and the Qur’ān only constitutes a minor part of the syllabi. Additional topics include Islamic history (worldwide and locally), famous religious scholars, different Islamic “sects” (mainly Shī‘ism), and morals, *akhlāq*. Some teachers in interviews elaborated on difference between traditional *madrasah* education and IRE. The common view was that they complemented one another. Several teachers described the *madrasah* education as “going deeper” than IRE (Svensson 2010).

One primary school in Kisumu has made an attempt at constructing an “integrated” Islamic education within the framework of the national curriculum, which in part could be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the *madrasah* education and secular education. IRE is here still taught as an individual subject, but the ambition is wider. The school days for the Muslim students are extended with 45 min for instruction in Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, and Arabic, similar to traditional *madrasah* education. There is an ambition to integrate Islam also into the teaching of other subjects. As one of the teachers of the school explained during an interview, in maths, stress could be made on the role of Muslims in history in both introducing the Arabic numerals and in developing mathematics as a science. In teaching biology, Islamic views on the origin of life and the need for environmental care could be touched upon. In this way, Islam would be made relevant during all school hours. Almost all teachers interviewed during fieldwork deemed the notion of integration to be a good idea in principle, particularly for solving the problem of students’ lack of time in participating in religious education due to heavy workload in their other studies. Some teachers, however, voiced concerns as for the particular school in

question. The tendency to a harsh attitude toward locally established beliefs and practices as “illegitimate innovations” and a partial censorship in relation to the IRE syllabus (not addressing Shī‘ah Islam or *mawlid*, both parts of the syllabus) was deemed problematic.

The difference between the *madrasah* education and IRE also exists in basic aims. While *madrasah* teaching focuses religious (mainly ritual) competence *in* Islam, IRE also has the additional component of securing knowledge *about* Islam. This latter aspect of religious education exemplifies what anthropologist Dale Eickelman and political scientist James Piscatori have termed the “objectification of Islam” as a feature characteristic of contemporary Muslim reflective understandings of the religious tradition, affected by increased levels of literacy and the availability of information on religious diversity worldwide (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 37–45). IRE is in this sense only a part of a larger process, visible also in the other forms of Islamic education during the colonial and postcolonial times mentioned above. Islam has increasingly become an object for reflection, delimitation, and active choice, not just a “matter of fact” part of everyday life. The process of objectification is clearly visible in the syllabi. A recurring theme is that Islam can be, and should be, relevant to “nonreligious” contemporary issues in society. Such a perspective becomes possible only if Islam first is viewed as a separate entity. The secondary school syllabus hence states that “special attention has been given to relating the teachings of Islam to issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender, child abuse, child labour and neglect, drugs and substance abuse, integrity at [sic] environmental concerns” (Ministry of Education 2002b: 78). This “maximalist” (Lincoln 2003) understanding of the relevance of Islam evident in this quotation, and in the statement on Islam as a “way of life” above, mirrors a reflective conceptualization of religion that is specifically modern (Beyer 2006: 155–185). In practice, it encompasses a potentiality of imagining the religion otherwise, i.e., as a differentiated aspect of social life, a separate “sphere.” Islam is clearly presented as a “modern” religion, misunderstood by its critics, and with a relevance for the issues of the day (Svensson 2009b).

The form of “objectified” Islam present in the textbooks, the syllabus, and actual teaching bears the hallmark of a twentieth-century Muslim reformist thought. A scripturalist tendency where “authentic” Islam is to be found in the Qur’ān and the *sunnah* dominates entirely. Little space is devoted to the historical development of religious thought or to differences between schools of law. When aspects of *fiqh* are outlined, for example, in relation to inheritance and marriage, the reference is to the scriptures and not to Islamic legal tradition. Locally available practices and beliefs are seldom addressed. Here, the perspective, particularly in actual teaching, is rather critical, posing the scriptures against local “superstitions” and “deviations” (Svensson 2006).

There is a detectible ambition of the subject to be part of a Muslim identity construction, locally, regionally, and globally. In the syllabus, the local history of Islam in East Africa is to be covered, including information on the great “reformists” al-Farsy and Mazrui mentioned above (Ministry of Education 2002b: 83). East Africa is put into a larger context of Islam in Africa through the inclusion also of some few notes on the history of Islam in West Africa. However, the “History of

Islam” component of the syllabus appears less concerned with local or regional aspect and more with fostering a sense of an Islamic global “imagined community,” a transnational “*ummah* consciousness” (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 141). “Islamic history” focuses the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid empires and of what can be termed “token persons” of contemporary Islamic hagiography of the “Golden Age”: al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Khaldūn. The only “modern” scholars explicitly mentioned (besides East African reformers) are the Egyptians Sayyid Quṭb and Hassan al-Bannā, which is indicative of the bias in the syllabi. Neither were “scholars” in the sense of traditionally schooled ‘*ulamā*’, but both have had a significant influence on Islamist thinking.

Part of the identity construction concerns elevating the self-esteem of the students as *Muslims*. Hence, the syllabi contain examples where locally common non-Muslim polemics against Islam as a misogynist and violent religion, and a connection made between Islam and slavery (Oded 2000: 105–110; Seesemann 2007), are addressed in an apologetic manner. Hence the “achievements of the Prophet” mentioned in the syllabus are “brotherhood and equality of mankind [. . .] elimination of racism [. . .] eradication of slavery [. . .] improvement of the status of women [. . . and] religious tolerance” (Ministry of Education 2002b: 83). In form four, there is a particular session entitled “misconceptions about Islam” addressing the three topics of *jihād*, terrorism, and slavery (Ministry of Education 2002b: 92). Particular mention can be made of what in the syllabus for secondary school is termed Islamic “preventive and precautionary morality.” The notion of Muslim moral superiority, displayed, e.g., in modes of dressing, sexuality, and politeness, is clearly an important part in self-understanding among Muslim students and a recurring topic in classroom discussions (Svensson 2008; 2009a).

Fieldwork revealed that a combination of IRE being an examinable subject, and the existence of much detailed syllabi, appeared to further a way to approach the subject among teachers and students that made the “facts” aspect dominate over the “molding” aspect. Much teaching and learning focused the important final exams and was strictly aimed at “covering the syllabus.” Even content belonging to the areas of ethics and etiquette was the object of cramming with the ultimate goal of scoring high on the final exams. Teachers and students testified to IRE being a “boost” subject. It was relatively easy to score high in the exams, which in turn could raise the overall results (Svensson 2010). This instrumentalist characteristic of IRE as a result of it being part of a larger educational structure would appear to running the risk of overshadowing the “nurturing” aspect pointed out in the syllabi. Furthermore, fieldwork, and particularly participant observations, made it clear that in many respects, the Islam outlined in IRE did not always rhyme well with the ideals and practices among the students. The Islam of IRE, fashioned as it was on a de-territorialized, reformist Islam with Islamist leanings, appeared to be much compartmentalized and limited to that very context. The “theological correctness” (Barrett 2004) voiced in class by students and teachers alike appeared to have limited relevance for the students outside of the classroom. Those aspects of the teaching that *did* have resonance in the views and actions observed outside of the classroom appeared to be the ones that could easily be integrated with established

practices, everyday norms, and identity construction in the local setting (Svensson 2009a).

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## Conclusion

From the above, it becomes evident that it is in a way more reasonable to speak not of Islamic education in East Africa but of “educations” in the plural forms of transmission of religious knowledge influenced by external and internal processes of social change. The forms of education are at times parallel, possibly mutually reinforcing and affecting one another, but at times also in conflict.

Throughout the history of the region, some important trends of change are noticeable, albeit there are areas of continuity as well. One trend of change is the democratization of Islamic education, in the sense that what was previously reserved for an elite has since at least the end of the nineteenth century becomes more and more generally accessible. Processes such as an increase in general literacy, new inexpensive ways to distribute information, the emergence of new social actors, and the formalization of institutions for learning have been important here. At one end, knowledge of the religious tradition and in particular of the “books,” above the level of basic ritual competence, was in the precolonial times a somewhat mysterious and inaccessible property of the few, defined by social status and lineage. On the other end, IRE today constitutes the ultimate form of democratization, where the “Islam,” including its basic texts, in itself is made into a compulsory “object” of study, in theory, if not in practice, for all Muslims in primary school and in the first 2 years in secondary school.

Another trend of change is the relevance of forms of education to the social situation in which they are embedded. Apparently, traditional forms of higher education were much related to, and special to, the actual religious needs of the community which those educated were to serve and guide (as well as be fed by). It involved a selection from the “great tradition” coupled with much local “useful” knowledge of, e.g., social relations; means of divination; how to acquire, maintain, and distribute *barakah*; and how to cure illness and avert misfortune. Compared to this, some forms of religious education emerging and taking a hold during mainly the twentieth century are more detached, more general, and more connected to the “great tradition,” as it is redefined in a reformist form of Islam not confined to the East African setting, and hence by consequence potentially, at least in certain respects, less in sync with the worldviews and needs of people in actual local situations.

This latter aspect of change is connected to the larger process of integration of Islam in East Africa into a larger transnational context of globalized Islam. Throughout history, the region has maintained close links, as a result of both immigration and trade, with other regions in the Muslim world. Translocalism is nothing new. However, as is the case of the access to education, what was once reserved for an elite has during a process of modernization becomes more general and much wider in scope and effect. Access to knowledge produced in other parts of the Muslim world is no longer only a matter of traveling to distant places, studying foreign languages,

and sitting at the feet of a revered master in order to receive an *ijāzah*. Useful religious knowledge can be gained through correspondence courses in English on the Internet, by attending local seminars or colleges run by transnationally funded and organized *da'wah* organizations, by privately reading or watching pamphlets or VCDs purchased at a mosque near you, or by simply tuning in to the “Islamic” satellite channel of your choice.

“Knowledge in Islam” was probably also in precolonial East Africa highly differentiated. However, differences correlated with locality. Different “Islams” existed in different local settings, sprung out of local circumstances. Differentiation brought about by the forces of modernity is of a different character. In one local setting, there is now an increasing diversity in “Islams.” Some are remnants of local traditions established since long, others are new and imported, and some are blends of both. In this, there is a potential for conflict, in cases when differences between forms of Islam adopted intersect with other differences related to ethnicity, social status, and class.

Some forms of Islam grow naturally and unreflectively as a result of the influx of new information mediated through the modern channels of print as well as digital and audiovisual technology. Others are a direct result of the efforts of diverse actors to spread their version of “the truth,” often through the means of more or less formalized education. The case of IRE in Kenya is striving to install an Islam in the future Muslim Kenyans that rhymes well with the national motto of peace, love, and unity.

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# Islamic Education in South Africa

Yusef Waghid

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## Abstract

As a previous colony of the Dutch and British, Islamic education in South Africa during the early period of its 300-year history mostly reflects the pedagogical influences of Muslims in the colonized Indonesian Archipelago and sub-East India and Pakistan. Over the last 100 years, the influence of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, and, to a lesser extent, Kuwait, Jordan, Iran, and northern African countries has been significant in guiding Islamic education in Muslim formal and nonformal institutions in South Africa. This chapter examines, firstly, some of the dominant trends that underscored Islamic education in both formal primary and secondary education during the postapartheid period as many primary and secondary schools mushroomed as Muslims stake their claim to private schooling in

Although there is not a single, unified curriculum for Muslim education in South Africa, the curricula at several independent Muslim schools implement the public school curriculum augmented by Muslim teachings. Hence, “the” Muslim education curriculum is constituted by the public school curriculum and variants of Muslim teachings determined by pedagogical expectations of the schools’ boards of trustees or parent-teacher communities.

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South Africa. Secondly, a specific focus is made on the rationale, content, and structure of the Islamic education curriculum at the aforementioned formal educational institutions. Thirdly, these institutions' responses to the Islamization of the education agenda as couched by Ismail Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman, and Naquib al-Attas are highlighted.

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### Keywords

Islamic Education · South Africa · Sufism · *Madrasah*

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## Early Islamic Education in South Africa

Muslim education emerged in South Africa with the arrival of the early “Mardycer” Muslims at the Cape in 1658 (Mahida 1993: 2). The early Muslims were mostly from India (36,4%), the East Indies (31,47%), Africa (26,65%), and Ceylon (3,1%, now Sri Lanka) and the remaining ones from elsewhere, while the origins of 1,31% of these slaves are unidentified (Da Costa 1990: 30). These Muslims came to the shores of South Africa with forms of mystical, passive *ṣūfī* devotional practices (*taṣawwūf*) that influenced Muslim education (Davids 1994: 47) under the prevailing conditions of political exclusion and slavery (Tayob 1995: 54). With these *taṣawwūf* and mystical orientations, the early Cape Muslims, despite being prohibited from openly practicing Islam, are said to have provided the “framework in which such people as Tuan Guru [Muslim leader at the Cape] could work” (Bradlow and Cairns 1978: 2, 106). What this means is that, before the arrival of Tuan Guru at the Cape in 1780, Muslims in 1667 (prohibited from practicing Islam in public) already practiced *taṣawwūf*, which could have been from the Qādirīyyah order (Da Costa 1994b: 130). *Taṣawwūf* orders like these constitute units of “socioreligious interaction,” whereby:

inside these *ṣūfī* orders groups gather around a master of spiritual guidance (*murshid*) seeking training through association or companionship . . . The disciples are linked by common devotions and spiritual discipline within these structures . . . being bound by sacred obligations, form a holy family.” (Da Costa 1994a: 60–61)

These are practices that constitute the basis of Muslim education during the earliest years, in particular enhancing people’s moral consciousness of spirituality and just action.

The first prominent exile among the early Muslim religious leaders was Shaykh Yusuf of Macassar, who was banished to the Cape in 1694. He is claimed to have been the first *murshid* (*taṣawwūf* guide) to introduce the Khalwatīyyah *ṣūfī* order – which has its origins in fourteenth-century Turkey – to the Cape (Da Costa 1992: 11). Moreover, according to Da Costa (1990: 61), *taṣawwūf* activities included “communal religious practices on the first, third, seventh, fortieth nights succeeding a [Muslim] funeral”; the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (Mawlūd al-Nabī), a common Qādirīyyah practice; and Rātīb al-Haddād, which involves readings from the Qur’ān, recitations in praise of Allāh, and the offering of supplications and

prayers (Davids 1980: 95). In addition, these *taṣawwūf* practices were dominated by *dhikr*, literally the remembrance of Allāh. This has become synonymous with verbal (single or communal) utterances in the forms of *du'ā* (supplications and confessions addressed to Allāh) and *ṣalawāt* (invocations of the blessings bestowed on Prophet Muḥammad and his followers) (The *ṣalawāt* later also was extended to praises rendered for Muslim pioneers, who, through their painstaking efforts, preserved Islam at the Cape.). These practices, which have continued until today, still underscore many of the devotional acts associated with Muslim education in formal independent schools. The Habibiyah Mosque and Madrassah complex in the Cape, for example, not only provided the location for the first formal independent Muslim school, established in South Africa (Islamia College) in 1984, but is renowned for its practicing of *taṣawwūf* rituals (Da Costa 1994b: 137). In early Muslim education, learners were socialized with the *taṣawwūf riwāyāt* (epic poems) and *ṣalawāt* (invocations recited on the Prophet Muḥammad), which required extensive memorization on their part. Davids (1994: 55) mentions the memorization of 20 attributes of Allāh or the Sanūsiyyah, formulated by the Sanūsiyyah (*taṣawwūf*) order, which continued to be the main teaching subject of Muslim education in the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, it is clear that Muslim education with leanings toward *ṣūfī* practices has flourished since the early days of Muslim settlement in South Africa. It is significant that the Western Cape educational institutions mostly use the Shāfi'ī teachings, whereas the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal institutions adhere mostly to Ḥanafī teachings, which are related mostly to a Deoband perspective (Waghid 2011).

Prior to the establishment of independent Muslim schools in South Africa, Muslim education was (and in many instances this situation remains status quo) offered at *madrasahs* (afternoon schools for Muslims that supplemented the formal public schooling system and usually was attached to some mosque institution) (Usually Muslim learners who do not attend an independent Muslim school attend a *madrasah*, where their public school education is supplemented by Muslim teachings.), state-aided Muslim schools (formally recognized schools for Muslims that followed a public school curriculum supplemented by Muslim teachings), and Muslim seminaries (those institutions at a local *madrasah* mostly catering for Muslim learners whose schooling ended prematurely). It seems as if the emergence of independent Muslim schools can be associated with the provision of public education supplemented by Muslim teachings, as has been the case in several state-aided Muslim schools in the past. In the following part, the chapter focuses on formal primary and secondary Muslim education in South Africa during the postapartheid era on the grounds that the first independent Muslim school (i.e., Islamia College) was established during this period of political transformation.

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## Post-Apartheid Formal Primary and Secondary Education

During the postapartheid era, one has witnessed the escalation of independent or private Muslim schools, both at secondary and primary levels. The state subsidizes the budget of the state-aided Muslim schools, especially the remuneration of

teachers' salaries, whereas independent private Muslim schools do not receive state support and have to raise own funding to remunerate their teachers.

The 75 Muslim schools in South Africa (Niehaus 2008) are considered as independent because they offer an Islamic curriculum parallel to the public school curriculum on which learners are assessed; and as private institutions, these schools receive significant funding from private donors. Sixty-eight independent Muslim primary and high schools are affiliated to the Association for Muslim Schools in South Africa (AMSSA, established in 1989), with the expressed rationale to cultivate a Muslim identity at school that recognizes the importance of being in service to Allāh (God) and humanity. There are several reasons that account for the emergence of independent Muslim schools: Firstly, it is broadly perceived by educational associations, parent-teacher organizations, and Muslim societies that Muslim schooling contributes overwhelmingly to the shaping of learners' faith-based identities. More specifically, independent Muslim schools contribute to the formation of learners' Muslim identity especially in Muslim-minority societies where secularism and liberal democracy are considered as challenges to the aspirations of Muslims. That is, not only is it important for Muslims to acquire knowledge by being initiated into "excellent" educational discourses at school, but they should actually do so to the distinct advantage of their faith-based identities as Muslims. Secondly, independent Muslim schools offer religious and/or spiritual havens to Muslims who are perceivably subjected to exclusion and discrimination in secular societies where the state does not always have control over Islamophobic threats from various spheres of civil society. The attitudes of several Muslims in liberal societies are guided by thoughts of responsibility toward the cultivation of a democratic public sphere. And, thirdly, especially in the wake of 9/11, compounded by assertions from secular and other religious and nonreligious circles that Muslims do not act swiftly enough in condemning certain crimes against humanity committed by minority others who bear Muslim identities, independent Muslim schools are often used as institutional manifestations of a nonviolent, tolerant, and just Muslim education.

Thus, independent Muslim schools in South Africa have not been established only to consolidate and preserve a Muslim identity but also to be responsive to the democratic convictions of the larger society. Quite recently, Muslim schools in South Africa arduously attempted to advance their positions as educational institutions intent on teaching cooperative, peaceful, and tolerant forms of educational discourse that can countenance the violent "jihādīst" type of Islamic discourse made famous by the extremist al-Qā'idah network (Waghid 2011).

In the main, Muslim schooling aims at producing learners who enact their education according to the tenets of the Qur'ān, *sunnah* (life experiences of the Prophet Muḥammad), and *sharī'ah* (laws and ways of good living as espoused and recommended by renowned Muslim jurists). In this way, adhering to the ordinances of the Muslim faith, Muslim learners would retain and cultivate their identities, such as affirming their belief in an Absolute God (Allāh), angels, revealed books, prophets, the last day, doing good and prohibiting bad, performing prayers, giving

alms to the poor, fasting, and undergoing pilgrimage, within the ethical paradigm of morally worthwhile action for both the individual and society. Hence, shaping a Muslim identity involves becoming a person of *adab* or goodness (Al-Attas 1991). Simultaneously, through an initiation into the public school curriculum, learners are introduced to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for grades R to 9 (general education and training phase, i.e., primary school level or grades R to 7, and two grades of secondary or high school, i.e., grades 8–9) and grades 10–12 (further education and training phase or high school).

The NCS is based on principles that can be linked to the aims of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. These principles include the following: social transformation; outcomes-based education; high knowledge and high skills; integration and applied competence; progression; articulation and portability; human rights, inclusivity, environmental, and social justice; valuing indigenous knowledge systems; and credibility, quality, and efficiency (DoE 2003: 1). What follows from this is that learners are taught knowledge, skills, and values associated with democratic citizenship education. Hence, being taught to be a good person through enacting one's Muslim identity and becoming a democratic citizen, who can be responsive to the demands of human rights, inclusivity, environmental, and social justice, are not necessarily regarded as mutually exclusive aims of two different, yet interdependent, educational discourses. In fact, it seems as if Muslim schooling integrates two different forms of education – that is, Muslim education and public democratic citizenship education.

On the basis of the aforementioned integrated Muslim education curriculum, that is, a curriculum that aims to engender in learners a Muslim identity together with nurturing them with virtues of democratic citizenship education, it seems rather odd to associate Muslim schools exclusively with doctrinaire learning. If Muslim learners ought to be initiated into being critical and autonomous learners who cooperate actively in groups, as expected by the NCS, then they are not supposed to act adversely to creativity and imagination – that is, aspects of non-doctrinaire learning. Likewise, if learners are socialized with the tenets of the Muslim faith, in particular to become deeply reflective on the concerns of others and actually learn to be responsive to others persons' well-being, then it seems unlikely that Muslim education should be dissociated from transformative learning. Of course, Muslim learners are expected to memorize many "facts" about their dogma and, at times, to learn many aspects of their faith, such as committing some verses of the primary texts (Qur'an and *hadīth* or prophetic sayings) to memory, without necessarily questioning their merit or learning how to conduct themselves ethically and without, for instance, scrutinizing the authenticity of several devotional acts (as the latter are expected to be authentic). But this does not mean that Muslim learners are indoctrinated and required to endorse everything they learn. The current Muslim education curriculum simply does not make provision for uncritical learning, as the learners are expected to be socialized with certain aspects of the faith and simultaneously encouraged to take into controversy what they have acquired in response to learning to act responsibly in society.

## The Muslim Education Curriculum: Rationale, Content, and Structure

Formal Muslim schooling is confined to three of nine provinces in South Africa, namely, the Western Cape, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal, because by far the majority of the Muslim population of under two million (out of the 49 million South Africans) reside in those provinces. Although the Muslim education curriculum is a decentralized one, often reflecting the expectations of the various provinces, it comprises certain core critical and specific learning objectives. These objectives are in line with the objectives of the South African public schooling system and are supplemented by Islamic-oriented aspects as enunciated through the teachings of the jurisprudential schools of thought toward which Muslim schools in the three provinces are biased. For instance, the Darul Islam (High) School in the Western Cape will offer learners a supplementary curriculum according to the juristic principles of the Shāfiʿī school of thought, whereas Islamia College in the same province supplements its curriculum with Ḥanafī jurisprudential principles. Similarly, independent Muslim schools that function under the auspices of the Deoband network in Gauteng, a conservative Muslim reformation movement that has its origins in India (Metcalf 1982), are biased toward the Islamic teachings according to the interpretations of Deoband (mostly Ḥanafī) religious scholars.

In what follows, this chapter briefly analyzes the Muslim education curriculum at two independent Muslim primary and secondary or high schools in the Western Cape, primarily because in such schools, the public school curriculum is supplemented by a Muslim faith-based program, as is the case throughout the country, and, more importantly, because the objectives of independent Muslim schooling pioneered through the Association for Muslim Schools in South Africa (AMSSA) do not differ significantly from one school to the other. As is the case with all independent Muslim primary and high schools in South Africa, the state's public school curriculum, that is, the NCS, is supplemented by an Islamic component in the form of additional "subjects" such as Islamic Studies and Arabic. These subjects are offered as constitutive of the Muslim education curriculum. In a different way, the NCS for grades R to 7 is offered in independent primary Muslim schools, whereas the NCS for grades 8–12 is offered in independent Muslim high schools. In turn, the curriculum in both primary and high schools is augmented with either Islamic studies and Arabic or just Islamic studies. The primary reason for why independent Muslim schools implement the NCS is to ensure that, after the successful completion of schooling, Muslim learners would be eligible to gain access to the public higher education sector, which requires learners to have achieved a fully endorsed schooling qualification recognized by the country's National Accreditation Body for Independent Schools, namely, UMALUSI.

At high school, Muslim learners are exposed to the NCS, which prioritizes social transformation in grades 10–12, "aimed at ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of our population" (DoE 2003: 2). In addition, outcomes-based education forms the basis of the NCS, and this "encourages a learner-centered and activity-based



approach of education” (ibid.). The NCS is inspired by the fact that learners have to achieve learning outcomes in grades 10–12 that are located in critical and developmental outcomes. On the one hand, critical outcomes imply that, at the end of the students’ learning experiences, they should be able to identify and solve problems; make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively with others as participants in groups; organize and manage effectively and responsibly; collect, analyze, organize, and critically evaluate data; use science and technology effectively; show responsibility toward the environment and the health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of interrelated systems. On the other hand, developmental outcomes are aimed at learners being able to reflect and explore a multiple of strategies in order to learn effectively, participate as responsible citizens in life situations, be culturally and aesthetically sensitive in society, explore education and career opportunities, and develop entrepreneurial opportunities (ibid.). Moreover, the subjects in the NCS are categorized into learning fields that include the following: languages (fundamentals); arts and culture; business, commerce, management, and service studies; manufacturing, engineering, and technology; human and social sciences and languages; and physical, mathematical, computer, life, and agricultural sciences (ibid.: 6). At many independent Muslim high schools, Arabic is generally included as a third subject (in addition to English and Afrikaans) under the learning field of languages, whereas Islamic studies is considered as an additional subject under the learning field of human and social sciences and languages. Thus, the Muslim curriculum can actually be regarded as a public school curriculum augmented at times by subjects such as Islamic studies and Arabic.

At primary school, Muslim learners in grades R to 7 are exposed to the NCS’s general education and training (GET) band. The GET band consists of three phases, foundation phase (grades R to 3), intermediate phase (grades 4–6), and senior phase (grades 7–9), with grades 8–9 forming part of the further education and training (FET) band. The percentage of time allocated to the curriculum for the three phases are as follows: foundation phase (literacy 40%, numeracy 35%, and life skills 25%) and intermediate and senior phases (languages 25%, mathematics 18%, natural sciences 13%, social sciences 12%, technology 8%, economic and management sciences 8%, life orientation 8%, and arts and culture 8%). Under the learning areas of life skills and life orientation, Islamic studies (including a rudimentary study of Islamic history, law, ethics, morality, and Qur’anic recitation) is integrated into the curriculum to give independent Muslim primary schools their uniquely Islamic character. This brings the discussion to a cursory glance at the rationale for curriculum content and structure of two independent Muslim schools in the Western Cape – one (Oracle Academy) an affiliate of AMSSA and the other (Islamia College) unaffiliated to the organization.

## **Oracle Academy**

The Oracle Academy is an independent Muslim high school that was established in 2008. It enrolls 320 students and 22 staff members (including 4 directors that govern

the school). The school implements the NCS for grades 8–12, and, according to the principal, its purpose is to initiate learners into “just relationships with Allāh and people.” The school curriculum does not focus exclusively on imparting content but also inculcates in learners an awareness of being human through a sustained program of character development. The supplementary text used to develop the learners’ morals is *al-muḥīdah* (authored by a local religious scholar), which espouses an integrated conception between belief and practice. The NCS is supplemented by Islamic studies (being taught for six periods of 30 min per week), through which Muslim morals are taught without the intent to establish artificial boundaries between the acquisition of knowledge and character development. It thus seems as if the Muslim education curriculum at Oracle Academy is geared toward producing learners who are equipped with academic knowledge and competencies to be able to fit into the broader, liberal society while simultaneously preserving their Muslim identity through the enactment of appropriate character and morals (According to the principal, the subject Arabic is not offered because of past experience that showed that learners do not develop a strong communicative command of the language, as they focus primarily on linguistic conventions.).

## Islamia College

Islamia College was established in 1984 and comprises a high school for boys, a high school for girls, a primary school for both girls and boys, and a *ḥāfiẓ* school where learners can commit the Qur’ān to memory. Both the two high schools and one primary school follow the NCS, supplemented by “value-based education [considered as] key to building a united nation which creates a caring, nurturing and respectful child” (Islamia College 2011: 1). The primary school has an enrollment figure of 765 students. As part of its supplementary value-based education system, it offers extracurricular activities such as arts and crafts, karate, playball, drama, computer knowledge, cricket, netball, soccer, rugby, table tennis, and squash. The enrollment at the high school for boys has increased by over 100 learners since 2010. Its supplementary curriculum to the NCS is integrated in life orientation, which focuses on “outreach” such as the provision of sandwiches, fruits, and drinks to impoverished learners in surrounding schools. The high school for girls also follows the NCS, and, in 2011, the school had a 100% passing rate of its grade 12 s, with 58 subject distinctions – an achievement that compares with some of the highest performing schools in the country. Supplementary to the NCS curriculum, the school offers extramural activities as part of its value-based education program, including softball, cricket, rugby, volleyball, squash, jewelry making, scrapbooking, speech and drama, and Islamic art. Collectively, the two high schools and primary school comprise over 1000 learners and 80 educators, with the rationale to become centers of learning “with an ethos where young Muslims can receive a broad and balanced education which does not ignore the reality of Islam in their lives” (IBERR 2004). On the one hand, the broad type of education is related to the implementation of the NCS supplemented by a Muslim focus on life skills and life orientation, and, on the other hand, the balanced education is related to the implementation of extracurricular activities and sport.

In the main, formal primary and secondary Muslim education in South Africa follows the trend of the Oracle Academy and Islamia College insofar as both schools use the public school curriculum in the form of the NCS. The NCS is supplemented by Islamic studies or Arabic or both at high school level, forming part of the learning field of human and social sciences and languages. At primary school level, the NCS learning areas of life skills and life orientation are mostly integrated with Islamic studies. Consequently, the Muslim education curriculum is constituted by the NCS and supplemented by Islamic studies (and at times Arabic), with the rationale to guide learners toward the implementation of Muslim ethical values and practices in their educational endeavors. Obviously, several assumptions have been made about the nature of formal education as it unfolds in Muslim primary and high schools in the country. One of the assumptions made concerns what is often referred to as the *Islamization* of Muslim education.

### **An Account on the Undesirability of the Islamization of Education in South Africa**

There is an assumption on the part of several Muslim educators and organizations such as AMSSA that either the Muslim education curriculum should be “Islamized” or that momentous steps have already been taken in South Africa to minimally “Islamize” aspects of Muslim education. Then there are those, such as a trustee of IBERR and founding director of Islamia College, Maulana Ali Adam, who opine that the *Islamization* of Muslim education is not possible until sufficient resources are available to facilitate the pedagogical transformation of education in Muslim schools (Niehaus 2008). Although this author agrees that there is a lack of learning materials and teaching training opportunities in several Muslim schools, he does not necessarily share the view that aspects of Muslim schooling, or the Muslim education curriculum, should be “Islamized.”

Certainly in the case of South Africa, the practice of *Islamization* is not necessarily desirable, for several reasons: Firstly, considering that *Islamization* has in mind the removal of secular thoughts from the Muslim education curriculum, more specifically “the deliverance of knowledge from its interpretations based on secular ideology; and from meanings and expressions of the secular” (Al-Attas 1991: 43), it would be very challenging for Muslim schools to “Islamize” the Muslim education curriculum because the NCS is not a de-secularized curriculum. Secular thoughts that at times disconnect faith-based understandings of knowledge from political, social, and cultural aspects of life (Al-Attas 1995: 24–25) are constitutive of the NCS. For this reason, *Islamization* of the Muslim education curriculum is not only possible but at this stage of educational change in the country also undesirable, primarily because the NCS is intent on cultivating a democratic citizenry from which Muslim learners cannot be recused. Secondly, the fact that *Islamization* demands that the Muslim education curriculum should be distanced from aspects of magic, myth, and cultural traditions (Al-Attas 1991: 46) makes *Islamization* in the African context quite undesirable, as myths, culture, and tradition are important facets of what

constitutes an African philosophy of education. In fact, an African philosophy of education relies on culture-dependent forms of rationality (Gyekye 1997) on the basis that African thought and practice are shaped by the culturally lived experiences of Africa's people. And any attempts to "Islamize" the curriculum in South Africa can be seen as an abdication of the moral responsibility of a minority Muslim community to countenance what is perceived to be a philosophy of African education that connects with the indigenous, real-life experiences of people. Thirdly, bearing in mind that *Islamization* involves constructing a non-bifurcationist view of knowledge – that is, a view of knowledge incommensurable with separating the study of rational, intellectual, and philosophical sciences from a study of religious sciences, as well as extending a study of knowledge to include "disciplines" such as comparative religion, Western culture and civilization, linguistic sciences, and Islamic thought, culture, and civilization (Al-Attas 1991: 43) – it seems very unlikely that South African Muslim educators have gained the competence to devise and develop a context-specific "Islamized" education curriculum. As has been noted by Khan (2006: 180–182), by far the majority of educators in independent Muslim schools are not adequately trained to cope with the demands of any form of "Islamized" education curriculum. Hence, to conclude the discussion, the *Islamization* of the Muslim education curriculum in South Africa does not seem to be an attractive option, particularly in the light of the country's transformation of the education process geared toward establishing a responsible and democratic public citizenry.

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## Conclusion

This chapter endeavored to demonstrate that Muslim education in all independent Muslim schools in South Africa implements the NCS of the South African Department of Education. Learners at the schools are prepared to be active participants in the cultivation of a democratic citizenry, especially after decades of exclusionary and segregated apartheid education. Muslim educators are not just intent on ensuring that Muslim learners are initiated into the public school curriculum but that the learners should also be socialized with rudimentary Muslim teachings supplementary to the NCS so that they hopefully can function as democratic citizens with a distinct Muslim identity. Independent Muslim schools undeniably have had their critics, being accused in particular of being too exclusionary in the sense that they are not open to all learners irrespective of religious affiliation and that such schools are too indoctrinatory in that Muslim identity is emphasized without encouraging engagement with other religious denominations. In some instances, such criticisms seem to be valid, and it would appear that independent Muslim schools do not really contribute toward building a democratic, non-racist, and nonsexist society. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that these schools are actively playing an important role in the democratization of the education process as corroborated by the successful academic performance of their learners, (The principal of Oracle Academy proudly revealed that 10 of the grade 12 learners of 2011 were accepted for medical studies at two prominent universities in the province as a vindication of the "excellent" academic results produced

by an independent Muslim high school.) as well as the various “outreach” efforts to connect the schools’ pedagogical activities with the improvement of the cultural lives of other learners. For now, independent Muslim schooling and the Muslim education curriculum in particular do not seem to be at variance with the broader democratic citizenship aspirations of most South Africans.

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# Islamic Education in Afghanistan

Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory

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## Abstract

In Afghanistan Islamic education takes place in mosques, *madrasahs*, and Qur'an schools as well as in Western type of schools (primary and secondary schools). The most common institution for Islamic learning is the mosque or *masjid* school where practically all children learn the basics of Islam.

Since long, a conflict between the two education systems, Islamic education and Western type of education, exists in Afghanistan. It concerns the state control over Islamic education, girls' participation in education, and the role of Islam in the Western type of education. Two tendencies are visible today: a

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clear preference for Western type of education and an increasing interest for a complementary Islamic education in addition to the few hours of Islamic subjects taught in primary and secondary schools. Islamic schools for girls have been established in a few places by communities or by the Ministry of Education.

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**Keywords**

Islamic education · *Maktab* · *Madrasah* · Afghanistan · Ṭālibān

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## Introduction

What today commonly is understood as education was actually established in Afghanistan, as in other Muslim countries, several centuries before it took shape in most of the Western world. With the advent of Islam to Afghanistan in the seventh century, education also arrived in the country, and thus, education within the framework of Islam has existed for more than a millennium. The type of education that has been developed in the West reached Afghanistan approximately 100 years ago.

Western type of education was not introduced by a colonial power during the nineteenth century as was the case in many third-world countries; Afghanistan was never, as most of the neighboring countries, colonized. Nevertheless, Afghanistan incorporated most of the typical features of the Western educational system such as grade structure; school hours and semesters; subjects like language, mathematics, science, etc., which are taught in separate modules; annual examinations; and so on. All such classical qualities were imported to primary and secondary schools, with one difference, though: Islam was always included as a subject from grade 1 and onward.

The two educational systems, Islamic education and Western type of education, have, since the beginning of the twentieth century, existed side by side; at times without dissonance but more often than not with conflicts and disagreements. Over the years, three issues have been at stake as regards education in Afghanistan: (1) the government's aspiration to control the community that runs Islamic schools, (2) Islam as a subject in the curriculum in Western type of schools, and (3) girls' participation in education, Western as well as Islamic education. These issues have contributed to a king's exile, to an official ban on girls' education, and to the occupation of the country by foreign powers. The turbulent events of the past decades have not cooled down the conflict: quite the opposite, the questions are still burning.

In the postcolonial period and up to September 11, 2001, Islamic education did not attract much interest (with the exception of a few conferences for Islamist scholars). After the terrorist attacks, media, governments, international agencies, researchers, and others turned focus and attention to Islamic institutions of learning, not least to Afghan institutions. The word *madrasah* became common also in Westerners' vocabulary. Islamic schools have been described as sources of terrorism

“suspected of fostering a medieval mind-set and violent militancy” (Pohl 2006, p. 390). *Ṭālibān*, i.e., students in Islamic education, got a new meaning, at least in Western minds. (*Ṭālibān* is the plural form of *ṭālib*, student in *madrasah*.)

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## Islamic Education Has a Long Tradition

In the first Islamic schools in Afghanistan, moral education and reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught. Sometimes vocational education was included, for example, calligraphy and bookkeeping (Rafi 1999). However, to read and memorize the Qurʾān were the prime objectives of Islamic education.

Since long, Islamic education takes place in mosques, *madrasahs*, and Qurʾān schools as well as in Western type of schools (primary and secondary schools). A Qurʾān school is a school where students learn to memorize the Qurʾān (*Dār al-Ḥifāẓ*). In the literature, Qurʾān or Qurʾānic school is often used to describe Islamic education in general, which is somewhat misleading since Islamic education includes many additional subjects and not only studies of the Qurʾān. The Islamic place for worship, the mosque or *masjid*, became early also an institution for learning. *Masjid* schools have existed since the arrival of Islam to Afghanistan. Male individuals, *mullās*, who had acquired knowledge of Islam in *madrasahs* or through personal studies have been teaching in the mosques for hundreds of years (Amaj 1991; Rafi 1999). This type of Islamic education is still very common. In 1960, almost 10% of Afghan men were working as religious teachers as a full- or part-time occupation (Dupree 1973).

*Madrasahs* also have a long history in Afghanistan. A renowned *mullā*-teacher might attract a large number of students at which point the mosque had to expand and construct special rooms for the training sessions and space for lodging the students. Thus, a *madrasah* institution with boarding facilities had been created. Hundreds, maybe thousands of *madrasahs* of varied sizes existed in most big villages and towns. *Madrasahs* have historically been more common than Qurʾān schools in Afghanistan. *Madrasahs* have, until very recently, been intended exclusively for boys and men. From the beginning, the students, the *ṭālibān*, learned a broad spectrum of religious subjects as well as Arabic language, logic, rhetoric, literature, history, etc. The education had and still has to some extent an informal character, and students attended irregularly and on individual basis. They decided themselves at what pace they wished to learn and for how long they wanted to continue.

*Madrasahs* were boarding institutions, and students from different villages attended the school and lived there together. Generally, education was free of charge, and the costs were shared by the local community that was responsible for running the school. The aim of *madrasah* was to provide the specialists a Muslim society needs or, in other words, to produce masters in Islamic theology and law. A *mullā* is an adult man who has studied in a *madrasah*, and he has high status as a learned person – but *mullās* are also sources of satire for people! Today’s younger *mullās* usually have primary and sometimes secondary education in addition to Islamic



studies. Sometimes a *mullā* – especially among Sunnī Muslims – is called *mawlawī*. There is no clear-cut definition of what constitutes a *mawlawī*. Learning in the Qur’ān school (*Dār al-Hifāz*) is limited to recitation and memorization of the Qur’ān. When the whole Book is learned by heart, the boy student becomes a *qārī*, a very honorable title. Initially, mostly blind men became *qārīs*. In addition to the mentioned institutions, Islamic education also exists at the university level, at faculties of *Sharī‘ah* since at least half a century. Moreover, Islamic subjects have always been – to a varying extent – on the schedule at the Western type of schools.

Traditionally, Islamic education (except at the university) has been community based, which means that the village council (*shūrā*) takes the responsibility for the management – to use a modern word – of the *madrasah* and the *masjid* (mosque) school. Encouraged by the *shūrā*, the households took turns in providing food to the teachers and students. Usually, the *shūrā* also organized and collected some kind of remuneration for the teachers; mostly, teachers were paid in kind. The communities were also responsible for maintenance of the mosque and the *madrasah*.

In the beginning of the 1970s, in addition to the many village and city *madrasahs*, there were some 10–15 Islamic schools of extraordinary reputation in Afghanistan with a large number of *ṭālibān* and prominent scholars as teachers. These particular *madrasahs* followed a prearranged curriculum, and the training ran for a fixed number of years. The students were grouped into classes like in public schools. Students from small village *madrasahs* sometimes completed their Islamic studies in these *madrasahs*. There were many similarities to the government *madrasahs* (see below) with one important exception: they were community based and managed and, thus, not controlled by the government. They were independent institutions and were not concerned about the requirements set up by the Ministry of Education (MoE) regarding, for example, student admissions.

The few (around 13) government *madrasahs* that existed before the wars (before 1978) had a curriculum decided by the government. The first government *madrasah* was launched by King Amānullāh already in the 1920s in Kabul. The intention was to set up a proficiency system for *imāms* (Rafi 1999). As time went on, the government took over some *city madrasahs*, renamed those to “formal *madrasahs*,” and established a strict system for admissions, teacher recruitment, accreditation, and so on. These *madrasahs* were in many aspects organized as secondary schools for grades 7–12 with schedule, curriculum, and examination system. Subjects such as mathematics, science, and languages were included. Students were admitted after studies in village *madrasahs* or primary schools.

The Communist government (1978–1992) introduced a Soviet inspired education system, which included hardly any Islamic teachings (Samady 2001), but (wisely) left the traditional *madrasahs* to local communities. The *madrasahs* survived but kept a low profile during this period. Only teachers affiliated with the Communist parties were employed. (There were two Communist parties in Afghanistan at the time: *Khalq* (The People) and *Parcham* (The Flag).) Girls’ education was much encouraged. Teachers were officially accused of backwardness, and the students, particularly those who studied at higher levels, were called “black reactionaries” (due to their black beards). However, the government *madrasahs* remained. Even

during the Communist rule, there was still a need for Islamic judges since the *shari'ah* law system was partially continued.

The Islamic revival during the *jihād*, the liberation war against the Soviet occupation 1979–1989, paved the way for an expansion of *madrasahs*. Mujāhidīn (Mujāhidīn is plural of *mujāhid* “the holy fighter” set up *madrasahs*, which included religious and nonreligious subjects, with Arabic support in the liberated areas. Some of these *madrasahs* were strongly influenced by the Wahhābī school of Islam.)

The Ṭālibān government (1996–2001) introduced yet another type of *madrasah*: a 6-year primary school with subjects such as mathematics; science; languages, including English; and literature. More than 50% of the time was set aside for religious subjects. These Ṭālibān *madrasahs* were the only schools with government support at the time. Essentially they replaced the previous type of primary education in Afghanistan with the exception of NGO and community-supported primary schools. The Ṭālibān *madrasahs* were, however, fairly limited in number.

Some 10 years ago, two competing tendencies were visible as regards Islamic education: on the one hand, the big sprawling institutions with hundreds of Ṭālibān engaged in intense studies were closing down. Students seemed to prefer the Western type of education provided by the government in primary and secondary schools. On the other hand, Islamic education was revived. Qur'ān schools became increasingly popular as *complement* to primary and secondary education; and new forms of Islamic education, sponsored by the government, were becoming more accessible. Today it seems as the state has completely taken over the Islamic education and established a number of formal *madrasahs* all over the country. Moreover, Islamic schools for girls have been established in some places (Ministry of Education 2003, 2006; Gran 2006; Ministry of Education of Afghanistan 2016).

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## Western Type of Education Is of Recent Date

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Afghan King recognized the need for trained officers and administrators and set up two institutions in Kabul in 1878 for training of military and administrative staff. Only members of the royal family were admitted as students in the *Madrasah-yi Nizāmī* (Military School) and the *Madrasah-yi Mulkī* (Public School). In these schools, but also in the first primary school for boys established in Kabul in 1903, the curriculum was based on that of the Islamic *madrasah*, i.e., most of the subjects taught in the *madrasah* were also taught in the new schools. As in the original *madrasahs*, the sons of the elites were the first students of schools (*maktabs*) (Rafi 1999).

The first girl school, also in the capital, opened in 1921 (Samady 2001). The state has from the beginning been the only provider of Western type of education until the 1980s when the state gradually collapsed and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) took over part of its responsibilities. Provision of education has always been free, from primary to tertiary level, and completely centralized. Today, however, fee-based private schools have appeared in most cities.

The few girl schools that were established in the 1920s closed down after just one decade, and most of them were not reestablished until the 1950s, mainly, if not only, in the cities. Generally, public education developed very slowly until the mid-twentieth century when foreign aid started to assist the expansion of the Western type of education. In the 1970s, approximately one third of all children attended primary schools, of which only 15% were girls (Samady 2001). In Kabul, however, girls constituted around 35% of all pupils, while in rural areas, hardly any educational opportunities were available to girls (Ghani 1990 as cited in Christensen 1995; Ministry of Planning 1975). The Soviet invasion in 1979 and the eventual collapse of the Afghan state resulted in a failed education system, in particular with regard to the public education. The number of students decreased dramatically throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The foreign occupation of the country gave rise to hard struggles, but within a relatively short time, many areas were liberated by the resistance movement, the Mujāhidīn. In these areas, the Mujāhidīn groups, with the support of international NGOs, established schools, including schools for girls. This development continued during the Ṭālibān regime (1996–2001). In spite of the Ṭālibān ban on girls' education, the number of girl schools in some rural areas with support from in particular the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) increased every year. In the cities, however, public schools were not allowed to enroll girls.

The primary education curriculum has been in constant flux, in particular as regards the Islamic subjects, and has changed in accordance to the preferences of those in power from the prewar government to the pro-communist regime in the 1980s, to the Mujāhidīn administration, to the Ṭālibān rule, and up to today's government.

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## Conflict Issues in Afghan Educational History

As noted earlier, from an educational perspective, three issues have been important in many upheavals and rebellions throughout modern history in Afghanistan: the role of Islam in education, education for girls, and the government control of Islamic education. These issues were disputed already in 1929 when King Amānullāh was forced into exile and have, after a relatively calm period thereafter, again become very hot issues since the 1970s.

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## Islam as a Subject in Western Type of Education

Islam was an important subject from the very beginning of *maktab* education, that is, in the primary and secondary schools run by the government. This fact did not cause much friction until the 1970s when secular subjects expanded at the expense of Islamic teachings. From that time, much more attention was paid to the secular content of *maktab* education, and Islamic subjects were, if not directly reduced in the curriculum, dealt with as less important by teachers and planners. The students represented the new generation that was expected to contribute to the development

**Table 1** Hours per week of Islamic subjects during different governments

	Prewar govt 1960–1978		Communist govt 1978–1990		NGOs (SCA <sup>a</sup> ) 1984–2001		Ṭālibān govt 1996–2001		Interim govt 2002–2005		Elected govts 2006–	
	Gr:s 1–3	Gr:s 4–6	Gr:s 1–3	Gr:s 4–6	Gr:s 1–3	Gr:s 4–6	Gr:s 1–3	Gr:s 4–6	Gr:s 1–3	Gr:s 4–6	Gr:s 1–3	Gr:s 4–6
<b>Qur’ān</b>	2	2	1	1	6	6	6	5	1	2	1	2
<b>Islam</b>	2	3	0	1	6	4	5	11	2	2	2	2
<i>Total</i>	4	5	1	2	12	10	11	16	3	4	3	4

Source: Adapted from Karlsson and Mansory (2004)

<sup>a</sup>SCA The Swedish Afghan Committee, then one of the biggest NGOs involved in education in Afghanistan

of Afghanistan and bring the country into a modern era. The underlying assumption was that religious knowledge was of less importance and out of date. The curriculum that was introduced by the Communist government (1978–1990) further emphasized this development but still did not erase all Islamic subjects. Islam remained a subject for 1–2 h per week in the primary school during this period. The short-lived Mujāhidīn government (1992–1996) introduced a considerable expansion of the time dedicated to Islamic subjects in *maktab*. The hours increased from a couple of hours to 12 per week in grades 4–6. Mostly, the NGOs who supported education in the 1990s adhered to this curriculum. In the Ṭālibān primary schools (1996–2001), students spent more than half the time on Islamic subjects.

One of the first measures undertaken by the interim government in 2002 was to considerably reduce the number of hours of Islamic subjects to the same amount as during the Communist period. This caused a lot of opposition and has been changed several times. Table 1 compares the number of hours per week students have studied Islamic subjects in *maktabs* during different periods.

## State Control of Islamic Education

From the 1920s, *maktab* and *madrasah* represented two education systems, which often were regarded as contradictory systems and looked upon with suspicion by the ruling classes and rural masses alike. When governments have put their efforts on educational development, they have focused only on *maktab* education. If attention was paid to *madrasahs*, the reason was not to improve or expand them but rather to control and supervise these community-based Islamic schools. (During the Ṭālibān government, the big madrasa in Ghazni protected its independence and even rejected government support.)

For a long time, the state has sought to control Islamic education with varying degrees of efficiency and success. Khattak (1986: 46) has described this struggle as follows: “since the early days of Afghan governments until now the administration has tried by various means to get rid of these influences [by religious instructors] and

to administer Islamic instructions through state agencies.” This aspiration to control Islamic education is still evident.

Since 2006, primary and secondary education head toward a decentralized system with increased local participation and influence, while Islamic education moves in the opposite direction, toward a centralized, state-controlled system, contrary not only to current global trends but also to the Afghan tradition. The struggle of the center to control Islamic education has been a recurrent theme in the history of Afghan education. Judging from the first National Education Strategy Plan 2006–2011 (Ministry of Education 2006), a renewal of the state struggle returned to the agenda. A new initiative to establish state *madrasahs* was taken, an initiative, which was said to be justified by the Constitution (2004): “the state shall devise and implement a unified curriculum based on the provisions of the sacred religion of Islam, national culture, . . .” (Art. 45) and “the state shall adopt necessary measures for promotion of education in all levels, development of religious education, organizing and improving the conditions of mosques, *madrasahs* and religious centres” (Art. 17). These statements were interpreted by the MoE as the duty to develop “a moderate, modern and tolerant Islamic education system” (Ministry of Education 2006: 94) and as an “[extended] responsibility to the oversight of *madrasahs* and the integration of religious and faith based education into the overall system” (ibid.: 5). A total of 364 secondary *madrasahs* (grades 7–12) were planned for 2010, one in each district, to provide Islamic education for an anticipated 90,000 boys and girls by year 2010. In 2006, 212 schools were already running, 2 of which were girl *madrasahs*. In 2013, 644 Islamic schools (grades 1–12) were established with 183,000 students, among those 21% were girls (Ministry of Education 2016), a considerable expansion.

UNESCO (2016) reports that the curriculum of Islamic education now dedicates 60% to religious subjects, including the Arabic language; 20% to social studies, English, and national languages; and 20% to maths and science. This curriculum is justified as to increase employability of Islamic education students. Graduates of Islamic education are eligible to work as Mosque *imāms*, lawyers, teachers of Islamic subjects, as well as religious advisors for the military.

In the plan for 2006–2010, policies for “private and cross-border *madrasahs*” (a euphemism for community-based and Pakistani *madrasahs*, respectively) were to be developed. It was hoped that by setting up state *madrasahs*, there would be no need for Afghans to go to Pakistani *madrasahs* and study Islam (Gran 2006). Afghans who had participated in Islamic education abroad were to be “evaluated” at their return, using a “databank of questions” to be developed (Ministry of Education 2006: 98). This reform has now become implemented, and the graduated *madrasah* students who return from Pakistan are tested in new examinations. By 2008, only 5,000 of the 41,500 examined had passed and got formal certifications (Ministry of Education 2008).

The Ministry of Education is upgrading the Islamic school teachers both as regards salary levels and education. Teachers have been sent to Egypt and Iran for studies (unclear for how long), and teachers from Al-Azhar University have assisted in instruction at the Afghan *madrasahs*. A new curriculum has been completed, and

**Table 2** Ministry of Education plans for Islamic education as stated in the National Education Strategy Plan 2010–2014

Indicators	Baseline 2008	Target for 2014	Target for 2020
Percentage of Islamic education graduates who passed national standard test	0%	50%	90%
Percentage of Islamic education graduates who are state employees within 1 year of graduation	25%	80%	90%
Percentage of grade 6 graduates of basic education enrolled in Islamic education	2%	8%	10%
Gender parity index in Islamic education	0.02	0.30	0.40
No. of <i>madrasahs</i> established	369	550	733
No. of Darul Hefazes (Qur'ān schools) established	84	250	314
No. of Darul Ulums ( <i>madrasahs</i> grade 13–14) established	42	60	74
No. of registered private <i>madrasahs</i>	10	300	400
Percentage of teachers using active learning and teaching methods	7%	40%	80%
Percentage of professional teachers passed competency test	0%	90%	100%
No. of students with access to sport facilities	8%	80%	100%
Percentage of schools with scouts	0%	70%	90%

Adapted from Ministry of Education (2009)

textbooks have been produced accordingly, recently by the support from the Kingdom of Jordan (UNESCO 2016).

After 2008, the government seems to have acknowledged the high demand for Islamic education and responded to the pressures from local communities. As seen in Table 2, government *madrasahs* are assumed to be governed by similar rules as *maktabs*. Even such activities as scouts are included in *madrasahs*. All teachers as well as administrators should get similar training as school staff. All private *madrasahs*, i.e., community-run *madrasahs*, are assumed to be registered with MoE by 2020. In the latest plan, it is stated that MoE will encourage the private sector to participate actively in providing Islamic education according to the national rules and regulations. If existing unregistered Islamic private schools get registered, their students' certifications may be approved by MoE. As other schools, Islamic education institutions are to be supervised and monitored by MoE officials. Similarly, *madrasahs* are also encouraged to be supported by community *shūrās* as other schools are supposed to be. As seen in Table 2, the government intends to fully control, formalize, and standardize all forms of Islamic education institutions. However, and astonishingly, the MoE pays no attention whatsoever to the *masjid* (mosque) schools where practically all Afghan children get their basic Islamic education. The only explanation available is that these schools sort under the Ministry of Pilgrimage and Endowments.

According to the third National Education Strategy Plan, 2015–2020 (Ministry of Education 2016) (draft version written by MoE but still (July 2016) not approved by

the donors), the overall aim for Islamic education is to “develop human resources with competencies needed for religious preaching in mosques, teaching Islamic subjects, working as judges and attorneys, working in governmental and non-governmental organizations, and pursuing their studies in higher education institutes” (Ministry of Education 2016: 33). To regularly improve Islamic education, it is seen as necessary with “extensive consultation with Islamic ‘*ulamā*’” (ibid.: 33). The MoE is “determined to promote active learning” (ibid.), and lecturers from the teacher training institutions are to observe the teaching in Islamic schools and guide the teachers “in new teaching methods, such as group work” (ibid.). To increase girls’ participation in Islamic education, it is seen as necessary to recruit qualified female teachers from teacher training institutions and from general schools through overtime payment and equip *madrasahs* with boundary walls, healthy drinking water, and sanitation facilities. Other Islamic countries will be asked to fund Islamic education in Afghanistan and to participate in a “development board” for fundraising and “discuss Islamic education policies.”

It seems obvious that the state seeks to grasp full control over the Islamic education institutions. MoE “strives to teach real teaching of Islam and prevent extremism” (Ministry of Education 2012: 26). Islamic education teachers are accused of using “lecturing and drilling techniques for teaching” and not “active learning methods” (ibid.: 26). However, whether this expansion, revised curriculum, and encouragement of girls’ participation in Islamic education are demand driven and based on independent national policies or a way to attract increased donor funding remains to be seen.

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## Girls’ Education

In Afghanistan girls have until recently been practically excluded from all Islamic education except for the few years they are allowed to attend the *masjid* schools. Girls probably constitute a minority of *madrasah* students in most Muslim countries. In Afghanistan, girls’ *maktab* education has also met difficulties throughout history.

In the first girl schools, the students were daughters of the urban elites. The girls were dressed in Western-like uniforms, an outfit that did not correspond to what was generally considered to be in accordance with the Muslim dress code. Thus, it was not hard for the belief to arise that *maktab* education as such countered Islamic values. The advocates for girls’ education moved too hastily and may not have had enough contact with the faith and values of the majority of the population at that time. As a result, girls’ education faced its first backlash by the end of the 1920s, and the schools closed down.

During the following decades, girl schools were revived at a very slow pace. Boys’ education expanded slowly as well. From the 1950s, girls’ education expanded little by little and initially mostly in urban areas. It was increasingly accepted that girls and women were needed in the pedagogical and medical professions since the gender separation required female teachers for girls and female doctors for women. By the end of the 1970s, girls constituted around one third of all

students. Rural female students were, however, few. The Communist government established by the Soviet occupants tried to introduce a socialist education system without Islamic influences. The posters that were spread throughout the country depicting girls dressed in short skirts, red neck scarves, and clenched fists were hardly cherished by the Afghans, particularly not by people in rural areas. Parents withdrew their children from *maktab*, first the girls and then the boys. However, in Kabul schools during the 1980s, the number of girl students outnumbered the boys, and in rural areas, soon liberated by the Mujāhidīn movement, girls became pupils to an extent that had never occurred before. Contrary to what is generally described, the Mujāhidīn members, at the time often Islamist modernists, generally favored girls' education. With international financial support (sometimes also conditioned), girl schools were established in many of the Mujāhidīn-controlled rural areas. This development continued during the Ṭālibān ban on girls' education: the number of rural girl schools increased continuously during these years. City girls, however, were totally excluded from education with the exception of those who could participate in clandestine home schools. The Ṭālibān believed that only Islamic education was required for the population; women, however, did not need education at all. The Ṭālibān movement was not homogenous in their view of education, and in rural areas girls' education was often accepted, and sometimes women were allowed to teach.

After the fall of the Ṭālibān regime, girls have returned to schools in the cities, and rural schools have also had an increase of girl students. Still in 2014 girls constituted approximately 40% of all students, and a majority of the girls were still urban dwellers. It was estimated that approximately 30% of all Afghan girls were enrolled in *maktab* (Ministry of Education 2016). Table 3 summarizes the most important issues of controversy in Afghan educational history (Karlsson and Mansory 2007).

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## Conclusion

The two education systems, Islamic education and Western type of education, still exist in Afghanistan. The conflict between the two is still there, and it still concerns the state control over Islamic education and the role of Islam in the Western type of education. The government seems to be strongly determined to exercise power also over Islamic education. Whether this ambition will be successful is still an open question, although state-controlled *madrasahs* seem to be dominating today. The presented statistics of attending students is not reliable, the financial resources available for Islamic education are limited, and it is doubtful whether the population is prepared to give up the long tradition of community-based Islamic education. Two tendencies are visible today: a clear preference for *maktab* education and an increasing interest for a *complementary* Islamic education in addition to the few hours of Islamic subjects taught in *maktab*. Presently, the government has to a large extent succeeded in controlling the *madrasahs* but seems to have lost the struggle as regards the role of Islamic subjects in basic education, i.e., in *maktab*.



**Table 3** Conflict issues in Afghan educational history

Period	Islam in <i>maktab</i>	Girls in <i>maktab</i>	Control of <i>madrasah</i>
1920s	<i>Maktab</i> curriculum based on <i>madrasah</i>	First girl school started in 1921. Closed in 1929	Community <i>madrasahs</i> all over the country Two state <i>madrasahs</i> in Kabul
1930s–1940s	No change	Very few girl schools restarted	No change
1950s–1960s	Secular education in focus as a means for modernization	Slow expansion, mainly in cities	Community <i>madrasahs</i> continued Gradual government takeover of seven city <i>madrasahs</i>
1970s	Decreased hours	Large expansion in cities A few schools in rural areas	Community <i>madrasahs</i> and nine government <i>madrasahs</i> continued up to 1978
1980s	In state <i>maktab</i> : decreased number of hours In Mujāhidīn <i>maktab</i> : increased hours In refugee <i>maktab</i> : increased hours	Public girl schools in cities Mujāhidīn girl schools in rural areas Girl schools in refugee camps	Community <i>madrasahs</i> attacked and expropriated, many continued (with a low profile) Nine government <i>madrasahs</i> dysfunctional but existing <i>Madrasahs</i> with formal structure Wahhābī <i>madrasahs</i> supported by Arabs <i>Madrasahs</i> in refugee camps
1990s	NGO schools with Mujāhidīn curriculum Ṭālibān schools = <i>madrasahs</i> with secular subjects	NGO girl's schools in rural areas Ṭālibān ban on girl schools (mainly in cities)	Community <i>madrasahs</i> revived, some supported by Ṭālibān government Nine government <i>madrasahs</i> revived
2000s	Fluctuating hours	Girl schools established in most parts of the country. Also, girls enrolment in <i>madrasahs</i>	Community <i>madrasahs</i> declining Government <i>madrasahs</i> dominating State control and regulation Private <i>madrasahs</i> encouraged; registration is required

Girls have until recently been excluded from formal Islamic education in Afghanistan. After the elementary instruction, girls get in the *masjid* school; their opportunity to learn about Islam is still mainly through *maktab* education. That girls have been completely excluded from Islamic education – and as a result have acquired

more limited knowledge about Islam than boys and men – has by far not attracted the same concern as girls' participation in *maktab* education. However, in the last plan for Islamic education, the Ministry of Education seems determined to expand the facilities of Islamic education for girls.

In the *masjid* schools, all Afghan children receive elementary Islamic education according to centuries-old traditions. To improve the textbooks and train the *imāms* in teaching methods have not been on the agenda so far, a measure that maybe could be considered as a first step in case the Ministry of Education really intends to improve Islamic education.

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# Islamic Education in Tajikistan

Hakim Zainiddinov

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## Abstract

Islamic education has a long history in the Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan, that has among the most famous Islamic educational institutions. When the country was occupied by Tsarist Russia, these institutions were allowed to continue as before. There were more than 10,000 *maktabs* teaching Islamic matters. However, under the Soviet rule, all such institutions were closed down and children were taught by *mullās* at home. The contacts with the Arab countries were stopped. In the 1980s, with the *Glasnost*, there was a revival of the Islamic education. After the Civil War (1992–1997), the Tajik State reinforced its control and regulation of Islamic education. In 2010, some 20 *madrasahs* existed. This chapter makes an overview of Islamic education in Tajikistan.

## Keywords

Islam · Religious education · Tajikistan · Pre- and post-Soviet periods · Secular state

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## Introduction

This chapter traces the emergence and development of Islamic education throughout the history in the pre- and post-Soviet periods. The main focus of this chapter, however, will be on the current dynamics of Islamic education under the secular state, *vis-à-vis* secular education, and under rapidly changing local and global circumstances.

The historical development of Islamic education in Central Asia has not been smooth. There were periods when this system prospered, followed by periods of stagnation, and then revival. During its peak period, the system enjoyed tens of thousands of *maktabs* (elementary schools) and *madrasahs* in this region. The Soviet period closed all *maktabs* leaving none operating legally. Apart from the Soviet schools, Islamic schools were embedded in the community and family ties, and this was the main reason for their survival. Independence to some extent brought the revival of Islamic education. In 2010, Tajikistan had 19 registered *madrasahs* and one Islamic University. The country has a total population of about seven million inhabitants, whereof Muslims comprise 97% (Epkenhans 2010; Karagiannis 2006).

The chapter consists of three parts, in chronological order of the development of Islamic education. After giving a quick overview of the pre-Soviet period, some light will be shed on the harsh methods used during the Soviet period by the communist regime to eradicate Islam and Islamic education. Special emphasis will be made on new dynamics of development of Islamic education that started immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet regime.

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## The Early History

For many centuries, *maktabs* and *madrasahs* were not only two main sources of religious education but also the building blocks of both religious and secular education. As noted by Shorish (1986), children were taught not only reading and writing but also elementary arithmetic, history, and geography in *maktabs*. In large cities, some *maktabs*, having such disciplines as grammar, poetry, morals, physical education, and proverbs as an essential part of the school's curriculum, could enroll over one thousand pupils (Nakosteen 1963 as cited in Shorish 1986, p. 318). However, the rise of science has not been followed, "after the Mongol catastrophe... by a renaissance" (Shorish 1986, p. 321). Mongols conquered Central Asia in the early thirteenth century. Unprecedented oppression and brutality of Genghis Khan's army took place against people. It is well documented by historians that the Mongolian army massacred the entire populations of several cities that refused to surrender. The same army also caused irretrievable damage to science. Burning the most famous library established in the tenth century by the Sāmānīds and feeding its books to warriors' horses after conquering Bukhara in 1220 was one of such cruel acts committed against human knowledge accumulated for many centuries.

*Maktab* from now on was associated with teaching young children of various ages (from 4 to 10 years old) the Arabic alphabet and basics of how to read and memorize the Qur'ān. This did not necessitate the writing skills and writing ability but was kept by literate people as a lucrative business (Becka 1966; Shorish 1986). The high level of illiteracy, despite the existence of the large number of *maktabs*, was always surprising to scholars.

At the end of the nineteenth century, there were about 10,000 *maktabs* in the country (Becka 1966). Officially, enrollment in the *maktab* did not entail any fee. It was explained by the notion that words of Allāh could not be sold. *Maktabdor* or *domullo*, the way the teacher was called, was mainly supported by the community or in rare cases from the *waqf* (endowment lands belonging to mosques). As described by Aini (1966), the community's support was expressed in various forms.

The *maktab* enrolled from 10 to 40 students of various ages and levels of knowledge where each pupil learned his lesson individually. According to Aini (ibid.), girls' *maktabs*, which were separately established in teachers' homes, provided better education. Female teachers were wives of *imāms* or other clergymen. High school- and university-level education were provided by the *madrasah*. First *madrasahs* as educational institutions of university type emerged in the tenth century, while first universities in Europe appeared only two to three centuries later (Becka 1967). *Madrasahs* were mainly located in urban centers (Aini 1936, 1949–1955). Compared to the *maktab*, the *madrasah* was not an extension of the community or family, but rather resembled a formal entity. The main financial source of *madrasahs* used to come from *waqf* property consisting of agricultural lands, stores, *korvonsaro* (roadside inns), and so forth.

*Madrasahs* went through some fundamental changes along the way of their development and ended up by being centers of the high theological education only. As argued by Shorish (1986), after the thirteenth century, only children of high social strata of the society could afford to study at *madrasahs*. Bukhara had about 185 *madrasahs* at the beginning of the twentieth century; only about 22 provided instruction, the rest providing accommodation only (Becka 1967, p. 49).

