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Book presentation

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*Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*

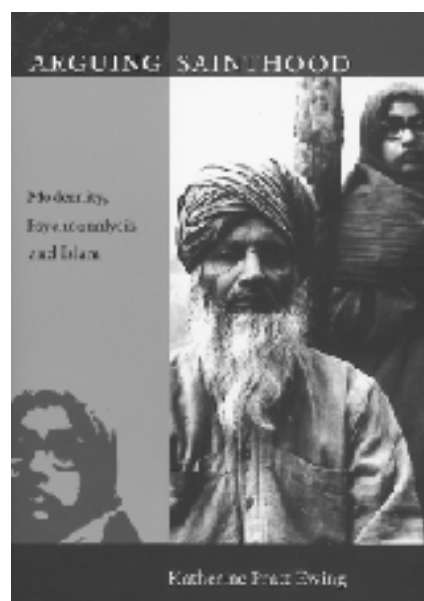
Duke University Press

Durham and London

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KATHERINE PRATT EWING



Book presentation

### Women, Islamisms and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt

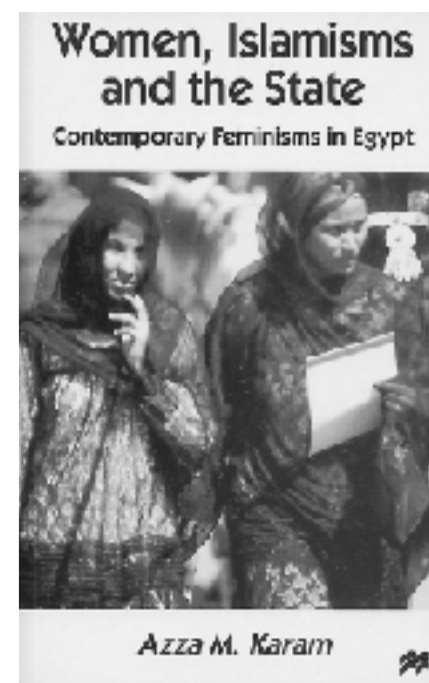
Macmillan and St. Martin's Press

London and New York

1998, xvii + 284 pp.

ISBN 0-333-68817-1 paperback

AZZA KARAM



In *Arguing Sainthood*, I examine Sufi religious meanings and practices in Pakistan and their relation to the westernizing influences of modernity in the shaping of the postcolonial self. The Muslim *pir* or sufi saint is a spiritual guide, a healer, a worker of miracles, an object of devotion at shrines, and a focus of social and political controversy as Pakistanis debate the true nature of Islam and its proper position in a modern nation-state that also sees itself as an Islamic state. With debates over the legitimacy and meanings of the sufi *pir* as my focus, I critically reinterpret theories of subjectivity, examining the production of identity in the context of a complex social field of conflicting ideologies and interests. I challenge the notion of a monolithic Islamic modernity in order to explore the lived reality of individuals, particularly those of *pirs* and their followers.

Furthermore, I examine how competing ideologies that have emerged in the process of nation-building in Pakistan are played out in individual experience among ordinary Pakistanis. Secularism, Islamic modernism, Islamic reform, fundamentalism, and 'traditionalism' are all platforms on which political leaders seek to shape government policy and public opinion. The *pir* has been a target of much of this ideological conflict about the place of Islam in the Pakistani nation-state. But the *pir* also plays an important role in the lives of individuals, who often turn to him for healing in times of personal crisis and conflict. I, therefore, focus on the *pir* as a nodal point where these political and personal processes come together. At this intersection, I observe the extent to which ordinary people are shaped or determined by a discourse of modernity and by the ideologies that arise out of this discourse. Just as the *pir* operates as a kind of nexus, this book stands at the nexus of several lines of academic inquiry. Drawing on my training in clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis as well as on historical sources, Sufi textual sources, and two years of anthropological fieldwork, I offer a basis for re-theorizing postcolonial studies. ◆

This book presents an analysis of the contemporary power dynamics between Islamism and thought and praxis, women's activism and state policies. Although it focuses on Egypt (during the presidencies of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak), the theoretical framework is relevant for other contexts involving this triangle. The book shatters three myths: that Islamism is a uniform and ultimately violent freak; that the state discourse in the Middle East is merely confronted with an ideology it is incapable of handling; and that women in the Arab/Muslim world, lack feminist vigour. This study highlights how the mediocrity of Islamist opposition is but a reflection of the State's own political discourse. Far from arguing that Islamism simply oppresses women, the book narrates a relatively unheard of phenomenon – *Islamist feminism*. This is to be compared to two other dominant streaks – Muslim and secular feminism – within a rife, evolving and diverse feminist discourse. The book brings out the plurality of Islamist praxis, the multiple means through which the Egyptian government has reacted and adapted to Islamist discourse over the years, and the heterogeneity of feminist voices in Egypt. Urging for a politics of difference, the book emphasizes that power is indeed ubiquitous, and that most actors can, and are, shaping the nature, impact, and future of political discourse in the region. ◆

Dr Azza Karam is senior programme officer of the Gender, Middle East, and Applied Research Programmes, International IDEA, Stockholm.

