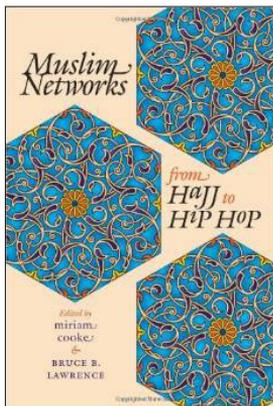


sky's place in Western literature where he remained "marginal" but not a "marginalised" writer (p. 159). The chapter about Venice also contains more biographical information about Brodsky. In short, this section of the book helps to localise the Russian émigré's disillusionment with the West, where he gained quite a prominent position as a public figure.

Sanna Turoma's book is theoretically well founded and brilliantly analytical. It is not only about Brodsky; it also skilfully reflects his status in the Soviet Russian poetry tradition, with references to other Soviet Russian poets like Mayakovsky, Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Blok. Turoma shows the inner confusion of Russian poets about the era where they were unable to find a clear position between the oppositional stance, euphoria about the Soviet might and progress, and nostalgia for the Tsarist empire with its high culture. Currently, when the national soul-seeking of Russian poets and writers has become prominent in Russian mainstream newspapers, the book gives a glimpse into the way of thinking by which such people seem to be influenced. The book is also a great contribution to existing literature about postcolonial writing by showing another angle: the Eastern European emigrant perspective on the Western cultural and economic dominance they wish to deny. Turoma's monograph, however, would have needed more biographical information about Joseph Brodsky at the beginning of the book. Many crucial facts of the poet's life are mentioned throughout the book but, unless the reader already knows who Brodsky was, they can find other sources for a more coherent biography of the poet.

Aimar Ventsel

## ISLAMIC CIVILISATION AND MUSLIM NETWORKS



***Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop.* Edited by miriam cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 344 pp.**

I wanted to review this book for one particular purpose: I know very little about Islam, and the title of the book suggested it could be a good place to begin. Therefore, this review should be seen from that perspective. In general, I have to admit that I was not disappointed.

The main argument of this edited volume is that networks are crucial for understanding Islam. As it appears, Muslim networks enforce a sense of community and help to create common identity on a group level, and in a larger perspective, expanding over continents and supporting the movement of ideas or people. This collection of articles focuses

on the networks that are related mainly to various facets of identity, centred around the common perception of being Muslim. These identities are related to a common

origin, religious group affiliation, gender, or political views, and stretch across time and space. The economic aspect or larger social issues are left out, but the selection of topics is diverse. Geographically the book goes beyond the Orient, discussing Muslim groups and activities in Europe, North America and the World Wide Web. From the 14th-century scholarly travels via politically motivated Mosque networks and various women's groups, to aspects of modern culture like the Internet and hip hop, the reader discovers more about the importance of spiritual interconnection within the worldwide Muslim community. These networks are flexible, in a state of constant recreation, and surprisingly vital. In short, as Taieb Belghazi writes, "we encounter the idea of Islam on the move" (p. 275).

The book is comprised of thirteen chapters, a masterly analytical introduction and an afterword. It is more than a review can grasp and therefore only selected chapters will be discussed below. As a social anthropologist, I found fascinating the view on Muslim networks presented in the Introduction by miriam cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence. Instead of looking at networks as concrete social relationships, the editors describe Muslim networks as a medium, method and metaphor defining the Muslim community '*umma*'. This approach justifies the claim that such networks are fluid, in process. In the Introduction, general network theories are avoided and the Muslim world is presented as a continuum of heterogeneous forms of identities throughout world history, in a situation where Muslims were both a dominant group and a minority. Simultaneously, the Introduction also shows how the following chapters interact with each other in order to form a coherent narrative.