The complete course of education in the *madrasah* could take up to 20 years, and Islamic functionaries and officials as well as secondary and higher education instructors were produced by the *madrasah* (Aini 1936, 1949–1954). The *madrasah* instructor could not charge fees to their students following the same presumption that it is sinful to sell Allāh's word. Albeit similar to *maktab* teachers, *mudarris*es used to receive gifts in forms of clothing, foodstuff, and money on various occasions (Aini 1936, 1949–1955).

Not much change has been introduced to the educational system until the emergence of the *uṣūl-i jadīd* reform movement, known as Jadidism, at the end of the nineteenth century. Jadidism initiated its reforms by promoting changes in educational system and attempted further to expand its progressive and innovative ideas to the entire society (Khalid 1998, 2007; Muminov et al. 2010) (see also Chapter ► “Islamic Education in Pakistan”). As Jadidism ideas posed threat to the old system, many Jadids were severely persecuted, jailed, and killed by the Emir of

Bukhara. Islamic dignitaries could not tolerate any innovation that could question their control over the education system.

Educational reforms demanded by Jadids were put in practice through the establishment of *maktab-i uşūl-i nav* (new method schools). The number of these schools was very small, many of which used to function secretly, especially in the territory of the Emirate of Bukhara. In contrast to traditional *maktabs* and *madrasahs* that used to provide only religious education, they not only implemented new teaching methods, essential part of which was learning the ability to write, but also introduced new secular subjects, such as geography, arithmetic, and history into the curriculum (Aini 1940). Moreover, the duration of lessons and academic year, as well as furnishing of classrooms in these schools, resembled the European type of schools.

Another addition to the existing educational system of this period was brought by Tsarist Russia through opening of Russian native schools. Emergence of these schools followed immediate colonial conquest of Turkistan by Tsarist Russia in 1865 and establishment of the protectorate known as Russian Turkistan in 1867. What was interesting is that Tsarist Russia did not take any radical measures to change the traditional education system. In general, it minimized substantially its interference with local religion and educational and legal systems an “indirect ruling” (Epkenhans 2010).

*Maktabs* and *madrasahs* were still very popular among the population. Any attempt to reform or prohibit the traditional Islamic school could entail an uprising against the authority, because

this school has a scholarly-religious character. It developed and established itself on the basis of local traditions which have not lost significance up to our days. The Russian administration is practically not in the position to gain influence on this school. (Ostourmov, 1914 as cited in Muminov et al. 2010, p. 227).

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## Soviet Assault on Religious Education

Fundamental changes to the traditional education system were introduced by the Soviet regime. The spread of the ruling of the Bolsheviks started rapidly after the 1917 October Revolution in those parts of Central Asia that were under the Russian Tsarist Empire. Tajikistan, located in the eastern part of the Emirate of Bukhara, came under the Soviet ruling in 1921.

Initial Bolsheviks' assault on religion included closing of *sharī'ah* courts, *madrasahs*, and mosques, confiscating *waqf*, and arresting *mullās* (local Islamic clerics or mosque leaders) and '*ulamā*' (Tazmini 2001). The response to the anti-religious campaign of the Bolsheviks included armed rebellious groups in Tajikistan which continued until 1935 through mountain guerrilla-type resistance (Ahmad 2009).

This period is also known as a period of mass migration of Tajiks to the neighboring Afghanistan fleeing the Soviet suppression. From Kulob alone, the

Southern region of Tajikistan about half a million fled to Afghanistan during 1924–1930 (Epkenhans 2010).

According to Kemper et al. (2010), Jadids joined the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s hoping to implement their reforms through the Soviet ideological and administrative machine. Lacking personnel and resources, as well as clearly developed concept and implementation mechanism for a new education system, the Bolsheviks used Jadids to infringe separation among the clergy. By the late 1920s, the Soviet regime had already constructed its education system and started replacing the Jadid schools. Many Jadids were exiled, killed, or jailed. While previous measures such as confiscation of *waqf* and mosque properties deprived Islamic schools of their financial support, collectivization left religious schools totally naked by eliminating wealthy peasants (so-called *kulaks*) who were their traditional and generous supporters (Kemper et al. 2010). Many *mullās* and religious scholars were exiled along with landowners, merchants, and wealthy peasants. Stalin's Decree of 1929 further crippled religion giving a serious blow to Islamic education. It framed religion only to “performance of the cult” –rites and rituals- and barred the church from education and social matters” (Juergensmeyer 2008, p. 154). The Great Terror of 1937–1938 deprived Central Asian republics of their national elites, who were replaced by people who were educated and trained by the Soviet system. According to Wheeler (1964), within about two and half decades of the Bolsheviks ruling (1917–1941), all *maktabs* and *madrasahs* had been shut down.

World War II brought some easiness to religion, as the state needed religious support in unifying people against the common enemy (Juergensmeyer 2008; Tazmini 2001). In 1943 the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was created. Having a loyal *mufī* at its head, the Administration was allocated the power of registering mosques, appointing *imāms*, and carrying out other religious activities under direct guidance of communist leaders (ibid.). Reopening of the Mīr-i ‘Arab Madrasah in 1946 (originally established in 1540) in Bukhara and the Baraq-Khān Madrasah in 1956 in Tashkent occurred during this period. The former provided secondary education, while the latter focused on higher religious education. The goal was to train loyal clergies and officials, such as *imāms* and *qādīs* not only for Central Asia and Kazakhstan but for the entire Soviet Union.

However, this official moderated policy toward Islam did not last long. A new campaign against religion was launched by Khrushchev. His Decree of 1961, which remained as the official line of the Communist Party until the mid-1980s, envisaged a harsh attack against the clergy, full implementation of already existing antireligious laws, and stronger enforcement of penalties for religious crimes (Tazmini 2001). It was under this policy that the Baraq-Khān Madrasah was closed in 1961 and reopened only decade later in 1971 as the Islamic University of Imām al-Bukhārī. For another two decades, next successors of the Communist Party continued this policy.

Scholars agree that the Soviet campaign directed toward the eradication of Islam was partially successful. While official Islam was constrained and restricted, the only way Islam continued to be taught and spread during the Soviet period was through grassroots initiatives or so-called folk Islam (Atkin 1989; Niyazi 1999). While

religious schools were closed, children were taught by parents or by *mullās* at home. People could not practice their religion at work, but they could offer prayers in their houses or teahouses and red corners (Atkin 1989; Niyazi 1999). Most *mullās* used to secure jobs that allowed them to have more leeway in observing their daily religious duties. Working as a watchman was one of them that allowed these people to offer their daily prayers on time and read their religious books throughout the nights.

Tajikistan as well as the entire Central Asia suffered most from being separated from the rest of Muslim world. As the Soviet Union was closed behind the iron curtain, it isolated Islamic scholars and thinkers from receiving and learning about current and important trends and thoughts in other Muslim countries. Khalid (2007) points to two main consequences of the Soviet regime's attack on Islam. While the first outcome resulted in the localization of religion and constraining it to customs and traditions, the second led to the removal of religion and its teaching from public discourse.

Conversion of the Arabic alphabet in 1928 into Latin followed by Cyrillic in 1940 with national adaptation deprived Tajiks not only from common cultural heritage that they had with people of Iran and Afghanistan but also from the ability to read their classics in original script and from having access to rich, comprehensive, and fundamental scholarly works of their predecessors.

Fundamental changes in the attitude of the Soviet state toward religion occurred in the mid-1980s, the period which is known as the era of Gorbachev. It was the period of revival and actual return of Tajikistan and its people as well as the other Central Asian countries to Islamic roots. *Glasnost* (policy of openness) and *Perestroika* (radical economic and political reforms) initiatives launched in 1985 by Gorbachev gave a big push for awakening people from a long sleep. The resurgence of the religion that led to the construction of new *masjids* (mosques) and *madrasahs* and rebuilding of old ones was a prominent feature of this period. One estimate shows that in 1991 ten new mosques were opened every day throughout Central Asia (Juergensmeyer 2008).

The *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* also brought other religious enrichments into the lives of people. As noted by Akiner (1997), the number of people performing *hajj* (pilgrimage) increased, leeway for celebration of Islamic holidays was given, and audio and visual religious literature started appearing. In 1989, about 1.5 million copies of the Qur'ān were brought from Arab countries and distributed to people through the Muslim Spiritual Administration for Central Asia and Kazakhstan (Atkin 1989). The years of *perestroika* have increased religious practices, while the knowledge of the faith remained rudimentary (Akiner 2002).

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## Post-Soviet Period

The accelerated process of Islamization of the society started after gaining independence in 1991 (Wanner and Steinberg 2008). Apart from the other Central Asian countries that also witnessed the revival of religion, the volume and speed of dissemination of Islamic culture, traditions, and teachings were significant in



Tajikistan (Epkenhans 2010). The Islamic resurgence in Tajikistan was characterized by a dramatic increase in the number of mosques and *madrasahs*. By 1992 there were already 130 large town mosques functioning in Tajikistan (Tazmini 2001). As noted by Rashid (2002), only in 2 years of 1990–1992, a thousand new mosques were opened in Tajikistan. Growth of attendance at mosques; emergence of production and consumption of religious media and literature; presentation of Islamic point of view on contemporary social, political, and religious issues by scholars; and return of women to the *hijāb* (veil) are some of the important characteristics of this period. Neighborhood mosques retained their previous influence and activities that were limited previously to offering daily five-time prayers, holding circumcision ceremonies, as well as washing, shrouding the body, and performing the funeral prayer. Now religious classes were organized in mosques.

The post-Soviet period has been characterized by sending young people to Arab countries, Iran, and Pakistan to obtain religious education from universities of these countries. Close linguistic and cultural ties that were established with Iran after the dissolution of the Soviet Union allowed Tajikistan to send its students not only for Islamic education but also to study in various secular fields. As concerns religious education, Tajik students were enrolled in Iran's center of Shī'ite teachings in Qum and Sunnī City of Zahedon [Zāhidān], Balujistan [Baluchistān] (Abramson 2010).

The Civil War of 1992–1997 displaced about 800,000 people, majority of whom found shelter in Afghanistan. Many families put their children in religious schools in Afghanistan or sent them to Pakistan knowing that *madrasahs* provide free education along with boarding and lodging (ibid.). Tajik students pursuing Islamic education could be seen in many Arabic countries, such as Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and so forth. The largest proportion goes to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. According to one estimate, only in 2009 there were from 500 to 1,000 Tajik students in Egypt and from 350 to 700 in Saudi Arabia (ibid.). The same source indicates that Tajikistan has far more students studying in religious institutions abroad than its neighboring countries of Central Asia.

Ironically, in 2004 the government cancelled its exchange program on religious education with al-Azhar, the only foreign institution at that time, claiming that Tajik students needed religious education along with secular subjects (ibid.).

Reasons that drive young people to seek religious education abroad are several. It is related to high unemployment rate and seen by young people as the only opportunity to leave the country. Some indicate poor conditions of teaching Islam in Tajikistan and absence of alternatives other than government-approved version of Islam (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2010). The only religious school of higher education, the Tajik Islamic University, which was established in 1991 in the capital under the auspices of *Qāzīyāt* (office of religious authority) has had limited resources in both provision of education and admission of increased number of students. In 1997 the university was registered as a private institution being mainly financed by *Shuro-i Ulamo* (Council of religious scholars), student fees, and donations by individuals. The fee for education is very symbolic and nominal, which does not exceed annually 40 USD, while annual education fee in secular universities varies from 800 to 1,000 USD or more. The number of students attending the

university, despite the poor conditions of its classrooms and building itself that is adjacent to one of the biggest mosques of the capital city, has increased gradually. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first millennium, it had 1,300 male students and about 300 female students in its *madrasah* for girls (Epkenhans 2010). In November 2007, the university was transformed into the Tajik State Islamic Institute, which brought it fully under the control of the state (Yuldoshev 2008).

While many young boys sought an opportunity to enhance their religious education abroad, an emphasis was put on formal and unified education for girls as well. In 2010, there was a legally functioning girls' *madrasah* at the Islamic University that had more than 300 female students.

Another source of religious education was the establishment of Turkish secular schools by the Fethullah Gülen foundation throughout the Central Asian countries. Operating in the capital of Tajikistan and its provincial centers, these schools are considered highly creditable and are in great demand among the population. These schools enroll students on a highly competitive basis, and in addition to complying with the national curriculum, they have to ensure that their students become fluent in four languages, namely, Tajik, Russian, Turkish, and English. Graduates of these schools continue pursuing their BAs and MAs at universities in Turkey and Western countries. Islamic missionary work of these schools is "mostly confined to informal circles in student dormitories" (Kemper et al. 2010, p. 15). This activity mainly consists of learning the Qur'an and performing prayers.

According to the SCRA (State Committee for Religious Affairs), that was replaced by the Department for Religious Affairs (DRA), in 2004, there were 262 Friday Mosques, 3,050 five-times-prayer mosques, 19 *madrasahs*, and one Islamic University in the country that were registered and thus were functioning legally (Epkenhans 2010). According to another estimate, there were 18 *madrasahs* in the whole country (Abramson 2010).

Tajikistan has been recognized as a secular, rule of law, and democratic state, according to its Constitution (1994). Although the Constitution of Tajikistan declares the separation of the state and religion and guarantees freedom of worship, the state administers strict control over religion, religious activities, and Islamic education through appointing religious leaders at national and local levels, dictating the themes and content of Friday sermons, registering mosques, giving permission for opening schools, and so forth. This process has been accelerated by the authorities who intensified the filtering of the mosque personnel. In 2002, only in the Sughd Province of the country 15 *imāms* were dismissed from their posts after they failed to pass examination administered by the SCRA, which tested their knowledge of religious teachings and principles (International Religious Freedom Report 2004). In August 2007, the process known as an attestation of *imāms* was repeated under the initiative of the Department for Religious Affairs of the Dushanbe Mayor's Office for Mosque Leaders of the Capital City. Although the authorities claim the main reason behind carrying out of the attestation process lies in complaints received from citizens on the lack of *imāms*' knowledge and competence, *imāms* themselves as well as other local and international observers considered the process as another attempt of government

to scrutinize mosques and tighten control over religion and its leaders by replacing discontented *imāms* with loyal people (Najibullah 2007).

Religious subjects are excluded from the curriculum of public secular schools. For young schoolchildren of age 9–12 years, a course on morals is taught from the third to the sixth grade. It is called *Odobnoma* (Book of ethics) and includes both national (Tajik) and Islamic values. The only course for higher grades is the History of Religions, which is taught at the tenth grade. It provides shallow information on all major religions. Starting in the academic year of 2009, all schoolchildren of the eighth grade took for the first time a mandatory course on Islam introduced by the Ministry of Education. The course called *Maʿrifat-i Islom* (Knowledge of Islam) is taught once a week and includes four parts, namely, the history of Islam, Islamic principles, Islam's stance on science and knowledge, and Islam's role in Tajik society (ibid.). The government expanded the course in 2010 to public schools of ethnic minorities, such as Uzbeks, Kyrgyzs, and Russians. The main intention of the government behind introducing the current course is to increase the knowledge of the youth on the mainstream Ḥanafī school of Islamic jurisprudence and protect them from the influence of radical Islamic ideas (Mirsaidov 2010; Najibullah 2009). Paradoxically, Islamic scholars were not involved in the development of this textbook. This happened despite repeated critics of the authorities of the Ministry of Education for producing textbooks that distort information about Islam. In December 2008, a prominent Tajik cleric and parliamentarian, the former *qāḍī* and deputy prime minister in his open letter to the Ministry of Education, pointed out many deliberate misinterpretations of Islam in Tajik history textbooks that portrayed the Prophet Muḥammad as a political figure and Islam not as a religion but the product of his imagination (Najibullah 2008). Moreover, graduates from the Islamic University were not invited to teach the current course at public schools either. The government assumes that involving Islamic specialists in teaching this course will bring to the intrusion and growth of religious agitation. Yet, 400 Tajik literature and history teachers trained by the Ministry of Education will not be sufficient to overcome the shortage of qualified personnel to instruct the course. At present, Tajik schools experience the shortage of over six thousand teachers with 40% of their instructors being without higher education, while over 3,600 schools of the country will need at least one teacher knowing the newly introduced subject (Sodiqov 2009).

Many new restrictions were brought particularly to religious movements and educational institutions since the adoption of the new law on religion on March 26, 2009. Hikmatullo Saifullozoda, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Revival Party, saw infringement of religious rights of people in every article of this law and called it “not ‘Law on the Freedom of Conscience’ but ‘Law on its restriction’” (Asia News 2009b: §4). The US Commission on International Religious Freedom expressed its concern and said the law would only “legalize harsh policies already adopted by the Tajik government against its majority Muslim population” (Kozhevnikov 2009, p. 4). According to the new law, children under the age of seven cannot be involved in religious education, and any religious teaching in private homes is prohibited. Religious services including education should be provided in places (mosques)

approved by the state. To establish such a place, say a five-times-prayer mosque in a village, the existence of 2,000 inhabitants is required. Tajikistan is an agricultural country with 70–75% of the population residing in rural areas. For many villages comprising of few families, it would not be possible to meet the minimum requirement. The benchmark is even higher for cities (20,000 residents per mosque) and the capital city (30,000 residents per mosque).

In order to ensure full control over religion and religious practices, the state imposes various norms. Many of these norms, routines, and practices have been transformed from government organizations to religious and other organizations not because they are efficient and have more value but because they are legitimized by the order and decree of the state. For instance, when some mosques in the country started experiencing a dramatic increase in attendance of women (new phenomenon in Tajikistan), the state-run Council of *‘ulamā* issued an order in August 2004 that in consistence with Ḥanafī jurisprudence (*fiqh*), women are supposed to pray at home. Thus, women were prevented from going to mosques, as was justified by the government, for the “sake of decency,” since places of worship do not have proper accommodation for women (Asia News 2004). Similar restrictions were observed in some orders of the Ministry of Education. One concerns the prohibition of wearing veil in schools and universities. The other is related to beard growing. The recent order of the Ministry of Education on September 30, 2009, instructed teachers of schools and universities to shave their beards every second day. School and university teachers under the age of 50 are banned from wearing beards, while the beard length was determined to be no more than three centimeters. The authority claims that these “novelties are introduced as part of an ongoing school and higher education reform and are in line with the mentality and the customs of our people” (Asia News 2009a: §3). In the real terms, it is a measure of showing to the rest of the globe to what extent the society has been secularized and kept on so-called “right path” of building democracy.

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## Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to look at the emergence and development of Islamic education in Tajikistan through the history. For several centuries prior to the conquest of Central Asia by Mongols, education served both religious and material needs of people. The culmination of the coexistence of religious and secular teachings in a single education system was reached during the ninth and tenth centuries, a period when the Tajik nation was formed and the first Tajik State was established. Such ancient Tajik cities as Bukhara and Samarqand (now in Uzbekistan due to the demarcation made by the Soviet government in 1924) became in the ninth to the tenth centuries not only centers of science and culture but also the cores of Muslim world where the best religious education was offered, best scholars were brought together, and best works on *tafsīr* and *fiqh* were produced and published.

Following Mongols’ brutal ruling, science lost its position in society while the original purpose of education was changed dramatically. From now on it was

concerned only with the Islamic theology. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, Jadids questioned the traditional methods of education in *maktabs* and *madrasahs* by introducing new methods schools. Jadidi schools did not aim to eradicate the old education system, but rather reform it through merging of traditional values with modern teaching methods. The Soviet regime used Jadids and their schools as a vital instrument in combating religious education and traditional schools. However, later the communist oppression made Jadids end up being exiled, jailed, and killed, while their schools were closed. Instead of modification of Islamic schools, the communist regime replaced them with Soviet schools. There was no place for Islamic educational institutions in the society. The only way that religious education survived was folk Islam.

Although relieve to religion and religious education came a half decade before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the actual revival of religion occurred after the country gained its independence in 1991. A leeway given to religious groups and institutions in early years of independence and during the Civil War did not last long. Since 1997, all attempts by the government have been directed to have stiffer control over religion through imposing the state-developed version of Islam and Islamic education. Many strict legal acts adopted in recent years constrain religion and religious education forcing them out of the public arena and moving them back to the private sphere. Among other outcomes, it empowered opposition groups which still promulgate specific narratives of Islam throughout their respective (non-formal and informal) institutions of Islamic education.

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# Islamic Education in India

Mohammad Talib

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## Abstract

An account of the *madrasahs* in India takes us into the history of the institution spread over the period of the medieval, the colonial context, and, more importantly, the post 1947 scenario when India gained independence from the British rule. This chapter also examines the events that provide a backdrop to the studies in social sciences focused on India. Each historical period is outlined in terms of how the religious institutions have dealt with the state and the community of beneficiaries.

There is a recent upsurge of popular interest in the *madrasahs* and the ‘*ulamā*’. The invocation of *madrasahs* and the class of clerics associated with the institution have been stereotyped to provide easy answers to some perplexing questions that beset the modern world. The tendency to see *madrasahs* conforming to the state’s blueprint of reforming the institution and its scholarly tradition has in

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general ignored developmental trajectories of *madrasahs* in its own terms and also how it relates to the society of its constituency.

The modern state's relation with the *madrasahs* is about both policy and administrative control required to keep the institution within the fold of educational mainstream. The responses of *madrasahs* are examined in terms of the stated norms as well as their practice and their bearing on the intended outcomes. The *madrasahs* have either brought about some blending of the modern and traditional curricular components or have inducted the traditionally neglected gender within the educational fold of Islamic learning.

The chapter also attempts to chart out the logic of the *madrasah* in its own terms, in terms of its context and the conditions which make the reality of a *madrasah* socially and culturally possible. This provides a partial reason for the continued existence of the *madrasahs* in India and their salience within the Muslim communities.

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### Keywords

*Madrasah* · *Maktab* · Reform · Self-reform · Curriculum · Modernization

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## Introduction

The reform of the *madrasahs* in India has followed from the directives of both the state and the *madrasahs* themselves. More importantly, the social and political contexts of the institutions have a bearing on acceptance or disapproval for reforming the *madrasahs*. The state-led initiatives in reforming *madrasahs* have gone alongside the self-initiated reforms of *madrasahs* themselves. This is not to gloss over the major chunk in the *madrasah* universe that has chosen to remain outside the state policy related to reforming or perhaps “mainstreaming” the *madrasah* curriculum. What follows is an outline of the idea of *madrasah* reform during the English rule in India before 1947 and the continuities in the policy of the independent India after 1947.

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## **Madrasah Reform in India Before 1947**

The contemporary perception of *madrasahs* needing urgent reform in its curriculum and pedagogy has a long history in India. The observation about the questionable utility of *madrasah* education is as old as the history of colonialism in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

In 1824, James Mill, the champion of the notion of “useful learning,” termed learning in an Islamic seminary to be “frivolous” (quoted in Zaman 2002: 64). In 1825 Delhi College was established under the aegis of the British India “pursuant to the report of the General Committee on Public Instruction critical of the state of the private *madrasahs* where Qur’ān and *fiqh* took most of the time. In contrast, the

Delhi College was supposed to connect education to finding “suitable work” (quoted in Metcalf 1982: 72). In 1838, Charles Trevelyan, a Victorian colonial administrator and the architect of the modern British civil service, quotes the statement of the government of Bengal on the Calcutta Madrassah that it was the center of “bigotry and error” (Trevelyan 1838: 91). Around the same time, the famous Adams Report on the state of education in Bengal observes in the context of a village *maktab* that the general instruction given was “crude and imperfect” (Adam 1941: 330). This followed from the 1835 policy of English education under William Bentinck wherein “the Calcutta Madrassah lost its importance as a recruiting ground for the public services” (Ibrahimi 1985: 32). This established the official views on the *madrasahs* that they were neither producing scientific rationality nor furnishing the degrees for entry into the ranks of the middle classes.

An insider’s response to the state initiative to reform *madrasahs* is best articulated in the writings of an Islamic scholar Maulana Syed Manazir Ahsan Gilani (1943: 4–5). He belonged to the historical Islamic seminary, Darul Uloom Deoband, and was a keen observer of the trend of increasing influence of modern education that challenged the existing *madrasahs*. He observed how the Muslims of the third and the fourth generation were the main beneficiaries of the modern educational system and gradually became

distanced from Islam and its way of life. . . . These families . . . have merely a notional belonging to Islam. They are ignorant of even the most basics of Islam. . . . Educated people whom one could recognise with their Muslim names were ignorant about the life of the prophet (of Islam). . . . With the passage of time (as modern education gains ground) the number of notional Muslims in the community would also increase. . . . (ibid.: 4)

Gilani was also concerned about the spread of compulsory modern education and its consequences on Muslim families and their children. He observes how “an average Muslim with some working knowledge of Islam would soon lose their commitment. The ‘*ulamā*’ too would soon find their position weakened with the turning away of the modern, educated Muslims” (ibid.). To respond to the above challenges, he recommended the Muslim community “to revisit the (Islamic) philosophical tradition introspectively” (ibid.: 5).

In the light of the above comments, Manazir Ahsan Gilani proposes what he called *nazarīyah wahdat-i nizām-i t’alīm* (the perspective of the unity of the educational system). He said that the difference made between the secular and religious subjects in a *madrasah* may be dispensed with. Some of the non-Islamic sciences in the *madrasah* curriculum, in his view, needed to be revised and substituted with English and other modern disciplines. In defense of his proposal, Gilani emphasized how important it was for the *madrasahs* to incorporate modern disciplines within their fold. This way, the institution would be able to exercise control over the new generation through its own teachers who are devout Muslims (and not whom Gilani called Muslims “in name only”). He hoped to see a generation of Muslims graduating from these institutions who would, in his assessment, be able to transact Islamic disciplines in a satisfactory manner. Gilani’s views echo in the

emerging educational institutions in contemporary India that seek to mainstream their educational package while keeping their ties with Islamic studies.

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### **Madrasah Reform: Post 1947**

The universe of *madrasahs* in India embodies a diversity of schools of Islamic thought. It does not represent an organized, international institutional network. Some madrasahs are related to the other madrasahs on a more systematic basis compared to others. Important illustrations of organized associations representing madrasahs (Nair 2009: 15) include Rabata-e Madaris-e Darul Uloom Deoband, the southern India's Kerala's Federation of Madrasahs and north Indian Dini Talim Council Uttar Pradesh. All except the last of these are independent of the state affiliation. Their primary objective of the associations is to protect the Islamic character of *madrasahs* and maintain their standards of education. The network of madrasahs around *Darul Uloom Deoband* is spread at a national level. The body acts as a nodal point for the cluster of *madrasahs*, in each state enjoying relative autonomy from their dependence on the government grant.

The Kerala-based Federation of Madrasahs operates through independent denominational institutions such as the Kerala Naduvathul Mujahideen (KNM) (Osella and Osella 2013: 139–170), the Jamaat-e-Islami, and the Samatha Kerala Sunni Jamaitul Ulama. None of these bodies extend their activities in the domain of politics. There are cases of individual religious scholars taking interest in the political affairs. At the national level, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board and Jamait-e Ulama-e Hind are known more for their role in campaign and advocacy around issues relevant to the Muslim community.

A numerical account of *madrasahs* in India (Nair 2009: 17–18) is usually based on speculative estimates, for instance, the government of India's Home Ministry report shows that the spread of *madrasahs* in various states has reached the following numbers: Uttar Pradesh (10,000), Kerala (9975), Madhya Pradesh (6000), Bihar (3500), Gujarat (1825), Rajasthan (1780), Karnataka (961), and Assam (721). Some *madrasahs* have got themselves registered with the individual state government's *madrasah* boards, which qualifies them to receive the so-called grant-in-aid educational funding. Those outside the fold of the government's formal recognition system are dependent on the Muslim community for the supply of funds in cash or other resources.

The post-independent state initiative regarding the regulation of religious education of Muslims focused on providing support to modernize the curriculum, ensuring that some of the disciplines in the mainstream curriculum are implemented, and, following 9/11, adding extra impetus to bring about major reform in the curriculum. In the post-independent scenario, the *madrasahs* have been able to claim benefits accorded to the minority status of Muslims as recognized in the constitution of India (Nair 2009: 21–23). Two fundamental rights are relevant to the Muslim community in relation to their educational matters: the Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25–28) and Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29 and 30). These rights

ensure that the community has the freedom to practice and propagate their religion, manage their religious affairs, and protect their interests in relation to their minority status. This goes hand in hand with the permission to establish and administer their educational institutions. Article 28, however, adds an important caveat, “no religious instructions shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of state grants. . . .” Clause (2) of the Article adds that “. . . nothing in Clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution that is administered by the state but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instructions shall be imparted in such institutions.” It is evident from Clause (2) that *madrasahs* and other minority-governed educational institutions qualify to be the beneficiary of state welfare initiatives and funding.

The central government has administered Muslim endowment properties and using the income to support educational programs for economically deserving Muslim students. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment supervises the Central Wakf Council to monitor the educational uplift of the Muslim community. The educational scheme of the council provides the scholarship to the needy students for pursuing different educational degrees. Following from the constitutional commitment to Universal Elementary Education, the government of India sponsors grant in aid focused on modernizing the *madrasah* curriculum through the inclusion of modern subjects and training programs for improving teaching methods.

The government-initiated *madrasah* modernization program (Nair 2009: 24–26) has gone through a historical trajectory. It began in 1983 with the government’s initiative through an Area-Intensive and Madrasa Modernization Program. In its revised version, the Plan of Action (1992) branched off into the development of infrastructure alongside the modernization of the curriculum. Subsequently the two were combined in the 10th 5-Year Plan. These programs, in their current description, are brought under the rubric of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Universal Elementary Education). The *madrasahs* exercise their choice as to whether or not to apply for government assistance. However, it requires 3 years of registration before a *madrasah* can apply for funds.

The modernization of the *madrasah* entails incorporation within the curriculum such subjects as science, math, English, Hindi, and social studies. This is to bring *madrasah* curriculum on a par with the mainstream subjects. The first stage of the modernization program, during the 8th 5-Year Plan period (1992–1997) covered the primary classes. The second phase (9th 5-Year Plan, 1997–2002) extended its scope to the secondary stage of schooling. The first phase covered the salaries of the qualified teachers provided to the *madrasahs* together with financial support to establish book banks and develop their libraries, alongside the resources required for science and math. In the 10th Plan Period, some five thousand *madrasahs* (less than 15% of their total number) were considered for the supply of Urdu textbooks produced by the government agencies.

The International Development Department report (hereafter, IDD report) on the state and *madrasahs* in India (Nair 2009) observes that three quarters of the entire funding in the modernization program was spent on the development of material infrastructure. Several factors were responsible for the partial utilization of the

allocated amount, one being the inadequate circulation of information about the government's program, as well as the reluctance of some of the *madrasahs* to enter into the tedious application procedure. Some of the state-independent *madrasahs* avoided state regulations on curricular matters.

In spite of the fact that some *madrasahs* choose to remain independent of government affiliation, there are certain programs that are available for unrecognized madrasahs under the Universal Elementary Education (*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*) (ibid.: 26). These include free textbooks and a salary for a teacher for *madrasahs* that is specially aimed at female education. More recently the Ministry of Human Resource Development has proposed the establishment of a Central Madrasa Education Board in an attempt to ameliorate Muslim educational backwardness. According to the proposal, the state governments are urged to engage in the modernization and upgrading of *madrasah* education as well as putting the task of educational development in Muslim majority areas as a high priority. The purpose of the board is to coordinate and monitor the mainstreaming of *madrasahs* into the regular educational system. More research is required to understand why some of the unrecognized *madrasahs* have refrained from accessing modernization funding from the state. The qualitative profiles of such *madrasahs* would untangle the puzzle around the material basis of the institution and their relation with the state.

The modernization program of the *madrasahs* has extensively focused on the states with a substantial Muslim population, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. This has included the establishment of state *madrasah* boards for the purpose of introducing modern education in *madrasahs*. In turn, these boards work under aegis of the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (Siddiqui 2007).

There is a scarcity of field-based research on the *madrasahs* that have adopted the state's modernization program. The ethnography of the state-sponsored *madrasah* reform should be able to show how the design of the program is conceptualized, the instruments chosen to implement it, the nature of outcomes generated, and an assessment of how they compare with what was intended in the first place. The entire process consists of changing conditions, worldviews, and attitudes, along with fundamental transformations in personalities. Or are these mere pious intentions turned into policy statements having little bearing on effective changes in the institution?

The IDD report cites the experience of the few *maktabs* and *madrasahs* in Delhi (Nair 2009: 28) which have accepted the government scheme. The report observes how most of the selected teachers, mostly women, had to travel to *madrasahs* in distant locations in the city. A large part of their meager remuneration (Rs. 1000, i.e., less than 25 USD) was spent on time-consuming travel. In addition, the payment of their salary was delayed. The teachers, who were supposed to be teaching native Urdu-speakers, were themselves barely able to speak Urdu. This led to the teachers dropping out of their jobs, leaving the students bereft of the intended benefits of the educational initiative.

In the neighboring state of Uttar Pradesh, a well-known nongovernmental organization, the Hamdard Education Society, with a track record of surveying

*madrasahs* in India (Qamruddin 1996) carried out another review of the *madrasah* modernization program in 2003. The report showed how the *madrasahs* who had incorporated modern subjects in the traditional curriculum did not find a slot in the official timetable. The number of teachers the state provided for the purpose was grossly inadequate. Also, the heads of the *madrasahs* were barely qualified to supervise the teaching of the modern subjects; even the teachers largely lacked the required subject knowledge. The materials and equipment required to teach science, math, and English were invariably in scarce supply. The teachers' salaries were low and paid at irregular intervals. Stemming from its survey, one major recommendation of the Hamdard Education Society to the state concerned the establishment of a Central Board for Madrasa Education with the power to monitor the implementation of the modernization program. The board was also expected to monitor the functioning of those *madrasahs* that received state funds. The board would thereby have ensured the standardization of curriculum across the country while in some way integrating the traditional sphere of education with the modern.

The IDD report based its survey on interviews of important actors in the *madrasahs*, including religious teachers and academic from well-known universities (29–33). There was a general unanimity over the principle of bringing about changes in the *madrasah* curriculum. Much of the disagreement concerned the authority of the government in leading such a change. Such mistrust may be understood in the wider context of communal discord as well as a highly generalized allegation that linked *madrasahs* with religious terrorism. The report points out how a number of scholars of Islam were critical of the state's motive behind the modernization program. It made little sense to them that, on the one hand, the state showed interest in reforming the *madrasahs* and, on the other, indifference toward making available data as to Muslim backwardness. More recently some of these misgivings were validated in the government's Sachar Committee Report (Sachar et al. 2006), which found a considerable disparity between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in respect to the percentage of the population that held regular, salaried jobs.

In the history of *madrasah* education, the reform has been brought about from within the institution rather than being conducted externally through the state initiative. The IDD Report quotes some religious scholars who point out that *madrasahs* were traditionally open to secular and modern education. In surveying the field of *madrasah* reforms, one would come across *madrasahs* that undertook major reform of their education on the basis of their own initiative. One major consideration in bringing about reform has been the expectations of the community of beneficiaries.

The IDD report draws attention to another major sphere of educational institutions, which may be included in the modernization package. Some Muslim scholars pointed out that the government must focus not so much on what is to be included in the curriculum but on providing good-quality education to all children, especially those belonging to the minority communities. According to the view, religious education is best served when the community has autonomy in its management. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) points out that the modernized *madrasahs* were unlikely to satisfy the educational needs of the community and *madrasahs*

should not be looked upon as alternatives to the regular schools. The report recommends that *madrasahs* should be linked to a mainstream school board and *madrasah* qualifications to be recognized for purposes of admissions into institutions of higher education. This highlights the need to provide mainstream schools alongside *madrasahs* in areas whose population was predominantly Muslim. Such localities which the Sachar reports are Muslim-concentrated areas. The IDD report compares the state-*madrasah* relationship in matters of educational reform in two states with different political environments (Nair 2009: 36–56). The report selects Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The first of these has seen widely ranging ideologies among its political parties. Except for the Bharatiya Janata Party, all of the parties, at least in their stated objective, are favorably inclined toward the Muslim communities. In comparison, West Bengal has been ruled continuously by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) for three decades prior to 2010 (the year of the study). The report examines the status of *madrasahs* in the two states by analyzing, for one, how the state regulates the modernization program and, for another, how *madrasahs* respond to such state interventions. The report's survey is based on interviews, observation, and review of official documents.

According to the 2001 census, Uttar Pradesh had 22% of India's 138 million Muslims, while West Bengal had 18%. In Uttar Pradesh, the integration of modern subjects with the religious curriculum antedates the state-led *madrasah* modernization program. One *madrasah*, popularly called Nadwa (*Nadwatul ulama*), in Lucknow (Esposito 2004: 226) was a pioneer in introducing modern subjects in its curriculum. The Nadwa provides education from the primary to the postgraduate level in theology and Arabic literature with the full course covered over a period of 16 years. The 5-year primary-level course is similar to primary education in secular mainstream schools but also includes Arabic literature and Islamic studies. At the advanced school levels, the subjects include Arabic literature and Islamic studies, with English representing the mainstream subject. At least two universities, Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi (Talib 1998: 156–189) and Aligarh Muslim University at Aligarh (Hasan 1998: 189–220), recognize its degrees as on a par with the graduate and postgraduate degrees in mainstream universities.

In spite of the government's willingness to provide support, funds, and resources, only a little over 10% of the *madrasahs* in the state have so far been recognized, and a smaller percentage have received grants. The IDD report reviewed one of the districts and observed that, out of an estimated 200 *madrasahs*, only 52 had been recognized and only 7 of these received government aid. Another thirty *madrasahs* were recipients of the aid linked to the *madrasah* modernization program of the central government (Nair 2009). The IDD report observes how the staffs were paid only for a period of 3 months, and the central government did not release the subsequent grant, as it had not received the utilization certificate, related to the previous grant. The report mentions some independent *madrasahs* that exercised their discretion in limiting their formal relationship with the state to what was mandatory. Some *madrasahs* cited reasons for deliberately minimizing their relationship with the state as they did not wish to compromise their autonomy in raising funds from other sources. There were also genuine reasons as to why some

*madrasahs* failed to apply to the state's program of modernization. One such reason lay in poor circulation and awareness of the government program. The modernization program also suffered a setback in the fact that there were serious problems in its implementation and the slow pace of providing the materials. In one of the schools, there was a discrepancy between the higher salaries of regular teachers in mainstream government schools and those paid to the teachers in *madrasahs*. Some *madrasah* teachers even formed their union in order to articulate this difference.

The *madrasah* education of the state of West Bengal (Nair 2009: 61–75) is classified in three parallel categories: 1) Kharzi *madrasah*, which is not recognized by the state government and teach up to the *Ālim* level equivalent to senior school; 2) an old system called "senior *madrasahs*," which offer degrees of *Ālim*, *Fāzil* and *Mumtāzel-Muḥaddithīn*, these being in theology and Islamic studies; and 3) a new system of "high *madrasahs*" in which education has been modernized and is gradually being brought up to par with the standards of the regular government high-school course. The high-school *madrasahs* are in turn divided into junior classes from one to five and high *madrasahs* with classes from six to ten. The IDD Report points out how Kharzi *madrasahs* conduct their own curriculum without support from the state, but the senior *madrasahs* and high *madrasahs* are affiliated to the State Madrasa Board.

Established in 1927, West Bengal's board, now the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education, is one of the oldest in the country. The board has the power to direct, supervise, and control both the high and senior *madrasahs* according to the guidelines provided by the school education department of the state government. Unlike the state-supported madrasas in Uttar Pradesh, the West Bengal state government appoints its own nominee and a member from the local *panchayat* (village council) to the management committee of each *madrasah*. It has both executive and political oversight and control. The board funnels the state funds for training of *madrasah* members, provision of teaching and learning materials, vocational courses, teacher-training modules, etc. The program comes up for a regular evaluation during the course of a year. The board ensures a secular and co-educational character of education and effective process of mainstreaming the curriculum.

The study draws attention to the areas that need to be further explored to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the state-*madrasah* relationship in India with respect to the reform of religious education. The report underlines the need to study the motives and socioeconomic characteristics of parents sending their children to *madrasahs*.

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## **Madrasahs and the Issue of Reform**

As mentioned, the domain of *madrasah* reform involves the state initiatives as well as self-directed interventions of *madrasahs*. The present outline draws upon Yoginder Sikand (2005: 140–193) to capture how *madrasahs* and their critics view the issue of *madrasah* curricular reform. The popular discourse associates *madrasah* reform with state interventions alone. Some religious groups have actively



pursued radical changes in *madrasah* curriculum independent of state directives. The state-led reform sometimes glosses over the different purposes behind the secular and religious instructions. One principal of Darul Uloom Deoband, Qārī Muḥammad Tayyeb, responded to ignoring the difference:

when people criticise the madrasa syllabus, they forget that the aim of the madrasa is different from that of a modern school. . . . The only way to pass judgment on the madrasas is to see how far they have been able to achieve their own aims, such as inculcating piety, promoting religious knowledge, control over the base-self (*tahzīb-i naḥs*) and service of others. Therefore, no suggestion for reform of the syllabus that goes against those aims is acceptable. (Sikand 2005: 141)

Sikand points out that the critics of madrasah see the

institution stereotypically, often generalising madrasas to be backward and conservative. This is seen as a major hurdle in social progress. Where standards of secular education and what these aim to achieve are drawn upon to evaluate a madrasa, then there is a possibility that a madrasa comes to be seen as unproductive. (ibid.: 142)

Sikand quotes one such comment of a modernist critic of *madrasah*

. . . Indian madrasas are completely oblivious of the repeated directions in the Holy Quran regarding the need to . . . study . . . scientific phenomenon [sic] . . . Islam cannot be defended by these ‘misfits’ who know nothing of modern knowledge. (ibid.)

Sikand criticizes the modernist response and makes three major points. First, it is misleading that all *madrasahs* resist change. Second, to say that *madrasahs* are conservative is actually to state the obvious, i.e., they are custodians of Islamic orthodoxy. Therefore, many ‘*ulamā*’ see no need for major reform. However, some ‘*ulamā*’ have expressed concern where the conservative objectives don’t translate into the expected outcomes. One professor of *ḥadīth* at the Darul Uloom Deoband, Maulana Saeed Ahmad Palanpuri, reflects over the cause of such falling standards. These are due to “. . . the lack of adequate experts in various disciplines, the carelessness of the students and their unwillingness to work hard” (ibid.: 143). Another *ālim*, the principal of Deobandi Madrasah in Mewat, Haryana, takes the view that it is not the *madrasahs* but the secular universities that were in need of urgent reform as they are beset “. . . with such problems as free sex, lawlessness and crime. . .” (ibid.).

At the same time, the ‘*ulamā*’ who are engaged in reforming *madrasahs* for their own reasons clarify that the inclusion of worldly subjects must not dominate religious sciences. In their view, the minimum expectations from students learning the modern subjects are limited to reading and speaking of elementary English, solving numerical problems, and familiarization with basic social sciences. These outcomes are assumed to be the elementary functional knowledge for living in the modern world. It was even pointed out that if the secular subjects add to the burden of the student, then it is likely to dilute their attention required for religious study.

Responding to the demand of reforming *madrasah* syllabus, the Darul Uloom Deoband organized a conference in 1994 on the theme of reform of the syllabus of the Islamic institutions. In the inaugural lecture, the rector of the institution clarified that many schools in the country were available for Muslim children who wished to study modern subjects. He further clarified that the secular and religious branches of knowledge were entirely different and mutually opposed in terms of the goals these pursued. One important resolution of the conference was that the challenges of modern life could be dealt with the knowledge of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh*. There was no need for them to take the help of western knowledge and culture (ibid.: 148). However, a network of alumni of Deoband *madrasah*, named Tanzim Abna ul-Qadim, did not entirely endorse the view. Their association sought to promote, alongside the study of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, an awareness of national and international affairs, hand in hand with support for religious and modern education. The association's monthly magazine, in Urdu, Tarjuman-i Dar ul-Uloom, is an important vehicle in the transmission of ideas in favor of the *madrasah* reform. The magazine carries articles by scholars and teachers who are part of the network. The magazine also features articles invoking certain practices and suggestions that were given by responsible '*ulamā*' but forgotten on account of the difficult debate around the reform of *madrasah* curriculum. One contributor to the magazine, a graduate of Deoband, supported the need to broaden the mind of younger '*ulamā*' by familiarizing them with subjects such as mathematics, science, social sciences, Hindi, and English. In support of his view, he cites how the founder of the *madrasah* introduced Sanskrit for teaching at Deoband. In a similar vein, another reformist *ālim*, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, proposed the inclusion of Hindi as well as knowledge of modern law in the *madrasah* curriculum. Sikand quotes the views of the editor of the magazine, Waris Mazhari, who argues for the inclusion of "... books of theology that also take into account the confirmed findings of modern science and that seek to engage with contemporary ideological challenges, such as materialism, atheism, Marxism, Hindutva and so on" (ibid.: 153).

The continuous pressure of the new thinking and of the dramatic state responses to 9/11 prompted the Darul Uloom Deoband to launch two new departments regarding the teaching of the English language and computer literacy and applications. The madrasa students who are able to clear the *fāzil* course get an opportunity to take admission in the new departments. The *madrasah* has also organized a special media unit to liaise with journalists and other media reporters regarding the official views of the institution.

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### **Madrasahs for Self-Reform**

Some institutions and organizations, bearing the broad motif of Islam, have shown demonstrable enthusiasm to combine modern subjects with religious learning. One example Sikand (2005: 198–199) refers to is Jama'at-i Islami Hind's central school at Rampur, named Markazi Darsghah. The institution's objective is to train volunteers for the spread of its ideology. This requires that the students develop some

understanding of the affairs of the world. The Darsgah has also replicated itself into similar institutions in India following common syllabi. Sikand points out, on the basis of Jama'at sources, that the network consists of 1,617 primary schools, 65 secondary schools, and 51 high schools, as well as 15 institutes for technical education. The Darsgah's schooling goes up to sixth grade. Subsequently, the students join regular schools. In conformity to Jama'at's view of Islamic education, students at the Darsgah learn a mix of religious and modern disciplines.

Another Jama'at-sponsored initiative is established in Jami'at ul-Falah in Uttar Pradesh (Sikand 2005: 200–204). The educational institution offers the conventional *Ālim* and *Fāzil* degrees, but at the same time, certain optional subjects are included in the latter degree, such as journalism, calligraphy, comparative religion, Islamic missionary work, Hindi, foundational Sanskrit, social welfare, and teacher training. After the junior high-school level, the students join a 7-year specialized course in Islamic studies and Arabic, with English, geography, history, comparative religion, political science, and sociology.

The Jama'at-i Islami's educational experiments have found roots in the southern part of India, especially Kerala (ibid.:204–209). In the state, the schools run under the broad supervision of the Jama'at prepare students for both the *Ālim* course and also the undergraduate degree from the regular state university. Similar schools can be seen in other places, such as Hyderabad, Jalgaon, Aurangabad, and Delhi. The medium of instruction in these schools remains English, the syllabus government prescribed, with the Markazi Maktaba-i Islami providing the additional textbooks in Islamic studies. Other successful examples of modernizing *madrasahs* are the Markaz ul-Ma'arif Education and Research Center in Mumbai, established in 1982 by a Deoband *madrasah* graduate (ibid.: 206–207). The school spawns a network of other English-medium schools, orphanages, modern hospitals, and institutions of vocational training. The school publishes Islamic literature in various Indian languages, engages in interfaith dialogue, and contributes to some of the well-known national welfare funds. The Markaz liaised with the Deoband *madrasah* and established an institution in Delhi (now moved to Mumbai) for training *madrasah* graduates in English, computer applications, Arabic, and Urdu journalism. The main aim of the project was to equip *madrasah* graduates in finding employment in the wider world and at the same time engage in a meaningful conversation with ordinary people about Islam's positive teachings.

Another experiment of reforming *madrasahs* is Dar ul-Umoor, situated in Karnataka (ibid.: 208–209). This *madrasah* draws its inspiration from the legendary Muslim ruler, Tipu Sultan, who promoted scientific innovations through an institution with the same name. The educational program combines Islamic and modern science to produce the socially engaged '*ulamā*'. The school organizes a weekly program for its students in participatory learning in local schools, nongovernmental organizations, science-based institutions, and museums. As part of interfaith dialogue, the students additionally visit various places of worship. The eligible students are encouraged to pursue their graduate degrees from the state's Open University. One other *madrasah* that has successfully combined Islamic and modern education is the Jami'at ul-Hidaya in Jaipur (ibid.: 210–211). The *madrasah* was established by

an *ālim* and a *ṣūfī*, claiming allegiance to the Deobandi tradition; the *madrasah* offers traditional Islamic education supplemented by compulsory modern subjects until the year 10. This segment of education relies on the government's mainstream textbooks. Subsequently, the students are offered a 4-year *Ālim* course besides the religious subjects and encouraged them to acquire a vocational skill for gainful employment after their graduation. Some of the vocational subjects include computer applications, mechanical and electrical engineering, electronics, and communications. The Bareilwis too have their share in the modernization pursuit evident in the courses running in Madrasah Ashrafiya in the eastern Uttar Pradesh (Alam 2011: 94–106). The *madrasah* manages Hafiz-e-Millat Technical Institute with a purpose of equipping students with skills that would secure them jobs in the employment market.

In response to the vibrant trend of educational reform in *madrasahs* in India, Darul Uloom Deoband has two new departments of learning English as a second language and computer literacy courses. Likewise, the *madrasahs* in Uttar Pradesh, under the administrative supervision of Dini Talimi Council, ensure that the educational curriculum represents a balance of religious and secular subjects. Upon successful completion of the given stage, students receive certificates for admission in mainstream schools. Some *madrasahs* encourage their students to enter into vocational training or small trade. Sikand (2005: 212) provides the illustration of Jami'at ul-Islamia Khair ul-'Uloom in Uttar Pradesh which has made arrangements for students who have successfully completed their *Fāzil* stage and training opportunities to become welders, tailors, and motor mechanics. Some *madrasahs* who are not able to do so have organized their timetable in a manner that enables their students to attend regular schools. Another variant of the trend in blending the religious and modern education is an attempt, on the part of some *madrasahs*, to establish institutions where this is implemented under a common management. Drawing its directive from the Madani Memorial Trust, a polytechnic for girls as well as a school is set up at the Deoband. In Kerala, the Markaz us-Shaqafat us-Sunniya manages Islamic colleges in the state, several modern schools, a vocational training center, a health clinic, and children's homes. The Delhi-based Abdul Kalam Islamic Awakening Center manages regular co-educational high schools and sizeable *madrasahs*. This trend represents a diversity of experiments where the gap between the religious and mainstream educational systems is bridged.

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### **Madrasahs for Girls**

*Madrasah* reform in India also branches off into religious education exclusively for girls (Winkelmann 2005, 2008: 105–122; Sikand 2005: 214–222). This trend is salient among various denominational traditions. Field-based research on girls' *madrasahs* highlights that these have grown in both quality and number. An ethnographic representation of case studies of girls' *madrasahs* should foreground whether or not the Muslim community now sees its women as communicators of religious knowledge alongside their role as mothers. One notable instance of girls' *madrasahs* in India is Jami'at us-Salihah in Maharashtra (Sikand 2005: 218).

Established in 1973 by an *‘ālim* from Deoband, the *madrasah* has a boarding arrangement for girls, observing strict *pardah* and never allowing a student to leave the premises without a close male relative as chaperone. A graduate scholar from Deoband, who founded the All-India Ta’limi-o-Milli Foundation, in Bihar, spawns a network of *maktabs*, a high school for girls, and an engineering college. A parallel in Delhi is Madrasa Jami’at ul-Banat in Abul Fazal Enclave. The minimum requirement for admission to the *‘ālimah* (female *‘ālim*, or religious scholar) course is that the girls have successfully cleared their seventh year in primary schooling. The course claims its affiliation to *dars-i nizāmī* and is orientated toward religious matters specific to women. In addition to religious subjects, the *madrasah* provides for vocational courses such as stitching, knitting, and embroidery, alongside the learning of English, based on textbooks from the national curriculum. The *madrasah* emphasizes special *tarbiyat* (nurturing the virtuous character) focusing on the ideal gender norms in the Islamic tradition. A variant of this experiment in the tradition of Jam’at-i Islami is a number of girl *madrasahs* in various parts of India. Alam (2011: 104) shows how Madrasah Ashrafiya in Mubarkpur has expanded its area of activities in founding “mainstream” schools in the adjoining areas, especially for girls.

The above is a brief account of how the reformed educational institutions among Muslims in India have promoted female literacy, women’s participation in mosques, and a widespread bridging of religious and modern education. Some of these institutions are affiliated to modern universities and receive grants from the government. The movement for spreading education has led to the establishment of scores of schools and colleges, polytechnics, industrial training institutions, printing presses, computer outfits, health care and medical centers.

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### Responses from the Field on “Modernization” of *Madrasahs*

In a focus group research (Talib 2007: passim.) intended to capture the field-based perceptions on state-led initiatives to modernize *madrasahs* to encourage “moderate Islam,” most participants were not aware that *madrasah*-going children were as small as 6.3% of the total population of school-age children. This percentage calculated in the Sachar et al. report (2006: 78) combines estimates of school-age children going to both *madrasahs* and *maktabs*. The participants had differing views on the need to modernize *madrasah* education. Many asked, “Why can’t the modern education we wish to see in *madrasahs*, be provided through the secular schools.” Some noted that, “Not all *madrasahs* are similar. Nor do they have similar surroundings. The reform program should also differ from one *madrasah* to the other.”

The story of Islamic education in a Tamil town Kilakkarai (Tschacher 2006: 196–223) is not spurred by the usual denominational affiliations. The mainstreaming of the curriculum is driven under the impact of competition between the Islamic and secular education. In an attempt to attract funders and students, the *Ālim Arusi* degree in the Jamia Arusiyya allows its students to attend a secular school or college.

Another Arabic college Jamia Sayyid Hamida cooperates with secular colleges allowing *madrasah* students to benefit from the infrastructure of the colleges.

The following illustrations refer to the internally differentiated universe of *madrasahs*. This helps clarify that modernization efforts have to be sensitive to the local needs and their social and cultural context rather than imposing a common “pill” to reform every *madrasah*. A 56-year-old Qur’ān instructor organizes a “mobile *madrasah*” in a pastoral community, *van gujars* (forest dwellers), who travel annually from the pastures in the foothills of the Himalayas. For this teacher, religious instruction contributes to this group’s *īmān* (faith) which is necessary for living in difficult conditions. Similarly, the Madrasa-e Islamia Muttasil Mangalore caters to the needs of the peasant communities in neighboring villages, some 80 kilometers from a well-known *madrasah*. The *madrasah* harbors no pretensions, according to the school’s principal, of training the students to become the *bābū* and *sāhib*, terms used to deride the modern salaried man. “If you replace *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) with physics, would the graduate get a job?”, asked the principal. “Can education on its own cure the ills of economy?” asks another respondent (Talib 2007: 110).

Some responses proved critical of secular schools and skeptical of the modernization projects for the *madrasahs*. One man noted that, “Degrees don’t get you the jobs on their own (*khud-bakhud*). For this reason, one finds a large number of educated youth who are jobless. A nominal change in the curriculum doesn’t help you get a job?”, he added. Another stated, “In most schools and colleges secular education lacks quality. It is also insensitive to the special needs of minorities and is not able to retain the Muslim students for longer schooling.”

The parental choice between secular or *madrasah* degree and its relationship to livelihood is a proposition which lacks supporting field-based evidence. One also needs to raise a question, “What kind of livelihood domains allow families to send their wards to opt for *madrasah* as part of acquisition of their necessary cultural capital?”. One may focus on trading communities and Muslims in the informal sector of economy where knowledge derived from *madrasah* system forms an important cultural costume providing identity and coping mechanisms in crisis in everyday survival.

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## Conclusion

Reforming and modernizing *madrasahs* in India refers to both a policy document and a program derived out of it. Between the text and its implementation at the institutional reality of *madrasahs*, there are several important aspects that together constitute a complex picture of state and *madrasah* relations. The policy document translates into programs but not entirely. The policy document also has rhetorical value for the state. The program in turn is dependent on the bureaucratic channels that facilitate and obstruct it at the same time. Subsequently, the program has both intended and unintended consequences for both the institution and its community of learners and their communities. One gets little understanding of what the program

does to its beneficiaries, the students, and in their turn communities of belonging. The reality of unrecognized *madrasahs* needs separate exploration in future researches. This segment of *madrasah* universe in India represents an uninhibited posture of nonacceptance of any policy overtures as well as a critical attitude toward the state and the mainstream society and its institutions. In the *madrasah* universe, one comes across *madrasahs* that opted for educational reform (modernization) on their own. These *madrasahs* provide a contrasting picture in comparison to the state-induced reform. The modernization program is followed by different social outcomes.

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# Islamic Education in Pakistan

Val D. Rust and Lucas Arribas Layton

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## Abstract

Pakistan combines traditional and modern school systems to provide an array of educational options for the youth of this Islamic country. Its dual system provides many different opportunities for equipping young people with the skills to function in a modern state and for preserving Pakistan's traditions and culture. However, its dual system also brings disadvantages and perils. Pakistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, with low formal schooling attendance and literacy rates. Some see its system of traditional education as a seedbed for the development of religious radicals and terrorists; this charge is strongly contested by others. Participation rates in all types of education among females remain low, even though the Pakistan constitution promises equality between males and females.

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**Keywords**Pakistan · Education · Economic development · Terrorism · Gender

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**Introduction**

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of Pakistan. Pakistani education must equip the nation's youth with the skills they require to function in a modern state. At the same time, it must balance schooling applicable to the modern world with Pakistani traditions and culture.

The formal name of Pakistan is the "Islamic Republic of Pakistan," making explicit that the government and its various agencies, including education, are identified with Islam. Pakistan has two distinct systems of education, a traditional and a modern, but both are based on Islam. Traditional educational can be traced back to the advent of Islamic culture in the seventh century C.E. The modern educational system was inherited from the British and continued after the country gained independence. Both traditional and modern forms of education are supported financially by the Ministry of Education (The Ministry of Education has undergone several name changes. In 2011, it was named the Ministry of Professional and Technical Training; in 2013, it was renamed the Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education, and in 2014 was renamed the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.).

**Background**

Most countries are unified by a common territory, ethnic background, and language, but in these respects Pakistan is severely hampered. In 1947, when India was divided into two states, the intention was to create a Hindu and a Muslim state, India and Pakistan (Harrison et al. 1999; Jaffrelot 2002; Talbot 2012). However, demographics complicated this aim. There was no clear demarcation of Hindus and Muslims, so even though 97% of the Pakistan population was Muslim, millions remained in India. Also, Pakistan was divided into two geographic regions, separated by more than 1000 miles of Indian Territory. These complications led to major political difficulties. Shortly after partition, an estimated 4.7 million Hindus left Pakistan and migrated to India, while 6.5 million Muslims in India migrated to Pakistan (Titus 1990, #707). These migrations caused tremendous social and economic difficulties. For example, the state of Punjab in Pakistan lost 3.6 million and gained 5.2 million other people (SarDasai 2002, p. 1013).

Prior to partition, Hindus had controlled much of the economy, including professional positions, such as educators. Their departure from Pakistan created a vacuum in society. In addition, many highly qualified Muslims migrated to England. The situation was further complicated because right after partition, Pakistan's economy came to be dominated by Muslim elites, who had come from India (Weinbaum 1999; Jaffrelot 2002). In addition, Karachi became the dumping ground for immigrants and

their presence created a new ethnic designation, *muhājirs* (immigrants), that persists to this today (Phukon 2002). Finally, during the military crisis in Afghanistan in the late 1970s and 1980s, almost four million refugees moved into Northwest Pakistan; by-and-large they have remained (Hussain 2007; Rastegar 1988).

In 1971, East Pakistan became the separate and independent state of Bangladesh, leaving the western political unit in sole possession of Pakistan state identity. Today, Pakistan is a state consisting of total area of some 796,095 square kilometers (land: 770,875 sq. km; and water: 25,220 sq. km), and population of 201,995,540 (July 2016 est.) of whom some 85–90 are Sunnī 10–15% Shī‘ah and 3.6% other (including Christians and Hindus) (2010 est.) (CIA 2016). Administratively, the country consists of four provinces (North-West Frontier, Punjab, Sind, and Baluchistan); the Islamabad Capital Territory; and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. There are distinct internal ethnic and linguistic divisions. Five major linguistic families with 32 distinct spoken languages are found in Pakistan, including speakers of Punjabi, Sindhi, Siraiki, Pashto, Baluchi, Brahui, and Burushaski (Talbot 2012). These are overlaid by the national languages of English, inherited from colonial times, and Urdu, a Persian language adopted by the elites and spoken as the mother tongue by less than 10% of the people (Phukon 2002). But Urdu is increasingly important and forms the basis of a “national” Islamic language. In addition, Arabic is the language of Islam and is formally expected to be learned by all Muslim children even though only about 8% of the population speak it at home and less than 20% read it (Jaffrelot 2002, pp. 252–253).

The state leaders have asserted a vision of a liberal, moderate, progressive state but have usually tried to achieve it through a repressive military administration. Pakistan inherited a parliamentary tradition from the British, but has not been able to establish a firm parliamentary process. In 1958 the military took direct control of the country by declaring martial law. General Ayūb Khān tried to implement a form of basic democracy, but war with India over the disputed territory of Kashmir interrupted the process. Ayūb Khān’s initiatives were replaced by those of General Yaḥyā Khān, who worked toward self-government in East Pakistan, further turmoil resulting in a civil war and the complete breakup of East (Bangladesh) and West Pakistan.

In 1971, civilian rule returned to Pakistan under Zulfīqār ‘Alī Bhutto, who introduced socialist reforms and in 1973 gave the country its first constitution that declared Pakistan to be an Islamic state. Bhutto was able to pursue multilateral relations with many countries, both socialist and Middle Eastern, which gave added meaning to Pakistan being an Islamic country (Jaffrelot 2002, p. 105). In 1977 the army once again took over the country under the leadership of General Muḥammad Zia ul-Haq, who tried to establish stronger national unity by further emphasizing Islam in the state and society; he implemented Islamic penalties for breaking laws, such as theft, adultery, and drinking alcohol, and by introducing Islamic taxes such as *zakāt* (giving of alms) and *‘ushr* (10% tax on the produce). With Zia’s death in 1988, elections led to a divided political mandate and ongoing political disruption, until General Pervez Musharraf re-established military rule in 1999, and held power until 2008, when he was succeeded by Asif Ali Zardari. In 2013 Nawaz Sharif was elected Prime Minister.

Pakistan remains an impoverished and underdeveloped country that has suffered from internal political disputes with Afghanistan and India. The border disputes associated with Jammu and Kashmir are a source of political tensions and even military conflict (Nicholson 2002). In addition, tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan continue and have been exacerbated by the disintegration and degeneration of political and economic institutions in the two countries, while Muslim insurgents expand in number and locations in the region, posing an ongoing threat to further destabilize the situation (Hussain 2005; Paul 2014).

Pakistan faces crucial quality of life challenges. According to UNDP, Pakistan ranks 147 out of 188 countries in terms of its Human Development Index (UNDP 2015). Even though progress has been made regarding literacy, and a constitutional declaration to “remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within [a] minimum possible period.”

While most Western political theorists view formal religious commitments as regressive and even detrimental to national and economic development, Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to a religious foundation. The ideal polity, first and foremost, is a community of religious believers in the Qur’ān as well as the written and oral traditions about the Prophet Muḥammad. Pakistan’s constitution makes “the teaching of the Holy Qur’ān and Islamiat compulsory,” and the state “promotes unity and the Islamic moral standards,” and secures the proper organization of tithing and alms as well as the maintenance of mosques (article 31).

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## Traditional Schooling

Islam has always placed a high value on education. South Asia was exposed to Islam by Arab traders in the early seventh century, probably while Prophet Muḥammad was still alive, and with the arrival of Islamic thinking came attempts to convert Indians to the new religion (Elliot and Dowson 1867). From that time forward, teachers and schools were founded that propagated Muslim beliefs. These schools were largely located in the mosques, where young people met to learn and discuss the Qur’ān.

Traditional schools still receive some government support, although it represents a small portion of their total expenses (Fair 2008). One consequence of the tenuous financial relationship between the private sector and the government is that the government exercises almost no control over most of these schools.

## Traditional Elementary Schooling

Young Pakistanis attend the *maktabs*, or Mosque schools, to be instructed almost exclusively in Qur’ān recitation, reading, writing, and grammar, including the memorization of the Qur’ān in Arabic. Teachers are often lay persons, who possess a range of levels of competence. *Maktabs* have traditionally been located among the elites and even in royal palaces and these schools included, in addition to the above

subjects, social and cultural studies that prepared the pupils for higher education and service in society.

During British rule, almost no colonial attention was given to mass schooling, so whatever education was received among Muslim children was carried out under religious sponsorship. In 1950, shortly after partition only 15.8% (25.7% male, 4.4% female) of young people ages five to nine were attending formal schooling (Ahmed 1984). The government convened the First Educational Conference in 1947 and beyond emphasizing that education should be inspired by Islamic ideology, the government leaders recommended that free and compulsory education be introduced for the first 5 years of schooling (Tahir 1980). However, whatever education was being provided to the broad masses came largely through the *maktabs*, which continued to be connected with mosques and shrines, and their major mission was to impart elementary religious knowledge. The primary shortcoming of these institutions has been their indifference to modern subjects such as science. Their curriculum has been largely to learn the Qurʾān, although some schools provide instruction in poetry, elementary arithmetic, penmanship, manners, and language (Fair 2008, pp. 17–19). The instructional approach is on reading, memorizing, and reciting the Qurʾān (Boyle 2006). Upon completion of this lower school, children are awarded various types of certificates: *nazīrah* (reading); *ḥifẓ* (memorization), and *tajwīd* (recitation) of the Qurʾān.

## Traditional Secondary Schooling

At the secondary school level of traditional education, the most prominent institution has been the *madrasah*. The first *madrasahs* in the subcontinent of Asia was at Ajmer around 1210 C.E., followed by schools at Delhi and the Muslim center of learning at Badaun. The program of study of these schools was generally the same, concentrating on grammar, literature, logic (*mantīq*), Islamic law (*fiqh*), Qurʾān commentaries (*tafsīr*), the life of the prophet (*sīrah*), mysticism, and religious philosophy (Hoodbhoy 1998).

It is to the credit of Muslim schools at that time that they became the repositories of the greatest stores of knowledge in the world (Guenther 2006). Their scholarship was without equal. Their libraries were exceptional. They excelled not only as centers of Islamic learning but as centers for grammar, poetry, literature, logic, mathematics, philosophy, natural science, and other disciplines (Anzar 2003). However, by the fifteenth century a bifurcation began to develop, when the *madrasahs*, at least in the Asian subcontinent, split from other schooling options by eliminating the “earthly sciences” of their programs in favor of a purely Muslim-oriented program of study (Hoodbhoy 1998).

This was the situation, when the vast Muslim empire was taken over by powerful political forces from the West. Even though the major motive of the West was economic, trade opened the way for Christian missionaries, who introduced a different kind of educational orientation. *Madrasahs* firmly opposed the cultural and educational hegemony of the British rulers, which meant that they focused

almost exclusively on the teachings of Islam as prescribed by the Qur'ān (Anzar 2003).

