

CHAPTER 1

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## Introduction: The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education

*Robert W. Hefner*

SINCE THE TALIBAN rolled into Kabul on September 26, 1996, Western media have grappled with the question of the nature of Islamic radicalism and its relation to religious education.<sup>1</sup> Several commentators were quick to place much of the blame for the radicals' rise on madrasas, religious schools devoted to the study of Islamic traditions of knowledge. A widely cited article in the *New York Times Magazine* reported that in Pakistan, "There are one million students studying in the country's 10,000 or so madrasas, and militant Islam is at the core of most of these schools" (Goldberg 2000). Other commentators suspected that an equally militant spirit might lie at the heart of madrasa education everywhere.

In light of the tumultuous events taking place in some Muslim societies, it is not surprising that some Western commentators were quick to point a finger of blame at this most pivotal of Islamic institutions. After all, the Taliban leadership *did* emerge out of madrasas located near refugee camps along the Afghan-Pakistan border. In the 1980s, madrasas in these territories grew rapidly in size and influence. Their growth was the result of several factors: a continuing influx of Afghan refugees; the inability of poor Pakistanis to get access to affordable education; and donations from patrons in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States—gifts sanctioned, it should be remembered, by American officials intent on rallying support for the anti-Soviet cause (ICG 2002; Zaman 2002, 136). In these difficult circumstances, some Pakistani madrasas did indeed become training centers for *jihadi* militants. Equally striking, even before the *mujahidin* victory over the Soviets in Afghanistan, some jihadis turned their aim away from the Soviets to other alleged enemies of Islam. In Pakistan, Sunni militants battled members of the Shi'i minority (see Zaman 2002, and this volume). Others carried out attacks against targets in the Indian-occupied province of Kashmir. Still others set their sights on the United States, taking exception to its policies in the Muslim world.

Events in Indonesia raised similar concerns about the political effects of madrasa education (Arza, Afrianty, and Hefner, this volume). In the months following the resignation of President Soeharto's authoritarian

government in May 1998, hundreds of radical Islamist paramilitaries sprang up in cities and towns across the country. Several boasted of their ties to Islamic schools. In late 2002, a handful among the country's 47,000 Islamic schools were discovered to have had ties to militants responsible for the October 2002 bombings in Bali, in which 202 people died, most of them Western tourists. For many analysts, these and other examples lent credence to the charge that madrasas are "jihad factories" and outposts of a backward-looking medievalism (see e.g. Haqqani 2002).

Against this troubled backdrop, the contributors to this volume seek to shed light on the culture, practices, and politics of madrasas and Islamic higher education. The authors were participants in a ten-month Working Group on Madrasas and Muslim Education that, with the generous support of the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs (CURA) at Boston University, came together in October 2004 and May 2005 to examine the past, present, and likely future of Islamic education. Our concern was not with general or secular education, but with institutions charged with transmitting Islamic knowledge and disciplines. The approach we adopted was comparative and theoretically eclectic, on the assumption that Islamic education is a total social phenomenon, in which knowledge, politics, and social networks interact in a complex and "generative" (Barth 1993, 5, 341) manner. The Working Group was organized with an eye toward interdisciplinary collaboration and included scholars from history, political science, anthropology, religious studies, and education.

Although the story told by each author in this book is as different as the case study in question, the contributors share two points of view. The first is the conviction that Islamic education is characterized, not by lock-step uniformity, but by a teaming plurality of actors, institutions, and ideas. Islamic schooling is today carried out by government and nongovernment organizations, and its purpose and organization are matters of great debate. At the heart of the dispute lie two important questions: just what is required to live as an observant Muslim in the modern world? And who is qualified to provide instruction in this matter? Disputation of this sort, in which different groups argue publicly about who they are and what their institutions should do, is a clear sign that the madrasa is anything but unchanging or medieval. On the contrary, Islamic education has been drawn squarely into the reflexive questioning and public-cultural debate so characteristic of modern plural societies. Indeed, if there is a struggle for the hearts and minds of Muslims taking place around the world, which there certainly is, madrasas and religious education are on its front line.

This first point leads to a second. The members of the Working Group felt it important not to allow the sound and fury of recent political events to obscure the fact that this contest for Muslim hearts and minds began

well before the Western media rediscovered madrasas in the late 1990s. In Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and India, the debate over Islamic education was already underway two centuries ago. In Southeast Asia and West Africa, the issue has been in the air for over a century. Not surprisingly, then, the central issues in this debate do not concern the Israel-Palestine conflict or American actions in Iraq, but what might at first appear as blandly prosaic matters: whether Islamic schools should teach modern science, provide training in philosophy as well as theology, or offer instruction on modern politics and citizenship. Although their respective positions vary, all sides in these debates are preoccupied with matters of a different nature than those that concerned believers in the Muslim Middle Ages (1000–1500 CE), when the first madrasas came into existence.

Whatever its roots in Islamic tradition, then, the madrasa is now thoroughly embedded in the modern world. The chapters that follow address the modernity of madrasas and Muslim education from four primary angles. They examine the variety of madrasas and other institutions of Islamic learning; the transformation of madrasas and Islamic higher education under the influence of modern social and intellectual developments; the state's efforts to reform Islamic education; and the future of Islamic education in an age of globalization and pluralization.

As this last point implies, a particularly important issue with which all of the contributors to this volume are concerned is the question of how Muslim authorities have responded to the distinctive pluralism of our age. This social pluralism differs from that attributed to earlier societies, in which “two or more elements or social orders . . . live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit” (Furnivall 1944, 446). The plurality that marks our contemporary world is not the colonial and segregationist pluralism Furnivall describes. Today's world is marked by a pervasive “mingling” of peoples, objects, and ideas. Markets, media, and social movements now spill over the boundaries of nations and communities. The spillage makes it impossible to speak, as social theorists once did, of a “society” neatly coinciding with a single “culture,” both tied to the same bounded territory (Barth 1993; Hannerz 1992, 262; Hefner 2001). The flow of people and ideas across social borders has fragmented identities, destabilized social hierarchies, and challenged all traditions of knowledge and faith.

The aim of this introductory chapter is to examine just how these late-modern developments have impacted the forms, transmission, and meanings of Islamic knowledge. To explore this question, we need first to know something of the social milieu in which Islamic education earlier developed. This historical background allows us to appreciate the scale of the changes now taking place in Islamic education, and their implications for public culture and politics.

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The transmission of Islamic knowledge was always dependent on the support of social and political authorities. Embedded as it was in specific social arrangements, religious education changed as the society in which it was located did. The institutions involved in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, however, did not shift with every new wind that blew across the landscape. The traditions with which Muslim scholars (*‘ulama*) were concerned included many viewed as divinely revealed. Scholars and teachers had to balance their efforts to demonstrate the urgent relevance of God’s message, then, with a normatively “conservational” (Eickelman 1985, 58) preservation of its eternal truths.

Striking a balance between conservatism and relevance has not always been easy. Religious scholars disagreed as to what knowledge should be foregrounded, and to what social ends it should be put. Rulers and viziers also had their own ideas as to the forms and purposes of religious education. Although tensions of this sort have been felt throughout Muslim history, in the modern age they have become not intermittent but chronic. The last two centuries have been marked by the appearance of a powerfully interventionist state, with educational ambitions distinct from those of the *‘ulama*. The period has also witnessed a heightened pluralism within and beyond the Muslim community. No less significant, our age has been characterized by the unparalleled ascent of Western powers, with their markets, media, and technologies of knowledge. Those involved in the transmission of Islamic disciplines could not but feel the impact of these world-transforming changes.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Muslim scholars struggled to come to terms with events that they had not authored and that they could no longer ignore. The answers they devised to their altered circumstance changed the face of Islamic education and society. It is this historical fact that gives Islamic education its importance. Islamic schools are not merely institutions for teaching and training young believers. They are the forges from which will flow the ideas and actors for the Muslim world’s future. This book is concerned with the diverse meanings and effects of this effort.

#### KNOWLEDGE AS WORSHIP

The study and transmission of religious knowledge (*‘ilm*) have always been at the heart of Islamic tradition. Islam is a religion of the Book and of religious commentary, and most Muslims regard religious study as a form of worship in its own right. In principle, every Muslim is enjoined to acquire a basic knowledge of God’s words and injunctions as revealed in the Qur’an, the canonical words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*), and the “path” (*shari‘a*) or the law God has pro-

vided as a guide for human conduct. From earliest times, the transmission of knowledge from teacher to disciple also created the network of religious leaders who—in the absence of an initiatic clergy and an institutionalized Church like that of the Christian West—came to exercise religious authority in the Muslim community. Like Aristotle in the ancient world, Muslim authorities also regarded ethical education as essential for the formation of virtuous subjects and the maintenance of a common good (Arjomand 1999, 266; cf. Mahmood 2005, 136). For all these reasons, then, the transmission of religious learning lay at the heart of Muslim civilization, and its support was incumbent on all who aspired to social and political leadership.

Although the transmission of knowledge has long been central to Islamic culture, the institutions through which this transmission takes place have changed over time. Since the Muslim world's Middle Period or Middle Ages (roughly 1000–1500), the institution most directly involved in the transmission of religious knowledge has been the madrasa, a kind of seminary or “college” for Islamic sciences. Today in the Arabic-speaking Middle East, the term madrasa can refer to a general as well as a religious school. However, in earlier times and in many non-Arabic countries still today, the phrase typically refers to an institution offering intermediate and advanced instruction in the Islamic sciences. The religious subjects with which the madrasa dealt included Qur'an recitation (*qira'a*), Arabic grammar (*nahw*), Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the sources of the law (*usul al-fiqh*), and didactic theology (*kalam*). In a few settings, medieval madrasas also provided instruction in nonreligious topics, including arithmetic, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and poetry (Bulliet 1994).

