Book Review

The Religious Question and the Paths of Political and Social Transformation in the Maghreb Countries by a group of authors (Beirut: Nama Center for Research and Studies, 2017). 424 pp. ISBN 9786144317129.

This collective work includes the contributions of the Second Maghreb Forum for Young Researchers in Social and Human Sciences held in Rabat, Morocco, October 16–18, 2015, on the theme "The Religious Question and the Transitions in the Maghreb," organized by the Afkar Center for Studies and Research in cooperation with the German Hans-Seidel Foundation.

The contributions of this work were the results of in-depth research and investigation focused on understanding the phenomenon of religiosity in the Maghreb communities, the presence and representation of the religious balance, the reasons for its use by extremist religious groups and political Islamic groups, as well as in official religious institutions of a traditional character, via the use of approaches and methodologies adopted in the humanities.

Key highlights of the symposium included the contributions of participants to the following debates: the influence of religion in the public sphere; the limits of its influence and the interactions between the religious establishment and the Maghrebi state; the relationship of the religious issue with democratic transition and the role of the religious actor in this process with regards to their experiences and know-how; and religious presence in party institutions, in the constitutional document, and finally the problem of pluralism in religious discourse and whether it is indicative of democracy or spiritual chaos.

On the matter of the state and religious affairs in Morocco, or the path of "Islamic" nation-building in independent Morocco, Moroccan researcher

Ahmed Jabroun traced the religious situation in Morocco after independence (1956–2015). It was in 1961 that the project of modernization of the religious sphere in Morocco began with its integration into the structure of the modern state. Consciousness of and respect for private life and the search for a religious political model was restored under the reign of Hassan II and was developed by Mohammed VI under his reign by the construction of the Islamic state being completed with an exceptional interest in religious affairs, including structuring, training, and information. The researcher concludes that the efforts exerted by the Moroccan state towards the integration of religion into politics and the elimination of the secular essence of the modern state eventually led to the formation of what he calls the "modern Islamic state" and "typical by all standards" in which religion is smoothly integrated with politics without any clashes occurring.

Using a sociological approach in his study of political–religious institutions and their role in current transformations, the researcher Abdul Razzaq al-Saidi examines the various forms of religiosity and their perspectives on the history of the Maghreb (official Islam, popular Islam, and political Islam). He concludes that not all forms of religiosity can be reduced into one model. He believes that these forms need to be recognized as subject to evolution and transformation by their cultural nature, which requires distinguishing them between several levels of understanding Islam; the fixed-value level in Islam is of an existential nature that transcends time and space and represents the essence of Islam. The level of historical practice of Islam, having a relative human nature, was founded on the interpretive efficiency of the acceptance of the principles of religion with life and produced several jurisprudential texts on which Islamic science was based, and which produced the relationship between Muslim scholars and political authority. It also led to the sanctification of some jurisprudential discourses, calling for the distinction between Islam, first as a religion, and the history of Islam, as a daily practice, of a second human nature. Here the researcher includes the official Islam of the state and the political Islam of some political organizations. The level of the individual dimension in the faith as a form of religiosity makes it possible to explain the difference in dealing with religion among philosophers, mystics, scholars, and ordinary people, depending on the nature of the religious person, his surroundings, and his culture.

The researcher insists on the need to read and understand religion as a modern and contemporary belief system in line with technological, economic, and social developments, despite the different forms and conflicting

patterns within the religious fabric. Otherwise, the various forms of religious extremism and the hybrid political employment of religion will inevitably lead to a repetition of the experience of Christianity in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era, when Christianity failed to cope with major transformations due to clerical dominance of the religious and political spheres.