A credible estimate of the number of *madrasahs* in Pakistan remains unreliable, except for those registered under the control of some central board. A central board determines the syllabus as well as collects registration and examination fees. In addition, it oversees examinations and distributes the results thereof. Five major *madrasah* central boards have operated since partition. At the time of independence, there were 137 *madrasahs* registered in Pakistan. By 1987, there were 2862 registered institutions. In April 2002, the Minister of Religious Affairs put the figure at 10,000, with 1.7 million students (Rahman 2004). Monitors of Pakistan put the number of such schools at about 40,000 (Stern 2000; Singer 2001; Talat 2013). This tremendous increase in *madrasahs* is explained in various ways, which shall be explored later.

Hoodboy (1998, p. 230) has given an account of the daily routine of one resident *madrasah*. A day starts with the *fajr* prayers, followed by recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. Regular classes commence soon after breakfast and continue until lunchtime. There are one or two more classes after the *zuhr* prayers. Some institutions allow a siesta period after that. Students are allowed playtime of an hour or so after the *‘aṣr* prayers. The *maghrib* prayers are followed by a lesson and dinner. The students are required to revise the day's learning after the *‘ishā*' prayers before they go to bed around 11 p.m. The meals are modest, and the students live, study, and sleep on the floor together in the same hall, neatly packing off their bedding in a corner during the day. Teachers have separate quarters. Most of the *madrasahs* have their own libraries. Students are often taken out of school to recite the Holy Qur'ān on special occasions such as funerals.

There are higher forms of *madrasahs* intending to produce the *‘ālim*, or Islamic scholar and teacher. In Western parlance, the *‘ālim* certificate is often seen as equivalent to a master's degree in Islamic or Arabic studies. To become an *‘ālim* qualifies one only for work in the religious sector, because these students rarely engage in studies other than Islamic religion (Anzar 2003).

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## Modern Education

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, during the colonial period, the British introduced what we now refer to as the modern education system to the Asian subcontinent. The current system in Pakistan has inherited all the major structural elements of the colonial educational system and in this way does not differ dramatically in form from most of the European inspired elements. Despite the continuing presence of traditional education, Pakistani families rely on the modern education system to prepare their youth to work in the modern world.

Young people who seek a modern education not only attend government sponsored schools but a wide variety of private schools. Even though most private schools are traditional in nature, if they are registered with the government, they are required to follow the government-prescribed curriculum, including Islamic

studies. Many private schools provide the best modern education available in Pakistan (Fair 2008). Many private schools cater to the families of elite Pakistanis and professionals. Some of these private schools are based on the Cambridge system of education, preparing students to take Ordinary-Level and Advanced-Level examinations, thus offering an academic curriculum substantially different than that offered in public schools. High fees have traditionally put these elite private schools out of the reach of most Pakistani families.

Recently, private modern education has expanded greatly in Pakistan. Once mainly available as a high quality alternative for families of means, now a range of private schools of differing quality and prices are available, making them a viable alternative for middle class and even some poor families. It has been estimated that private educational institutions account for approximately 20% of total student enrollments at the modern primary and middle school levels. These educational institutions, all classified as nongovernmental by the Pakistani Ministry of Education, take many different forms. Most are privately owned, commercially run entities, and account for approximately 80% of these institutions. Others are sponsored by international nongovernmental organizations or community-based groups (Laumann 2000). Although nongovernmental schools have a stronger presence in urban areas, accounting for about two thirds of private school enrollment, they also reach rural areas, which account for the remaining third.

As in many countries, the public school system consists of several stages: preprimary, sometimes referred to as *kachi* or nursery, which may begin for children as young as 3 years old; primary, five grade levels; middle school, a three-year phase consisting of grades six through eight; a two-year secondary school or matriculation stage, grades nine and ten; a two-year higher secondary or intermediate college; and higher education, including colleges and universities in which students earn baccalaureate, professional, master's, and doctorate degrees. Students at colleges usually concentrate on two or three subjects, but they must take additional courses in English, Pakistan studies, and Islamic studies.

When partition took place there was only one university in Pakistan, but the number of institutions has multiplied. In the early 1970s, all institutions were nationalized under Bhutto and they remained state-run for the next decade. This arrangement did not result in a satisfactory participation rate, so in the mid-1980s private institutions were again allowed to operate. In 1991, there were only two private institutions of higher learning, but by 2005/06 this number had increased to 56, and to 74 in 2015 (Khattak 2016). Even with this rapid growth, higher education in Pakistan remains underdeveloped.

The basic language of instruction in most elite schools is Urdu, although some schools use Sindhi; Usually English is taught only beginning at age 10 as a foreign language. In the last decade, the government of Pakistan has made it a goal to increase English instruction and begin offering it at an earlier age, but it has been hampered in its attempts to recruit enough qualified personnel. Currently, the Ministry of Education is sponsoring special initiatives to introduce English teaching from the first grade. Both Urdu and English languages are still highly linked to social class.

The government of Pakistan also sponsors some English-medium Model Schools in urban centers. These schools are much in demand and select students based, in part, on entrance exams. The Pakistani military forces also run some schools to accommodate the children of military personnel (Riaz 2014).

Vocational education exists in Pakistan and takes many forms. Some career tracks, such as carpentry, have only minimal basic education qualification requirements, while some more highly technical trades, such as computers, require the completion of some secondary education.

Students take state-administered high-stakes exams at certain points in their educational careers. At the completion of secondary school, students are required to sit for board examinations. Approximately one-third of examinees pass. They may opt to continue on to higher secondary school or intermediate college, after which they again sit for exams for the Higher Secondary School; approximately one-third of examinees pass.

The Pakistani government has issued a number of reports on education, beginning with the National Education Conference report in 1947, the first year of independence from direct British, and the latest one, Pakistan Education for All Review Report (2015). Although these documents vary in quality and rhetoric, Tariq Rahman (2004) finds three prominent and sometimes contradictory goals in all the major documents: one of the goals is to use Islam and Pakistani nationalism to prevent ethnic groups from breaking away from the center and to build a modern, cohesive nation.

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## Critical Educational Issues

According to Pakistan's constitution, the state has an obligation to provide education to all citizens (Article 37, f). While Pakistan has publicly committed itself to universal primary education and adult literacy, the country has not been able to deliver on these promises. The best education in Pakistan may be compared with similar institutions in the West; however, the educational system has come to be characterized by its many shortcomings and perceived failures. More than six million children (aged 5–9 years) have no access to formal primary education of any kind, and only half of the children who begin school reach grade five (Mujahid-Mikhtar 2006).

Pakistan has low literacy rates. In 2013, UNICEF indicated that 79.1% of male youth (15–24 years) were literate, while 61.5% of females the same age were literate (UNICEF 2015). These figures are up from a decade ago, when the gap between male and female literacy was substantial: 66.25% for males and 41.75% for females. Literacy levels vary greatly by region as well; there is a 60.8% literacy rate in Punjab and 34% in Baluchistan.

Military tension with India and general national security needs have contributed to relatively high military and relatively low educational spending. In 2002, Pakistan's public expenditures allocated to all levels of education increased from



2.6% in 1999 to 3.3% in 2010. Less than 10% of government spending is for education (UNESCO 2015).

## Islamic Education and Religious Radicalism

Major questions, post 9/11, have been whether attending the *madrasah* leads to militant behavior and whether increasing the length of schooling reduces militant behavior. Studies have been conducted in Lebanon, Palestine, and elsewhere in the Middle East that suggest the possibility of such relationships, at least regarding individuals who participate directly in terrorist activities (Berrebi 2007; Krueger and Maleckova 2002; Hassan 2001).

In Pakistan, Christine Fair surveyed 141 families, each of which lost at least one son to militant actions in Kashmir and Afghanistan, and she found that only 19 young men were reportedly recruited from a *madrasah*, while an equal number were recruited from a public school and none from a private school. At least 50 were recruited from friends, 32 at mosques, 27 from proselytizing groups, and 19 from relatives (Fair 2008, p. 68). Fair also found that those who participate in militant activities also tend to have relatively high levels of schooling. For example, 58% of the young men in her sample had completed at least 10 years of schooling, while the average male in Pakistan had completed less than the sixth grade (ibid.: 69).

Although Fair found that only a small number of militants came from the *madrasah*, she is concerned that under certain circumstances education in the *madrasah* may encourage terrorism or militant activity. Rastegar (1988) found that certain *madrasahs* in and near refugee camps located near Afghanistan and Kashmir became training grounds for young militants who would dedicate their lives to the liberation of these two areas. According to Rastegar, these schools failed to provide the traditional curriculum but became part of the political mobilization process by distorting concepts such as *jihād* (striving and struggling in the face of persecution) and turning that concept into one of struggling against any enemy through violence and vengeance.

In the 1980s, the administration of General Zia ul Haq tried to Islamize the state and society, and the traditional *madrasahs* underwent a dramatic change. Funds were appropriated through religious tithes (*zakāt*) and used to encourage the establishment and development of *madrasahs* (Jones 2002, pp. 31–32). These increased resources were enhanced by major contributions from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. Because the program of studies of *madrasahs* has not been overseen by the state, their school's leaders have been able to decide who to take in and what to teach. The assumption on the part of state authorities was that these schools would follow the pattern of traditional secondary education and that occurred in the vast majority of cases (Andrabi et al. 2006). Ironically, while traditional education has often been blamed for the slow rate of economic and political development in Pakistan, it is also seen by some as a possible key to tap into Pakistan's potential. UNESCO, for example, declared in 2005 that *madrasahs* could make an effective contribution to national development efforts if the teachers could become better.

## The Contested Question of Islamic Education among Women in Pakistan

The constitution of Pakistan promises equality for all citizens, and explicitly states, “there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone” (Article 25: 2). The same document extends this guarantee specifically to education: “The state shall provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race” (Article 38: d). In spite of this, “gender parity remains a distant prospect” for Pakistan (UNESCO 2003), and this assessment had not changed by 2015. Although overall enrollment rates have increased dramatically over the past 60 years, the gender gap persists (Jalil 1988).

Authorities often assign blame for low rates of girls’ enrollment at the primary and secondary school on parents placing low value on female education. However, many scholars feel parents are willing to send their girls to school under the right conditions. Scholars such as Farah and Shera (2007) and Heward (1999) argue that schools must be free and of decent quality, located near their homes, and staffed by teachers the community can trust, preferably women. Despite growing awareness of the importance of education, attitudes deeply rooted in the traditional Islamic structure of family, gender roles, and power towards female education have been slow to change (Farah and Shera 2007; Weiss 1998).

Islam is thought, especially by non-Muslims, to restrict girls’ access to education (King and Hill 1993). Indeed, gender inequalities have been a part of Pakistan since its inception and many scholars suggest that Muslim values account for a part of this inequality. According to Lisa Laumann (2000, p. 98), “women have been constructed as legal minors, economic dependents, political appendages, and objects of social protection in the contentious struggle over Muslim communal identity. . . .”

However, Coleman (2004) challenges this, stating “Islamization is clearly not the reason for Pakistan’s low female literacy rates” and that “most Islamists are careful to stress their support for female education.” She offers a more indirect effect, stressing that religious leaders’ emphasis on a traditional role for women and the need to protect women’s honor reinforces cultural norms that limit female mobility and access to the public sphere, compounding the already large challenges of getting and keeping girls in school. Others argue that cultural practices sometimes curtail women’s rights guaranteed by Islamic law and that girls’ enrollment rates are a reflection of restrictive and often misleading interpretations of the status and role of females according to Islam (Farah and Shera 2007).

Throughout its brief history, Pakistan has articulated strategies to grapple with these educational imparities. The framing of education goals changed in 1992, when for both male and female education documents began to recognize education as a right, influenced by global ideals expressed in the Education for All movement (ibid.). International efforts have reinforced Pakistan’s attempts to bring about greater gender and education equality. Few doubt the importance of achieving educational parity, even though some scholars challenge as simplistic the above conventional portrayal of the benefits of educating girls (Hannum and Buchmann 2003). Pakistan has repeatedly

expressed the ambition to achieve the goals mentioned, however, has been unable to match these goals with the financial resources to achieve them (Farah and Shera 2007; Heward 1999).

In July of 2007, the Pakistani government besieged the Lal Masjid in Islamabad, after students and clerics agitated against President Musharraf's government through a variety of public disturbances in favor of imposing *shari'ah*. The siege ultimately ended with a death toll over 100 after military forces stormed the mosque and the attached female seminary Jamia Hafsa (BBC 2007). According to Saini's analysis of the Pakistani military operation, "the Lal Masjid was widely known to be a center of radical Islamic learning" (Saini 2009, p. 554). News coverage of the incident, in particular, focused on the actions of Jamia Hafsa's female students as they represented a heretofore uncommon phenomenon in Pakistan: a significant number of women from a female *madrasah*, politically and publicly engaging in movements against the government. Most of the students attending Jamia Hafsa came from rural areas, and in particular the North West frontier provinces. In July 2005, the women defended Lal Masjid against a raid by Pakistani special forces who were investigating suspected links between the mosque and bombings in London (BBC 2007). In the months leading up to the siege, the women shut down several movie stores and massage parlors for promulgating "decadent western values" (ibid.). Perhaps the most high-profile demonstration carried out by the female students was in response to government demolition of mosques that had been illegally constructed on government land. As demolition began, the students occupied a children's library near the mosque with intent to "fight to the death" once the government threatened eviction.

The Lal Masjid incident, a confrontation between students and the Pakistani government at the Red Mosque, and reactions to it, brought the female *madrasah* education in Pakistan and the role of Islam in Pakistani to the forefront of debates and contentions.

The siege of the mosque, and in particular, the involvement of Jamia Hafsa's female students, both in the disruptions leading up to the siege and in the siege itself, raised the need for a more in depth understanding of female *madrasah* education in Pakistan. Conflicting reports emerged about the role of Jamia Hafsa's female students in the siege. Some news outlets used claims made by the Pakistani government to depict the women as hostages forced to stay in the *madrasah* against their will (Masood, New York Times, July 13, 2007). However, the actions taken by the women leading up to the siege suggest at least partial willingness by female students and teachers to participate in the resistance to the Pakistani government.

Thus, given the complexity of the potential sociopolitical influences over female education in Pakistan and their effects on the position of women within Pakistani society, understanding the *madrasah* as a legitimate source of education for females becomes essential.

The effect of increased politicization of women's rights and empowerment in Pakistan, different theories of feminism, and its relationship to education were emerged to consider the role of female *madrasah* education. Women, especially in countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, have been identified as key actors in progressing development in the third world.

In her examination of female madrasa education at Madrasatul Niswan in New Delhi, India, Marieke Winkelmann discusses how female madrasah education affords its students a degree of social mobility that works within Muslim community in India. Winkelmann concludes that although she went into the project looking for women's emancipation within Islam as produced by education, she found that empowerment itself proved to be a problematic tool for analysis (Winkelmann 2005). This raises concerns about the control the male officials exert over the female *madrasah*, particularly in the partial curriculum on Islamic law. However, in reference to Mahmood (2001), Winkelmann recognizes and argues that the education in the schools on the subjects of Qur'an, Islamic upbringing (*tarbiyah*), Arabic, Urdu, and even the partial exposure to Islamic law (*fiqh*) has benefits for the students, namely upward social mobility in a context where religious ties are strong.

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## Conclusions

Pakistan combines its traditional and modern school systems to provide an array of educational options for the people of this Islamic country. Such a tradition brings disadvantages and perils with it, as well as provides tremendous opportunities. Economically, Pakistan is one of the poorest nations in the world. It has become a nesting place for militant fundamentalists. In spite of stated ideals, it fails to provide its citizens with the educational opportunities that human rights demands. However, if the potential of the country and its culture can be channeled appropriately Pakistan might be able to set a model of Islamic growth and productivity both economically and spiritually.

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# Islamic Education in Malaysia

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid

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## Abstract

Islamic education in Malaysia first recorded its presence during the period of the Malaccan Sultanate (1414–1511). Malacca witnessed the birth of prototype boarding schools known as *pondok*, literally meaning “hut,” in which the master or *tok guru* assumed full control. Malay students started to study at al-Azhar University in Cairo in the 1920s. Upon returning to Malaya, this new generation of Middle Eastern graduates significantly contributed to the changing face of Islamic education. They converted *umumi* (general) *pondoks* into *madrasahs*, adopting the *nizami* (structured) system, which combined instruction in Islamic fundamentals with Western-influenced pedagogy and technology. Realizing the deep attachment of the Malays to Islam, the British incorporated some form of Islamic education into Malay vernacular schools. With Malaysia’s independence, centralization of the administration and curricula of all schools that offer some kind of Islamic education has dominated the Ministry of Education’s efforts in the realm of formal Islamic education. There is continuous endeavor to bring an end to dualism between secular and religious education, as manifested in the marriage between Islamic and secular sciences in tertiary-level courses.

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In 1973, a Religious Education Division (*Bahagian Pelajaran Agama*) was established within the Ministry of Education to coordinate Islamic education. In 1983, it was renamed Islamic Education Division (*Bahagian Pendidikan Islam*). In 1995, it was restructured as Islamic and Moral Education Division (*Bahagian Pendidikan Islam dan Moral*). It has now reverted to Islamic Education Division, and its task is to manage the Islamic educational policy and curriculum, the Arabic-language policy and curriculum, the recruitment and in-service training of Islamic education and Arabic-language teachers, and missionary and leadership training for Islamic education staff and students, and to aid and raise the standards of both national secondary religious schools. Centralization of the administration and curricula of all schools that offer some kind of Islamic education has dominated the Ministry of Education's efforts in the realm of formal Islamic education. Curriculum has been designed to accomplish the aims of the Islamic Philosophy of Education. There is continuous endeavor to bring an end to dualism between secular and religious education, as manifested in the marriage between Islamic and secular sciences in tertiary-level courses.

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#### Keywords

Malaysia · Islam · Education · *Pondok* · *Madrasah* · *Sekolah agama* · Centralization · Ulama

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## Introduction

In spite of Malaysia's position as a country geographically located within the Islamic periphery, as measured by the distance separating it from the Islamic heartlands of the Middle East, the contribution of Malaysian and Malaysian-based scholarship to the worldwide discourse of Islamic education, whether on an individual or institutional basis, has been far from marginal. Historically situated at the confluence of ancient Eastern and Western trading routes, medieval "Malaysia" – a term traditionally used by scholars to describe the whole of Nusantara or Malay-Indonesian archipelago which encompasses modern Southeast Asia, was exposed to a host of Arab, Persian, Chinese, Indian, and European economic and civilizational influences. It was through successive waves of mutual interactions between the indigenous Malays and foreign Muslims, developed ostensibly on trade and commerce but behind which lay deep missionary impulses, that Islam eventually gained a perennial foothold in Malaysia since the end of the thirteenth century (Alatas 1985: 162; Ahmad Fauzi 2002: 469). Since September 16, 1963, Malaysia has acquired the distinction of being one of the most strongly plural societies among Muslim-majority nation states in the world, having been officially formed out of the merger between peninsular Malaya – independent since August 31, 1957, Singapore, and the Borneo territories of Sabah and Sarawak. In August 1965, however, Singapore left the Federation of Malaysia.

On a global scale, the discourse on Islamic education has been very much influenced by the thoughts and writings of renowned Malaysian philosopher Syed



Naquib Al-Attas (b. 1931). In 1987, Al-Attas became founder-director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), a research institute affiliated to the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) - an institution conceived at the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Mecca in 1977. The Meccan Conference, in the words of Muhammad Kamal Hassan (b. 1942), another Malaysian scholar of worldwide reputation who led IIUM as Rector from 1999 to 2006, represented the *ummah*'s earnest hopes for "a return to the concept of integrative Islamic education as an alternative to secular education" that had beleaguered postcolonial Muslim societies (Kamal Hassan 1986: 40–41). To the coterie of his loyal students and enthusiasts, Al-Attas was the rightful progenitor of the "Islamization of knowledge" scheme, before the idea was taken up and further developed by the late Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi of Temple University, Philadelphia, USA (Wan Mohd Nor 2005: 332–338). In concrete form, "Islamization of knowledge" attempted to systematically and systemically synthesize the vast body of knowledge within the Islamic epistemological tradition with Western humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Under its successive Rectors, IIUM emerged as the main proponent of the "Islamization of knowledge" program internationally. "Islamization of knowledge" has also become the permanent tagline for Ismail Al-Faruqi's brainchild, the USA-based International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), of which former IIUM Rector (1989–1999) Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman (b. 1936) was also a former President.

As his long-lasting discursive contribution, Syed Naquib Al-Attas has innovatively reconceptualized the notion of "education" as *ta'dīb*, i.e., "the instilling and inculcation of *adab* in man"; *adab* here essentially embodying the processes of disciplining the mind and soul, acquiring good qualities for the mind and soul, performing correct as against erroneous action, and thus preserving mankind from disgrace (al-Attas 1979b: 36–37). Al-Attas' preference for *ta'dīb* in elucidating an understanding of education, as compared with other concepts which have also gained wide currency within Muslim educational circles such as *tarbiyah* and *t'a'līm*, is underscored by *ta'dīb*'s human-specific quality, recognizing the nature of human's spiritual constitution as made up of soul (*nafs*) and intellect (*'aql*) which are responsible for the fulfilment or neglect of one's actions as part of one's individual covenant with God (al-Attas 1979b: 24–25; al-Attas 1991: 29–32). *T'a'līm* and *tarbiyah*, by contrast, have more generic attributes, connoting respectively "the teaching and learning process" and the multiple actions of "bringing out," "developing," "nurturing," "fostering," "nourishing," "rearing," and "cherishing" as applied to objects under one's possession (cf. El-Muhammady 1987: 123–124; Halstead 2004: 522; Ishak 1995: 5–8). As such, the corollary of *ta'dīb* is not necessarily quantifiable, as more than usually is the case with the end product of *t'a'līm* and *tarbiyah*.

Inspired by Al-Attas' moralistic outlook, Malaysian scholars have broadly arrived at an understanding of Islamic education as an integrated process of imparting Islamic knowledge such that its recipients are equipped spiritually, intellectually, and materially in order for them to carry out their God-ordained roles as His servants and vicegerents on earth (Kamal Hassan 1986: 40; Zawawi Ahmad 1994:

13–34). In Al-Attas' epistemological framework, knowledge (Arabic: *'ilm*) is defined as “arrival in/of the soul of/at the meaning of a thing or an object.” For knowledge to be authentic or correct, it has to be “determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth as projected by the Qur’ānic conceptual system” (Al-Attas 1991: 17–18). Knowledge can be seen in contradistinction to “information,” which may not necessarily be predicated on divinely ascertained truth and whose internalization can fail to nurture goodness among its human agents. The purpose of Islamic education may be summarized as “to produce a good man;” meaning one who justly acknowledges God as one’s “*Possessor, Creator, Sustainer, Cherisher, Provider*” (Al-Attas 1991: 23). Long-standing “*confusion and error in knowledge*” has engulfed the *ummah* (global Muslim community) in manifold dilemmas and crises (Al-Attas 1979a: 2–3; Al-Attas 1991: 34–35), as quintessentially embodied in failure to stem the tide of secularization in postcolonial Muslim states, for whom the aim of national education has been relegated to one of producing merely “good citizens” (Al-Attas 1979b: 32–33).

Hasan Langgulung (d. 2008), an IIUM-based Indonesian educationist, refined the above classification, as originally drawn from typologies developed by the medieval scholars Abū Hāmīd al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), in terms of “perennial knowledge” and “acquired knowledge.” Under the “acquired knowledge” category, Langgulung included engineering, medicine, agriculture, and other disciplines which we identify today as the modern sciences (Ishak 1995: 45).

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## An Overview of Islamic Education in Pre-independent Malaya

From the moment the Prophet Muḥammad received divine revelations in 610 C.E., Islamic education began via informal channels connecting him with a close circle of relatives and companions in the holy city of Mecca and later Medina in the Hijaz – the vast region on the western coast of the Arab peninsula stretching south from the Gulf of Aqaba, in present-day Saudi Arabia. Trade networks played a crucial role in disseminating the Islamic teachings, whose modus operandi encompassed the variegated methods of lecturing (*kullīyyah*), memorization, discussion (*muḥādathah*), dialogue, debating (*mujādalah*), experiencing, traveling (*riḥlah*), and study circle (*halaqah*) (Ishak 1995: 68). These methods of transmission were applied by Arab traders, many of whom were *ṣūfī* missionaries and *sayyids* – descendants of the Prophet, who arrived in the Malay world through two waves of exodus, ensuing from the fall of Baghdad to Mongol conquerors in 1258 and the ascendancy of the puritanical Wahhābī sect pioneered by the Nejdī reformer Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab (d. 1792) and culminating in the establishment of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 (Ahmad Fauzi 2013: 97–99).

Islamic education in what is today Malaysia recorded its earliest formal presence during the period of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca (1414–1511). Islamic learning was unleashed among all segments of Malaccan society as a consequence of enthusiasm shown by its rulers, in particular its founder Parameswara who embraced Islam upon marrying the daughter of the Sultan of Pasai in 1414, and Sultans Mansur

Syah (1456–1477) and Mahmud Syah (1488–1511), both of whom developed a predilection for *ṣūfī* theosophy and held the ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars: sing. ‘*ālim*’) in high regard (Ishak 1995: 122, 127–129). In Malacca, residential schools known as *pondok* – deriving from the Arabic word *funduq*, i.e., a place of temporary residence but literally meaning “hut,” emerged as the prototype institution offering an organized form of Islamic education. Conventionally made up of student boarding houses resembling huts built around or near the residence of the master known as *tuan guru* or *tok guru*, a *pondok* was typically funded by the surrounding community, imposed no fees and was fully under his control. The pedagogy employed was the *tadah kitab* or *buka kitab* (opening the book) method, by which a *tok guru* would sit at the center of a semicircle formed by his students when delivering lessons, with an emphasis on memorization. In neither being divided according to age group nor having their progress monitored through examinations, the students were in an *umumi* (unstructured/general) system where the *tok guru* himself graduated his students by way of a simple testimonial. Students not uncommonly moved from *pondok* to *pondok*, based on the enumerated *kitab*s offered in the syllabi and fame of the *tok guru* (Alwi 1980: 192–194; Ishak 1994: 161–167; Roff 2004: 6–9). Malacca’s renown for religious education was undergirded by the fact that two of the illustrious *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints) deemed responsible for spreading Islam to Java, Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri, acquired Islamic knowledge at its Pulau Upih *pondok* at the hands of one Sheikh Wali Lanang, who reputedly hailed from Jeddah (Osman Bakar 1991: 266–267). The *pondok* institution was to remain the quintessence of Islamic education in Malaya until the Second World War, by which time *pondok* schools and their variation could be found in all Malay states except Johore and the Straits Settlements (Rauf 1964: 22).

For many generations since the advent of Islam in Malaya, Mecca, whose *Masjid al-Ḥarām* (Grand Mosque) conducted religious classes teaching via a similar *halaqah* system as in *pondoks*, was the preferred destination for Malayan students to pursue higher education. By the end of the nineteenth century a thriving Malay-Muslim diaspora known as the *Jawi* community had emerged out of the communities of *pondok*-educated sojourners. In fact, Mecca was churning out the cream of the Malayan ‘*ulamā*’. So close was the trans-continental educational network that Kelantan, a state on the northeastern coast of Malaya, acquired the unofficial designation as *Serambi Makkah* (forecourt of Mecca) among contemporary travelers. The center-periphery linkage was also spiritual: many of the Meccan-based ‘*ulamā*’ were simultaneously *ṣūfī shaykhs* (spiritual mentors) who would bequeath the *ijāzah* (right) to spread their particular *ṭarīqah*s (*ṣūfī* orders) to their *Jawi* disciples, who upon returning to Malaya would found *pondoks* which functioned also as *ṣūfī zāwīyah*s (hermitages) (Johns 1993: 53–59). The natural appeal of Mecca lay also in its position as the host of the annual *hajj* pilgrimage, of which the British colonial government expressed concern regarding its potentially subversive implications in facilitating contacts between the Malay-Muslims and their Middle Eastern brethren (Roff 1967: 40–43).

In the 1920s, influenced by the emergence of the steamship as a mode of transportation plying the Suez Canal and uncertainties following the rise of Wahhabism in

Mecca and Medina after their conquest by Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud in 1924, the flow of Malay students shifted to al-Azhar University in Cairo. While the staunchly Sunnī Malay community in the Ḥijāz generally received Saudi dominion with composure, they were still alienated by Wahhābī-inspired militant excesses in purportedly cleansing the Islamic faith, for example by leveling the gravestones of deceased Prophet Muhammad's family members and companions. Al-Azhar's newly carved role as the major center for Malay students was to have tremendous impact on the trajectory of Islamic education in Malaya. Quite apart from the formal lectures and classes, more important was the political socialization and informal education acquired outside of the university's ambience, via exposure to Egypt's sociopolitical flux, intermingling with Indonesian anticolonial activists, and subsequent collaboration with them in launching two politically aggressive journals, *Seruan Azhar* (Call of Al-Azhar) (1925–28) and *Pilihan Timor* (Choice of the East) (1927–28) (Soenarno 1960: 8–10; Roff 1967: 87–89; Roff 1970: 73–75).

Upon returning to Malaya, this new generation of Middle Eastern graduates significantly changed the face of Islamic education. They converted *umumi pondoks* into *madrasahs*, adopting the *nizami* (structured) system, which combined instruction in Islamic fundamentals with Western-influenced pedagogy and technology. Students were assigned to formal classrooms based on age groups, taught modern sciences, and subjected to written examinations (Ishak 1995: 196; Roff 2004: 10–13). While some authors have ascribed the reformist phenomenon of the 1930s to the *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) movement helmed by the largely Penang and Singapore-based Arab-Malay leaders who had excelled in business and charitable enterprises (Roff 1967: 40–43, 75–77), innovative educational efforts were also forthcoming from traditionalist '*ulamā*' more readily identified as belonging to the *Kaum Tua* (Old Faction). For example, it was the *ṣūfī*-oriented yet reformist-inclined Sheikh Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi (d. 1964) who pioneered the opening of female enrolment into secondary education, beginning with the Madrasah Al-Ma'ārif which he founded in Singapore in 1936 (Ni'mah 1998: 62; Al-Junied and Dayang Istiaisyah Hussin 2005: 253). Fadhlullah Suhaimi's distinguished career had included a stint as headmaster and controller of religious schools with the *Majlis Agama dan Adat Istiadat Melayu* (Council of Religious Affairs and Malay Custom) of Kelantan (Alwi 1980: 199–200). Kelantan, belying its reputation as the pulse of the *pondok* system, had in fact been very open to modernization of education, as reflected in the reformist role played by Tok Kenali (d. 1933), a traditionalist scholar who served as inaugural editor of the journal *Pengasuh* (Educator). Despite being identified by Roff (1967: 79) as a standard-bearer of the *Kaum Tua*, *Pengasuh* was actually vocal in its advocacy of reform, as showcased by its positive acknowledgement of *Seruan Azhar*, its penchant for serializing articles which lamented Malay backwardness as reflective of educational deficiencies, and its praising instead developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom (UK) and Japan for their educational advancements (Ahmad Fauzi 2001: 132; Kushimoto 2012: 223–234). In Kedah, another major hub of *pondok* education, the Madrasah al-Hamidiah in Limbung Kapal, Alor Setar, run by the well-known traditionalist '*ālim* Ḥajjī Wan Sulaiman Wan Sidek, was comparable to any of the supposedly modern

schools in terms of curriculum structure and state-of-the-art facilities (Khoo 1991: 169). Hence, while much has been written on the *Kaum Muda*'s contributions toward improving the delivery of Islamic education in Malaysia, thus engendering the early impulses of Malay nationalism (cf. Roff 1967: 75–77), one must be careful not to generalize traditionalist purveyors of Islamic education as being necessarily resistant to change. As noted by Kushimoto (2012: 207): “. . . new ideas of Islamic learning that supported the spread of new madrasah had been shared regardless [of] *kaum muda* – *kaum tua* dichotomy.”

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## The Contemporary Setting of Islamic Education in Malaysia

Since Malaya's independence on August 31, 1957, jurisdiction over Islamic education has occupied a gray area between federal government and the nine state governments whose Malay Rulers act as the Heads of the Islamic religion in their respective states. Such authority over Islam is vested in Article 3 of the Federal Constitution, which also pronounces in separate clauses the positions of Islam as “*the religion of the Federation*” and of the reigning Yang di-Pertuan Agong – the constitutionally appointed monarch rotated every 5 years among the nine Sultans, as Heads of the Religion in states without the hereditary Rulers, viz. Malacca, Penang, Sabah, and Sarawak (*Federal Constitution with Index* 1998: 1–2). Officially, education is located under federal authority in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, but since Islamic affairs are technically administered by the various states (*Federal Constitution with Index* 1998: 156–157), their governments have traditionally wielded considerable autonomy over Islamic education. This power is most lucidly articulated in the running of religious schools.

Until a decade ago, the landscape of primary and secondary level Islamic education in Malaysia was made up of five types of religious schools, viz. Federal Religious Schools (*Sekolah Agama Persekutuan* and *Sekolah Kebangsaan Agama*), State Governments' Religious Schools (*Sekolah Agama Negeri*), schools run by a state's *Majlis Agama Islam*, Community Religious Schools (*Sekolah Agama Rakyat*) and Private Religious Schools (*Sekolah Agama Swasta*). Of these, *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* (SAR) and *Sekolah Agama Swasta* (SAS) are independently managed but accept the use of the national curriculum so that their graduates can further their studies in formal institutions of higher learning. A perennial problem concerning these religious school graduates used to be the acute shortage of places for further education at the tertiary level in Malaysia. Only three state-run institutions, viz. UM, UKM, and IIUM offered Islamic studies degree courses which accepted students based on secondary level specialization in Islamic subjects per se. For professional degree programs in all universities, a host of extra qualifications remain a *sine qua non* for the admission of religious school graduates (IPPTN 2001).

In line with the federal government's gradual absorption of Islamic education under the national educational system, the Education Act of 1961 made Islamic religious lessons a core part of the syllabi in both government primary and secondary schools (Zainal Abidin 1994: 106). Recruitments of the primary and secondary

school teachers, who were now part of the educational administrative service, became the responsibilities of the state governments and the Ministry of Education, respectively (Ishak 1995: 155–157). Parallel declines in enrolment were consequently registered by both state and private Islamic schools (Nelson 2008: 209). The time allotted to formal instruction of the overtly religious sciences was reduced in proportion to the increase in slots for the modern sciences. Course delivery was thereafter conducted in Malay instead of Arabic, which served as the medium of instruction only in Arabic language classes. Constantly running on a tight budget, private *madrasahs*, notwithstanding expansion of their curricula, found themselves unable to match state-run religious schools in terms of staff qualifications and infrastructural facilities (Che Noraini and Langgulung 2008: 11–12).

By 1974, the transfer of authority over primary Islamic education from state governments to the federal government had been more or less accomplished. In that year, the Ministry of Education extended control over the content and discourse of Islamic education by establishing a Textbook Bureau which ensured that only textbooks written by Ministry-commissioned authors were used in schools (Ishak 1995: 179). The Education Act of 1991 gave ultimate approval for subsuming religious teachers hitherto employed by the states' *Majlis Agama Islam* under the federal administrative scheme – a process which had acquired additional momentum following the founding of an Islamic Teachers Training College (MPI: *Maktab Perguruan Islam*) in 1977 (Bin Othman 1993: 60–62). In its present form, the MPI operates as the degree-granting Islamic Campus of the Institute of Teachers' Education of Malaysia (IPGM-KAMPIS: *Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia Kampus Pendidikan Islam Selangor*), having previously undergone upgrading in 2006 into the Islamic Teachers Training Institute of Selangor (IPIS: *Institut Perguruan Islam Selangor*).

Following the Cabinet Committee Report on Educational Policy of 1979, which critically noted that the delivery of Islamic lessons at secondary schools suffered from technical weaknesses and lack of monitoring (Zainal Abidin 1994: 107–108), an Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM: *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*) was launched. Purportedly guided by resolutions of the 1977 World Conference on Muslim Education in Mecca, KBSM had sought to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills and moral values (Che Noraini and Langgulung 2008: 13). In national schools, *Pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education) replaced the *Agama Islam* (Islamic Religion) subject to reflect the broader scope of the curriculum. Muslim students in nonreligious streams were additionally given the choice of taking as electives such core religious subjects introduced in the 1980s–1990s as Higher Arabic language, *Tasawwur Islam* (Islamic Worldview), al-Qur'ān and al-Sunnah education and Islamic *sharī'ah* (Law) education (BPI 2009: 51). In order to sanctify the position of Islamic education within the paradigm of the national educational system, the Ministry of Education promulgated a reputedly distinctive Islamic Philosophy of Education (FPI: *Falsafah Pendidikan Islam*) which reads:

Islamic Education is a continuous effort to deliver knowledge, skill and emotional experience based on al-Qur'ān and al-Sunnah in order to build behaviour, skill, personality, and a

view of life as the servant of Allāh, responsible for self development, the community, the environment and the nation for the sake of prosperity and salvation in this world and the hereafter. (Quoted in original in Tamuri 2007: 373, cf. Zainal Abidin 1994: 110–111)

Within the Ministry of Education, a separate Religious Education Division (BPA: *Bahagian Pelajaran Agama*) was established in 1973 to spearhead coordination of Islamic education at the federal level. In 1983, the BPA was reconstituted as the Islamic Education Division (BPI: *Bahagian Pendidikan Islam*). Upon assumption of responsibility over moral education, the BPI was upgraded in 1995 into the Islamic and Moral Education Division (BPIM: *Bahagian Pendidikan Islam dan Moral*), only to revert to the BPI in a later restructuring exercise. In a nutshell, BPI's task is to facilitate the integration of religious schools with the national educational system. Its current responsibilities include managing the Islamic educational policy and curriculum, the Arabic language policy and curriculum, the recruitment and in-service training of Islamic studies and Arabic language teachers, *dakwah* (religious propagation) and leadership training for Islamic education staff and students, and improving the standards of both national secondary religious schools (SMKA: *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama*) and government-assisted religious schools (SABK: *Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan*). Listed among its pioneering achievements were conversions of thirteen state secondary religious schools (SMAN: *Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri*) and SARs into SMKAs which used a uniform syllabus known as the Higher Islamic Knowledge Syllabus (*Sukatan Pelajaran Pengetahuan Agama Islam Tinggi*) (Ishak 1995: 162).

In terms of modernization of the curriculum, SMKA students are now given the option to specialize in either one of the three available streams, viz. humanities/arts and religion, science and religion, and technical-vocational education and religion. All streams offer the choice of core religious subjects such as al-Qur'ān and al-Sunnah education, Islamic *sharī'ah* education and Higher Arabic language (Adnan Yusopp 2003: 36), all of which also form elective subjects in mainstream secondary education, which operates its own religious stream (*kelas aliran agama*) at selected schools (BPI 2009: 71–72). In both types of state-sponsored religious education, the choice of subjects has been made broad enough so as to equip students with sufficient preparation and confidence to enter the competitive labor market while steadfastly upholding Islamic values. Beginning in the year 2000, high-flying religious stream students can choose to further their education through the Higher Religious Certificate of Malaysia (STAM: *Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia*). Having its Arabic-medium curriculum streamlined with *Ma'had Bu'ūth al-Islāmīyah* of Cairo's al-Azhar University, STAM offers a pathway for SMKA graduates toward tertiary-level Islamic studies at Malaysian and overseas universities. STAM is also offered to students of SARs and SMANs which have agreed to gradually bring their syllabi to be in synchronization with STAM instead of the Malay-medium Higher Religious Certificate (STA: *Sjil Tinggi Agama*) examinations (Adnan Yusopp 2003: 37; BPI 2009: 91–97).

The Malaysian government's decision in late 2002 to withdraw automatic per capita grants to private SARs dealt a heavy blow to these effective successors of the

independent *pondok* system. The sudden denial of funds led to closures of, dwindling enrolment and staff cutbacks in not a few SARs. According to reliable statistics, at the time of the government's campaign against SARs, student enrolment in SARs was at an all-time high, clinching 126,000 in 2003 (Salleh and Nor 2003: 204, Singh 2007: 7). None other than Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad himself and Education Minister Musa Mohamad helmed the public rebuke of SARs. SARs were accused, among other things, of persistently failing to translate financial assistance into good examination results, and of jealously guarding their autonomy while at the same time benefiting from the federal grants. More important than the issues of low-quality teachers and infrastructure, however, were allegations that SARs had become a breeding ground for hatred of the government and political extremism, as shown by the conspicuous presence of SAR graduates among the upper echelons of recently uncovered terrorist cells (Mahathir Mohamad 2003; Musa Mohamad 2003). For skeptics though, the political motives behind the vituperative assaults on SARs were all too obvious. Most SARs were believed to have come under the influence of the opposition Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS: *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*) through personal associations of their headmasters and members of governing boards to the party. The salient role played by the *pondok* institution and later SARs in maintaining grassroots support for PAS in the Malay-Muslim heartland states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah, all of which it had ruled in alternate terms with the United Malays National Organization (UMNO)-led National Front (BN: *Barisan Nasional*) coalition, has long been acknowledged (Alwi 1980: 195; Ishak 1995: 234). PAS-affiliated figures and scholars rather unsurprisingly surmised that the punitive move owed to pressure exerted by the USA, Malaysia's largest trading partner, which was aggressively pursuing a Global War on Terror (GWOT) in response to alleged terrorist attacks on its sovereign soil on September 11, 2001 (cf. Wan Abdul Rahman and Kamaruzzaman Yusoff 2004).

The government's penalizing the already cash-strapped SARs proved to be a most unpopular measure among the Malay-Muslim masses. Such harsh action was perceived by them as an attack on Islamic education on the whole rather than on private religious education per se. For many Malay-Muslim parents, despite the apparent weaknesses of and stinging criticisms leveled against SARs (cf. M. Bakri Musa 2001), a SAR education provided a viable alternative to mainstream state-supported schooling which they fear lacked the capacity of equipping their offspring with a proper balance between worldly knowledge and religious training. With parents increasingly worried at the possibility of their loved ones getting dragged into moral afflictions such as drug addiction, child abuse, *lepak* (loitering) culture, sexual promiscuity, and heavy crime (cf. Awang Had Salleh 1996: 30–32; Mohd. Kamal Hassan 1994: 137–142, 146–154), SARs' counter-culture has proven to be an attractive option for those who seek the best of both the corporeal and spiritual worlds. Notwithstanding the negative publicity on SARs as constantly aired by the mainstream media, parents of modest financial backgrounds have come up with a slew of reasons for preferring a SAR education for at least some of their kids (Che Noraini and Langgulung 2008: 14; Zainal Azam 2003: 280–284). Moreover, recent research fails to lend support to the government's allegations against independent



Islamic education. For instance, Mohd Kamarulnizam Abdullah (2004: 95–100) has shown that not only have contemporary *pondoks* been open to curricula modernization and financial rationalization, but their graduates are also found to be well equipped in both secular and advanced religious education, such that there is no basis to directly link the existence of such schools to the growth of radical Islamism in Malaysia. If a linkage exists in any way to the radical nexus, it is informal in the sense that recruitment to militant groups is done via the alumni network and individual teaching staff rather than their affiliated institutions per se. But if that were the case, a similar situation is arguably found even in state-run Islamic education. For example, in his survey of Islamic studies programs at Malaysia's tertiary institutions, Muhammad Nur Manuty (2011: 150–151) detects the latent danger posed by the presence of fundamentalist-inclined lecturers at the Academy of Islamic Studies, UM. Despite the tendency of these Saudi-trained dons to repudiate the thoughts of prominent Muslim theologians accepted as veritable by generations of the staunchly Sunnī Malay-Muslims, Muhammad Nur nevertheless downplays the threat posed by them, as their doctrinal bias are counter-balanced by the traditionalist emphasis which prevails in the formal syllabi of all Islamic *'aqīdah* (belief) courses in both secondary and tertiary-level Islamic education.

Relenting at grassroots Muslims discontent at the government's undermining of independent Islamic education, Dr. Mahathir's successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, an Islamic studies graduate who hailed from a renowned lineage of *'ulamā'* backtracked by partially restoring grants to SARs (Singh 2007: 13). Throughout Abdullah's checkered Premiership (2003–2009), which ended with his effective ouster by UMNO warlords following his disastrous leadership of UMNO's election campaign of March 2008 when the ruling BN coalition lost its two thirds parliamentary majority, he endeavored to woo Malay-Muslims by bolstering the Islamic studies programs in national schools. One of his lasting contributions in this direction was the inauguration of the J-QAF (*Jawi, Qur'ān, Arabic and Fard 'ayn*) syllabus in primary schools. J-QAF employs five teaching models towards achieving the target of fundamental mastery of four basic subjects, viz. Jawi writing, i.e., Malay language written in Arabic alphabets, Quranic education, Arabic language and *fard 'ayn*, by the time a Muslim pupil completes his or her primary education (Farid Mat Zain and Ibrahim Abu Bakar 2007; BPI 2009: 113–119). Nonetheless, belying his rhetoric of engendering an open-minded generation which thinks "out of the box" as when launching the National Master Plan for Educational Development 2006–2010 (PIPP: *Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan 2006–2010*), Abdullah's emphasis with respect to Islamic education per se could be summarized as one of encouraging homogenization rather than pluralism, uniformity instead of diversity, in both religious thought and practice. Under the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006–10), a major component of government policy with respect to Islamic education was the extension of the national curriculum to cover secondary-level SANs, SARs and SAsS, and their mandatory registration under the Ministry of Education (BPI 2009: 103, 110).

While researchers have identified centralization as a bane for curriculum development in Malaysian education as a whole (Lee 1999: 92), students undergoing

Islamic education are especially targeted for political neutralization as far as the infusion of the supposedly broad-based *Islam Hadhari* (civilizational Islam) approach into the actual curriculum is concerned. Hence, the foregrounding of themes connected with streamlining, coordination, uniformity, and unilateral recognition of qualifications in the official implementation of Islamic education (BPI 2009: 122–123). Under such a centralizing scheme, the co-optation of the financially beleaguered SARs into the family of fully aided government religious schools (SABK) is lauded as a success (cf. Wasilan 2010). On the one hand, it appears as if greater aid is extended to formal Islamic education. On the other hand, greater control is exerted over operators of Islamic education, with debilitating effects on creativity and innovativeness – the very traits of students that Abdullah had apparently vouched for through his PIPP. In the long term, the increasingly state-mediated Islamic education taking place in Malaysia can only result in greater homogenization of Islamic orthodoxy, deviancy from which is criminalized by states’ religious laws. This dovetails with the long-standing political intent behind a strictly state-monitored Islamic education: that of producing compliant ‘*ulamā*’ and religious officials who would progress in their careers within institutional Islamic officialdom. The creation of colleges and university faculties offering tertiary Islamic education expressly served as their channels to obtain qualifications and thus eligibility “for appointments in the public service” (Rauf 1964: 99). Tertiary institutions offering Islamic studies degree courses such as the Islamic Academy, UM, and IIUM, established in 1981 and 1983 respectively, were landmark developments in spurring the production of new cohorts of *sharī‘ah*-based lawyers, consultants, economists, judges, and religious functionaries to fill posts in the expanding Islamic bureaucracy and state-supported Islamic financial landscape (Salleh and Nor 2003: 207, 210; Roff 1998: 221–224).

The transfer of power from the Islamic-educated Abdullah Badawi to the Western-educated Najib Razak in April 2009 did not slow down the centripetal drive of state-sanctioned Islamic education. Not long after Najib’s elevation, the Deputy Prime Minister-cum-Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, Higher Education Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Jamil Khir Baharom and officials from the Department of Advancement of Islam of Malaysia (JAKIM: *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*) agreed in a meeting that “a special committee with representatives from several agencies would be set up to streamline Islamic Studies and review several areas, including its curriculum, teachers and their qualifications” (The Star, September 16, 2009). Greater surveillance aside, Najib’s first prime ministerial term witnessed increasing budgetary allocations for formal Islamic education (Ngah 2010), improvements in instructional methodology training of Islamic studies teachers and greater moves to convert remaining SARs into SABKs. Realizing that the Islamic education constituency was a crucial voting bank in Malay heartland states such as Kedah, not only were the BN government’s donations to SARs and *tahfīz* (memorization of the Qur’ān) schools intensified and given wide publicity (Mohd. Shariza 2013), but the upholding of Islamic education and upgrading of the quality of SARs and *pondoks* were also included in BN’s Thirteenth General Elections (GE13) manifesto (Embun 2013).

Najib's government was handsomely rewarded in the May 2013 elections when BN wrested Kedah from PAS, whose Kedah chapter was beset with internal rivalries and suffered alleged sabotage by discontented elements among operators of independent Islamic schools (Tan 2013). In neighboring Penang, aid to SARs and *tahfīz* schools were similarly bandied about prior to GE13 as proof of the *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR: People's Pact) state government's ennoblement of Islam (Yusoff 2013). Helmed in Penang by the Chinese-controlled Democratic Action Party (DAP), the PR coalition, which snatched the state away from BN in March 2008, strengthened its position by winning 30 out of 40 state legislative assembly seats contested in GE13.

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## Concluding Remarks

In Malaysia, the terrain of Islamic education is almost entirely colored by politics. Administrative centralization and rigid control of curriculum content have been justified in the name of patriotism, national unity, and protection of Islam. While official pandering is admittedly given to notions of multireligious understanding and tolerance, the emphasis in the formal discourse and delivery of Islamic knowledge is on toeing the line of the powers that be. Given the legally coterminous position between Islam and Malay ethnic identity in Malaysia, ruling politicians have often manipulated Islam as a political tool. Official discourse of Islam has therefore been increasingly contaminated by a chauvinistic racialization of Islam, reinforcing the stereotype long held by non-Muslims or Islam being a Malay religion and an intolerant faith to boot. Alternative conceptions and practices of Islamic education, as experimented for instance by the maverick Darul Arqam movement (1968–1994) and its organizational successor Ruffaqah Corporation (1997–2007), have been outlawed on account of alleged deviancy from orthodox Islam (Ahmad Fauzi 2005: 175–194; Ahmad Fauzi 2010: 57–68, 80–85). Clearly, an ideal Islamic educational system remains far-fetched as far as state-managed initiatives in Malaysia are concerned. Ironically, in the works of intellectuals such as al-Attas, Malaysia stands high above others in the comity of Islamic scholarship actively engaged in defining, interpreting, and re-conceptualizing Islamic educational categories. Even those who disagree with al-Attas' framework, for instance Noaparast (2012) who writes from the Shī'ah intellectual tradition, will not fail to acknowledge Al-Attas' enormous contribution to the global discourse of Islamic education.

To be fair, putting aside political prejudices and homogenizing tendencies, in practice there is continuous state-orchestrated effort to end the artificial dualism between secular and religious education, as manifested in the marriage between Islamic and secular sciences in tertiary-level programs. The broadening of the Islamic studies curriculum at secondary level has facilitated the entry of Islamic schools' graduates into science and social science courses outside the ambit of formal Islamic studies. Islamic studies graduates nowadays are better equipped to compete in the labor market and vie for professional positions in modern employment sectors. Such endeavor is further underscored by the Malaysian government's founding in 1999 of its second full-fledged Islamic tertiary educational institution,

the Islamic University College of Malaysia (KUIM: *Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia*), upgraded in 2007 to the Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM: *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia*). Global recognition of a novel form of Islamic education not necessarily based on the religious sciences per se has been identified as one of USIM's primary achievements in its inaugural decade. USIM prides itself in the fact that 40% of its postgraduate students are foreign nationals, a significant number of whom are first language Arabic-speakers from Middle Eastern countries (Najua Ismail 2009: 7–11). Although its student population comes largely from Malaysia's secondary-level religious stream of Muslim students, USIM projects the image of a modern integrated university rather than a traditional religious university. This is further underlined by the government's appointment in 2013 of prominent female scientist Professor Asma Ismail, a former Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) of the science-based Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), as USIM's Vice Chancellor (<http://www.usim.edu.my/ms/naib-canselor>, accessed May 12, 2013).

In line with the government's vigorous promotion of Malaysia as an international education hub (MOHE 2007: 25, 35), increasing numbers of students from Muslim countries have chosen Malaysia as their destination for continuing higher education in the scientific, technological, and other professional disciplines, particularly since the GWOT era (Morshidi Sirat 2008). In its unending quest toward modernity, the government will do well by foregoing political biases which condition its policy with regard to Islamic education. Such skewed implementation has unfortunately deprived Islamic education of its pristine ideals and sublime purposes. Instead, the ruling establishment has transformed the Islamic education clientele into yet another area susceptibly bound to its largesse and patronage. The history of Islamic education in independent Malaysia can be summarized as one of uncompromising absorption of autonomous units and categories into a politically conditioned national educational system.

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# Islamic Education in Indonesia

Hidayatulla Azra

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## Abstract

This chapter attempts to delineate the complex and rich history of Islamic education in Indonesia. The chapter however will pay attention only to major aspects of the history of Islamic education in Indonesia with a particular focus given to its process of modernization in the modern times.

The history of Islamic education in Indonesia is a very distinctive one compared to that of other areas of the Muslim world, particularly since the period of the coming of European powers up until today. But there is no doubt that the rise and development of Islamic education in Indonesia were closely linked with the spread and dynamics of Islam in the country. The Dutch colonialism in Indonesia since the early sixteenth century did not result in the decline of Islamic education. During this period, Islamic educational institutions did not only survive but also began in earnest to make certain adjustment by adopting certain aspects of European education. This is very clear in the rise of *madrasah* that introduced classical system and curriculum, for instance; this in turn led “traditional” Islamic

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educational institutions such as *pondok* or *pesantren* to also modernize themselves.

Education is at the core of Islamic teachings leading the preachers of Islam, ‘*ulamā*’, and Muslim rulers since the early history of Indonesian Islam to employ mosques and *langgar* as well as to adopt existing local institutions such as *surau* and *pesantren* or *pondok* as the places for Muslims to study Islam.

A new momentum in the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia has taken place in the last three decades at least. There are two historical courses that have been adopted: firstly, by fully integrating Islamic educational institutions into national education which are run and financed by the government and, secondly, by making standardization of Islamic education in accordance with national standards while the ownership and administration remain mostly in the hands of Muslim organizations and communities.

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### Keywords

Islamic education · Indonesia · *Pandok* · *Pesantren* · *Madrasah*

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## Introduction

The history of Islamic education in Indonesia is a very distinctive one compared to that of other areas of the Muslim world, particularly since the period of the arrival of European powers up until today. The spread and dynamics of Islam in the country were accompanied by the rise and development of Islamic education.

The fact that Islam puts a strong emphasis on education motivated the preachers of Islam, ‘*ulamā*’, and Muslim rulers since the early history of Indonesian Islam to work diligently to develop Islamic education. For that purpose, they employ big and small mosques (*muṣallā* or *langgar*) as well existing local institutions such as *surau* and *pesantren* or *pondok* as the places for Muslims, particularly children, to study and learn basic knowledge on Islam (Azra 2003).

The Dutch colonialism in Indonesia since the early sixteenth century did not result in the decline of Islamic education. During this period, Islamic educational institutions not only survived but also began in earnest to make a certain adjustment by adopting certain aspects of European education. This can be seen in the rise of *madrasah* which, for instance, introduced a classical system and curriculum. This in turn affected “traditional” Islamic educational institutions such as *pondok* or *pesantren* to also modernize themselves (Dhofier 1982).

A new momentum in the modernization of Indonesian Islamic education has been taking place in the last four decades at least. There are at least two approaches adopted: firstly, by fully integrating Islamic educational institutions into national education run and financed by the government and, secondly, by standardization of Islamic education in accordance with national standards while the ownership and administration remain in the hands of Muslim organizations or communities.

This chapter will describe the complex and rich history of Islamic education in Indonesia, more precisely “Indonesian Islamic education.” The chapter, however,

will focus solely on major aspects of the history of Islamic education in the country with a particular emphasis on its process of modernization in the modern era.

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## ***Pesantren and Madrasah***

Educational institutions are among the most important factors in the development, dynamics, and progress of Indonesian Islam. From the earliest stages of massive Islamization of the archipelago in the late twelfth century onward, various educational institutions from the traditional to modern ones have made great contribution to the progress of Indonesian Muslim society (Azra 2007). There are traditional Islamic educational institutions still existing today. They are *pesantren*, *pondok*, *surau*, *dayah*, and *madrasah*, mostly with boarding facilities, and they have strong roots in the history of Indonesian Islam. All of them, in turn, have contributed significantly to the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian Islam.

At the outset, it is important to delineate some important features of each of these educational institutions. Of the five, four of them, *pesantren*, *pondok*, *surau*, and *dayah*, are generally regarded as “traditional” Islamic educational institutions that have their history since the early centuries of Islam in Indonesia. There are at least three traditional roles of *pesantren* and similar educational institutions within the Muslim community: first as center of transmission of religious knowledge, second as guardian of the Islamic tradition, and third as center of ‘*ulamā*’ reproduction.

They were considered traditional at least up to the 1970s in terms of the content of education which was mainly religious, of teaching and learning processes, and of management mainly in the hands of “traditional” ‘*ulamā*’, commonly given honorific titles such as *kiyai* in Muslim Java, *syekh* in West Sumatra, or *tuan guru* in much of Eastern Indonesia.

The terms *pesantren* (place of *santri*, or student) and *pondok* (lit. hut) have often been used interchangeably. The term *pesantren*, coming from the word *santri* or practicing Muslim students, means a complex of traditional Islamic boarding school. The typical *pesantrens* consist of a mosque, classrooms, dormitories, and *kiyai*’s house; all of these were very modest. In the last two decades, more and more *pesantrens* have permanent brick and concrete buildings; and more and more *pesantrens* have very impressive building complexes (Dhofier 1982).

Even though some small *pesantrens* are supposed to have been in existence in Java since the sixteenth century, it was only in the nineteenth century that the *pesantrens* gained momentum when returning *hajjīs* and students from Mecca and Medina founded *pesantrens* initially in Java, but later also in other parts of Indonesia. From this period onward, *pesantrens* became the only available educational institutions for Indonesian Muslims since Muslim parents by and large refused to send their children to Dutch schools available mostly from the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

*Surau*, mostly found in West Sumatra, and *dayah* in Aceh were in many ways similar to *pesantrens* in Java. For a number of reasons, much of the two have not survived as traditional Islamic educational institutions in contrast to *pesantrens* that survive rapid changes occurred in Indonesian society since the early twentieth

century. Many *suraus* were transformed either into Dutch-modelled schools introduced in the 1860s or into *madrasahs* which were initially introduced in the 1910s. One of most important factors in the survival of *pesantrens* is their ability to accommodate to the rapidly changing situation without losing some of their fundamental distinctions. In fact, some new types of *pesantrens* have appeared in Indonesian Islamic educational scene in recent years; they are what in this chapter entitled as “urban *pesantrens*” and discussed thoroughly later.

*Madrasah* is a modern institution in Indonesia. The introduction of *madrasah* in the early decades of the twentieth century was in fact a response among Indonesian Muslims to the introduction and spread of Dutch schooling. *Madrasah* is different from traditional *pesantrens* in a number of ways. Firstly, traditional *pesantrens* were non-graded institutions of learning; in contrast, the Indonesian *madrasahs* are graded and give classical schooling. Secondly, while traditional *pesantrens* did not have established curricula and fixed content of education and depended almost entirely on *kiyais*, *madrasahs* have their curricula; in the early period, they had their own “*madrasah curriculum*,” and after national independence on 17 August 1945, they followed the curriculum issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). Finally, they adopted the national curriculum issued by the Ministry of National Education (MONE), following the enactment of Law of National Education Number 2 of 1989 that was revised in 2003. Thirdly, the educational content of traditional *pesantrens* was wholly religious, while *madrasah* progressively adopted a greater general “nonreligious” or “secular” or rather “general” subjects in their education.

Generally speaking, *madrasah* in Indonesia consists of three levels of education: firstly, *Madrasah Ibtidā'iyah* (MI), primary *madrasah* for 6 years; secondly, *Madrasah Tsānawīyah* (MTS), junior secondary *madrasah* for 3 years; and thirdly, *Madrasah Ālīyah* (MA), senior secondary *madrasah* for 3 years. In the post-enactment of Law on National Education Number 2 of 1989 (UUSPN or Undang-undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional), amended in the Law on National Education Number 20 of 2003, the *Madrasah Ālīyah* consists of four divisions or specializations: MA division of natural sciences, MA division of social sciences, MA division of vocational training, and MA division concentrates on Islamic religious sciences (*li al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn*) (cf. Haedari 2010).

The continuing existence and even the revival of *pesantren* and *madrasah* in recent Indonesia clearly show how they still occupy an important position in the midst of Indonesia's rapid political, cultural, socioreligious, and educational changes. In terms of education, the number of students studying at *madrasah* and *pesantren* represents some 35% of all Indonesian students. The share of Islamic education in Indonesian national education is likely to increase steadily.

The data shows that there is continued increase in the number of *pesantren* and *madrasah* in contemporary Indonesia. The data at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, for example, demonstrates that there has been significant increase in the number of *pesantrens* throughout Indonesia. In 1977 there were about 4,195 *pesantrens* with a total number of students 677,384. This number continued to increase in 1981, with 5,661 *pesantrens* and a total number of students of 938,397. In 1985, the number of *pesantrens* reached 6,239 with 1,084,801 students. Meanwhile in 1997, the Ministry of Religious Affairs noted that there were 9,388 *pesantrens* with a total of 1,770,768

students, and in 2004 the number had increased to 14,067 *pesantrens* with 3,149,374 students (cf. Azra et al. 2007: 178–182; Makruf 2009).

Furthermore, some important figures about *madrasahs* need to be mentioned here. First, the number of *madrasahs* (in all levels: primary, secondary junior and secondary senior level) owned and administered by the government are fewer than those owned by private and community organizations or foundations. The 2004 data released by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) show that *Madrasah Ibtidā'iyah* (primary level) owned by the state was only 1,484 compared to those *madrasahs* administered by private or community organizations and foundations which reached the number of 21,680. At the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (secondary junior level), a similar trend was also found. There were only 1,239 *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* owned by the state, while *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* owned by private institutions were 10,465. At the *Madrasah Ālīyah* (secondary senior level), around 579 were owned by the state while almost 3,860 *Madrasah Ālīyah* were owned by private and community organizations. Again, one can observe that the number of *madrasahs* – both public and private – also continues to increase in the first decade of the second millennium. This fact shows how the Indonesian Muslim community plays an important role in promoting Indonesian Islamic education.

Another important point worth mentioning is the gender composition in all these *madrasahs*. According to 2004 data, it was only at *Madrasah Ibtidā'iyah* (primary level) where the number of female students was slightly fewer than those of male students. There were 1,552,743 female students compared to 1,571,410 male students. However, the number of female students at the higher education level was slightly bigger than those of male students. For example, there were about 1,064,658 female students and only 1,016,918 male students at the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*. Similar figures were also found at the *Madrasah Ālīyah*. The number of female students was 392,701, and male students were only 334,192. Within all these *madrasahs*, one can witness that the numbers of female students are almost always higher than that of male students (Makruf 2009). This gender composition is very interesting due to the general assumption that in the Muslim world as a whole, female are always perceived to have less opportunity and access to public space including education. Therefore, *madrasahs* play an important role in women empowerment.

The above data might also lead to several questions. These questions are not only related to the issue on how *pesantren* and *madrasahs* have been able to maintain their existence and role within the Muslim community but also to how they have responded to rapid political, social, cultural, and educational changes in Indonesia, particularly since the early 1970s.

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## **From *Pesantren* to *Madrasah*: Transformation of Islamic Education**

The early twentieth century was an important period that witnessed a significant transformation within the Islamic education of Indonesia, which began with the Dutch government building modern schools, in line with the introduction of the so-called “ethical policy” that showed their concern with the welfare of the native

people. With this new policy, the Dutch colonial government introduced a new schooling system, especially *volkscholen* (people schools), intended to provide children of native Indonesian with some basic education. *Volkscholen* were initially established during the 1860s in several cities in Indonesia, particularly Batavia (now Jakarta) and Semarang, Central Java. After failing to gain positive response in Batavia and Semarang, they received a lot of enthusiasm in West Sumatra. As a result, these schools were able eventually to produce a new educated elite of Indonesian, particularly of West Sumatran origins. They formed a very important segment of Indonesian society and consequently determined much of the course of Indonesian history in the subsequent periods (Abdullah 1971; Niel 1984: 46–72).

At the same time, networks among learned Indonesian Muslims with Islamic reformism or modernism in Cairo, Egypt, also began to find a fertile ground in the Indonesian archipelago. Cairo increasingly became a new scholarly destination for Indonesian students in their search for knowledge. Different from Mecca as the most important traditional center of scholarly tradition of Indonesian Islam, Cairo provided students coming from various parts of the Muslim world also with the ideas of Islamic reformism or modernism, in addition to the experiences living in urban circumstance where “modern” Islamic schools and printing press increasingly became common phenomena. Not least important, Cairo also became a center of political activism among Indonesian students who came to this city in ever-increasing number (Azra 1999 [2006]; Laffan 2003; Roff 1970).

As a result, Cairo networks accelerated the transformation of Indonesian Islamic education, indicated by the establishment of various new Islamic educational institutions by alumna of Cairo and their local modernist counterparts which adopted the modern system of Dutch school, an alternative to the traditional system of *pesantren* (Azra 1999 [2006]; Steenbrink 1986). The rise of Islamic modern educational institutions, *madrasah*, therefore, became an important part of Islamic movement in the early twentieth century.

Hence, *madrasah* not only introduced a new teaching method and system such as adopting class system, using new textbooks and teaching sciences other than Islamic religious sciences; it also began to function as a forum to disseminate ideas on Islamic reform. *Madrasah* also soon became a locus for the creation of modern and progressive Muslim. This development started to emerge as a dominant discourse in Indonesia (Abdullah 1971: 9–17) together with the rise of Indonesian nationalism. It is from this perspective that one can argue that *madrasah* has strong socioreligious cultural and political dimensions in the rise and development of Indonesian nationalism.

The introduction of *madrasah* had modernizing effects not only on other Islamic educational institutions but also on the dynamics of Indonesian Muslim society. In comparative perspective, in the *pesantren*, students learned religion from *kyais* and used *kitab kuning* (lit. “yellow book” or classical Islamic text books) as the only sources of knowledge (Bruinessen 1995: 234–262; Dhofier 1982). *Madrasah*, in addition to using new books, inserted new method to better understand Islam in a modern perspective. In addition, if *pesantren* was expected to produce ‘*ulamā*’, *madrasah* was hoped to produce educated Muslims (*Muslim terpelajar*) or, in the end, to produce intelligentsia and even intellectual ‘*ulamā*’.

In line with this development, Abdullah Ahmad (1878–1933), one of the prominent modernist Muslim figures, established a school in Padang in 1909. The establishment of this school was part of the efforts to produce Muslims with a modern orientation, in accordance with the idea of modern transformation of the Muslims community in West Sumatra at that time. His vision was that the school should be a forum to disseminate new ideas about modernist Islam. It is important to note that this school is based on the Dutch model; so it is not really a *madrasah* that was based on Islamic ideas on education, or *pesantren*-based educational institution (Noer 1985: 51–52). In addition to this, Abdullah Ahmad published the first journal on Islamic reform in Indonesia that also played an important role in the spread of Islamic modernism (Azra 1999: 92–97). Several similar schools have then been established (Daya 1990: 83–84). The rise of all these educational institutions represents that fact the Minangkabau modernists tended to take the Dutch-modelled school rather than an Islamic-based one. Based on Dutch model, their schools possessed Islamic characteristics by adding a number of Islamic religious subjects in their curriculum.