With its emphasis on intermediate and advanced religious study, the madrasa was always distinguished from institutions that provided elementary religious instruction, such as the knowledge required to recite but not understand the Qur'an. Although its name and social form vary, in the Arab world the institution most commonly associated with the latter task was the *kuttab*. Kuttabs taught youth to memorize and recite the Qur'an, skills regarded as first steps in a scholar's formation (Eickelman 1985, 50, and this volume). Historical evidence indicates that a kuttab-like institution emerged in the first century of the Islamic era, not long after scholars working at the instruction of the Caliphs 'Umar (634–44) and 'Uthman (644–56) completed their recensions of the Qur'an (Bulliet 1994, 28).

The madrasa developed only three centuries later. The first is thought to have originated in the tenth century, not in the Arab heartland, but in the province of Khurasan in eastern Iran. From there it spread widely, reaching Baghdad in 1063, Damascus in the 1090s, Cairo in the 1170s,

and Spain and northern India in the first decades of the thirteenth century (Bulliet 1994, 148–9). In the second half of the eleventh century, the great Seljuq vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, established eleven madrasas in Iraq and Syria (Arjomand 1999, 269–70). By the twelfth century the madrasa had become “perhaps the most characteristic religious institution of the medieval Near Eastern urban landscape” (Berkey 2003, 187; this volume). The institution trained many of Muslim society’s leading lights, including jurists, religious scholars, and, in some countries, mathematicians, medical doctors, and astronomers. In all these regards, the madrasa was *the* central institution of medieval Muslim civil society (Arjomand 1999; Hoexter 2002).

Prior to the historical emergence of madrasas, advanced study in the religious sciences was already taking place, but it does not appear to have been systematized and standardized to the degree that it would be after the rise of the madrasa. The setting in which advanced study had earlier taken place was the informal study circle or *halqa* (pl., *halaq*). Study circles were organized in homes, mosques, or shops under the auspices of a master scholar (*shaykh*). By the eighth and ninth centuries, the growing complexity of religious knowledge, especially that associated with the legal schools (*madhahib*) coming into being at this time, meant that advanced learning required more prolonged periods of study (Berkey 1992, 7; Makdisi 1981). In these changed circumstances, mosques specializing in advanced study built hostels for resident students. The tenth-century madrasa took this innovation one step further, providing classrooms, dormitories, and wash rooms for students, all of whom in this early period were male.<sup>2</sup>

Eventually, the typical madrasa came to include instructional rooms; residences for the founder, teachers, and students; and a mosque, which was used for study as well as worship. Many complexes also had mausoleums, where the school’s founder and his relatives were entombed (Hillenbrand 1986, 1,139). Not unlike cults of sainthood in Western Christianity (Brown 1981), these burial complexes became the object of religious pilgrimage (*ziyarah*) by Muslims convinced that the founder could intercede with God and serve as a channel for divine grace (*baraka*; see Taylor 1999, 127–67). In modern times, Muslim reformists have prohibited veneration practices of this sort, and madrasas of reformist disposition dispense with the tomb complex entirely (see e.g., Metcalf 1982, 157).

In the latter half of the thirteenth century, events in Iran ushered in yet another phase in madrasa development, with the appearance of what Said Amir Arjomand (1999) has aptly described as the “educational charitable complex.” Created by a single deed of endowment, the new complex included not just the familiar mosque, madrasa, and founder’s residence, but a hospital, Sufi convent, and even public baths or an astronomical observatory (Arjomand 1999, 272). The educational charitable

complex soon spread from Iran to Mamluk Syria and Egypt. Few societies at the periphery of the Near East, however, adopted the full complex, with its distinctive clustering of welfare services, nonreligious learning, and madrasa instruction. Indeed, even in the Near East and northern India, the question of whether madrasa should provide instruction in subjects like mathematics and philosophy was controversial, and the dispute was reflected in the curricula of rival madrasa systems (see e.g., Robinson 2001, 14).

### *Funding and Functionalization*

Since madrasas typically did not charge tuition, the funds required for their operations had to come from sources other than the student body. Most funding was derived from religious endowments provided by local notables. The legal basis for these pious endowments centered on the well-known institution of the *waqf* (pl., *awqaf*). A *waqf* is a private endowment set aside in perpetuity for the purpose of providing funds for some public good or service, typically of a religious nature (Kahf 1995). In medieval times, those who established *waqf* for madrasas included rulers, governors, merchants, and members of the military and civilian elite.

For the purposes of comparison with Islamic education today, it is interesting to note that even in medieval times the state's role in madrasa funding varied. The state everywhere provided the legal guarantees that allowed for madrasas to operate. But the state's contribution to madrasa endowments differed in a manner that reflected the broader balance of power between state and society. Where, as in northeastern Iran in the tenth and eleventh centuries, civil society was strong, landed aristocrats and other nonstate notables led the way in founding and managing madrasas. "It is an indication of the vigor and assertiveness of the patrician civil society . . . that its members competed with the rulers, at times defiantly, in the founding of madrasas" (Arjomand 1999, 268). Elsewhere, however, as in Iraq during the Seljuq Empire (1040) or Egypt and Syria under the Mamluks (Berkey 1992; Chamberlain 1994), rulers led the way in establishing madrasas. In these countries, court officials even made appointments of professors to endowed chairs.

State meddling in madrasa appointments reflected a broader influence in the political economy of the Muslim Near East. In Mamluk Egypt and Syria, the ruling elite was of Turkic background, while most of their subjects were Arab. The Turkic rulers patronized madrasas in an effort to bolster their legitimacy in the eyes of the local population, which often regarded its alien lords skeptically. The rulers also used patronage to atomize patrician households that might otherwise make trouble for the ruling family (Berkey 1992, 45, 116–8; Chamberlain 1994, 91–107).

In an important book on Islamic education in contemporary Egypt, the anthropologist Gregory Starrett has coined the term “functionalization” to describe the process by which elements of Islamic tradition like the madrasa, with their own histories and discourses, “come to serve the strategic or utilitarian ends of another discourse” (Starrett 1998, 9). Starrett illustrates his concept of functionalization with reference to Islamic education in contemporary Egypt. There state-sponsored programs of religious education disseminate a “synoptic and systematized ‘Islam’ ” (ibid.) compatible with the interests of the government, even if at variance with the views of some religious scholars.

Historical examples like those from medieval Syria and Egypt are useful, however, because they remind us that the functionalization of Islamic education is not something new, but characterized the political-economy of madrasa operations from the start. Kings, viziers, and civilian elites patronized madrasas to demonstrate their own high standing and to ensure that the message coming from the scholarly community remained friendly. Medieval rulers’ interest in madrasas, however, was not limited to narrowly political ends. The eleventh-century Seljuq vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, founded his network of madrasas to strengthen Sunni orthodoxy against a newly ascendant Shi’ism. In other lands and in other times, court officials used their patronage of madrasas to promote one sectarian school against its rivals. In territories at the frontiers of Muslim expansion, rulers and other elites patronized madrasas to promote orthodoxy among Muslim converts still only nominally conversant with the details of their faith (Brenner 2001; Grandin 1997; Dhofier 1999).

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, rulers in Qajar Iran (Menashri 1992, 29; Ringer 2001, 245) and the Ottoman Empire (Fortna 2000, 85) attempted to functionalize Islamic education for a new and distinctly modern end: creating a broadly shared public culture for the purposes of nation building. Some of these rulers intervened directly in madrasa affairs. Anxious not to antagonize the madrasa establishment, however, other leaders tried to outflank the ‘ulama by founding elementary schools of their own. Whatever the option pursued, the modern state ended the ‘ulama monopoly on education, and raised questions about schools and authority that have remained at the heart of Muslim politics to this day.

### *Muslim Universities?*

A generation ago, historians of Islamic education concluded that the madrasa’s classrooms, degrees (*ijaza*), professorships, and endowed properties were proof that madrasas were the Muslim equivalent of the medieval West’s universities (Makdisi 1981). In one sense this comparison is apt, in that it underscores that monotheist education was central to high public



culture in both the Muslim and Western worlds, something which was by no means the case for all Old World civilizations.

Seen from another angle, however, the equation of the madrasa with the medieval Western university is misleading. Notwithstanding its classrooms and professorships, the madrasa of the high Middle Ages had little of the Western university's corporate identity or centrally coordinated administration. Madrasas in this period also operated without the benefit of examinations, formal curricula, degrees, or college governance. In fact, until well into the modern period, the pursuit of religious knowledge in Muslim societies was an individual or, more precisely, networked undertaking, in which students sought out master scholars for personalized instruction. The fact that a teacher might hold an endowed professorship at a particular institution mattered little to the overall transmission of religious knowledge. Over the course of his academic career, a student might study with several teachers and at several different madrasas. His eventual professional standing depended, not on a degree awarded by a particular university, but on the reputation of his teachers and the line of scholars from which they were descended.

By comparison with Western Europe's examination-giving and degree-granting universities, then, religious education in the premodern Muslim world remained "persistently informal" (Berkey 2003, and below). Although students might be awarded a degree (*ijaza*) of sorts, this was neither a certification of courses taken nor a title conferring membership in some corporate community of scholars or clergy. The *ijaza* was first and foremost an "emblem of a bond to a shaykh" (Chamberlain 1994, 89). Inasmuch as this was so, the criterion for choosing where to study was not the reputation of a college but the brilliance of the shaykh under whom one hoped to study. As an elderly Moroccan scholar told the anthropologist Dale Eickelman in the late 1960s, students were enjoined to seek out a teacher who "had God's blessings in the religious sciences and feared God the most, those who were older and more powerful and who always had their hands kissed in the street" (Eickelman 1985, 105). The religious scholar was important because he linked the student to a chain of transmission reaching back through time to the moment of revelation itself. As with so many other aspects of the Islamic tradition, the informal and networked quality of religious education was to undergo a great transformation in the modern period.