Moroccan researcher Younes Al-Wakili discusses the subject of "The body and its diseases: an anthropological reading in the often-overlooked Wahhabi calligraphy in Morocco"; the theoretical and methodological foundations of the Wahhabi call, and its presence in Morocco since the eighteenth century. Based on the issue of Sharia law in the Salafist Wahhabi current as a new and different issue, and on the writings of the Wahhabis II, the author concludes with healers' therapeutic treatments with references embodied in the Salafi senior scientists of Al-Uthaymeen, Ibn Baz, and Al-Fawzan, which produced local dancers, as is the case of Mustapha Laksir in Morocco, who benefit from the Wahhabist prerogative of the Moroccan Salafist preachers of Mohammed Zahl, Judge Barhoun, Maghraoui, Al-Madani, and Hilali.

The researcher does not overlook the ideological stakes of the legitimacy of Sharia, which was initially manifested on the religious level, considering that the narration is, in the eyes of the Wahhabis, at the heart of the call; thus, its practice is voluntary and aimed at treating underlying, repressed and invisible factors, freeing the patient from them and thereby enabling obedience to and compliance with God. It is a ritual to bring about a cure for the sick through recitation and immunization, protecting the person from the jinn and the devil and from disease entering. It comes about through the interaction of the body with faith as a sacred expression in an attempt to transcend the profane (earthly). And second, at the social level, women are required to wear the hijab and to conceal all flesh to the point of exaggeration in the number of shrouds they use to cover themselves, in the belief that women as "sexual beings" know their sexual organs more than they know through their religion (81). These constraints have had the effect of preventing some healers from touching the patient and have resulted in some healers' reluctance to treat women because of the trouble it creates. The place of treatment is the home and the benefits of treatment is to advise women to wear the veil because it protects them from the diseases of the jinn and makes community safe from its predicament.

Thus, in the Wahhabi conception of this therapeutic form, narcissism is not separated from an integrated ideological vision of the body and society,

masculinity and femininity, in relation to the ethical system that works in unison to recreate the body of women and the effects they can have, confirming, in one way or another, according to the researcher, the erotic view of the body.

Under the title "Religion and the state in Islamic societies, an approach to disengagement," Yemeni researcher Abdelkawi Hassan shares his perspective on the theme of religion and state as a traditional dilemma, which has returned to the intellectual debate following the Arab Spring with the emergence of calls for the separation of state and religion. After investigating the issue and reviewing the text, he concludes that there are two main orientations: first, that Islam is a religion and not a state; and second, that Islam is a religion as well as a state. After reflecting on the foundations and concepts of the two scenarios, the researcher concluded that the vision of differentiation does not combine religion with the state, and does not separate the two because of the close link, in his view, between them. This vision confirms that political practice revolves between what is wrong (error) and what is right (valid), between what is right (valid), and what is wrong (error), which necessitates the removal of the doctrinal vocabulary from political practice (112). Therefore, the distinction between religion and politics establishes the ground for recognition of the other, a right to discretion and a role in the political act.

On the subject of "Religious institutions as an area of ideological conflict: mosques as a case study," researcher Saeed Jalil examines the sociological approach of the mosque's relationship to the religious life of Moroccans with their particular specificities, the question of the association of mosques in the field, and the relationship of the mosque with other religious institutions, and whether there is a connection or separation between the two. He then ends with the issue of mosques being caught between official control and sectarian chaos, religious polarization, and between the Moroccan form of mosques and some of the contents and manifestations of the Salafist doctrine of the expatriate, and access to the mosque as sites for conflict between various religious speeches and patterns, which claim that they are all belonging to a single unified origin, that insist on unification and the rejection of discrimination. This is so much so that they reflect the religious practices of any given religious actor on the basis of a specific reference that claims possession of truth, the monopoly of interpretation and embodiment of the sacred, all within a dynamic social perspective rather than a normative or even a static legislative one! In other words, to view the religious establishment in its

sociocultural environment and the dynamics and transformations it undergoes, which may not be sufficiently clear, religion, through its institutions, performs multiple functions, meets different needs, identifies certain changes, and connects religion with many other political, social, and economic institutions.