The transformation of Islamic education continued intensively with the establishment of more such schools and transformation of *surau*, traditional Islamic educational institution in West Sumatra, into a modern educational institution (Azra 2003). It was often called *surau* with class system (Yunus 1977: 73). The different Islamic organizations decided to unite and form a federation. Following this, similar development occurred in other *suraus* in West Sumatra (Abdullah 1971: 36; Daya 1990: 91–92).

All of these new schools represent another tendency among the West Sumatran modernists, that is, to transform an Islamic-based educational institution – that is the traditional *surau* – into a modern one. The basis remained Islam, but at the same time included modern general subjects. Although they were called “schools,” they were in fact “*madrasah*.”

Other than Sumatera Thawalib, the transformation in Islamic education can also be seen from a number of *madrasahs* established by al-Azhar graduates after their return from their study in Egypt. Mahmud Yunus (1977: 102–103) showed clearly that with the increased number of graduates from al-Azhar returning to Indonesia, efforts to include sciences other than Islamic religious sciences into the curricula of Islamic educational institutions were accelerated. Several *madrasahs* began to include general sciences in their curricula. Besides teaching Islamic sciences, these *madrasahs* taught general sciences which were also taught at modern Dutch school.

Another school was Normal Islam (*Kulliah Mu'alimin Islamiah*) that was built by Islamic Teachers Union (*Persatuan Guru Agama Islam, PGAI*) in 1931. It is also important to note that Islamic College was established as well by Indonesian Muslim Association (*Persatuan Muslim Indonesia, PERMI*) in the same year. Other than that, there was also a Training College established by other colleges.

Meanwhile in Java, transformation of Islamic education was mainly carried out by Muhammadiyah; the largest modernist Islamic organization in Indonesia was established in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan (1869–1923). Similar to the development in Minangkabau, the efforts to transform education by Muhammadiyah were also based

on the idea to achieve progress (*kemajuan*) for Indonesian Muslims. Ahmad Dahlan emphasized strongly the need to transform Islamic education (Hamka 1958: 91). For Dahlan, the backwardness of mainly the Javanese Muslims, compared to the Christians, laid on the traditional education system of *pesantren*, which in his view was no longer able to provide solution for the changing society. For this reason, Dahlan attempted to “build educational institutions by applying modern school system (*sekolah*), so that the teaching processes can be done properly (Hamka 1958: 91).” Instead of *pesantren* and *madrasah*, Ahmad Dahlan with Muḥammadīyah built modern Islamic schools. He added Islamic elements to the adopted Dutch education system, in which the students were provided with both secular and Islamic subjects. As a result, one model of the *sekolahs* of Muḥammadīyah was the “*HIS met de Qur’ān*,” or Islamic religious subjects. With this, Muḥammadīyah took the leading role in the efforts to integrate Islam to the modern educational system of Dutch school.

Muḥammadīyah schools grew rapidly in line with the spread of the organization throughout Indonesia. Until 1932, Muḥammadīyah organization owned about 316 schools in Java and Madura islands; of them some 207 were general schools which adopted Western educational system and method, 88 religious schools and 21 other schools (Alfian 1989: 189). The number of Muḥammadīyah’s schools continued to grow alongside with its spread to every corner of the country. This should be seen as the organization’s real contribution toward Indonesian Islamic education. Through its schools, Muḥammadīyah teach both Islamic and general education, based on its objective to produce Muslims with adequate knowledge on modern sciences as well as on Islamic knowledge. Mukti Ali (1958: 28) stated that Muḥammadīyah schools, ranging from kindergarten to university, are developed in order to produce well-educated Muslims (*Muslim terpelajar*) so that they will have the ability to cope with modern world with a strong Islamic basis.

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## Change and Continuity of the *Pesantren*

The strong wave of transformation of Indonesian Islamic education represented by the rise of Islamic schools and *madrasahs* finally touched on *pesantrens*, which had for long time been a target of criticism of modernist thinkers and leaders such as Ahmad Dahlan. While continuing to maintain traditional aspects of educational system, some *pesantrens* in Java began to modernize certain aspects of their institutions such as management, curricula, and adoption of *madrasah* system. The experience of Tebuireng *pesantren* in East Java is worth mentioning here. This *pesantren* was built by one of the leading ‘*ulamā*’ in Java in the twentieth century, Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari (1871–1947). It became a model for other *pesantrens* in Java. Almost all leading *pesantrens* in Java were built by former students of Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari, and, therefore, they applied similar content of education and methods as the ones in Tebuireng (Dhofier 1982: 96, 100). With the establishment of the traditionalist organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), in 1926, Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari gained a central position in the tradition of ‘*ulamā*’ and *pesantren* in Java. He was and is still

acknowledged as the *Hadratus-Syekh* (master teacher) of the all '*ulamā*' in Java (Dhofier 1982: 90–99).

In the 1930s, when the wave of transformation of Islamic education was intensified, the efforts to renew educational system at *pesantren* continued also to take place. More and more *pesantrens* started to adopt the *madrasah* system, by opening six levels of class which consisted of preparatory class for a year and *madrasah* class for 6 years. More than that, *pesantrens* also began to adopt nonreligious or general subjects into their curricula. They included Dutch language, history, geography, and mathematics (Dhofier 1982: 104). At the *Pesantren Tebuireng*, this process continued to develop under Kyai Wahid Hasyim (1914–1953), the son of Hasyim Asy'ari. He even put strong emphasis on bringing *pesantren* tradition into a more modern system (*ibid.* 73–81). In 1950, he completed the adoption of *madrasah* system at Tebuireng *Pesantren*, while at the same time continuing to maintain certain aspects of traditional educational system of *pesantren*.

Tebuireng was not the only *pesantren* that carried out major transformation of its educational system. *Pesantren Krapyak* in Yogyakarta was another leading *pesantren* that since the early twentieth century had followed some major transformations (Arief 2003: 69–92). Also in this case, other *pesantrens* were established, adopting *madrasah* system and general subjects into their curricula (Yunus 1977: 246–248). Thus, along with socioreligious development, the transformation of Indonesian Islamic education had become a general tendency in the dynamics of Indonesian Islam in the early twentieth century. '*Ulamā*' or, rather *kyais* from *pesantrens*, were known as strong defenders of traditional system in education. However, they gradually understood the need to alter some of the old educational system and began to adopt modern system, such as *madrasah*. Dhofier (1982: 113) points out that the role of *pesantren* which previously was simply to train students to become '*ulamā*' was also changed. As with other modernists, the teachings at Tebuireng were now directed to also educate students to develop their knowledge in order for them to be intellectual '*ulamā*' who can talk not only about Islam but also other sciences.

In all of these developments, the old and original characteristics of traditional *pesantrens* such as those mentioned above are increasingly more difficult to find nowadays. Since early twentieth century and especially after independence, *pesantrens* have continually experienced far-reaching transformation. In the last three decades, *pesantrens* no longer have simple traditional educational institutions. Because of rapid social, cultural, and religious changes that took place since the years of the New Order economic development under President Soeharto (1966–1998), the *pesantrens* were also "forced" to respond not only to survive but also to play a greater role in Indonesian society. The end result was that the *pesantrens* are increasingly becoming what the author calls "holding institutions." This is because *pesantrens* no longer have only simple traditional educational institutions that consist of *madrasah*, such they were in the past; they also have also general schools from primary to university levels. In fact, only a small proportion of the *pesantrens* now concentrates on *tafaquh fī al-dīn*, Islamic religious knowledge.



Furthermore, as “holding institutions,” many *pesantrens* recently also own economic institutions, particularly cooperatives, peoples’ credit union (Bank Perkreditan Rakyat (BPR), or *Bayt al-Mal wa al-Tamwil* (BMT)). Many *pesantrens* also become community development centers for the application of appropriate technology as well as for the preservation of environment. Some *pesantrens* operate also community health centers. In addition, more and more *pesantrens* adopt modern management, where there is distribution of power and policy among the founding owner and *yayasan* (foundation), the executing body of day-to-day matters of the *pesantrens*. In the midst of all of this development, in the last two decades, at least some leaders and figures in the *pesantren* circles have been worried about the future of the *pesantren* as institution that in the past was also responsible for the reproduction of ‘*ulamā*’. They fear that with so many institutions within *pesantrens*, they would not be able to concentrate on the reproduction of cadres of ‘*ulamā*’ who would play a crucial role in guiding the Muslim *ummah* in the future.

In the course of all changes, the *pesantren*’s tradition has its own flexibility which allows it to continuously develop within the community. This transformation does not really remove the strength of *pesantrens* as typical Islamic educational institution. In contrast, in the last three decades, there are a growing number of Indonesian Muslim parents who prefer to send their children to *pesantrens* rather than to general school. They hope that when their children complete their education in the *pesantren*, they will be good Muslims, who practice Islamic teachings in their everyday life as well as master modern sciences needed in the competitive age of globalization.

Furthermore, with the increased *santrinization* (becoming *santri*, or practicing Muslim) of Indonesian society in the last three decades, the *pesantrens* surprisingly gain new momentum. The *pesantrens* now can be found in big cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, and many others, creating what I call “urban” *pesantrens*. This recent development contributes to changing the image of *pesantrens* that in the past were mainly located in rural area and, therefore, were perceived as backward institutions. In addition, a growing number of new Islamic schools adopt certain features of *pesantren* system, such as the boarding system as well as its leadership system that is based on religious credentials.

*Madrasahs*, both state and private, and *pesantrens* since the early years of independence have been put under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). The government subsidy for them has also been put in the budget of this ministry. For supervision of *madrasah*, there is a Directorate of Madrasah at MORA since the early 1970s at least. However, it was only in 2001 that MORA also formed a Directorate of Pesantren that aims to help improve various aspects of *pesantren* education.

The recognition of the *pesantren* education also came from the Ministry of National Education (MONE); since 2001 MONE has recognized the senior secondary level of Islamic education known as KMI (*Kulliyah Mu’allimin al-Islamiyyah*) available at certain *pesantrens*. Not least important, MONE in the last several years is also helping with some facilities such as computer laboratories for a number of *madrasah* and *pesantrens*.

## Modernization of *Madrasah*

To improve the quality of *madrasah* has been a major concern of MORA. Since the time of Indonesian independence, one of the ways to achieve them is to integrate and modernize Islamic educational institution as a whole into the mainstream of the modern national education system. To achieve this, it was necessary for *madrasah* to absorb modern elements of education embedded in the national education system, so that the quality could be improved. From this point of view, the integration of *madrasah* into national education system was a must.

The efforts to modernize *madrasahs* began in a more serious way in the 1970s when a professor of Yogyakarta *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (State Institute of Islamic Studies/IAIN), Mukti Ali, was appointed Minister of Religious Affairs. During his tenure as minister, he introduced several strategies to mainstream *madrasahs*, *pesantrens*, and other Islamic educational institutions into national education system. This “mainstreaming” agreement stated that graduates of *madrasahs* had the same status as those who graduated from general schools. It means that *madrasah* graduates would have no difficulty to continue their education to general schools; on the other hand, the same rules applied to graduates of general schools if they wanted to study in *madrasah* or other Islamic educational institutions. The implication of this policy for *madrasah* was that it had to revise its curricula by adopting general subjects or general sciences that amounted to some 70% of its curricula and maintaining only 30% of Islamic religious sciences.

The modernization of *madrasah* initially took place in earnest particularly since the early 1970s when the New Order government under President Soeharto began to launch Indonesian economic development. For that reason, the regime felt that *madrasah* should be also modernized in order not to simply become an object – but a subject – of national development. With this framework, different from the previous periods, during the Dutch and Old Order under President Soekarno (1945–1965), in the New Order period, it was not only the community who took initiatives in a number of programs in the modernization of *madrasah* but also the government, particularly through MORA. The processes occurred systematically, meaning that the initiative came from various levels of officials at MORA. In this regard, it should be mentioned that most of these officials were IAIN graduates; and some of them gained their advanced degrees from various universities abroad, both Middle Eastern and Western universities.

The State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) is a unique Indonesian Islamic higher education institution and was mostly established by the Indonesian government under the supervision of MORA from the late 1950s to the 1970s in the province capital cities. But some faculties of IAINs were also founded in towns outside the capital of these cities; and in 1997, these faculties were converted into autonomous State Colleges of Islamic Studies (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam* (STAIN)). IAINs and STAINs generally consist of five faculties or study programs of Islamic religious sciences: *Tarbīyah* (Islamic education), *Shari’ah* (Islamic law), *Adab* (Islamic literature), *Uşūl al-Dīn* (theology), and *Da’wah* (Islamic preaching).

In addition, there are also full-fledged Islamic Universities (Universitas Islam Negeri or UIN). The conversion of IAIN Jakarta into UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in 2002 was followed by creation of other colleges, and this is undoubtedly another major transformation of Indonesian Islamic education (Azra 2006; Azra and Jabali 2010).

With the conversion, UINs – different from IAINs – consist of not only faculties and study programs of Islamic religious sciences but also of faculties and study programs of “general sciences,” such as science and technology, economics, psychology, medical and health sciences, and social and political sciences. The aims of the conversions, among others, are as follows: firstly, to integrate Islamic religious sciences and general sciences and, secondly, to provide graduates of all the four divisions of *Madrasah Āliyah* with study programs that are in accord with their educational background (Azra 2006; Kusmana and Munadi 2002; UIN Jakarta 2005; Yatim and Nasuhi 2002).

The number of public Indonesian Islamic higher education has been expanding in the last two decades. In addition, there are 674 private institutions of Islamic higher education. With the increase, the Indonesian Islamic higher education is arguably the largest public education system in the whole Islamic world.

The graduates of IAINs, STAINs, and UINs all over Indonesia play a very important role not only in the reform and modernization of the *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* but also, as shown by Jamhari and Jabali (2003), of the Muslim society as a whole. All these Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions at first instance produce Muslim intelligentsia that occupy certain position in almost all walks of lives. They increasingly become the backbone of the rising Indonesian Muslim middle class.

Their role in the modernization of *pesantren* and *madrasah* has a lot to do with approaches to Islam employed at IAINs, STAINs, and UINs which are mainly historical, sociological, cultural, rational, and nondenominational (*non-madhabī*) rather than theological, normative, and denominational that was common in Islamic educational institutions in the past (Jamhari and Jabali 2002). With these kinds of approaches, these Islamic higher educational institutions are at the forefront in the introduction and dissemination of not only new interpretation of Islam but also of contemporary ideas on compatibility between Islam and democracy, civic education, civil society, gender equity and women empowerment, multicultural education, and other related issues (Azra 2014).

In the context of the *pesantrens* and *madrasahs*, the graduates of IAINs, STAINs, and UINs have certain advantages compared to graduates of other higher educational institutions. Since most of them were graduates of the *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* before continuing their education at certain IAIN, STAIN, or UIN, they are familiar with system and environment at the *pesantren* and *madrasah*. So when they had finished their studies at IAIN, STAIN, or UIN, a good number of them returned to their home villages and some of them taught and dedicated themselves to the improvement of *madrasah* and *pesantren*, while those who decided not to teach or return to the *pesantren* or *madrasah* were involved in government or non-government activities related to the empowerment of *madrasah* and *pesantren* either as officials in MORA or leaders of Islamic organizations or founder of Islamic foundation working in field of Islamic education.

The alumni of IAINs, STAINs, and UINs of course also play an important role as teachers of religious instruction in general schools from primary to university level under the auspicious of MONE. On the basis of *Pancasila* (the five pillars of the ideological basis of the Indonesian state), National Constitution of 1945, and Indonesian Law on National Education Number 20 of 2003, religious instruction is made an obligatory subject from elementary school to university. For that purpose, both MORA and MONE recruit graduates of IAINs, STAINs, and UINs as teachers of religious instruction that is given 2 h a week.

Despite their important roles, the graduates of IAINs in the 1970s faced a series of problems in their efforts to modernize *madrasahs* and *pesantrens*. From the period of the Old Order government, not long after the independence, up to the time of enactment of Laws on National Education Number 2 of 1989 and Number 20 of 2003, they had to face one of the main problems of the Islamic education institution *vis-à-vis* national education in general, which was the issue of legitimacy. Although the Indonesian State has positioned religion as one of the most important aspects in the state affairs, the integration of Islamic education into national education system, meaning under MONE, remained a big agenda. It was expected that integrating Islamic educational institutions into MONE would not cause further dualism in the administration of education.

In much of the views of national leadership such as President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001), education should be administered under one single roof, that is, under MONE. However, this attempt failed because there was strong opposition from the Muslim community from time to time. Many members of Muslim community felt that Muslims had struggled to maintain the existence of MORA and at the same time had nurtured Islamic educational institutions since the Dutch colonial period. Therefore, Indonesian Muslims insisted that Islamic education must remain under the administration of MORA not only for Islamic education itself but also for the very existence of MORA.

Although the state since the early period of independence failed to integrate *madrasahs* into MONE, it continued to pay its attention to the development of Islamic education in general through MORA. The subsidy – though much less compared to that given to general schools – provided by the state to the Islamic educations is an indication of this. The state actually began to legally acknowledge the existence of Islamic education institutions through the Law on Education (*Undang-Undang Pokok Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*) No. 4 of 1950. It stipulated that the state acknowledged the education of students graduated from *madrasahs*. However, the state in practice still perceived and treated *madrasahs* as an educational institution that was not at the same level with or equivalent to general schools under MONE. Therefore, to overcome this inequivalency, the government felt the need to modernize and upgrade *madrasah* quality and by implication other Islamic educational institutions (Azra 2012: 99–101).

In 1989, the Indonesian government enacted a new law on National Education System (UUSPN). This law gave even a more significant impact on the development of *madrasahs*. Through this law, *madrasahs* and other Islamic educational institutions are put as a subsystem of the whole national educational system. And most

importantly, *madrasahs* are defined as “general schools” at the three levels and are legally made as equivalent to general schools. Furthermore, *madrasahs* are also required to participate in the government 9-year compulsory education program. This law also, once again, emphasizes that religion is one of the compulsory subjects that has to be taught at all levels of education, from primary to university level. It also acknowledges the important role of these Islamic education institutions in the process of the nation and character building.

Thus, a major change in *madrasah*, as a result of the Law on National Education, was the transformation of identity. *Madrasah* from its origin as a religious education institution is transformed into a general school with an Islamic identity or character. The implication of this can be seen in some fundamental changes in *madrasah* curriculum; since it is a general school, the curriculum of *madrasah* needs to be the same with those general schools administered by MONE. In order to develop some kind of distinctions of *madrasah vis-à-vis* general school, MORA developed a policy to produce textbooks for general subjects with Islamic perspective for *madrasahs* while, at the same time, religious subjects are still being taught. With this, it is expected that *madrasah* will continue to maintain its distinctive identity.

However, one of the implications of this policy for *madrasah* students is that they will have more subject matters to learn compared to their fellow students in general schools. As a response to this, the State Institute for Islamic Studies began to reopen its teaching departments on sciences to prepare teachers for *madrasah* in these subject matters. In later development, in order to accommodate students who want to continue to higher education, Indonesian government enhanced further the quality of IAINs, STAINs, and UINs. This was intended to make teachers able to teach better in *madrasahs*.

Why is the transformation of *madrasah* in that way seem to be so smooth, almost without resistance, let alone opposition, from Muslim community at large? The answers lie on the two long-held expectations among Muslim society; on the one hand, they expected that existence of *madrasah* could be maintained, and on the other, they expected that the quality of *madrasah* education should be on par with that of general schools. The final transformation of *madrasah* through the Law on National Education Number 2 of 1989 seems to respond to these two expectations. As a result, 3 years after the implementation of the National Curricula of 1994 issued by MONE, the graduates of senior secondary *madrasah* (*Madrasah Āliyah*) are able to continue their education not only in AINs, STAINs, or UINs but also in “secular” or general universities; they now even can be admitted to military and police academies, an unprecedented and unimaginable thing in the past.

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## New Trends of Islamic Education Institutions

It is clear from the earlier discussion that many efforts have been carried out both by the Muslim community and the Indonesian government to modernize *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* and in fact all Islamic educational institutions from *Bustān al-Atfāl* (kindergarten) to university level. All of these efforts have been taken in order to

achieve progress in science and technology and to meet the practical needs of the community as well as to minimize the disparities in terms of resources and quality between Islamic educational institutions administered by MORA and general schools administered by MONE.

The community and government success in developing and modernizing *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* has significantly transformed the image of Islamic educational institutions. All of these processes of transformation coincided with the awakening of the new religious consciousness among Indonesian Muslims since the period of the 1990s, known as the period of *santrinisasi* (*santrinization* or becoming more pious) or *Islamisasi* (Islamization), among the new and younger generation of Muslim families in urban areas. It is evident that many of them are now middle class. These families graduated from prominent universities both in Indonesia and abroad, and they are very keen on the advancement of sciences and technology, but lack of religious education; therefore, they were looking for an efficient way for their children to better understand and practice Islamic teachings, and Islamic education institutions will cater this need.

Some believe that this new urban religious consciousness resulted from the betterment of education, steady economic growth, and global revival of Islamic awareness because of international movement and impact of television, radio broadcasting as well as the Internet, and, more importantly, easy access to a large body of information on Islam in printed media like books, journals, and magazines. This development in its turn has led to the rise of certain feeling of *ghirah* (sentiment) to also develop and advance Muslim community in general *vis-à-vis* other communities in Indonesia.

Therefore, in terms of education, it is understandable if they paid a more serious attention to the quality of output of Islamic schools for their children's further studies and careers. They insist on their children having education in science and technology on the one hand, but also expect them to be familiar with religious tradition and practices on the other. It is evident that this Muslim middle class is the main actor of the development of new trend of Islamic educational institutions. They initiated and invested in the development of new offshoots of *sekolah Islam* (Islamic school) as a new genre of Islamic educational institution. In many ways, this new *sekolah Islam* is "secular" or general school in its character in terms of system and curriculum. Some of these new schools are explicitly named as *sekolah Islam*, while others are named as model school (*sekolah model* or *sekolah unggulan*).

The new *sekolah Islam* however makes some adjustment of the MONE curriculum. They put a stronger emphasis on certain subject matters like natural and social sciences and on foreign languages, particularly English. In a more recent development, some of the new *sekolah Islam* adopted the boarding system of *pesantren* in order to conduct a 24-h education (Azra 2012: 78–93).

Rather than emphasizing Islamic knowledge simply as subject matters taught regularly in the classes, the new *sekolah Islam* gives more practical emphasis on Islamic values into daily interaction. In this sense, *sekolah Islam* neither considers Islamic sciences to be core subjects in the curriculum as in *pesantren*, *madrasah*, and old *sekolah Islam* nor to be only supplementary subjects as can be seen in *sekolah*

*umum* (general schools). What the new *sekolah Islam* emphasizes is that it aims at building student's Islamic character based on religious ethics and values. In other words, religion is not considered only as part of cognitive knowledge as has been outlined in the curriculum but rather to be manifested in the daily life of students. Islam accordingly should be practiced as values and ethics to which the students become accustomed in their life. It is therefore in the new *sekolah Islam*; the detailed exposition of Islamic sciences commonly taught in *pesantren* and *madrasah* is hardly available.

It is also worth mentioning that *sekolah Islams* of this new genre are well equipped with complete facilities like air-conditioned classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sport arena as well as any other teaching and education services like computer, Internet, and, of course, well-organized extra curricula. As a modern institution, the new *sekolah Islam* is run by professionals in terms of management, teaching and learning processes, and curriculum development. Teachers, managers, and administrative staff are recruited in a highly competitive selection, and most of them earned advanced and qualified degrees. In the same token, requirements for being admitted as student in this school are also very competitive. Only those who reach certain score in entrance test and pass the interview can be admitted. Therefore, this new *sekolah Islam* is very expensive in terms of entrance fee and other monthly cost. It is not surprising, since this kind of school is established partly to attract the middle class Muslims in urban areas and to fulfil their need of having quality education for their children that combined secular sciences and religious values. With these kinds of features, it is not surprising that the private new *sekolah Islams* in many cases are able to supersede the quality of state-owned *sekolah negeri* or *madrasah negeri* administered by MONE and MORA.

Another model of this new genre worth mentioning is the *Sekolah Madania* under *Yayasan Madania*. This institution was established in the mid-1990s. Initially, *Madania* opened and adopted the *pesantrens* model of boarding for the SMA level. However, this model of boarding school is no longer available due to technical difficulties and very high costs. This school is now also well known for its efforts to promote the idea of pluralism and multiculturalism. Therefore, *Madania* admits non-Muslims students. It also maintains weekly religious teaching for non-Muslim students by having class of religion they profess. This provision is of course very common for *sekolah umum* (general schools) under the MONE or for some private schools run by Catholics foundations, but quite distinctive for educational institution affiliated to Muslim community. Recently, this school had at least over 3% non-Muslim students. Along with the idea of pluralism and multiculturalism, *Madania* puts a strong emphasis on individual character building and life skills in response to globalization by introducing students to other languages and cultural orientation of other civilizations like those in China and Japan.

Another unique model is SMU *Insan Cendekia* which was initiated in 1996 as a general Senior Secondary School (SMU) by some prominent scientists. SMU *Insan Cendekia* aims at producing Muslim scientists who are also knowledgeable in Islamic knowledge. Moreover, it also offers opportunity and scholarship for graduates to have overseas advanced studies on sciences and technology in Germany, in particular. This

school also adopts boarding school system. Some years ago, this school was converted into State Senior Secondary *Madrasah* (MAN) and was put under MORA.

## Conclusion

It may be seen that the logic behind the development of Islamic education institutions may differ from one to another. *Pesantren*, *madrasah*, the old *sekolah Islam*, and the new *sekolah Islam* are in certain ways different in the way they have developed. However, all of them have arrived at one single objective, that is, to develop quality Islamic educational institutions for Indonesian Muslims.

At this point, all of these Islamic educational institutions agree that an Islamic education system that could implant religious and moral values within its modern curricula is both very important and prospective. With that Islamic educational institutions will probably be able to maintain their instrumental role in the continued modernization of Muslim community as a whole.

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# Islamic Education in the Philippines

Jeffrey Ayala Milligan

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## Abstract

This chapter examines the education of the Muslim minority community in the southern Philippines. It reviews the history of Islamic education and the education of Muslim Filipinos from the introduction of Islam into the region in the fifteenth century through the imposition of colonial education under the United States in the early twentieth century and Philippine government education in the latter half of the century. It concludes with a discussion of recent attempts by Muslim educators in the southern Philippines to provide an “integrated” education that meets the needs of children in the region as Muslims and as Filipinos.

## Keywords

Islamic Education · Philippines · *Pandita* · *Maktab* · Mindanao

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## Introduction

The story of Muslim education in the southern Philippines is a narrative of struggle, the struggle of a minority Muslim community to preserve its religious and cultural heritage against more than three centuries of military suppression, government education, and political manipulation by a succession of colonial and postcolonial Philippine governments intent on assimilating Muslim Filipinos into a western, culturally Christian conception of modernity. The survival of Islam in the Philippines in the face of such pressures is due, in no small measure, to the perseverance and creativity of Muslim educators and Islamic educational institutions.

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## The Roots of Islamic Education in the Southern Philippines

The Islamization of the southern Philippines is generally thought to have been gradual and largely peaceful. Islamic education, therefore, in all probability settled into indigenous communities as a new layer of cultural and educational practice resting upon pre-Islamic values in a mutually adaptive, syncretic fashion. Quasi-historical accounts of the coming of Islam to the region credit the *makhdūmīn* – a term describing a series of individuals respected for their piety who acted as teachers of the faith – with introducing Islam to the region. At least one account in Sulu traditions describes a *makhdūm* teaching children to read and write by drawing letters in the sand on the seashore (Majul 1999: 45 and 105). It would not be inaccurate, therefore, to say that the religion was brought by teachers and spread through education. With the establishment of the first sultanate in Sulu by Abū Bakr – Sharīf al-Hāshim – came the first recorded organized instruction in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* in the *madrasah* established by the sultan.

Over the centuries of Muslim Filipino independence prior to American colonization in the early twentieth century, formal education in Mindanao and Sulu was more or less institutionalized in what came to be known as the *pandita* school. *Pandita*, a Sanskrit word meaning “learned man” corresponding to the Arabic *‘ālim* was a name given to individuals who, regardless of social standing, had distinguished themselves by acquiring a superior knowledge of Islam (Majul 1999: 114–441). But, in a cultural context in which Islam was believed to govern all aspects of social and individual life, the *pandita*’s knowledge was extensive. In addition to serving as religious functionaries, they served as courtiers of the sultan, judges, scribes, and medical experts. In effect, they constituted a class of indigenous intelligentsia that was a precursor of the contemporary *ustādh* and *‘ulamā’* (Mastura 1982: 6–7).

The *pandita* school – more appropriately called *makātīb*, from the Arabic *katabah*, “to write” – typically consisted of small tutorial classes conducted in the mosque or at the home of the *pandita*. Pupils would live with or visit the teacher daily, supported by the more prosperous families who wanted their children to learn the fundamentals of the faith. In addition to the rudiments of the faith, some children were taught to read and write their native dialects using Arabic script. By the time of

the American occupation of Mindanao and Sulu, literacy rates in some areas compared favorably to the rates of Christian areas despite centuries of almost continual military pressure on Muslim regions from the Spanish colonial government (Cameron 1909: 35–36). Well into the twentieth century, the writing of Muslim Filipino dialects continued in Arabic script, and Arab cultural influences survived in the customs and practices of Muslim Filipinos (Carpenter 1916: 349–351). *Pandita* schools were relatively widespread and important in the social life of Muslim Filipino communities where the *pagtamat* [completion ceremony] was an important event in the lives of the Muslim children (Mastura 1982: 7). Thus, while Spanish and American accounts of *pandita* schools are generally dismissive, it is clear that the institution, largely unhampered by 300 years of Spanish colonialism in the northern and central Philippines, was firmly rooted in Mindanao and Sulu by the dawn of US colonial rule in 1898. And the practice of Islam, often disparaged by American observers as a corruption of the religion of the Prophet, remained strong and at the center of Muslim Filipino identity. These facts suggest the effectiveness of *pandita* schools in helping to preserve the cultural and religious identity of Muslim Filipinos against three centuries of Spanish attempts to transform both.

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## Muslim Filipinos and Government Education

Spain's relation with the Muslims in the south was one of intermittent war and mutual animosity for 300 years. Therefore, while Spanish education – particularly the religious instruction of the catechism schools – exercised an important impact on the cultural evolution of Filipinos in Visayas and Luzon, it is almost certain that it had little or no impact on the Muslims of Mindanao and Sulu. Census figures from the last decades of Spanish colonial rule indicate that only a very tiny proportion of the Muslim population – if any at all – were enrolled in Spanish schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Figures from 1870 report 22 schools for boys and 19 for girls in Mindanao with an enrollment of approximately 7500 pupils. The 1892 statistics on national schools report 6 schools in Cotabato, 11 in Davao, and 15 in Zamboanga (Bazaco 1953: 228–9). These figures represent, however, areas of the heaviest Christian settlement.

American involvement in the education of Filipino Muslims, on the other hand, would be deeply influential. Almost before the fighting between American and Filipino forces had stopped, existing schools were reopened as quickly as possible, and, in some cases, American soldiers were assigned to serve as teachers (Barrows 1995). This was the case as well for schools in Mindanao and Sulu, where the first schools were established in January 1900, just 2 months after the US Army began replacing Spanish garrisons (Cameron 1909: 35). However, since the existing schools were almost exclusively within the areas previously controlled by Spain, they included few, if any, schools serving Muslim children.

The establishment of the Moro Province in July 1903, however, included provision for a Department of Public Instruction with direct responsibility for the organization, administration, and expansion of public education throughout the region. In

1904, only 240 of the 2114 children enrolled were Muslim (Wood 1904: 14). However, by 1907, Superintendent of Public Instruction Charles R. Cameron reported that Muslim Filipinos constituted 17% of school enrollments, though they comprised 90% of the total population of the Moro Province. Given the population at the time, only about 1 in 5000 Maranao were in school. In 1909, 8% of the total Christian population was enrolled in school, while only about one-tenth of 1% of the Muslim population was enrolled (Cameron 1907: 1909). By 1913, the total Muslim student enrollment had grown to 1825, approximately 12% of total enrollment, but still only one-half of 1% of the Muslim population of the province, while approximately 10% of the total Christian population was enrolled in the schools (Pershing 1913: 51–52). After 1915, when the schools in the Department of Mindanao and Sulu were absorbed into the insular Bureau of Education, reports do not desegregate Muslim and Christian enrollment in the figures reported for the provinces that comprised the department. However, extrapolating from the Muslim enrollment in 1914, it is apparent that Muslim enrollment in 1920 in all likelihood remained below 10% of the Muslim school-age population.

Industrial and agricultural education were seen as tools to counteract the “lassitude of mind and idleness of body” that Americans believed characterized Muslim Filipinos and to “Occidentalize and modernize [their] Mohammedan and Oriental modes of thought” (Torrance 1917: 139). This vocational emphasis of educational policy was focused from the beginning of the colonial regime to prepare Muslim children for “useful callings” and vocations suited to the practical life for which they were destined (Bureau of Education 1904b: 3–4). To prepare for these useful callings, industrial education began by “teaching the Moro children the useful arts of their own people.” Such arts included hat making, mat making, beadwork, wood carving, and weaving of articles valued as “curios” characteristic of “the work of the race” as well as “work of more civilized design” made from “patterns selected and explained by the American teachers” such as doilies, table covers, napkin rings, hammocks, bamboo furniture, and so on (Bureau of Education 1904a: 28–29). The agricultural curriculum had “for its specific objective the training of boys to be efficient, practical small farmers and the girls to be farmers’ wives and mothers. That is, it is proposed to educate toward the soil rather than away from it.” But agricultural and industrial education was aimed at more than just producing small farmers; it helped disabuse boys of the “idea of earning their living by some other means than manual labor” and provided “a large number of well-trained natives” possessing a “reasonable knowledge of English, arithmetic and kindred subjects, [and] a thorough knowledge of wood-working, iron-working, and agricultural methods” (Cameron 1909).

The formal curriculum of the public schools in the Moro Province offered 3 and later 4 years of primary instruction, which included 3 years of English, 3 years of arithmetic, 1 year of geography, and the “rudiments of a useful occupation.” This was followed by an intermediate course of elementary instruction for 3 years that offered courses of study in teaching, farming, housekeeping, trade, business, and general education characterized by a “great emphasis on vocational training” (Government of the Philippine Islands 1911: 2). Intermediate schools were also

expected to have a laboratory, a shop, a garden, and a model Filipino home for instruction in housekeeping. High school courses of study for durations between 2 and 4 years included programs in literature, history and science, teaching, commerce, agriculture, and arts and crafts. "Body training" in singing, drawing, handiwork, and physical exercise was offered throughout the curriculum (Bureau of Education 1904b: 3, 6, 9).

Despite the best of intentions, only the tiniest of minorities among Muslim Filipino children ever received even a primary school education from the American public school system let alone the whole scheme of education from primary through secondary school. The gap between overt intentions and reality in the Moro Province is one of the sites where a *hidden* curriculum shaped the educational experience of Muslim Filipinos as much as the formal curriculum did. The two main aims of this hidden curriculum were the deculturalization of Muslim Filipinos and their political-economic subordination to a Philippine government dominated by Christian Filipinos. The aim of deculturalization in turn included two objectives: the transformation of cultural practices and social relations and the emptying out of Muslim Filipinos' religious identity. Perhaps the most profound element of this hidden curriculum reflected American attitudes toward Islam. American officials, as well as civilian observers, generally did not take Muslim Filipinos seriously as Muslims. They dismissed Muslim Filipinos' practice of Islam as shallow and ignorant, a pretense. This more or less hostile disposition toward Islam, coupled with a relatively unapologetic preference for Christianity as the religion of civilized humanity, meant that this hidden curriculum was aimed at "educating" Muslim Filipinos away from Islam and toward Christianity. Colonial officials, however, never really expected Muslim Filipinos to convert to Christianity; they realized that any overt effort to bring this about would engender the same sort of resistance that had been marshaled against the Spaniards. But they were attempting to, in effect, "empty out" the cultural expression of Islam in Mindanao by prohibiting or interfering with everything Christians found repugnant. In essence, it was tolerable to call oneself Muslim so long as one conformed to the values and practices of Christian civilization.

Another aspect of the deculturalization of Muslim Filipinos involved the attempt to transform traditional gender relations by "freeing" Muslim Filipino women from the "chains" of "female slavery" and polygamy through the education of Muslim girls in boarding schools. American educational officials discovered very early that Muslim Filipino families were extremely reluctant to send their daughters to school, fearing their conversion to Christianity or other deviation from social expectations and the important role they played in Muslim Filipino society. Boarding schools, in which "the handicaps of the home and environment of the whole life are removed," were seen as the only "practical way to reach the Mohammedan and pagan girl" (Torrance 1917: 171). This policy deliberately targeted the daughters of Muslim elites in the hope of influencing the broader Muslim community who could not, for obvious practical reasons, be included in the boarding school experience.

Thus, while the policy of Filipinization was usually expressed in terms of Filipinos taking over the reins of government, the policy of Filipinization was also

cultural. The objective of the hidden curriculum was to transform the “Moro” into a mirror image of his Christian Filipino “brother.” For 25 years the fundamental policy of American and Filipino policy was the “ultimate incorporation of that area [Mindanao and Sulu] into a united Philippines” (Hayden 1928: 627). To this end educational leaders saw the schools, with their preponderance of Christian Filipino teachers and students, as a means of bringing Muslim Filipinos into association with Christian Filipinos (Torrance 1917: 152). It was assumed that such association would lead to the erosion of prejudices among both Christian and Muslim Filipinos. “Promising” Muslim boys were sent to schools outside the area “where they are trained as prospective teachers and at the same time imbued with the culture of the Christian Filipinos” (Jones 1920: 612).

In 1935, the Philippines was granted local rule under a commonwealth government in preparation for eventual independence. The jurisdiction of the new government included the Muslim regions of Mindanao and Sulu, much to the consternation of Muslims who, for the first time in their history, found themselves governed directly by Christian Filipinos, something they had fought against for more than 300 years. Commonwealth policy toward Muslims represented, essentially, a continuation of the American policy of integration, albeit with a greater emphasis on speed of that integration than most American officials had thought wise. This was, no doubt, partly driven by the threats to the national and economic security of the Philippines that unrest in Mindanao represented, but it is likely that it also reflected a tendency on the part of national leaders to neglect Muslim Filipino concerns unless they were confronted with open conflict.

After independence in 1946, educational policy in the new Philippine Republic generally continued the trends established under the colonial and Commonwealth governments. The National Council of Education, drawing on the educational aims stipulated in the Philippine Constitution, listed the educational system’s primary goal as “impress[ing] upon our people that they are citizens of the Republic” and the second as promoting among Filipinos “an abiding faith in Divine Providence.” The Moro Problem was still festering, however. The collapse of governmental authority in Mindanao during World War II had facilitated the reassertion of former attitudes and habits toward external authority (Mednick 1965: 38). One Filipino educator of the period wrote that 50 years of American education had had little effect on the life of common folk, who still identified themselves as Muslims rather than Filipinos (Soriano 1953: 428). The curriculum, standardized throughout the country by a Manila-centered bureaucracy, was widely dismissed as “basically Christian” and hence anti-Muslim. Textbooks were criticized for content that was either offensive or culturally unfamiliar to Muslim students (Mangadang 1957: 125–130). The situation was compounded by the shortage of resources and poor facilities that plagued other areas of Philippine education.

One of the first official government responses to the ongoing “Moro problem” was an inquiry into the social, economic, and educational problems of Muslim Filipinos. This inquiry eventually resulted in the passage of a republic act in 1955, which provided for the establishment of a state university at Marawi City in the Muslim-dominated province of Lanao del Sur. The Philippine Congress created the

university “to serve primarily as a vital government instrument in promoting greater understanding between Muslims and Christians” (Isidro 1968: 376). Aside from providing higher educational opportunities to local Muslim students, the university’s objectives included the economic development of Mindanao, the preservation of indigenous cultures, and, most importantly, promoting the integration of Muslims into the Philippine mainstream. At least at the level of its mission statement, the government’s charge to the university to study and preserve Muslim Filipino culture suggested a softening of the long-lived discourse around “civilizing the Moro,” which quite clearly postulated the surrender of Muslim religious and cultural identity as the price of civilization.

However, the university faced many serious obstacles, including the lack of Muslim students ready for college work. By the time the university began operation in 1961, for instance, only 17.7% of school-age children in the province were in school, and only 2% of these were in high school (Isidro 1979: 103–104). The university responded by establishing its own network of feeder schools, but by the late 1970s, the university had only managed to graduate a little over 300 local Muslim students (Van Vactor 1978: 29). In addition, the university faced from the beginning the challenge of retaining the character of a national university from the pervasive influence of a local culture whose values were often powerfully at odds with the fundamental values of a modern, western university.

Two years after passing the legislation establishing Mindanao State University, the Philippine Congress passed another act creating the Commission on National Integration, tasked with fostering the development and integration of Muslim Filipinos (Clavel 1969: 17–18). The activities of its education division, which accounted for approximately 70% of its funding, focused largely on providing scholarships for minority students to attend university. But, even the effectiveness of this effort was severely limited by corruption revealed in government investigations in the early 1960s (Filipinas Foundation 1971: 27–28, 162). By the time the Commission was disbanded in 1975, it had enabled 3000, mostly Muslim, students to obtain a college education but had achieved little else (Salgado 1994: 110). Two years later, the Filipinas Foundation (*ibid.*: 192) reported “an embarrassing lack of concern on the part of the national government and private sector to understand Muslims as Filipinos, much less to contribute toward their social and economic uplift.” Clearly, by the early 1970s, the effort to promote integration via educational policy had not accomplished much because the effort to achieve integration through uniform educational policies and curricula left ethno-religious differences untouched if they did not in fact exacerbate them. In fact, more than 65% of Muslims surveyed in 1971 identified themselves as Muslim rather than Filipino, and significant majorities held unfavorable views of government education (*ibid.*: 116–117). Many continued to reject integration in favor of an Islamic education at home or abroad. Many others accepted the education but put it to use resisting integration.

While a few individual Muslims had achieved enough success in the larger society to perpetuate the illusion of the permeability of the Muslim-Christian cultural divide, such terms often meant that “the educated Muslim all too often becomes a part of a rootless intelligentsia, unable to go back wholeheartedly into his own



traditional culture, but unwilling because of his religion to assimilate himself completely in the Christian society” (Tamano 1971: 126). Thus, while education had still not succeeded in the wholesale assimilation of the Muslim minority into the Philippine mainstream, it did alienate some Muslim individuals who, tempted by the widespread faith in education, willingly occupied marginal positions in the gap between the majority and minority communities in hopes of carving out some sense of personal agency, either for self-serving or altruistic reasons (Saber 1991). Most Muslims, however, continued to lack access to the resources that would enable them to pursue integration on these terms or any others. In Lanao del Sur, for instance, 80% of children dropped out of school before completing the sixth grade (Isidro 1979: 8–12). The situation was somewhat better in other Muslim provinces, but they still lagged behind the rest of the country.

This widespread sense of economic marginalization, government neglect, and the pressures of government-sponsored immigration of Christian Filipinos into traditionally Muslim areas led to a growing belief that the very existence of the Muslim community in the Philippines was under threat. This tinderbox of Muslim grievances was soon set alight by the alleged massacre of Muslim soldiers by government forces in an attempt to cover up a plot by the Philippine government to invade the Malaysian state of Sabah (George 1980). The secessionist movement that erupted thereafter has continued intermittently ever since, claiming more than 150,000 lives and causing untold economic damage to Muslim Mindanao (Vitug and Gloria 2000). As the Americans had before them, the Philippine government looked to educational policy as one tool, along with military repression, to mitigate tensions. In 1973, for instance, they issued an instruction allowing the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction “in schools and areas where the use thereof permits” (Department of Education and Culture 1973: 48). Any meaningful implementation of the policy, however, was severely limited by the lack of teachers capable of teaching Arabic. Moreover, the presence or absence of Arabic instruction in public schools had never been one of the top concerns of Muslim Filipinos regarding the public schools. Consequently, few significant steps were taken toward the implementation of the order until the early 1980s when Mindanao State University began a formal program to train Arabic language teachers (Hassoubah 1983: 24–25). In spite of this effort, Arabic language instruction remained limited and largely ineffectual.

Most of these efforts were seen as ineffective and insincere attempts on the part of an increasingly brutal dictatorship to improve the lot of Muslim Filipinos – mere window dressing rather than substantive educational reforms. Studies by Muslim educational scholars in the late 1970s and early 1980s continued to claim that government textbooks contained little or nothing relevant to Muslim Filipino experience or useful in counteracting negative images of Muslim Filipinos in the Christian mainstream (Madale 1976: 89–97). Madale’s (1983) surveys of Muslim Filipinos found that 97% of his respondents believed that the “educational system in Muslim areas failed in its goals and objectives as evidenced by its inability to effect observable changes in local people’s culture and society.” Common Muslims, he reported, were still suspicious of government education because it tended to alienate them from their identity as Muslims, which superseded any sense of identity

as citizens of the Philippines (ibid.: 15–42). Schools in Muslim areas were dilapidated and lacking in textbooks, supplies, and highly qualified teachers. A unified curriculum still failed to adequately include Muslim culture. After 50 years of Filipino rule, the Philippine government was still seen by many Muslims as a *gobirno a sarawang a tao*, a “government of foreign people” (Madale 1981: 248–255).

After the overthrow of the Marcos regime and the reestablishment of democratic government in 1986, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was created, ostensibly providing a measure of local autonomy to the four predominately Muslim provinces. The agreement included devolution of authority over schools in the ARMM to a regional Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS-ARMM). For the first time in almost 100 years, Muslims ostensibly had policy-making authority over the public schools in the four provinces of the Autonomous Region (Tamano 1996). The department, however, had limited success in changing or improving public education in the region. A foreign-funded effort to Islamize textbooks in the 1990s, for instance, failed to produce or disseminate adequate numbers of textbooks sensitive to the Islamic identity of the local inhabitants because of the disappearance of funds meant for their publication and other controversies (Tamano, personal communication, Sept. 5, 1999). While there were such modest efforts at educational transformation for Muslim Mindanao – including many individuals in both Muslim and Christian communities who worked sincerely to improve relations between them – many Muslims continued to doubt the sincerity of the Philippine government because they saw so little change in the conditions of their schools.

Given the history of colonial and neocolonial centralization and the material poverty of the country, particularly in the remote, impoverished regions like Muslim Mindanao, the textbook became all-important. The textbook was the curriculum, but teachers had no control over the selection of texts; they tended to be selected either by the Department of Education or by central administrators in charge of the schools. In many cases even course syllabi were prepared by central administrators and distributed to teachers to be implemented. It was, as one observer described it, a *lutong makao* curriculum, “a cooked curriculum”: it was cooked in Manila, and the teachers simply served it to the students (Panambulan, personal communication, Jan. 17, 2000). Children often had no textbooks at all. With nonexistent school libraries and hours of difficult travel from cities, teachers had very little access to instructional material with which to supplement the text. Moreover, Muslims and their history, culture, and contributions to Philippine history were largely absent from the selective tradition embodied in most Philippine textbooks. Content analyses of elementary and secondary textbooks in use in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed that fully half of the 38 textbooks studied contained no reference to or mention of Muslims at all. Of those that did include some mention of Muslim Filipinos, most contained no more than one or two paragraphs to a couple of pages. Furthermore, much of the information included was either erroneous or insulting to Muslims (Bula 1989).

In this way the curriculum, even where it included material on Muslim Filipinos, engaged in the intellectual construction of the Muslim other in ways that reinforced popular biases and divided the world in ways that justified and perpetuated the marginalization of Filipino Muslims. Attempts to sympathetically portray the lived

culture and experience of contemporary Muslim Filipinos in ways that might acknowledge the dignity of Muslims and help eradicate the strong bias against them held by many Christian Filipinos were largely absent or ineffective. Thus, the *lutong makao* curriculum fell short of a fundamental ethical principle: the idea that the child should see herself in the curriculum and learn to see through others' eyes (Martin 1995).

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## The Resurgence of Islamic Education

Islamic education, of course, had been a feature of Muslim Filipino society since the introduction of Islam in the late fourteenth century and had continued to be so throughout the period of American and Christian Filipino control of Mindanao and Sulu. For much of this history, however, the inculcation of Islamic doctrine was largely a function of individual learned men teaching small groups of individuals in association with a mosque or what the American colonial regime called *pandita* schools. The imposition of American colonial rule, however, profoundly impacted indigenous educational institutions by introducing a more modern, secular system of education along with social, political, and economic structures premised on the types of knowledge disseminated in such schools and offering the prospect of social, political, and economic advancement for those who possessed such knowledge. Colonial education, in short, introduced a radically different regime of truth supportive of Western political domination, weakening, though by no means eradicating, traditional ontological and epistemological frameworks. Thus, colonial rule dichotomized religious and secular education, tradition, and modernity in ways quite similar to the experience of other colonized Muslim societies, introducing a tension between Western-educated and traditionally educated segments of Muslim societies.

One result of Muslim Filipino mistrust and dissatisfaction with government education was a growing tendency to send their children to Islamic schools (Boransing et al. 1987). The early 1950s saw an Islamic revival among the new generation of Muslim leaders educated in secular Filipino schools. One consequence of this resurgence was the establishment of formal Islamic schools such as the Kamilol Islam Institute in Marawi City in 1954, which expanded to collegiate level in 1959 under the name Jamiatul Philippines Al-Islamia. Muslim missionaries from the Middle East as well as Filipino Muslims educated in Islamic countries contributed to the growing network of *madrasahs* in the region throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Mastura 1982: 9–10). This network provided educational alternatives for those Muslim Filipinos suspicious of government educational objectives and desirous of fostering their identity as Muslims rather than Filipinos. Thus, the continued development of two parallel educational systems – Islamic and governmental – with the contradictory aims of orienting Filipino Muslim identity either toward an essentialized Filipinism or a purified Islamism contributed to the division of Muslim and Christian Filipinos (Boransing 1982: 17).

The 1950s saw the establishment and expansion of some of the earliest formal *madrasahs* in the Lanao capital of Marawi City as Western-educated Muslim

political figures encouraged the establishment of Islamic schools in an effort to consolidate their political power as intermediaries between local Muslim populations and the state and as missionaries from Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia, and other Muslim countries increasingly traveled to the southern Philippines (Mastura 1982: 6–15). After the early 1970s, the number of *madrasahs* mushroomed from a mere handful to the thousands of schools, reflecting a similar pattern of dramatic growth in Pakistan, India, and Europe (Abaza 1995: 13–16). This rapid growth reflects both the efforts of local Muslims as well as the assistance of Muslim states undergoing their own Islamization movements reemphasizing *madrasah* education. By the late 1980s, the Ministry of Muslim Affairs listed approximately 1100 *madrasahs* throughout the country. However, according to Boransing et al. (1987), if small, less formally organized schools were included, the total number could be in the neighborhood of 2000. Moreover, roughly half of the *madrasahs* they reported on as well as half of the total enrollment in the *madrasah* system was concentrated in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City (ibid.: 59, 62). The fact that Islamic schooling survived and grew in the poorest regions of the country without government support and often in the face of active attempts to marginalize it is testament to its enduring importance in the lives of Muslim Filipinos.

Traditionally *madrasahs* have taught the principles of Islam and the performance of its rites, the Qurʾān, the life and teachings of the Prophet, Islamic jurisprudence and theology, Islamic ethics, and Arabic language (Boransing et al. 1987: 7). The legacy of the colonial dichotomization of Muslim Filipino society, however, meant that such traditional Islamic education represented a dead end in terms of social and economic mobility within the larger Philippine society. As a result of this, a number of Muslim Filipino educators have, since the 1980s, called for the integration of government-approved curricula into the curricula of the *madrasahs* (Damonson-Rodriguez 1992). While the government has offered limited support for such efforts, which the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is currently continuing, progress is hindered by constitutional restrictions that prevent direct support to religious schools, the material poverty of most *madrasahs* and their constituents who can ill afford the trained teachers and materials necessary for the effort, and the fears of some Muslims that the integration effort might lead to increased government interference in Islamic education (Mastura 1982; Pandapatan 1985).

Private groups have had, in some respects, more success in this matter. In 1995, for instance, *ʿulamāʾ* involved in *madrasah* education in Lanao del Sur joined forces with the Ranao Council, an association of Western-educated Muslim academics at Mindanao State University to create the Ibn Siena Integrated School in Marawi City. According to the school's published brochure, it offers the basic requirements of the public school curriculum as well as the traditional Islamic curriculum of the *madrasahs* in order to, citing the Muslim educational scholar Ismāʿil al-Fārūqī, resolve "the present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into Islamic and secular systems. The two systems, he is quoted as saying, "must be united and integrated, and the emergent system must be infused with the spirit of Islam." Within 5 years of its establishment, the school had grown to an enrollment of 2000 students from kindergarten through high school and was making plans to

expand to offer college-level courses. Moreover, its success had inspired the establishment of similar schools in the area (Maguindanao, personal communication, Feb., 23, 2000).

It is plausible to read such efforts to “integrate” *madrasahs* as an educational effort designed to strengthen Islamic identity while eschewing what some see as the more fundamentalist tendencies of the traditional *madrasah* or of groups like the Jama’et al. Tabligh. Some proponents of the reform, in fact, see it as a mechanism that can enable Muslim Filipinos to more fully participate in Philippine society while retaining their religious identity. The *madrasah* schools, even the integrated *madrasahs*, encode a regime of truth quite different from that encoded in secular government schools or Catholic schools. Thus, they represent, at the very least, a profound sense of dissatisfaction, if not outright rejection, among some Muslims of the educational alternatives offered to Muslim Filipinos by mainstream society.

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### **Islamization of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao**

Greater autonomy in educational policy making made possible by the creation of the ARMM has led to two new initiatives in ARMM educational policy, initiatives that are also supported by the national Department of Education for Muslim children residing outside the region (Tamano 1996; Mutilan, personal communication, June 23, 2003) The first of these initiatives involves the Islamization of public education in the region. Though the geographic concentration of Muslims in western Mindanao and the growth in the numbers of Muslim schoolteachers since the 1970s have meant that many Muslim children attend majority Muslim schools taught by Muslims and located in Muslim communities, the historical centralization of policy making in Manila ensured that curricula did not reflect, and at times conflicted with, local values (Bula 1989; Rodil 2000). Thus the new autonomy to design curricula that reflect local values represents a significant shift in policy. Muslim educators in the ARMM have, therefore, seized upon that autonomy to infuse Islamic values into the public school curriculum both in the formal values education program and in the curricula of other subjects. Textbooks are to be written and disseminated that depict Muslims and Islam favorably and accurately reflect their values. To this end locally respected ‘*ulamā*’ have been engaged to help review, revise, and write new curricula and textbooks. Arabic language instruction is to be expanded as well in order to enhance Muslim children’s opportunities to interact with the rest of the Muslim world as well as enable them to read the Qur’ān, the traditional purpose of Arabic instruction in the *madrasahs*. The goal of these efforts is to make public schools more attractive to Muslim families and thus reduce the incentive to send children to *madrasahs* outside of government control and susceptible, in some instances, to radical Islamist influences (M. Mutilan, personal communication, July 5, 2004).

The second initiative involves the so-called integration of the *madrasahs* (Macada-ag, personal communication, June 23, 2004). Ever since the introduction of government education under the American colonial regime, Islamic education,

though respected and supported within the Filipino Muslim community, represented a social and economic dead end for Muslims as citizens of the Philippine state. The vast majority of *madrasahs* focused almost exclusively on religious instruction; thus students who attended them did not receive instruction in those subjects that would enable them to attend universities or compete for positions in the larger society. Even those *madrasahs* that did offer such instruction were often not recognized by the government or were of such poor quality that their graduates were equally handicapped. Thus graduates of the *madrasahs*, some of whom do go on to receive an advanced Islamic education in the Middle East, are employable only as poorly paid teachers in Islamic schools. This contributes to a sense of exclusion, frustration, and discrimination that has radicalized many. The aim of *madrasah* integration, therefore, is to encourage and support *madrasahs* to expand their curricula to include subject matter taught in the public schools. This would enable those integrated *madrasahs* to seek government recognition and thus be eligible for limited public support. It would also, theoretically, afford those students who choose a *madrasah* education as a measure of social mobility through the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to transfer to public schools, attend government universities, or to seek employment in the national economy. In effect, these reforms aim to integrate what for centuries have been two separate systems of education.

Making good on the potential inherent in these public policy and private educational experiments has been severely hampered by endemic poverty, continued financial dependence on the central government, corruption and infighting within the ARMM, and the lingering habits of a century of educational centralization (S. Tamano, personal communication, July 12, 1999; Chua 1999; A.H. Macada-ag, personal communication, June 23, 2004). Over the last decade, however, officials of the Department of Education in the ARMM have begun to articulate policies responsive to the charge to teach Muslim culture, develop consciousness of one's ethnic identity, and "adopt an educational framework that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals and aspirations of the people in the Region" (Republic of the Philippines 1990). The general intent of these policies is the Islamization of education in the Autonomous Region. After a century of colonial and postcolonial government efforts to subordinate Islamic identity to national identity and to dismiss it as irrelevant to educational development in the southern Philippines, Muslim educational leaders in the ARMM have placed that identity at the heart of a program of educational reforms they think necessary for the social and economic development of Muslim Mindanao.

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## Conclusion

Islamic education reached southern Philippines in the as early as the 14th century before the population had been Islamized. Different types of Islamic educational institutions – mostly *maktabs* and *madrasahs* – were established, and the southern population became Islamized mainly by attending such schools. These types of schools continued to exist despite Spanish colonization and the spread of Western-type Christian schools. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Philippines was

occupied by the United States, and a network of secular American schools was established. When the islands got their independence in 1946, formalized Islamic education had almost disappeared. The Philippine state took over the American schools but did not support religious (i.e., Islamic) schools. However, with the international revivalist movements that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, an Islamic revival took place also in the traditional Muslim south of the republic. After the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, the new government of Corazon Aquino endorsed the establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to afford Muslim Filipinos a greater measure of control over their political, cultural and economic affairs. Now constituting a majority of decision-makers in the ARMM, Muslim Filipinos started to Islamize education in two ways: (1) Islamic matters were included in the otherwise secular curriculum in public schools and (2) *madrasahs* were integrated into the formal education system, whereby these schools came to include not only Islamic matters but also secular subjects. Despite these efforts, the tension between secular or Christian forces, on the one hand, and Muslim forces, on the other, has continued.

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# Islamic Education in China

Jacqueline Armijo

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## Abstract

Although Muslims have resided in China since the earliest days of Islam (primarily as traders along the southeast coast) it was not until the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1261–1364) that hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Central Asia and the Middle East settled permanently in China, creating communities in every region of the country. Today, most of the more than 20 million Muslims living in China are descended from these thirteenth century settlers.

Despite their relative isolation from the Islamic heartland, over the centuries Muslim communities were able to sustain their religious identity and knowledge. However, in the mid-sixteenth century in an effort to make both Islamic texts more accessible to the growing number of Muslims who were no longer able to read texts in Arabic or Persian, as well as establish a more formal tradition of Islamic education, a group of Chinese Muslim scholars developed the *Han Kitāb*

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and *Jingtang Jiaoyu*. The *Hān Kitāb* is a collection of important Islamic texts translated into Chinese and *Jingtang Jiaoyu* is a term meaning “Education in the Hall of the Classics,” that refers to the form of Islamic education that built on traditional Chinese educational methods but focused on the study of Islam.

These texts and methods of education proved highly effective in fostering a deeper understanding of Islam, and before long experienced teachers were traveling to different regions of China to set up schools. It was also during this time that the tradition of the traveling scholar developed, as well as that of students traveling to different regions of China to further their studies under well-known *‘ulamā’*.

Islamic education in China today incorporates both a continuation of the traditions started centuries ago, as well as influences from Western style education, and government controlled Islamic education. In addition, over the past 20 years as Islamic education has flourished in China, thousands of advanced students have chosen to continue their education abroad at international centers of Islamic learning in Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Malaysia. (For additional information on the influence of foreign study on Islamic education in China see, Armijo 2008.)

In addition to the issues addressed above, this chapter will also focus on the active role played by women in Islamic education, the role of the state in both promoting and restricting different forms of Islamic education in different regions of China, and the recent trend to link vocational training with Islamic education, as well as other recent developments.

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**Keywords**

China, Islamic education

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## Introduction

Although Muslims have resided in China since the earliest days of Islam (primarily as traders along the southeast coast) it was not until the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1261–1364) that hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Central Asia and the Middle East settled permanently in China, creating communities in every region of the country. Today, most of the more than 20 million Muslims living in China are descended from these thirteenth century immigrants.

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## Historical Background

For centuries before the advent of Islam, traders from the Middle East had been traveling the overland Silk Road to Chang'an (the Chinese imperial capital, and present-day Xi'an) and along the maritime Silk Routes to China's southern ports of Guangzhou and Quanzhou (*Zaytūn* in the Arabic and Persian sources). Although some settled in China, most traveled back and forth, eventually returning to their homeland. As Islam spread throughout the Middle East, increasing numbers of these traders were Muslim. Little is known of these early communities of Muslims in China, other than the fact they built their own mosques, were expected to live in designated areas of the city, and were granted a limited degree of autonomy.

It was not until the thirteenth century, when the Mongolian Empire spread across much of Asia that hundreds of thousands of Muslims were both forcibly relocated and recruited to China and Mongolia to assist the Mongols in developing their new realm. Initially, the Mongols sought out architects, engineers, craftsmen, and military technicians to help design and build a new capital. Then, as the Mongols gained control over all of China and established the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), they recruited even more people from the Middle East and Central Asia, most of whom were Muslim. Medical physicians, astronomers, hydraulic engineers, academics, language experts, and others were sought to fill newly established ministries, but in addition, thousands were recruited to serve as low-level bureaucratic officials to assist in governance of the new state.

These officials were posted throughout the entire country, and many of them settled permanently. The largest group of Muslims in China today, the Hui, are the descendants of these recruits. Unlike China's other nine Muslim minority groups

who are mostly concentrated in one region, and speak their own language and are ethnically distinct from the dominant Han Chinese group, the Hui are spread throughout the country, speak primarily Chinese (or, if they live in the midst of another minority group, the language of that group) and have adopted many customs and cultural practices of the dominant Han group, while maintaining their religious identity. According to the national census, the Muslim population of China is currently more than 20 million. However, others have estimated that the population is much larger, between 30 and 50 million. After the Hui, the next largest group is the Uighur, who are concentrated in the northwest province of Xinjiang. Other predominantly Muslim groups in China include the Kazak, Kirghiz, Tajik, Uzbek, Salar, Dongxiang, Bonan, and Tatar.

Although some of the immigrant Muslims may have been able to bring their wives and families with them to China, most were men who married local women and raised their children as Muslims. Following Islamic practice, daughters were expected to marry Muslim men, or men who agreed to convert to Islam. Despite the isolation from the Islamic heartlands, many of the Muslim communities spread throughout the empire during this early period have survived down to this day.

Little is known of these early communities and how they insured that religious knowledge was maintained and passed down over the generations. It is assumed that, as in other traditional communities, education took place in the local mosque, both for children, as well as more advanced training for *imāms*. Given that many of the early immigrants had come from Persia and Central Asia, Persian, together with Arabic was the main language of instruction. To this day, the word in Chinese for *imām* is *ahong*, from the Persian *ākhūnd*.

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## **Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and the Creation of the *Hān Kitāb***

Throughout the Yuan Dynasty, Muslims living in China were able to maintain contacts with the rest of the Islamic World. Mongol rule across most of Asia allowed for relatively safe passage from Europe all the way to China and beyond. As a result, there was a continuous stream of traders, diplomats, artisans, and religious scholars traveling back and forth across the Asian continent. However, with the overthrow of the Yuan Dynasty and the establishment of the Ming Dynasty in 1368, travel became restricted. In addition, one of the goals of the new dynasty was to reassert traditional Han Chinese culture, values, and traditions. All foreign residents, including the large Muslim population, were required to adopt Chinese names, learn Chinese, dress in Chinese clothing, and assimilate as much as possible. Despite the imposition of these strict laws, there is no evidence that any of the long-term foreign residents were expected to leave China. It was during this period that increasing numbers of Chinese Muslims immersed themselves in traditional Chinese Confucian education, and like their non-Muslim peers, took the Imperial Examinations in order to secure official government positions.

As Chinese Muslims became increasingly assimilated into Chinese culture and society, there was a growing concern that their communities' knowledge of Arabic and Persian, and Islamic texts was fading. It was also during this period that a

movement developed to insure that the increasingly isolated Muslim communities in China maintained their knowledge of Islam as comprehensively as possible.

Hu Dengzhou, a Chinese Muslim who had received both a traditional Chinese education as well as an Islamic education, decided he needed a deeper and fuller understanding of Islam. Determined to gain that level of understanding he decided to make the long and dangerous trek across Western China and Central Asia all the way to Mecca. His journey took years as he stopped and studied in different centers of Islamic learning along the way. By the time he returned to China he had not only acquired an extensive and diverse training in Islamic studies, he had also acquired a large collection of important Islamic texts with which he then developed a curriculum for the Muslim communities in China. He established a school that not only taught in Arabic and Persian, but also introduced the practice of using the Chinese language to rigorously study Islamic ideas and principles. The school, although controversial, quickly attracted many students, who then set out to establish this new type of Islamic schools in Muslim schools throughout China. This new type of Islamic education became known as *Jingtang Jiaoyu*, or “Education in the Hall of the Classics.”

In order to make the Arabic and Persian texts more accessible, Hu set about translating as many as possible into Chinese, and training others to do so as well. Over the next few decades, these scholars used their increasingly sophisticated linguistic and theological skills to write new texts in Chinese explaining complex Islamic ideas. These initial efforts led to a more systematic project to create a body of Islamic texts that became known as the *Hān Kitāb*: *Hān* for Chinese, and *Kitāb* for book in both Arabic and Persian. However, in order to make the religious concepts as clear and precise as possible, first they needed to develop a vocabulary in Chinese to express Islamic ideas and concepts. Some examples of how this was done include the following: Islam was translated as *qing zhen jiao*, or “the pure and true religion”; God was translated as *zhen zhu*, “the true master”; and the Prophet Muḥammad, was referred to as a sage, or *sheng*. Two of the most important Chinese Muslim scholars who took the lead in this project were Wang Daiyu (c1570–1658) and Liu Zhi (c1660–1730). The works of Frankel (2011), Ben-Dor Benite (2005), Petersen (2017), and Murata (2009) all focus on this important movement, the scholars involved, and the texts they produced.

By formalizing the *Hān Kitāb* as the canon of Chinese Islamic texts, it became possible for Chinese Muslim scholars to establish schools around the country that taught a relatively uniform curriculum. It also resulted in the creation of a network of centers of Islamic education around China. Chinese Muslim students began traveling to different regions to study under different scholars. One of the many important consequences of this development was the creation of both strong ties among China’s widely dispersed Muslim communities, but also a network by which Muslim communities kept abreast of what was happening in other communities.

Another important benefit of this network between disparate Muslim communities is that it facilitated the redistribution of funds across China to support religious projects such as the building of new mosques and the renovations of old mosques. A recent article by Tristan Brown documents how historically important mosques in southern regions of China, where the local Muslim populations had diminished over

the centuries, communities were able to maintain their mosques (and the education that traditionally accompanied them) by appealing for and receiving donations from larger and wealthier Muslim communities throughout China (Brown 2013).