## RECENTERING ISLAM

Although the madrasa differed from the medieval European university, the institution's diffusion across the medieval Muslim world was an event

of world-making importance. An earlier generation of historians observed that the establishment of madrasas in the Sunni Near East coincided with political advances by Shi'i states in the same region. The celebrated historian of Muslim civilization, Marshall Hodgson, observed that the spread of madrasas was part of a larger "Sunni revival" that sought to counteract a growing Shi'i advance (1974, 2:45–49). In the face of this threat, Hodgson argued, Sunni madrasas trained individuals for service in the state establishment. Other scholars have taken exception to Hodgson's claim, pointing out that there is little evidence that madrasas were directly involved in the training of state officials (Makdisi 1981; cf. Chamberlain 1994, 70).

Whatever the precise nature of the training offered, there can be no question that the rise of the madrasa in the medieval Muslim world was part of a far-reaching reorientation and disciplining of religious knowledge and authority. The event offers lessons for our efforts to understand the changes taking place in Muslim education today. As Berkey (1992), Chamberlain (1994), and Bulliet (1994) have shown, the spread of the madrasa was part of a great "recentering and homogenization" of Islamic knowledge and authority (Berkey 2003, 189). The signs of this change were visible in several social fields. First, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) became the centerpiece of 'ulama learning and the queen of the religious sciences. Second, even if most learning continued to take place in informal study circles under the guidance of a revered shaykh, a written canon came to play an increasingly important role in young scholars' training. Heightened emphasis on the mastery of this canon did not do away with the emphasis on voice and orality so critical to the study of the Qur'an and traditionalist commentaries. These have remained key features of traditionalist Islamic education to this day (Bowen 1993; Messick 1993). The significance of the change lay instead in what it implied for the definition and control of religious knowledge. The now tightened linkage of scholarly standing to master teachers and canonical texts created clearer criteria for identifying just who did and who did not count as a legitimate religious scholar. In other words, one's status within the 'ulama community was now more directly dependent on one's command of a written canon, learned under a recognized master, and demonstrated in textual and oral performance. Madrasas alone were not responsible for this standardization of 'ulama status and knowledge. But they contributed vitally to the change.

This shift in knowledge and authority offers lessons on how we might think about the changes taking place in Islamic higher education today, especially as regards questions of orthodoxy in religious life. As Talal Asad has observed, orthodoxy is "not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship—a relationship of power . . . to regulate, uphold, re-

quire or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace *incorrect* ones” (Asad 1986, 14). Seen from this perspective, the spread of the madrasas was part of a heightened orthodoxy brought about through a great recentering of Islamic tradition. The recentering had to do, first, with the establishment of stricter controls for recognizing just who counted as a religious authority. “The ‘ulama . . . sought to restrict the ability of individuals who possessed only a modicum of intellectual training, or who might even be illiterate, but who nonetheless claimed considerable religious authority among the uneducated masses, to define for their audiences what was properly Islamic” (Berkey 2003, 229). The recentering also had to do with just what counted as Islamic knowledge. “The development of a homogeneous corpus of authoritative Islamic texts . . . contributed greatly to a growing uniformity of Islamic belief and practice throughout the vast area in which Muslims lived” (Bulliet 1994, 21).

Of course, the broader distribution of knowledge and authority in Muslim societies was still more complex than these thumbnail characterizations imply. Historical studies and modern ethnographies indicate that, beyond ‘ulama circles, nonstandard streams of religious knowledge continued to be studied and transmitted. After all, the peoples of the Muslim Middle Ages were still predominantly rural, and 98–99 percent of them were illiterate (Findley 1989, 130). Even in twelfth-century Cairo, “a city of schools” (Berkey 1992, 45), one did not have to travel far beyond the madrasa to stumble on to personalities whose behavior seemed to defy the ‘ulama canon. The famous *shaykh ummi* offers a particularly striking example. This colorful figure

came from a humble social background, and so had not had access to much in the way of education. The attitude of such figures toward books and the ‘in-scripted’ culture of the ‘ulama was, at least on the surface, dismissive: the Sufi master prevailing upon a learned disciple to dispose of all his books was a trope of Sufi literature. The *shaykh ummi* might or might not be literally illiterate, but he claimed a kind of ‘knowledge’ that he had acquired, not from books, but from dreams, or visions of the Prophet, or more vaguely from his ‘heart.’ The *shaykh ummi* might seek to transmit that knowledge to his pupils, but in a language or style which itself was alien to the discourse of the jurists and the more learned Sufis. (Berkey 1992, 244)

Elsewhere, as in Damascus during the medieval period, a visitor might stumble on even more flamboyant displays of uncanonical behavior. “Radical dervishes ostentatiously flouted social and religious norms: dressing in rags or (in some cases) not at all; shaving off hair, beard, moustache, and eyebrows, in violations of conventions rooted in the *Sunna*; deliberately disregarding cultic practices such as prayer; publicly indulging in the use of hashish and other intoxicants; and, according to numer-

ous reports, piercing various bodily parts, including their genitals” (Berkey 2003, 245). One might be tempted to dismiss examples like these as the bizarre antics of underclass eccentrics. Apparently, however, the popular Islamic scene was not nearly so standardized as such an assumption would imply, for “these flamboyant ascetics and mendicants also attracted the patronage of the powerful” (Berkey 2003, 245).

The development of madrasas in the high Middle Ages, then, facilitated a canonization of knowledge and a recentering of religious authority. Outside of ‘ulama circles, however, less standardized traditions survived, some of them in seeming tension with the new scholarly orthodoxy (Berkey 2003, 244; Bulliet 1994, 173–4). If this was the case in late medieval Damascus and Cairo, it is easy to imagine that it was even more the case in territories like West Africa, western Anatolia, the Balkans, Bengal, Kazakhstan, and the Indonesian archipelago, areas drawn into the Muslim fold after the events of the high medieval period. Natives in these late-converting territories maintained nonstandard traditions well into the modern era. Like the famous *abangan* Muslims of mid-twentieth-century Java (Geertz 1960), adherents of these traditions usually insisted that their spirit cults and ritual veneration were thoroughly Islamic, notwithstanding ‘ulama opinion to the contrary. We know from anthropological studies in other modern Muslim societies, like Mayotte in the Comoros Islands (Lambek 1993) or the Gayo Highlands in Sumatra, Indonesia (Bowen 1993), that many such nonstandard traditions of Islamic knowledge flourished right up into recent times. Although mainstream ‘ulama might dismiss these popular traditions as un-Islamic, these “claims of mutual exclusion are transcended in the practice of ordinary people” (Lambek 1993, 61).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, Muslim societies experienced powerful new pressures to recenter and standardize their still-plural traditions of religious knowledge. The effort was the greatest seen since the birth of the madrasa in the high Middle Ages, and was linked to the expansion of mass education and movements of religious reform. These two events converged to create conditions in which more people than ever were educated in Islam, not just through the informal interactions of everyday life, but through schools run by either state officials or reform-minded Muslims. As Gregory Starrett has observed of modern Egypt, “the expansion and transfer of religious socialization from private to newly created public sector institutions . . . led to a comprehensive revision of the way Egyptians treat Islam” (1998, 6). In Egypt and elsewhere, these developments encouraged growing numbers of believers to think of their faith as objective, systemic, and exclusive. Often as not, these new ways of understanding Islam were especially exclusive of popular traditions of religious knowledge.

The recentering of Islam in modern times, then, has taken advantage of the modern governance, print and electronic media, and mass education to reach beyond the ranks of the ‘ulama into the consciousness and lifeways of ordinary Muslims. Notwithstanding the ambitions of state officials and religious reformists, however, the efforts have not, everywhere, gone as planned. The recentering has been accompanied by a new pluralization of knowledge and authority, and new arguments over how to be a Muslim in this most challenging of eras.

### MAKING MODERN MUSLIMS

Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have long emphasized that schooling has played a central role in the making of modern nations, citizens, and religion. It was through a gradually expanding program of mass education that, over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a disparate assortment of regionalized peasants were turned into Frenchmen (Weber 1976). It was through a similarly expansive program of mass education that Japan’s provincial populations came to shift their allegiances from feudal lords to the emperor and the idea of Japan (Marshall 1994).

State-sponsored systems of mass education have been key ingredients in the Muslim experience of political modernity as well. Modern Muslim rulers have followed the example of their Western and East Asian counterparts and attempted to create a citizenry defined by a common culture and national identity. These rulers, however, have also had to grapple with civilizationally specific questions: where Islam fits into the idea of the nation, and whether to incorporate the ‘ulama and their schools into the state-sponsored educational system. Different Muslim rulers have adopted different tacks toward these problems. Everywhere, however, their efforts have challenged received traditions of Islamic knowledge, created new knowledge-elites apart from the ‘ulama, and deepened the debate over the social meanings of Islam.

The timing and organization of this *étatization* of Islamic education have also varied in different societies. In the most powerful Muslim state at the dawn of the modern era, the Ottoman Empire, the “modernization” of religious education had actually begun several centuries before the Western powers achieved military supremacy over their Ottoman rival. Educational modernity here was not, then, a postcolonial effect of Western rule. After Turkish armies moved into western Anatolia in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries (culminating with the capture of Constantinople in 1453), the Sultan established madrasas (Turk., medrese) throughout the conquered territory, sometimes in churches confiscated

from the defeated Christian population (Veinstein 1997, 71). From the start, madrasas and ‘ulama were harnessed to the wagon of the Ottoman state. In the late fifteenth century, Ottoman authorities regularized and centralized the madrasas in their core territories. They classified and ranked religious schools in a strict hierarchy. Ottoman officials also established educational criteria whereby scholars passed from lower to higher ranks in the religious hierarchy (Veinstein 1997, 73). Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–66) added another level to the madrasa hierarchy, designated the *mufti* of Istanbul the first among all ‘ulama, and regularized the procedures whereby select ‘ulama were recruited to government service. The rationalization of Islamic education reached a crescendo in the eighteenth century, with eleven levels of madrasas differentiated by prestige, teaching staff, and salary (Veinstein 1997, 24–6).

