

creation of the man first and imported the rib story from the Genesis account in the Bible into their commentaries to lend heft to this reading *against* the actual wording of the Quran – this goes precisely to the nub of feminist critiques of traditional masculinist interpretations of such key verses.

Two verses that enjoy prominence in feminist exegeses should have received greater attention. One such verse is Quran 9: 71 (only briefly referenced in the book), which describes men and women as partners (*awliyā'*) of one another to promote what is right and prevent what is wrong, a fundamental moral imperative within Islam. Another is Quran 33: 35, which broadly posits the moral and spiritual equality of men and women. Both of these verses have general applicability since they are not understood to be restricted to specific circumstances. Verses with such general applicability (*'āmm*) establish the general principle or norm; verses that concern a circumscribed situation (*khāṣṣ*) like Quran 2: 242 have limited applicability and do not undermine general principles. Bauer briefly mentions this important distinction but does not dwell on it.

This is a missed opportunity since modernist and feminist exegetes who seek to challenge androcentric interpretations of key Quranic verses invoke this vital distinction as a cornerstone of their hermeneutic projects. Such a hermeneutic approach allows one, furthermore, to explore fruitfully the tension within the Quran between notions of functional superiority versus ontological equality, a key discussion that is unfortunately notably absent in Bauer's study. This tension had been insightfully underscored by Fazlur Rahman (in his *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, and further elaborated upon by his student Amina Wadud in her *Qur'ān and Woman*), who had commented regarding Quran 4: 34 that the status of men as "custodians" (*qawwāmūn*) of women that has typically been read into this verse is contingent upon his traditional function as the sole breadwinner in the family (similarly for Quran 2: 228). In the modern world, large numbers of women work outside the home and contribute to the economic well-being of the family or serve as its sole provider, which allows us to reassess the assumed absolutist implications of the term *qawwāmūn* in Quran 4: 34. Furthermore, the verse discusses gender roles in the context of the domestic sphere. When read cross-referentially with other verses, such as Quran 9: 71 and 33: 35, that have to do with gender more broadly speaking, a more generalized understanding of a superior status for the male *qua* male becomes untenable.

Ultimately, this book fails to satisfy on many levels: the author's conclusions are sometimes too hastily founded and do not do justice to the complexities of gendered identities in the Quranic milieu. A more thorough canvassing of the corpus of Muslim feminist works having to do with a broader range of relevant Quranic verses would have led to a more rigorous and nuanced treatment of this important topic.

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MICHAEL FARQUHAR:

*Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education and the Wahhabi Mission.*

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It is a truism in accounts of modern Islam that Saudi Arabia emerged as a serious global religious player during the second half of the twentieth century. Media reports and scholarly studies alike point to the firepower of the country's

petrodollars, which managed singlehandedly to transform Muslim communities worldwide by pushing the “rigid” Wahhabi creed. Michael Farquhar takes issue with such lazy conceptualizations of Saudi influence in his masterful book *Circuits of Faith*. Instead, he provides a careful and nuanced study of the most important instrument for the spread of Salafism, the Islamic University of Medina (IUM). Founded in 1961, it has become alma mater to tens of thousands of international graduates. In order to make sense of the dynamics of transnational flows, manifested in the circulation of teachers and students, as well as “social technologies” such as pedagogical methods, the author develops a sophisticated concept of “transnational religious economies” (p. 16). What an education at the Islamic University meant was the acquisition of “spiritual capital”, which in itself is a permanently contested category. It hinges on the particular subcultural context in which a Muslim is based, but at the same time constitutes also a “medium of conflict . . . in that accumulation of capital increases one’s authority to engage in disputation over the definition of correct belief and praxis” (pp. 12–3). Importantly, however, Farquhar does not take economic terminology too far. In his view, any attempt at translating material into spiritual wealth ceases to be a process that can be tightly controlled. This implies that what happened over the last decades can hardly be termed as a straightforward and deliberate export of a pure Wahhabi doctrine. Instead, the author suggests thinking of the end result as an “expansion” of the initially local tradition from Najd. The missionary project itself was transformed by appropriating persons, resources and discourses from outside the Wahhabi fold while also trying to cater to the diverse needs of religious actors around the world (p. 191).