Later during the Qing period, when several predominately Muslim regions became engulfed in violent rebellions with devastating consequences, Chinese Muslims were able to use these networks to find safe refuge in other regions of China.

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## **The Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and Reconnecting with the Islamic Heartland**

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, China began to face a series of threats and challenges, both from Western nations during the Opium Wars, but also from indigenous rebellions, including several in Muslim regions. Although the Chinese dynasty was able to initially survive the internal and external threats, China as a nation had suffered serious setbacks. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, both Han Chinese and Chinese Muslim officials and leaders sought to develop educational systems that would better equip their nation and communities to face the future.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a concern throughout China that traditional Chinese education based on classical texts was not sufficiently preparing the country to face a future, dominated by both Western countries and an increasingly powerful Japan. In response, Chinese Muslim communities developed new schools that would provide not only religious training and a traditional Chinese education, but also science and mathematics courses. In order to make sure such schools had sufficient numbers of teachers who could teach across these curricula, Chinese Muslim communities began to establish teachers colleges. One of the most successful and famous of these schools was the Chengda Teachers Academy, which was established in 1925, in Jinan, Shandong Province. The academy developed a 6-year program that included traditional Islamic studies classes in both Arabic and Chinese. During the first 3 years, students also studied, “history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology; during the last three years they would focus on educational methods, school administration, accounting, and so on” (Mao, 2011). Similar schools established around the same time were the Shanghai Islamic Teachers Academy, the Mingde High School in Kunming (which still exists), the Wanxian Islamic Teachers Academy in Sichuan, and the Chinese-Arabic Teachers Academy in Ningxia.

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## **The Establishment of the People’s Republic of China and the Impact of Early Political Campaigns**

During China’s Civil War period (1927–1949), both the Nationalists and the Communists sought the support of China’s large Muslim communities. Both sides made promises of religious freedom and independence. After the Communist victory in

1949, it appeared that those promises would be kept. However, within a few years a series of political campaigns began that gradually grew out of control and the practice of all religions came under attack. The most violent and devastating campaign was the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). During this period, all religions, as well as traditional Chinese customs, and anything that appeared foreign, came under attack. Mosques were confiscated and often severely damaged, Muslim leaders were persecuted, and all religious practices were banned. During this period, even uttering such common Muslim expressions as *inshā'allāh* or *alḥamdulillāh*, could lead to arrest and punishment. All forms of religious education were banned. Although Muslims faced an extra degree of persecution, in fact during this period, most Chinese suffered. The movement only ended after the death of Chairman Mao in 1976. Within a few years, the government set about returning mosques to their communities and allowing them to repair and rebuild them.

As soon as mosques had been repaired and reopened, Muslim communities throughout China lost no time in reaffirming their religious identity by reviving their Islamic education traditions. As soon as possible classes were started for the younger children who had never been allowed to learn about their religion and traditions, and for others anxious to once again practice their religion. Very quickly the demand for Islamic studies teachers grew. The Chinese government sensing an opportunity to both help redress for the earlier persecution of the Muslim population, as well as play an important role in shaping the future of Islamic education in China, established nine Islamic colleges throughout all of China to train *imāms* (These schools are located in Beijing, Kunming, Xi'an, Zhengzhou, Shenyang, Xining, Lanzhou, Yinchuan, and Urumqi.). These colleges were fully funded by the state and offered 4-year programs that included instruction in Arabic, Qur'ān, *ḥāfidh*, Islamic law, Chinese language, and Patriotism. They also offered 3-month intensive refresher courses for *imāms*. Although many Chinese Muslims were reluctant to attend an institution so closely connected to the state, these schools have managed to attract many students over the years.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Muslim communities around China began establishing small locally funded Islamic colleges to train teachers and *imāms*. These schools offered a similar curriculum as the official government Islamic colleges, but benefitted from their perceived independence from the state. As different Muslim communities around China were able to revive their Islamic education traditions, Muslims from all over China once again began traveling to different areas to continue their studies, thus reviving and strengthening the networks that had existed for centuries. At the same time small numbers of advanced Chinese Muslim students began studying overseas. The first small groups of students traveled to Egypt, Syria, and Pakistan to continue their studies, later others went to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Throughout this period of the revival of Islamic education in China, women played an active role, both as students in China and overseas. Upon completing their studies many of the young women volunteered to set up schools (both coeducational and for girls) for Muslim communities throughout China. As China has 9 years of

compulsory public education with a set curriculum for the entire country (with no additions or mention of religion allowed), these independent Islamic schools have to work around the standard school day and terms. These schools offer preschool programs for 3–6 year olds, after-school and summer programs for school-aged children, evening and weekend classes for working adults, and daytime classes for the retired and elderly.

In especially poor communities, where peasants cannot afford to send their children to school, these independent Muslim schools are often the only opportunity for an education. Sometimes the schools are simple classrooms attached to small mosques, whereas in wealthier regions communities have combined resources to build multistory classroom buildings. Over the past 10 years many of these schools have also begun to introduce vocational classes as well, the most popular subjects being English and computers skills.

Another particularly interesting development in these schools' curriculum has been the introduction of courses in the history of Islam in China. Muslim communities throughout China have become increasingly aware of the importance of studying their own history, and there are now several textbooks that have been written and are being taught.

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## The Active Role of Women in Developing Islamic Education

From the earliest days of the revival of Islamic education in China, women have played a very active role, and not just in central China where there is a history of women's mosques and women *imāms*, but even in the most conservative Chinese Muslim communities in northwest China. (For a detailed discussion of the history of this phenomenon and its present-day legacy in China, see Jaschok and Shui 2000.) In addition to attending both independent and government Islamic colleges, women have also gone overseas to carry out advanced Islamic studies, and returned to teach as well as establish new schools, especially girls' schools, in the more remote and impoverished Muslim regions of China. Many of these young women focus on developing 3-year (age 3–6) preschool programs for Muslim children. According to recent research carried out by Rosey Ma at the Shude Kindergarten in Lanzhou (the capital of Gansu province), "by the time they leave the kindergarten at age six, the children are fluent in reading the Qur'ān, have learnt the basic knowledge of faith and have acquired the habit of the prayer rituals. The kindergarten also provides Chinese and mathematics classes so the children will have a comfortable and competitive start when they go to the national primary schools" (for more details see, Rosey Ma (2012)).

These preschool programs, like those developed for older children during the summer and winter school breaks, offer important opportunities for Muslim children to be socialized into a religious observant and active environment. Women are also teachers in the Islamic colleges, and many families actively support their daughters in taking on this important role in strengthening the religious knowledge of the Muslim communities.



## The Impact of China-Middle East Economic Ties

Over the past 5 years, there has been a tremendous growth in the trade and economic ties between China and the countries of the Middle East in general, and the Gulf in particular. Like their ancestors centuries ago, once again hundreds of thousands of Arab traders are traveling to China, but today silk, spices, and porcelain have been replaced with inexpensive manufactured goods and petroleum. In addition, both China and the major Gulf countries (the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait) are investing billions of dollars in each other's major petrochemical and other industrial projects. Yiwu, a center of manufacturing south of Shanghai now has a large resident Arab population. In an effort to facilitate their long-term presence, the local Chinese government has provided land for a huge mosque and established Arabic preschools and primary schools. Today, as one walks around downtown Yiwu, it is almost as if you are in a Middle Eastern city. Arab restaurants and shisha cafes, small grocery stores and coffee houses all vie for customers among the resident Arab population and the hundreds of thousands of Arab traders who travel through each year. One can hear every Arabic dialect, as well as Al Jazeera playing in the background, together with the sounds of backgammon games and classical Arabic music.

When I visited the city in 2010, I met Chinese Muslims from every region of China. Many were graduates of independent Islamic schools who had decided to use their Arabic language skills to get positions as interpreters and translators for the thousands of trade businesses that have been established in Yiwu. Others work in the restaurants, cafes, and stores that cater to the Arab residents and visitors. This huge demand for Arabic speakers in China has resulted in several schools tailoring their curriculum. And while most mosque schools and Islamic studies schools in China still teach Arabic with the idea to further understanding of Islam, in at least one place in China, for several years now a school has focused on training Chinese Muslims in Arabic to get commercial jobs.

According to a recent report in People's Daily, the Tongxin School of Arabic Language in Tongxin, Ningxia (one of China's most impoverished provinces) that was established in 1985 to foster understanding of Islam, now:

... has three specialties, namely Arabic language, commerce Arabic and tourism Arabic. Ninety percent of its students are of China's Hui ethnic group, and the graduates' employment rate always stands at more than 95 percent. Most of the graduates work as translators in cities like Yiwu, east China's Zhejiang Province, and Guangzhou, capital of south China's Guangdong Province, which are prosperous in foreign trade and commerce. Taking advantage of the growing demand for people proficient in Arabic language at home and abroad, Ningxia has been exerting efforts to cultivate Arabic translators, a new source of the region's labor export which makes it China's largest exporter of Arabic translators. Nowadays, more than 3000 Arabic translators from Ningxia are working in foreign trade and commerce in Yiwu City, the seat of China's largest small commodity distribution center. (Qin 2010)

As a result of the success of this school, many more schools focusing on Arabic language training, with fewer class hours set aside for religious studies, have opened

across China. In some regions of China where both types of schools exist side by side, there is growing discussion about which type of education is more important. In his dissertation, “Between Sacred and Secular Knowledge: Rationalities in Education of a Muslim Village in Northwest China”, Hong Yanbi discusses how this tension plays out in one area (Hong 2012). One of the largest and most successful is the Ningxia Muslim International Language School, which was established in 2010. Just a few years after opening, the school had enrolled approximately 1,300 students and had 120 teachers, three of whom were from Arab countries (Qian 2013). Recent graduates of these language schools have begun to pursue work opportunities outside of China. On a recent research trip to Dubai, I met dozens of Chinese Muslims working at DragonMart (the largest wholesale and retail center for Chinese manufactured goods outside of China) who had studied Arabic in China. Ten years ago, there were few if any Chinese Muslims working at DragonMart, but as more and more have arrived, a new addition to the network of Chinese Muslims has developed. (For more on the growing Chinese Muslim community in the United Arab Emirates, see Jacqueline Armijo, “Dubai’s DragonMart: The Mega-Souk of the New Silk Road.” *MERIP*, Special Issue: China and the Middle East, 270 (Spring 2014).)

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## **Xinjiang and Potential Role of Turkey**

Although Chinese Muslim communities throughout China now have the freedom to practice their religion and provide a religious education for their children (outside of the required national school times) the same cannot be said for the Muslim communities in Xinjiang. Despite the presence of more than 24,000 mosques in Xinjiang (Li 2009), children are not allowed to enter them, and all adult Muslims who work for, or have retired from, any government institution or agency are not allowed to publically practice their religion. No private or independent Islamic education is allowed. (For an excellent overview of the situation in Xinjiang, see the Human Rights Watch report, “Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang” and Waite 2006.) There is an official government sponsored Islamic college in Urumqi, but more so than in other parts of China, many Muslims are not willing to attend. As a result, Muslims from the different communities throughout Xinjiang travel to other regions of China to acquire an Islamic education. In addition, many also travel overseas, with Turkey being an especially popular destination for Uighurs and other Turkic dialect speaking Chinese Muslim communities.

In 2011, there was an important and interesting development regarding Islamic education for China’s Muslim population. Turkish and Chinese religious officials met to sign a cooperation agreement that included provisions for Chinese Muslims to receive a range of educational opportunities in Turkey. According to the agreement, “As part of the protocol, Muslims living in China will be able to study at vocational religious high schools and theology faculties in Turkey, moreover, they will be able to participate in Master’s and PhD program offered by Turkish universities” (Turkish Weekly 2011). One of the many important aspects of this arrangement is the fact that it will greatly increase the possibilities for Uighurs from Xinjiang to not only receive

an Islamic education, but also much needed vocational training. Although there are many Chinese Muslim students studying overseas, this is first diplomatic effort to formalize educational opportunities for students abroad.

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## Conclusion

The future of Islamic education in China appears strong. As growing numbers of students return from advanced Islamic studies overseas and local Chinese Muslim education programs continue to develop, in the future, there will be less of a need for students to continue their studies overseas. As more and more teachers graduate and help establish small independent schools in the more remote and impoverished Muslim regions of China, even more Muslims will once again be able to study their religion and Arabic. And finally, with the growing interest in research in and studying their own extraordinary history in China, the Muslim communities of China will grow even stronger over time.

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# Islamic Education in the Balkans

Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this chapter is to present a comparative overview of the Islamic education in Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia). Muslim population of these countries is around nine million and is characterized by cultural, ethnical, and linguistic heterogeneity. The Muslim presence in these countries is evident since the fifteenth century, when also the first centers of learning can be traced. Over the centuries, those centers have gone through changes and transformations trying to preserve the Islamic character of

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its purpose while adopting traditional forms of its being to contemporaneous streams in the society. The chapter focuses on the status of Islamic education in Balkan countries, forms of its organization, curricular paradigms, content structuring, and teaching staff. The discourse is contextualized in the sociopolitical circumstances identified as relevant for molding the Islamic education arrangements in these countries, which are more or less common to all of them. These are (a) Ottoman cultural influences, (b) establishment of local national regimes at the beginning of the twentieth century and the rule of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in certain parts of the region, (c) establishment of Communist regime in the aftermath of WWII (except for Greece), and (d) liberalization of state-religion relations encouraged by democratic processes. The analyses indicate existence of quite similar organizational forms of Islamic education across the selected countries, although with different levels of diversification and institutionalization. However, the main differences are noticed in terms of curricular paradigm and the status of Islamic education within the frame of the official state system.

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### Keywords

Systemic approach to Islamic education · Confessional religious education (CRE) · *Madrasah* · *Maktab* · Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (ICBH)

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## Introduction

The Balkan Peninsula represents a geographical region of Southeastern Europe that is the home of around nine million Muslims (excluding the European Turks that geographically belong to the region). The largest Muslim communities are located in Albania and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (with population between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 in each country), while the smallest are those in Slovenia and Croatia (amounting to between 50,000 and 62,977).<sup>1</sup> Muslims of the Balkans differ according to their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic background while representing mostly indigenous communities (except small immigrant Muslim minorities in Bulgaria<sup>2</sup>, Greece, and Romania), whose adherence to Islam roots back to the Ottoman empire. Even today the identity texture of Balkan Muslims retains strong emblems of Turkish form of Islam expressed in following Ḥanafī *madhab*, Mātūrīdī thought in theology, and the presence of Turkish-origin *ṣūfī* orders. Turkish cultural influences are also visible in the traditional architectural style and educational structures such as *maktabs* and *madrasahs*. That is why this part of the world is often referred to in literature (Nasr 2009) as belonging to Turkic cultural zone,

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<sup>1</sup>For detailed information of Albanian population, see INSTAT 2012; figures on the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina in ASBH 2016 (<http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanje.pdf>); results of Census in Croatia in CBS 2011, and in Slovenia in: [https://www.stat.si/eng/tema\\_demografsko\\_prebivalstvo.asp](https://www.stat.si/eng/tema_demografsko_prebivalstvo.asp) (April 28 2014).

<sup>2</sup>Bulgaria is also discussed in Chapter ► “Islamic Education in Eastern Europe.”

although ethnically and linguistically not being part of it. Islamic education in the Balkan countries by no means forms a homogenous structure, reflecting the countries' intricate histories, political controversies, and contemporaneous challenges.

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## General Remarks on Islamic Education in the Balkans

During the Ottoman period, education was imparted in traditional educational structures (i.e., *tekke*, *maktabs*, *ibtidai* schools, *idādī* schools, and *madrasah*), with strong tendency for practicing Turkish as the language of instruction within the official system. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the system included primary schools or lower secondary schools (*muallimhana*). The tradition continued with *madrasahs*, *ḥāniqāhs*, *Dār al-Qur'ān*, and *Dār al-Ḥadīth* schools in the sixteenth century (Alibašić and Zubčević 2009). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, education in the Balkans faced the process of administrative separation from the Ottoman state and establishment of national schools.

During the twentieth century, a large part of the region was under the Communist atheistic regime. Since the collapse of Communism, redefinition and reshaping of the relations between the Muslim communities and the post-Communist states took place. Muslims experienced revival of their spiritual and cultural practices, reflected significantly in the educational sphere. All the countries have developed a certain form of individual Islamic educational arrangements, rather compatible with the modern-day educational structures (following levels from elementary to higher education but also paying attention to preschool Islamic education). Nonetheless, the common landmark for all of them remains two traditional educational forms – *maktab* and *madrasah*. Furthermore, some countries (i.e., Bosnia and Herzegovina) have developed their own system of Islamic education that exists alongside the official state system, enjoying in the largest extent of state's recognition and, quite often, its financial support.

In the Balkan countries, *maktabs* are nowadays courses, mostly in Qur'ānic script and recitation as well as religious rituals organized in mosques and lead by *imām* or *mu'allimah* (female religious teacher) with the aim of imparting practical knowledge of faith (frequently also referred to as Qur'ānic courses). Those courses are voluntary, are organized on weekend intended mostly for school children, and do not lead to any officially recognized certificate. Even in the countries hosting confessional religious education (CRE) model, *maktabs* remain active, despite the initial fear that *maktab* attendance would drop due to introduction of CRE. Moreover, in countries like Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia, which opt for separation of state and faith in the public education sphere, *maktabs* – operating under the auspices of the respective Islamic communities – remain playing an important role in transmitting the Islamic knowledge and practice.

*Madrasahs* are, on the other hand, upper secondary schools in majority cases recognized by states as private or vocational religious schools, as it is regulated by the law on secondary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo Canton 2010), educating cadre for various services inside Islamic communities in the respective

countries. *Madrasahs* in the Balkans have changed their educational profile significantly in the past two decades, thus transforming their status from *imām* schools recognized only by the respective Muslim communities to state-recognized religious schools with almost equal rights as other schools granting their graduates possibilities of vertical mobility to study program either in Islamic disciplines or any other study field. Balkan *madrasahs* are almost exclusively boarding schools with dormitories and full-time residence giving special attention to forming students' character and values. Ever since the *madrasahs* started admitting female students, the teaching process has been segregating female and male students. More recently, there are initiatives for coeducational classrooms in the *madrasahs* of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

Majority of Balkan countries have developed some form of Islamic higher education. In countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, modern-day higher education draws upon much longer educational tradition dating from the Ottoman learning centers in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and resting upon the modern structures established after the collapse of the Ottoman state. In other countries (e.g., Albania), higher education institutions have been established just recently aiming at educating *imāms* for the domestic population, based on the religious as well as national values. To the large extent, higher education institutions in these countries are established with the intention to present their youth from studying abroad, mostly in the Arab world. Nevertheless, there are still countries with no higher Islamic education (Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Slovenia) whose *imāms* and religious education teachers serve either only with *madrasah* qualification or start their tertiary education abroad, in the Balkans, Turkey, or Arab world.

Some Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia) regulate confessional religious education (CRE) in state schools. In this arrangement, a special cooperation between the religious communities and the state is realized, meaning that religious communities are responsible for preservice and in-service teacher training, issuing teaching licenses, and preparing textbooks, whereas the state is, on the other hand, in charge of authorizing curricula and textbooks according to the general educational aims set for a certain school level. In countries like Greece and Romania, the state supports majority of religious communities in giving their confessional education, while other religious communities can set up their lessons at their own expense. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, religious education is confessional but is mostly given as an elective on a voluntary basis outside school hours. Besides this, a group of Balkan countries have no form of religious instruction in state schools. These include Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Slovenia, although the latter has recently introduced Religion and Ethics in the last three classes of compulsory education, as a non-confessional course (cf. Alibašić 2009; Filipović 2011; Schreiner et al. 2007).

Macedonia is one of the latecomers in the discourse on religious education, as it introduced the subject only in 2010/2011 as a part of the course Ethics in Religion taught in primary schools (Mirascieva et al. 2011). However, it is evident that whatever educational system introduced religious education in state schools, the initiative has evoked heated debates bringing to the forefront issues of the position of



religion in the public sphere and relations between the state and the religious communities (e.g., Kosovo and Montenegro), on the one side, and challenged the country's inter-religiosity (as in Bulgaria and Greece), on the other side.

Given the diversity of forms and legal statuses of Islamic education throughout the region, it might seem impossible to find any common denominator except for the geographical region. However, for the purpose of clarity, it is possible provisionally to group the countries in three rough categories:

1. Country with well-structured, diversified, and holistic Islamic education organized in a system-like model (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
2. Countries with several educational structures but more loosely coupled between themselves than in the first category (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia)
3. Countries with rather reduced forms of Islamic education (Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia)

The subsequent sections will offer insight into the major particularities of the Islamic education in each of the countries in the Balkan region.

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## Toward the Systemic Approach to Islamic Education

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Among all Balkan countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has the longest lasting, best structured, and most dynamic Islamic education functioning almost as a holistic system encompassing all educational levels. The responsibility of managing Islamic education in this country lies in the hands of the Islamic Community of BiH (ICBH) established in 1882. It is worth noting that educational institutions are entitled to funding from the state and qualifications granted by them are recognized throughout the state system.

With the inauguration of the new *Ra'īs al-'Ulamā'* Husein Effendi Kavazović in 2012, the ICBH emphasized its dedication to strategic approach to planning the community's educational and scholarly institutions. Four expert teams were to prepare projects treating four areas: establishment of preschool educational institutions inside the ICBH, *madrakah* reform, strategic projections in the area of higher education and research activity, and establishment of a new school center.<sup>3</sup> Each team has completed the required document which was presented on the Counseling on the Development of Educational and Scholarly Institutions of the ICBH (2014–2024). The initiative envisioned some ambitious innovations and would

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<sup>3</sup>School centers represent a completely new educational structure inside the ICBH, more oriented to children's general education than to religious but permeated by religious values. School centers are envisioned as a holistic educational concept starting from preschool education and continuing all up to adult education. It is intended to integrate national with international curriculum, such is the Cambridge International Examinations.

certainly have an impact on the wider education sector. Yet, the implementation of the initiative has made little progress during the past 2 years (Alibašić 2010).

Currently, the ICBH operates six *madrasahs* scattered around the country, most of them being established during the Ottoman period, closed down by the Communists, and revitalized after its collapse. When the Communist Party formed the government in 1945, *madrasahs* along with Higher School of Islamic Theology and Sharī'ah were closed. Only one *madrasah* of 23 *madrasahs* operating in BiH during the Ottoman period continued its work and thus remained the only Islamic educational institution with undisrupted continuity from the founding days till today.

The mission of *madrasahs*, as it is stated in the Founding Charter of Ghazi Husrev Bey Madrasah (*Waqūfnama*), is to be centers of distinguished learning, combining traditional disciplines and contemporary knowledge in compliance with the demands of the changing times. Efforts in meeting the needs of modernity have been the everlasting motif for all subsequent reformation endeavors. Nowadays, *madrasahs* are highly ranked upper secondary schools imparting advanced religious and general knowledge in various disciplines and preparing students to continue their academic education. Following the same curricular structure as gymnasia (state grammar schools) in BiH, *madrasahs* offer its students the possibility to choose between one of the five study fields after completing the second grade (Gazi Husrev-Begova 2014).

Traditionally the purpose of *madrasahs* was training of *imāms* and religious teachers working in various structures inside the ICBH. However, following the line of state's education system reforms, on the one hand, and paradigmatic change in approaching Islamic education, on the other, *madrasahs* were to undergo several significant curricular reforms. This required a certain reduction of traditional Islamic disciplines on the account of nonreligious courses. An important reform took place in 2004, when officially *madrasah* qualification ceased to be sufficient requirement for *imām*, *khaṭīb*, or *mu'allim/mu'allimah* profession. In order to enter the labor market, candidates were to complete some level of tertiary education.

In 2014, a team of experts presented the plan for further curricular innovations in Bosnian *madrasahs*.<sup>4</sup> Yet, this arose certain concerns inside the ICBH related to whether the reduction of teaching hours in religious disciplines would weaken the traditional essence of *madrasah*, which defines this school as primarily a religious learning center. Moreover, there are voices that call for balance between constant modernization of didactic approach while not harming the religious curricular substance.<sup>5</sup>

BiH also has a rather renowned tradition of Islamic higher education resting on *Dar al-Mu'allimeen* (est. 1879 and 1893) for educating religious education teachers and *mu'allims* in *maktabs* and School of Sharī'ah (1887), which was transformed into Higher School of Islamic Theology and Sharī'ah in 1935. The School was closed in 1946 after the abolition of the Sharī'ah court system in Socialist Yugoslavia

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<sup>4</sup>*Plan for Development of Madrasahs*, internal document for Counseling on the Development of Educational and Scientific Institutions of Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014–2024, April 16, 2014.

<sup>5</sup>Notes from the debate arisen at the Counseling, April 16, 2014.

(Karčić 1999). Today, the ICBH operates three higher educational institutions, all belonging to universities located in respective cities.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo was established in 1977 and now represents the oldest and most prestigious institution of Islamic higher education in Southeastern Europe. In the era of higher education reform commencing with the ratification of the Bologna Declaration in 2003, the Faculty undertook significant curriculum changes. In 2004, it became the adjoined member and in 2013 the full member of the University of Sarajevo. This new status loosens the Faculty's dependency on the ICBH funds and strengthens its adherence to university standards in terms of quality assurance, curriculum implementation, and teacher promotion.

Currently, the Faculty offers possibility of obtaining degrees all through the doctoral level (although the doctorate is still arranged as a nonstructured, traditional doctoral research). There are three major programs: Islamic theology, Islamic religious education, and training of *imām*, *khaṭībs* (preachers), and *mu'allims* (teachers). In 2005, the *Faculty of Islamic Studies* introduced a B.A. program *imāms*, *khaṭībs*, and *mu'allims*. This was accompanied by certain difficulties and lacked serious academic profile, and the admission of new students was stopped in academic year 2013/2014. Realizing the importance of providing high-quality training for *imāms*, the ICBH in 2015 recovered the program for *imāms*, *khaṭībs*, and *mu'allims*, now in an innovated form. Male and female candidates are equally eligible for the study, but respecting the specificities of Islamic doctrine, female students are qualifying for *mu'allimah* position, while male graduates are, in addition to this, performing the service of *imām* and *khaṭīb*.

The Islamic Pedagogical Faculty is a transformed and extended form of Islamic Pedagogical Academy that was founded in 1993 as a program for training of Islamic religious education (RE) teachers. The idea for it was to become a dynamic institution, opened to new scientific knowledge and experiences, sensitive to the needs of *living* Islam (Isanović and Isanović 2008). The institution gained the necessary prerequisites to be transformed into Faculty in 2004 and in the same year became the adjoined member of the University of Zenica (est. 2000). While study program for Islamic RE is exclusively designed for Muslim applicants, other three departments attract students from various religious and nonreligious backgrounds. In many respects this Faculty has proved to be the most innovative of all the Islamic faculties in the Balkans. It has managed to cross religious barriers and offer training for more general vocations such as social pedagogue and preschool educator (Alibašić 2010, p. 624).

Study profile, organization, statute, and curriculum of the Islamic Pedagogical Faculty in Zenica served as a model for establishment of the Islamic Pedagogical Academy in Bihać. Today, the Faculty offers two study programs – one in Islamic RE in social pedagogy and spiritual care.

In the early 1990s, the country embarked on the journey of delivering confessional religious education in public schools. Ever since that time CRE has evoked debates in media and scholarly circles questioning its status and role. The debate is dominated by the two poles – one that sees CRE in state schools as perpetuating religious divisions (Pašalić Kreso 2008, p. 367) and the other that sees it as a contribution to young people's interreligious competence helping them to preserve their particular identities (Alibašić 2009). In spite of its different and changing status

in various parts of the country, CRE in BiH has gained the status of a well-established subject with large admission rate and support by parents. CRE in BiH is an elective subject and equal to other subjects in the curriculum. Once the subject is elected, it becomes compulsory and is graded along with other subjects (Ustava Bosne i Hercegovine 2003). It is generally represented with 1 or 2 h a week in all grades of primary school and 1 h a week in the first two grades of secondary school. The issue still remains of how and what form of an alternative, nondenominational religious education, locally known as Culture of Religions or History of Religions, is appropriate for Bosnian schools (Smajić 2014, p. 1140).

Recently, religious education was introduced as an optional activity in public kindergartens in Sarajevo, and several kindergartens have been opened throughout the country by the ICBH.

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## Loosely Coupled Structures of Islamic Education

### Albania

During the period of Enver Hoxha Communist regime (r. 1944–1985), Albania experienced by far the most aggressive repression and interdiction of any religious manifestation, culminating in 1967 and an official ban of all religion from the public sphere. Muslims in particular have been exposed to persecution and forced migrations (Blumi and Krasniqi 2014). Religious schools and sites were closed, land and property were nationalized, and even the graveyards were controlled in order not to become places of religious rituals. Following the collapse of Communism, Albania managed to establish a parliamentary democracy, and today's Constitution (1998) guarantees free manifestation of religion and right to affiliate with a religious community or group and grants religious communities the status of juridical persons. The latter means that they have right to own and manage their property, including educational institutions. The state itself is defined as secular, meaning that there is no official state religion and that it is neutral in relation to religious matters.

Religion is not taught in Albanian public schools, but religious communities may establish their schools or educational institutions, which should be licensed by the Ministry of Education (Blumi and Krasniqi 2014, p. 500). Their administration is regulated by the Law on Pre-University Education System (1995/2012), which allows opening of private schools at all levels of the preuniversity education, including the operation of private educational institutions holding religious subjects or even being established and administered by religious communities (Mash 2012). Despite this rather favorable legal framework, in practice, in Albania, there are only seven *madrasahs*,<sup>6</sup> two primary schools, and five Islamic religious courses. All of

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<sup>6</sup>Madrasah Hafiz Mahmud Dashi in Tirana, Madrasah Hafiz Sheh Shamia in Shkodër, Madrasah Mustafa Varoshi in Durrës, Madrasah Hafiz Ali Korça in Kavajë, Madrasah Elbasan Liria in Cërrik, Madrasah Vexhi Buharaja in Berat, and Madrasah Abdullah Zemblaku in Korçë.

them are run by the Muslim Community of Albania (MCA) and some Albanian and foreign Muslim NGOs (Jazexhi 2014, pp. 23–24). Until 2003, most of the *madrasahs* of the MCA were sponsored and run by Arab NGOs. More recently, some Turkish organizations have gained greater presence in Albanian Muslim education, providing finances, infrastructure, and human resources.

The most distinguished Albanian Islamic educational institution is Madrasa Hafiz Mahmud Dashi in Tirana, established in 1924, closed down by the Enver Hoxha regime in 1964 and revitalized in 1991. The mission of the *madrasah* is to give students quality knowledge in various disciplines and to educate them in religious as well as patriotic spirit. The *madrasah* curriculum integrates religious disciplines with maths, science, social studies, philology, and other humanities.

Until 2011, there was no institution of Islamic higher education in Albania, so Albanian *imāms* and religious teachers were educated abroad, mostly in Arab countries and Turkey. During the Communist period, a certain number of Albanian clergy were also educated in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Training of *imāms* and religious teachers in the Arab world raised concerns over the possible extremist interpretation of Islam among Albanian Muslims and the infiltration of Salafist exclusivist view. This was most likely an important impetus for state to welcome the opening of the Islamic university (cf. Karci 2016).

In 2005, the MCA was granted the permission by the government to initiate a higher education center. In 2010, the opening of a Theological University was approved. The result was, in place of a Theological University, establishment of Bedër University, situated in Tirana. The University offers programs giving opportunity to those enrolled in Islamic Sciences to obtain their bachelor's diploma in Islamic Sciences and master's either in Modern Islamic Studies or Basic Islamic Sciences. As stated in the study syllabi, the languages of instruction are Turkish and English, and a significant number of the current teaching staff are of Turkish origin (Shkolla e Lartë Hëna e Plotë 2014).

## Greece

The institutions of Islamic education in Greece are part of the Minority Education System that exists in the country since the early 1900s along with the Greek public schooling system. The Minority Education System was introduced on the basis of Treaty of Lausanne (1923) signed between Greece and Turkey, which safeguards the minority status of Muslims in Greece (more precisely, in Thrace) and Greeks in Turkey. The schools are of semiprivate semipublic character, giving students possibility of bilingual education (Greek and Turkish) and integrating religious education in their curricula (Koukounaras-Liagkis 2013, p. 273).

The Minority Education System envisages primary and secondary education, while preschool and higher education are treated in a less systematic manner. It operates through 208 primary schools, 1 gymnasium and 1 lyceum and 1 gymnasium and 1 in Xanthi, est. 1964, in addition to two *madrasahs* dating back to the Ottoman era (Koukounaras-Liagkis and Ziaka 2015; Tsitselikis 2012; Ziaka 2009).

The *madrasahs* follow the Greek state curriculum with extra Islamic subjects and are founded primarily by the state and out of *waqf* income, for about 7,500 Muslim students (Tsitselikis 2012). In addition, there are five public schools in Thrace that also provide Islamic instruction. Following the 1998 transformation of *madrasah* when it became a 6-year school, in compliance with Greek legislative on secondary education, its diplomas are recognized by the Greek state. The curriculum contains courses common with other gymnasia-lyceums, in addition to *sharī'ah*, *sunnah* and *ḥadīth*, Qur'ān, and exegetics of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*). In the *madrasahs*, the Arabic of Qur'ān is taught, together with Greek, Turkish, and English languages. Educators are both Muslims and Christians (Ziaka 2009). Both primary and secondary education in minority schools are provided in a bilingual program, whereas social science courses are taught in Greek, while natural sciences, Turkish language, and religion are taught in Turkish (Koukounaras-Liagkis and Ziaka 2015). Like other Balkan countries, Greece has a long tradition of nonformal courses in Qur'ānic script and recitation (*Kur'an kursu*) organized by mosques outside school hours.

Until recently, the majority of Greek *imāms* served either with *madrasah* qualification (gained in Greece or from *imām hatip* schools in Turkey) or are self-trained. However, *madrasah* graduates can no longer become *imāms* without first attending university, and they usually opt for schools in Turkey (Alibašić 2010, p. 631). A common trajectory for *madrasah* graduates is to continue by enrolling into the studies at the teacher training college in Thessaloniki, obtaining thus a primary school teacher qualification. On the university level, Islam is offered for non-Muslim students as a subject in theological schools.

Greek public schools require the teaching of religion in each of the 6 years of secondary education for 2 h weekly, while in the upper primary grades, some elements of religious orientation are offered (Ziaka 2009). Though, the RE curriculum focuses primarily on the Christian faith and Orthodox tradition. Children not belonging to Orthodox Christian affiliation have the legal right to opt out of the RE courses. Amidst the rising social challenges (the need to address religious, political and social needs of Muslim immigrants), there are some initiatives to adjust the RE curriculum accordingly. In addition, an initiative has been taken to introduce an optional Islamic RE in the Greek state schools of Western Thrace, where despite the existence of the Minority System, school capacities are insufficient for the number of interested Muslim students, so a significant number of them eventually get oriented toward the state schools.

## Kosovo

Kosovo's capital Prishtina hosts two Islamic education institutions: Alaud-din Madrasah (est. in 1949, started operating in 1952) with additional branches in two other cities and the Faculty of Islamic Studies (est. 1992). In addition, the Institute of *hifẓ* since 2005 with the support of a Turkish NGO continues increasing the number of its attendees. Qur'ān courses are run at almost all of Kosovo's

mosques (Ismaili 2014). All these institutions are under the jurisdiction of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK).

The Alaud-din Madrasah continues tradition of its predecessors; *madrasahs* established at the beginning of twentieth century, all had been closed in 1927 during the time of the Serbian Kingdom (Hamiti 2009). Both male and female students are currently admitted. The Alaud-din Madrasah was the only Islamic school in Albanian language during the Communist regime. Today, the *madrasah* curriculum combines religious and nonreligious subjects, and its diploma is recognized by the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), which allocates finances for the employees' salaries.

Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the first institution of Islamic higher education in the region was established in Kosovo, with Albanian as the language of instruction. The Faculty of Islamic Studies was established in 1992, and its primer role was providing training for imāms. Until today, the Faculty remains offering only a 4-year undergraduate program in Islamic theology. With the exception of Arabic language and a couple of Islamic philosophy courses, only courses in the traditional Islamic disciplines are offered. No courses in psychology, sociology, or pedagogy are included (Alibašić 2010, p. 625).

Faculty graduates serve as *imāms* or take up other positions inside the ICK. The Faculty has been affiliated member of the University in Prishtina, and its program has gained accreditation for the period of 3 years (Setimes 2012). Islamic education in Kosovo today continues to be taught and practiced only through mosques and the institutions of the ICK. The law and the new Kosovo Constitution do not allow religious education in state schools, an issue that resurfaces almost every year in the parliamentary and public debates (Interfaith Kosovo 2013).

## Macedonia

Islamic education in Macedonia is represented by the Isa Bey Madrasah and Faculty of Islamic Studies, both being based in the capital Skopje and run by the Islamic Community of Macedonia (IRCM). In addition, *maktabs* for children between 6 and 15 operate in almost all mosques throughout the country.

The *madrasah* was established in 1984 as a private religious secondary school and currently has branches in cities with a larger Muslim population. The Skopje division admits both boys and girls. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science decided that the *madrasah* would become a publicly funded school operating under the Ministry's supervision. This would lead to certain curricular reformations, entailing the introduction of a large number of nonreligious courses. However, the decision has not been implemented yet (Jahja 2014). After completion of the *madrasah*, the graduates can continue either in Islamic studies or in any other higher education program.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies was established in 1997. In 2008, parliament enacted a law governing the higher education institutions of religious communities, which provided for the Faculty of Islamic Studies to change its status from a

completely private to a private-public nonprofit educational institution. This entitles the Faculty to state funding in addition to donations from other sources. As in Prishtina, the current curriculum is focused on the traditional Islamic disciplines. The language of instruction is Albanian, although students may take examinations in Macedonian and the curriculum includes a number of language courses: Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, English, Albanian and Macedonian are offered. As in Prishtina, no social science courses are included (Alibašić 2010). Nontheological faculties also occasionally provide courses on Islam and the Middle East. A degree course titled Orientalism treats the history, culture, and literature of Islam, Arab, and Turkish language and literature (Jahja 2014).

In Macedonian primary schools, RE is taught as a non-confessional course called Ethics in Religion. It is an elective subject in the fifth grade of the primary school. Students are free to choose the topic to learn depending on their background and preferences (Mirascieva et al. 2011, p. 1408).

## Serbia

Today's Islamic education in Serbia is in much regard a reflection of the country's historical as well as contemporaneous challenges. There are two Islamic communities in the country, divided on the basis of their understanding of the relationship with the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, the Islamic Community in Serbia (ICiS) "recognises the Bosnian *rais al-ulema* as its supreme leader while the *rais al-ulema* confirms the chief *mufī* as the head of the ICiS" (Pramenković 2014, p. 533). On the other hand, Islamic Community of Serbia (ICS) forms a separate entity, and two communities run their own educational institutions and activities.

Like in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first Islamic schools were established as the part of the Ottoman education system in the fifteenth century, with *mekteb* and *madrasah* as the chief representatives of the tradition. Following the end of the period of complete abolishment of Islamic schools, it was finally possible in the early 1990s to open a *madrasah*. The female department of the *madrasah* was opened in 1996. Another girls' *madrasah* was opened in 2001. In addition, the Islamic community headquartered in Belgrade runs *madrasah* for girls and for boys and the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Belgrade (est. 2011). The Faculty of Islamic Studies in Novi Pazar was established in 2001 as the Islamic Pedagogical Academy and was transformed into a faculty with 4-year program in 2005. Its purpose is to train imāms and Islamic RE teachers in public schools. Programs are offered at undergraduate, MA, and PhD levels in six fields. Unlike similar educational institutions in the region, the Faculty is not free of charge; student fees are an important financial source, together with a contribution from the ICiS. The ICiS also runs an international university, formally registered as a *waqf*. It is a secular university with several faculties and branches in a number of towns throughout Serbia, attended by both Muslim and non-Muslim students. The Faculty is an affiliated member of the university (Alibašić 2010, pp. 627–628). As in BiH and



some other countries, there is an emerging interest for opening kindergartens and Qur'ān schools.

Confessional religious education was introduced in the Serbian public school system as an optional subject in 2001, on both primary and secondary level. Today, Islamic religious education is an elective compulsory subject, which means that pupils may choose the subject but may not later withdraw during that school year.

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## Basic Levels of Islamic Education

### Montenegro

The *madrasah* tradition in Montenegro was revitalized in 2008 with the opening of the Madrasah Mehmed Fatih in Podgorica – the capital – the last school of its kind having been closed by the Montenegrin authorities in 1918. Its curriculum also combines religious with nonreligious subjects bringing it more closely to the curriculum of state secondary schools. From July 2013, the *madrasah* is officially an integral part of the Montenegrin education system. The *madrasah* has a female department, and three more female *madrasah* departments are underway (Pacariz 2014, p. 433).

The male *madrasah* graduates can serve as imāms, as the Islamic Community of Montenegro (ICM) does not require university diploma for imām practice. However, most of the graduates from the first *madrasah*'s generation continued their education. Their diplomas are in principle recognized by the only state university in the country, University in Montenegro. A certain number of its graduates continue their education in various disciplines at universities in neighboring countries. Relying on the Article 14 of the Montenegrin Constitution (2007), RE still does not find its way to the country's state schools, so the Islamic education is exclusively conducted via the ICM structures and some Muslim NGOs' activities.

### Croatia

The representative of Islamic education in Croatia is an Islamic gymnasium established in 1992, as a *madrasah*. In 2000, it was recognized by the government as a private school with the right to public activity, and ever since, it has been an integral part of the Croatian secondary education system. The *madrasah* followed curricula rather similar to those in BiH. Meanwhile, due to low enrolment rates which were ascribed to its overwhelmingly Islamic curriculum, in 2006, the *madrasah* changed its status to a general Islamic high school (Islamic gymnasium) with a curriculum harmonized with that of state high schools (Alibašić 2010, p. 630).

According to the Croatian Law, Muslims have the right to organize CRE in all public schools wherever there are seven or more pupils in a class. In 2008, the Islamic Community of Croatia (ICC) in cooperation with authorities of the City of Zagreb opened the first Islamic kindergarten in Croatia (Mujadžević 2014).

## Slovenia

Islamic education in Slovenia is completely left to the hands of the Islamic community, which organizes *maktab* classes in 17 towns for school-age children, in addition to some lectures and occasional religious courses intended for adults. The only form of RE in Slovenian schools is realized through a non-confessional elective course in Religions and Ethics but is not widely taught (Moe 2014).

Although establishment of private religious schools is permitted, there has not been much interest in establishing one that would offer Islamic education. Instead, a certain number of Slovenian Muslims go to Zagreb or cities in BiH for *madrasah* education. Slovenian universities have recently begun to offer religious studies, and some occasional courses and topics are represented in departments of other universities. Teacher training for the optional school subject on religion is offered jointly by the Faculty of Arts and the (Catholic) Theological Faculty in Ljubljana.

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## Conclusion

On the basis of the presented data, it is obvious that all countries from the Balkan region have developed unique arrangements reflecting the specific *modus vivendi* developed inside each of them in relation to the presence of Islam within their respective societies. The educational arrangements are, thereby, a reflection of countries' individual histories, the ways relationships between the state and the religious communities are defined, as well as the structure of Muslim population itself. It is evident that "Islamic" in the context of education in the Balkans refers to (a) education organized in institutions run by respective Islamic communities, whose core curriculum contains immanent Islamic knowledge; (b) education organized in the institutions run by Islamic communities, with dominantly nonreligious curriculum, but being permeated by Islamic values; and (c) education conducted inside the state systems with the goal of imparting religious knowledge.

Notwithstanding that Islamic education in the majority of Balkan countries has gone a long way from aggressive suppression to a liberal state where it enjoys a certain degree of freedom; there is much to be done in terms of improvement of the overall status and forms of Islamic education. Given the heterogeneity of the region's individual societies, and ever-increasing global challenges, the majority of the countries still have not found a sustainable model for RE in public schools. It continues to be an arena for political discussions often overseeing the contribution of RE to preventing some of the negative features in today's societies (Islamophobia, bad social integration of Muslim minorities, lack of critical thinking, and danger of extremist interpretation of Islam offered via alternative, non-formal channels). There is also a need for improvement of imāms and religious teachers' training, giving more emphasis on their preparedness to facilitate amidst conflicting social realities.

**Acknowledgments** The author would like to express her gratitude to Dr. Ahmet Alibašić for valuable insights into the results of his previous research. The responsibility for all omissions is, of course, hers alone.

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# Islamic Education in France

Anna van den Kerchove

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## Abstract

In order to better understand the Islamic education in France, this chapter begins by a brief overview of the French educational system and the French notion of “Laïcité.” Since 1905, the law on the separation of the churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Israelite) and the state has been applied in the whole public sphere in France, except in the Alsatian and the Moselle *departements*, which were under the German rule when the law was enacted in 1905. Because of the 1905 law, the French educational system – the curricula and the teachers – are secularized. However, two types of schools exist: the public and the private schools. Most of the private schools are Catholic and have signed a contract with the state. Since

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some years back, there exist also some Muslim private schools. What are their relations with the state? What kind of education do they deliver? What are their relations with Qur'anic schools? The chapter will endeavor to address those questions.

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### Keywords

Qur'anic schools · Muslim education · Religious education · Secularization (*Laïcité*) · Private Muslim schools · French curricula

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## Introduction

At the end of the nineteenth century, amid political and religious conflict (between republicans and monarchists and over the power of the Catholic Church and its control over education), the French public school was one of the first areas to be secularized, following the transfer of the civil registry from priests to mayors in 1792. This included implementing a secularized education program (Ferry law of 28 March 1882, Art. 1: religious and moral instruction is replaced by civic and moral instruction), removing any controls over private or public elementary schools from the hands of religious ministers (Ferry law of 28 March 1882, Art. 3), and appointing secular teachers at all state schools (Goblet law of 20 October 1886, Art. 17). No sectarian education and religious proselytizing were permitted in public schools, as in other state institutions, since the law of 9 December 1905 on the separation of the churches and the state. The departments of Alsace and Moselle were not included at the time, as they were under German administration between 1870 and 1918. They continue to refer to the Concordat of 1801, which organized relations between the Catholic Church and the state; to the Organic Articles of 1802, which regulated the exercise of worship for the Catholic, Lutheran and other Reformed churches; and to the decrees of 1808, which organized Jewish worship. State schools in these departments offer religious instruction in all four of these faiths. As for the rest of France, families and religious communities are able to organize at their expense any religious education outside of school.

The Ferry law set aside 1 day per week for “private” activities, whether musical, artistic, religious, or for sports, originally on Thursdays (Law of 28 March 1882, Art. 2), replaced by Wednesday in 1972, and this provision was reaffirmed by Article 1.3 of the Debré law of 31 December 1959. Finally, if no religious instruction is permitted (except in Alsace-Moselle), religion may be the object of scientific discourse, and it has always been present in curriculum subjects and textbooks, including history (see Gaudin 2014).

While school is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16 years, neither the state nor the Ministry of National Education has a monopoly on education (Poucet 2012: 3), and it is possible for families to secure instruction outside the framework of public schools. Whatever the affiliation, two main options are available to families who wish to give their children religious education in a structured way: through the religious community (organized in France as “Law of 1901” nonprofit associations)

on nonschool days (Thursdays, replaced by Wednesdays, or Saturdays and Sundays) or by enrolling them in private denominational schools.

Muslim families wishing to offer their children an Islamic religious education, that is to say, which aims to teach and argue the faith, are therefore to be distinguished from teaching “about religions” (*faits religieux*) and also have these two options. However, while the Catholic community has long enjoyed a well-organized private school system, given the long-standing importance of the Catholic Church and Catholics in French society, this does not apply to the Muslim community. Indeed, it has only been over the last 30–40 years or so that this community, “the product of a long history of immigration from the Maghreb enriched by waves from Turkey or West Africa” (*Le Monde* 2011: 177), has evolved into a community of settled families, whereas it consisted of immigrant workers before, and that it has also produced an awareness of its Muslim identity. It has grown today to four to five million people, 70% of whom are French (*ibid.*), which makes it the second most visible religious community behind Catholics. How is Islamic religious education being carried out today? What are the challenges that it faces? What are its relations with the secular sphere of the public school system? To answer these questions, this chapter will examine Islamic education within two different frameworks: community (Law of 1901) associations and private schools. The chapter will not cover Muslim higher education institutes, which mostly train adults, though some may offer courses to youth as well; further details can be found in the report published by the Institute for the Study of Islam and Societies of the Muslim World concerning the teaching of Islam (IISMM 2010: 53–72).

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## Muslim Associations

There are many Muslim associations, mostly organized as Law of 1901 associations, and many strive to provide sectarian instructions, among other things. A number of associations have managed to organize this type of education over the long term, notably within Qur’ānic schools, which are “one of the first places where Islam is taught” (*ibid.*:13).

## Distribution in France (Mainland and Overseas)

It is difficult to assess the exact number of Qur’ānic schools in France. Prayer rooms/mosques in France are currently estimated at about 2300 in total, with 2000 on the mainland (*ibid.*: 11), some in the Antilles and French Guyane, about 26 in Réunion (*Mosquées* 2012), and more than 280 in Mayotte (*FranceMayotte* 2011). In these French departments overseas, nearly half the mosques/prayer rooms across Antilles-Guyane, Réunion, and nearly all in Mayotte have Qur’ānic schools. The case of Mayotte, which stands apart, is explained by the age-old presence of Muslim Sunnis who currently represent nearly 95% of the population in Mayotte (*Outre-Mer* 2012).

For this reason, Mayotte will be treated separately hereafter, and the chapter shall focus on the situation in mainland France.

On the mainland, researchers estimate that a quarter of the 2000 prayer rooms/mosques offer instruction; reportedly, there are 500 Qur'ānic schools serving about 35,000 youth in total (IISMM 2010: 11). Their distribution mirrors Muslim community concentrations: the Seine-Saint-Denis department has the most (about 45); four departments account for more than 30 (Bouches-du-Rhône, Nord, Rhône, Val-de-Marne), whereas about 13 departments have no Qur'ānic schools, even though they have places of prayer. Researchers consider that a prayer room/mosque should be attended regularly by at least 150 people in order to have the financial and educational means to provide religious education (ibid.: 12).

### **Affiliations with Countries of Origin: Still Strong**

Mosques/prayer rooms on the mainland are strongly characterized by ethno-national affiliations (which does not preclude disagreements between the *imām* and the head of the school), and the vast majority of Islamic schools that depend on them are linked to their originating countries who provide the *imāms* and funding for the teachers; the governments of home countries thus have a means to influence the religious and the political discourses that take place at the mosque and school. The schools also employ volunteers and teachers contributed by the community; unlike teachers (and *imāms*) contributed by the originating states, such participants are residents since long or were born and raised in France. Moreover, calls for volunteers and donors occur regularly (Lunel 2012a). According to the IISMM report, few radical groups seek to control these schools, and radicalization does not so much develop at a mosque as it rather stems from a break with it (IISMM 2010: 21).

### **Objectives and Organization**

The main objective of Qur'ānic schools is to ensure the transmission of creed (which the secular state school does not provide) and strengthen the Islamic faith. Another objective that often appears on the websites of Qur'ānic schools is behavioral and civic: to train “good Muslims” and good citizens. The course contents at these schools reflect the two objectives. The Qur'ān is at the core, especially chanted reading and recitations. To be added is (1) learning classical Arabic (CA), “primarily to read and learn the Qur'ān” (ibid.: 18), that is to say, for a denominational and non-communicational purpose, to borrow a distinction made by Kerzazi (2011: 1), as distinct from both the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) language of communication and the colloquial Arabic spoken in families, and (2) Islamic morality. Teachings are organized in a single or several classes, which last between 1.5 and 4 h. Lastly, though this may not relate to Islamic education per se, some Islamic schools will devote hours to the home country's history, in a “legitimist” vein (IISMM 2010: 20).



Considering that becoming literate in Arabic is essential to learn the Qur'ān, the minimum weekly time allotted would be 3 h in one or two classes on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and/or Sundays. An example is the school at the al-Iḥsān mosque in Argenteuil, where children aged 6 to 13 years attend 4 h of classes on Saturday mornings (religion and Arabic) and are also offered Arabic classes of 1.5 h on Wednesday mornings (Al Ihsan 2012; *La Croix* 2012). This adds to the already heavy schedule at elementary school (24 h), middle school (about 25 h or more), and high school (over 30 h), excluding the homework required by both public schools and Qur'ānic schools.

Indeed, in most cases at Qur'ānic schools, children are assessed and grouped by age (at school) and not by level (as may be the case for adult courses). An attendance report is used to liaise with parents, and there are school rules about timeliness, attendance, behavior, and dress (the *ḥijāb*, or Islamic headscarf, is permitted, not required) that must be proper, even be “in accordance with Islamic teachings,” as recommended by the school in Vigneux (2012). Some schools go so far as to state the possibility of being expelled, either temporarily or permanently (Al Imane 2012; Vigneux 2012). No information is available on suspensions or exclusions, but we may logically assume that few of these occur and that the rules are well respected (perhaps more than in public schools?), based on the parental choice involved and the fact that the courses do not suffer from the negative view held toward public schools, which will be discussed later. Mixed-sex education is the norm, except at certain schools (whose number is impossible to define), such as the ones attached to the mosque in Lunel (2012b; IISMM 2010: 30).

The different instruction programs are defined by the Qur'ānic school itself or the teacher himself, and the latter is assisted with textbooks, especially those published by Pixel, Jeunesse sans Frontières (*Youth Without Borders*), and Granada. Moreover, since the early 2000s, the production of Arabic textbooks [containing a suggestion of Muslim-ness, at times, which may be difficult to assess (Kerzazi 2011)] and on religion has increased significantly, and publishing houses are claiming high print runs, over 150,000 copies according to some (Cheikh 2010: 100).

Researchers note a wide disparity among these schools in the quality of education as well as teachers who may have no training or experience as educators; the IISMM reported “a form of amateurism” regarding courses (IISMM 2010: 22; Cheikh 2010: 98 regarding Arabic).

Besides Qur'ānic schools, we should mention Muslim cultural associations (Law of 1901) that only focus on the Arabic language. Available documentation on the subject is minimal (Cheikh 2010). Hocine Kerzazi is currently preparing a doctoral research on “The religious discourse in textbooks of Arabic for the French speakers.” Most of these associations follow the Maghrebian tradition, i.e., they dispense 1.5 h of Arabic (classical) together with 30 min of religion, using the editions mentioned above (Cheikh 2010: 98–99) because, as in Qur'ānic schools, we are dealing with the Arabic of the faith. Rare are courses that deal solely with language, without the religious dimension.

## The Special Case of Mayotte

In Mayotte, which became the 101st French department on 31 March 2011, the situation is different because of the overwhelming presence of Muslims dating back from the early times of Islam and because of its former status. Until 2011, Mayotte was the part of the Comoros that had remained French and was a *Collectivité d'Outre-Mer* (Overseas Collectivity) for which the Law of 1905 did not apply but where Muslim custom law was in force (Outre-Mer 2012). All Muslim children attend Qur'ānic school in the morning and public school in the afternoon (Poucet 2011: 264). Islamic teaching is in accordance with tradition, essentially with chanting of the Qur'ān. At this time, there is no scientific information available on course contents.

## Interaction with Secular Public Schools

It is difficult to assess the interaction between Qur'ānic schools and public schools, because there is no study on this subject, and of course, the state has no control over instruction at Qur'ānic schools. While these two worlds cannot ignore one another's existence, they know little of each other. Few public schoolteachers know exactly how many and which of their students also attend Qur'ānic school; this knowledge, which can only be vague, is acquired only from student's casual comments or offered statements. In any case, hardly any of them are familiar with the contents of these courses and the spirit in which they are taught or to what school of Islam they belong (Sunnī, Shī'ah, etc.) or the attendance and additional workload demands for students. As for Qur'ānic schoolteachers, it would seem that only a minority (their number is impossible to specify, given the current state of research) are public sector educators as well. This dual activity enables Qur'ānic schools to benefit from the training and experience of public schoolteachers, skills that teachers at Qur'ānic schools do not all have.

Conversely, one may ask what impact their work with religious teaching would have on their work in the secular public sector. Would it lend them – at the public school and among Muslim students there who would know of their religious involvement, especially if this was performed in the same town or a neighboring town – an authority (additional) that would come more from their role in the religious community than their status as a teacher? This point arises insofar as teachers of history as well as of French have reported that their credibility to speak about Islam and the Qur'ān is sometimes questioned on the grounds that they are not Muslim (IESR 2011, no. 30; Laithier and Van den Kerchove 2012). As a history teacher in public school, how would one address the chapter on the beginnings of Islam? If one teaches earth and life sciences, how would he approach the topic of evolution present in the course programs of his subject? Will one manage to make a clear distinction between the scientific line applied within the state education system and the religious perspective of the Qur'ānic school? If so, will one take the opportunity to make young people understand that the two discourses, one scientific

and the other based on faith, are no doubt different but that they are not opposed by nature? Such questions remain unanswered for the moment.

Thus, any interaction would mainly and sometimes solely be manifested among youth who attend both institutions. We will consider what questions arise at the cognitive and behavioral levels. Under the school laws of the late nineteenth century and the 1905 law, public schools do not provide religious instruction, but nor do they prevent any faiths. In Alsace-Moselle, where the public sector is required to offer religious classes, yet with the possibility of being exempted from them (Poucet 2012: 79), there is still no Islamic instruction, although the Stasi Commission found in its report prepared in 2003 that it was possible to propose teaching of Islam without changing the status in Alsace-Moselle (*Le Monde* 2003: 22). Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education is not silent on religion in general or on Islam in particular. Thus, history class begins with a chapter on the “beginnings of Islam” (about 3 h) in the school year of *cinquième* (students aged 12–13), and occasionally returns to contemporary Islam in later years (in *troisième*, *seconde*, *première*), as in geography (in *quatrième*). In French class, the teacher has the opportunity to study extracts from the Qur’ān (in *sixième*, first year of middle school, students aged 11–12). Together with this, some public schools offer Arabic (Langue et Culture Arabes 2011), i.e., Modern Standard Arabic, the language of communication, taught as a foreign language; Arabic is however in decline at public schools (less than 7000 students currently), compared to private institutes and associations, religious, or otherwise (Cheikh 2010; Kerzazi 2011).

The state’s education perspective thus differs significantly from that of Qur’ānic schools. The first one is scientific, historical, and critical, and it evokes Islam, mostly in history, by focusing on its historic track (namely by contextualizing the Qur’ān) and its plurality; the purpose, according to the skills base defined in 2005, is to bring students to develop their “capacity for judgment and critical thinking” (Socle 2002). The second perspective, on the other hand, is religious, nonhistorical (e.g., the story of Qur’ān’s revelation), and noncritical. Two discourses that are quite different and may seem contradictory to any youth are still lacking in knowledge, perspective, and maturity. Of course, the qualitative survey conducted in 2011 by the European Institute of Religious Sciences on teaching about religions (*faits religieux*) in history classes shows that teachers are careful to respect religions and not to offend the faithful (Laithier and Van den Kerchove 2012). However, this cannot be sufficient. And what about the teachers at Qur’ānic schools? How do they view the secular discourse on their religion at public schools? What do they tell children who ask about any differences? These questions have yet to be explored:

There are thus several moments in class that may be further investigated:

- In history, when Islam at its beginnings is presented (*cinquième*, students aged 12–13) and particularly when the public sector teacher discusses the Qur’ān, its writing, and its presentation
- In history, when the contemporary history of some Muslim countries is addressed, as the teacher may differ from “legitimist” line (IISMM 2010: 20) in some Qur’ānic schools

- In French, when in *sixième* the teacher chooses to address, in extracts, the French translation of the Qur’ān
- In earth and life sciences, when the teacher discusses the theory of evolution (Mathieu 2011)

On all these points, even on others (such as the chapter on development in Geography: *IESR* 2011: no. 30), teachers have indeed noted difficulties, involving students who claimed a Muslim identity and who challenged their lecture. However, in these cases, the teachers evoked the influence of mosques more times than the schools which depend on them. Only three of the 40 teachers interviewed in the *IESR* survey (*IESR* 2011, no. 20, 25, and 33) made a connection with Qur’ānic schools, noting three different reactions from students. One male teacher in Seine-Saint-Denis (*IESR* 2011: no. 20) stated that the difference between what is discussed at home, by the teacher and at Qur’ānic school, creates confusion among students, generating protests from some and a sizeable misunderstanding. A teacher in Paris (*IESR* 2011: no. 33) said that several of her students in *cinquième* attended Qur’ānic school and that they were happy that the year began with a lesson on Islam. The third teacher in the Haut-Rhin in Alsace (*IESR* 2011: no. 25) expressed her surprise, saying “the Turkish little ones, they may be following religion classes, but they aren’t necessarily aware of the religion itself, they do not necessarily know things, it’s amazing, I’d say.” What about the others who evoked only the mosques? Are they confusing mosques with Qur’ānic schools for lack of better understanding? Do they just speak of the mosque/prayer room because it is more visible than a Qur’ānic school? Should one tie any protests to mosques alone, where radical preaching may on occasion occur? Only an in-depth study would enable us to determine the factors (multiple) behind these protests: mosque, Qur’ānic school, parents, the Internet, etc.

At any rate, it seems clear that a juxtaposition of the two teachings, so different in perspective and so little articulated in relation to one another by the educators themselves, can only bring young students to ask questions at best and, at worst, to radically reject the line of one discourse in favor of the other.

Finally, we may also ask whether the young are putting the two teachings on the same plane; this is probably in line with the different expectations placed in each. We could look back at the results of the investigation “Religious Education: Conflict or Dialogue of Factor” conducted in 2008 (in France and seven other European countries), which reported that only 28% of French Muslims who responded to the questionnaire considered the school as an important source of information about religion, behind the religious community, and the family foremost (95%) (Van den Kerchove 2009: 60).

The same question arises vis-à-vis parents. They probably feel more reassured by the Qur’ānic school that gives explicit attention to morality (although it is certainly present but more diffuse in public schools) and proper appearance and also carries out “a mission of support for the parents in child education and social tutoring” (*IISM* 2010: 19). At the same time, these same parents are very little involved in or active with the public school, which they tend to bear passively rather (not having chosen it), which moreover often suffers from a negative image, whose secular

character is not always understood, nor readily accepted as it may be considered as opposing Islam and its practice.

Next to Qur'ānic schools, the reputation of public schools can only be magnified as a place of laxity or even impunity for some. One may wonder to what extent some families would set all their hopes on the Qur'ānic school, the way other families – Muslim or not – set their hopes on private schools.

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## Muslim Private Schools

Following the Catholics (9085 private establishments, with 8980 dispensing education under contract with the state), Protestants (24 establishments, with only four under contract), and Jews (110 establishments, with 86 under contract) (Poucet 2012: 96–97), Muslims now have access to Muslim private schools, since a few years. Their number however is modest given the size of the Muslim population in France.

### A Brief Historical Account

Besides the state school system (86.9 % of the students), there is a private school system enrolling the remaining percentage of students. Most private establishments operate under a “contract of association” with the state, a possibility offered by the Debré Law of 1959: the state pays for the teachers, who must pass qualification exams that are specific to the private school system, but whose examination tests are identical to those for the public sector; the private sector must comply with state directives on education, respecting secularity (*laïcité*) above all; this contract may be signed after a minimum of 5 years of operation and after inspection by the State School Inspectorate (Poucet 2012: 49–50).

The oldest Muslim private school is Médersa Taalimul-Islam (kindergarten and primary school), located in Saint-Denis, Réunion, founded in 1947, and under contract with the state since 1990. For a long time, it was the only Muslim school on French territory. Several schools have been established since the early 2000s, following various initiatives from which Bruno Poucet drew a typology (Poucet 2012: 269–271): (i) schools fostered by mosques under the impetus of the Union of Islamist Organizations of France (UOIF, close to the Muslim Brotherhood). They include the Lycée Averroès (high school) in Lille in 2003, which was the first Muslim private high school (under contract since June 2008); the Collège-lycée Al-Kindi (middle and high school) at Décines, near Lyon, which opened in 2007 after a long legal battle; the Collège Education et Savoir (Education and Science) in Vitry-sur-Seine, opened in 2008; the Collège Alif in Toulouse, opened in 2009; in Marseille, two establishments, “L’Olivier” (Olive Tree), a kindergarten and primary school, opened in 2003, and the Collège Ibn Khaldun opened in 2009; also in 2009, the Collège Institut de formation de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (Training Institute) at Montigny-les-Bretonneux; (ii) schools fostered by mosques under the auspices of

the National Federation of Muslims of France: the Collège Réussite in Aubervilliers, opened in 2001 (not yet under contract yet, despite its requests since 2005); (iii) schools established by a religious brotherhood: the Collège Educ'Active in Ville-neuve-Saint-Georges, opened in 2009, belonging to the Gülen network; and (iv) La Plume primary school in Grenoble, opened in 2005 (not listed in IISMM 2010: 37–38, but in Poucet 2011: 275). These eleven establishments (with only two under contract with the state) did not represent more than 1100 students in 2010 (Poucet 2011: 265). Other projects are underway, but for the moment there is no coordinating national organization, even if the UOIF increasingly is trying to federate all of them (Poucet 2011: 271).

Three factors explain the development of Muslim private schools according to the IISMM report (2010: 40–44): (1) the work of the Muslim Brotherhood who are active in many projects and who wish to establish a “Muslim Citizenship” – Hakim Chergui, legal counsel to the UOIF stated that “Muslims need to be educated by other Muslims” (ibid.: 41) – in order to avoid a loss of religious identity; (2) the perceived breakdown of public schools and the will to succeed; and (3) the “headscarf” affairs since the late 1980s and the ban on wearing the *hijāb* (in publicly administered environments), considered as an ostentatious religious symbol since the Law of 2004 – on this count, the background of some schools as the Lycée Averroès is instructive (Lycée Averroès 2012). However, the IISMM report does state that, while this factor was a trigger, one should not be distracted by it; the *hijāb* is permitted in these establishments because of their proper character, but it is not mandatory and not all girls attending these schools wear them.

From the viewpoint of the parents, the desire to enroll their children in a Muslim private school is twofold: to transmit Islam and provide their children with a better opportunity for scholastic achievement. According to the founding president of the school group Al-Kindi, although it is “our responsibility as Muslims to pass on our heritage,” it is the desire of parents to secure better attention and tutoring than would be the case at public schools that takes precedence over religion (Guéraud 2010); this motivation, the choice for scholastic achievement, is hence identical to the prevailing one in choosing a Catholic school. And in both cases, the argument is the same: higher schooling standards and “added value on moral education” (IISMM 2010: 46). The names chosen for some schools explicitly reflect this emphasis on achievement: Réussite (Success), Averroès (Averroes), etc., one that is effectively delivered in light of national examination statistics, as evidenced by the Lycée Averroès (nearly 100% success rate for the Baccalaureate), partly explained by low student-teacher ratios (which comes at a significant cost). However, should the faith-driven motivation be relegated to a secondary plane? Would this not have a rhetorical effect, and would this not reflect a willingness to circumvent possible criticisms, concerns, and fears? It seems to us that we should not be minimizing, at least for the moment, the religious aspect; it is obviously quite present on the websites of the schools, and it accounts for a large part in the decision of parents, who could have otherwise enrolled their children in other private schools under contract, less expensive, but non-Muslim.

