

Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (ed.), *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021); xxi, 794 pp; ISBN 9789004425255.

A huge and crucial collection on virtually all the major sectarian strands and movements one can find in the Islamic world today, with additional information about their historical background or antecedents. Dr Afzal Upal, an ‘Indo-American’ authority of computer and cognitive science now based at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, cut his teeth in the study of Islamic new religious movements probing the Ahmadiyya movement, to which he formerly belonged and concerning which he wrote a multidisciplinary study *Moderate Fundamentalists* (Berlin, 2017), an important text in the Cognitive Science of Religion. His research has put him in touch with a wide range of scholars working on Muslim minorities across the northern hemisphere and has been wonderfully complemented in this volume by Carole Cusack, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney and surely one of the most accomplished editors of all time, whose wide-ranging interests have very much helped to enrich the mix.

After the editors’ helpful Introduction, the collection is organized in five major parts: Sun-ni Traditions; Shi’a Traditions; Fundamentalisms and Extremisms; Sufism and its Influences; and sects “in between and on the fringes of Islam.” Expect to find among Sunni groups the Indian-originated Tablighi Jama’at (Zacharias Pieri), the Muslim Brotherhood (Rickard Lagervall) and the Turkish Gülen movement (Caroline Tee), and among the Shi’i, the Twelvers (Mohammad Fazlhashemi), the Isma’ilis (Farhad Daftary) and Alevis (Yvette Talhamy). The chapters on fundamentalists and extremists naturally include Salafis (Joas Wagemakers), the Taliban (Jon Armajani), Hamas (Shaul Bartal) and ISIS (Emin Poljar-ovic); the part on Sufism inter alia involves the Ni’matullahu school (Milad Milani), Subud (Antoon Geels) and such Traditionalists as René Guénon (Rory Dickson); while on the fringes one encounters the Ahmadiyya (Upal again), Black Islam (Edward Curtis IV) and the Yezidis (Victoria Arakelova). The odd chapter is thematic, one on women in Islamic movements (Eva Nisa), for example, and also the editorial introductions to guide readers into each part. Apart from recommending the collection as absolutely fundamental for the teaching and research of Islam and its diversities, I will confine my observations to issues that interested and concerned me. It is impressive to see the presence of various in-house Islamic scholars among the mix of Western specialist researchers. Fried Saenong, for ex-ample, is a welcome new name to tackle Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama, surely the largest of the movements under scrutiny in the book. The presence of a chapter on Zaydism (by Najam Haider) is well taken, because the Zaydis are neglected as a group oscillating be-tween Sunna and Shi’i positions, in honouring ‘Ali’s right to succeed Muhammad yet accepting the caliphal reigns of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar (if not ‘Uthman). Haider’s examination is extraordinarily detailed and learned. The chapter on Nigeria’s Boko Haram (by Nigerian Africanist Benson Igboin) is special for plumbing the sect’s intransigently anti-Western Salafic roots and its ideological mainsprings, yet one wonders what can be done to avert further violent behaviour. Finnish researcher of Russian pagan activities Kaarina Aitamurto does good service in introducing the problems for both Islam and sects in contemporary Russia, and the case of Tartastan’s little-known separatist Islamic community surrounding Faizrakhman Sattorov.

Some bibliographic absences left me concerned. Discussion of the Gülen movement with-out reference to Mehmet Ozalp’s important work on the theology of Said Nursia is sad, although Ozalp’s Sydney thesis (submitted for Lexington Studies of Classical and Modern Islamic Thought) was not to be published until mid-2023. To write about Twelver Shi’ites without homage by Fazlhashemi to Abbas Amanat’s magisterial *Iran* (2017) is disconcerting, even though the latter is fringe Baha’i (and Lil Osborn in the book’s last chapter, on the Baha’i

faith, does not mention him either). Curtis's writing on the Nation of Islam without reference to Dennis Walker's monumental *Islam and the Search for African-American Nationhood* (2005) seems strange, and crucial macro-historical narratives of Eli-jah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan therefore went missing. Any article on the Druze, surely, should from now on refer to Daniel de Smet's crucial French translation of the *Druze Sacred Epistles* (2007), and surely Abdul Ghaffar's classic Druze text *Al-noqat wal daw'ir* ought never be neglected. But the editors are to be congratulated, and they have not only each contributed important articles, but also provided a good model for guiding readers through this complicated range of materials stage-by-stage.

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