Farquhar’s first two chapters, of seven, provide an overview of the informal educational landscape of the Hijaz that began to be shaped by Ottoman attempts at bureaucratization and strong linkages to the Indian subcontinent. The Saudi conquest of 1925 by no means extinguished these limited reforms, even though the new rulers founded a Scholastic Saudi Institute (al-Ma‘had al-‘ilmī al-su‘ūdī) in order to emphasize the “unadulterated Salafi creed” (p. 51). Yet, the employment of foreign and in particular Egyptian staff led the Institute to display quite some openness towards pedagogical innovation and ideas fashionable in Cairo at the time, hence presaging the IUM (pp. 64–5). Chapter 3 turns to the University itself, and demonstrates its character as a royal project that was not only supposed to shore up domestic religious legitimacy for the monarchy but that should also be seen within the context of the country’s regional rivalry with Nasser’s Egypt and later Iran under Khomeini.

Chapter 4–7 form the empirical and argumentative heart of the book. Drawing on a broad range of monographs and articles in Arabic as well as interviews with former students, it looks at the inner workings of the IUM. Farquhar underlines the importance of non-Saudi faculty in helping to get the institution off the ground. Exiled Muslim Brothers from the Arab world played a large role in this, but connections with Salafi movements in Egypt and South Asia were substantial too (pp. 97–8). The presence of these foreign scholars was crucial for lending legitimacy to an institution “which was intended to address the entire *umma* but which might otherwise have been easily dismissed as the pet project of a marginal group of scholars” (p. 100). While the sensitive classes on God’s unicity (*tawhīd*) as the core of Wahhabi doctrine remained in the hands of mostly Saudi teachers, fixed syllabi and bureaucratic controls made it possible to hire even those who did not wholeheartedly embrace the religious outlook of the Saudi state. This transnational composition of the faculty has only given way since the 1990s in the context of Saudization and tighter political control. Shifting to the perspective of the IUM’s

international student body, chapter 5 gives a detailed description of the University's strict pedagogical regime that operates with surveillance and fosters competition, a far cry from the forms of instruction dominant in mosques of the Arabian Peninsula in the early twentieth century (pp. 124–7). Away from the IUM campus, chapter 7 sheds light on the many ways in which graduates have made use of their spiritual capital. Some have established their own educational institutions in places like Yemen or the United States (pp. 171–2) or have even turned into public critics of the University and Wahhabism more broadly (p. 181).

Between these discussions stands the highly intriguing chapter 6, which tackles the important question of how the content of the taught Wahhabi corpus has shifted. *Fiqh* instruction in particular moved away between the 1960s and 1990s from an exclusive reliance on Hanbali manuals towards a more comparative approach (pp. 146–8). Farquhar offers only some speculative reasoning as to why this happened by pointing to the presence of South Asian Ahl-i Ḥadīth scholars, known for their strong opposition to *taqlīd* within Islamic law, in the IUM's Advisory Council and faculty (p. 150). Unfortunately, however, the reader does not get to hear the voices of these potential agents of change beyond official announcements and only when they expressed themselves in Arabic. A widening of the source base and a greater concern for intellectual history, manifested perhaps in a case study of how this new legal approach found its way into theses written by graduates, would have surely strengthened this aspect of the book's argument. One is also left wondering whether Farquhar does not in general overplay the transformative strength of outside influences. He is very clear, for example, that the doctrinal core of Wahhabism was fiercely guarded at the IUM (p. 143). Preserving a strict focus on Hanbali law was perhaps only a minor concern in comparison with the University's emphasis on religious polemics against "wayward" Muslim sects and other religions which its graduates were supposed to produce. The latter texts, however, are not further explored by Farquhar beyond some cursory references to articles in the IUM magazine (pp. 131–7).

Overall, this is an outstanding, engaging and very clearly argued work that goes a long way in putting the study of transnational Islam on a sophisticated theoretical footing. Farquhar does not neglect the important issue of power but manages to show that even a missionary project as lavishly funded as the IUM faces real limits to its global influence and is in no position simply to dictate a hegemonic discourse. The book's accessible style should make it attractive for students and specialists alike.

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A.C.S. PEACOCK and D.G. TOR (eds):

*Medieval Central Asia and the Persianate World: Iranian Tradition and Islamic Civilisation.*

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This is a collection of papers based on those given at a conference at the University of St Andrews in 2013. It is dedicated to the memory of two scholars: Professor C. Edmund Bosworth, who died in 2015, and whose paper in the volume is presumably one of his last publications, and Berenike Walburg, a St Andrews graduate student