By this time, however, Ottoman power had begun to decline, and government officials began to appreciate that Western Europe had developed a military and technological edge over its long-time rival. The sultan’s advisors concluded that the “secret wisdom” behind the European advantage was education. In a pattern of defensive military reform also seen in nineteenth-century Egypt (Starrett 1998, 26–30) and Iran (Ringer 2001, 7), Ottoman officials responded with educational initiatives aimed at narrowing the gap with the West (Fortna 2000, 12). They established a naval (1773) and army (1793) academy, recruiting Western Europeans as instructors. In the following century, state officials opened schools of medicine (1827), civil administration (1859), and law (1878). “Optimism in the transformative power of new-style schooling energized the entire Ottoman political spectrum” (Fortna 2000, 5).

It is important to emphasize that these educational reforms took place outside of, rather than in collaboration with, the existing madrasa system. The new Ottoman academies looked to Western Europe rather than Muslim madrasas for their educational model, a fact that caused not a little unhappiness in ‘ulama circles. The Ottoman Education Regulation of 1869, which provided guidelines for programs of mass education, was based on a report drafted a few years earlier for Ottoman authorities by the French Ministry of Education (Fortna 2000, 15).

The relationship between the new schools and religious education was not entirely dualistic, however. As ties between the Ottomans and Western powers deteriorated in the final decades of the nineteenth century, Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) launched educational programs that combined new forms of European administration and pedagogy with instruction on Islamic and Ottoman history. Renewed emphasis on religious and moral instruction “was perhaps the defining characteristic” of Abdülhamid’s educational agenda (Fortna 2000, 241), and the program was carried out with the direct assistance of state-based ‘ulama.

Although the content of late Ottoman education was not purely secular, then, the fact remains that the state opted *not* to construct its new educational edifice on a madrasa foundation. State officials “believed that positive, rational science” offered the best solution for the country’s problems (Fortna 2000, 85). Equally important, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, conservative ‘ulama had rebuffed proposals for reform presented by the Ministry of Education. It was only in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire that the state was finally allowed to launch an ambitious program of madrasa reform. In 1900, the state opened a Western-style Faculty of Theology in Istanbul; in 1908, it created a new type of state school for training madrasa instructors; and in 1910 it introduced instruction in general subjects (mathematics, history, literature) into madrasas (Jacob 1997, 111–2).

By this time, however, the system of general education had also brought a new class of Western-educated young Turks into being, and many of these graduates were impatient with the pace of national reforms. The shock of defeat in World War I and the occupation of large parts of Anatolia by Allied forces caused a political crisis so severe that the new Turkish elite resolved to restructure the educational system once and for all. Not long after the declaration of the Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the Republic’s founder and first president, abolished Turkey’s madrasas, replacing them with a School of Theology and thirty-three schools for training religious officials. Over the next few years, his administration eliminated religious instruction entirely from public education, reversing most of Abdülhamid’s reforms. After Kemal’s death in 1948, the state reintroduced religious education into its schools, and higher religious education (under strict state supervision) was again allowed. Private religious education remained tightly controlled. Indeed, as Bekim Agai shows in his essay in this volume, religious education remains under strict state supervision to this day, even if many of the staunchly *laicist* policies of the Atatürk era have been put aside.

The Ottoman case is a particularly dramatic example of an educational crisis that swept most of the Muslim world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. No other Muslim-majority country undertook a program of educational *étatization* as radical as that of Republican Turkey. Nonetheless state meddling in religious education was the rule rather than the exception. In countries that managed to avoid colonization by the West, educational trends more closely resembled those of the late Ottoman Empire than its republican successor. In nineteenth-century Iran, for example, the Qajar rulers responded to the disastrous losses of the first Russo-Persian War of 1803–15 with a program of defensive military reform. French officers came to Iran to instruct troops in European military arts (Ringer 2001, 20). In the 1810s, small numbers of students from elite

families were sent to France and Britain to master subjects also related to military affairs (Menashri 1992, 46–51; Ringer 2001, 33). In 1851, the Academy of Applied Sciences was established, the first state-sponsored European-style school (Ringer 2001, 67–108). The school's curriculum was again “predominantly military in nature” (Ringer 2001, 75). Only a tiny number of elite youth were involved in the Academy and overseas education, and the ‘ulama monopoly on education remained secure. More conservative ‘ulama nonetheless took exception to parts of the European-style curriculum, such as its heretical ideas on the heliocentric nature of our solar system (Ringer 2001, 104; cf. Menashri 1992, 61–2).

Fearing ‘ulama opposition and the contagious spread of European political ideas, Naser al-Din Shah turned down his advisors' recommendations that the state launch a program of mass educational reform (Ringer 2001, 153). Private citizens responded to the decision by establishing European-style schools of their own. During the 1880s, there were numerous incidents in which conservative ‘ulama and their students attacked the new schools, on grounds that they were heretical. Nonetheless the new school movement gained momentum, and even won the support of some low-level ‘ulama (Ringer 2001, 180). By the end of the nineteenth century, the Iranian ‘ulama had effectively lost their monopoly hold on education. But Iran's educational reformers were still unable to initiate reforms in the madrasa system itself (Menashri 1992, 64; Ringer 2001, 271).

Developments in Egypt showed a similar push-and-pull between the state and ‘ulama-led madrasas. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Albanian-born Muhammad ‘Ali followed the lead of his Istanbul counterparts by establishing schools for military training (1816), engineering (1820), medicine (1827), and civil administration (1829). As with the Ottomans, the looming threat of European intervention ensured that most of these educational initiatives focused on improving military readiness. In the 1820s, Egyptian officials tried to recruit boys from the existing system of Qur'anic schools (kuttab) to the new preparatory and technical schools. However, as it became clear that one of the purposes of the new schools was to draft graduates into military service, enrollments plummeted. State officials then resolved to establish schools of their own (Starrett 1998, 26–8). After a series of military disasters in 1863, however, the state's attempts to organize a system of preparatory schools collapsed. Efforts to restart the general system in the 1870s also foundered, so that responsibility for basic education in Egypt continued to lie with the country's five thousand kuttabs. Despite some tinkering at the margins, these latter institutions remained educationally unreformed.

In 1882, the British took control of Egypt. They quickly realized that they needed to make use of at least some Islamic schools. However, they were equally convinced that it was essential that they not educate too



many Egyptians. The British experience in India a few years earlier had convinced them that education beyond elementary school only heightened native restlessness. Egyptian youths given the opportunity to study in the few *kuttab* that doubled as elementary schools, then, were not encouraged to go on in their studies (Starrett 1998, 31). Beginning in 1895, forty-six of the country's five thousand *kuttabs* were provided with subsidies on the condition that they provide increased instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic (Starrett 1998, 47). Any broader reformation of Islamic education, however, remained out of the question.

As was the case here in Egypt after 1882, from the late nineteenth century on, the primary determinant of educational reform in most Muslim countries was not a native *dirigiste* regime like that of Mustapha Kemal or Muhammad 'Ali, but Western colonialism. The precise impact of colonialism on education varied, however, depending on the new rulers' school policies and the attitude of surviving religious and political elites toward educational reform. However different their details, the educational transformations in the broader Muslim world all had one thing in common. The 'ulama's monopoly on education had been broken once and for all. Notwithstanding the hopes of the European rulers, however, this development did not bring about the decline or privatization of Islam. Rather, the new educational pluralism brought intensified competition between supporters of general as opposed to religious education, and fierce public debate over the place of Islam in an imagined postcolonial community.

#### COLONIZING EDUCATION

The contrast between Morocco and India illustrates how varied colonialism's impact on Islamic education could be. From the 1830s on, the French intervened directly in Moroccan political affairs. At first, however, "higher education thrived and was alive with attempts at reform," as a result of the collaborative efforts of religious scholars and native officials (Eickelman 1985, 3; this volume). Mathematics, engineering, and astronomy were reintroduced as subjects of instruction, and some men of religious learning were dispatched to Europe for study. Crowned by two mosque universities, the Islamic educational system continued to attract the children of the political and religious elite well into the 1930s, when it began a sudden decline.

As Eickelman explains in this volume, the sudden decline was the result of several influences. French restrictions on the pious endowments used for financing madrasas was one factor (cf. Eickelman 1985, 82). Another was the authorities' transformation of the two main mosque universities

into state-controlled institutions (Eickelman 1985, 161; this volume). But the decline in religious education also reflected a more general development, one common in other Muslim societies in the early twentieth century. The change reflected a shift in the perceived hierarchy of education, expressed in the conviction that European-style education was a better road to upward mobility than Islamic education. “Studies in a mosque-university ceased to be an effective means of social advancement,” Eickelman writes. “The consequence was to leave the mosque-universities primarily to poor students of rural origin” (Eickelman 1985, 163). The ‘ulama and their schools enjoyed the respect of rural Moroccans for many more years (Eickelman 1985, 165, 171; this volume). Nonetheless, the politico-religious elite’s desertion of the madrasas shattered the once-close tie of religious education to high social standing.

The Moroccan example is unusual, not so much because of this elite defection, but because there was so little organized religious opposition to the change. The fact that the Moroccan royal family, an icon of local Islam, embraced European-style education seems to have reassured the public that the new schooling was not tantamount to repudiating one’s ethnoreligious identity. In other colonial settings, the accommodation of Muslim elites to European-style education proved more difficult. Some groups celebrated the new Western education while others retreated to madrasas, which they hoped to use as a springboard for resistance to the new colonial order. This pattern was no more vigorously expressed than in the homeland of the world’s largest Muslim population, India.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire, which had dominated the Indian subcontinent for two hundred years, was in serious decline. In the eighteenth century, the British took advantage of political uncertainties to seize Bengal and Bihar in the east. By 1803 they had moved inland, taking control of northern India’s political heartland, and reducing the Mughal emperor to a puppet. By the time of the “Mutiny” of 1857, the British had extended their rule over the whole subcontinent.