Researcher Yusuf bin Ghayatiyyat bases his study on the countries of the Maghreb between the breaks in religious discourse and the incentives of the founders of religion. He identifies what he considers to be fundamental issues: revelation and the type of Islam we want. He then reformulates the paradigm to broach the issue of freedom of thought and the separation of state from the religion that has custody over it. He recalls the speech of Vicket (1762–1814) on freedom of expression, free thinking, and the necessity of separating powers, and the recognition of universal human rights. As the researcher concludes his chapter on the religious question in the modern Islamic countries of the Maghreb, he speculates on the nature of the appropriate religious discourse that will emerge from the tension between the modernist religious approach of the state and that of extremism, in the light of the fluctuations and challenges facing the religious situation in Morocco, especially as the "new old" problem of the relationship of religion with the political establishment is becoming increasingly complicated.

A few points of criticism are called for with regard to the choice of subject matter per se: Was it intended for making better understanding of the Qur'an or was it directed towards the Qur'an itself? The latter is of primary consequence for the status of the sacred text established in the belief system and behavior of the nation. In the context of religious history, several taxonomic dichotomies appear to be harmful to any participatory work that requires examination and reflection; they include secularism/religion, legislation/religious law, and modernity/Quran.

The researcher concludes that there is a need to move towards a new era, one that requires a religious revolution based on a moral and social revolution, on the one hand, and the need to link the study of the religious situation of the Maghreb countries closely to decisive issues of identity, the separation of religion from politics, women's issues, the relationship with the "other," and the interpretation of religious texts, on the other (172–73).

Tunisian researcher Badreddine Houchati discusses the issue of religious movements and the problems of democratic transition in the Maghreb countries, the post-revolutionary situation in Tunisia, initially speculating on whether there are religious characteristics of democracy, and how to apply

democracy in a society that is predominantly religious. He then deals with these issues from a rational, historical, and ideological point of view; wherein freedom is found to be bound by democracy and Islam. In dealing with the Tunisian situation, the researcher calls the Islamic trend into question, especially the Ennahda movement and its attempts to integrate and adapt to the components of the Tunisian political scene by accepting democracy as a method of governance (197). The researcher concludes that the most important challenge facing Islamic movements today is the inability to transform people's hopes for dignity, freedom, and justice into a democratic political system that guarantees the participation of all in public affairs and ensures the protection of their rights (200).

In the constitutional documents of the Maghreb countries, religion drew the attention of the Moroccan researcher in political science, Fatima Zahra Herat, who records the presence of religion in the constitutional documents of the Maghreb countries as a major component of their identity. She pursues with the protection of religious minorities and the fight against discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, as well as the protection of places of worship constitutionally, where the new Tunisian constitution, for example, provides for the state to guarantee that mosques remain neutral, places of worship be safeguarded from political differences, and the balances and existing consensus be maintained, to preserve the country's religious identity and control the fatwa, as is the case with the constitutions of the other Maghreb states that established religious constitutional institutions such as the Supreme Islamic Council of Algeria and Mauritania, and the Supreme Scientific Council of Morocco.

The theme of religiosity and its conflicting position between objective conditions and the cultural actor is analyzed by Gamal Lakhalfi, with a particular focus on the difference between the patterns of religiosity that Morocco has known throughout its history and the historical and cultural contexts in which it originated, influenced, and interacted with, seeking to combine the analysis of the human act with the conditions and the objective factors surrounding it. The researcher uses the concept of "simulation" in his approach of the subject. Creativity, the first element in the simulation, aims to overcome the paradoxes posed by Islam to Moroccans when entering their country. The second element is the analysis of the form of emulation that is associated with validity and mandate, while the third element is represented in the lineage or "honor" where the act of simulation to the experience of prophecy, expressing the stage of intellectual stalemate and cultural closure is couched.

The researcher uses the concept of "simulation" to assess jihadist movements by examining their views on history, and he concludes that they are attempting to restore the past and abolish the concept of history, driven by the desire to reproduce and restore historical events, be they miraculous events, invasions, or even rituals. In what appears to be an "eternal struggle," one's vision of permanence and selectivity and what renders one captive represents the collective imagined history.