## An Islamic Education?

Private schools under contract or off contract must comply with all national teaching programs, even if the state does not effectively control some Jewish private schools and even some Catholic ones (Poucet 2011: 272). They differ from public schools by offering electives or optional subjects, namely, courses more religious in character or language courses like Hebrew. It is the same in Muslim private schools. Thus, all Muslim private schools offer Arabic as foreign language in addition to English, and Islamic education, at the rate of 1 h per week at some establishments (IISMM 2010: 46), around three themes: morality, religious practices, and relevant topics (*Hijrah*, *ramadān*, etc.). Some off-contract schools have a much more pronounced religious objective, e.g., the Collège Plume in Grenoble, which aims “to provide children a complete education for the development of their personality, their intelligence, and their faith”, which has “a project for education of the person in his entirety” and which “is marked for the spiritual values of Islam.” (For more details, see the website of the school: <http://ecoleplume.com/article/projet-d-educatif-de-l-ecole>. Accessed on March 4, 2014.)

However, this teaching raises several questions:

1. Regarding quality in particular. As in Qur’ānic schools, many private schools are struggling to find qualified educators and dedicated ones who are not just activists (IISMM 2010: 47), for either Islamic education or Arabic. This was particularly the problem at the Lycée Averroès, until it found a doctoral candidate in sociology in 2010 (she earned her PhD in December 2011) for its Islamic education classes.
2. Attendance at these courses. At the Lycée Averroès, which is under contract, the Islamic education course is optional and is not graded (unlike so many Qur’ānic schools). In addition, the majority of students do not follow it, and the school’s administrators do not seem to be bent on promoting attendance to it, because their efforts are directed at ensuring success in formal education in order to form an elite foremost; even if Muslim off-contract schools may have a greater ability to incentivize students, it will be difficult to maintain the momentum if they want to get the contract, which is the wish of many. Thus, can the Collège Plume in Grenoble continue to display its pronounced denominational vocation when it wants to come under contract with the state?
3. As in the case of Qur’ānic schools, interaction with general education. How does it happen? How are the differences discussed with students between a position that is religious, nonhistorical, no-critical, and the scientific and critical position? How are the differences, sometimes significant, in viewpoints treated between the two approaches? How are some chapters treated in history, French, and earth and life sciences? Many questions remain unanswered for the moment.

In fact, the authors of the IISMM report (2010: 48) believe that the Islamic dimension of education is less present in the courses offered and their content than in “the ‘atmosphere’ of the institution,” the possibility to wear the *hijāb* for both students and teachers, the presence of places of worship, religion-based meals,

respect for Muslim holidays which are off-days, the possibility to have a corps of Muslim educators. “Somehow, it suffices that the establishment is run by Muslims, which allows the school to euphemize reference to Islam in its mission statements” (ibid.: 49). But even this “atmosphere” is subject to questioning, particularly because of the willingness to be under contract with the state. If schools insist much on this “atmosphere,” only Muslims will attend; these schools will become *de facto* (not in a legal sense) community-dedicated establishments, developing as a religious and cultural circle between themselves, as is the case of several private Jewish and Evangelical schools. However, several Muslim schools report they want to bring in non-Muslim students and have received requests to this effect (without us being able to verify these claims). This would entail opening up faculty as well, which would also be the case for a school under contract with the state.

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## Conclusion

At present, Islamic religious education occurs mainly in France as part of associations, especially through Qur’ānic schools (approximately 500 for 35,000 students). It is thus for the most part carried out without any state control. The discourse developed is therefore very different from that in place within the national education system, being sectarian, noncritical, and nonhistorical. Yet no interaction is intended or considered with general education, which may facilitate the two discourses which are thus being placed in opposition (by the young students themselves, but also by some educators).

Besides the community association framework, and at times grown from it, private schools of general education with an Islamic denomination have also been created over the last 15 years, and several projects are underway; there are 11 schools (of which only two are under contract with the state) for less than 1100 students in all (in 2013, when this paper was written). All offer, together with national course programs, religious education that is normally optional. Any articulation between general education and Islamic education is also difficult to implement, even if both occur in the same place, because of difficulties in sourcing qualified educators and/or because of the pronounced sectarian and religious character of some schools, which raises the question of their compatibility with national programs. Except for the long-existing school in Réunion, all these schools are recent and at crossroads in their development. Either some will follow the model of many Jewish schools which are *de facto* (not in a legal sense) community dedicated establishments or some will be moving toward the model of many Catholic schools, which are primarily focused on scholastic achievement. The model adopted will also depend on how certain relationships will be altered to include (1) the status of both science and the religious sciences in Islam and (2) the ties between Muslim private schools, Muslim communities, mosques, and countries of origin.



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# Islamic Education in the Nordic Countries

Jørgen Bæk Simonsen and Holger Daun

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## Abstract

The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) shared an educational foundation until the beginning of the 1990s, when education was radically changed in all these countries except Denmark. The latter country has a long tradition of private education, which has allowed Muslims to start their schools when they started to arrive to the country. The other countries were very strict in relation to private schools in that regulations and control were strong and subsidies low. This was changed in the beginning of the 1990s, and 20 years later, Sweden had some 15 Muslim schools. The chapter uses Denmark and Sweden to

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illustrate the Nordic case. The other countries did not yet in 2013 have any Muslim schools, due mainly to the fact that there were few Muslim immigrants.

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**Keywords**

Muslim schools · Quranic schools

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## Introduction

The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) share several features of the welfare state and educational views but differ in immigration policies and in regard to Islamic education. Sweden had for a long time the most generous or liberal immigration policies, while Finland had the most restrictive one. Consequently, the proportion of Muslims among the populations differs. All of the countries except Denmark were restrictive in relation to private schools but in the beginning of the 1990s, Sweden relaxed the regulations and increased public subsidies. This policy made it possible for formal schools with a Muslim profile to be established. In Finland, no private Islamic school had been established yet in 2016. In Norway, one private Muslim school with state subsidies was approved after several applications and appeals to higher level authorities had been made, but the school was closed after 1 year. Thus, Islamic educational institutions exist practically only in Denmark and Sweden, and these countries will therefore serve as cases in this chapter.

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## Denmark

### Private Schools

According to the Danish Constitution, § 76, parents are directed to secure their children to have 9 years of primary education from the age of 5 or 6 years. Most parents enroll their children in the free public school but it is only an offer, not a prerequisite for abiding to the legal demands endorsed by the Parliament. Parents are according to the constitution free to teach their children themselves or have them enrolled in a private primary school. Since the promulgation of the first constitution in 1849, Denmark, has had a great number of private schools established along various religious or political principles, but a number of parents have also decided to establish private primary schools because they disagree with the number of pupils admitted in each class in the public school, or because they are in favor of stronger emphasis on such more creative subjects as music, art, theater for the daily life of the children. In recent years, quite many private schools have been established when local authorities, as a consequence of declining budgets have decided to close small public schools in the countryside. The number of pupils enrolled in private primary schools at the national level has been increasing lately as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1** Numbers and percentages of students in public and private schools in Denmark, 2004/2005–2014/2015

	2004/2005	2006/2007	2008/2009	2010/2011	2012/2013	2014/2015
<i>Public schools</i>	595,578	595,561	582,658	559.609	550.710	543.753
Percent	87.1	86.6	85.9	85.5	84.3	83.5
<i>Private schools</i>	88,649	92,064	95,972	95.142	102.638	107.581
Percent	12.9	13.4	14.1	14.5	15.7	16.5

Source: Ministry of Education; UNI.C Statistik & Analyse, September 16, 2009; Ministry for Children, Teaching and Gender Equality 2016

The numbers presented in Table 1 cover all public and all private schools in Denmark. Statistics for the greater Copenhagen area indicates that more than one fourth of all Muslim pupils in the region are enrolled in private Muslim primary schools (Ihle 2007). This is also the case for Århus, the second largest city.

Parents who want to establish a private primary school have to organize themselves in an association, have to elect a board democratically, and finally have to prepare a charter explaining the specific values and intentions on which they want to run the school. If these legal prescriptions are fulfilled and the values of the charter do not contradict Danish laws, the Ministry will allow the school to be established. All private primary schools are obliged to meet the goals formulated in the general law for the public primary schools as far as the individual subjects in the curriculum are concerned (cf. Bekendtgørelse nr. 748 af 13. juli 2009); however, as they are privately established and legally recognized, their curriculum may include subjects not found in the public school, for example, special classes on Islam or special classes in the language of the parents. They will always be offered as an addendum to the general curriculum.

In general, the state covers 70% of the expenditures for running a private primary school and the rest must be covered by the parents who set up the school. All private schools are entitled to apply for economic support from individuals or from private organizations, be they Danish or foreign, but external private funding has to be transparent in the accounts of the individual school sent to the Ministry of Education every year. The rules and regulations pertaining to teachers working in the public schools do not apply to teachers employed by private schools. The board and its director are free to employ whoever they find fit for the job and are not obliged to choose professionally educated teachers although most of them does as will be illustrated below. According to the law on private primary schools (Bekendtgørelse nr. 962 af September 26, 2008) it is up to the board, the director and the parents in cooperation to guarantee, that legal rules and demands requested by law are fulfilled in the school at large as well as in the various subjects taught.

The private schools are accordingly subject to external supervision at recurring intervals. The external supervisors are chosen by the individual private school and supervisors submit a report to the Ministry and to the school after supervision. These supervisors of course pay their visits at dates and hours unknown to the school and are requested to supervise the actual teaching in various subjects, the books and

materials used by any single teacher, and finally have to make sure that the pupils are offered possibilities to take part in the decision making process of the individual school by way of pupils' council and the like. Upon recommendation from the supervisor, the Ministry can ask the school to adjust its daily practice if it does not abide to the standards and levels requested or it can decide to place the school under extended supervision. In the end, the Ministry can decide to withdraw its economic support in which case the school will have to close. If the Ministry finds public funding to be used in violation of existing rules, the economic support will be stopped immediately as has been the case with a few of the Muslim private elementary schools (Kühle 2006).

### Private Muslim Schools

The first private Muslim school in Denmark was established in 1978 when a group of parents opened The Arab School, an establishment which excellently mirrors the dynamics of the Danish tradition with private primary schools (Bæk Simonsen 1990; Jensen 1987). From 1967 to 1973 a number of migrants from Yugoslavia, Morocco, Turkey, and Pakistan arrived in the country to take over some of the many unoccupied jobs in the country. The original plan of the migrants was to return to their country of origin when enough money had been saved to make investment back home possible, thus creating a better future for the family. In November 1973, new legislation passed the Parliament effectively curbed further migration. However, the employers' associations persuaded the political parties to pass new laws during the spring of 1974 making it possible for migrants with a job to join their families in Denmark (Bæk Simonsen 1990; Østergaard 2007).

Despite the unification of the families, the migrants upheld the plan of returning to the country of origin but meanwhile they had to face a number of challenges as the interaction with the surrounding non-Muslim host society increased at all levels. Danish law prescribes all foreigners staying in the country to abide to existing laws in various fields of daily life, and the migrants were thus expected to abide to the legal obligation of parents to secure education for their children. As a result of this, the unified migrant families had to enroll their children in the public school and were encountered by a public school system established based on values and traditions different from those familiar to the parents. As the parents were convinced that their stay in Denmark was temporary, some of them were quite critical *vis-à-vis* the pedagogical practices used by teachers as well as the social norms dominating the public schools. This is evident from the charter for the first private Muslim primary school. The charter which was formulated by the parents lists the following goals to be fulfilled by the new school:

- To teach Islam, not just as a subject along other subjects but as the central focus in the upbringing of the pupils with reference to the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.
- To establish a firm milieu offering children of different nationalities and social classes the possibility to grow up and develop in community with others.

- To offer assistance to each child making it possible to develop his or her personality in an atmosphere of joy and security.

The rules pertaining to members of the board list the following requirement for those elected:

- Knowledge of the Islamic *shahādah* (testimony of the Faith)
- Knowledge of and abiding to the Muslim religious duties (prayer, fasting during Ramaḍān, and the like)
- Knowledge of and abiding to the moral and social rules of Islam.

The first private Muslim school soon split up into several others due to differences among the parents as to how Islam was to be translated into practice at a more concrete and daily level, but the Muslim private schools established during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s subscribed to the same central and formal position of Islam in their respective charters.

The parents were convinced that they sooner or later were to return back to their country of origin, and they were very traditional as far as the curriculum was concerned. They had, on the one hand to abide to legal prescriptions as to the subjects taught at the individual grades of the school, but as the schools were recognized by the Ministry, they were legally entitled to add to their curriculum subjects in line with the wish of the parents who also had the authority to set up general and specific rules of daily conduct among the pupils.

The charters therefore signify the wish of the single private Muslim primary school to introduce to the students' knowledge of Islam in line with a specific national interpretation subscribed to by the parents and in a wider perspective to develop, sustain, and enhance an individual and collective social conduct in line with values and norms in the country of origin. In line with this, all private Muslim schools were offering classes in the language spoken by the parents. All subjects were according to the law to be taught in Danish, save the lessons offered as a consequence of the specific charter of the single school. Islam and Islamic history could therefore be taught in Turkish, Arabic, Urdu, or Somali.

As time went by, both the Danish host society and the migrants had to come to terms with the changing and evolving social dynamics embedded in the irreversible transition of society and slowly set in motion by the migration. It gradually became clear that the migrants were to stay – and during the 1990s this resulted in a reformulation of the charters of the Muslim private schools established in the preceding decade. The parents recognized that their children for the greater part were to live their lives in Denmark and not in the country from which the parents originated. This awareness was further enhanced as both the parents and the teachers of the Muslim private schools realized the difficulties that the students experienced when they continued their education in the public secondary schools (high schools). Their skills in several subjects often proved insufficient not least in mastering the Danish language orally and in writing. This resulted in a revision of what the single private Muslim school had as its point of departure and a very significant shift in

emphasis took place. As it was recognized that the future of the children was linked to Denmark, the mastery of social norms and values in the country of origin was downgraded while skills required for a future in a Danish context were strongly upgraded. This can be concluded on the basis of how the charters of some of the schools were reformulated during the middle of the 1990s (Bæk Simonsen 1998; Shakoor 2008). In the charter of Lykkeskolen, for example, the new statutes from 1995 §1 is formulated as follows:

The goal of the school is “to give the students self-esteem by maintaining Islamic values and their original positive cultural values.”

This becomes even more explicit in the statutes of another private Muslim school founded in 1995, when a group of parents from The Samid School established in 1981 by Palestinians decided to open a new school called Al-Quds. It had been discussed in relation to The Samid School on how to enhance the teaching of Danish, and as no compromise could be reached, a group of parents left the school and established a new private Muslim school. In the statutes recognized by the Ministry of Education we find the goal(s) of the school expressed as follows:

Al-Quds School has as its aim to run a bilingual and bicultural free school from kindergarten to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade primarily for students with Arabic as their mother tongue (Statute of the al-Quds School 1995: §2)

The changed social agenda can also be documented in the charter of another new Muslim private school established in 1996 by a group of Lebanese and Palestinian refugees associated with the Sunnī-Muslim *Aḥbāsh* group in Beirut by the name Al-Hudā School (Bæk Simonsen 1998; Hamzeh and Hrair Dekmejian 1996) where the statutes in §1 are formulated as follow:

[The School will] take part in the upbringing [of pupils] and will make it possible for them to develop a Muslim identity as a strength and a support in relation to the society.

In the case of Ørnevejens Free School, the statute §2 is even more direct in this respect defining the goal of the private Muslim school

To unite the Muslim tradition with the demands of the modern world. Islam was to remain the core of values for the single Muslim school, but the fundamental outlook of the schools had changed dramatically. Focus was still on Islam, but the point of departure was now the needs of the students who were to live their lives as Muslims in a non-Muslim society. An interpretation of Islam and a Muslim daily life according to values and norms of a distant country had proved to be insufficient and of no avail in a Danish context, where the students in their future life were expected to take part in debates and discussions with a society and its members with a different set of values. To make this possible it was recognized, that a number of skills were needed if the students were to succeed in the education system at large. Muslim parents as good and caring parents revised and reformulated their practice accordingly.



The first Muslim private schools were established by migrants, and they were all established according to a set of core values embedded in a specific Danish tradition for private primary schools. When a growing number of Muslim parents arrived in the country as refugees seeking political asylum from the early 1980s onwards, they also resorted to establishing private Muslim schools as they, during their first years in the country, experienced the same challenges in their encounter with the Danish public school as had the migrants when their families were unified. But like the migrants, the refugees soon realized the need to adapt to the demands of the surrounding society in case they were to support the future of their children in a more constructive and future-oriented strategy.

Muslim parents who did not enroll their children in private Muslim schools established a number of Qur'ān schools often linked to the local mosque they frequented. These Qur'ān schools were offering courses for a specific time as a way of teaching children the basic values and tenets of Islam and offer them a basic knowledge of early and classical Islamic history. Along with the lessons in Islam, the local Qur'ān schools also offered courses in the mother tongue of the children (Urdu, Arabic, Turkish, Somali, etc.).

The institutions established by the Muslim minority as a consequence of the unification of the families soon became an issue in the public debate, and in line with most of Europe a debate on the compatibility of Islam with the modern secular world took place during the 1990s. Politicians expressed concern as they interpreted the establishment of the private schools as a proof of the establishment of a parallel society based on values different from the values of the host society. As a result of the terror attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001, this discussion was intensified further, and a number of revisions of the laws pertaining the legal rules for running private schools have been decided by the Parliament. Since 2000 no less than 22 changes in the general law on private, primary schools have been endorsed by the Parliament.

During the latest decade, The Gülen Movement has established a number of private schools in Denmark as well as two High Schools. The schools are set up in line with the movements' international strategy and have a declared aim to prove the compatibility of Islam with modern science and modernity (Ebaugh 2010; Yavuz 2013; Tittensor 2014).

## **The Reaction of the Danish Society**

The general public and some politicians have suspected and still suspect the private Muslim schools for not seriously and wholeheartedly endorsing the principles of a democratic society. In a few cases have politicians demonstrated a serious and dangerous lack of knowledge of the legal conditions for the private Muslim schools demanding among other things, that books used in the schools were to be in Danish. Ever since the establishment of the first private Muslim school the law has explicitly underlined the obligation of the private schools to teach in Danish, and a number of students from some of the Muslim schools publicly criticized the elementary lack of

knowledge on the part of the politicians who clearly were not up to date with existing rules (*Politiken*, August 28, 2009).

In total, there were 38 private Muslim primary schools in Denmark in 2016 and three private Muslim high schools, two of which are run by the Gülen Movement. No less than 41% of the students are continuing their education in High School compared to 26% of the students from other private primary schools (Ihle 2007). During recent years the tendency for the various Muslim private schools to be dominated by specific national groups of children has changed, and most of the private Muslim schools have an ethnic mix as far as their students are concerned. Lately, a number of ethnic Danish children whose parents have converted to Islam have begun to show up in the private Muslim schools, and that trend will certainly increase in the future.

A number of local mosques and organizations have established educational programs on a private and informal basis during recent years offering courses in Qur'ān recitation, Qur'ān commentary as well as in Islamic law, philosophy and dogma. They are attended by young Muslims who aim to obtain a more profound knowledge about Islam or intend to expand further the knowledge they already have accumulated in their private studies. One of the many local mosques (The Islamic Cultural Centre) has entered into negotiations with the Ministry of Education for a possible official recognition of courses offered and diplomas issued by the Center. The offered courses will be confessional in content, but the argument of the Center is the general recognition of a growing need for well-educated and trained Muslims in the increasing and ever-expanding interaction between the Muslim minority on the one hand and the society on the other. In this respect, the Center plans to develop and offer courses to educate young Muslims who wish to serve as *imāms* for their fellow Muslim citizens. For decades a number of *imāms* from various Muslim countries have been attached to the various mosques, some of them with a long and professional education from different universities in the Muslim world, some, however, of with less formal education. Many of these *imāms* have been criticized for a general lack of knowledge of the wider Danish society, and certainly a number of them in the early years were in dire need of greater and deeper insight into the social norms and structures of the Danish society.

This has, however, been changed, and like the parents and the teachers in the private Muslim primary schools most of the *imāms* are now aware of this need and are accordingly striving to achieve the insight needed in order to assist the Muslim minority at large as well as the individual Muslim in developing an interpretation of Islam making it possible for Muslims to live a life as believers in a non-Muslim society. The question of education of *imāms* has been on the public agenda several times during the last decade, but always as part of a public debate about the compatibility of Islam with the modern world initiated by non-Muslim politicians and therefore often without participation of Muslims living their life in the country (Johansen 2005, 2006). The new initiative seems to indicate a change of position in this view and offers yet one more example of how Muslims in general are engaged in the debate about the future in line with initiatives established by the organization Muslims in Dialogue or by The Islamic Society of Faith, the largest Muslim congregation in the greater Copenhagen area.

Advanced studies in Islam are presently conducted at the University of Copenhagen and University of Århus; however, similar to all other studies at the Faculty of Humanities based on the secular, humanistic approach to the various subjects and in no way based on a dogmatic acceptance of Islam nor beliefs and dogmas formulated by Muslim scholars.

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## Sweden

### Private Schools

In Sweden there were few Muslim immigrants until the 1990s but since then Muslim immigrants have come in large numbers from Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iran. In the 1970s, an explicit immigration policy was formulated for the first time (Widgren 1980). Immigrants should be integrated in the economy and the labor market but have freedom of choice as to culture, lifestyle, and language, without needing to violate their cultural and ethnic identity. Approximately 10% of the population were immigrants or children of immigrants in 2015 before the large-scale immigration at the end of that year. In 2015, 500,000–600,000 in Sweden were defined as Muslims (either immigrants from Muslim countries or children of such immigrants). A total of 150,000 of them are considered religious believers. According to the World Values Surveys (WVS), Sweden has all the time been the most secularized country in the world (Inglehart 1997; Norris and Inglehart 2004), and still was in 2015 (World Values Survey 2015). Among some groups of Muslim, Swedish schools are perceived to be not teaching morals.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Sweden radically changed its policy in relation to private schools – from a situation of strong regulation and control, and low subsidies to more deregulation and to more favorable conditions for private schools. Less than 1% of primary school students were in private education before the radical changes (privatization, decentralization, etc.) in 1991. These reforms were, by the way, precisely of the type suggested in the globalized world models: privatization and response to multicultural interests (see Chapter ► “Islam, Globalizations, and Education”).

Some important changes affecting the potential for choice among Muslim parents and children were implemented between mid-1980s and mid-1990s and may be summarized as: (i) decentralization; (ii) introduction of choice; and (iii) deregulation and stimulation of private education. Decentralization started in the 1980s, when the schools were “municipalized.” Since the beginning of the 1990s, municipalities are in the charge of schools and they must guarantee that the national goals are achieved by all schools, i.e., that a certain level educational quality is maintained and that the national curriculum is implemented. They must also subsidize private schools at the same level as public schools. The amount of subsidies has been changed several times but has normally been 75% of the costs of a public school in the same community.

After 1991, the numbers and proportions of pupils in private schools have increased tremendously (see Table 2).

**Table 2** Number and percentages of pupils in public and private comprehensive education in Sweden, 2004–2014

	2004/2005	2006/2007	2008/2009	2010/2011	2012/2013	2014/2015
<i>Public schools</i>	979,244	881,505	816,606	886,487	779,327	815,361
<i>Private schools</i>	65,036	78,587	89,444	105,136	119,695	133,942
Percent	6.2	8.2	9.3	10.6	13.0	14.1

Sources: Skolverket 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014

Note 1: Pupils in Sami, International and some other schools are not included in Table 2. In 2014, some 200 pupils were enrolled in those schools

Note 2: In 2014, only some 8,000 pupils were enrolled in confessional schools, most of which were run by Christian organizations

## Muslims and Education

All private schools are under state supervision while the municipality in which the school is situated has the right of access to information on the school's operations. It is stipulated that private schools must conform to the value premises and the general goals which apply to primary schools within the public municipal school system. Private primary schools with Muslim profiles must not have a content which deviates from the value premises of Swedish society.

Establishment of new private schools should not imply "essential organizational or economic difficulties for education" (in the municipality) (Education Act, Chap. 9, SFS 1997). The municipality allocates subsidies to public and private schools according to the needs: "...subsidies to private school should be determined in regard to the school's responsibility, needs of the students and according to the same principles as for public schools." Each school is eligible to the same amount as that for a public school in the same municipality. Additional subsidies may be allocated to a school per child having learning difficulties, due to handicap or another mother tongue than Swedish (SFS 2010).

Private schools are obligated to follow the national curriculum and the various regulations and laws. This means, for instance, that a private school has to accept all applicants regardless of their background or abilities: private schools "must, in the same way as municipal schools, be based on a democratic foundation and characterized by democratic values, openness, tolerance, objectivity and versatility" (SMES 1997: 12). Before formally establishing a private school, approval must be granted by the National Agency of Education (NAE).

As far as the curricula are concerned, according to the 1994 national curriculum for primary (LPO 94, 1994) as well as upper secondary education, the basic principle is that "everybody should have access to an equivalent education, regardless of their sex, ethnic or social background, or place of residence" (SMES 1997: 7). Religion is taught as a general subject presenting all world religions. The students are not taught in a specific religion but are taught about different religions.

The first private primary school started by Muslims in Sweden was established in 1993. In terms of total numbers only a small segment of Muslim children in Sweden

attend a school with a Muslim profile. The percentage of compulsory school students at private schools has increase from Little more than 1% in 1991 to 14% in 2014/15 (Skolverket 2014). Approximately, 1% of all students were enrolled in 67 schools with a confessional orientation, and of these schools 13 had a Muslim orientation (Skolverket 2009). Some other schools had officially an ethnic/linguistic profile but had been chosen by parents because of their perceived Muslim profile (Brattlund 2009). All private schools with an explicit or implicit Muslim profile were operated chiefly as foundations, corporations, or associations. Private schools should employ teachers with pedagogical training.

Most children from Muslim families attend public schools or other private schools. Some Muslim parents, children, and the Muslim staff came to Sweden as refugees. Some of the children attend the public schools during the initial period in Sweden while others start directly at a private school. Among those choosing a Muslim school, reasons frequently mentioned are that the parents felt that their children were bullied or marginalized, and that racist attitudes were common in the public schools.

Studies (Berglund 2009; Brattlund 2009) have shown that primary schools with a Muslim profile in Sweden have recruited many non-Muslim teachers due to the requirement of the Education Act that schools have to secure competent teachers and because the schools themselves put demands on the high quality of their education.

The Muslim profile schools at the primary level do not recruit students by being value neutral. Rather, they have been chosen just because they are perceived by parents and students to be private schools with a Muslim profile. For most of those schools, therefore, the recruitment strategy has been to strive to be as clear and frank as possible in stressing their Muslim profile. Even if the schools are open to all and some schools have made an effort to recruit other groups of students, they succeed to recruit mainly Muslim children. Since schools with a religious profile are not allowed to teach in religion, schools with a Muslim profile use to give lectures in Islamic matters outside the schedule of the ordinary school day, that is, after the ordinary school day or during the day but in between the formal classes. Also, some of these schools are colored by something of Muslim culture in that they organize praying, either before the formal school day starts or when it has ended. Furthermore, the school culture is in some schools with a Muslim profile steered by Islamic ideals and norms (ibid.).

Opponents of the private primary schools with a Muslim profile tend to argue that the municipal school is the meeting place where students of different religions and cultures learn to respect one another, “Swedish culture” and “Swedish values.” But the Muslims had experienced in the public schools that they were completely exposed to the values of the majority culture and that the public school very seldom took into consideration the views of the minority cultures on various questions (Daun et al. 2004).

For some of the students, the private schools were their first encounter with Sweden, Swedes, the Swedish language, and the values and the premises which are formulated in the Swedish national curriculum. Students in such schools are instructed by teachers with Swedish teacher training as well as teachers with foreign teacher training, Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Muslim parents come from many different countries and cultures. There are parents among them who are illiterate and others who have a qualified university education. There are parents who have lived in Sweden for only some weeks and other parents who have lived most of their lives in the country. Some of the Muslim parents whose children previously attended a Swedish public school feel more secure when they subsequently send their children to a school with a Muslim profile, because the children are subjected to bullying or be confronted by teachers who act negatively to Muslims or teachers who were striving for cultural “eradication” of the student’s cultural heritage. Another reason for parents and children to choose such a school is the desire to make it possible for the children to learn more about Islam and to become Swedish Muslims (*ibid.*).

After September 11, 2001, mass media have been reporting about some Muslim schools that they do not base education and school life upon the Swedish values. For instance, they have been said not to accept gender equality in the daily life of the school pupils. Some Muslim schools have after inspection been told to follow the established rules concerning budgets and school facilities, and when they have not done so within a certain period, they have been forced to close down. In some of the cases, they have later taken measures and been allowed to reopen.

## **Qur’ānic Education**

Somali immigrants as a case illustrate some of the cultural and educational challenges facing Muslim immigrants in Sweden. In the beginning of the 1990s, Somalis started to arrive in Sweden in large numbers, and at the end of the 1990s, their number was approximately 13,450. Somalis are the largest immigrant group of African origin in Sweden (Statistics Sweden 1998).

Immigrant groups, such as the Somalis, create community centers with the support from the central state and the municipalities. Issues of concern are Islamic education that is offered within the community centers. According to Tibi (1995), there is a general tendency among Muslim communities in diaspora, to avoid the secular knowledge and secular values. Despite the Western education introduced to them, Islamic education is taught in almost all Somali community centers in Sweden. Some of the families send their children to Muslim schools. Full time Muslim schools or Qur’ānic education (as a complement) during leisure time are seen as means in the struggle for the maintenance of the Muslim lifestyle (Daun et al. 2004).

A number of immigrant associations have been established in Sweden, and some have specific reference to their countries of origin, such as those of the Somalis and the Gambians, while others have an Islamic orientation. Many of the associations in Sweden engage in close networking. These associations provide different services for the communities: Qur’ānic schools for children according to the traditional pedagogical model; general guidance for the parents; assistance in various conflicts, a strong core of religious activities including prayers and other religious rites; *zakāt*

at the end of the Month of Ramaḍān (the Month of fasting); most Islamic ceremonies are held in the premises of the association; and a platform for women's meetings. These provisions made by the Somali community centers are mainly to sustain and reinforce the Islamic up-bringing (*tarbīyah*), which is very essential in the earlier socialization of the Muslim children (Robleh 2001).

During the Qur'ān lessons, the children are less exposed to outside influence and the parents strongly believe that Islamic education inspires the development of an Islamic personality. Additional motives on the part of the parents are group pressure and the expectation that traditionally oriented education could stabilize the Somali-Islamic identification of their children and reduce the sharp family and generational conflicts. They argue that Islamic education can prevent a whole range of evils such as drug addiction. The fear of the Muslims is that the overpowering of Western values, particularly those related to material needs, are not only taught at schools but disseminated by the mass media (television, radio, and videos). In order to avoid these, Muslims encourage their children to learn Islam, particularly the reading of the Qur'ān (Nielsen 1992).

In 1997, the NAE made an evaluation of the denominational/ethnic schools and found that they were most commonly chosen by parents with low formal education as a means to maintain their home culture and religion. One of the conclusions drawn by the evaluator was that self-segregation of this nature contributed to more overall segregation in society (Skolverket 1997a). Later studies indicate that such self-segregation seems to continue at least as far as immigrant children of parents with low education are concerned.

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## Conclusion

Denmark differs from other Nordic countries in that private schools have a long tradition in Denmark, and it differs from Sweden in that immigration started later and was for a long time less important. Also, in Denmark it is considerably easier than in the other Nordic countries to start private schools, such as Muslim or Islamic schools or schools with an Arabic profile.

In Sweden, there are considerable differences between the Muslims. The majority accept enrolling their children in public schools. Some of these parents do not see a need for any education apart from the one given in these schools, while others see a complementary need for religious and moral training and send their children to Qur'ānic education organized by different Muslim organization in the local community. A third category of Muslims enroll their children in Muslim schools that teach the Swedish national curriculum, receive state subsidies and have to accept regulation and monitoring exercised by the Swedish authorities.

The leaders in such Muslims schools struggle to keep a balance between the Swedish laws and norms, on the one hand, and the demands from the Muslim owners of the schools and the Muslim parents, on the other hand.

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# Islamic Education in England

J. Mark Halstead

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## Abstract

The first part of the chapter examines the public education system in England and the Muslim response to this system. The dual system of education means that about a third of state-funded schools are owned and operated by religious bodies (mainly the Church of England and the Catholic Church), but the remaining two-thirds are not fully secular as they are required by law to teach religious education and provide a compulsory daily act of collective worship. Trends toward equality of provision over the last 40 years have resulted in (a) the widespread abandonment of single-sex education, (b) the spread of comprehensive education which involves the education of children of all abilities in the same establishment, and (c) the growth of multicultural education which seeks to meet the needs of children from different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds and to prepare all children for life in a pluralist society. Although there has been a backlash against multicultural education in some quarters in the last 10 years, it has made

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state-funded education in England more Muslim-friendly in a number of ways. Religious education is no longer concerned with Christian nurture but adopts a world religions approach, with Islam as one of six religions studied. *Halāl* food is provided for school dinners, Muslim dress requirements are respected, and Islamic festivals are taken as school holidays. Some schools provide opportunities to study Islamic history and Islamic art and seek to make pupils aware of the Islamic contribution to knowledge more generally.

Many Muslim parents are content with the current situation, and, although they would prefer single-sex schools, are prepared to take responsibility for nurturing their children in Islam at home or in the local community, while state-funded schools provide their general education. Others, however, do not like the distinction made between religious education and secular general education (as against the spirit of *tawhīd*), do not like their children to be exposed to un-Islamic values throughout their school life, worry about the moral standards and values in English schools, and want their children to receive more support for their faith identity and spiritual development at school.

The second part of the chapter looks at Islamic educational arrangements outside the state system. These include (a) Muslim full-time schools, of which there are currently nearly 150, mainly private but a few in receipt of state funding, and (b) Muslim supplementary schools, which children attend in the evenings or at weekends, mainly to learn Arabic and Islamic beliefs and practices. The debates about these schools both inside and outside the Muslim community are also discussed.

The third part of the chapter looks at other issues, including academic results of Muslim students, Islamophobia in schools, the fear in British society that Muslim schools promote terrorism, the developing identity of British Muslims, official reports on Muslims and education, and contemporary issues like the development of free schools and home schooling.

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**Keywords**

Islamic education · England · Muslim diaspora · Religious education · Muslim transnational communities

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**Introduction**

According to the UK National Census in 2014, there are over 3,000,000 Muslims living in England, representing 5% of the total population (ONS 2013). They are the fastest growing religious group in England and the largest religious group after Christians, numbering more than the combined total of all other religions. They are the most ethnically diverse religious group in England, though more than two-thirds have ethnic roots in the Indian subcontinent. Thirty-eight percent of England's Muslim population lives in London, with most of the remainder living in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, and West Yorkshire. Forty-eight percent of England's Muslims are under the age of 25, the youngest age profile of any religious

group. Over 9% of all children in England and Wales under the age of 5 are from Muslim families. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the education of Muslim children in England is a matter of great concern for both the government and the parents themselves.

The government is in favor of using education to support integration, interpreted explicitly in terms of community cohesion and encouraging Muslims in England to take on the shared values of the broader society (Thomas 2011); the term also implies conforming to western social mores and expectations, including the free mixing of the sexes, the consumption of alcohol on social occasions, acceptance of homosexual equality, treating religion as a matter of individual choice, etc. Muslim parents generally support integration to varying degrees, though they are more likely to interpret this in terms of their children having a fair chance to pursue careers and economic advancement and to get involved in the institutions of the broader society without fear of racial or religious prejudice and discrimination. If integration requires them to compromise their deeply held religious beliefs and values, this may be considered too high a price to pay. Many Muslims, including young Muslims, prioritize the maintenance of faith identity over other considerations (Abbas 2007; Lewis 2007) and wish to retain the freedom to live in accordance with their religious beliefs and most important cultural traditions, even if to do so involves a degree of separation from the broader society and the rejection of some western secular lifestyles and values. However, they recognize that in the current climate of fear of extremism, any signs of separatism within the Muslim community may be viewed with suspicion.

Muslims in England balance these integrationist and separatist pressures in different ways, and there is very significant diversity in what they want (or are prepared to accept) for the education of their children (Weedon et al. 2013). Most Muslim parents send their children to their local comprehensive community school or academy, either out of choice or because there is no viable alternative. Some parents would clearly prefer single-sex schools if these were available, and others choose church schools because they think any religious ethos preferable to a secular one. Others again prioritize a traditional Islamic upbringing for their children and send them to a state-funded or independent Muslim school where this option is available, or provide homeschooling, or send them to a Muslim country to complete their education, or at least supplement their education with specialist Islamic provision at a mosque school after regular school hours. Behind this diversity lies a number of controversial and under-researched questions: Do Muslim parents have a religious duty to send their children to a school where they will get the best possible academic results? Or is it more important to provide for their spiritual and moral needs, as part of balanced human development? Is the local school the best? What impact do schools have on children's developing identity anyway – compared to the influence of the home, for example? Do state schools prepare children more effectively for future citizenship? Do children at single-sex schools achieve better academic results? Do supplementary schools really add value to Muslim children's education? Recent research has highlighted the extensive debate about such matters among Muslim parents in England, and consensus has so far proved elusive (ibid.).

This present chapter seeks to facilitate further discussion of these and related issues. The first main section examines the public education system in England, with particular reference to its structure, its underlying values, the nature of religious education, and the response of schools to cultural diversity. The second section focuses on the Muslim response to the opportunities and challenges presented by this public education system. The third section considers Islamic educational arrangements outside the state system in England, including both full-time Muslim schools, whether independent or state-funded, and part-time supplementary Muslim schools. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of Muslims in higher education and of contemporary educational challenges facing Muslims in England.

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## The Public Education System in England

One of the most distinctive features of the national system of education in England is the “dual system of education” (Gillard 2011). The term refers to the coexistence in the publicly funded sector of (a) “voluntary” denominational schools, typically owned by a church or other religious organization and hence popularly known as “church schools” or, more recently, “faith schools,” and (b) nondenominational state schools, originally controlled by a school board and hence called “board schools,” but later under the control of the Local Education Authority (LEA) and currently called “community schools.”

Both kinds of school provide children with a general curriculum, but what distinguishes a denominational school is its particular religious character or ethos and its approach to the teaching of religion, which may involve nurture in the faith. In 1944, the status of schools within the “voluntary” sector was clarified, with a distinction being made between (i) voluntary-aided schools, which had some financial responsibility for the provision and maintenance of school buildings but in return were free to appoint their own staff, determine their own admissions policy, and teach their own religious education (RE) syllabus, and (ii) voluntary-controlled schools, where the costs of maintaining school buildings were met by the LEA, but in return the LEA could control the appointment of staff, the admissions policy, and the RE syllabus.

The inclusion of both denominational and nondenominational schools within the state sector of education in England continues to the present day, with almost one-third of all schools being owned by religious bodies (mainly Church of England or Catholic). Denominational schools have retained their popularity with parents (and the support of successive governments) over many generations, perhaps because they are perceived to provide a caring and well-disciplined environment in which children learn sound moral values, though they have been criticized in recent years for using faith-based admission policies to discriminate against children from socially deprived backgrounds (Allen and West 2011); it is worth noting that this charge does not apply to Muslim schools. The dual system of education is of particular interest to Muslims in England, since the legislation allowing the

establishment of denominational schools is not restricted to Christian groups, and indeed Jewish schools have received state support in England since the nineteenth century.

Recent innovations in publicly funded schooling in England, often designed to reduce the influence of LEAs on community schools though using the rhetoric of increasing parental choice, have retained the coexistence of religious and non-religious schools. Thus academies (originally set up to replace low-performing community schools in deprived areas, with no requirement to teach the national curriculum, with running costs met by central rather than local government, and accountable directly to the Department for Education), foundation schools (owned and controlled by the school's own governing body rather than the LEA), and free schools (set up by charities, businesses, teachers, or parents, funded directly by the government, responsible for their own curriculum and admissions but accountable ultimately to the Secretary of State for Education) may all be denominational or nondenominational in status. Free schools with a religious character are allowed by law to admit up to 50% of students on the basis of their faith, and this has made the option of opening a free school attractive to some Muslim groups. Significant numbers of independent or private schools in England (7% of all children attend such schools) are also owned by religious bodies and provide denominational education. Finally, parents who exercise their legal right to homeschool their children may be motivated by religious considerations.

Another distinctive feature of the national system of education in England is that all schools, both denominational and nondenominational, are required by law to provide RE and a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils (though parents can request their children's withdrawal, and teachers also have the right to withdraw for conscientious reasons). Indeed, prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act, RE was the only compulsory school subject (Gillard 2011). The 1988 Act retained this high status by defining the basic curriculum of schools as made up of two parts: first, religious education, and, second, the subjects of the national curriculum. Voluntary-aided schools and other schools with a religious character (but not voluntary-controlled schools) are able to organize their RE and collective worship in line with the beliefs of their own religion or denomination, but other kinds of school are required to provide RE and collective worship that is nondenominational (and, implicitly, non-indoctrinatory). The 1988 Education Act, Section 7(1), further states that nondenominational collective worship should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character," which clearly allows space for some worship to follow non-Christian traditions (Hull 1995).

RE in all nondenominational schools follows a locally agreed syllabus. LEAs were required by the 1988 Education Reform Act to delegate responsibility for the development of the agreed syllabus for RE to a local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The SACRE is made up of representatives from four groups – the Church of England, other religious denominations, the local council, and teachers' unions. Muslims are increasingly being appointed as representatives of "other religious denominations."

The reason for the exclusion of RE from the national curriculum was to allow local syllabuses to take account of religious differences in different parts of the country, but in 2004 a non-statutory framework for RE was published offering *national* guidelines for the subject, and gradually the approach is becoming more standardized. Agreed syllabuses are required to reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking into account the teachings and practices of other principal religions represented in the country. The desire to be fair to the growing number of non-Christian believers in England has thus led to a highly significant transformation of RE in the country. Fifty years ago, the aim of the subject was mainly to encourage children to understand and accept Christian teachings and nurture them in the faith. Nowadays the aim is to ensure that children know something about the belief systems and practices of six major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism) and to develop their general understanding of the nature and significance of religious faith and ethics. The approach is phenomenological rather than confessional, with the primary aim of encouraging community cohesion and intercommunity understanding and perhaps the secondary aim of facilitating personal choice about religion. Because the purpose of RE is to develop understanding rather than commitment, few parents exercise their right anymore to withdraw their children from the subject, and no alternative curriculum (such as Ethics) is available for those who are withdrawn.

As already noted, the changes to the RE syllabus in publicly funded non-denominational schools were motivated at least in part by the desire to show fairness and equal respect to the growing number of non-Christian families in the country. A number of other significant structural changes and reforms have been made to the public education system in England over the last 50 years, based on the same core liberal values of justice, equality, and respect (These include the widespread abandonment of selective education, in which the more able students were educated in grammar schools and the less able in secondary modern schools, in favor of comprehensive schools where all children are educated together; the phasing out of single-sex schooling, as part of a policy to offer equal opportunities to boys and girls; the introduction of the national curriculum, based on the principle of equality of entitlement; the extension of parental choice, to ensure that as far as possible, parents are free to choose a school that is in line with their own beliefs and values; and the introduction of multicultural education policies with the aim of ensuring that no minority group is disadvantaged educationally on account of their religion, culture, ethnicity, or mother tongue, but is treated with equal respect in a safe, inclusive environment.).

While the government has taken a lead on these broader policy issues, it has often been left to LEAs to respond to the more specific needs of children from Muslim and other minority groups or to make decisions in difficult cases where a clash of rights is involved (Halstead 1988). This has had two less than positive outcomes. The first is that provision is uneven across the country, and the second is that schools still have considerable discretion on the implementation of the local guidelines, which are not subject to national inspection. The underlying principle behind such multicultural guidelines is to avoid putting Muslim or other children in a position where they are

required to act against the teachings of their faith. Thus schools have been encouraged to provide a room for midday prayers and make special provision for Friday prayers; to provide *halāl* food when Muslim children take school lunch; to adapt school uniform rules, sportswear requirements, and showering arrangements to take account of Islamic teaching about modesty and decency; to use discretionary holidays to allow Muslim children to be away from school at the start of Ramaḍān, ‘Eid al-Fiṭr, and ‘Eid al-Aḥḥā; and, more generally, to provide a school ethos and extracurricular activities that are respectful to Islamic values (Halstead 2005, p. 120).

In terms of curriculum, schools have been encouraged to show sensitivity to Islamic beliefs in school assemblies and in the teaching of Sex Education, Music, Art, and the Performing Arts and to provide for children’s language needs (*ibid.*, pp. 154–160). Sometimes multicultural concessions have only been achieved after extensive campaigning by Muslims, and campaigns have not always been successful even when the matter has been taken to court (as in the case of a girl who was suspended from school for wearing the full-length *jilbāb* in place of the normal school uniform, where the final judgment of the House of Lords ruled in favor of the school; see *Regina v. Headteacher and Governors of Denbigh High School* 2006).

In the aftermath of the Muslim riots in the North of England in 2001 and particularly the terrorist attacks in London in 2005, a less friendly and accommodating approach has been adopted to cultural and religious diversity, and multicultural policies in England have fallen into disfavor (Halstead 2010). Politicians and others have spoken of the “death” of multiculturalism, Muslims have been accused of self-segregation and living parallel lives, and multicultural education has been blamed as creating a climate where terrorism can thrive (Home Office 2001). Media coverage has sometimes stirred up resentment and ill-feeling against Muslims, and a climate has been created where further concessions in English public institutions to Muslim beliefs are unlikely. Much greater stress is now placed on community cohesion, and Muslims are put under pressure to dissociate themselves publicly from any expression of intolerance or extremism and to conform more fully to the shared norms and values of the broader society (Thomas 2011).

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## **The Muslim Response to the Public Education System in England**

In spite of the rhetoric of school choice, the reality for many Muslim parents in England is that the schools in the public education system between which they can choose all fall short of an Islamic ideal. This is because the values which underpin the schools’ provision differ in significant respects from Islamic values; this is seen most clearly in relation to sex education and religious education. As a result, English state schools do not take account of Muslim children’s identity as their parents would wish. Most Muslim parents in England end up making compromises over their children’s education, whereby they receive academic education and career preparation through the public education system and more specific Islamic education at home and through supplementary schooling at the local mosque. Even if parents are prepared to make such compromises, however, any choice they make is further



constrained by other factors beyond their control (Weedon et al. 2013, pp. 44–45). For example, very few single-sex schools (which most Muslim parents would prefer) are available any longer, and campaigns to reintroduce them have little chance of success; church schools (which some Muslim parents would be content to choose because they do at least have a religious ethos) may give priority to the children of Christian parents; and first-choice community schools or academies be may over-subscribed or too far distant from Muslim residential areas.

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## Independent Muslim Schools

For a growing number of Muslim parents, this situation is unsatisfactory. First, the state schools where many Muslim children end up tend to be low-achieving, inner-city schools where prejudice and discrimination are still found and teachers have inadequate levels of understanding of Islamic teachings to support the children's identity as Muslims. Second, the clear division between children's general education and their Islamic education offends against the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd*, according to which all aspects of life should be interlinked and characterized by a spirit of unity. Third, the system leaves Muslim children exposed daily to un-Islamic beliefs and values in the state school both in and out of the curriculum (e.g., the notion that children can construct their own belief system or that having premarital sexual relations is a matter of personal choice). For these reasons, some Muslim groups in England have taken advantage of the freedom allowed in the English educational system to set up independent Muslim schools where a harmonious, integrated educational experience can be provided for Muslim children, with much more time devoted to Islamic studies, reinforced by the ethos of the school and the example set by teachers. The structure and curriculum of such schools will be discussed more fully in the next section, but for now it is worth noting that a few such schools have taken the further step of applying for state funding, either by exercising their right to seek voluntary-aided status on the same terms as Catholic and Church of England schools or, more recently, by seeking to establish free schools with an Islamic religious character. Currently there are 12 Muslim voluntary-aided schools (compared to over 4,500 Church of England schools and over 2,000 Catholic schools) and five Muslim free schools in England, but the road to their establishment has been far from straightforward (Ansari 2004, pp. 324–339). There have been many more unsuccessful than successful applications from Muslim schools for voluntary-aided status, and even the successful ones have often had to wait 10 years or more and go through numerous applications before the stringent criteria were met and funding was granted.

Similar difficulties have been encountered in the establishment of Muslim free schools: in 2013 plans to open a Muslim free school in Halifax were rejected by the Department for Education following allegations of links to “extremist” views, and in 2014 a secondary free school in Derby was closed amid claims that it was setting a fundamentalist agenda by segregating pupils by gender and requiring non-Muslim female teachers to wear the *hijāb*. The establishment of funded Muslim schools is

made even more problematic in practice by the existence of a vociferous minority in England who totally oppose any kind of faith schooling (Dawkins 2006), and their opposition simply adds fuel to the widespread suspicion of all Islamic institutions as possible breeding grounds for “violent extremism” (for evidence of the unreasonableness of such claims, see Finney and Simpson 2009).

With regard to the more specific topic of RE in the public education system in England, there is a mixed response from Muslims. Most Muslims do not mind their children learning about a range of different faiths in RE, though some see this as irrelevant for Muslim children and would prefer the time to be spent studying computing or mathematics. The hidden message of a world faiths approach to RE – that all religions are equally valid and therefore deserve equal attention in RE – also goes against the grain for many Muslims. Parents may be concerned that if Islam is taught to their children by non-Muslim teachers as part of a world religions course, the children might end up misinformed, and that a phenomenological approach to Islam might focus mainly on cultural manifestations and practices, to the exclusion of deeper spiritual insights and truths. Teaching about Islam in contemporary English agreed syllabuses normally takes one of two forms: there might be a block of time (a term or half term) devoted to different aspects of Islamic beliefs, practices, and institutions, or Islam may be touched on more lightly alongside other religions in thematic work on topics like festivals, pilgrimages, or sacred texts. There is concern that this latter approach might end up confusing children, especially since the small amount of time allocated to RE (usually 1 hour a week) and the number of topics covered in the RE syllabus mean that it is rare for pupils to spend more than 5 hours per year studying Islam. Pupils who choose to do a GCSE exam in Religious Studies at the age of 16 or an advanced level GCE at 18, however, can select an option in Islam, which allows them to study the faith in more depth, and this option, unsurprisingly, has proved popular with Muslim children.

There is a similar ambivalence in Muslim attitudes to the daily act of collective worship in publicly funded schools in England. The requirement that such worship should be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character” raises concerns among some Muslim parents that their children might be unduly influenced by the regular experience of non-Islamic worship, even if there is no intention to proselytize. On the other hand, if schools were to use the presence of Muslim children as a reason for abandoning worship altogether or holding secular assemblies, Muslim parents would be unlikely to support this either, as it would remove a potentially important contribution to children’s spiritual and moral development. In practice, most Muslim parents are satisfied with the safeguards that are in place: they have the right to withdraw their children if they do not approve of the nature or content of the worship, and schools with high number of Muslim children or children from other non-Christian faiths can apply for a “determination,” which frees them for 5 years from the requirement that the collective worship should be mainly Christian. Few Muslim parents withdraw their children from collective worship, and comparatively few schools have sought a “determination.” Most schools have an occasional Islamic theme to their worship (e.g., during Ramaḍān or the *hajj*), and a few schools have experimented with holding separate assemblies for each of the main faiths represented at the school.

For many Muslim parents, the most important kind of RE is that which nurtures children in their own faith, and it is a matter of surprise and concern that such nurture is not at the heart of the subject in English state schools. Their preference would be for their children to be taught about Islam within the state school system, as part of the normal school day, preferably by an *imām* or qualified Muslim teacher – and parents do in fact have the right to arrange such denominational religious instruction for their children in school time under the 1944 Education Act. Experiments with this approach were tried in Bradford and elsewhere (Halstead 1988), but the policy met widespread opposition and was gradually phased out, the argument being that in RE *all* children should gain some basic understanding of *all* major world faiths and that responsibility for nurture in any specific faith lies with the family or faith community rather than with any publicly funded institution.

It seems unlikely that the 5 hours or so per year spent studying Islam as part of RE is enough to achieve any positive goals – at least, unless it is supplemented with (a) positive references to Islam and the Muslim contribution to learning and culture across many other subjects of the national curriculum and (b) a Muslim-friendly approach to other aspects of school life, which will carry important hidden curriculum messages about respect for Muslims and their faith and help to shape non-Muslim students' attitudes in a positive way.

The question therefore arises how Muslim-friendly is the general educational provision in state-funded schools in England. This question has both a negative and a positive dimension. The negative dimension involves the removal of obstacles to living in accordance with Muslim principles in English schools, and the positive one involves supporting the balanced development of Muslim children, including both academic and spiritual development. As already noted, major steps have been taken to avoid putting Muslim children in a position where they are expected to act in a way which is contrary to their core beliefs and values (e.g., by providing rooms for midday prayers and *halāl* food for school dinners; adapting school uniform rules, assemblies, and sex education provision; respecting Islamic festivals, and so on; cf. Weedon et al. 2013, pp. 54–63), though these are not applied consistently across the whole schooling system.

In terms of positive input provided by the public system of education in England, however, the wishes of Muslim parents are not being fully met. These wishes combine the full development of their children's academic potential, their preparation for life as full British citizens, their moral development in line with Islamic values, and the support of their Muslim identity. Statistics are not available showing children's academic achievements by religion, and so most discussions of Muslim children's achievement levels in England focus on Pakistani and Bangladeshi children and ignore other ethnic groups of Muslims. The latest statistics show that Pakistani and Bangladeshi children have largely closed the achievement gap that previously existed between them and the non-Muslim majority (Weedon et al. 2013), especially if social and economic factors influencing educational attainment (such as poverty, social class, parental unemployment, residence in deprived neighborhoods and the poorest performing regions of the country, etc.) are taken into account (Department for Education 2013). However, there are a number of factors that

may still be holding Muslim children back from achieving their full academic potential, including continued religious discrimination, the lack of Muslim role models in schools, continuing low expectations on the part of teachers, time spent in mosque schools, and the disaffection and disorientation resulting from the incompatibility of some of the values of the school and the home.

These factors, which have been almost entirely neglected in the literature on achievement levels, could also affect Muslim students' preparation for life as full British citizens. However, it is in terms of supporting their children's moral values and developing identity as Muslims that Muslim parents have most problems with the state education system in England, because of the gulf between the values of Islam and the official (often secular) values of the school, not to mention the values of the youth subculture operating among non-Muslim students. Continuing doubts about the ability of state schools ever to adequately support their children's developing Muslim identity have led many Muslim parents to turn to independent educational provision outside the state system.

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## **Islamic Educational Arrangements Outside the State System**

There are two main forms of Islamic education provided by the Muslim community in England outside the state system. The first is a *supplement* to state schooling; Muslim children attend religious schools in the evenings or at weekends for specifically Islamic education. The second is a *substitute* for state schooling; full-time Muslim schools combine the teaching of normal school subjects with the teaching of Islam in a unified provision.

### **Muslim Supplementary Schools**

In addition to the compulsory education required by the state, parents and community groups are free in English law to provide any other schooling or education they feel is necessary to meet the religious, cultural, language, or other needs of their children. Muslim groups perhaps more than any other religious or cultural group in England have taken advantage of this freedom, and the first mosque schools were established in the 1960s (Halstead 1988, p. 232). There are several kinds of provision for Muslim children under the heading of "supplementary schooling." The most important are classes in Islamic teachings and practices, but there are also classes in mother tongue languages, especially Urdu, Bengali, Turkish, and Kurdish, and classes run by mosques or community groups to provide help with homework or basic skills. Some organizations are more like youth clubs, protecting Muslim young people from "unhealthy" peer culture by providing Islamically approved Saturday evening leisure activities. Summer schools and summer camps for Muslim children may also be arranged.

As already noted, the dominant pattern that has emerged in England for many Muslim children is to attend nonreligious schools in the daytime and then to attend

mosque or other Islamic schools (known as *makātib*, *madrasahs*, or Qur'ānic schools) for up to 2 hours every evening to learn about their religion. Little research has been carried out into Muslim supplementary schools in England, and such information as is available draws on local experiences rather than providing a national overview (Amer 1997). Attendance figures are rarely available, and it is impossible to state with confidence what percentage of Muslim children attend such schools; one source claims an attendance rate of 90% of Muslim children aged 5–12 (Parker-Jenkins 1995, p. 30), but this is almost certainly an overestimate. It is equally difficult to establish how many mosque schools there are in England, though it is clear that many mosques and other Muslim organizations take their educational role very seriously. In Bradford alone, for example, there are 63 Muslim supplementary schools registered with the LEA, apart from others which may operate less formally. The financial responsibility for the provision lies entirely with the organizing group, though some have been able to obtain LEA grants.

Children typically receive supplementary schooling in Islam from the age of 4 or 5 to the age of 13 or 14, although girls may stop attending earlier. They learn the Qur'ān, the principal beliefs of Islam, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the basic requirements of the *sharī'ah*, Islamic history, social and moral values, and Arabic for the purposes of Qur'ānic recitation. Those who wish to memorize the whole Qur'ān and become a *ḥāfiẓ* may attend mosque in the morning as well.

Supplementary Muslim schools contribute significantly to the preservation and promotion of Islamic values (Parker-Jenkins 1995, p. 131) and have an important role to play in nurturing children in the faith. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why this dominant pattern of education has, over many years, created problems and challenges for Muslim children. First, the system continues to expose them to secular and un-Islamic values for most of their school day, values which may be strongly criticized within the mosque. This exposure to different and incompatible values may create confusions and divided loyalties in Muslim children. Second, the additional demands the system places on Muslim children's time are of concern to many parents and may lead to a preference for full-time separate Islamic schooling. Third, the provision in many supplementary schools is of dubious educational quality: the premises and resources are often inadequate, the teachers are unqualified, and the methods, which include rote learning and strict discipline, have been strongly criticized in the media in England in recent years. The local *imāms* who provide the teaching may be unfamiliar with current educational thinking, having received their own training in *madrasahs* on the Indian subcontinent or in other cultural contexts outside England, and there is an urgent need for English-trained imams who are able to relate to young Muslims born in England. As awareness of these problems increases, many Muslim groups are trying to improve the quality of provision in supplementary schools by paying more attention to child protection, health, and safety and behavior management, providing more appropriate resources, adopting more up-to-date pedagogical approaches, liaising more effectively with parents, and drawing more on LEA support (Richardson and Wood 2004).

## Muslim Full-Time Schools

Numbers of full-time Muslim schools in England have grown rapidly since the first were established in the early 1980s in London and Bradford, and there are currently about 140 such schools. A Muslim school may be defined as one that aims to preserve and maintain the faith and to help Muslim young people to “lead an Islamically meaningful life” (Sahin 2013, p. 239). Sometimes, nondenominational community schools and church schools with a very high enrollment of Muslim students are called “Muslim schools,” even in official reports (Bradford District Race Review Team 2001), but this terminology is not used in the present chapter. In England, there is a clear distinction between state-maintained and independent Islamic schools. The state-funded schools tend to be more ethnically diverse and more focused on academic success, whereas the independent schools tend to have a more distinctively Islamic ethos and to be more interested in Islamizing the curriculum (Breen 2009). Only about 12% of Islamic schools currently have state funding, which carries with it numerous conditions. State-funded Islamic schools are required to employ qualified teachers, to have adequate buildings and resources, to provide equality of opportunity, to promote community cohesion, and to teach the national curriculum, but they are free to teach their own syllabus for religious education. In addition, they have a Muslim ethos and Muslim assemblies, and their teachers can provide a role model of belief and practice for Muslim students. All such schools have long waiting lists. Only about 2% of Muslim children in England are educated in such schools, but their existence carries symbolic weight as a recognition of the Muslim community’s right to establish such schools.

There is much more diversity among the 130 or so independent Islamic schools in England in size, curriculum, teaching staff, educational philosophy, and religious affiliation, though they are still required to register with the Department for Education. Some are well integrated into British society, some less so. In the latter category are the Dar ul-Uloom schools which combine traditional Islamic religious education, based on models from the Indian subcontinent, with a comparatively small amount of general education (cf. Gilliat-Ray 2005, pp. 9–10). Many independent Islamic schools are quite small, averaging fewer than 100 students, which means that less than 4% of Muslim children in the UK attend such schools. They are funded privately and the fees paid by parents vary from £200 to £5,000 per year.

Typically, the national curriculum is followed in some subjects, though in others such as History, Art, PE, Music, and Sex Education, a more Islamic approach is adopted (if they are taught at all), and there may be opportunities for students to study the Muslim contribution to mathematics, science, medicine, and architecture as well as Islamic authors and poets. Most Islamic schools include citizenship and interfaith dialogue in their curriculum. A significant percentage of time is usually devoted to Arabic and Islamic Studies (and sometimes Urdu for students of Pakistani origin). The faith teaching component is generally made up of (a) Arabic, (b) the Qur’ān – recitation, memorization, and understanding the meaning – and (c) Islamic Studies, including the life of the Prophet, the *ḥadīth*, the history of Islam, the five pillars and core Islamic beliefs, moral character, and good manners. Some of the

resources currently used come from India and South Africa (Mogra 2007, p. 390) and pay little or no attention to the cultural or educational environment of England. However, the situation is gradually improving as local Muslim educationalists are prioritizing the production of more appropriate resources and materials.

In the past, many independent Islamic schools in England have received critical reports from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) particularly because of poor buildings, inadequate resources, the failure to meet good health and safety standards, inexperienced management, unqualified teachers, and the low level of general education that they provide (Halstead 2005, p. 126). They have also been criticized for a failure to provide opportunities for their students to develop cross-cultural understanding and citizenship skills by mixing with students from other faiths and backgrounds. However, a combination of support from Ofsted and local authorities together with a determination among the schools themselves to professionalize their teaching force has led to significant improvements over the last 10 years, not least in terms of the growing number of qualified Muslim teachers and in the standard of academic results. Though there is considerable variation in the academic levels achieved by students at independent Islamic schools, several state-funded Muslim schools have come top or near the top of the value-added league tables in England in recent years. On average, the academic achievements of students at state-maintained Islamic schools in England are higher than those at schools with no religious character and higher than all other faith groups except for Jewish schools (Bolton and Gillie 2009, pp. 7–8). The numbers are probably too small for a “true” comparison, but the achievement is nonetheless very impressive because the numbers of children entitled to free school meals at the Islamic schools (a key indicator of poverty and deprivation) are twice the national average (ibid.: 4).

Some Muslim parents may have concerns that Muslim schools make the Muslim community in England appear rather introverted and isolationist and that attending separate institutions may not prepare children adequately for life in contemporary England or help them to compete on equal terms in the job market. Nevertheless, Muslim schools have numerous advantages as well. They counter the danger of cultural absorption by the dominant culture and present religion as a normal way of life, so that children do not feel odd or different because they are Muslims. They provide a spiritual and moral environment where faith is respected and children can learn sound values and extend their understanding of and commitment to the faith. They provide an environment secure from Islamophobic bullying where children can fulfill their academic potential and develop their Muslim identity and self-esteem. Meer argues that they can be an effective way of “integrating religious minorities into a matrix of British citizenship” (Meer 2007, p. 55).

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## Higher Education and the Training of *Imāms*

Muslim students in England are more likely go on to higher education after school than their non-Muslim counterparts, and there is evidence of growing numbers of young Muslim women in particular pursuing their studies at this level (Tyrer and

Ahmad 2006). A high proportion of Muslim undergraduate continue to live at home throughout their degree course (Dean and Probert 2011). Muslim students are overrepresented in the post-1992 universities (mainly former polytechnics) and underrepresented in the more prestigious Russell Group universities. The most popular subjects are business studies, information technology, mathematical sciences, law, social sciences, and medicine-related subjects (Halstead 2005, p. 140).

However, there are currently no Islamic universities in England, and Muslim students wishing to study Islam at university have a choice between courses in Islamic Studies, Islamic History, Arabic, Oriental Studies, Religious Studies, or Theology, though these are all taught objectively, i.e., based on western values rather than Islamic principles. A few Islamic research centers have been established in British universities (often funded by Middle Eastern countries), but the main provision of Islamic education at many universities comes from the Student Islamic Societies which may organize Arabic classes, invite prominent Muslim speakers to address open meetings, and hold classes for students who want to develop a deeper understanding of their faith. The Federation of Students Islamic Societies in England has highlighted continuing Islamophobia on many campuses and has campaigned for more culturally responsive provision (FOSIS 2003).

The one area of where Islamic higher education has expanded significantly and has extensive support from western governments is the training of imams, chaplains, and teachers of Islam. In the past the inadequate preparation of *imāms* for teaching in England led to fears, particularly after 2001, that they might contribute to an extremist Muslim subculture. Birkbeck College of the University of London has validated a master's degree in Islamic Studies and a training program for *imāms* at the Muslim College in West London, and the University of Gloucestershire has validated a BA and MA in Islamic Studies, an MEd in Islamic Education, and a certificate in Muslim chaplaincy at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education in Leicestershire (Sahin 2013, pp. 211–236).

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## Conclusion

In recent years, research on the education of Muslim children in England has focused less on issues of school provision and parental choice and more on listening to the concerns of the young people themselves (such as their career aspirations and ambitions) and the way they make sense of their schooling. Of particular interest are the ways they understand and interpret their own gendered religious identity (Archer 2003; Basit 1997; Shain 2003), and the way they interact with the non-Muslim majority encourages them to rethink previously accepted cultural practices (Sahin 2013, p. 142). Nevertheless, the biggest problem facing Muslim education in England today remains the myths and prejudice about Muslim schools that are still widespread in the media and elsewhere – for example, that they are socially divisive, indoctrinatory, extremist, sexist, fundamentalist, undemocratic, authoritarian, separatist, and supportive of terrorism (Halstead 2009). Such myths do very significant damage to the cause of Muslim education by making attacks on Muslims more



likely, by making it more difficult for the graduates of Muslim schools to get jobs, by fueling opposition to the establishment of new schools, and by appearing to justify Islamophobic attitudes. In challenging this continuing prejudice, Muslims need to develop both a sound foundation of philosophical principles on which Islamic education is based and the skills to express and justify these in language that is accessible to non-Muslims. At the same time, more empirical research is needed into the effect that school attendance (whether at Muslim or non-Muslim schools) has on the developing beliefs, values, and identity of Muslim children, so that most important needs of Muslim children in the context of contemporary English society can be clarified and met.

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# Islamic Education in the Netherlands

Ina ter Avest and Cok Bakker

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## Abstract

The arrival of so-called guest workers after the Second World War (in the 1960s and 1970s), in particular the arrival of labor force coming from Turkey and Morocco, was a confrontation with another and strange religion: Islam, in a predominant Christian country.

At first – in line with how they were named: “guest” workers – the Dutch population as well as the guest workers themselves were convinced of their return to their respective home countries. However, things changed, and in the 1980s the process of reunion with wife and children started, resulting in Muslim children entering the Dutch educational system.

