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All in all, one feels dissatisfied with this book, and not just because of its general content: in addition to the general misunderstandings outlined above, one finds numerous, albeit minor, errors of spelling and punctuation, as well as what are often quite serious errors of translation, all of which bely the claim on the cover that the book has been "meticulously edited". It will no doubt please those who are already interested in Rahman's work, but it is unlikely to be of much appeal to anyone else.

Yasin Dutton

### **Islam—A Short Introduction**

Abdulkader Tayob

Oneworld Publications, Oxford 1999, pp. 224.

In his preface to the book, Tayob justifies the need for yet another introductory work on Islam by saying that in his experience 'students want access to the material and tangible aspects of the religion of Islam'. This he interprets as a desire to understand why Muslims do certain things such as wash before prayers, how they experience the Hajj pilgrimage etc. Tayob's task therefore in writing his introductory book is not so much an exploration of the historical context of Islam as an attempt to explain what is obviously visible within the lives of Muslims and the Islamic world.

Tayob achieves this with an interesting conceptual approach. He introduces the reader to the world of Islam as though he were leading him through a mosque. Thus, under the chapter titles such as the 'minaret,' 'minbar' 'the prayer niche,' the author discusses various areas of Islamic life, including purification rituals, gender issues, feminism, leadership, politics, aesthetics and music. The discussions are part scholarly debate and part descriptions of rites and experiences of the living Muslim community. Only the final chapter, 'Challenges and Opportunities in the Twenty-First Century,' is removed from this mosque concept. It is more a re-evaluation of Islam and the opportunities and challenges it faces in the next century, with the focus lying particularly on globalisation in the world and how Muslim communities are responding to this phenomenon.

Though the chapters focus on some aspect of the mosque's architecture, they quickly draw the reader into the various themes of Islamic life and thought as well as short but pertinent accounts of Islamic history. For example, Chapter Two which is titled 'Ablution' begins by the Qur'anic verse exhorting believers to perform the wudu' as well as a Maliki tradition on the virtues of performing the ablution. The writer uses the notion of physical purity as a religious axiom to explain why water facilities are generally found in mosques. He then goes on to explore the legal dimensions of the purity laws, their ritual function as well as the symbolic notion of purity in Islam. In the analysis, Tayob looks at the major anthropological approach to the subject, namely the work of Mary Douglas and the recent arguments against her thesis

by Kevin Reinhart. Tayob manages to draw in various contemporary scholarly viewpoints alongside citations from the early works of the Muslim thinkers to try and balance different approaches to the religious issue in question. However, the difficulty he faces is fundamentally doing justice to the details of any one particular intellectual discipline. In an introductory work such as this, he merits praise for his attempts to portray the variety of interpretation on specific issues both within the ideological and historical context. However, in trying to say too much, certain statements present a gloss over the actual complexities of a subject matter. For example, he quotes the Qur'an 9:28, 'polytheists are impure,' as the reason why the Sunnis consider non-Muslims to be spiritually impure (p. 43). He does not add that this verse relates specifically to the bar on non-Muslims from entering the sacred mosque of Mecca, nor does he explain that in actual fact, the majority of legal texts go to some lengths in claiming that non-Muslims are not biologically impure. Tayob does not explain that the texts distinguish between biological impurity as opposed to spiritual impurity even though he concedes that regarding non-Muslims, there is no notion of requiring ritual purification.

In the final chapter, Tayob looks at the impact of globalisation and its effects on Muslims carving out new meanings and identities for themselves. Tayob's thesis is fundamentally that despite scientific advancement and increasing secularization, religion did not die out. Infact as he puts it, 'freedom has produced brilliant creativity, but also left a trail of corruption, greed and depravity not unlike that exhibited in the name of gods and kings.' (141). It is in this world that religion has begun to reassert itself. Tayob explores the ideas of three prominent Muslim thinkers, Fazlur Rahman, Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi and Seyyid Hossein Nasr who have all put forward views on how Islam should approach the challenges of modern society. His own conclusion seems to be that Islam has become a highly symbolised religion, but it must be cognisant of realising itself in the global village and take some heed of the attitudes of the early Sufi masters.

This is by all accounts an interesting and eloquent introductory work on Islam. It is both informative and accessible to the student as well as the general reader and definitely deserves a place on undergraduate reading lists.

Mona Siddiqui

### **The Turkish Republic at 75 Years. Progress–Development–Change**

David Shankland (ed.)

The Eothen Press, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire 1999, pp. 248.

Leading Turkish and British experts and a distinguished audience met in London in 1999 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic. The former correspondent of the Financial Times in Ankara David Barchard, the Chief