

I The Study of American Muslims: A History

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Though popular images and amateur ethnographies of Muslim slaves and visitors circulated in the nineteenth-century United States, the formal study of American Muslims did not begin until the 1930s. This chapter explores the history of the field, which began as the sociological study of “Black Muslims” and a few immigrant groups and by the 1980s became a religious studies subfield sometimes called Islam-in-America studies. The field’s focus in the 1980s on post-1965 Muslim immigration, however, obscured the presence of African American Muslims and mistakenly analyzed the Muslim American experience as a whole through the lens of a first-generation struggle between American modernity and Islamic tradition. As studies of African American and other Muslim groups multiplied in the 1990s and then increased dramatically after 9/11, however, the leading paradigm of the field was challenged. A new generation of scholars arose to analyze Islam as an American religious tradition and to narrate the lives of Muslims as mundane Americans.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF SECURITY THREATS, OR THE STUDY OF BLACK MUSLIMS

Anticipating a contemporary motive for the study of Muslim Americans, the first research conducted in the field was generally concerned with Muslims as a security threat. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and a few sociologists led the way. Though it did not produce peer-reviewed scholarship, the FBI was by far the most prolific student of Muslim groups in the first half of the twentieth century. The Bureau produced thousands of pages on both the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), established in the middle 1920s by Noble Drew Ali, and the Nation of Islam (NOI), established by W. D. Fard in 1930, during the first three decades of these organizations’ existence. The FBI was worried about the radical potential of such groups, a concern that continued

to define the FBI's relationship to any African American movement that threatened white supremacy in the United States through the 1960s.¹

Following in Marcus Garvey's footsteps, the Moorish Science Temple of America, the Ahmadiyya movement, and the Nation of Islam urged Blacks to challenge their second-class citizenship in the United States by converting to Islam. Both the MSTA and the NOI explicitly questioned whether the American nation-state was the proper object of Black Americans' loyalty, instead encouraging African Americans to imagine their national identity as located in other sites – like the “nation” of Islam. In the 1930s, some members of these groups were attracted to Japanese national Satokata Takahashi's movement to unite all nonwhite people in the United States behind the Empire of Japan. This sympathy for Japan never amounted to a direct threat to the national security of the United States but was a symbolically important challenge to Jim Crow and white supremacy.²

The fact that these groups were simultaneously religious and political posed another problem for the federal government, because religious activity was protected under the U.S. Constitution. In order to remove this legal impediment to persecution, it was in the interest of the federal government to deny these groups' religious legitimacy. Both field agents and scholars in the employ of the FBI did just that, insisting that the MSTA and NOI were not religious groups but “cults.” Religion was a veil, they said, that hid the subversive politics of movement members and the chicanery of movement leaders. The white press repeated this message, depicting Black Muslims as “improper” religious believers, as Sylvester Johnson has pointed out.³ The press demeaned movement members by representing them as pitiful and poor Negroes who had been duped by religious charlatans interested only in making money or in leading Blacks toward political radicalism.

In confronting the question of whether Muslims posed a direct or indirect threat to the internal security and cultural cohesion of the United States from the 1930s to the 1950s, sociologists were among the very few scholars outside of the FBI to track the burgeoning institutional growth of

¹ See “Moorish Science Temple of America,” <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/moortemp.htm>, accessed November 11, 2010, and “Nation of Islam,” http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/nation_of_islam.htm, accessed November 11, 2010.

² Ernest Allen Jr., “When Japan Was ‘Champion of the Darker Races’: Satokata Takahashi and the Flowering of Black Messianic Nationalism,” *Black Scholar* 24 (1994): 23–46.

³ Sylvester A. Johnson, “Religion Proper and Proper Religion: Arthur Fauset and the Study of African American Religions,” in Edward E. Curtis IV and Danielle B. Sigler, eds., *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions* (Bloomington, 2009), pp. 245–284.

American Islam in the twentieth century. As popular and media images of American Muslims oscillated between images of the scary political radical and of the sad religious cultist, sociologists employed both functionalist and reductionist paradigms to understand these movements. In 1938, for example, sociologist Erdmann Beynon's misnamed article, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," addressed police suspicions that the Nation of Islam engaged in ritual human sacrifice. He argued that the movement was better understood as a creation of displaced, working-class African Americans attempting to attain higher social status.⁴

This thesis was later reiterated in C. Eric Lincoln's 1961 *The Black Muslims in America*, likely the first full-length academic book about Muslims of any kind in the United States. Repeating the claim of Beynon and anticipating the analysis of Martin Luther King Jr., in the 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Lincoln argued that the Nation of Islam was first and foremost a Black nationalist group. It was a "defensive response to external forces – hostile forces that threaten their creative existence." Its single most important aspect was its social function as a response to the anger of working-class Blacks toward their white oppressors: "It matters little," wrote Lincoln, "whether the homeland of the dispersal Black Nation is said to be Asia or Africa. For the black nationalist, the black Zion is wherever whites are absent."⁵ Lincoln discounted the importance of Islamic religious practice, narrative, and scriptures to the group's functions as a social protest movement. Islam worked to shroud Black anger in religious clothes, according to Lincoln.⁶

Addressing the NOI as a Black nationalist group was meant to show the need for a civil rights bill that would remove the underlying social conditions that led to such protest movements. But in downplaying the Islamic elements of the NOI, Lincoln also supported, no doubt unconsciously, the arguments of immigrant and some African American Muslim competitors who dismissed the Islamic legitimacy of the NOI. After World War II, though Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X came to represent the public face of Islam in the United States, scholars slowly began to note the presence of a new kind of Muslim on American soil. Called "orthodox Muslims" by Malcolm X, South Asian and Arab

⁴ Erdmann D. Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43:6 (1938): 894–907.

