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WOMEN, LEADERSHIP, AND MOSQUES: CHANGES IN CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC AUTHORITY. Edited by MASOODA BANO AND HILARY KALMBACH. pp. xvii, 581. Leiden and Boston (Mass.), Brill, 2012.
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Two of the most important issues in the modern Islamic world are: (1) religious authority and its maintenance at a time when change takes place with increasing rapidity, and (2) conventional understandings of the position of women and their conflict with new interpretations drawn from religious reform, the requirements of the modern economy, the needs of the modern state, and globally supported positions on human rights. *Women, Leadership, and Mosques*, which had its origins in a conference, which Hilary Kalmbach and Masooda Bano hosted at Oxford in 2009, embraces both of these big issues, but does so by focusing very specifically on women's religious authority. In the pre-modern era, in some Sufi contexts and in the transmission of knowledge, in particular Hadith, some women had authority. This book, however, concentrates on a

contemporary phenomenon, the growing presence of women in madrasas and mosques, their growing involvement in religious learning, in religious interpretation, and even in giving religious leadership to men.

Hilary Kalmbach introduces the book with an excellent discussion of the theoretical issues involved in Islamic authority, making it clear that in Islamic terms we are in new territory:

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries female Islamic leadership has dramatically expanded . . . in part because of structural changes in Islamic authority . . . as well as shifts in the roles and activities of women in many Islamic communities . . . women have been able to claim exoteric, scholarly religious authority based on at least some – and occasionally a significant amount of – formal learning, mixed with reputation, teaching experience, charisma, a pious image, commitment to religious and charitable causes, and family ties.

Masooda Bano rounds off the collection by drawing out some of the common themes in the book in a study of the Jamiah Hafsah, a women's madrasa, which was founded in Islamabad (Pakistan) in 1986 and whose teachers and students engaged in armed protest against the state in 2007. She offers an extreme example of women's religious authority at work in the form of Umm-i Hassan, a leading preacher at the madrasa and shows: how she and her followers are radicalised by moves on the part of the Pakistani state to demolish their madrasa, how they emerged in part at least as a result of the wish of Deobandi ulama and were embedded within a broader Islamist network, and how deeds were arguably more important than a capacity to interpret religious texts in consolidating religious authority. Umm-i Hassan lost both her son and her husband in the government's assault on her madrasa and the Red Mosque next door to it.

Twenty substantial essays lie between the introduction and conclusion, half focusing on women's authority in Muslim majority societies, and half on women's authority in minority ones. They range from Morocco, Turkey and Iran through to China, Sweden and the USA. They are divided into three sections, representing the three major questions the book sets out to answer. The first question involves the creation of space for the exercise of women's religious authority, and the relative roles of male invitation, state intervention and women's initiative in making this possible. We are shown how male invitation in the context of state oppression of Muslims in sixteenth – and seventeenth-century China led to the foundation of the women's only mosques which are a feature of the contemporary Hui community. On the other hand, we are shown how the Moroccan state, in recent years, keen to counter the impact of Islamic revivalists, has deliberately created space for female leadership in the country's mosques. In Turkey the state has operated on a broader scale through its Directorate of Religious Affairs, which employs over 350 highly-educated women, creating circumstances in which they produce *fatava* and give sermons to men as well as women. Then, in Saudi Arabia the role of the state has had the opposite effect. The state's desire to exclude women from most religious spaces has led over the past two decades to women carving out for themselves a parallel religious universe, both virtual as well as real.

The second question asks how women have used the opportunities which they, state and society, have created to consolidate their positions as religious authorities. So we see how women might circumvent the limitations of established religious spaces or official religious posts to create new opportunities, as in the case of Nalia Ziganshina of Kazan who used her position on the Tatarstan Islamic Spiritual Board both to run the Union of Muslim Women and to support the unofficial civil society association, The Social Organization of Muslim Women. So, too, we see how women have come to take the lead, particularly in Europe, where the needs of female students might contrast sharply with the teachings of male teachers trained abroad. Thus, for instance, a Swiss Muslim women's association distanced itself from male control by establishing itself as a legally independent association. A further striking

example of the consolidation of a space for women's religious authority is the way in which the image of Fatima al-Zahra has come to be manipulated in Iran. Traditionally, Fatimah was always a 'reserved obedient and domestic' figure but in contemporary Iran she is a 'proactive self-confident figure'. The key agent of this redefinition was the Iranian Islamist thinker, Ali Shariati, who died in 1977. The outcome has been a considerable development of this model and the emergence of major women Shii scholars.

The third section explores the impact of female religious authority on Muslim women. Some use their authority to reinterpret texts, to reorganise gendered space and to argue for new roles for Muslim women. We are shown, for instance, how two Egyptian women preachers pass on Islamic teachings which can empower women against either family attempts to control their lives or the demands of custom. We are shown, too, the impact of feminist readings of the Quran by Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud and the impact of the preaching and leadership of the latter both in the USA and South Africa. Muslim women, however, do not just adopt positions moving in a feminist direction; they are just as likely to use their authority to support traditional understandings of gender roles and orthodox senses of piety. An examination of the positions amongst Indonesian women's religious leadership clearly sets out this division.

Hilary Kalmbach and Masooda Bano, who are post-doctoral research fellows at Oxford, are to be congratulated on producing an outstanding book. Indeed, it is one of those rare books which opens up a whole new subject; it is a landmark in the field. The issue of women's religious scholarship is presented to us in rich and wide-ranging scholarship. The articles are invariably respectful of historical and social context; nuance tends to be embraced rather than ignored. Moreover, the whole work is extremely well-planned, so as to make its main arguments readily accessible. Much work must have gone into its editing. The outcome is essential reading for all those interested both in issues of authority in the contemporary Muslim world and in the new spaces opening up for Muslim women. But for its hefty cover price it would make an excellent basis for a graduate class. Brill should offer it in paperback form as soon as possible. FRobinson@rhul.ac.uk

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ARTS OF MUGHAL INDIA: STUDIES IN HONOUR OF ROBERT SKELTON. Edited by ROSEMARY CRILL. pp. 308. Ahmedabad, Mapin in association with the Victorian and Albert Museum, London, 2004.
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Tempus fugit – it seems only yesterday that I was given a copy of "Arts of Mughal India", honouring Robert Skelton's scholarly achievement and generous fostering of younger talent. Yet since then every year has seen further evidence of the flourishing field of study that Robert has done so much to make fruitful: the 2009 "Garden and Cosmos" show of Jodhpur court painting; the 2010 SOAS / NPG conference and book on the Indian Portrait from 1560 to 1860; the marvellous 2011 exhibition at the Rietberg Museum, Zurich of masters and schools of Indian painting from early medieval to early modern, with its accompanying double tome of text; the Chester Beatty, Dublin remarkable show of Muraqqa' albums; and more recently, Willie Dalrymple's 2012 Asia House, New York exhibition of the Delhi school of painting in the later Mughal period . . . not to mention the proliferating publications on the regional arts of the Deccan and Bengal.