In the Netherlands education is organized in so-called pillars representing the Protestant, the Roman Catholic, and the social-humanistic worldview in, respectively, Protestant schools, Roman Catholic schools, and (neutral) state

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schools. As a consequence of family reunion, teachers (remarkably in all of these) in these schools in their classrooms were confronted with children from Muslim families, socialized in another religious worldview than their own and the one the school adhered to. Different models were developed to adapt to this new situation. Three models are described, in particular the model of “interreligious education.” Although great effort was done to include Muslims in some way or another in the developed new ways of denominational schools, some 25 years ago Muslim parents decided to found their own Islamic primary schools, after the recognition by the Dutch government of Islam as a stable ground for the foundation of Islamic schools. A new “pillar” was established, be it that only a small percentage of Islamic children attend Islamic primary schools. The majority is part of the population of Protestant, Roman Catholic, or state schools.

All schools, be it Protestant, Roman Catholic, state, or Islamic schools, are obliged to include in their curriculum a subject that was formerly called “Geestelijke Stromingen” (religious and secular philosophies of life), to inform pupils about the main characteristics of the different worldviews as they are lived by citizens in the Netherlands. These days this subject is included in a new subject called “citizenship education,” with a focus on living together, respecting, and tolerating “the other” in a democratic society.

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#### Keywords

Migration · Responding to plurality · Diversity in education · Integration

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## Background

In the colonial era, the archipel of islands called Indonesia was part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as was Surinam (in the northern part of South America) and the Windward and the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, north coast of Surinam. The greater part of the population of Indonesia was adherents of the Islamic tradition, the second group of believers being Hindus. In Surinam and the Windward and Leeward Islands, it was just the other way around: the greater part of the population belonged to a Hindu faith community; the second group of believers were Muslims. However, in those days Muslims were approached from a strict Christian perspective, and with astonishment it was observed that “Islam overran and trampled the only true religion [Christianity] which had great impetus on the population” (quote from Abraham Kuyper, in NRC August 23, 2014). In a *Handbook on Islam in the Netherlands*, it is stated that “Although institutionalization of Islam in the Netherlands has a strong relation with immigration of labourers from Mediterranean countries in the sixties [of the last century], the first initiatives to create Islamic communities in our country were taken already before World War II” (Landman 1992, p. 19). Expatriates from Indonesia, living on a temporary basis in the Netherlands, developed these initiatives. Next to that missionary movements like the *ṣūfī* movements and the *Aḥmadīyyah* movement had

settled down in the Netherlands, however on a small scale – not reaching “John the Plumber” in the street.

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## Islam in the Postwar Period of the Netherlands

“John the Plumber” is confronted with Islamic fellow citizens since the 1960s of the last century, as a result of labor migration. To start with the so-called guest workers came from Mediterranean countries like Italy and Spain, adhering to the Roman Catholic tradition – a tradition Dutch people were familiar with. Later on workers also were recruited from Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. The religion these migrants practiced was Islam, a “new” religion for the Dutch colleagues they cooperated with in, for example, steelworks and textile factories.

At first – in line with how they were named: “guest” workers – the Dutch population as well as the guest workers themselves were convinced of their return to their respective home countries. However, things changed, and in the 1980s of the last century, the process of reunion with wife and children started, resulting in Islamic children entering the Dutch education system. Teachers in all primary schools (be it confessional or state school) in their classrooms were confronted with children from Muslim families, socialized in another religious worldview than their own (religious or secular) life orientation and also different from the one the school adhered to.

A decade later as a result of Surinam’s declaration of independence on 25 November 1975, the group of Muslims in the Netherlands was completed with believers from Surinam. Islam was brought to the Netherlands, not only from former colonies and by migrant workers, but these days also Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia, Afghanistan, and Syria are part of the Muslim community. Last but not least, also Dutch converts are part of the Islamic community in the Netherlands. Nowadays approximately 850.000 Muslims live in the Netherlands that is just about 5% of the Dutch population – 290.000 Moroccan Muslims and 270.000 Turkish Muslims constituting the larger part of adherents to the Islamic tradition. The part of the Surinam Muslims is much smaller with only 40.000 believers (CBS 2009, p. 38).

Institutionalization of Islam started with the establishment of mosques, as a place to meet the so-called guest workers’ religious obligations, in particular performing prayer and attending the Friday sermons. In some cases, Dutch representatives sympathizing with the “guest workers” assisted in finding a place for the Muslims to pray and educate their children in Islam; in other cases, migrant leaders of a Muslim community struggled with Dutch development plans of cities and tried to finance the rent or purchase price with gifts of the members of their Muslim community. Sometimes the rent or the purchase price of a building and the finances to put this in order according to Islamic regulations were provided by funding from Muslim countries. Also in some cases, the Dutch government assisted financially in this process of institutionalization of Islam (Landman 1992, p. 43). The initiatives to establish a mosque, be it in an unoccupied office building or church or in a new

building, in all cases were met with resistance from people living in the respective neighborhoods. Freedom, as written down in Article 1 of the Dutch constitution, including freedom of religion, apparently not yet included migrants' religious tradition of Islam.

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## Islam in the "Pillarized" Educational Context of Netherlands

Freedom of religion is seen as a basic right of all Dutchmen. This right is concretized in the freedom to establish institutions according to people's religious or secular life orientation. As a result, the Dutch society is a "pillarized society," meaning that the institutions are organized according to dividing lines of religious or secular world-views, a typical Dutch way of living apart and living together in a country that is characterized by religious diversity (each in its own Protestant, Roman Catholic, or liberal/humanist "pillar") in a monocultural context (all having a Dutch identity).

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, "the relation between religion and education in state schools was embodied in the teaching of Christian ethics and in religious education classes, in those days within the area of responsibility of the churches" (ter Avest et al. 2007, p. 203). School identity was characterized by Christianity "that goes beyond all institutionalized religion, a Christianity above religious differences" (ibid.: 203). Later on, due to a clash between different interpretations of "Christian ethics," separate Christian schools were founded and financed by a community of parents or by the teachers themselves (ibid.: 204). As a result, the "voice" of the parents in the establishment of a school as well as the construction of the identity of the school was very important right from the beginning. Teachers were recruited in the religious community the parents adhered to, and the school board was composed of parents observing the same Protestant denomination as the school had adopted. From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, Protestant and Catholic schools were "obliged to meet the gradually strengthened governmental criteria for quality of teaching and learning" (ibid.: 204); in the funding by the government however, state school still had a privileged position. In 1917 the "School Funding Controversy" (*Schoolstrijd*) was settled, and from then on all schools in the Netherlands are equally funded by the Dutch government, meeting Article 140 of the Constitution stating that education is the government's continuous concern. All schools since then have to meet the criteria and aim at core objectives given by the government, and all schools are controlled by the Inspectorate of Education.

At its height in the 1950s in the Netherlands not only education but also institutions such as healthcare, newspapers, and sports clubs were organized in line with the religious orientations of parents, patients, readers, and sportsmen. Each pillar had its schools, hospitals, newspapers, and sports clubs, and there were also neutral/liberal schools, newspapers, and neutral/secular sports clubs as well as schools organized by the state. Islam was not yet included in the "pillarized" system in those days. (See for a more detailed description of the Dutch pillarized system: ter Avest et al. (2007).)

By consequence, Christian teachers in Christian schools and teachers in state schools did not yet take account of Muslim children and their respective religious socialization at home. However, on arrival of Muslim children in the classroom, among others, as a result of the process of family reunion of the so-called guest workers in the 1980s, school boards and teams of teachers had to reflect upon the school's Christian or neutral identity in relation to the religious education and development of life orientations of all their pupils.

## **Adaptation in Christian Primary Schools**

Since 1917 all primary schools in the Netherlands, be they Protestant, Roman Catholic, or state schools, are fully subsidized by the government. Today, approximately two-thirds of the children attend denominational primary schools (Protestant Christian or Roman Catholic schools). These schools are not related to any church community and the respective church's commitment to a Christian confessional denomination, which allows schools to find their own way regarding religious education for a plural pupil population. One-third of the children attend neutral primary state schools (CBS 2015). Christian schools (Protestant as well as Catholic schools) include religious education (RE) in their curriculum, which is taught by pupils' own teacher. In state schools RE is taught on a voluntary basis, on request of the parents. For these voluntary RE lessons, pupils from one class are divided according to the religious conviction of the parents and their wish for denominational Christian or humanistic worldview education. Teachers for those separated classes are appointed and trained by organizations entrusted with each mission. These organizations are funded by churches and the humanistic organizations, respectively.

The moment school boards and teachers became aware of the consequences of the socialization of some of their new pupils in the "strange" religion of Islam, different solutions were explored to respond to this new situation. Some of confessional Protestant and Catholic schools continued to teach RE as before, focusing on their own denomination and their own religious tradition. All pupils in these schools are obliged to attend RE lessons, whether or not they are socialized in the Christian tradition the school adheres to (model A). Others include the "strange" religion of Islam by putting dialogue and encounter to the fore, taking the Christian tradition as their starting point (Wardekker and Miedema 2001; ter Avest 2003, 2009; ter Avest and Miedema 2010; ter Avest 2008a, b). The admission of pupils and of teachers appeared to be a weak spot in the process of adaptation to the new situation of religious diversity. Some schools require teachers' as well as parents' life orientations to be in line with the school's identity and create a mono-religious educational context (see model A above). Others do ask teachers to underline the school's vision and mission but allow for a plural pupil population, creating an educational context of coping with diversity from a Christian point of view (in between model A and model B). Again others focus on the pedagogical matters and teaching experience of an applicant to be employed, creating a context of teaching and learning in diversity (model C; see also Roebben 2007). In the last two decades, an increasing number of schools have gone a step further by considering interreligiosity as the main core of their school's characteristic (Bertram-Troost et al. 2012; Alii 2009).

In the 1980s, the interreligious RE model was planned to the end in a primary school in a small town in the Dutch Bible Belt. The model was described as follow: “encounter” was the central concept in the newly developed curriculum. Religious education (RE) [during school hours] was included in this curriculum in two different ways. Firstly, the children were given RE in line with the tradition in which they were socialized at home, either the Christian or Islamic tradition. These RE lessons were given separately to Christian and Islamic children. The class teacher taught Christianity and the *imām* presented Islam. Secondly, every child had a weekly “lesson in encounter,” given by the class teacher. The Christian and Islamic lessons and the “encounter lessons” were scheduled weekly and were fine-tuned to the developmental phase of the child. According to the age of the pupils, the children were introduced to the common elements (shared stories, such as the story of Joseph/Yusuf and Moses/Mūsā) and to the different accents of both religions (the different meaning of fasting, the different position of Jesus/‘Isā). From their classmates, “the other,” they learned the good reasons for behaving differently. Pupils both noticed and experienced that the authentic way their classmates believed and behaved was really meaningful for them (ter Avest 2009).

For the team of the interreligious primary school, as for teams of teachers elaborating on this model in the years to follow, multi-religiosity and variations in family cultures are not seen as a problem but as a challenge to cope with. In this kind of schools, both students and teachers are from various religious backgrounds, and the teaching of RE fosters the idea that diversity among the participants is seen as constitutive or even precondition for the formation of pupils’ own religious identity (ter Avest 2003, 2009). Some Christian *teachers* hesitate in relation between their teaching of interreligious education and their own commitment to their beliefs. They fear relativism and indifference, due to a presentation of religious traditions as being the same in their profound beliefs (Rietveld et al. 2010).

Research on *parents* of young children shows that parents’ ideas about religious and secular worldview education in schools have changed from “RE in line with socialization at home” to “RE adding to (secularized) religious socialisation at home” (ter Avest et al. 2013). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, parents anew are an important “voice” in the construction of the identity of the school and subsequently in the interpretation of RE in the secularized and plural Dutch context (ter Avest et al. 2013).

## Adaptation in State Primary Schools

State schools in essence are “neutral” with regard to religious traditions. Whereas in the beginning of the nineteenth century, their character was Christian “above Christian differences” (see above), in the decades at the end of the twentieth, and the beginning of the twenty-first century, “neutrality” is interpreted as “objective” as the opposite to “subjective” (Westerman 2001). To meet the needs of neutrality, classes in religious and secular worldview education during school hours are optional and are kept out of the pedagogical responsibilities of the (neutral) state school. The



so-called missionary institutions (for instance, cooperating Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic church, or the Humanist Society) develop teaching materials and train and coach teachers to go to state schools and teach the children in a Christian or humanist worldview in so-called GVO (*Godsdienstig Vormings Onderwijs*: Religious Education Classes) and HVO (*Humanistisch Vormings Onderwijs*: Humanist Education Classes). Classes of pupils are split according to age and the wish of parents for a Christian or humanist worldview class for their children. The optional RE classes aim at “informing children about Christianity (and other religions) and the Bible. By way of telling stories, making use of symbols and rituals, children gain insight in “the world of faith”. Religious literacy facilities for children reflect upon their own worldview” ([www.pcgvo.nl](http://www.pcgvo.nl)). Next to Christian RE classes, there is a possibility for parents to require Hindu and Buddhist classes and Islamic classes; Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic classes are more frequently given, in particular in the bigger cities in the western part of the Netherlands, although the lack of Dutch-speaking Muslims is an impediment to this. Optional lessons in Humanism aim at “facilitating the development of the values that are central in their life orientation. In HVO lessons children do not learn what to think, but the value of thinking and reflection in itself” ([www.humanistischverbond.nl](http://www.humanistischverbond.nl)). The teachers appointed by the humanist society aim at the construction of a personal life orientation in interaction with classmates, adhering to the core concept of “dialogical identity development” (Veugelaers and Oostdijk, 2013, p. 139).

In order to avoid “segregation” at the classroom level and meet the needs of education in a plural society, nowadays efforts are made to develop materials for teaching and learning in diversity, covered by the concept of “active plurality.” With the concept of the “active plurality,” an open approach is favored in this kind of worldview education in a plural society. The “Vereniging Openbare Scholen/Algemene Besturen Bond” (VOS/ABB; National Organization on Education in State Schools) is taking the lead in these developments.

The teaching material for voluntary Islamic religious education (IGO, *Islamitisch Godsdienst Onderwijs Islamic Religious Education*) in state schools is called “Life and Death,” covering important themes for young children about daily life, in relation to eight central values, three basic principles of belief, and four human characteristics (IGO; van Bommel et al. 2012, pp. 14–15). The material is characterized by an open attitude toward the Dutch society. The aim of this method is to contribute to the construction of an Islamic identity of active citizens, taking their role in “bridging” activities in the Dutch plural society (ibid., van Bommel et al. 2012, p. 1). Eight Islamic values are central and are in a thematic way explored with the help of Qur’ānic *sūrah*s. First the values are explored in a general sense. Next to that they are approached from an Islamic point of view. Then a comparison is made with two other religious and/or secular(ized) points of view, and last but not least, they are seen in the context of possible dilemmas emerging from the context of diversity pupils live in, in order to develop an own authentic view on themes with a high priority for Muslims in the Dutch society (ibid., van Bommel et al. 2012, p. 2). The pedagogical strategy of IGO is characterized by a variety of workshop activities, fitting the psychological age of the children – based on a so-called child-centered approach (ibid.: 7).

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## Government Response to Diversity

To meet the need of teams of teachers and school boards to adjust to the plural classroom situation, the government in 1985 introduced the subject of “Geestelijke Stromingen” (World View and Spiritual Movements). The aim of this new and mandatory subject was to inform pupils about the variety of religious and secular traditions as they are practiced in the Netherlands. In 2006 “Burgerschapsvorming” (citizenship education) was introduced as a mandatory subject, complementing “Geestelijke Stromingen.” Besides mere information about religious and secular traditions, the focus of this new subject is on information about the structure of the democratic Dutch society and the practicalities of contributing to the democratic society as an active citizen. The core concepts of citizenship education are democracy, participation, and identity: *democracy* as a way to live together in a plural society and find solutions to cope with and respond to diversity, *participation* seen as each citizen’s responsibility to contribute in a constructive way to the own neighborhood and larger context one lives in, and *identity* as the (preliminary) outcome of the development of a subjective system of values and subsequent regulations and rules as the basis of one’s actions – at home, at school, and in the society. Pupils should become aware of the ideals and values that motivate them in their actions.

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## The Foundation of Islamic Primary Schools

Although great effort was done to include Muslims in some way in the developed new curricula for RE denominational schools, some 25 years ago Islamic parents decided to found their own Islamic primary schools, after the recognition by the Dutch government of Islam as a stable religious tradition for the foundation of Islamic schools. Although resistance of the Dutch population hindered institutionalization of Islam, at the end of the day, Muslims succeeded in establishing a new “pillar” in the educational landscape of the Netherlands. A small proportion of all children from Islamic families though attend Islamic primary schools – less than 1%. The large majority of the Muslim children attend Protestant, Roman Catholic, or state schools.

The start of Islamic primary schools gave rise to suspicion, partly due to the fact that not all of the instigators of this initiative mastered the Dutch language (Budak, in press; see also Inspectie van het onderwijs 1999). This suspicion expressed itself in anxiety and fear for radicalization, a frequent topic in newspapers, overruling positive articles about Islamic education (see, e.g., Ghaemina 2010 in the daily newspaper *Trouw* April 21). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the suspicion resulted in two reports of the Inspectorate of Education, researching pedagogical strategies and didactics with a focus on the democratic character of religious education and “Geestelijke Stromingen” in Islamic primary schools (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2002, 2003). Although in none of the reports any indication was found for any mistrust regarding the intentions and aims of (religious) education in Islamic primary schools, the suspicion did not fade away completely and still lasts.

In Islamic schools, religious education is given by a specialized teacher. Whereas at the start of Islamic schools, these teachers had to construct their own teaching material by copy and paste from mainly Arabic material (Budak 2014; in press); nowadays teachers make use of curricula and teaching material developed in the Netherlands. School boards cooperating with the “Islamitische Schoolbesturen Organisatie” (ISBO: National Institution of Schoolboards of Islamic schools), and the “Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond” (SPIOR: Foundation of Islamic Organizations in the area of Rijnmond) developed teaching material for religious education of Muslim children – teaching material adapted for the education of Muslims in the secularized and plural context of the Netherlands.

Teaching material was developed by representatives of a team of teachers of one Islamic primary school, in close cooperation with ISBO. This material for Islamic religious education in particular at Islamic primary schools is characterized by a close relation to the method “Vreedzame school” (Peaceful Education) stimulating social-emotional development. Topics in that method that are central during a certain period, like “respect,” “friendship,” and “feedback,” are brought into relation with what takes place in children’s everyday life and with *sūrah*s from the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth*. The psychological development of children, what and how they can understand religious stories, is leading. Pupils have an exercise book in which they write their answers to preformulated questions. Every thematic period is concluded with a written rehearsal.

All schools are obliged to include in their curriculum a subject that was formerly called “Geestelijke Stromingen” (religious and secular philosophies of life), to inform pupils about the main characteristics of the different worldviews as they are lived by in the Netherlands. Nowadays this subject is included in “citizenship education,” with a focus on living together, respecting, and tolerating “the other” in a democratic society (see also Niehaus 2012; Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. 2009; Meijer 2006).

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## Islamic Education in the Mosque

Many of the children, attending religious classes in a Christian primary school or a state school, next to these mandatory and voluntary lessons at Christian and state schools, respectively, go to the mosque to attend lessons aiming at socializing children according to Islam, to make them “good Muslims.” These children attend classes in the mosque mostly on Wednesday afternoon, sometimes also during the weekend. In the mosque they learn to recite Qur’ānic *sūrah*s and the basic attitudes and ways of decent behavior, based on the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. For example, in the mosque children are taught that a good Muslim is “*barmhartig*” and never makes use of any aggressive method to convince people of the unity of God and Muḥammad being God’s prophet. Since these days there is a vivid discussion about Muslim youngster joining IS (Islamic State), *imāms* in their Friday preaches pay attention to the basic values of Islam:

The youngsters who wish to join the IS don't know what they are talking about. That's why in Qur'anic education in the mosque attention should be paid to the process of radicalization. Youngsters should know that the quotes IS people use to propagate and even advertise violence, are misused. We at the mosque should offer them a religious alternative. (*Imām* Yassin Elforkani, in NRC August 23, 2014; see also an interview with *imām* Elforkani in NRC, December 30, 2014)

According to Elforkani, the poor economic situation of some of these youngsters makes them vulnerable for the teasing and convincing message of IS. These Muslim youngsters are not aware of IS's offensive way of preaching Islam and Islamic behavior – not fitting the basic values of respect and mercy of Islam at all is the opinion of Elforkani.

Next to formal Islamic education, children are socialized in the Islamic way of life in “schools” related to mosques (Andree et al. 1990). Usually during the weekend young children starting at the age of 5 or 6 years are taught Arabic and introduced in saying prayer in Arabic and learn *sūrah*s from the Qur'ān by heart and recite them. Next to that children are taught about the basic principles of proper behavior according to Islam, and information is presented to them about the life of Muḥammad and the four law schools in Islam. Girls and boys have their lessons in separate rooms in the mosque. Some children attend these Qur'anic schools/mosque schools during the years that they are in primary school. Girls stop going to Qur'ān schools when they attend secondary school and when there is no separate room for women in the mosque (Andree et al. 1990, p. 31, 84, 95).

Muslim parents send their children to the mosque because they “find it difficult to teach their children themselves” (El Bouayadi-van de Wetering 2012, p. 78). Mosques in the Netherlands are organized along ethnic lines and political and religious mainstreams within the ethnic groups (ibid.: 81). Religious education in these mosques differs accordingly. Moroccan parents delegate religious education for a greater part to the *imām* in the mosque (Pels 1999, p. 203); Turkish parents sometimes talk to the *imām* in case of general topics regarding (religious) education in the Netherlands (Nijsten 1998, pp. 188–189). Mastering the Arabic language is very important in *Moroccan mosques*, since it is the language of the Qur'ān and also the national language in Morocco. The educational material is in Arabic. The goal of education in the Moroccan mosque is to recite the whole Qur'ān by heart and to practice the main Islamic rules of the rituals (ibid.: 82).

In the *Turkish mosques*, the children learn the Arabic alphabet, in order to be able to read the Qur'ān. These Turkish children do not learn the Arabic language as a spoken language. The Turkish language is used for religious instruction; educational material is in Turkish. Children learn the necessary Arabic words and sentences to say prayer and practice the Islamic rituals. Teachers in the mosque inform the children about the five pillars of Islam: confession of faith, prayer, fasting, *zakāt*, and *hajj*. In most *Surinam mosques*, lessons are given in Dutch, since this is the national language in Surinam. The content of the lessons is similar to those in Turkish mosques.

Next to the traditional content of curricula at mosques, modern curricula add another goal. “Given the Dutch environment, it is considered important that pupils learn that treating others with respect and decency, regardless of their religion or

ethnicity, is Islamic and important social behaviour” (Nijsten 1998, p. 83). It is seen as a pedagogical challenge to teach children that respect for others is seen as good Islamic behavior, while at the same time, children are taught that drinking alcohol (as many secular and secularized Christians do in the Netherlands) is sinful or *ḥarām* (ibid.: 83).

A private parents’ initiative resulted in the method “Amaleed,” a method that is complementary to classes RE in schools (Mugaibel and El Haloui 2013). In the mission statement of “Amaleed,” we read that it is the intention to facilitate knowing about and experience the Islamic tradition in a playful way and recognizing and respecting differences. The method is developed in particular for children from poorer families and combines cultural and religious topics. Attention is, for example, given to “the story of Muslims,” to “science and technology,” and to “health.” The classes are given after school hours, in the mosque, in combination with enjoying a simple evening meal together.

Recent studies show that with regard to the pedagogical climate in the mosques, teachers’ way of approaching the children has become more friendly. This is probably a reaction to the very strict pedagogical climate in the mosques in Turkey and Morocco, together with a growing awareness of “the importance of a child-friendly and effective pedagogical climate in Islamic education” (ibid.: 84). Pedagogical strategies however follow the IRE model (initiate-respond-evaluate) – the teacher poses a question, the child answers the question, and the teacher evaluates the answer as right or wrong (ibid.). This model is not in line with didactic methods used in most Dutch primary schools. Since educational material for the Moroccan and Turkish children is in Arabic and Turkish, respectively, no references are made to the Dutch context. According to Tariq Ramadan, “traditional Islamic education does not succeed in learning the Muslim youth to master the critical skills they need to resist the difficult moral and social dilemma’s they are confronted with” (El Bouayadi-van de Wetering 2012, p. 84).

Today, primary schools of different denominations with a majority of Islamic pupils try to establish a relation of trust with the *imām* and other key persons in the mosque and start a conversation about the pedagogics of teaching in order to try to adjust the pedagogical strategies in the mosques to the Dutch standard of education.

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## RE4All (Religious Education for All)

Inspired and motivated by the lines of thought of the German pedagogue Wolfram Weiße (Religion für Alle, 1997) and the Belgian theologian Bert Roebben (Education in difference, Roebben 2007), the Dutch theologian and pedagogue Cok Bakker developed in close cooperation with his colleagues of the Utrechtse Adviesgroep (Utrecht Advisory Board on Identity, Life Orientation and Education) the concept of “Religion4All” (Bakker and ter Avest 2013). This concept was constructed in an inductive way from research on principals and teachers in state schools in the city of Rotterdam, answering the question about the policy and practice of worldview education in their schools. By way of interviews and participant observations, an answer emerged to the question: What is taught in state schools to a pupils’ population socialized in a variety of religious

and secular worldviews, and by whom? In everyday practice in individual teams of teachers, three ways of responding emerged.

In the first place for teachers, the subject *Philosophy with Children* gives space for exploration of and doing justice to answers that are given to existential questions in the different worldviews classmates are socialized into at home and in the religious community their family belongs to. Some teachers like to do these classes of philosophy themselves; others prefer a specialized teacher for this subject. Characteristic for this approach is the teacher's attitude of "listening to the voice of the child" (cf. McKenna et al. 2008).

The second concept that emerged from this qualitative study is *Education in Encounter*. The relevance of a religious or secular worldview in the life of each person, and by consequence of living together in society, is the basic principle in the concept of "Education in Encounter." The focus on this approach is in the commonalities in different religious and secular worldviews. An important aspect of this approach is the training of pupils' competencies to live together, respecting "the other" who possibly is different but with whom also commonalities can be shared, and living together in a world full of differences. These classes are taught by a specialized teacher in close cooperation with the class teacher.

The third model emerging from Bakker's research is called *Differentiated Classes*. In this model in different periods of the year, the focus is on a different religious or secular traditions: a period for Protestant Christian religious education, a period for Roman Catholic religious education, a period for Islamic religious education, and a period for humanistic worldview education. These different classes in different periods are given for all children, preferably by a specialized teacher.

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## Concluding Remarks

Different schools react in different ways to the pluralization of society, as is shown throughout the chapter. Different perspectives dominate in reflections upon this situation, resulting in different positions in diversity. Whereas the pedagogical perspective dominates in the approach of the Bakker study, a theological perspective dominates in a recent Finnish study (Rissanen 2014). Dialogicality is needed in the exchange of various ideas about learning to live together in diversity among scholars in all disciplines involved. Parents should be included in these conversations, not least because it is all about their children, the future citizens of the Netherlands, and the main characters in the construction of and participation in a way of living together in diversity.

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# Islamic Education in Eastern Europe

Maria Lagutina

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## Abstract

The chapter explores Islamic education in selected countries in Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine). Islam in Eastern Europe has a long history: it arrived in Eastern Europe in the seventh and eighth centuries, and Muslims have lived in these countries for generations. Hence, the question of Islamic education has remained as a contested topic among Eastern European societies. One of the most important peculiarities in this region is that the Christian heritage and the political relations have left great imprint on the traditional relations between Islam and the state. Among Eastern Europe, there are different approaches to religious education: in some countries, multiconfessionalism is typical, while in others, religion is excluded from state education. This chapter provides examples of such different approaches in the three above-mentioned countries. In Poland, religion

According to the definition used by the United Nations (2008), Eastern Europe includes the following states: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine. This chapter will follow this definition. Islamic education in Russia will be the subject of Chapter 44.

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still dominates the nation and the majority of the population supports the enactment of the basics of Catholicism at Polish schools, but not Islam. In Bulgaria, multireligiosity is implemented, providing possibilities for Islamic education. In Ukraine, religion is separated from state education. The most common way for children to receive Islamic education in all three countries is to attend private religious schools.

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**Keywords**

Bulgaria · Poland and Ukraine · Islamic education · *Madrrasah*

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**Introduction**

According to various sources, the total number of Muslims in Eastern Europe (EE) countries is estimated for 0.5–1% of the population. Only Bulgaria with some 12% Muslims is an exception among the Eastern Europe (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2006). In many Eastern Europe countries, national unification is still a problem, and religious education at schools is seen as an important part of this problem. At the same time, in modern Europe scholars, politicians and religious leaders continue debates and discussions on the desecularization of schools.

The Muslim population in Eastern Europe is rather diverse. The majority of Muslims has lived there for generations and they consider themselves as natives of those countries. In fact, there are Muslim minorities in Eastern Europe and Balkans whose roots stretch back several hundred years. Therefore, there are certain historical and traditional relations between Islam and the state in this region. These traditions have adopted some elements of the Christian civilization and integrated into a diverse social and political landscape. Also due to the secularization process and as a result of the domination of the Communists, a significant devaluation of religions was exercised, which also affected the Muslim population. That is part of the reason which explains why the public activities of Muslims have been unsystematic and disorganized. With this historical background, this chapter attempts to explore Islamic education in three Eastern European countries: Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine.

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**Islamic Education in Eastern Europe**

The European Union (EU) advocated for religious education in schools as an elective part. Despite this, however, the Eastern European countries have adopted different approaches to religious education. In some countries, religion has a strong influence in the society, which affects educational arrangements. For instance, in Poland education of religion was reintroduced in 1990, and in spite of the opposition in the Parliament, some 67% of the population supported the enactment of Catholicism as the basis for school education in Poland in 1995 (Jarvis 2003). Pupils

following other religions or being atheists and who not wish to attend religious classes are not granted the right to abstain from them.

In some other countries in the region (e.g., Bulgaria), multiconfessionalism is the typical arrangement; while the third category of countries (Belarus, Czech Republic, Ukraine) religion is separated from state education (ibid. 16). In the latter category, religion is entirely excluded from the curriculum. Such policy helps to resolve a series of problems in countries where there are two or more religions or large proportions of atheists. Hence, in order to accommodate the needs of the religious people who wish to educate their children according to their religion, the policies allow private schools to include religious matters, or maintain a religious profile. In almost all countries in the Eastern Europe, there is a possibility for such schools, and pupils are granted choices to attend them.

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## **Islamic Education in Bulgaria**

As noted earlier, Bulgaria is the only country in the region with a rather large minority of Muslims (some 7.8 million people) (EMIN 2008). Most Muslims comprise a community of Turkish descendants from the period of the Ottoman Empire (which in Bulgaria ended in 1878). Apart from Muslims of Turkish origin, there are other adherents to Islam, including some 300,000 Roma and Pomaks, Slavs who converted to Islam under the Ottoman rule (ibid.). The Muslims are concentrated in southern regions and in the north-eastern town of Razgrad as well as in the capital Sofia.

Under the Ottomans, many mosques were constructed in Bulgaria, many are still the largest in the Balkans. Also the *conacs* (office buildings), *caravanserai-sheds* (commercial buildings), *madrasahs*, and Turkish baths were built. After the overthrow of Turkish rule, many of these buildings were reconstructed or demolished.

Since the independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, the policy of “bulgarization” has taken place systematically, and nationalist regimes have marginalized Muslims and considered them as the foreigners, despite the fact that they are ethnic Bulgarians. The Orthodox Church is an influential institution in Bulgaria and has with the help of the Bulgarian nationalists forced Muslims to convert to Christianity. In 1984, under the Communist regime of Bulgaria, the Turkish minority of the country was forced to change their names from Turkish or Arabic to Bulgarian names. The assimilation policies continued from 1984 to 1989, when also the Turkish culture and language along with the Islamic beliefs were enormously suppressed. All the Muslim inhabitants were harassed, injured, imprisoned, killed, or deported, and mosques were converted into churches. The argument was that the Muslim population of Bulgaria was allegedly Bulgarians forced to convert to Islam under the Ottoman rule. During the Communist period, religious education was also forbidden (Merdjanova 2006: 1–10) and thousands of Muslims fled to Turkey and Greece. In the summer 1989, more than 300,000 Muslims were deported from Bulgaria (Islamweb 2006). However, after the collapse of the Zhivkov regime, people were entitled to reacquire their previous names or adopt new Muslim/Turkish

names. Many mosques reopened and new ones were built to replace some of those which were demolished, vandalized, or neglected beyond repair in decades before.

During the period 1989–2004, approximately 150 mosques were built in Bulgaria. Old mosques were restored with the government funding and the total number of mosques reached 1150. The Bulgarian Turks elected their religious leader themselves, and in Bulgaria, *madrasahs* and Islamic institutes started to function once again (Merđjanova 2006) in Sofia and in Rushe, Shumen, and Mestanli. Since 1992, the Turkish language teachers of Bulgaria have been trained in Turkey. In the beginning, the textbooks published in Turkey were used for teaching Turkish in Bulgaria. However, in 1996, the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Bulgaria assumed the responsibility to publish manuals, literature, and other materials for Turkish. Today, the government of Bulgaria finances Turkish schools, while Turkish children living in Bulgaria spend their summer holidays in Turkey where they study Qurʾān, Turkish literature, and history of Turkey, and improve their Turkish language.

In 1997, the Islamic Law (*sharīʿah*) at Bulgarian schools was introduced. And since 2000, weekly 35-min elective classes on Basics of Islam and Turkish language are included in the curriculum of the comprehensive schools in 22 settlements in the south and northeast of the country (Tulskiy 2001). During 7 years in schools, the Bulgarian pupils have the possibility to study the subject “Religion.” From 1997 up until 2002, the course was an elective subject; however, from 2002 it is a required course. The subject “Religion of Islam” is taught at schools where Muslims are the majority. While classes on “Religion” are held as a part of the formal curriculum (Gudzik 2003), public worships or rituals are not considered as a part of the curriculum. Moreover, trips arranged for visiting temples, monasteries, or mosques are considered “excursions with educational purpose.” The teachers, who teach the subject “Islam,” are required to have a degree from a higher education institution, majored in Theology. Alternatively, they should have graduated from the Islamic Institute – an accredited institute of Islamic higher education in Sofia.

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## Islamic Education in Poland

Out of the total population of some 38 million inhabitants in Poland (Livepopulation 2016), according to the Polish Muslim Union (*Związek Muzułmanow Polskich*) the number of Muslims in 2014 was estimated at some 38,500 (Muslim Population in the world 2015). Unlike other European countries, there are not any large Muslim communities, and Muslims compose only some 0.05% of the population (EUobserver 2016) with limited resources. To illustrate the point, it suffices to know that there is only one mosque, newly-erected in Warsaw. The first noticeable presence of Islam in Poland began during the fourteenth century, and since then, Islam was primarily associated with Tatars. The first significant non-Tatar groups of Muslims arrived in Poland in the 1970s. Today, the approximate estimate of the Muslim population in Poland is: Tatars 5000, “foreign” Muslims 25,000, new Polish

Muslims between 500 and 1000. Information on this latter group does not appear in the public statistics (Planet Islam 2008).

Islam in Poland faces a series of problems. Poland is a predominately Christian (mainly Catholics) country which comprises 99% of the population. Hence, the Muslim *community* is very small indeed and not active to the extent to be able to enforce anything on the Polish government. By many Poles, Islam is viewed as an exotic phenomenon and as an alien religion with complications to be met and fought. The majority of the Poles have a vague understanding on Islam and Muslims and their views are often colored or affected by the Islamist activism and terrorism, and this has resulted in a strong opposition to Muslim immigrants and Islamophobia. There are not sufficient funds for Islamic activities, and therefore, the Muslim community in Poland is poorly organized. As a small community, the Tatar Muslims fear failing to protect and maintain their cultural and religious identities. There is a lack of educated clerics and funds to establish educational institutions. In order to educate vernacular clerics for Muslim communities in Central and Eastern Europe, a Qur'ān school was built in Białystok (Brozek 2004), but in general, due to the lack of funding, the progress is very slow across the country. Some types of Islamic education arrangements such as week-end schools for Muslim children at the age for elementary education in cities with larger Muslim communities have started to appear recently. However, there are no *imāms* or scholars with sufficient knowledge on Islam, the Polish language, and understandings on the Polish society to be able to create and develop Muslim education or start establishing new Muslim schools in Poland (Planet Islam 2008).

The small Muslim minority in Poland does not often face resentments wearing their religious attire in public. Also, Muslim pupils at the public schools are entitled to wear any clothes in schools, including their religious attires.

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## **Islamic Education in Ukraine**

The current estimation of the total number of Muslims in Ukraine is 2,000,000. Despite the historical presence of Muslims in Ukraine, their relations with other groups of population and the state have been far from straight as the grand Muftī of Ukraine notes, "Islamophobia appears where and when Islam and Muslims are involved in politics too much" (The Mufti of Ukraine 2007b).

Basically, there are only a few Muslims in the Western part of Ukraine, and most Muslims are concentrated in the Central, Eastern, and Southern areas of the country. At the beginning of 1990s, as anywhere across the territory of the former USSR, a process of religious revival started in Ukraine. In 2000, the only mosque in Kiev was inaugurated.

In 1992, the Council of Religious Affairs of Ukraine registered the Spiritual Administration of Ukraine Muslims (DUMU) which has succeeded to unite all Muslim communities across the country. As a result, the head of DUMU, the religious leader Shaykh Ahmed Tamim, enjoyed popularity in Ukraine (Islam in Ukraine 2009).

Nowadays, there is an advanced structure for Islamic organizations in place in Ukraine. However, due to the lack of educated Muslim clerics, Ukrainian Muslims attribute great importance to Islamic education. Therefore, in 1993, the Kiev Islamic University was founded whose diploma is accredited by the leading Islamic educational institution Al-Ahzar in Egypt. Also, at the Kiev University, there are departments of Islamic sciences, *sharī'ah*, oriental languages, and architecture. This fact has made it possible for Ukrainian *madrasahshākirds* to receive education in Ukraine.

There are also a secondary school, Irshād, with a subsidiary research center, publishing house, printing house, and center for electronic media. The school is the only one in Ukraine and was opened in 1996. Despite being established for years, it was not recognized by authorities in Kiev. At Irshād School, the pupils study the core curriculum according to the Ministry of Education of Ukraine. In addition, they study the basics of Islam, rituals, and also the Arabic language and the Qur'ān, which are considered as elective subjects (The Spiritual Administration of Ukraine Muslims 2008).

Nevertheless, in Ukraine there are no comprehensive Islamic schools because the Ministry of Education of Ukraine has refused to register and accredit Islamic schools. However, the private educational institutions for Muslim children already are opened in Kiev, and there are 12 schools where the Tatar language is studied. Several years ago, the grand *muftī* of Ukraine initiated the inauguration of a Muslim school and a kindergarten in Kiev which were officially recognized. He has argued that such schools are deemed necessary since the subject Christian Ethics has been introduced at Ukrainian schools and Muslim children have found themselves ignored and discriminated (The Mufti of Ukraine 2007a). There are also plans for the future to launch a National Islamic Centre near the mosque in Kiev to respond to the ever-increasing needs of the Ukrainian Muslim population, educationally and otherwise.

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## Conclusion

Islam in Eastern Europe has a long history, arriving to Eastern Europe during the seventh and eighth centuries. This is the reason why the majority of Muslims in Eastern Europe are natives and have a long tradition in practicing Islam.

During the second half of twentieth century, a process of secularization took place across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, in which religion was forbidden and atheism was promoted. Islamic education was abolished, which resulted in a significant devaluation of religious beliefs and Islamic values among the local Muslim populations. In the long term, Muslims in those areas became disorganized and rarely or sporadically participated in public activities.

Today, as a result of the religious revival among Muslims in some Eastern European countries, the restoration of religion and religious institutions has gained a momentum. Various countries use different approaches towards the restoration of Islamic education. In Poland, where Catholicism still predominates, the majority of

the population supports the enactment of the basics of Catholicism at Polish schools and Muslims who comprise a small minority do not have means for an organized Islamic education. In Bulgaria, multireligiosity prevails and Muslims are entitled to Islamic education in a number of different arrangements. And, in Belarus, Ukraine, and Czech Republic, religion is separated from the state education. Excluding religion from the curriculum is the most widespread policy among Eastern European countries. Such policy helped to avoid or resolve a series of problems in these countries. One way to provide children with Islamic education in these countries has been to establish private religious schools, where religious education is permitted. Almost all countries in this category have this type of schools, which may be chosen on voluntary basis by parents who wish to teach their religion to their children.

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# Islamic Education in Russia

Maria Lagutina

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## Abstract

This chapter is devoted to a description of the formation of the Islamic education system in Russia. Islam is the second-most widely spread religion in Russia after the Orthodox. Islamic education in Russia has centuries-old experience, special traditions, and deep roots. The first part of the chapter gives the historical background of the formation of the Islamic education system in Russia from the beginning of spread the Islam in the Russian territory till nowadays. The modern challenges of Islamic education are described and the author points out that the main problem of the current system of Islamic education in Russia is the correlation between secular and religious subjects within the framework of Islamic religious education. The second part of the chapter highlights the regional peculiarities of the development of Islamic education: in Northern Caucasus (Dagestan), the Middle Volga, and in the Central Region of Russia (Moscow).

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While in the Caucasian region the Islamic education has developed continuously, other regions have experienced a period of deterioration of the education system in Russia as a whole. The last part of the chapter deals with the issue of relationships between the state, Islam, and education over time. During the last 20 years the modern system of Islamic education has been gradually established in the Russian Federation. After a period of fast growth of Islamic educational institutions of different stages in the middle of 1990s, a period of stabilization has begun. The author draws the conclusion that the key role in the system of Islamic education belongs to Moscow and Russian Islamic Universities (in Kazan) which form the core of the unified system of Islamic education in Russia.

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**Keywords**

Russia · Islamic education · Dagestan · *Madrasah* · *Jadīdism* · *Maktab* · Kazan

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## Introduction

Muslim religious education in Russia is centuries-old and has established its special traditions and deep roots. During the past 25 years, this system has been restored in the Russian Federation after some decades of crisis. Nowadays Moscow Islamic University and Russian Islamic University in Kazan have a key position in Russian Islamic education, and they are a core of the united Islamic educational space in the modern Russia. The Muslim minority in the Russian community has contacts with the world Muslim *ummah*. “Today Islam is the second-largest religion in Russia (after the Christian Orthodox). According to the different sources, there are more than 20 million Muslims in Russia” (Statistics 2017). Peoples who traditionally adhere to Islam live in different regions of Russia. Islam is the predominant religion in Northern Caucasus (Dagestan, Ingushetia, and the Chechen Republic); in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Udmurtiya, Chuvashia, and Siberia; as well as in Samara, Astrakhan, Perm, Nizhniy Novgorod, Ekaterinburg areas, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg.

The largest proportions of Muslims are found among the Tatars and Bashkirs on the Middle Volga, and the largest group of Tatars (about 500.000 individuals) lives in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. But this ethnic group is mainly concentrated in the Middle Volga and on the Southern Ural (Mitrokhin 2007). Tatars live also in Siberia. In the Volga area there are two quasi-Muslim autonomous republics – Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. The two republics are officially secular. The Northern Caucasus is another Russian Muslim region where basically smaller mountain peoples live. Chechens are the largest of them (about one million people).

The creation of the Council on Islamic Education in March 2005 was an important step for the formation of an Islamic education system in the Russian Federation. It has united the majority of spiritual leaders of Muslims and Islamic educational institutions, which train Muslim clerics. First of all, the Council has elaborated the common standard of higher, secondary professional, secondary, and primary Islamic education. In addition to this the Council has approved unitary certificates and

diplomas of the Council of Muftīs of Russia for educational establishments for various stages. Nowadays the certification for Islamic educational establishments and *imāms*, who work in mosques around Russia, is regarded as an important task of the Council, which certifies students being examined in these institutions. Finally, one of the most important results of the Council's activity is the development of the concept of Islamic education in Russia which was accepted in 2006 (The Concept of the Islamic education developing in Russian Federation 2006). The main problem, however, is the relationship between secular and religious subjects within the framework of Islamic religious education. Despite those efforts the problem of the content of the Islamic education is yet to be solved in the Russian educational institutions.

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## The Historical Development of Islamic Education Institutions in Russia

The spreading of Islam on the territory of Russia began before the acceptance of the Christianity in this country. According to the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Islam was accepted officially in 737 year (Nabiev 2002: 25). For example, Tatars accepted Islam 50 years before the approval of Christianity in Russia. They have also maintained the centuries-old tradition of Islamic education. So, the proportion of literate people among Tatars was larger than among Russians before the Revolution in 1917 (Amirkhanov 2001). This was possible due to the widespread system of religious education – the system based on a network of institutions such as *maktabs* and *madrasahs*. Meanwhile, until the middle of nineteenth century Islamic education in Russia did not constitute a system and excluded any secular disciplines. As far as the higher education is concerned, it was possible only abroad - in Turkey, Persia, Bukhara (Khayretdinov Damir 2012).

Muslims took the opportunity to perform their religious activities openly; they built mosques in big cities and opened Islamic educational institutions during the Catherinian era. At the end of the eighteenth century, the first *madrasahs* in Kazan – and among them the largest rural *madrasahs* – appeared. By the nineteenth century, the number of *madrasahs* was estimated in hundreds. The quality of education in these institutions reached rather high standards. One of the famous researchers of Turkish history and a school inspector in Kazan, V.V. Radlov, notes, "... the *shākirds* (the pupils of Islamic educational institutions) are more educated than our teachers of parish schools" (The National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan n.d.).

In Russia, Muslim educational institutions were represented basically on the level of the elementary schools. The first stage in education of *shākirds* was *maktab* – i.e., "a place where pupils write." It was elementary schools teaching children in Islamic subjects. Until the twentieth century boys were instructed in Qur'ān recitation, reading, writing, and grammar in *maktabs*, which were the only means of mass education. Practically, these schools spread across all areas where there were Muslim settlements, and they were often attached to a mosque.

The next and more advanced stage of Islamic education took place in *madrasahs*. Certainly the basic direction of education was the study of the Qur'ān and *tafsīr*. At the same time, the attention was given also to the Arabic language, Islamic literature, various theological sciences, and even arithmetic. The study in these schools was free of charge, and pupils were more deeply and seriously engaged in the study of various sciences. However, when the position of many Muslim countries started to deteriorate in the mid-sixteenth century, Islamic education and its institutions in many regions in Russia gradually disappeared. Therefore, Muslims were forced to receive their religious education wherever it was possible. Dagestan was one such place, and during centuries, the religious education and its institutions were under state control. However, the Dagestani '*ulamā*' had a strong authority, even at the times when the Islamic education disappeared in the other regions of Russia. Since the sixteenth century, the *abyzhi* – people who were able to read the Qur'ān but also possessed knowledge in other fields – began the restoration of the lost knowledge in the Volga region. Their respect and authority among people were mainly due to their education among otherwise illiterate Muslim population of the region. Furthermore, they chose a highly moral way of life, among other reasons to set an example for all others. Their activity was performed, not for material benefits as they did not receive any compensation for their educational work.

Undoubtedly, many features of the *madrasahs* in the Middle Ages have been maintained in modern Islamic educational institutions. In Russia *madrasahs* have existed ever since the eighteenth century. Strengthening of trade relations with Turkmenistan provided the opportunity for many Muslims in the Volga region to be educated in famous centers of the Islamic scientific world such as Bukhara and Samarkand. As a result of this exchange, the educational institutions of the Central Asian type appeared in many parts of Russia. Due to the fact that the founders of these religious establishments were natives of Central Asia, many pupils, who wanted to receive a more profound knowledge, began to move to Bukhara. Thus, a multilevel system of Islamic education was formed in the Volga region which included *maktab*, *madrasah*, and a third advanced level for those who wished to advance their religious education. They were provided with the opportunity to continue education in one of the many theological seminaries in Bukhara or other Central Asian cities.

This tradition was maintained even during the Soviet period (especially since 1960–1970) during this period to receive an official religious education was possible only in Uzbekistan. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, the crisis of the Bukhara style of education surfaced. The main reason of this situation was that the Central Asian scholastic tradition was not adapted to the developments of the modern world. The Central Asian countries were conceived as a part of the Russian Empire during this era, and as a result these countries lost their status as Islamic states. That is the reason, for instance, why some students aspired to continue their education in Medina, which then was located in the Ottoman caliphate. At the same time, some scholars realized the necessity of reforms and changes within the system of Islamic education, which resulted in secular disciplines along with the religious subjects in the *madrasahs*.

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, progressive Muslims declared their dissatisfaction and resentment with the methods of teaching and the content of the curriculum in *madrasahs*. They noted the growing need to introduce a reform within the Islamic education. These Muslim reformers were named the *Jadīds*, and the term *Jadīdism* was normally used to describe their reform plan. Originating from the Tatars of the Volga and Crimea, *Jadīdism* spread later to Central Asia, in particular to the cities of Bukhara and Kokand. *Jadīdism* was met with suspicion by the Russian Government, which resented their connections with similar Muslim reform movements across the Ottoman Empire and British India, and hence alleged of having Pan-Turkish and Pan-Islamic sentiments. Some of the initiated changes, such as the introduction of benches, desks, blackboards, and maps into classrooms, were perhaps merely cosmetic; others, such as the use of textbooks printed in Cairo, Kazan, or Istanbul, were rather more substantial. The *Jadīds* had also many opponents among the *‘ulamā’*, normally known as *Qadīmīsts*. They opposed any reforms and asserted the old-methodological approach to Islamic education. During the entire nineteenth century, representatives of these two factions engaged in serious disputes with each other about Islamic education. However, those debates were interrupted with the prohibition of religious education in 1939, when all Muslim educational institutions were closed by the Soviet Government (Mukhametshin 2000: 80–87).

Prior to the abolition of the Islamic education, and during the period after 1905, Islamic education had begun an exhaustive progress. Islamic education was reformed, and new methods were introduced. As a result of the *Jadīds’* efforts, the level of literacy among Muslims increased considerably. By 1916, there were more than 5000 new-methodological schools in Russia (Landa 2000). The Madrasah Muḥammadīyyah in Kazan and Madrasah Ḥusaynīyyah in Orenburg were recognized as the largest and most famous institutions. Their education was considered among the best in the Muslim world. In Madrasah Ḥusaynīyyah, the main focus was on *tajwīd*. Other subjects included the Arabic literature and religious studies along with some secular sciences such as geography, arithmetic, philosophy, psychology, jurisprudence, and medicine. The *shākīrds* in Muḥammadīyyah learned Tatar, Russian, Arabic, and Persian languages and literature (Khayrullin). The teachers were mainly graduates of Islamic educational institutions in Medina, Cairo, and Constantinople. Many famous scholars received their education in Muḥammadīyyah, which worked until 1918. In 1993, after a long break, it was reopened.

After the revolution in 1917, the Islamic education was practically abolished and replaced by the Soviet-type schools based on atheism, where education was separated from religion. Hence, the formation of new groups of Muslim intellectuals was interrupted for 70 years. During that period, all Islamic educational institutions were closed in the USSR. Children and adults learned about their religion from oral narratives of their grandparents and visited mosques on special occasions. As a result, new intellectuals emerged in Soviet community, who did not remember their history and traditions and hence were indifferent to Islam as to any other religions. As expected, there were exceptions to this rule; in some regions (for instance, in Dagestan), the process of *de-Muslimization* proceeded with less intensively and thus did not lead to such destructive consequences as in other parts of the Soviet Union,

like in more Europeanized regions – such as the Middle Volga and Ural. Somewhat later, people could study Islam, but only in the educational institutions located in Uzbekistan, which were assigned this purpose, something which lasted until 1989. This was the Madrasah Mir Arab in Bukhara, opened in 1945 (Sylamtiev 2008: 96) as the only institution to provide Islamic education at that time. Almost all modern Russian *muffī*s were trained in Madrasa Mir Arab. At the same time, there were a number of informal clubs where people could study Islam.

At the end of the twentieth century, the organizers of the first Sunday schools in Russia encountered the challenge to educate the basics of Islam to young believers and set the track for those with aspirations to train as Muslim clergies. In the 1990s, schools started to be established adjacent to and under large mosques, which resulted in more than thousand children and adult graduates from Moscow educational center schools – institutions similar to the “public universities” – spread all over the world (Goryaeva 2003).

The *madrasah* and university under a mosque in Otradnoe area of Moscow is one interesting example. It was built by a businessman R. Bajazitov, who was the founder of the educational society Hilyal and constructed an entire complex of religious buildings which informally are called “the New Jerusalem,” including Sunnī and Shī‘ah mosques, a chapel and a church and a synagogue located close to each other. Their vicinity symbolizes an interconfessional world. Children, women, and old men study in the Tatar (Sunnīte) *madrasah*, and women are the majority. Pupils have classes every Sunday for 2 or 3 years. All subjects are taught by one teacher. Further education can be continued at the University of Tatars-Muslim culture. At this university, specialized subjects – Arabic language, history of Islam, *tajwīd*, *tafsīr*, and *sharī‘ah* – are studied in depth. While these institutions sell or distribute free Islamic materials, they also offer free courses which are widely spread in regions with traditionally Muslim population. This has contributed greatly to education of Arabic language and basics of the Islam and Muslim worldview and lifestyle.

Islamic education is spread not only in traditionally Muslim republics, but also in other regions in Russia. The Islamic educational institutions have equally spread across other areas of Russia such as Vologda, Samara, Nizhniy Novgorod, Kostroma, and Republic Mordovia, where Muslims do not make the majority. In 1995 in Kazan, the legendary Madrasah Muḥammadīyyah was revived and turned into “the Supreme Madrasah.” By 1996, some 30 *madrasahs* were registered in Russia (Sylamtiev 2008: 97). In 1998, the Russian Islam University (RIU) was opened in Kazan and became the most important University of Russia for Islamic studies. In 1999, the Moscow Islam University (MIU) was founded. In year 2000, most *madrasahs* were opened in Dagestan, while *madrasahs* and *maktabs* were founded in almost every city and settlement.

A new period of the history of Islamic education in Russia began at the end of the twentieth century, when a new opportunity for the revival of the Islamic education appeared and a number of *maktabs* and *madrasahs* were founded in various areas across the Muslim settlements. In 1988, the Madrasah Ismā‘īliyyah was opened in Moscow and became the first Muslim educational institution in Russian Soviet

Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). In 1989, *madrasahs* were opened in Ufa, Kazan. Two years later, some Islamic schools were founded in Dagestan and Chechnya. During that period many of schools had only half-legal status and a low level of education. Besides that, young students went to the Arabic countries and Turkey, where they graduated from famous Islamic institutes and universities. This resulted in prioritizing the establishment of an organization to regulate and monitor the specialized educational institutions in Russia, and consequently a number of official religious educational establishments opened in the regions with largest Muslim populations. According to some estimates, more than 6000 mosques existed in Russia in 2005 (Russian Muslims support the abolition of income tax for religious organizations 2006), which also functioned as the educational centers for parishioners of all ages. However, while only about 1–2% of the Muslim population regularly visited a mosque and performed their religious obligations, between 30 and 50% of the young people in these schools declared their affiliation to Islam (Goryaeva 2003).

Despite that, the situation of Islamic education in Russia began to crumble at the beginning of twenty-first century, when some *madrasahs* adopted specific and non-vernacular orientations of Islam and some *madrasahs* gained the reputation for being the basis for extremists and terrorists. This was among the prime reasons why the Russian Government intervened to form and develop a framework for Islamic education in Russia. In the light of the subsequent developments in 2002, President Vladimir Putin issued an official order to plan and implement a series of arrangements, policies, and practices for religious education and especially Islamic education. The plan was based on a traditional and vernacular Islamic education which has been in practice in traditionally Muslim areas of modern Russia for centuries and will be presented more in detail in the next part.

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## **The Development of Islamic Education in Northern Caucasus (Case Study of Dagestan)**

Caliphate authority over Derbent at the beginning of the year 654 turned the city into one of the centers of administration, Islamic education, and culture in the region. In 733, the grand cathedral mosque and seven quarter mosques were established in Derbent, which not only served as venues for praying and supplications, but also as the centers of cultural life of the community as well as education.

In Dagestan the networks of Qur'ānic schools, *maktabs*, and *madrasahs* were the pillars of an Islamic education system which lasted for centuries. The formation of the Islamic education system began as early as the construction the first mosques and their adjacent *maktabs*, which provided the rudimentary Islamic education and basic knowledge about Islam. At the end of the eleventh century, the first *madrasah* in Northern Caucasus was established and contributed greatly to the popularity and significance of Derbent as a hub for Islamic spiritual and educational practices in Northern Caucasus (Gadjiev et al. 1996: 335). This, along with the establishment of a network of *madrasahs* across the Golden Horde in fourteenth century, contributed to the spread of literacy in Dagestan, where the level of education was much higher

than in other areas. While the education in early stages took place in groups, the individual highly specialized courses with high-ranking Muslim scholars were the last stage to be completed for the entitlement of the rank of *'ālim*.

As a result of centuries of development, the Islamic education in Dagestan from the end of the eighteenth till the beginning of the nineteenth century comprised of various institutions, for each level in Islamic educational ladder of the time. The main task at the first level was the learning of the Qur'ān and basic of the religious creeds. All other subjects were to support and strengthen learning of the Qur'ān and basics of religion. For example, the grammar was studied for it was perceived necessary for understanding the correct meaning of religious texts; geography, for determining the accuracy of the direction to Mecca, necessary for performing daily prayers; astronomy was needed for the calculation of the time of prays and the beginning and the ending of Ramaḍān; and mathematics for solving the questions related to religious taxes and inheritance. Various levels in acquisition of the Islamic knowledge were arranged within the different institutions, each with the function of taking Islamic education farther. These institutions will be reviewed in more detail below.

1. The Qur'ānic school was an institution at the preparatory level. It was organized by educated parents or acquaintances on an individual initiative (Tusemez 1900: 111; Zabitov 1989: 94) and played an important role in spreading literacy among Muslims. In the Qur'ānic schools, parents (or acquaintances) taught children the alphabet, recitation of the Qur'ān, and various prays. Many pupils, who completed the elementary Qur'ānic schools, believed that they did not need more education. The Qur'ānic school was particularly important for girls who could not follow the next two steps of Islamic education (Kaymarazov 2001: 117; Rizakhanova 2001: 120).
2. It is very difficult to provide an estimation on the number of *maktabs* in Dagestan during this period. Many Muslim educational institutions did not have a source of sustainable financing, and they were not funded by the state. Hence, the schools often opened and after a while of operation were closed. Also, *maktabs* did not have any specially constructed buildings, and any rural *mullā* could organize a *maktab*, often attached to his house or the local mosque. In Dagestani *maktabs*, the old, traditional alphabetic approach in teaching the Arabic letter prevailed: the teacher wrote down the capital letters of the Arabic alphabet on a board. Then the teacher "loudly and clearly uttered each letter of the alphabet and asked pupils . . . to repeat each letter after him" (Tusemez 1900: 117).
3. *Madrasah* in that era was considered a school par excellence in Dagestan, and only some 0.5% of those, who graduated from the elementary *maktabs*, succeeded to continue their education in *madrasahs* (Tusemez 1900: 117). Unlike *maktab*, *madrasah* usually had a specially constructed building which often was attached to a mosque. Education was free of charge in *madrasahs*, and they were often organized by famous Islamic scholars. The number of *madrasahs* was significantly smaller than *maktabs*. Methods of instruction in Dagestan resembled *madrasahs* in other parts of the Muslim world. The curriculum was



composed of 12 subjects: grammar (*ṣarf*), syntax (*naḥw*), rhymes and meters, logic (*manṭiq*), theory of debate, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), interpretation of the Qur'ān, biography of the prophet (*sunnah* and *sīrah*), *sufism*, *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'* (rhetoric, stylistics, poetics). In addition to these subjects, pupils studied also geography, astronomy, sometimes physics and philosophy (metaphysics), and also Turkish and Persian languages.

*Jadīdism* penetrated rather weakly into Dagestan. The authorities strictly monitored the schools with new methodologies. They often were concerned that those schools could turn into the places for anti-Russian propaganda and Turkish influence (Kaymarazov 2001: 137–138). Consequently, with the official sanctions of authorities, the *Jadīd* schools could open in Dagestan. The state sanctions, however, were not the only reason for the slow spread of *Jadīdism* in Dagestan. Other reasons included the weak connections between the North Caucasian Muslims and Muslims of Crimea and Volga region and the inhabitants of the people in the mountains across the region. Consequently, Dagestan entered the twentieth century with an outdated system of Islamic education in a desperate need for reform, which did not correspond to the conditions of the new societies and could not meet the needs of people. Despite all, this system of Islamic education lasted in Dagestan until the end of the 1920s. In 1928–1930, collectivization and the cultural revolution took place in the USSR, in which Islam was one of the targets of the Soviet authorities. As a result, the network of both old- and new-methodological religious schools practically ceased to exist in the 1930s (Roy 1998: 128). Abolition of the Islamic schools was accompanied by physical elimination of people who could teach Islam. However, despite all such harsh measures from the authorities, religious teachings did not disappear and continued clandestinely in mountain areas of Dagestan. The *'ālims* (who escaped after repressions) continued to recruit pupils secretly and to educate them Islam. Hence, the domestic Qur'ānic schools continued to exist practically everywhere in Dagestan.

The middle of 1980s was the time for the gradual decrease of state control over religion in the USSR, and Muslims of Dagestan got the moment to revive Islamic education in the region. The number of *maktabs* increased rapidly, with the intention to raise the level of elementary religious education among Muslims; the plan succeeded to the extent that *mullās* who later at the beginning of 1990s took a leading role in reviving Islam in the region had graduated from those *maktabs*. *Madrasahs* were also restored and started their educational activities. At the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, there was an exponential increase in the number of *madrasahs* in Dagestan. For example, in 1998, 25 *madrasahs* were active in the republic (Shikhsaidov 1999: 109), while in 2002 the number increased to 131 (Statistics of Committee of the Government of Republic Dagestan on Religious affairs 2002) and, finally, in 2007 – included approximately 400 *madrasahs* (Khanbabaev 2007). After a period of rapid growth, however, the number of *madrasahs* declined substantially to the level lower than the pre-revolutionary era (pre-1917). Most likely, the main reason was the lack of educational religious tradition as a result of some 70 years of authority of the USSR during

which the religious education abolished and its respective institutions were abandoned completely.

Today, the most developed network of Islamic educational organizations and institutions exists in Dagestan. Certain reasons have contributed to the creation of this situation. Firstly, the historical memory of people in this area of Caucasus kept centuries-old traditions of Islamic education and the high status of the Islamic scholarship. Secondly, the authorities of the Republic have supported Muslim education in this region. According to the Committee of the Government of Republic Dagestan on Religious Affairs ([The official site of Committee of the Government of Republic Dagestan on Religious Affairs](#)), there are 13 Supreme Islamic educational institutions (with about some 2800 students), 43 branches (with more than 2400 students), 132 *madrasahs* (more than 5400 pupils), and 278 *maktabs* (4000 pupils) in Dagestan today. That is, in total, about 14,000 individuals who study in the Islamic educational institutions in Dagestan (Gusaeva *n.d.*). In 2017 Dagestan is still a region where the Islamic education is well-developed, but today while the number of universities increased a little bit, the number of *madrasahs* decreased: 15 universities and 79 *madrasahs*.

*Madrasahs* still have specifically constructed buildings, often attached to a mosque, and, as ever in the Muslim history, still rely on and are run by donations, sponsor support, and sometimes through the financial support of the local authorities. The majority of *madrasah* teachers don't have relevant educational and pedagogical trainings. Secular subjects are not included in the *madrasah* curriculum, which poses a serious problem since some *madrasahs* are replacements for secondary schools in some areas in Dagestan. These are parts of the reasons why the local and state authorities are concerned about *madrasahs*, their educational qualities, and their role in society.

The inception of the so-called Islamic high schools and universities in this region was one of the innovative methods by the government as part of the measures to curb the situation. In Dagestan the number of Islamic high schools has increased substantially. At the same time, the modern Islamic high schools fail to deliver quality education, which still remains one of the serious problems in the development of Islamic education both in Dagestan and in Russia in general.

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## Islamic Education in the Middle Volga

The Tatar enlightenment has a centuries-old history. Ancestors of Tatars – ancient Turks – had their own script and established an educational tradition already in the seventh century. At the end of the ninth toward the beginning of the tenth century, *maktabs* and *madrasahs* were opened in villages across the Volga Bulgaria (a state that existed between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries around the confluence of the Volga and Kama Rivers). Education in these institutions was conducted using the national language as a tool of instruction. In the seventh to the ninth centuries in Bulgaria, there was a ramified network of *maktabs* and *madrasahs*. In the last quarter of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth century, Volga Bulgaria was

divided into several principalities, and one of them was the Khanate of Kazan, which by the 1430s was established as the most important of these principalities. A rapid development of religious education system took place till the middle of the sixteenth century, with a Supreme Madrasah attached to the central cathedral mosque in Kazan. However, this process was interrupted by the occupation of Kazan by the Ivan IV Vasilyevich's (Ivan the Terrible) army in 1552. This was the beginning of a spiritual genocide of the Tatar people. The collapse of the Kazan Khanate was a start of a recession period in religious education. All mosques in Kazan were destroyed, and all *maktabs* and *madrasahs* as well, which usually were attached to the mosques, were demolished. From the middle of the sixteenth century, a period of struggle for freedom, independence, and restoration of statehood started in the Middle Volga region.

Historical materials about the activities of the Tatar educational institutions since the conquest of Kazan until the eighteenth century are scarce. Certainly, such institutions existed, probably however, with a quasi-legal status, due to the fear of abolishment. It was only during the reign of the Catherine II that the situation started to change. By the middle of the nineteenth century in Kazan alone, about 430 *maktabs* and 57 *madrasahs* were established (Gataullina 2001: 16). Until the end of the nineteenth century, Tatar *madrasah* was based on a confessional character known as *Qadīmist* (the old-method *madrasah* in which theology included the basis of the curriculum of *madrasah*). *Madrasahs* were clerical educational institutions that educated experts in the Islamic law and trained religious leaders of the Muslim communities. The traditional curriculum of the *madrasah* included studies of grammar (*ṣarf*), syntax (*naḥw*) of the Arabic language, logic (*manṭiq*), philosophy, religious dogma and the Muslim law (*fiqh*), etc. There were a few general educational subjects, and quite often they had an auxiliary character and served for better understanding of the Islamic dogma. Some teachers taught a number of secular subjects outside of the curriculum: the classical literature of the East, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, rhetoric, poetics, history, and geography.

In the Russian Empire from 1818 till 1880, the Tartars were not entitled to establish secular schools. Meanwhile, however, a number of proposals for the establishment of European-type high schools for Tatars were sent to the authorities (Amirkhanov 2002: 452), but none of them was realized. Intriguingly, even after the revolution of 1905–1907, opening of secular schools was declared forbidden by the government, and the authorities regulated and strictly monitored that the Tatar *madrasahs* only maintained their confessional character. Nevertheless, and despite all obstacles, some important changes took place among the Tatars by the end of the nineteenth century. One of the most radical initiatives was that the Tatar business circles joined the advocates for the reform of “old-method” *madrasahs*. The blooming business needed people with secular knowledge able to run a business or develop manufacturing goods, a function that *Qadīmist madrasahs* failed to fulfill. This gave rise to the *Jadīdist* schools that provided such knowledge alongside specialized training in theology. Practically all basic Islamic subjects – including the Qur’ān, interpretation of the Qur’ān (*tafsīr*), history of Islam, life of the prophet Muhammad and his Companions (*sīrah*), *fiqh*, etc. – were taught as before in all *madrasahs*. However, as the new era proved to require knowledge in secular subjects, those

matters were included in the curriculums of *Jadīdist* (new-method) *madrasahs*. The ambition of the *Jadīdist madrasahs* was particularly high in the larger educational institutions, located in territory of the ethnic Tatars.

