

Book review: Marjo Buitelaar, Manja Stephan-Emmrich, Viola Thimm (eds): Muslim Women's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Beyond - Reconfiguring Gender, Religion, and Mobility

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framework designed to support local researchers in interpretative research. The fourth section emphasises the importance of gender and entangled sensitivities during field research. It also highlights ethical vulnerabilities and subsequent mitigation strategies in the research design process and when presenting fieldwork findings wherever development interventions are intended. The editors, Berit Blieseemann de Guevara and Morten Bøås, highlight the challenges associated with researching the subject of sex and associated sensitivities while ignoring the difficulties field researchers face due to their own sexual orientation.

Although there are fewer examples of religious sensitivities while doing research in those societies where religion forms a vital part of everyday life as well as constitutional discussions, there are nonetheless rich examples of challenges encountered while researching in authoritarian states with gender-related sensitivities, in pre- and post-conflict environments. Unlike the compilations of Charles et al. (*Researching the Middle East: Cultural, Conceptual, Theoretical and Practical Issues*, Edinburgh University Press, 2021) and Mac Ginty et al. (*The Companion to Peace and Conflict Fieldwork*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), which focus respectively on the MENA region and Global North only, this book provides a comprehensive review of the intricacies and limitations of doing research in violent and closed environments across a wider geography. It is vital to diagnose the dos and don'ts in an environment where a research activity is being initiated. This publication offers diverse examples and assists early career researchers and graduate students in comprehending the problems of conducting research in heterogeneous violent and closed situations, helping to add value to the quality of the research by mitigating possible risks and issues.

Fazlullah Akhtar

MARJO BUITELAAR, MANJA STEPHAN-EMMRICH, VIOLA THIMM (EDS), *Muslim Women's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Beyond: Reconfiguring Gender, Religion, and Mobility*. London: Routledge, 2021. 222 pages, £36.99. ISBN 978-0-3676-2810-9

The present book investigates the topic of Muslim sacred journeys to a variety of Islamic holy places in various countries. The most notable of these pilgrimages are to sites in today's Saudi Arabia, especially the Kaaba in Mecca and the grave of the prophet Muhammad in Medina. In addition to these, the articles in this book include religious travels to a number of other shrines found around the Islamic world. The main focus is on Muslim women's mobility from Islamic countries and other parts of the globe to Mecca and other areas of the Islamic world, as well as the link between these mobilities and globalisa-

tion, current technology and infrastructures. The majority of the papers in the book tackle the problem of women's pilgrimage in modern days, and they benefit from productive case studies. By focusing on the connections and interlinkages between the different arenas of Muslim pilgrims (p. 4), the editors have succeeded in reconfiguring their "understanding of Muslim pilgrimage through the lens of women's new mobilities" (p. 5).

Muslim Women's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Beyond is largely written by women scholars and is structured in ten chapters with a helpful introduction. Geographically, the book's essays cover pilgrimages or pilgrimage sites in various parts of the Islamic world, such as Morocco, Indonesia, West Africa, India, Iran, America, the Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muslim women's pilgrimages within various Muslim sects and denominations are also considered, as for example one essay that researches pilgrimage among Shiite Muslims ("Shi'i Muslim Women's Pilgrimage Rituals to Lady Fatemeh-Masoumeh's Shrine in Qom").

The book is especially notable for combining the investigation of women's holy journeys to sites in many countries with that of the *hajj* as a definite religious duty (seven of the ten articles examine the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Mecca). Looking at the scientific literature published on these topics, we can see that only a few publications have thus far addressed these two fields together. The articles edited by Marjo Buitelaar, Manja Stephan-Emmrich and Viola Thimm fill this gap and provide an appropriate blend of numerous perspectives and methodologies on the issue of pilgrimage, allowing the reader to delve into a comprehensive and multidimensional examination of female pilgrimage in Islam. Although the articles are primarily written following an anthropological approach, in line with the editors' own expertise in this scientific field, contributions that consider the jurisprudence of female pilgrimage ("Under Male Supervision? Nationality, Age and Islamic Belief as Basis for Muslim Women's Pilgrimage"), the cultural history of female pilgrimage ("Considering the Silences. Understanding Historical Narratives of Women's Indian Ocean Hajj Mobility") and a rereading of some travelogues and pilgrimage memoirs (articles 9 and 10) give this book an interdisciplinary approach and consequently provide rich content.

Despite the efforts of the editors to include studies on non-*hajj* pilgrimage traditions of Muslim women, the lens of pilgrimage research remains primarily under the shadow and impact of the *hajj*, due to the scarcity of academic scholars working on alternate pilgrimage destinations. Even the first article ("Under Male Supervision? Nationality, Age and Islamic Belief as Basis for Muslim Women's Pilgrimage, by Viola Thimm), which explores the question of women's pilgrimage from a jurisprudential standpoint, limits itself to *hajj* jurisprudence and does not examine the legal challenges faced by women on non-*hajj* pilgrimage. Furthermore, some articles pay less emphasis than expected

to one of the book's core concerns, namely mobility and travel. The inclusion of at least a few images of women on pilgrimage would have been highly welcome to deepen the reader's insight into the book's fundamental theme in a visual way. Finally, Muslim communities are facing dramatic social and cultural changes, particularly among young Muslims and the so-called "Muslim Z generation", who make up a substantial portion of the global Muslim community. The book sadly does not pay attention to this huge group of young Muslim pilgrims, which would have rounded off the otherwise multi-perspective elaboration of the issue.

However, in any regard, this timely publication should be of interest for scholars of Islamic Studies, the anthropology of *hajj* in particular and pilgrimage in general, the anthropology of Islam, Mobility Studies and Women's Studies, for some time to come. For example, the essays collected in this book effectively present the connectedness between Muslim women's pilgrimage and other issues, such as the market, shopping activities and business. In this way, they contribute to the flourishing trend to move away from stereotyped, essentialist and exclusionary views of Muslim women. The editors' ambition to concentrate "on how such cultures inform the normative, social and practical dimensions of their pilgrimage practices, and, in turn, how women's practices inform specific discourses on their mobility" (p. 13) is clearly expressed throughout the book. Furthermore, this publication adds valuable perspective to the theories of pilgrimage, which are otherwise mainly formed in a masculine and non-Islamic context.

Peyman Eshaghi

ISMAIL FAJRIE ALATAS, *What is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia*. (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021. Xvi, 268 pages, 1 map, \$95.00. ISBN 978-0-6912-0431-4

The Bā 'Alawīs, who claim to be descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, or *sayyids*, have been an increasingly popular topic of study over the last twenty years. Historians and anthropologists, or the confluence of the two, have enormously contributed to the study of this distinct community from the Ḥaḍramawt valley in Yemen, as well as their diaspora in the Indian Ocean, thereby reshaping a new discourse of a "transnational turn" since the 1990s. Among other scholarship, Engseong Ho's macro-diachronic analysis, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (University of California Press, 2006), is a landmark in this transregional/transnational study, as it innovatively interprets the diasporic community from the late medieval period onwards through