Dr Katherine Pratt Ewing is associate professor in the Department of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University.

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Book presentation
<b>Shattering the Myth</b> <b>Islam beyond Violence</b>
Princeton University Press
Princeton, New Jersey
1998, xix + 237 pp.
ISBN 0-691-05769-9
<b>BRUCE B. LAWRENCE</b>



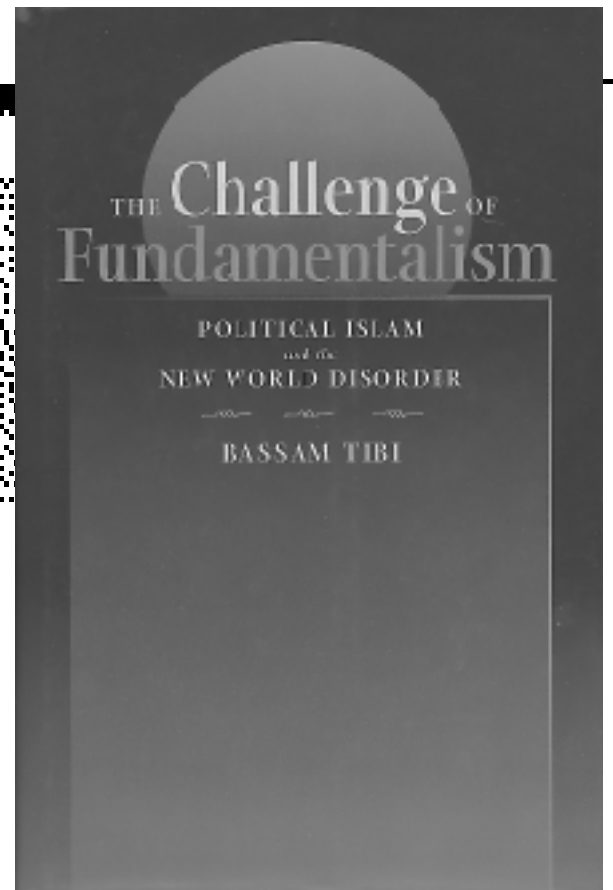
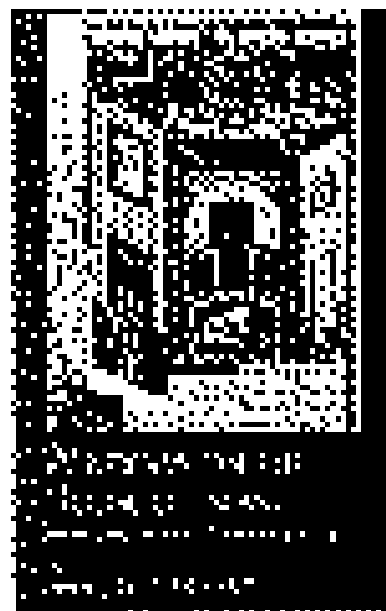
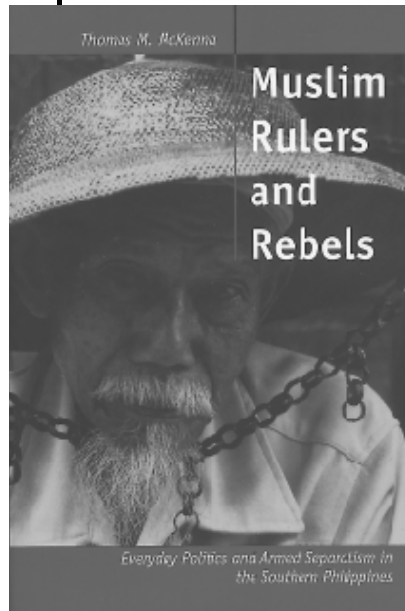
Islam is often portrayed, especially in Western media, as an alien, violent, hostile, and monolithic religion, whose adherents resemble Osama bin Laden, the Afghan terrorist, more than Aliya Izetbegovic, the President of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the realities of contemporary Islam are closer to the latter than the former. Islam, as I argue, is a religion shaped both by its own postulates and ethical demands and by the specific circumstances of Muslim people in the modern world. The last two-hundred years have brought many challenges for Muslims, from colonial subjugation through sporadic revivalism to elitist reform movements and, most recently, pervasive struggles with fundamentalism. During each period, Muslims have had to address internal tensions, as well as external threats. Today's Muslims are mostly Asian and non-Arab, with Muslim women assuming increasingly greater prominence, in Asian countries from Iran to Indonesia. My book calls attention to the region-specific features of Southeast Asia, and to the new developments in Malaysia which put Islam and corporate culture as a higher priority than Islam and cultural combat. Only by looking at the entire spectrum of contemporary Muslim societies can we avoid the pitfalls of stereotyping and falsification, such as beset V.S. Naipaul in his tragic travelogue, 'Beyond Belief'. The realities of Muslim life and the hopes of modern-day Muslims far exceed the slanderous muckraking of headline journalists and falsetto novelists alike. ♦

