

Gerhard Böwering (Ed)

Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction

(Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2015, ISBN: 9780691164823, 289 pp., \$24.95/£16.95)

Until recently, the available introductions to Islamic political thought could barely satisfy students of Islamic studies. Most of these works were outdated, focused either on medieval or modern times and limited in the scope of treated problems or thinkers. Muslim political thought has evolved much since the nineties of the 20th century and the issue of pluralism, for example, is now taken seriously. The divide between medieval and modern political thought also has to be addressed in order to allow a full understanding of the reinterpreted past questions such as *sharī'a* and Caliphate. The book under review largely meets the expectations, producing an inclusive and updated book while covering both pre-modern and modern periods of Islamic political thought. It is, therefore, a very welcome publication. Furthermore, being written by senior scholars of Islamic studies, and internationally recognized experts in their own subfields, assures a distinctive excellence to the content. The book draws on the articles published in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, co-edited by Gerhard Böwering in 2013.

The book comprises sixteen chapters, alphabetically and thematically organized. One can break down the entries into four units. The first elaborates on the foundations of Muslim political thought; it includes articles by Paul L. Heck (Knowledge), Gerhard Böwering (Muhammad and the Qur'an), Patricia Crone (Traditional political thought) and Devin J. Stewart (*Shari'a*). A second unit covers topics of authority, with the contributions of Roy Jackson (Authority), Wadad Kadi and Aram A. Shahin (Caliphate), Emad el-Din Shahin (Government) and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (*'Ulama'*). A third unit discusses issues of alterity including articles by Yohanan Friedmann (Minorities), Gudrun Krämer (Pluralism and tolerance) and John Kelsay (Jihad). Finally, Muslim political thought in the modern times has been explored by Armando Salvatore (Modernity), Roxanne Euben (Fundamentalism), Ebrahim Moosa and SherAli Tareen (Revival and reform) and Ayesha S. Chaudry (Women). The format is generally encyclopedic, summarizing the state of the art or the research on the given themes by the authors in their own fields. The articles by P. Crone (medieval political thought), Roxanne Euben and G. Krämer (modern political thought) stand apart with their comprehensive view of the map of Muslim political thought and their deep engagement with its major figures. They offer valuable insights into Muslim thought for a modern reader.

In most chapters, the authors have utilized a historical method. The introduction by Gerhard Böwering sets the tone for this approach as it clearly endorses a chronological order in the classification of Muslim political thought. Böwering divides this history into six periods: 1. Foundations (From Muhammad to 750). 2. The early middle ages (750-1055). 3. The high middle ages (1055-1258). 4. The late middle ages (1258-1500). 5. The early modern period (1500-1800). 6. The Later modern period (from 1800 to the Present). Such method allowed the authors to track the evolution of Muslim political thought from early Islam until modern times. Often, the turns of this evolution are spotted. Thus, the author can easily follow and benefit from this frame provided that it does not fall to a false sense of continuity. A drawback of this approach is repetition. For example, several authors extensively treated the theme of the caliphate in the chapters on authority, caliphate, government and traditional political thought. Some authors such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) pop up in several chapters in the book while al-Fārābī (d. 950) was mentioned in



one chapter on knowledge. Although the format is that of an introduction to topics of Muslim political thought, the final result is a selective history of this thought. Another consequence of the historical method is the little space the volume allots to the contemporary issues.

The main limitation of this book is the number of transliteration and factual errors. Here is a list of some examples. On page 30, it is stated that the Almoravids emphasized Ḥanbalī literalism, while it adopted the Mālikī school. The Ḥanbalī school never took ground in North Africa or Muslim Spain. On page 46, the date of Ibn Taymiyya's death is given as 1348 while it should be 1328. On page 70, the date of al-Juwaynī's death is given as 1105 while it should be 1085. On page 81, *shūrā* is translated as consensus while it is consultation. On page 85, *li-taṣbaḥ* (in order to become) should be *li-tuṣbiḥ*. On page 108, the religious scholarly councils in Morocco are known as *al-Majālis al-ʿilmiyya* rather than *Majālis al-ʿilm*. On page 108, al-Hamdawi date's of birth 1957 is given as his date of death. On page 113, Muʿāwiya is transliterated as Muʿāwiyya. On page 120, *al-mujtamiʿ* should be *al-mujtamaʿ*. On page 131, it is affirmed that Sistani is reluctant to be drawn to worldly affairs while he issues dozens of *fatwas* about Iraqi politics. On page 208, Ibn al-Surayj should be Ibn Surayj. On page 210, the Muhammad Iqbal's date of death is given as 1939 while it is 1938. On page 213, Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's date of death is given as 1787 while it should be 1792. On page 267, Shajarat al-Durr's date of death is given as 1259 while it should be 1257. On page 268, Bint Shatīʿ should be Bint al-Shāṭiʿ.

Taken together, these chapters make an outstanding introduction (and history) of Muslim political thought. With its detailed index (fifteen pages) and a list of further readings (mostly in English) at the end of each chapter, it is a highly accessible volume. Additionally, due to the book's clarity and engaging debates it can be used as an excellent teaching book. I highly recommend it for students of Islamic studies. Beyond this field, it can benefit anyone involved in the politics and the media of the Middle East.

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