The speed of the Mughal collapse and the sectarian diversity of the Muslim community guaranteed that there was to be no unified response to the British advance. As Barbara Metcalf and Muhammad Qasim Zaman have shown, the demise of Muslim rule prompted the development of diverse social movements, not only among ‘ulama but among Sufi masters (pirs) and others involved in regional traditions of devotion to the Prophet and Islamic saints (Metcalf 1982, 8, 25; Zaman 2002, 11–13; cf. Hodgson 1974, III, 333; Robinson 2001, 184). The ‘ulama were convinced, however, that the primary reason for the Muslim decline had been believers’ neglect of God’s law. In their eyes, then, the only way forward was for Muslim teachers to promote a renewed commitment to

the law. In the absence of an Islamic state to support this revivalist program, the task fell to the ‘ulama. Rather than concentrating their energies on the cultural and political elite as in Mughal times, then, the ‘ulama reached out to the broad Muslim public. The result was to be the largest movement for Muslim mass education the world has ever seen.

Notwithstanding their consensus on the importance of religious education, India’s ‘ulama could not agree on the form the new religious education should take. All of the main movements “produced a virtuosity in new techniques of organization and communication”; all “sought to define a personal sphere in which the *shari‘ah* was to be followed”; and all aimed to create a new public identity, “Indian Muslim” (Metcalf 1982, 335). However, groups differed on their target constituencies, patterns of religious authority, and attitudes toward Western schooling. As with the famous modernist educator, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, some scholars directed their appeals to high-born Muslims, emphasizing the need to cooperate with the British and incorporate European arts, sciences, and etiquette into Muslim education (Metcalf 1982, 317–35, and this volume; Zaman 2002). Others, like the Ahl-i-Hadis, rejected Sufism, medieval jurisprudence, and British rule, insisting that the only path forward was a strict commitment to the law, which believers could discover for themselves through study of the Qur’an and Hadith. Still others, like the Farangi Mahall (Metcalf 1982, 29–34; Robinson 2001), developed a new educational curriculum to train an elite class of jurists. The first of these jurists worked for Mughal and post-Mughal Muslim rulers, but later some went on to serve in “Anglo-Mohammedan” courts.

As the essays by Metcalf and Zaman in this volume both demonstrate, however, it was the famous madrasa established at Deoband in 1867 that has come to be regarded as the icon of Islamic educational reform in modern India. From a small base in Deoband, the number of schools grew to 36 by 1900. By 1967 the network (in what had once been British India) had grown to 9,000 schools (Metcalf 1982, 136). In Pakistan alone, the number grew from 150 in 1947 to nearly 10,000 in 2002 (Zaman, this volume).

In recent years, Deobandi fame has grown as a result of the fact that during the 1980s some of Afghanistan’s Taliban leadership studied in Deobandi schools in Pakistan. The early Deobandis, however, were not backward-looking medievalists, but cultural brokers for a unique educational hybrid that combined elements of Western education with the ‘ulama tradition. What most distinguished the Deobandis from their rivals was their skillful adaptation of British styles of school administration. The first Deobandi school had a library; classrooms; a paid professional staff, many of whom had experience working in government service for the British; and a fixed curriculum complete with examinations (Metcalf 1982, 93). Rather

than relying on pious endowments, the school depended for its finances on contributions from the general public, all of which were carefully recorded and published (Metcalf 1982, 97). Unlike Sayyid Ahmad Khan's modernists, however, the Deobandis distinguished between the social technologies of educational administration and the content of the curriculum. "There were no spokesmen for including English or Western subjects" (Metcalf 1982, 102). Although students were not prohibited from continuing their studies in government schools, few did. This combination of, on one hand, a welcome embrace of Western-style administration and, on the other, ambivalence toward general education was to remain a hallmark of Deobandi schooling for years to come (cf. Zaman 2002).

Success in the emerging Muslim public sphere also required a formula for neutralizing the fractious divisions of ethnicity, language, and social standing that continued to divide Indian Muslims. The Deobandis responded to the challenge by emphasizing the literate tradition of knowledge and the law over and against local traditions and holy men (*pirs*). The Deobandis also popularized markers of high religious standing, by extending styles of dress, learning, and social bearing previously reserved for the Muslim upper classes (*ashraf*) to all those who embraced Deobandi reform (Metcalf 1982, 256). This proved to be an especially appealing formula for India's growing community of urban Muslims.

Indonesia provides a final example of the way in which the arrival of the West impacted religious education. The Indonesian situation differed in one very important respect from that of Muslim India. No army of conquering horse warriors had ever swept through the archipelago. Although a Malayo-Muslim culture had diffused across the region during the first centuries of Islamization (from the thirteenth to sixteenth century), the region had never been united under a single Muslim ruler. As a result, there was no transregional class of ashraf notables whose language, dress, and social etiquette might serve as a model for imagining a new Muslim community. On the contrary, in fact, each of the archipelago's Muslim territories had its own religiopolitical elite and distinctive social styles. Rather than popularizing the status markers of high-born elites as in India, then, the archipelago's reformists promoted a "Malayo-Indonesian" identity that was both populist and transethnic. One of the most striking features of this unusual social hybrid was the ease with which it assimilated cultural forms of diverse provenance, including elements of Western dress, administration, and education.

As Arza, Afrianty, and Hefner explain in their chapter, the colonial peace also allowed for an expansion of Qur'anic schools and residential madrasas into once nominally Islamized portions of the archipelago. In Indonesia as in Mali (see Brenner, this volume), traditionalist and small-scale Qur'anic schools were at the forefront of the Islamization of once

non- or nominally Islamic populations. European rule also intensified competition among the two main Muslim elites, known locally as the “old group” (*kaum tua*) traditionalists and the “new group” (*kaum muda*) modernists. Notwithstanding their sectarian rivalry, both groups came to agree on the importance of educational reform. By the late 1920s, traditionalist and modernist Muslim schools alike were incorporating mathematics, science, history, and European languages into their curricula. This early precedent paved the way for even bolder developments in Islamic education during the last decades of the twentieth century, when Indonesians initiated some of the Muslim world’s most ambitious reforms of religious education (see Arza, Afrianty, and Hefner, this volume).

#### BOOK CHAPTERS

The chapters in this volume are all concerned, then, with the ideals, practices, and politics of Islamic education in modern times. Chapter 2, by Jonathan Berkey, brings insights from medieval Islam to bear on modern Islamic education. Building on remarks made by Michael Chamberlain (1994), Berkey reminds us that the concept of education, with its neatly demarcated roles, organizations, and programs, is quintessentially modern. Less uniquely modern, he adds, are political elites’ habits of patronizing and functionalizing religious education for their own ends.

Berkey also reminds us that the regularization of madrasa learning is not particularly modern. In fact a significant measure of educational rationalization had taken place in medieval times. It reached new heights, however, in the programs of the last and greatest of the Muslim world’s medieval military states, the Ottoman Empire. Viewed from this angle, and contrary to many great-divide models of tradition and modernity, the dawn of the “modern” in the Near East began well before the arrival of Europeans, and had “roots at least in part in indigenous developments in the premodern Near East.” In their study of renewal and reform in eighteenth-century Islam, Nehemiah Levtzion and John O. Voll (1987) have made a related point, demonstrating that proto-modern movements of Islamic reform had begun well before Westerners arrived. Both of these essays make any facile divide between the precolonial and colonial in the Muslim world highly problematic, and underscore that the pathways to modernity are multiple (Hefner 1999; Eisenstadt 2000).

Berkey’s essay also highlights the fact that a particularly important aspect of the objectification of Islam in modern times has been the insistence that there is just one objective and invariant “Islamic law,” and a primary ambition of Muslim politics should be its implementation in the form of state-managed legal codes (cf. Zaman 2002, 24). Readers unfamiliar with

Islamic jurisprudence may assume that this is the way the law has always been understood. Building on remarks made by the anthropologist Brinkley Messick (Messick 1993), however, Berkey observes that the idea that one can delimit a precise body of “law” is foreign to premodern Islam, which conceived of God’s shari‘a more as a “general societal discourse” than a positive legal canon (cf. Hooker 2003; Zubaida 2003).

In chapter 3, Muhammad Qasim Zaman examines the legacy of Islamic schooling in Pakistan, whose madrasas have been the subject of more bad-news mongering than any other. The educational situation in Pakistan, however, is indeed sobering. Madrasas have been linked to the Taliban leadership, bloody attacks in Indian-controlled Kashmir, and, most recently, the London underground bombings in July 2005. As Zaman’s essay makes clear, the violence has not just targeted non-Muslims. Several of the more radical madrasas, like the Jami‘at al-‘Ulum al-Islamiyya in Karachi, first developed an appetite for sectarian violence while coordinating attacks on the Ahmadi community, a small sect regarded as deviationist by most Muslim leaders. In the 1980s, militants involved in the anti-Ahmadi campaign shifted their aim to Pakistan’s Shi‘a, who make up about 15 percent of the country’s population. Once begun, intemperate habits of the heart like these have proved difficult to contain.

Zaman’s chapter, however, has more subtle ambitions than just reviewing the dark side of madrasa politics. He invites us to put our modernist eyeglasses to the side and consider what it means to participate in a *tradition* of religious scholarship. Such a tradition is alive and well among Pakistan’s ‘ulama. Their discourse has its own assumptions, arguments, and textuality, all of which must be drawn into each act of scholarly creation. Within these discursive horizons, however, the tradition also allows a significant measure of innovation and debate, like that attempted by ‘Ubayd Allah Sindhi (d. 1943). Much like the late twentieth-century Indonesian scholar, Nurcholish Madjid (Hefner 2000), Sindhi sought to unite Muslims around a platform emphasizing the universal rather than exclusive meaning of Qur’anic values. As also with Indonesia’s Madjid, Sindhi wanted the ‘ulama to take their national identity seriously and mine its sensibilities to provide the raw materials for a religious ethic that was civil and pluralist.

While revealing the dynamism of madrasa scholarship, Zaman also sheds light on its vulnerabilities vis-à-vis sectarian conflict. Most ‘ulama avoid direct participation in violence like that initiated against the Ahmadi and the Shi‘a. However, Zaman adds, the “accusation of denying the fundamentals of the faith” is a slippery slope, one that can be “directed against modernist hermeneutics . . . as well as against the Shi‘a.” Although sectarian discourses may not directly enjoin violence, they “remain available” for followers inclined to see defense of the faith as

grounds for violence. Although the state can attempt to contain such acts, any long-term resolution of this tension will require the hard work of scholars operating within the horizons of the tradition, and directing its discourse toward more civil conclusions (cf. Abou El Fadl 2004, 110).