On the theme of political Islam in Mauritania, between the dialectic role and the problem of the framework, Mauritanian scholar Mohamed Baba Ould Mouheda presents a comprehensive account of forty-five years of experience of the Islamic Movement in Mauritania in the spheres of politics, trade, culture, civil, and humanitarian issues in which the movement faced the issue of what "role" it should play as a cultural or political advocate. As for the question of the "framework" in which it had to operate, the issue of whether it should be independent of it or operate within it with other political blocs arose. The author describes the movement's currents, visions, successes, gains, and ambitions, recording the slow pace of the development of the Islamic movement, which he attributes to political reasons including the conflict with the regime and internal divisions and conflicts between the wings of the movement itself.

The Islamic movements and the future of the democratic transition in the Libyan case was the subject of concern for Egyptian researcher Marwa Wasfi, whereby she stood against the repercussions of the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya and its impact on the Libyan state, compared with Tunisia and Egypt in which the state showed resistance and was not affected by the collapse of the previous regimes. She examines the dynamics of the Libyan political map embodied in the tribal system and balance, which was played by the former regime, and adopted it to divide wealth and create loyalties, and later the oil wealth as an economic resource engine of politics, as well as the Islamic religion as a determinant of the identities owed by the majority of Libyans.

The researcher deals with the dilemma of the Eastern region and the Islamic movements that emerged in Libya after the fall of the Qadhafi regime listing the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Fighting Movement, the Islamic State Organization, Al-Qaeda Organization, and the supporters of the Sharia. These movements played an important role in mapping the transition. Several factors contributed to the deviation of the balance of power in favor of the Islamic movements, and the division of Libya into two blocs: the alliance

of dignity led by Khalifa Hafater, and the bombing of Libya supporting the Islamic movements, which raises the problem of rebuilding the state, order, and institutions which complicates the chances of building the state in the short term.

Moroccan researcher Abdul Rahman al-Shairi shared his perspective on the relationship of religious scholars to the democratic transition in Morocco, and the necessity from moving away from a state of neutrality to the having an impact, stems from the fact that to develop the democratic process requires a genuine political will to integrate the scientific elites from various backgrounds within the framework of religious and cultural support for an emerging democracy in society. This is based on the constitutional recognition of their financial and administrative organizational autonomy, as well as on positive coexistence with independent scholars as an input to contribute to democratic transformation and their scientific authority in the field of religious knowledge, which is based primarily on the contractual and regulatory system of the modern civil state that guarantees their right to an effective legal presence within representative institutions related to experience, consultation and arbitration, and in the presence of the civil society as an effective and influential community elite.

The institutional presence of the global community, in the researcher's opinion, is strengthening the National Democratic Front towards planting the roots of religious moderation and liberating the religious discourse from the trends of politicization and excessive concentration on governance to focusing attention on values and civilizational change (389).

From a historical point of view, Mohamed Meziane discusses religiosity in Morocco between tradition and modernization by raising the following questions: Is there a correlation between religion and religiosity? Are all Moroccans religious in the same way? What is the effect of modernity on religiosity? What is the position? Thus, the researcher seeks to distinguish between the concepts of religion and religiosity based on the sociological and anthropological theories of Durkheim, Weber, and Gertz, and then ends with a look at Moroccan Islam and its apparent indicators including mosque attendance, fasting, hajj, religious education, and dress codes. He sets out the levels of Moroccan religiosity under four headings: standard religiosity, popular religiosity, central religiosity, and dynamic religiosity (political Islam/ Islamic Movement).

As regards modernity's influence over and attitude to religiosity, the researcher speaks of a kind of resistance shown by various forms of religiosity

towards modernity by adhering to texts and rites or to inherited religious traditions and values. However, cultural and communicative globalization drives a kind of harmony between religious beliefs and the spirit of modernity, which is reflected in the explosion and reproduction of religious sites on satellite channels and the internet (418). Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether the technical products of modernity employed by tradition represent the latter's engagement in modernity or conversely, are rather for the reproduction of religious tradition and values.

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