The book is compiled in chronological order, starting in the Middle Ages and progressing into the 21st century. The first chapter by Vincent J. Cornell describes the travels of a 14th-century Moroccan scholar Ibn-Battuta. This chapter exposes how medieval Muslim identity differs from the modern nation state, where loyalties are defined territorially rather than philosophically. The chapter includes a brief but interesting analyses that shows how 'medieval Muslim notables resembled mafia dons' (p. 33), and how hierarchies of loyalties were structured in such states. The travels of Ibn-Battuta are also described as a process revealing the nature of Muslim networks as those of identity and loyalty. Ibn-Battuta, as a typical medieval scholar, lived in different courts, served local sultans as an expert on Islamic law and by necessity changed his patrons. During his lifetime he travelled from Maghreb to India, and in his own way he was the forefather of modern mobile scholars. This chapter points out how the Muslim world was held together by common knowledge and jurisprudence as a global spiritual community and how this spirituality was carried by men of knowledge or '*ulama*'. As the author writes: "The solidarity of '*ulama*' was based in part on a common education and a common epistemology" (p. 43). This made possible Ibn-Battuta's travels and activities in different regions as an expert on Quaranic law.

The next chapter is directly linked to the first one. David Gilmartin gives a detailed overview of how '*ulama*' was involved in the creation of the state of Pakistan. Here the '*ulama*' is shown in a different role, using modern means of communication such as print media and publications in order to foster the creation of a modern nation state. The author goes back to the 19th century and shows how structures of the British colonial empire, separation of the state from society, and the introduction of print media, created an environment different from that of the medieval state, discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, '*ulama*' is shown as the network that instrumentalised colonial

structures and modern means of technology in order to mobilise Muslims around the idea of a common Muslim state. Valuable are also remarks that show how, for example, Taliban and organisers of September 11 are directly linked to the networks of political mobilisation established in the 19th century.

Gender in the Muslim world is tackled in several chapters that focus on women in different regions and socio-political contexts. Tayba Hassan Al Khalifa Sharif has contributed a chapter about the Iraqi Shiite women in the Netherlands, and the meaning of the mourning ritual *majlis al-qiraya*, which is a ritual conducted only by women and dedicated to remembrance and mourning of the members of the Prophet's family. A reader unfamiliar with Muslim culture and specific characteristics of different religious schools finds in this chapter an excellent explanation to the main conceptual differences between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The chapter focuses on a diasporic women's network "that projects female actors as the custodians of hope" (p. 133). Through the detailed ethnographic descriptions, the author paints an excellent picture of the ritual and atmosphere in the room. It is argued that the ritual has a therapeutic meaning for participants who link their new home in Holland not only to the Iraq prior to Iran-Iraq War but also to Iraq history. As a whole, the chapter sheds light on how Muslim refugee communities are able to establish their group solidarity around intimate rituals, using poetry and historical narratives.

The concluding research paper about the Muslim hip hop networks in the USA is rather disappointing. The author H. Samy Alim shows how different American hip hop artists use 'Islamic knowledge' and particularly the Quran to link hip hop with Islam. For someone who has conducted research on hip hop, the chapter contributes too little to what we know about the different forms and ideologies of hip hop culture. Apart from discovering that some of the most notable hip hop artists like Mos Def, Chuck D or RZA are Muslims, the reader will not find any particular new insight into the world of American Muslims and their take on hip hop. It is shown that Afro-American Muslim artists feel part of the global Muslim community '*ummah*' but the chapter does not answer the question 'How?'. At the end of the chapter the author poses questions for 'further research', which are related to the process of Muslim nation building with the help of contemporary urban music culture. I hope that H. Samy Alim will have a chance to explore these issues in the concluding pages and will present us with some new and fascinating research in the future.

In general, this book is a well written and refreshing collection of individual research articles. These articles present a reading alternative to networks, discussing issues of a philosophical, religious and ideological nature rather than strategies or structures. All contributions are theoretically well founded, in some chapters unexpected links are made between different philosophers and analysis of the network. However, the most glaring attribute of the book is how readable it is for people without a deep knowledge of Islam or the Orient. Regional histories, rituals, the essence of different spiritual schools, are elegantly explained and the whole text is perfectly understandable and interesting for a non-expert. Therefore, this book is not only recommended to scholars of the Middle East, Islam, or the Orient, but also to anybody who wishes to get an insight into Muslim culture. Moreover, anybody interested in diasporas, nation building, networks, or identity construction finds in this book some solid case studies of comparative material.

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