*Dr Bruce B. Lawrence is professor of Islamic Studies and Chair of the Department of Religion at Duke University.*

Book presentation
<b>The Challenge of Fundamentalism:</b> <b>Political Islam and</b> <b>the New World Disorder</b>
<b>BASSAM TIBI</b>

The process of globalization, mostly addressed in terms of the spread of McWorld, is misleading. There is no globalization when it comes to culture/civilization. On the contrary, the politicization of world religions in an age of crisis, both structural and also a crisis of meaning, is a source of fragmentation. Culture is a production of meaning and not patterns of consumption. The resort to religion for the articulation of dissent results in translating religious beliefs into political convictions. This politicization of religion is addressed in this book as religious fundamentalism. The new ideology poses a challenge to the world order of secular states. With regard to non-Western civilizations, religious fundamentalism becomes a vehicle for the claims of both de-secularization and de-Westernization. Religious fundamentalism is a global political phenomenon that can be observed in all major world religions. However, the very fact that among the existing civilizations only Islam and the West have universal claims, explains the focus on Islam. Giving Islam a political imprint results in an ideology called political Islam. This ideology has little to do with the religion of Islam or with the history of the related civilization, for political Islam is not a religious belief but rather a political ideology which is both anti-Western and anti-secular. It has the claim of establishing a new world order being an alternative to the prevailing one designed by Western norms and values. However, instead of this envisaged world order we are currently encountering de-stabilization effects resulting in disorder. Following the first two chapters that provide the general world-political framework for the rise of fundamentalism, the focus is set on the world of Islam and in particular the Middle East. It is argued that the Gulf War of 1991, in the West, is nothing more than a fading memory, while in the Middle East the confrontation between Saddam Hussein and the West continues to be vital in the anti-Western attitudes of the people in that region. The Gulf War left a 'Saddam Hussein legacy' now mixed with the thriving politicization of religion resulting in political Islam. I attempt to add to the political analysis of the observed anti-Western attitudes of Islamic fundamentalists. In this further background analysis I touch upon the crisis of meaning growing from the exposure of the world of Islam to the socio-cultural set-up of cultural modernity. In concrete political terms, the rise of political Islam leads to an increasing cultural fragmentation in terms of a decline in consensus and also to the diffusion of power in world politics. In the Middle East itself, religious fundamentalism is the greatest destabilizing challenge to the existing order of nation-states in the region. The ideology of the 'Islamic State' is the framework for the de-legitimization of the existing secular states in the Middle East. In my view, a proper interpretation of Islam is compatible with democracy and human rights and thus draws clear lines between Islam, as a religion, and the abuse of this very religion for developing an ideology named political Islam. In rejecting Western universalism I base my plea on cross-cultural grounds for averting a clash of civilizations. This clash is in fact between fundamentalist ideologies, not between the civilizations themselves. The book clearly displays the great diversity and deep strife within the world of Islam, where the major political movements can be identified as an expression of religious fundamentalism. The conclusion is that the claim to establish an alternative world order results in creating only disorder. Thus the challenge of fundamentalism is a challenge of disorder and disarray. ♦

*Dr Bassam Tibi is professor of International Relations at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and the 1998 Robert Bosch Fellow at Harvard University.*



### The Challenge of Fundamentalism

Edited by Bassam Tibi  
 This book is edited by Bassam Tibi, Professor of International Relations at the University of Göttingen, Germany. It is a collection of essays by leading scholars in the field of Islamic studies and political Islam. The book is divided into three parts: the first part deals with the rise of fundamentalism, the second part with the challenge of fundamentalism to the world order, and the third part with the future of Islam. The book is a valuable contribution to the understanding of the complex relationship between religion and politics in the modern world.

### Muslim Rulers and Rebels

Thomas M. McKenna  
 This book is a study of the political and social movements of Muslims in the Middle East. It examines the role of religious leaders and the impact of their teachings on the political process. The author argues that the rise of fundamentalism is a result of the failure of secularism to address the needs of the Muslim population. The book is a critical analysis of the political and social movements of Muslims in the Middle East.

### Whidawa and the House of Islam

Bassam Tibi  
 This book is a study of the political and social movements of Muslims in the Middle East. It examines the role of religious leaders and the impact of their teachings on the political process. The author argues that the rise of fundamentalism is a result of the failure of secularism to address the needs of the Muslim population. The book is a critical analysis of the political and social movements of Muslims in the Middle East.

### Putting Islam to Work

Bassam Tibi  
 This book is a study of the political and social movements of Muslims in the Middle East. It examines the role of religious leaders and the impact of their teachings on the political process. The author argues that the rise of fundamentalism is a result of the failure of secularism to address the needs of the Muslim population. The book is a critical analysis of the political and social movements of Muslims in the Middle East.

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