No comparison better illustrates the contextual relativity of modern Islamic education than that of Pakistan and India. As Barbara Metcalf's essay makes clear (chapter 4), contemporary India's madrasas grew out of the same nineteenth-century movements of Islamic reform as did Pakistan's. But today the situation of madrasas in the two countries could hardly be more different. The 1947 partition left Indian Muslims, who had earlier been one-quarter of British India's population, just 10 percent of the total (12 percent today). The violence of the partition placed Muslims who stayed behind in India under "an atmosphere of suspicion," their loyalty to India forever in question. At times the tension explodes into anti-Muslim violence, as was most recently illustrated in the anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat during March 2002 (cf. Brass 2003). In these vulnerable circumstances, madrasas have come to be identified, not with the struggle to create an Islamic state, but with the cultural reproduction of an imperiled identity.

As a result of these challenges, Muslim educators in India have preserved their nineteenth-century predecessors' concern with forging identity and maintaining piety "apart from political life." Far more than their counterparts in Pakistan, Indian Muslim scholars have embraced the ideals of secular democracy. Most Indian madrasas have also incorporated the national educational curriculum into their programs. In some states the process has been assisted by government madrasa boards. As in Indonesia (see Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner, this volume), however, the reform has also been driven by the desires of parents who hope that their children might be modern and prosperous as well as pious.

Metcalf's essay makes several other points relevant for this volume's broader themes. She points out, for example, that madrasas fulfill social functions other than providing religious education. Among other things, they serve as centers where people go for advice on Islamic legal matters and for guidance from Sufi saints. Metcalf comments on a trend also apparent in Indonesia, the growing feminization of madrasa enrollments. Here in India, Metcalf reports, the trend seems to be linked to parents' and educators' concerns to create pious, "demure," and "competent homemakers." Interestingly, Muslim schools in Indonesia show a similarly gendered trend, but they are far less reluctant to prepare women for employment outside the home.

No institution is more universally identified with Islamic higher education than is the famous al-Azhar university (est. 1171) in Egypt. Malika Zeghal's essay in this volume (chapter 5) reminds us of just how excep-

tional this educational institution is. In Pakistan and India, madrasas have grown by first splitting along sectarian lines and then competing for Muslim hearts and minds. “Peripheral ‘ulama,” to use Zeghal’s telling phrase, can also be found in Egypt. But Zeghal’s choice of terms is itself indicative of the fact that the religious field in Egypt is dominated by al-Azhar to a degree unparalleled elsewhere in the Muslim world. Outside of Egypt, the task of distinguishing “peripheral” from “mainstream” ‘ulama can be difficult indeed (cf. Zaman 2002, 239).

One of the reasons for al-Azhar’s commanding position is that, since Egypt’s 1952 revolution, a series of governments have turned to the university to assist in the construction of a public Islam compatible with Egyptian national identity (Zeghal 1996). The government’s strategy reminds us that the notion that Egypt is an entirely secular state is, to borrow a phrase from Starrett, “an astounding fiction” (1998, 16). The crowning moment in the state’s effort to harness Islamic education to the cart of nation-building was the nationalization of al-Azhar in 1961. With this act, Zeghal notes, religious education became “recentered” and “institutionalized under the control of the state.”

This, in any case, was the intention, but as Zeghal and Starrett (1998) have both shown, the realization of this state ambition has proved difficult. Although government officials had hoped to create a uniform Islam, the program stimulated the formation of counter-hegemonic religious groupings (Starrett 1998, 14). Zeghal observes that a “parallel religious structure” of nonofficial structures for the transmission of religious knowledge has also emerged (cf. Wickham 2002). Rather than diminishing al-Azhar’s authority, however, the broadening of the ideological gamut has allowed al-Azhar officials to distance themselves from the regime, at times even challenging its programs. For outsiders who dream that this space will allow al-Azhar to exercise a democratizing or civil-societal influence, the news thus far is sobering. More Azhari interventions have aimed to clamp down on deviations from neo-traditionalist dogma than have promoted civic freedoms.

In chapter 6, Dale F. Eickelman examines the curious fate of madrasa education in modern Morocco, discussed in some detail above. Morocco is an unusual case. Until the 1930s, it had a vigorous tradition of madrasa education crowned by two innovative mosque universities. Since the 1930s, however, the madrasa wing of Islamic education has declined precipitously, largely as a result of the linking of state and private schooling to status and employment opportunities. Madrasa schooling, Eickelman observes, has been relegated to the status of a “valued collective memory instead of contemporary practice.”

At the same time, however, basic elements of Islamic knowledge and Muslim-mindedness have experienced no such decline in prestige. Eickel-



man reminds us that, in a Pew Global Attitudes survey, 70 percent of Moroccans “identified themselves primarily as Muslims rather than Moroccans.” Increasingly, too, the peer learning once associated with madrasa study has been “taken over by religious activists.” In other words, and in contrast to the situation in Egypt, the madrasa has slipped in the perceived hierarchy of schooling, but Islamic learning itself remains vitally important. In circumstances like these, one would expect freelance activists to circumvent the religious establishment and initiate programs of religious education of their own. This is just what is happening, though thus far not to a degree that would sever the cultural lines that tether Moroccan Islam to the Sultan and the state.

The position of Islamic education in modern Turkey has long been weaker than its counterpart in Egypt, and the political temperament of Turkish Islam has differed as well. As Bekim Agai discusses in chapter 7, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) launched the most radical program of secularization the Muslim world has seen. Kemal dismissed madrasas as “degenerated ruins, unable to be reformed in the light of a modern academic mentality.” The pilgrimage (*hajj*) was banned from 1934 to 1947, Sufi lodges were abolished, and higher religious education ceased from 1933 to 1948. A quarter century after Kemal’s secularizing reforms, state officials realized that this repression was not having the desired effect, because it was creating a system of underground religious education. This may be a useful lesson for Western policy makers to keep in mind today.

From 1948 on, the Turkish state sought to create a “depoliticized” and national Islam, programs that culminated in the “Turkish-Islamic-Synthesis” of the 1980s. Today courses on Islam are mandatory in state schools and Darwinian theories of evolution are banned. The Directorate of Religious affairs has 100,000 employees and manages 70,000 mosques. As is so often the case with étatized programs of religious education, Islamic minorities fare rather poorly here. In particular, the non-Sunni Alevi, who make up 20–30 percent of Turkey’s population, find that their practices and beliefs are not acknowledged in state educational programs (Shankland 2003).

But Agai’s story takes us well beyond official Islam, to one of the world’s more unusual experiments in Islamic education. The Gülen movement is an Islamic educational association, founded in Turkey but now active in over fifty countries. An offshoot of Said Nursi’s (1879–1960) Nurcu movement, the followers of Fethullah Gülen adhere to the same educational tenets as their forebear: don’t challenge the state, implement Islam at an individual rather than state level, and emphasize science education rather than religion alone. In light of the restrictive circumstances of the Turkish Republic, the movement’s tack sounds strategic. But the movement has now acquired a cultural logic more complex than tactical caution alone.

The Gülen movement is not a liberal Islam, however, at least in the Western sense of these terms. As Agai reminds us, Fethullah Gülen “is not interested in advocating a new form of theology,” and, unlike many Turkish or Indonesian reformers, he doesn’t challenge religious conservatives on matters of gender, headcovering, or the implementation of Islamic law. However innovative Gülen’s schools, his stands on jurisprudence and doctrine are also cautiously conservative. Again, however, the practice of educational pluralism, with its emphasis on engaging intellectual traditions from outside of conventional Islam and conventional madrasa curricula, may yet contribute to a more far-reaching reformation of Muslim traditions of knowledge and learning.

Indonesia, discussed in chapter 8, lies at the other end of the Eurasian land mass. Two generations ago it was also off the map of all but the most far-seeing of specialists of Islam. But the Asian boom of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as extremist violence in the 1990s, all helped to nudge this most populous of Muslim countries back into the global spotlight. Unlike Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, or Iran, premodern Indonesia never achieved an international reputation for quality Islamic education. Certainly, from the sixteenth century on, an Indonesian variant of a residential madrasa developed in coastal and central portions of the Indonesian archipelago. But a combination of political fragmentation, imperial indifference, and European colonization all prevented its development into a more elaborate educational tradition.

The networks of Islamic scholars that operated in this region, however, were far from parochial. From the eighteenth century on, the Malayo-Indonesian or *Jawi* community (as it was known in Arabia) was a major presence in Medina and Mecca (Laffan 2003). In the late nineteenth century, Jawi visitors sometimes made up 40 percent of the holy land’s pilgrims. In the early twentieth century, returned scholars and pilgrims played a central role in the movement for national independence. Muslim nationalists also showed a keen interest in educational reform, and from the 1910s on Islamic schools were established that combined general education with religious instruction. More remarkable yet is the fact that one of the country’s two largest voluntary associations, the thirty-million strong Muhammadiyah (est. 1912), placed its commitment to modern education and social welfare above party-based politics. The educational innovations promoted by this organization soon spread to the traditionalist schools run by the even larger Nahdlatul Ulama (est. 1926). These and other experiences paved the way for the educational reforms of the 1970s and 1980s, which established degree equivalencies for those Islamic schools willing to implement a general educational program similar to that used in government schools.

The most remarkable feature of Islamic education in Indonesia, however, is its system of Islamic universities. There is perhaps no more striking contrast among religious universities in the Muslim world than that between this system and the Saudi universities described by Muhammad Qasim Zaman in the epilogue to this book. For reasons discussed by Arza, Afrianty, and Hefner, Indonesia's Islamic universities are among the most intellectually far-ranging in the world. In recent years, both the state-supported and privately-run wings of this system have developed programs of civic and democratic education. The universities have also facilitated the movement of tens of thousands of young Muslim women into higher education. Although events like the Bali bombings of October 2002 have underscored that a few among Indonesia's 47,000 Islamic schools have ties to radical groupings, the overall trend in religious education remains pedagogically and theologically pluralist.

