

Intellectual Traditions in Islam, ed. Farhad Daftary, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London-New York, 2001. xvii plus 252 pp.

The book consists of papers which were originally presented at a conference held at The Mellor Center, Churchill College, University of Cambridge in 1994.

Farhad Daftari, the editor of the volume, underlines the richness of Islamic civilization as characterized by a diversity of literary and intellectual traditions in various fields of learning such as theology, law, philosophy, literature, mysticism, arts, and natural sciences, in its formative phase. The aim of the book, therefore, is to ask questions about the life of intellectual and the idea of tradition(s) in medieval Islam. Aziz Esmail, for example, raises some very interesting and meaningful questions not only about intellectual life and tradition but also about the whole development of Islamic civilization and its interaction with other traditions. (pp.1-16) He applies the concept of tradition to the whole Mediterranean region as a cradle of "a triple heritage", that is the heritage of monotheistic faith, Greek philosophy, and the Enlightenment. (pp.11-12) It seems that, when he highlights the pluralistic dimension of tradition, he has a pragmatic concern for today in contrast to totalistic and fundamentalist approaches to Islam.

Hugh Kennedy tries to give an outline of how he sees Islamic intellectual life developed in the formative period of Islamic thought. He argues that two main political issues which constitute a background and fertile ground for the later development of Islamic thought are the leadership of the Muslim community and the spread of Islam.

Oliver Leaman asserts that during the rapid expansion of Islamic empire, Muslim rulers found themselves thrust immediately into contact with people who had relatively sophisticated ideas about theology, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics. Muslims, he contends, instead of rejecting all these new elements as a product of "the other", they tried their best to incorporate

these new material "into their own way of looking at world". (p. 31) As a result "an extremely rich symbiosis of cultures and religions took place" and "produced great scientific and philosophical riches". (p. 31) All in all, these richness of ideas lead Muslim philosophers to argue that " you could have different points of view of the same truth". (p. 42)

According to Muhsin Mahdi, from the beginning there was always a rational dimension in Islam, which remains alive to present day. The problem, however, is not that Islam excludes the rationality but that Muslims in history sometimes went to extreme positions about the extent and importance of rationality. He gives us a picturesque view of rationality in the history of philosophy. (pp. 44-45) Then, he turns to the development of rational tradition in Islamic context and stresses the emergence of Mu'tazilite as " a single global theological school". He considers the birth of Sunnite school by Ash'ari, who was also a Mu'tazilite earlier, as a reaction to Mu'tazilite.

Mahdi, also deals with contemporary situation of rationalism in Muslim world, beginning with Mir Damad and Mulla Sadrs, as the founder of "new wisdom school of Persia", as the pioneers of rationality in modern times. However, contemporary founders of rationalism and two ardent students of "new wisdom school of Persia", Iqbal and Afghani, left the school. They consider Mulla Sadra and his genre to be absorbed with the lure of pure metaphysical speculation and lost their connection with "the real world", which resulted in the colonization of Muslim lands by the West. It seems that Mahdi is optimistic about modern Muslim intelligeisa, who once more has the opportunity of re-kindling the rational tradition, "the most angelic good that a human being can have". (p.45)

Although Norman Calder assures us about the richness of Islamic intellectual life in the early history of Islam, he claims that it was M. Abduh and his followers who tried to "reject and discard" all richness of Islamic tradition by recommending to the Muslim community to go "back and start all over again

with the Qur'an". Mahdi suggests that if Islam started to become smaller and narrower, one should start with Abduh to comprehend the reasons for that contemporary phenomenon as well as to overcome it.

Farhad Daftary, gives us an overview of the intellectual activities of the Ismailis during the medieval times in the field of "philosophy, law, historiography, as well as certain distinct traditions and institutions of learning". (p. 88) However, Alice C. Hunsberger focuses on one compelling individual, Nasir Khusraw, to give a better picture of a Fatimid Intellectual to us.

Annemaria Schimmel argues that a Sufi, although does not ignore the reason and rationality, never prefers reason to love. She underlines that "while intellect has first to ponder things, love tries to jump into the heart of the matter without thinking of the consequences". (p. 131)

John Cooper examines the role of Sufism and also how S'hism become an ossified, authoritarian, and state-allied monopoly. Cooper's paper does not highlights some key elements in the intellectual life in Safawid period but also shed some lights for a better understanding today's Twelver S'hism, which now had the backing of a state and become a kind of ideology for the the first time in its history.

Abdulaziz Sachedina tries to provide a wider framework to the present discourse on the place of Muslim woman in society. He asserts that the juridical deliberations in the exclusive male-oriented traditional centers of Islamic learning, the madrasah, have disregarded female voices. Therefore, a major issue that confronts contemporary Muslim jurists is a redefinition of the statue of a woman in modern society. Furthermore, Sachedina encourages Muslim woman's participation in the legal-ethical deliberations. He believes that "without their participation in legal-ethical deliberations,

women's rights will always depend on a 'representational discourse' conducted by male jurists". (p.161)

Mohammed Arkoun's "Present-Day Islam Between its Tradition and Globalization" is an unpublished paper in place of the presentation he made at Cambridge. He deals with the present-day Islam, the living tradition dating back to the early days of Islam, and globalization. It seems that his objective in this classification is " to set apart the *implicit* that are lived but unthought in each of these areas of individual existence and historical action, from the *explicit* that are problematized, thought for the first time or rethought, in the perspectives opened up by the new phenomenon of globalizations". (p.179) He defines the new context created by the "forces of globalization" and then examines to the questions of present-day Islam and Islamic tradition. He argues that it is almost impossible to understand the concept of globalization with our old terminology of international affairs. Globalization, he asserts, upsets all the known cultural, religious, philosophical and politico-juridical traditions; even modernity. For example, European Union is an indication of a process which marks the end of nation-state, one of the greatest achievements of modernity itself.

He insists that "one cannot deal with present-day Islam by simply repeating the linear chronological account of its historical spread, the theologico-juridical frames of its articulation as a system of beliefs and non-belief fixed by God". Therefore, students of Islam have to understand "to what extent Islam is subjected, like all living traditions of thought, culture and beliefs, to the irresistible hurricane of globalization". (pp. 194-195)

Arkoun concludes that the present categories and methods are insufficient to explain and understand the reality of Islam. It is necessary "to undertake the reverse process of- de-sacralization, that is unveiling, deconstruction, de-historization; laying bare the reality which has been constructed by and for the social imaginaire". Arkoun offers some new terms, such as *debt-of-*

meaning, prophetic moment, imperial moment, Mushaf/Closed Official Corpus, as the tools to understand the development Islamic culture. It seems that Arkoun's essay is a new chapter of what he callas as "the project of critique of the Islamic reason" which he has been developing for some forty years.

In short, Daftari's book undertakes a difficult task of bringing into light the richness of intellectual life and traditions in Islam within a single volume. The fact that, to most Americans and Europeans Islam is still a static monolithic or a mysterious exotic "other", the book, with all its limitations as composed by different scholars, will present new insights about the richness of Islamic culture. In turn it may help Muslims to base their heritage within a wider framework and overcome popular fundamentalist and totalistic discourses of Islam.

Ibrahim Ozdemir, Ankara University, Turkey