BOOK REVIEWS

Christoph Marcinkowski (ed.), *The Islamic World and the West: Managing Religious and Cultural Identities in the Age of Globalisation*

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Perhaps the most important service academic writing can serve is to make us challenge our conceptions and assumptions. And then, if possible, to help us construct other conceptions that may serve us better. The collected work *The Islamic World and the West* does both of these services admirably.

Assumptions about ‘Europe’, the *Abendland* (lit. ‘evening land’, i.e. the land where the sun sets), and the ‘Orient’ tend to seem commonsensical. And yet, the construction of the concept of Europe is actually built on a foundation of what it is *not*. The bold idea of the contributor Christian Giordano (“Independent Diversities: Self-Representations, Historical Regions, and Global Challenges in Europe”) is that Europe discovers its ‘self’ via the ‘other’ (p. 43). Using the terminology of depth psychology, one may posit that precisely those characteristics that one is ashamed of or cannot cope with, one projects onto the other. And any relationship founded on sublimation and projection is doomed to fail – the Muslims, in this case, cannot help but be rejected and refused.

Inciting concepts such as ‘Eurabia’ then serve to affirm the superiority of the European over the other and confirm the political and physical exclusion of the other. A part of Christoph Marcinkowski’s contribution is the deconstruction of ‘Eurabia’. There are similarities between the concepts of ‘Eurabia’ and Christian Zionism in the United States. They are both radical right ideas that have succeeded in permeating almost the entire spectrum of political discourse. In a healthy political society, the ideas would be fringe at best.

Christoph Marcinkowski’s nuanced and considered examination of Turkey and the EU, “Between ‘Turkish Delights’ and ‘Eurabia’: The Islamic World and Europe at the Crossroads”, is very welcome. I know of no other scholar who explains the situation as well, as he speaks (literally and figuratively) the languages of Europe and the Middle East. The situation, of course, is highly contentious. To pick just one issue: in Germany, the state collects a religious tax for Rome under the *Reichskonkordat*, and Turkey is “an example of a movement in the opposite

direction – towards limiting religion to the private sphere” (p. 20). One watches the purported reasons for Turkey’s exclusion become unmasked one by one.

While the idea of ‘Europe’ as distinct from the ‘Orient’, or Muslims or Islam, seems commonsensical, the authors perform a careful deconstruction that forces us to re-examine our assumptions. One of the ways this is done is by showing how supposedly foreign elements are as close to the Europeans as their languages. Hans Daiber comments in his contribution, “Islamic Roots of Knowledge in Europe”, that new techniques of irrigation and new plants made their way to Europe via Muslims. In fact, “apricots, artichokes, aubergines, cotton, lemons, oranges, rice and sugar-cane” (p. 67) all have their origin in Arabic. When a European denounces the Muslim ‘other’, he does so in a language that betrays more same-ness than other-ness. In fact, when Europeans fear ‘hordes’ of Muslim immigrants, they may not realise that the word itself comes from the East, via the name of the national language of Pakistan, Urdu, and ultimately from the Turkic-Mongol world of Central Asia.

Ataullah Kopanski’s contribution, “Muslim Communities of the European North-Eastern Frontiers: Islam in the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”, continues the deconstruction of assumptions of a clearly delineated Europe. But as mentioned, this book not only deconstructs, it helps us re-build our conceptions in a better way. Hans Daiber’s view of the Islamic intellectual tradition is that it is relevant today. The Islamic intellectual tradition grew from an open encounter with new knowledge. Dogma and doctrinal blinders were not nearly as present as they were with Christian theologians, and as a result, the intellectual tradition was a part of the universal history of ideas, hinting “at the coherence of philosophy and sciences” (p. 79). Building on this idea, Osman Bakar, in his article “Muslim Intellectual Responses to Modern Western Science and Technology: Between Ottoman Westernisation and Post-Colonial Islamisation”, examines the interaction of modern scientific thought with the Ottomans and then in Islamisation. With the advent of what is elsewhere called ‘the new sciences’, Osman Bakar sees that “Islam can once again play its providential universal role of providing the essential ingredients for these new paradigms” (p. 151).

After the reader accepts the failure of ‘West vs East’ as a concept, one is ready for a new way of seeing. Karim Crow (“Muslims and Resources for Peace in Islam”) speaks of a middle realm, “geographically bridging East and West – a ‘mid-most community’ – partaking in varying degree of the same roots as the West, while simultaneously open to the East, being in ideological and spiritual terms ‘neither eastern nor western.’ Both these, it should be noted, are *qur’ānic* terms” (p. 293).

As with ‘Eurabia’ in Europe, another strange phenomenon is occurring in the United States; an effort to officially ban *sharī‘ah*! One wonders what ‘the *sharī‘ah*’ means to these proponents. Still, the idea that the *sharī‘ah* is a reifiable entity distinct

from common law or other law systems comes from the colonial period. In fact, the *sharī'ah* is a process rather than a code, and Mohammad Hashim Kamali ("Law, Commerce and Ethics: A Comparison Between *Sharī'ah* and Common Law") is at the forefront of efforts to integrate legal systems so that Muslims may once again have the process of *sharī'ah* and not simply the name, and that relegated to the tiniest spheres of jurisdiction. In the area of Islamic banking and finance, the *sharī'ah* is often seen by non-Muslims as a process to be revived (p. 258).

The present work, published in the highly regarded *Freiburg Studies in Social Anthropology* series, is more far-ranging than can be appreciated from this review. In an age of divisions, reflected as well in academia, this work is remarkable for its scope, depth, and range of academic and intellectual perspective.

Ibrahim Ahmad Aliyu, *Protection of Women's Rights Under the Shari'ah*

(Petaling Jaya [Malaysia]: Dakwah Corner, 2010), xvi+144 pp. incl. Glossary and Bibliography. ISBN 978-967-5699-02-3. MYR75.00

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This relatively brief work of 135 pages is the translation of a revision of the author's book published in 2007, apparently written at the Centre for Islamic Legal Studies at Ahmadu Bello University (Zaria, Nigeria). Aliyu had completed his doctoral dissertation, entitled "Termination of Marriage and Its Legal Consequences under Islamic Law", at this Centre in 1996.

The scope of Aliyu's present work addresses the main topics of controversy over gender equality, inheritance, legal testimony, maintenance (*nafaqah*), women's seclusion, and political leadership. These issues feature prominently in criticisms levelled by non-Muslims concerning women's rights in Islam. The author states the aim of his book is to present a catalogue of rights which *sharī'ah* law affords Muslim women. He undertakes to provide a clear defence of how Islamic law guarantees and protects the rights of women, and contrasts these with rights as understood from the Western perspective. The 'Publisher's Note' prefaced to this book (p. iii) alerts us to the significance of the content: "[...] Islam is not a sexist religion, do [*sic*] not believe in oppressing women, and most importantly, Islam preserves the right of women [*sic*]."

The 'Foreword' by M. Sadiq Al-Kafawy (Director, Centre for Islamic Legal Studies) refers to the critique raised in recent decades by non-Muslims which he portrays as "an outright misunderstanding of Islamic tenants [*sic*] mischievously created in the minds of many Muslims, especially our sisters, by the West [...] that has unfortunately found listening ears". Al-Kafawy observes that the author takes