As Louis Brenner shows in chapter 9, Mali presents an equally dramatic example of the rapid diffusion of a reformed Islamic education into territories as yet only marginally Islamized. As in Indonesia, in Mali the term *madrassa* refers to an institution that uses modern pedagogical techniques and combines general education with religious studies. The term here also applies only to primary schools, not institutions of higher learning. Mali's modern *madrassas* developed later than those in Indonesia, appearing only in the 1940s. Despite their relatively late appearance, by the 1980s *madrassas* enrolled a full 25 percent of the school-age population. The system's expansion reflected, not state policy, which was hostile to Islamic education, but the desires of parents who wanted their children to be modern and employable as well as religious. "In responding to this demand," Brenner reports, "the directors [of schools] continually enhanced the secular parts of the curriculum to conform more to that in the state schools." Rather than isolating students in an Islamist enclave, Brenner shows, Mali's *madrassas* prepare students for integration into the mainstream political economy.

Brenner shows that the *madrassa* expansion in Mali was part of a broader package of changes, which included urbanization and the establishment of Muslim voluntary associations. As in other Muslim-majority countries, the new educational system used a structured curriculum, classrooms, and graded examinations. Although esoteric knowledge and initiatic learning have not entirely disappeared, their scope has narrowed for the same reason that the *madrassa* curriculum has changed: knowledge and subjectivities are being reoriented to the impersonal institutions and opportunities of the marketplace and mass society.

Islamic education in contemporary Britain, as discussed by Peter Mandaville in chapter 10, knows little of the esoteric economies and spiritual hierarchies of nineteenth-century Mali. Or at least that's the way it ap-

pears to Muslim youth in Britain who seek to be religiously observant. Pious youth want little of the “village Islam” of their parents, preferring to pledge allegiance to the global *umma*. As the anguished debate among British Muslims after the London bombings of July 7, 2005 illustrated, once one reaches this conclusion, the question becomes which among the rival versions of global Islam one chooses to join.

The pluralization and competition that marks Islamic education in Britain is expressed in four varieties of Islamic schools: “faith schools,” which blend an ethicalized understanding of Islam with an otherwise British national curriculum; higher educational facilities for Islamic studies, which mix instruction in the Islamic sciences with academic study of culture and history; Deobandi-style “houses of learning,” which are the least influenced by mainstream British education; and informally structured halqa study circles, where recent converts and born-again believers study with an individual, and often conservative, teacher.

The “houses of learning” were the first to be organized in the UK, but it is the faith schools that have led the way in posing the question of how Islamic education should be structured. Only 3 percent of Muslim youth attend Islamic institutions of any sort, a fact which speaks legions about the Muslim desires for integration and social mobility. Yes, as recent events remind us, there are radical voices in this vibrant mix. But their numbers are small relative to the educators who wish to develop religious schooling that blends the subjects and styles of British education with religious instruction. In Britain as in other Western countries, the future of Islamic education will depend as much on the attitude and policies of the host country as it will the efforts of Muslim educators.

## CONCLUSION

What lessons are to be learned, finally, from these varied portraits of Islamic education around the world? The first and most obvious is that modern Islamic education is neither timelessly traditional nor medieval, but an evolving institution visibly marked by the world-transforming forces of our age: religious reform, the ascent of the West, nationalism, the developmentalist state, and mass education, among others.

Of these forces, the most initially decisive were the various inter-state rivalries and programs of colonial and postcolonial state-building that swept the Muslim world from the nineteenth century on. The scale of the Western challenge became apparent only gradually, of course, and its precise form varied over time and space. In the nineteenth century, rulers in still-independent countries like Egypt, Qajar Iran, and the Ottoman Empire were convinced that schooling was the “secret wisdom” behind the

Europeans' military and technological advantage. All that was required to acquire this wisdom, the rulers believed, was a program of restricted education targeted at children of the elite. Send the princes' children to Paris, open an army academy, bring in a few Prussian advisors—measures like these would suffice to fend off the Westerners clamoring at the gate.

These “defensive military reforms” (Ringer 2001, 7) were initially conducted at a safe distance from the ‘ulama and madrasas. As in Muhammad ‘Ali’s Egypt and the Ottoman court of Abdülhamid II, a few ‘ulama might be made accessories to state educational programs. But the larger madrasa system was spared, for fear that a greater meddling might provoke unrest. Attacks by conservative ‘ulama on Western-style schools in Anatolia and Iran provided regular reminders of some scholars’ reservations about Western learning. Rulers in Cairo, Istanbul, and Tehran were also concerned that the new schooling might spread subversive Western ideas. The state kept new schools in quarantine, then, at a safe distance from the ‘ulama and masses.

The rulers’ tack, however, was not entirely strategic. It also reflected a distinctive legacy of knowledge, a legacy which has influenced the development of Muslim culture and politics to this day. Notwithstanding high-flying rhetoric to the contrary, the knowledge that guided the everyday practice of state politics was primarily based, not on the ‘ulama’s shari‘a, but on arts of governance refined over the course of many decades of state administration, as well as through contacts with non-Muslim subjects and non-Muslim neighbors like the Byzantines (Brown 2000, 57). Guided by this level-headed legacy, sultans and their viziers had few of the ‘ulama’s reservations about appropriating foreign technologies of knowledge. Modern Western education was to be but one more weapon in the arsenal of governance.

As far as most ‘ulama were concerned, the rulers’ adoption of foreign forms of knowledge and education was acceptable as long as it did not trespass into ‘ulama affairs. The separationist principle that lay behind this attitude reminds us that Muslim societies had long since developed a practical separation of knowledge and powers between rulers and ‘ulama. The ‘ulama were reluctant or unable to acknowledge the separation in explicit principle, since it contradicted the prophetic ideal of political and religious authority as a seamless whole (Brown 2000, 54, 56–7; Zaman 2002, 84, 87). But the separation was no less real. ‘Ulama used it to defend their tradition of knowledge from abuse at the hands of rulers. Rulers took advantage of the separation to support creative initiatives in science, the arts, and state administration.

The princes’ arts of governance, moreover, were not the only nonjuridical stream of knowledge flowing through the Muslim world. As Marshall Hodgson observed a generation ago, Muslim civilization had early on

developed a vibrant tradition of belletristic literature (*adab*) and empirical and speculative philosophy (*falsafa*), in addition to the ‘ulama’s science of law and its allied traditions of knowledge (Hodgson 1974, 1, 238–9). In the first centuries of the Muslim Middle Ages, the *falsafa* tradition of philosophy and historical empiricism served as the intellectual platform for a remarkable Muslim engagement with Greek philosophy and natural science. This, too, was the scaffolding upon which the great Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun, erected his magisterial “introduction” to the history of the world, the *Muqaddimah* (c. 1375), with its undogmatic commitment to historical realism.

For a variety of reasons, however, in the late Middle Ages the *falsafa* tradition was marginalized from the commanding heights of literate Islamic culture, including most of the Muslim world’s madrasas. The marginalization took place in part because the methods and concerns of philosophy and history seemed at variance with the jurisprudence that had become the linchpin of ‘ulama learning. In several Muslim countries, independent scholars continued for a while to make impressive progress in the fields of medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. Indeed, in northern India and several other countries, jurists provided private lessons in philosophy and the natural sciences in addition to instruction in the law (Sabra 1994; Huff 2003, 87). Elsewhere, however, the marginalization of *falsafa* and science in madrasas and Muslim scholarship was sufficient as to leave religious elites with few resources with which to critically engage Western science and natural philosophy when these reappeared on the Muslim stage in the nineteenth century. The focus of the Islamic traditions of knowledge had long since come to lie elsewhere, in a more normatively self-referential tradition.

The relative atrophy of history, natural philosophy, and empirical science in ‘ulama learning, then, is another reason Muslim rulers felt obliged to look elsewhere than madrasas as they scrambled to devise a response to the Western imperial challenge. Inevitably their tactics proved insufficient because the speed and scale of the Western advance were so great. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Europeans had dismantled all or part of the Muslim state edifice in the Maghrib, India, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Where the Europeans eviscerated Muslim rule, the ‘ulama response was often to retreat from formal politics into new programs of religious education. The ‘ulama’s strategy was “civil societal” rather than state-centric, in the sense that it aimed to strengthen popular piety rather than struggle directly for the restoration of a Muslim state. These educational efforts built on movements for Islamic renewal that had appeared in the Muslim world in the eighteenth century (Levtzion and Voll 1987; Haykel 2003). Now, however, the renewal project was given special urgency by the awful scale of the European advance.

The new religioeducational imperative was felt at the grassroots of Muslim society as well as at its intellectual peaks. In nineteenth-century Java (Dhofier 1999) and early twentieth-century Mali (Brenner 2001, and below), colonialism ushered in a relative social peace. The peace brought new means of production, transportation, and commerce, all of which facilitated the growth and dispersion of the native population. Muslim preachers and teachers soon joined the great population flow. Where they took up residence in a newly opened territory, the teachers typically established, not institutions of higher learning, but modest Qur'anic schools, often of a vaguely Sufi persuasion. Not infrequently these were oriented to segments of the population previously known as only nominally Islamic. The schools became a major force in the great wave of Islamization that swept the Muslim world's peripheries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As the essays in this collection make clear, however, the project of religious and educational renewal was not just a grassroots affair. In India and Java, Muslims created new networks and voluntary associations for the purposes of higher religious education, much of it of a Salafi-reformist rather than Sufi bent. As with the Muhammadiyah movement in early twentieth-century Indonesia (Alfian 1989), these associations modeled their administration on the voluntary associations Europeans had brought to Muslim lands. Some reformist educators also introduced subjects like mathematics and history into their curriculum. But not all educators embraced these innovations. Some, like India's Deobandis, warmed to European models of administration but stayed cool about nonreligious learning. After independence, and at the urging of the government, Pakistan's Deobandis opened their schools to general education. However, they still found it hard to see nonreligious instruction as anything but "a separate segment of education which students are expected to deal with as a prelude to their real vocation" (Zaman 2002, 83).