All subjects included in the curriculum of the modern general educational secondary schools were also studied in some of the *Jadīdist madrasahs*. For instance, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the curriculum of a famous *madrasah* was comprised of the following subjects: Russian language and literature, arithmetic, calligraphy, drawing (shechting), geography, physics (natural sciences), geometry, Russian history, world history, history of Turkish peoples, history of science, ethics, hygiene (medicine), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), poetry (rhyme and meter), rhetoric, psychology, logic, philosophy, pedagogic, the Turkish language, the Arabic language and literature, and Persian language. Certainly the pupils wrote dictations, summaries, and compositions and memorized various texts. Strong attention was given to the study of the Russian language in this particular *madrasah*. Thus, for 11 years, at both elementary and secondary levels, pupils studied Russian on daily basis.

Today, a multistage system of Islamic education is in function in Tatarstan, which includes primary, secondary, and higher *madrasahs*. The modern system of Islamic religious education among Tatars is presented in Table 1 (Safiullina 2005: 3).

- Preparation of highly skilled Muslim clerics
- Creation of own school of seminary students, Muslim teachers, educators, and experts in other sciences who bases the activity on Islamic dogma
- Creation of fundamental scientific basis for revival of Islamic sciences in Russia

## The System of Islamic Education in the Central Region of Russia (Moscow)

The emergence of Muslims in Moscow dates back to the era of the Golden Horde. Historical sources note the existence of the Khān Courtyard in Kremlin in the fourteenth century. However, when this Courtyard was later relocated to another area and the so-called Tatarskaya Sloboda appeared, the permanent presence of a Muslim community in Moscow took shape.

The origin of the Islamic education could be linked to the construction of the first mosque in Moscow at Tatarskaya Sloboda in 1744. The mosque was traditionally

**Table 1** The modern system of Muslim education in Tatarstan<sup>a</sup>

Educational religious work	Network of clerical Islamic educational institutions	Teaching of the bases of Islam in secular educational institutions
Work of clerics with arrival and sermons	Secondary religious educational institutions	Teaching of the basics of confessional culture at school
Muslim Sunday schools	Higher educational religious institutions	Teaching of religious studies in high schools

<sup>a</sup>Tasks include:

also used as a place for learning the basics of reading, writing, and religious teachings. Despite this, the official date for establishment of the Islamic education in Moscow is 1871, the year when a separate wooden *madrasah* was inaugurated in Moscow. It was later replaced by a stone building and was closed in the aftermath of the October Revolution in 1917, when religious education was confined to the walls of the mosque until 1939 when the mosque also was closed. Other mosques and *madrasahs* were established during this period, but all were closed by the authorities.

The revival of Islamic education in Moscow began in 1988 when the School of Arabic Language and the Basics of Islam Teachings began its work in Moskovskaya Sobornaya mosque (a historically famous mosque). The school gained popularity among the Muslims of Moscow and its suburbs, and due to the high quality of educational activities, soon an adjacent *madrasah* started its activities. The curriculum included Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, the Arabic language, *fiqh*, the history of Islam, biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, the Tatar language, and other subjects. The classes took place during the weekdays, and in some years, several hundred students attended those courses (Murtazin 2006). In the twentieth century, the Muslim community embraced and hosted representatives from all Muslim groups across Russia, the former Soviet republics, and Muslims from abroad which enriched the activities of the Islamic organizations and promoted pluralism within the Muslim communities.

Then, it became evident that one single Islamic religious institution would not satisfy such diverse appetite of the Muslims. Hence, in 1994, the Moscow Supreme Ecclesiastical College was founded by DUMER (Ecclesiastical Administration of Muslims of European Region of Russia). The College was registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation and was accredited to provide religious education. The college was located in the office building of DUMER in the vicinity of the Moskovskaya Sobornaya mosque. The students studied both religious and secular subjects, including the Qur'ān, *tajwīd*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *sunnah* and *sīrah* of the Prophet Muḥammad, rituals of Islam, history, philosophy, psychology, pedagogics, and foreign languages. The first graduation of students took place in the summer of 1998. In 2005, the College became Moscow Islamic Institute which functions under the auspicious of Moscow Islamic University.

Moscow Islamic University (founded in 1999 as a non-state educational institution) is comprised of the department of secondary vocational training (45 students), Sunday schools (with some 100 students), and educational courses of the Foundations (*Nadezhda*) with some 70 students. Thus, the total number of students was over 300 in 2005 (Murtazin 2006). Meanwhile, then the number of students decreased: 181 students in 2017.

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## The Relationships Between the State, Islam, and Education over Time

Over the past 30 years, a system of Islamic education has been gradually established in the Russian Federation. Following a period of rapid growth of the Islamic educational institutions in the mid-1990s, a period of stabilization started. The key

role in the system of Islamic education belongs to Moscow and Russian Islamic University (the latter is in Kazan) which formed the core unified curriculum for the Islamic educational institutions in Russia. Nowadays, institutions for all stages of Islamic education are available in Russia, from short courses and Sunday schools with the intention to spread general knowledge about Islam to primary schools (*maktabs*), to secondary and high schools (*madrasahs* and colleges), and to institutions of higher education (Islamic Institutes and Universities).

According to the Constitution, the Russian state and hence the education are secular (Law 3 1995, Art. 14). Art. 5 of the Federal Law suggests that, “According to the freedom of conscience and religious associations: (i) Every person has the right to freely choose the type of religious education, whether individually or together with others; (ii) Bringing up and teaching of children shall be carried out only by parents or their legal guardians, with respect to children’s rights to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion; (iii) Religious organizations shall have the right to set up their educational institutions according to their charters and to the legislation of the Russian Federation, (iv) Boards of Administration of municipal and state educational institutions shall provide an opportunity for religious organizations to teach children religious subjects as extracurricular activities. This should be with the will of their parents or legal guardians and with the consent of children studying in these institutions” (Ponkin 2008).

In November 2007, Vladimir Putin delivered a speech at the event to commemorate 90th anniversary of restoring the position of patriarch in the Russian Orthodox Church and noted the following: “Today in the secondary schools all kinds of religious education are popular and this does not mean solely teaching the basics of one single religion. Many municipal schools have introduced the course in Basics of all Religious Cultures – Orthodox, Muslim and others, as well as the course of Religions of Russia. I believe all these religions have right to exist. We should summarize experience in this sphere and take into account the need to set standards in spiritual and moral dimensions in education. At the same time, while teaching religious subjects, the principle of freedom of choice should be observed” (Putin 2007).

Prior to that in March 2005, the Council of Muftīs of Russia set up the Council for Islamic Education which united representatives of religious associations of Muslims and heads of Islamic educational institutions from different regions across Russia. The Council developed a unified standard for Islamic religious education which includes all the stages of religious education from children at primary to adults at the advanced levels. The standard also contains guidelines for all types of vocational (professional) training, i.e., training of *mu’dhins*, *imāms*, *imām-khatībs*, and teachers, for Islamic educational institutions. The efforts of the Council resulted in the “Map of Development of Islamic Education in Russia” adopted in 2006 (The Programme of Development of Islamic Education in Russia n.d.). According to this document, several stages of Islamic education can be singled out in Russia:

*Stage 1 – Primary Religious Education:* Education at this stage is provided by primary (Sunday) schools (*maktabs*) or through courses offered at mosques or local religious associations. Basic religious education classes take place on weekends or in the evenings, for the period of 2–4 years. The age of students ranges from 6 to

12 years for children groups, 13–16 years for teenager groups, 17–35 years for of young people groups, and from 35 years for senior groups. The objective of studies is to learn the basics of Islam and primary religious duties as a Muslim.

*Stage 2 – Secondary Religious Education* is provided in secondary (evening) schools (*madrasahs*) and includes religious education for the period of 2–3 years, and classes take place in the evenings. The age of students is from 14 to 35 in junior groups and from 35 in senior groups. The objective of this stage is to prepare students for further education in secondary vocational schools and institutions of higher education or to serve as junior religious clerics in mosques (*mu'dhins*, attendants of religious sermons, etc.).

*Stage 3 – Secondary Clerical Education* is provided by secondary (full time or evening) schools and colleges; classes take place in the evenings or during the daytimes for the period of 3–4 years. Students are 16–35 years old. The objective of this stage is to prepare students for further education at the institutions of higher education or to serve as middle-rank religious clerics in mosques (*imāms*).

*Stage 4 – Higher Religious Education* is provided by Islamic institutes (religious educational institutions). Studies take place during daytime, in evening classes, or through distance trainings, for the period of four to five; and with the objective to train higher-rank clerics in mosques (*imām-khatībs*), personnel for religious associations, and teachers and professors for religious educational institutions.

*Stage 5 – Secular Higher Education with Religious Component* which is provided to Islamic Universities (non-state educational institutions), founded by religious associations of Muslims. The trainings take place during daytime, evening classes, or distance training for the period of studies is 4 years to receive a bachelor degree and 5 years for specialist degree. The objective of the studies is general training of specialists with expertise in Islamic theology, philosophy, history, teacher training, etc., each with sufficient level of religious knowledge.

*Stage 6 – Postgraduate Education (Master Degree)* which is also provided by universities, either as daytime courses or evening classes. The period of studies is 2 years. The objective is to train highly professional graduates capable of lecturing and carrying out research (The programme of development of Islamic education in Russia n.d.).

Undoubtedly, the development of these guidelines is regarded a great achievement for the formation of a system of Islamic education in the contemporary Russia. Nevertheless, there are several challenges facing it. One of the major hindrances is the lack of qualified teachers capable of delivering and maintaining high educational standards. In pre-Soviet era, graduates from *madrasahs* had excellent command of the Arabic language which provided means for communication with Muslims of various ethnic groups and for reading and comprehending the classic and original Muslim literature in Arabic. Today this linguistic capability does not exist anymore.

However, the lack of such capacity in Russia resulted in a positive development for younger generation to pursue their further education in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria. In this way, the traditional links with the global Muslim community are being restored. On the other hand, this development has also caused concerns among the elder generation of Muslims. More often than not, the

younger generation of Muslims educated abroad criticizes the older, more vernacular form of Islam for their compromise and servility with atheistic ruling power apparatus.

An indicative instance is the case of Madrasah Joldhyz in Naberezhnyie Chelny. The activities of *madrasah* were suspended in 1999 due to allegations on the religious extremist activities and connections with terrorist organizations. According to the information by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) – the main domestic security service of the Russian Federation – several students of this *madrasah* received training in subversive camps abroad. Although this claim was never substantiated, the authorities came to closely monitor the *madrasahs*, their activities and contents of the curricula, and their *shākirds*. In the mid-1990s, there were many lecturers from Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Turkey, Somalia, Sudan, Jordan, and India in the Russian *madrasahs*. Nowadays, however, their number has decreased significantly.

One of the key challenges within the Islamic education in Russia is literature. In the beginning of the 1990s, the appetite for books was satisfied with an uncontrolled inflow of foreign books. This caused serious concerns among local Muslim leaders and resulted in a series of initiatives. Today, more than 100 publishers across Russia are specialized in Islamic literature, both for general public and academics. Nevertheless, even this local line of production still involves distrust and wakes suspicions.

Another challenge is the relations of the Christian Orthodox and Muslim clerics, which first appeared in 2002 during a heated debate (which is still ongoing) following the possibility for introducing an extracurricular course in the schools, “Basics of the Orthodox Culture.” On the utmost surprise for the Christians, the legally accepted Muslim organizations declared their resentment and protested against the “obligatory bringing up pupils (some of whom could be Muslim children) according to the Christian Orthodox culture.” The source of surprise was the fact that the Orthodox establishment did not oppose the introduction of extracurricular course “the basics of Islam” in the Muslim regions of the country. Hence, while Muslim children would exercise their right to study Islamic culture at schools “in traditionally Christian” parts of the country – with the absence of teachers and books and the evident support of the Russian Orthodox Church by authorities – such advantage was denied for Orthodox pupils.

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## Conclusion

The Islamic education in Russia has undergone various changes through different and complex stages. Although in the Caucasian region the Islamic education developed sustainably and continuously, other Russian regions have experienced a period of deterioration, with the exception of the mid-eighteenth century when Islamic education was revived in the Volga-Urals region.

Due to the lack of any substantial and systematic work in the field of Islamic education as well as the lack of coordination between various stakeholders, organizations, and individuals, the revival of the system of Muslim education in



contemporary Russia has not reached a significant achievement. Moreover, success of one religious group is often interpreted as an attempt to concentrate power in the hands of one faction and has caused resentment and opposition of other groups.

Islamic education in its various forms with its respective institutions in Russia is conditioned by a number of factors. The turmoil of the Islamic education was due to the prevailing urban atheistic population, as a result of a long period of “de-Islamization,” and careful attitudes among the Muslim leaders and authorities, who endeavored to counterweigh the “extreme attitudes” of the new generation of Muslim, and conspiracy of silence in the mass media with regard to the peaceful Islam. This, in part, was compensated by the abundance of Muslim religious print media and books. An environment of mutual distrust and suspicion is still poisoning the dialogue between the communities in Russia and non-Muslims as well as the state institutions.

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# Islamic Education in the United States

Nadeem Memon

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## Abstract

The history of Islamic schools in America is complex. There are varying definitions of what an Islamic school is, should be, or should produce. There distinct Muslim communities with unique historical trajectories of being in America that have shaped their conceptions on the purpose of Islamic schooling. And, as a result, there exist today many types of schools that aspire for some semblance of an Islamic ethos.

This chapter attempts to unpack these diversities and distinctions through a brief historical timeline of some American Muslim communities. Through the experiences of the Indigenous Black American Muslim to the South Asian and Arab Muslim Immigrant experience and finally from the lens of second generation and convert Muslims, this chapter outlines how each community conceptualized the need for Islamic schools uniquely.

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### Keywords

Islamic school · Islamic education · Madrassah · Weekend schools · Clara Muhammad Schools · University of Islam Schools · Nation of Islam · Muslim Student's Association · African American Muslim · Immigrant Islam · Second Generation Muslim

## Introduction

The term Islamic education is complex and has come to be understood differently based on context and religious orientation. The United States represents an important case study of these differing conceptions because it is home to one of the largest Muslim indigenous, immigrant and convert populations with diverse ethnocultural communities. There are an estimated 5,745,100 Muslims in the United States and 1751 Islamic institutions. Among these institutions, Ba-Yunus and Kone (2006: 37–42) estimate that 53% (801) are Islamic centres, 13% (194) neighborhood mosques, 7% (101) local *muṣallās* (prayer areas), 13% (199) full-time Islamic schools, and 14% (215) Muslim Student's Associations (MSA). In terms of ethnicity, 29% of these organizations are run by Arab Muslims, 26% by African American Muslims, and 25% by South Asian Muslims. Turks, Bosnians, Malaysians, and Somalis are the other major ethnic Muslim populations in the United States. The largest Muslim populations reside in the states of New York, Illinois, California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Massachusetts, Maryland, Texas, Georgia, and Florida.

It is important to begin by conceptualizing the term Islamic education. To fully conceptualize the term, it must be first divided into two overarching categories: purpose and form. In relation to purpose, the term Islamic education has come to represent quite divergent forms of schooling. Islam that includes: teaching of the Islamic sciences, teaching of the foundational beliefs and practices of Islam, emphasizing character education and an Islamic moral ethic, teaching from an Islamic perspective, representing of Islam and Muslims in public school textbooks, and calling people toward Islam. In relation to form, the list is equally diverse: full-time Islamic day schools, supplementary weekend schools, summer camps and youth initiatives, new Muslim workshops and training, traditional *madrasah* schools, Islamic conferences, mosque programs, religious retreats, Islamic colleges, *da'wah* (outreach) programs, prison education programs, Islam-inspired art forms such as comedy, *nashīds*, and the list is again ever expanding.

The diverse forms of Islamic education are important because they challenge the conception of what Islamic education is and more importantly they illustrate the growth and complexity of the American Muslim diaspora. Arguably, through the field of Islamic education in America, if one can call it that, all of the differences that distinguish Muslim communities in America become evident. Differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religious orientation, generational differences, and even the varying positions on civic responsibility versus global *ummah* based concerns can be

explained. Take for instance the rise of Muslim American colleges such as the American Muslim College (AIC), American Open University, Zaytuna College, Islamic American University, and the Islamic University of Minnesota. A simple analysis of each college's core curriculum, instructors, and program objectives would reveal distinctions in religious orientation – what some might call ideological positions and the ways in which Muslim American discourses are being shaped. Similarly, a data analysis of where elementary and secondary Islamic day schools are located across urban cities – i.e., inner cities versus suburbs would reveal both racial and socioeconomic distinctions that demarcate deep lines between communities.

This chapter will analyze the particular trend of elementary and secondary Islamic day schools that are becoming more central to the American Muslim discourse.

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## Islamic Schooling or Schooling Islam?

To begin, the term Islamic school itself has multiple meanings and forms. Approximately 95–97% of school-aged Muslim students attend State public schools or common schools that include publicly funded charter schools (Keyworth 2009: 28). Some of these students will also attend weekend or evening religious education programs offered through mosques or individuals in the local Muslim community. The statistics for supplemental religious education are difficult to gather because not all of them are administered through mosques, nor are there requirements to register nonformal educational initiatives.

In addition to supplemental religious education as one form of Islamic education, there are also traditional *madrasah* schools across the country. The curriculum of these schools is most often rooted in the Darul Uloom Deoband tradition from Deoband, India, which aspires to educate religious leadership. (See Hashimi's book entitled *Muslim Responses to Western Education*. His chapter on the *Darul Uloom* Deoband represents one of the many schools that arose out of a reaction to British colonialism in the subcontinent. Schools such as the Darul Uloom Deoband began in the mid-nineteenth century to counteract the perceived moral degradation of the Mughal Empire, its downfall, and the establishment of colonial rule.) The number of students that attend these *madrasahs* is relatively insignificant across the American landscape but significant in their impact because many *imāms* across the country are trained through this system (There are two such notable *madrasah* schools in the eastern United States (Buffalo and New York) that serve as boarding schools and then smaller offshoot schools more locally often based out of mosques). Although weekend supplementary schools and *madrasahs* deserve greater analysis the remainder of this chapter will focus on full-time Islamic day schools that are rapidly becoming a significant part of the American private school discourse.

The focus on full-time Islamic schools is for two reasons: firstly, there is little research on their long history in America and interconnections between Muslim communities, and secondly, because there has been a significant growth of Islamic schools in the past two decades that is equally unexplored. Although only an

estimated 4% of American Muslim youth attend Islamic schools, 85% of the existing approximately 300 schools were established in the last 10 years (Keyworth 2009: 28). Combine these statistics with the fact that the largest consortium of Islamic schools in America, the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools, reached its peak close to two decades prior to 9/11 (Rashid and Muhammad 1992) and a very complex field of questions begins to form.

Statistics on the number of Islamic schools in North America vary. Some studies show that in 1992 there were 165 private Islamic schools in the United States, of which 92 were full-time schools and 73 part-time. Bagby (2003) found that 21% of the mosques in the United States had full-time Islamic schools running out of their center, and 71% had part-time schools. According to their list of mosques for that year, they had identified 1209, mosques which would mean that there were approximately 254 full time Islamic schools and 858 part-time. Based on the above numbers, they estimated that approximately 31,700 students attended full-time Islamic schools and 79,600 attended part-time schools. Other studies suggest that by 2005, there were approximately 400 full-time Islamic schools and 800 part-time (Ba-Yunus and Kone 2006; Dirks 2006; Nimer 2002). A typical full-time school has approximately 100 students enrolled, 6 years or younger, growing, professionally oriented, and independently governed (Keyworth 2009: 33).

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## Historical Development

The historical development of Islamic schools in North America has been led by two distinct and largely separate communities: the indigenous and the immigrant. Although within these two communities many subdistinctions can be made, “indigenous” in this chapter refers to the African American Muslim community of Imām Warith Deen Mohammed (1933–2008) whose roots can be traced back to the Nation of Islam (The use of the term “indigenous” to refer to African American Muslims seems odd in an American context when the term is most often used to refer to Aboriginal, Native Americans. In the context of Islam in America, however, because there is such diversity within African American Muslim communities within their ethnic, cultural, and religious identities many Islam in America scholars will devise new terms to describe the specific community they wish to refer to. Terms like African American, Black American, Blackamerican, African, Asiatic, and indigenous are not uncommon to describe the different aspects of identity that describe the specific African American experience scholars wish to highlight. Within Muslim communities in North America (in the United States in particular) “indigenous” is most often employed to distinguish the historical presence of Muslims in America, see Sherman Jackson (2005). *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Third Resurrection*. New York: Oxford University Press. The use of the term indigenous versus immigrant easily demarcates who came first. For a community historically oppressed and then marginalized once again in their encounter with immigrant Islam in America, the use of the term indigenous gives African American Muslims a sense of authority over what it means to be “American” if not what it

means to be “Muslim.”). Similarly, the “immigrant” Muslim community refers specifically to the generation of Muslims who immigrated to the United States largely in the 1960s and 1970s.

These two communities are the first to have aspired toward establishing Islamic elementary and secondary schools as full-time alternatives to the North American public education system. Their histories, contexts, and objectives are distinct and rightfully deserve two separate narratives, as has been done in the handful of doctoral dissertations written on this topic. (See for example Abdus Rashid, Abdus Sabur, or Shalaby’s theses listed here that all focus on the African American experience and Kelly and Zine on the immigrant: Abdus 1999; Sabur 1998; Kelly 1997; Shalaby 1967; Zine 2004.) Yet most references to Islamic schools in America trace the roots back solely to the first major wave of Muslim immigration while disregarding African American contributions, particularly those contributions that are linked to the Nation of Islam (The tension in acknowledging contributions of the NOI to Islamic schools in America resides in the belief by many American Muslims that the beliefs and practices of the NOI are incongruent with fundamental aspects of a mainstream Islamic worldview.).

In order to gain a more complete narrative, this chapter attempts to highlight the distinctions between Islamic schools. Maintaining separate histories of schools does not illustrate the differences nor does it provide an appreciation for the collaboration and interconnections between the types of Islamic schools that exist. Therefore, in the remainder of this section, this chapter briefly traces the roots of the “indigenous” Islamic schools in America from the Nation of Islam (NOI) to the transition of those schools under Imām Warith Deen and similarly, trace the roots of “immigrant” established Islamic schools and the expansion of those schools by subsequent generations.

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## University of Islam Schools

The term University of Islam (UoI) can be misleading. Elijah Muhammad, religious visionary of the Nation of Islam (NOI) between 1930 and 1975, established elementary and secondary schools for children of the NOI as a response to the abject racism of the time. Establishing their own schools was an act of protest against the absence of legitimate educational opportunities that existed for African Americans. Schools served as microcosmic representations of the core tenets of the NOI that were intended to separate, isolate, and re-educate African American children with a sense of self. Such re-education required extreme measures of both resistance and reverse-discrimination.

The rise of the NOI and its schools should be contextualized. For some African Americans separate schools served as an outlet for both rejecting and, to a large extent, reversing sentiments of inferiority. Between the Common School Movement and Civil Rights Era, there remained a great divide between the theory of an equal education for all and the practice of public educational institutions. Living in an era whereby Jim Crow laws (Jim Crow laws were the enactment of American civil law



that espoused a “separate but equal” line of protest. Practiced between 1876 and 1965, these laws segregated schools, restaurants, restrooms, and other public spaces. The term Jim Crow itself represented the stereotypical behavior of Black Americans that reinforced their presumed inferiority. Through popular culture, most notably in stage plays, the term became widespread.) stunted learning for blacks, taking active control of their own educational fate was not considered optional by Elijah Muhammad. He believed that for his teachings to be successful his system of education could not be accommodated or integrated into a public system nor could it be constructed parallel to what the state provided; it had to be devoid of all teachings, nuances, and sentiments of white superiority, and therefore had to be separate.

As early as the fall of 1933, believers were instructed to remove their children from public schools and to enroll them in the UoI schools (The actual start year has varied depending on source. Some scholars have mentioned 1934 (Rashid and Muhammad 1992), and others have mentioned that the first school was established as early as 1932. Since the first school was located in the home of Elijah and Clara Muhammad and was not formally registered, it is difficult to be completely accurate.) The locations of the schools varied from substandard and inadequate learning environments to viable educational facilities. Depending on the city, some schools were housed in a temple’s prayer area and others in converted residences (IHPG 2006: 124). One UoI schools in Paradise Valley, Detroit, is estimated to have had approximately 400 children in 1934 (Evanz 1999: 98).

The purpose of the schools was to re-educate adult converts but also to proactively educate their children with a sense of pride through sentiments of “Black is beautiful” and Black Power were part of the initial reconceptualization of the curriculum (Ross 2003: 148). The crux of the UoI teachings was to reform and reinvent a black identity for believers; one that challenges the perceptions and stereotypes that were commonly held of black peoples (Shalaby 1967).

The UoI Schools became a national movement within the Nation of Islam. By the time of Elijah Muhammad’s death, the schools, similar to the temples, had spread all over the country. Estimates of the number of schools vary between 14 and 42 (Curtis 2006: 153). Some were weekend programs but many were full-time day schools and one was a college established in Washington, DC. When the NOI initially transitioned as a whole toward orthodox Islamic belief; so did the schools.

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## Clara Muhammad Schools (CMS)

Among the changes made in the years following his father’s death, Imām Warith Deen Mohammed renamed and re-envisioned the University of Islam schools after his mother, Sister Clara Muhammad. What have come to be known as the Clara Muhammad Schools (CMS) are today the largest single consortium of Islamic schools in America (Rashid and Muhammad 1992). By realigning the community as a whole toward orthodox Islamic beliefs, Imām Warith Deen by virtue inspired the educators in his community to similarly redevelop the schools both in educational

vision and curriculum. The change of labels such as that of the schools reflected new beginnings and yet built upon the legacy of his father.

For the schools, this meant, that educators had to rethink their school philosophy and to actively redevelop an indigenous Black American Muslim model of schooling. The educational vision of Imām Warith Deen aimed to achieve two things: firstly, to establish the primacy of the Qur’ān, and secondly, to maintain the work ethic that defined the NOI. Reinstating the Qur’ān as the source for guidance and example was a major departure from the NOI where believers were previously generally not encouraged to read it. For Imām Warith Deen, the Qur’ān served as the exemplar par excellence and every aspect of daily life is aligned with the teachings of the Qur’ān. For the schools and the teachers in them, this has meant a re-envisioning of curriculum, pedagogy, and administration. The transition did not come easy for all believers though. Turning to the Qur’ān and the Prophetic tradition as the sole sources of guidance also meant that Imām Warith Deen officially replaced his father’s authority and by virtue his own role as the sole source of leadership.

What remained tangentially consistent in early CMS were the values of hard work, perseverance, and community building that were so central to the NOI educational philosophy. In this sense, the plight of the Black American Muslim remained consistent but could now be understood as part of the larger framework of marginalized peoples worldwide. He instructed believers to be Muslims first but to equally recognize their responsibilities as civil society actors in American society. They should be politically active, economically contributive, and socially integrated. He encouraged them to no longer envision themselves as an independent community in America, but rather an interdependent community with America. This drastically altered the curriculum of schools. They began interacting through dialogue and community service with their local communities, and as a result a sense of civic responsibility slowly began to develop amongst them.

By the late 1970s, the Clara Muhammad Schools had already begun to take shape according to Imām Warith Deen’s new vision. However, as in any transition there were also challenges. Some believers felt the community had conceded on the legacy of the NOI and so decided to revive it under the leadership of Louis Farrakhan. Other parents felt that the CMS schools were not as necessary as the UoI schools and hence opted for public schools. And yet other schools closed because of unsustainable funding, or parent support, or issues related to the quality of education their children were receiving. Overall, the way the schools were considered a necessity under the NOI did not transfer in the same way under the leadership of Imām Warith Deen and as a result the number of schools declined drastically. Today, there are an estimated 24 Clara Muhammad Schools across the United States.

Over the past three decades, however, the CMS have made a significant impact on the field of Islamic schooling in America that is often unacknowledged. For example, under the leadership of Imām Warith Deen, the Muslim Teachers College was established in the mid-1980s in Randolph, Virginia, to train teachers to teach in CMS. The College also offered graduate programs in education. Since the same time period, annual teachers’ conferences have also been held to provide ongoing professional development and as a result, a number of curriculum working groups have

been developing the curriculum for the CMS. Today, although the college is no longer running, professional development and curriculum initiatives remain as regular supports for the CMS system.

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## **Immigrant Established Schools**

During the period of transition in the Nation of Islam in the 1970s, another significant movement of conversations around Islamic schooling was also taking place among immigrant Muslims. Unlike the experience of indigenous African American Muslims in the United States whose history can be traced back to the earliest European settlement, the Middle East and South Asian Muslim presence in the United States is a more recent phenomenon. It was not until the policy of immigration was widened primarily for higher education in the 1960s and 1970s that the presence of immigrant Muslims was felt. Although there were pockets of Muslim communities whose members had migrated as early as the mid-nineteenth century as dockworkers in Detroit (Abraham and Shryock 2000; Suleiman 1999), there is no evidence that aspirations of establishing faith-based schools had crossed the minds of these early immigrants. Therefore, this chapter begins the narrative of Islamic schools established by immigrant Muslims in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

Through networks and the establishment of community organizations to preserve an Islamic identity in a new country, the need for educational outlets arose among immigrant Muslims. By the 1960s, America began to attract foreign nationals from around the world to come and study in American universities. Many of these students who initially came on student visas opted to make America their home after graduation. Many immigrants came from the educated elite of their home country or were at least privileged enough to gather money so as to find a way to North America. Although the intent for many immigrants was to eventually return back home and assist in the redevelopment of their own countries, the potential for social stability that America offered soon became evident to many who were politically active.

The intention of this wave of Muslims was very different from the indigenous experience. As ethnically and linguistically diverse as they were, they were not affected by, and could not relate to the racial discrimination and subjugation that had been and continues to be experienced by their African American Muslim brethren. Nor could this wave of immigrants relate to the issues of class that has been imposed on African Americans. For the South Asian and Arab Muslim immigrants their socio-economic and educational privileges awarded them the ability to network, mobilize, and establish Muslim organizations far more effectively.

To ensure that new immigrants would not lose attachment to their religious identity and values, some of the young Muslim intellectuals began to organize themselves both socially and politically into networks called the Muslim Students' Association (MSA). The MSA began to spread to individual university campuses across the United States and served students on campus with congregational prayers, study circles, and political activism around issues that were affecting the Muslim

world. It also served as the foundation for community building which included concerns of religious education for their children. Through a small educational committee comprising largely concerned mothers within MSA circles, educational initiatives first began with youth camps to nurture Islamic values and positive relationship building. To complement the camps, the committee also began establishing weekend schools and children's programs at the annual conventions. By the early 1970s, they began to foresee a potential for full-time schools as children came in substantial numbers. They envisioned two pilot projects: one in Toronto (Canada) and another one in Chicago (USA). The Toronto pilot project is the present-day ISNA School located in Mississauga, Ontario, and the Chicago pilot project is the present-day Universal School located in Bridgeview, Illinois.

Aside from Islamic schools that grew out of MSA circles, there were also other community-based initiatives, often by a small group of concerned parents. One of the oldest of such schools is the Aqsa School which began as an all-girls school in the mid-1970s by an early Palestinian community in Bridgeview, Illinois. The Islamic School of Seattle was established in 1980 by a group of concerned mothers many of whom are converts to Islam and then there were also schools established by African American converts such as the Islamic School of Oasis that were not connected to the NOI (Dannin 2002: 237–39). Each of these examples ruptures the idea that early Islamic schools in America were either established through the NOI or the MSA networks, but more importantly, these community-based initiatives illustrate that there were pockets of concerned parents across the country that sought an outlet for religious education for their children in the form of separate private day schools.

Since this early period of establishing schools, the number of Islamic schools in America has been on a consistent increase. Most communities that have an established mosque or center begin with weekend and evening religious education programs until demand inevitably leads toward the establishment of a full-time school.

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## Second Generation Established Schools

According to the research by the author of this chapter, there is no empirical study that associates the World Trade Center bombings of September 11, 2001, with a decline in the number of Islamic schools in America but the majority of current day Islamic schools have been established since that year. The growth of schools can be attributed to a number of factors including overall population growth, continued immigration, significant refugee populations in the mid-late 1990s, increased Islamophobia post 9/11, or simply a community coming of age. Numbers aside though, if 9/11 had any impact on Islamic schooling in America it certainly altered the discourse of Islamic education.

The popular sentiment in America post 9/11 has been an increased scrutiny at the very least of all things "Islamic" including Islamic schools (Parker-Jenkins et al. 2005). Such scrutiny has manifested through questioning the curriculum and quality of schools. Sociological research on Muslim youth identity, public debates on the

place for separate religious schools, and mainstream documentaries have all explored and in some ways scrutinized the existence of Islamic schools more closely after 9/11 (see for example: Merry 2007; Haddad et al. 2009; Sarroub 2005). The deeper public interest and inquiry of Islamic schooling post 9/11 has encouraged Muslim educators and parents who support Islamic schools to be more introspective themselves. In my study of Islamic schools in America, I found a far more concerted effort by parents and educators alike to think about and reflect upon the objectives of Islamic schooling once again. The initial rationale of preserving and protecting Muslim children's religious and cultural identity by both indigenous and early immigrants has begun to seem passive among younger Muslim voices. Largely led by second generation American Muslims and Muslim converts, a new cadre of Muslim American intellectuals has encapsulated young Muslims to begin to think differently about education in relation to religion as an active part of daily life. Discursively this has meant a shift from thinking about Islamic schools as solely imparting beliefs and practices to Islamic schools as inspiring lived practice of faith through, most notably, civic responsibility.

The progeny of Muslim immigrants who came to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s in particular comprise of a major segment of the Muslim demographic (Karim 2008: 15–16). These second and third generation Muslim Americans, many of whom would consider themselves “American Muslims,” have reaped the fruits of their parents' American dream (ibid.: 5). They are largely products of public schooling, university educated, and financially stable (Nimer 2002: 35–37). For some of them, their Islamic education came directly through Islamic schools but the vast majority found it through Sunday schools, if not at home. For a significant segment of this demographic, gaining a consciousness of Islamic practices – often referred to as the *dos and don'ts* – is insufficient. As Muslims born and raised in North America, they aspire to know how to *be* Muslim. The shaping of identity for many second generation Muslims is now articulated as a journey of self-discovery. These are young Muslims who are beginning families of their own and questioning whether to put their children through public schools with supplementary Islamic education as the majority of them underwent or consider Islamic schools that some attended and largely found inadequate. This is also a generation, unlike their parents, whose definition and relationship with American Islam or Islam in America is not defined by the politics of back home and American foreign policy. Their Islam is most notably defined by American Muslim converts who came to Islam during or soon after the Civil Rights era and in many instances were inspired by the likes of Malcolm X (Abdo 2006; Mohammad-Arif 2002; Schmidt 2004). Both the influence of Civil Rights and Malcolm X have raised a discourse of active civic engagement and social justice for local over global concerns and has done so within an Islamic framework. (See for example Zaytuna Institute's commemoration and remembrance of Malcolm X's pilgrimage. The event was held at the institute in Haywood, California on February 2nd, 2002, and was recorded and released by Alhambra Productions. This event, like many others, represents the exemplar of faith and justice that Malcolm X has been to American Muslim converts and second generation Muslims alike. This is but one example of moments of reflection that American Muslims have organized around Malcolm X's

legacy.) For second generation Muslims, this has been transformative. The life and teachings of Malcolm X systematically removed the concept of race from the minds of second generation Muslims that plagued the collaborations of their parents' generation. It also moved them toward a social consciousness and activism that strengthened personal conviction in Islam.

Understanding the dynamics of second generation Muslims in America will assist in understanding the current direction of Islamic schooling. Post 9/11, influential Muslim intellectuals, converts in particular, built on this legacy of social activism as a central objective of education which led to a critique of the limitations of Islamic schools themselves. The public scrutiny of Islamic schools which was relatively minor in the overall Islamophobic sentiments expressed toward Muslims in the country inspired an internal critique of the purpose of Islamic schooling as a whole. Many critiqued Islamic schools for being substandard in the more conventional areas such as teacher qualifications, school buildings, and student achievement. This developed a conversation among Muslim educators about raising the level of excellence in Islamic schools to produce higher academic results for students commensurate of elite private schools. Others began questioning the emphasis of Islamic schooling itself – whether schools ought to emphasize moral uprightness or intellectual engagement with religious teaching, academic excellence, or citizenship education. These are deeper philosophical questions that were wholly absent in the early development of Islamic schools, because initially it seemed a simple task of appending religious study to an existing core curriculum and methodology of teaching.

This form of active intellectual engagement has reshaped the field of Islamic schooling with a growth of what can be considered Islamic school alternatives. Unlike Islamic schools pre 9/11 where parents selected schools based on proximity, convenience, or enrolment space, today parents are beginning to select Islamic schools based on their educational philosophy. In the past 10 years, not only have Islamic schools grown in numbers but they have also developed conceptually. Across cities in the United States one can find Islamic Montessori schools, home schools, community schooling collaborations, schools that emphasize civic engagement, others that emphasize academic excellence, and yet others that emphasize experiential learning, American history, American Muslim identity, classical education through a Great Books curriculum, character education, environmental education, and the list could go on. Each of these approaches seeks to connect varying educational emphases with a particular interpretation of the Islamic tradition in relation to what knowledge ought to be most central in an Islamic school. This development of approaches and definitions has altered the conception of Islamic schooling into a very dynamic field of study.

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## **The Future of Islamic Schooling in America**

This chapter has attempted to challenge the perception that Islamic schools are in some way uniform, singular, or monolithic. By tracing the roots of Islamic schooling in America to the Nation of Islam, such a narrative illustrates the complexities of the

field in terms of race, class, religious orientation, or ideology, and paths to Islam in America – conversion, immigration, or by birth. Islamic schools represent a diverse group of institutions with unique educational aims, approaches, and historical trajectories. As a result, the future of Islamic schooling in America promises to be equally complex in three particular areas: institutional aims, institutional structures, and institutional supports.

In relation to institutional aims, the current discourse in Islamic education revolves around its foundation – questioning the “Islamic” in Islamic schooling (Halstead 2004; Panjwani 2004). The growth of schools and the rise of a more concerted effort to improve the quality of existing schools have led to community-wide conversation on educational choices. With relatively greater social mobility among both African American and second generation immigrant Muslims, a larger segment of American Muslims with young families are beginning to take the education of their children more seriously. Having been born in America and having a more personal connection to educational choices available, some parents are now beginning to ask more nuanced questions. Parents question what makes an Islamic school distinct from a public school and is the facilitation of prayer, diet, and dress sufficient in defining a “good” Islamic school? With multiple Islamic schools in many urban cities, they also question what distinguishes one Islamic school from another – teacher qualifications, school environment, school philosophy, educational achievement, curricular framework, or instructional approaches? These are the types of questions that parents could not ask when there only existed one Islamic school in their vicinity and as result, such interest and critique has made the types of Islamic schools blossom that exist and the approaches that define each.

Structurally, however, Islamic schools have a long way to stability. If one acknowledges the quality of school environment or lack thereof, school funding model, and organizational structure and development plan of many schools, the infancy of Islamic schooling in America becomes apparent. The majority of schools are yet to be housed in a school building proper with what have come to be considered essentials of any school environment – playgrounds, science labs, and gymnasiums (Keyworth 2009: 30). Some schools do not aspire for such an environment (Muslim home-schoolers, Islamic Montessori schools, or Qur’ānic schools) but among those that do, funding remains a major hurdle. Currently, the majority of schools are solely dependent on meagre school tuition along with, in some cases, charitable donations from within the community or abroad. Given that half of the schools are connected to a mosque, this relationship in some cases also serves as an initial start-up funding model (ibid.: 33). In States where voucher programs are available such as Wisconsin where parents can use public funds to choose the school of their choice, Islamic schools are relatively more financially stable.

Funding in many ways has also affected the ability of schools to attract and retain qualified teachers and administrators or support professional development opportunities for existing staff. Some current teachers in Islamic schools do not have State certification of which the most urgent area is Islamic Studies teachers. With the absence of religious teacher training programs, Islamic/Qur’ānic studies teachers are reliant on sporadic professional development opportunities.

Despite the mounting challenges, a number of institutional support are beginning to become a more central part of the field. The Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA) continues to serve as the portal that connects schools through listserves, resource sharing, and research. The Council of Islamic Education in North America (CISNA) recently solidified a partnership with AdvancED, a school accrediting agency to support new and existing Islamic schools through the accreditation process. Razi Group (a Canadian education consulting firm) has established an online teacher training certificate program to meet the specific needs of Islamic schools through the University of Toronto. And the Ahlul-Qur'an Academy has developed a teaching methodology entitled Nuraniyah to train Qur'an teachers. Each of these initiatives is in addition to the long-standing annual teacher conferences held by the Clara Muhammad Schools and CISNA. These overarching initiatives represent the growth of a field and the need to provide support structures for schools nationally. They also illustrate the direction of the coming years with more collaborative programs with universities and mainstream educational organizations as well as a more concerted effort to creatively support the growth of schools.

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# Islamic Education in Latin America

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## Abstract

The development of Islamic education in Latin America and the Caribbean started as early as the sixteenth century, when Muslim religious practices were brought there by African slaves. Although all of them then were nominally converted to Christianity, a number of Muslim communities managed to survive in a new environment, and Islamic education played an important role in Muslim survival strategies.

At this early stage, Islamic education in the New World was basically West African and Mālikīte, keeping to the same curriculum and teaching material. Almost all traces of African Islam in Latin America and the Caribbean had vanished by the early twentieth century. The legacy of West African Mālikīte education is mostly known to us from the outsiders’ records published since the eighteenth century as well as a small number of written texts produced locally by Muslims (copies of the Qur’ān, Arabic poetry), amulets and very few original texts, e.g., on *tawhīd*. The “African stage” in Latin American Islam is reconstructed in this chapter.

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Since the nineteenth century, postcolonial Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced a steady flow of Muslim immigrants, mostly from the Middle East and South Asia. The former group of immigrants, most of them Lebanese, but known as “Turks” in Latin America, brought with them Islam and Islamic educational practices of the Ottoman Empire and its heir states. The latter, coming from British India and today’s Indonesia, were much more heterogeneous and have settled mainly in the Caribbean Islands such as Trinidad, Guyana, and Surinam.

In the twentieth century, the modern picture of Latin American Islam and Islamic education was shaped by both immigrants, mostly from the Arab world as well as Iran and some other Islamic countries, and local converts, some of them heavily influenced by North American Black Islam. Others have been attracted by the activities of one or another *ṣūfī* “*ṭarīqah*” and more recently by the anti-*ṣūfī* and anti-Western *Salafīyyah*. In Latin American Muslim communities, as elsewhere, conflicting ideologies and religious practices within Islam have greatly influenced educational practices, often borrowed from the Middle East.

Nowadays not only various Sunnī but also Shi’ah communities exist in Latin America, with their respective educational institutions and well-established links with Islamic “motherland(s).” These institutions, usually affiliated with Islamic cultural centers and mosques, are examined in this chapter. Special attention is paid to Islamic education in Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela.

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### Keywords

Latin America · Islamic education · Brazil · Argentina · Venezuela

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## Introduction

Islam has been a minority religion in Latin America and the Caribbean for several centuries. If the hypothetical pre-Columbian presence of Muslim Arabs and West Africans is not taken into consideration, one can surely describe the arrival of Islam in the New World as a post-1492 phenomenon. The role of Muslims on the early stages of the Spanish and Portuguese conquista is again far from clear, even though this topic has become rather popular among Latin American Muslims of late (for a general overview, see, e.g., M’Bow et al. 2001).

The first recognizable wave of Muslim settlement in the Americas was due to the arrival of slaves brought from Sub-Saharan Africa. This forced migration started as early as the fifteenth century and continued till the mid-nineteenth century, primarily directed toward Brazil and the Caribbean. As a rule, there were few Muslims among the slaves. Nowadays, some authors consider significant groups of African slaves to be Muslims (see, e.g., Diouf 2013). According to one of these descriptions, referring to all African slaves brought from “North and West Africa,” “a large majority of these slaves were Muslims who did not count with the possibility of freedom to realize or practice their rites and beliefs, rather the opposite, they were forced to abandon their faith, under the threat of being executed. Thus, with time their traces of

Islam disappeared from Latin American territory.” (Los musulmanes en Latinoamérica: historia e inmigración. Organización Islámica Para América Latina (OIPAL). <http://www.islamamerica.org.ar/> (translation from Spanish is done by the chapter author).)

While the impossibility of overt adherence to Islam was evident in the colonies of the Catholic kings of Spain and Portugal, to speak about a Muslim majority among the slaves would be an exaggeration not confirmed by any historical evidence. However, some so-called African nations (Mandinga, Hausa, Fula, Tapa, Bornu, as they were registered in the acts of baptism and in other official documents) were known to be originally “Moor,” “Mahometan,” “Turk” or at least influenced by Islam, as were, e.g., the “Nagô” (Yoruba) in Brazil (see. e.g., Lovejoy 1994).

With a few exceptions, the representatives of all such “nations” were brought from West Africa. This means they were undoubtedly Sunnī and Mālikītes. The *madhab* of Imām Mālik was not the first form of Islam to penetrate into Bilād al-Sūdān, but it was by large the strongest one, shaping the development of the Muslim *ummah* in Western and Central Sudanic Africa during the whole period of transatlantic slave trade.

Quite predictably, the peculiarities of Sudanic African Islam also shaped the character of education in this region of the Islamic world. Premodern Islamic education in West Africa has been subject of many scholarly publications, where local and subregional varieties of schooling were described in detail (see, e.g., Meunier 1997; Ndiaye 1985; Ryan 1977; Sanankoua and Brenner 1991; Sanneh 1979). The repertoire of texts to be learned besides the Qurʾān was quite stable, based on a relatively small number of North African works, such as the famous Mālikīte *Risālah* of ibn abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī and *Umm al-Barāhin* of Muḥammad al-Sanūsī. The stages of education were also practically standardized throughout Western and Central Sudanic Africa, and the centers of knowledge were soon established, determining the direction of students’ migrations. Many Islamic scholars had private libraries, containing treatises on *fiqh* and *tawḥīd*, works of poetry, written amulets, and prescriptions for their own use, usually in Arabic and often with explanations or notes in one or more African languages.

All over Sudanic Africa, the early stage of Islamic education was based on the use of wooden boards (*allo*, *alluwal*, etc.) rather than paper. These boards were found in any Qurʾānic school and had both symbolic and practical value.

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## Sudanic African Islam and Qurʾānic Education in the New World

By the nineteenth century, and probably much earlier, West African written traditions and Arabic script literacy had spread into the New World in the course of the transatlantic slave trade and forced migration. Some African Muslims were able to take with them manuscripts and written amulets produced in Africa, while others retained their literacy skills or learned Arabic script in their new homeland. Reading and writing in Arabic was not uncommon in the Caribbean and the adjacent parts of North America during the time of slavery and for some time after its abolition in the

nineteenth century, especially in Jamaica and Trinidad. Some Muslims of African origin also used Arabic script for writing in an African language, on demand and maybe for themselves. Very little is known about the transmission of Islamic education in North America and the Caribbean of these times. There exist a few manuscripts produced by Africans in North America, which have been studied in detail (see, e.g., Judy 1993). In the Caribbean, such texts include *Kitāb al-Ṣalāt* (The Book on Prayer) of Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu, alias Robert Peart, produced in Jamaica in the 1820s. The writer was a Jakhanke from Futa Jallon, who studied with his father and his uncle before he was enslaved and brought to the New World (Daddi-Addoun and Lovejoy 2004).

African Muslims in the Caribbean, whose educational path is known, included Mohammedu Sisei from Gambia, who served in the Third West India Regiment between 1811 and 1825, and wrote Mandingo “indifferently in Arabic character” (Campbell 1974: 34). Before his capture, Sisei went to a Qur’ānic school for 8 years (between 8 and 16), learned the Qur’ān, and then became a teacher (Warner-Lewis 2009: 256–257). Another former slave, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, was born in Timbuktu around 1790, in a scholarly family. His father was a scholar and a gold trader, of scholars and jurists. Abū Bakr studied the Qur’ān before he was sold into slavery and brought to Jamaica (Al-Siddiq 1997).

Among the ex-slaves and demobilized soldiers of the Third West India Regiment on Trinidad, there were a few Muslims who possessed copies of the Qur’ān, and one of them apparently became a teacher of a Qur’ānic school. The Muslim presence was felt by a Canadian missionary when he established a Presbyterian mission on the island and encountered resistance from the “Mandingo” (Warner-Lewis 2009: 246). Some African Muslims took with them manuscripts and written amulets produced in Africa, including a copy of the Qur’ān brought to Trinidad between 1840 and 1867 and still kept in the same family one century later (ibid.: 27).

Since the mid-nineteenth century, when Sudanic African Islam was on the brink of extinction in the Caribbean, a new wave of Muslim settlement began. The newcomers were mostly from South and Southeast Asia. Their descendants now belong to several Muslim communities in the Caribbean, including Guyana and Surinam on the continent. Afro-Caribbean Islam resurfaced under the influence of the Islamic revival in the United States as well as the influence from the Middle East in the second half of the twentieth century. Nowadays every mosque in the region has some kind of classes where Arabic and religion are taught. The content of such classes depends on the interest shown by the local *imām* as well as the inflow of external support (teaching material and teachers). This is also largely true for the countries of Latin America such as Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela.

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### **“African” Islam and Qur’ānic Education in Brazil**

In South America, the major concentration of Muslim population is now found in Brazil. In this country, Sudanic African Islam was firmly established by the nineteenth century. Between 1819 and 1826, José Bonifácio de Andrada interviewed a

few Hausa people in Brazil about the geography of central Africa. In his letter to Menèzes de Drummond, he described one of his informants, who was of Kano by his origin: “He had been Muslim priest and school master in his country, he knew very well Arabic, he was able to count and write as you can imagine a tradition of *pater noster* in the Hausa language, written by himself in Arabic letters, which I send to you as well as a small dictionary” (Drummond 1826: 305) (translated from French to English by the chapter author).

In the mid-nineteenth century, Francis Castelnau, a French traveler and diplomat, found that Africans brought to Bahia were able to read and write in Arabic and “Libyan” (probably Hausa or another African language written in Arabic script). Castelnau’s book on the geography and customs of central Africa begins with the following words: “The little work that I submit at this moment to the public consists of information which I have been able to get from the negro slaves in Bahia. Just after my arrival to this place, I have not been late to observe that many of them can read and write in Arabic and Libyan” (Castelnau 1851: 5).

Castelnau also collected several wordlists of African languages he could find in Bahia. The word “book” was translated by his informants as *alcoran* into both Hausa and Fula, while “small book” was rendered as *kundi* (Hausa) or *cunde* (Fula) (Castelnau 1851: 52). In modern Hausa, *kundi* is used for an Islamic scholar’s “book of recipes,” usually a bundle of small sheets of paper with notes of the components of various charms, potions, and so forth. It is not impossible that some of these books could have been brought to Brazil from West Africa and maybe a few copies of the Qur’ān.

Afro-Brazilian Muslims in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia continued the tradition of Islamic education, at least on its early stages. This may be concluded from the fact that they used wooden boards to write on them (Gomez 2005: 107). Unlike the amulets, such boards were probably made in Brazil and then used for teaching. In fact, the existence of Qur’ānic schools was confirmed by some of the Africans interrogated by the police after the “Malê” insurrection of 1835 in Bahia. Dandarā, one of the suspects, was seen “teaching the Blacks, and this was done only twice a day” (Reis 2003: 296). It may be assumed that the classes used to start in the morning and then continued by night, as is still the case in modern West Africa.

Since 1835 the criminalization of Arabic script apparently contributed to the decline of local written tradition. Many documents written in this “subversive” script, including books and wooden boards used by local Muslims, were confiscated by the police and then burnt. On the other hand, a few texts of Afro-Brazilian Islam have been preserved exactly because they were kept in the court archives (Monteil 1967; Reichert 1970). (My catalogue with the description of all these documents (made accessible thanks to the staff of APEB and Prof. João J. Reis) remains unpublished.)

Emigration to Africa, either forced or voluntary, resulted in a drastic reduction of the Muslim communities in Brazil. Afro-Brazilian Muslims still retained some of their rituals, such as the Islamic salutations, but the number of those who could read and write Arabic was now minimal. The number of Muslims may be calculated on the basis of the fact that a French bookstore in Rio de Janeiro sold around 100 copies

of the Qur'ān per year (da Costa and Silva 2001). This figure seems to be rather high, and it may be possible that these books were used for protection (as amulets) rather than reading.

The surviving Afro-Brazilian manuscripts include three books, two in Rio de Janeiro and one in Havre. The book preserved in the municipal library of Havre was found in the pocket of an African who died during the rebellion of 25 January 1835 in Bahia. (“Livres trouvés dans la poche d’un noir Africain mort lors de l’insurrection qui éclata dans la nuit du 25 Janvier 1835 à Bahia” (MS 556, Bibliothèque Municipale du Havre). “Book found in the pocket of a black African deceased after the insurrection that broke out during the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1835 in Bahia.”) One of the invocations in this book, “Oh God, oh Muhammad, or shaykh ‘Abd k[a]d[i]r” (sic), seems to indicate that the scribe belonged to the *Qādirīyyah ṣūfī* order, very popular in West Africa. The peculiarities of writing include irregular spelling of Allāh as ‘Alā, also found in the nineteenth-century manuscripts, especially in today’s Northern Ghana.

Two other Afro-Brazilian books written in Arabic script are now in the collection of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (Historical and Geographical Institute) in Rio de Janeiro. These include a small prayer book from Bahia (“Livrinho male.” For more information on this book, see Reis 2003: 197–205), found on the neck of an African killed during the rebellion, and a larger book confiscated by the police in Rio Grande do Sul several years after the uprising of 1835 and donated to the Institute in 1855 (“Livro manuscrito c/caracteres arabicos”). The composition of both manuscripts is similar (mostly Qur’ānic quotations and complete *sūrah*s, as well as a few prayers combining Arabic and an African language or some kind of magic incantation (Dobronravin 2009: 232).

Among other texts written by Afro-Brazilian Muslims, the majority consists of written amulets, fragments of the Qur’ān, and Arabic poetry, with a few words or glosses in the Hausa and Soninke languages. The only exception is a private letter, mainly in Hausa, which was written by ‘Abd al-Qādir to Malam Sani, apparently his teacher and maybe a *Qādirī* shaykh in Bahia (Reis 2003: 222–224; Dobronravin 2014). The document was confiscated from Francisco Lisboa, a “Tapa” (Nupe), in 1844. The Hausa word *malami* in the text certainly refers to the teacher or the writer. João Reis (2003: 223) suggested that Malam Sani could be identified with Luís Sanim, also a Nupe.

Interestingly, no Afro-Brazilian texts in Fula have been found, although the “Fula nation” was famous for its adherence to Islam. Castelnau described the representatives of this “nation” in Bahia in the following words: “They exerted, even in captivity, much influence over the negroes. . . Everybody was able to read and write; these were intolerant and malicious” (Castelnau 1851: 9). The absence of texts which could be attributed to the Fula-speaking Muslims may be explained by the linguistic shift from Fula to Hausa in the Sokoto Empire.

A few more details about the state of Islamic education in the mid-nineteenth century Brazil are known from the travelogue of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Baghdādī. A native of Baghdad, he was the *imām* of the Turkish warship “Bursa,” sent from Istanbul to Basra around Africa. In June 1866, the storm drove the Turkish sailors to

the shores of Brazil. When they reached Rio de Janeiro, a few black Brazilians came on board of the “Bursa.” To the surprise of the *imām*, they welcomed him according to the Muslim custom. Al-Baghdādī described Brazilian Muslims as ignorant people who had almost lost their knowledge of Islam. For example, it was perfectly normal for them to be baptized in the church, to dance, and to drink wine.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the traditional culture of Brazilian Muslims did all but vanish. The oral transmission of the Qur’ān also continued for almost a century after 1835. In the 1930s, Manuel Querino collected and published two Muslim “songs.” One of them was described as “corresponding to the Pater-noster.” These songs, beginning with the words *Ali-ramudo lilāi* and *Cula-ús Bira binance*, were in fact two *sūrah*s from the Qur’ān (1 and 114) (Querino and Lody 1988: 67–68). Apparently very few of the Muslims met by Nina Rodrigues and Querino could still write or read Arabic script. Most of them became practically monolingual, speaking Portuguese and a little “Nagô” (Yoruba). The use of the Yoruba language has since resurfaced in Bahia.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the old Afro-Brazilian Islam had completely disappeared. In 2005, one of the “new” Muslims in Salvador introduced me to the niece of the last *imām* of Afro-Brazilian descent. The rosary of this *imām* was still preserved in her family. Only at the turn of the twenty-first century did the country once see the numbers of Muslims grow rapidly. This new surge partly resulted from the African immigration. More and more Africans are now coming to study or teach in Brazilian universities, and quite a few are Muslims. Besides, various forms of transatlantic communication have been reestablished between Brazil and West Africa, especially with Nigeria. A Nigerian cultural center was opened in Salvador. An Islamic center (with a mosque) in the city is now attended by local Muslims regardless of their origin. The *imām* of the mosque, a respected Yoruba shaykh, came from Nigeria, thus renewing the Nagô tradition of Islamic scholarship in Brazil.

The 1835 uprising is now being studied in Brazilian schools and universities as part of the national history curriculum. This is especially visible in Bahia. The reinterpretation of the events that took place in 1835 has resulted in a certain “re-invention” of Afro-Brazilian Islam (see, e.g., Abu Talib 1997). The uprising has become one of the themes of the carnival in Salvador, there exists even a local rap, which praises the fight of the Malês and promotes the conversion of the Afro-Brazilians into Islam as a religion of struggle against injustice and inequality. The reinterpretation of the events of 1835 is unlikely to significantly increase the number of Muslim Afro-Brazilians, but it certainly will boost the interest of the “Afro-descendentes” in their alleged ancestry and cultural heritage.

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## “Arabic” Islamic Education in South America

The West African variety of Islamic education (Sunnī Mālikīte) vanished together with the last bearers of post-slavery Islam. In West Africa, the twentieth century saw the radical reform of Islamic education. Alongside with traditional Qur’ānic



schooling, a whole new system of Islamic educational institutions grew rapidly, often sponsored by Middle Eastern and European NGOs (see, e.g., Daun 1983; Meunier 1997; Okuma-Nyström 2003; Pondopoulo 2007). The same process did not take place in Latin America, where the traditional Qur'ānic schooling had already disappeared. Thus there was no competition with new trends in Islamic education.

In the twentieth century, Latin American Islam was dominated by the Middle Eastern tradition associated primarily with the "Turks" (Lebanese and Syrians, in fact both Muslims and Christians of various rites). Pinto (2005: 235) even wrote about the "ethnification" (etnificação) of Islam as a "religions of the Arabs in Brazil." An opposite view was presented by de Castro, who wrote about a "possible 'uniting of forces' between African immigrants and black Brazilians toward an Islam free of the Arabism of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants" (de Castro 2013: 18).

The "Arab" tendency mentioned by Pinto is not always valid for all Muslim communities, but it is rather strong despite the presence of new converts and non-Arab Muslim immigrants (concerning the new converts to Islam in Brazil, see, e.g., de Oliveira and Mariz 2006). Mostly Lebanese and Syrian Muslims were then joined by other immigrants from the Arab countries, as well as the Shī'ites from Iran and a number of new converts from Catholicism.

In the Muslim sources, the size of the community in Latin America as a whole is considered to reach over six million, among them more than 1.5 million in Brazil and around 700,000 in Argentina (Los musulmanes en Latinoamérica historia e inmigración. Organización Islámica Para América Latina (OIPAL), <http://www.islamamerica.org.ar/>). These figures seem exaggerated, although they reflect the significant presence of Islam in some urban areas and rarely outside the cities. According to the 2010 Brazilian census, there were 35,207 Muslims in Brazil (IBGE 2010). Today many Muslims, mostly of Lebanese origin, live in São Paulo, as well as in the "tri-border" area (Triple Frontera, Tríplice Fronteira) in the adjacent regions of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. The presence of the Arabs in this porous area has caused concern of the media (especially in the United States) since 2001. Local Muslims have repeatedly been accused of smuggling and financing the terrorist activities in the Middle East.

Most Brazilian Muslims have settled in the states of São Paulo (around São Paulo and in Santos) and Paraná (mostly in Curitiba and Foz do Iguaçu). There have been a number of mosques, cultural centers, and associations, such as Centro de Divulgação do Islã, CEDI (Dissemination Centre of Islam); Centro de Divulgação do Islam para a América Latina, CDIAL (Centre for Dissemination of Islam to Latin America); Sociedade Beneficente Muçulmana do Rio de Janeiro (Muslim Beneficent Society of Rio de Janeiro); Centro Cultural Islâmico de Recife (Islamic Cultural Centre of Recife); Centro Cultural Islâmico da Bahia (Islamic Cultural Centre of Bahia); Liga da Juventude Islâmica do Brasil (Islamic Youth League of Brazil); União dos Estudantes Muçulmanos no Brasil (Muslim Students Union of Brazil); and many others (for an extensive list of such organizations, see de Castro 2013). The Islamic Centre of Campinas (Centro Islâmico de Campinas) was founded in 1977. As in some non-Arabic countries of the Islamic world, the initiative here belonged to a businessman of South Asian descent, and the funds were raised among the Muslim

community in South Africa (de Castro 2013: 33). The mosque of Brás (Mesquita Muhamad Raçulullah) is frequented by about 3000 (out of 20,000) Shī'ites in São Paulo. This mosque was described as predominantly Lebanese, even though Iranian Shī'ites did attend some of the annual celebrations. The mosque activities included a course on Islam on Thursday, but this course was apparently irregular. New conversions were based not just on personal and religious reasons, but also ideologically motivated (anti-imperialist, linked with Hizbullah, Iranian revolution, etc., more "pure" and "revolutionary" than Sunnism). In 2001, the activities of the mosque were said to be monitored by federal police after the "nine-eleven" events in New York (Pinto 2005: 239–240). All this may explain to a certain extent why the Shī'ah Islam is often associated with terrorism and radical movements in the Brazilian media and among non-Muslim university students.

In Rio de Janeiro, where there are around 5000 Muslims affiliated with Sociedade Beneficente Muçulmana do Rio de Janeiro (SBMRJ), the *imām*, a Sudanese, received his religious education in Libya. About 40% of the community were Arabs or Arab by origin in 2005, while the majority was African and Brazilian, including "Afro-descendentes." Pinto stressed the role of Arabic as a language used to mark the Muslim identity of the community: "The Arabic language is valued as the constitutive element but is not determinant for Muslim identity. There exists a preoccupation to teach it to the members of the community which is not of Arabic origin (and even to those who are but do not understand the classical Arabic of the religious texts) with the intention to allow everybody direct access to the holy texts, in particular the Qur'ān" (Pinto 2005: 231) (translated from Portuguese to English by the chapter author). However, the religious activities were in fact dominated by Portuguese, and even the verses of the Qur'ān were followed by a Portuguese interpretation, a practice not too different from West African oral *tafsīr*. The Muslim community in Rio also includes a small *ṣūfī* (Naqshbandīyyah) group. Interestingly, the members of this community were recommended to attend the SBMRJ, so that "they had a good education in the exoteric doctrine (*zāhirī*) of Islam," according to the Naqshbandī shaykh (Pinto 2005: 233) (translated by the chapter author from Portuguese).

The Khalwatī-Jerrāhīyyah (*Jerrāhīyyah*), a *ṭarīqah* of Turkish origin, has been present in Brazil for at least a decade. The *ṭarīqah* tried to present its own view of the history of Brazilian Islam (al-Jerrahi 2003). The missionary activity of this order covered not only Sao Paulo but also such historical centers of Islam as Salvador. In spite of all current *ṣūfī* activity, even if "mild" Sufism looks attractive for non-Muslims, the majority of modern Muslim communities stand far from the nineteenth-century *ṣūfī* (and Mālikīte) school of Islam.

As in Catholicism, Brazilian Muslims created their own "cathedral mosque" (Mesquita Brasil) as early as 1929. Under the auspices of this mosque, there are classes of Arabic and Islam led by the teachers who received their education at the al-Azhar University. The number of students is only large by local standards, somewhere around 50.

In Argentina, the Islamic Cultural Centre "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd in Argentina" in Buenos Aires represents the largest mosque in Latin

America. This center was opened in 1996 as a result of support from both Saudi Arabia and the former President of Argentina, Carlos Menem, who is of Arab origin. There are also many other mosques, mostly Sunnī. The Shī‘ah community in Argentina is relatively small and fairly recent. The Islamic Organization of Latin America (Organización Islámica Para América Latina, OIPAL), aiming at the spread of Islam and the creation of a united Muslim *ummah* on the continent, also has its headquarters in Argentina (Organización Islámica Para América Latina (OIPAL). <http://www.islamericar.org.ar/>).

King Fahd Islamic Cultural Centre Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a four-level program of Arabic language learning, each level intended for 4 months of study. Besides, there are classes and seminars on Islamic culture and civilization. The center also includes the King Fahd School, officially described as an “educational establishment dedicated to child development and learning from early childhood through adolescence” (The Islamic Cultural Center. “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd in Argentina” <http://www.ccislamicoreyfahd.org.ar/>). Various courses on Arabic and religion have been also held by other institutions of Islamic education in Argentina, such as the Institute of Islamic Culture (Instituto Argentino de Cultura Islámica, IACI), founded in 1983 and cooperating with state universities, and the Arab-Argentine Institute (Instituto Argentino Árabe Islámico) (Instituto Argentino de Cultura Islámica. <http://www.organizacionislam.org.ar>; Instituto Argentino Árabe Islámico. <http://www.iaai.org.ar>).

In Venezuela, the largest Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Ibrahim mosque was built in Caracas with the support from Saudi Arabia. As in Brazil and Argentina, several other mosques and Islamic organizations have been established, including Instituto educativo Islámico Venezolano. The objective of this institution was declared to “form the leaders that our country needs, to have a prosperous tomorrow” (formar los líderes que nuestro país necesita, para tener un próspero mañana) (Instituto educativo Islámico Venezolano, <http://ieivnuevaesparta.webnode.es/>). The same formula may apply to the educational activities of most similar centers and schools in Latin America. However, the real schooling in most of them is very heterogeneous, at least in comparison to the early Sunnī Mālikīte education which was brought to the New World before the twentieth century.

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## Conclusion

The presence of Muslims and Islamic education in Latin America dates back to the sixteenth century, when the slaves were brought to the continent, mainly from West Africa. In the twentieth century, Islam was almost extinct on the continent even if some Muslim and West African customs had been maintained. Then later in the same century, immigrants arrived to Latin America from Africa and Asia. Islam and certain types of Islamic education and old costumes were revived due to the immigration. Today, there are Muslims and Islamic educational institutions in various places in Latin America, mostly in Brazil. Also, many Catholics convert to Islam.

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