However much Muslim rulers might have hoped that the new education might remain an affair of the few, then, modern events conspired to make it a surging societal interest. In Qajar Iran, "in the period 1851–71 an increasing number of parents sent their sons abroad to Europe to study at their own expense" (Ringer 2001, 89). In Morocco in the 1930s, "Islamic institutions became the least attractive option open to . . . Muslims in colonial society," because French-run government schools "siphoned off the children of Morocco's elite" (Eickelman 1985, 163). Parental demand rather than top-down supply was the driver for this great educational transformation. Muslim parents could not be swayed from their goal of giving their children practical skills as well as a vivid sense of their faith. Although the pattern varies from country to country, most parents show a similar preference today.

At first, then, the reform of Islamic education was given momentum by the decline of Muslim political power. In colonial settings, Islamic schools were functionalized to sustain Muslim values and 'ulama social standing even in the absence of a Muslim-led state. After the Second World War, national independence seemed at first to offer Muslim educators an opportunity to relax their guard. But postcolonial nation-building only ushered in new struggles to control the commanding heights of public ethics and culture. This was no more forcefully the case than on the question of where Islam should figure in new programs of mass education.

In most Muslim countries, nationalist parties and state-making dominated the political scene through the 1960s. The nationalization of Egypt's al-Azhar in 1961, with its requirement that henceforth the university's shaykh be appointed by the president rather than the 'ulama, was symptomatic of the trend. Out of sight of the governing gaze, however, parts of the public cultural scene were quietly heading in a different direction. In all but a few countries by the 1980s, the majority of people, and the majority of women, were functionally literate (Brown 2000, 125–7; cf. Findley 1989, 141). Secondary and higher education had grown as well. State schools socialized their young charges into “the canons of . . . a secularizing, modernizing, and centralizing nationalism” that replaced the hierarchical mores of the old generation with an “ever present egalitarian populist rhetoric” (Brown 2000, 132).

Aided by a galloping urbanization, these programs succeeded in alienating educated youth from the settled parochialisms of their elders. But nation-building proved less capable of tethering the younger generation's allegiance to the ruling elite's political aims. In the 1970s and 1980s, Muslim societies were swept by resurgence of personal piety and public observance. Attendance at Friday mosque services swelled; there was a boom in the market for inexpensive booklets and magazines on Islam; women donned head coverings (*hijab*) and men sported facial hair.

Eventually these developments converged to create a powerful challenge to a heretofore hegemonic nationalism. Rulers responded with concessions to Muslim social and educational interests. But these, too, had unintended effects. In Egypt, regime efforts to co-opt al-Azhar scholars increased the 'ulama's involvement in politics (Wickham 2002; Zeghal 1996, and below). In Pakistan, the “ulama were made use of . . . without any concomitant success in the regulation of their activities” (Zaman 2002, 151). The politicization of Pakistani madrasas reached new heights during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, as a result of, among other things, a decade-long flood of armaments purchased with Saudi and American funds. It was this functionalization of Pakistani madrasas by domestic and international actors, rather than some fatal proclivity in madrasa education itself, that lay behind the rise of the Taliban in the



1990s. As these examples show, 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.

A second line of reflection that emerges in the following chapters concerns the internal dynamics of Islamic education rather than its functionalization. The rise of modern Islamic education brought about a shift in the distribution and style of Islamic knowledge. The earlier pattern of informality and, in Louis Brenner's phrase, "initiativ transmission" gave way to classrooms, fixed curricula, examinations, and professional teachers. In these relatively depersonalized settings, many believers came to view their faith as "a subject which must be 'explained' and 'understood'" (Eickelman 1992, 650) on the basis of formal doctrinal canons. The transmission of Islamic knowledge had been abstracted from intimate teacher-student relationships, with their habits of dress, bearing, and deference, and repositioned in classrooms and quick-read textbooks (see Berkey, this volume; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 38; Starrett 1998, 9).

For state officials intent on managing religious education, the benefits of objectifying Islam seemed obvious. Religious knowledge could be packed into curricular modules and disseminated in mass educational programs. In so doing, it was hoped, the political message of that knowledge could also be stabilized and made regime-friendly. But marketing mass religious education in this way encouraged other actors to think of religion in a similarly disembedded, formulaic, and political manner. It was not long, therefore, before other, nonstate actors began to create modular Islams of their own. The result was that the religious marketplace became more pluralized and competitive. Of course there have always been different carriers of religious knowledge in the Muslim world. But the plurality and contest of meanings acquired a new intensity in the 1970s and 1980s, as debates over Islamic knowledge moved from elite circles into a restless and mobile mass society. There is no evidence to suggest that the agonistic pluralism of Muslim politics and learning is about to diminish any time soon.

These events bring us to a third and final conclusion as regards the cultures and politics of contemporary Islamic education. Some Western analysts have seen the ferment surrounding religious schooling as proof that the modern Muslim world dances to a different drummer from that of the West, East Asia, and Latin America. Muslim civilization does indeed have distinctive institutional complexes and ethnocultural concerns. But all civilizations differ in these regards; modernity is multiple, not singular (Eisenstadt 2000). What claims as to the exceptionalism of Islamic education overlook, however, is that mass education of a moral-

istic sort has been a hallmark of nation-making and societal reform since the late nineteenth century's "Age of Education" (Zeldin 1977). "A moral agenda of one sort or another lay at the heart of state educational projects unfolding in disparate parts of the late nineteenth-century globe" (Fortna 2000, 35). Charles Taylor has aptly described the "atomist prejudices" (Taylor 1989, 166) that dominate modern Western political philosophy and popular Western discourses (cf. Asad 2003; Mahmood 2005). Notwithstanding liberal philosophers' penchant for ontological individualism and secularization theorists' "master narrative of long-term religious change" (Cox 2003, 201), however, ethico-religious issues have surged back into public debate even in Western societies, not least of all in the form of our culture wars (cf. Casanova 1994; Hunter 1991; Rosenblum 2000).

In one basic respect, of course, public-ethical ferment in the Muslim world differs from that of the historical West. Islam has no church, and modern debates over religious education and the public sphere have not had to cut their way through the question of what role a church hierarchy should play in moral education. Ever since the great recentering of 'ulama knowledge in the Muslim Middle Ages, however, Muslims have accorded a rather considerable authority to the 'ulama and their understandings of the shari'a. Official religious discourses have tended to assume that the shari'a is the fount from which public ethical instruction should flow.

Rather than smothering debate, this discursive fact has guaranteed that argument over public ethics often centers on the meaning of the shari'a and who has the right to define its terms. Just as religious nonconformists challenged the West's churches in early modern times, today new Islamic intellectuals challenge the 'ulama's monopoly over the interpretation of Islam (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 13, 44; Meeker 1991). Many call "for a reinterpretation of the underlying principles, or essence, of religious law" (Ringer 2001, 245), rather than an unempirical textualism. Faced with conservative 'ulama's shows of force, however, many reformists have retreated to a position similar to that of Iran's reformists at the end of the nineteenth century: their clear-eyed critiques give way to "a deliberately vague reform platform" (ibid.), as if they realize they have little chance of beating 'ulama at the public ethical game. Of course, some among the 'ulama support efforts at pluralist reform. As Zaman illustrates in the epilogue to this book, scholars like Baqir al-Sadr in Iraq and Motahhari in Iran have long called for reforms to Islamic ethics and education. But even these scholars face a dilemma similar to that of reform-minded 'ulama elsewhere. They realize that to question the authority of classical 'ulama learning is to risk being "marginalized in the structures of authority sustained by reverence for such texts" (Zaman 2002, 73).

Here then is a dilemma, arguably *the* dilemma, at the heart of Islamic education today. Is the purpose of Islamic education to teach fidelity to a fixed and finished canon? Or should religious education offer a high-minded but general religious ethics that looks outward on creation and encourages a plurality of methods for fathoming and engaging its wonder? For a Western public shocked by images of terrorist violence and convinced that madrasas may be a big part of the problem, the suggestion that the fault line in Islamic education lies astride this question of scholastic unitarianism versus epistemological pluralism may appear ludicrous. In Muslim educational practice, however, there is no more decisive a contest.

Notwithstanding two centuries of secularist forecasts to the contrary, religion and public ethics continue to matter, and matter deeply, in our modern world (Rosenblum 2000; Sandel 1996). In Muslim countries, the search for a workable public ethics has often come to focus on the meaning and functions of Islam, and the methods for their educational inculcation. Inasmuch as this is so, arguments over religious education will almost certainly remain subjects of contention in Muslim countries for years to come. We should not allow these disputes to become one more excuse for attributing a putative exceptionalism to Muslim civilization. We in the West would be truer to our own moral history were we to recognize that our schools and politics, too, bear the imprint of struggles over how children and citizens should ethicalize and behave. Current debates over Islamic education, then, do not represent Muslim civilization's regression to some premodern past. They are a civilizationally specific response to the challenges of pluralism, knowledge, and ethics faced by all citizens in the late-modern world.

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## NOTES

1. Although the Taliban put Islamic education back in the Western media spotlight, scholarly interest in madrasas goes back to the late nineteenth century. A later and particularly important wave of English-language scholarship appeared in the wake of the Iranian revolution, and included path breaking studies by Dale F. Eickelman (1985), Michael M. J. Fischer (1980), David Menashri (1992), and Roy Mottahedeh (2000). Nicole Grandin and Marc Gaborieau’s (1997) collection, and Malika Zeghal’s (1996) study of Egypt’s al-Azhar, provide useful reminders of the depth of French scholarship on Islamic education as well.
2. As the chapters in this volume make clear, women are well represented in the Islamic educational systems found across the world today.