⁵ C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Grand Rapids, 1994 [1961]), pp. 43, 63.

⁶ Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, pp. 26, 43, 46, 210, 215.

American immigrants had planted roots and established local organizations during the first half of the twentieth century. But only in the 1950s did their religious activities warrant major attention from scholars.

STUDYING THE ASSIMILATION OF "AUTHENTIC" MUSLIMS

As was the case with African American Muslims, it was sociologists who first conducted research on the new Muslim American other. In 1966 Egyptian Abdo Elkholy, a sociologist at Northern Illinois University, published a landmark comparative study of Muslim American mosques in Toledo and Detroit. *The Arab Moslems in the United States*, as the book was titled, was critical toward its Muslim subjects in Detroit, whom Elkholy believed to be poorly assimilated into mainstream American culture. Like Lincoln, he analyzed their failures as a problem of working-class economic status: they worked "almost solely in the auto factories" of Detroit, he explained. Elkholy also asserted that "these Moslems live in a ghetto-like community in Dearborn. Besides delaying the process of assimilation, the residential concentration of the Detroit community has perpetuated the traditional conceptions of family and social relations, as well as of religion and of the sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shi'as."⁷ By the 1980s, the construction of strong ethnic, kin-based, and confessional enclaves (think Irish Roman Catholics and East European Jews) would be understood as necessary precursors to or even as expressions of successful assimilation into American culture.⁸ For Elkholy, however, such resources evidenced a lack of integration into the American middle class.

Toledo was a different story. There, according to Elkholy, men, women, and children reached across the generation gap to participate equally in the life of the mosque regardless of their particular sectarian background. Families attended Sunday school classes, contributed to the public life of Toledo, and embraced the many interfaith (generally Christian and Muslim) couples who were members of the mosque's community. Elkholy argued that Muslims who were the most active in the mosques' activities were also the most Americanized. This finding dramatically questioned the idea, still popular among sociologists at the time, that the ideals of "foreign" religions such as Islam conflicted with

⁷ Abdo A. Elkholy, *The Arab Moslems in the United States* (New Haven, 1966), p. 16.

⁸ Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York, 1987).

American norms. Elkholy showed that mosque participants were more likely to identify with the patriotic values of the white middle class than those who did not participate in the life of the mosque.⁹

Elkholy's vision of the mainstream, middle-class, "white" Muslim was never accepted as an important trope either in sociology or in media accounts because such an image did not complement popular notions of Islam as a symbol of protest. After 1965, the slain Malcolm X became a patron saint of Black power and Black consciousness movements, and there was no more effective symbol of protest against the Vietnam War than Muhammad Ali. The picture was further complicated by the presence of first-generation Muslim students, visitors, and immigrants from Africa and Asia. Coming in modest numbers to the United States first as students in the 1950s, this group began to challenge the older generation of "assimilated" Muslim immigrant leaders. As a result of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, perhaps more than 1.1 million new Muslims arrived in the United States before the end of the twentieth century.¹⁰ They not only challenged but also displaced many of the older immigrant leaders. Not all of these immigrants were religious, but their significant educational and cultural capital (a large number were academics, physicians, and engineers) catapulted them into leadership positions among existing and newly established Muslim immigrant groups. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, they often presented themselves as the voice of authentic Islam, and for the most part, the media, academics, and the intelligence services, otherwise ignorant of diversity among Muslims abroad, took their word for it.¹¹

Now that the so-called Black Muslims were declared to be inauthentic Muslims, some scholars began to search for the "real" Black Muslims. Unfortunately, they completely missed the phenomenon of Sunni African Americans, those Muslims not associated with the Nation of Islam who traced their lineage instead to interwar leaders such as Muhammad Ezzaldeen, Wali Akram, and Daoud Ahmed Faisal and the heirs of these leaders.¹² Though Imam W. D. Mohammed, the son of Elijah Muhammad and heir to the Nation of Islam, received some scholarly attention, the focus was primarily on Black Muslim slaves. For a time, it was almost as if the only African American Muslims worthy of a

⁹ Elkholy, *Arab Moslems*, pp. 17–18, 91–93, 102, 122–125, 129, 133–134.

¹⁰ Mohamed Nimer, *The North American Muslim Resource Guide* (New York, 2002), pp. 24–25.

¹¹ Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975* (Chapel Hill, 2006), pp. 35–65.

¹² Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York, 2002).

book were the dead ones, figures like Kunta Kinte, so famously discussed in Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976).¹³ Haley's book reflected the scholarly mood of the period. His personal search for a Muslim African ancestor was an attempt to weave African Americans into a larger story of American immigration; the middle passage became an immigrant crossing into the American homeland. A decade later, Terry Alford published the incredible tale of Abdul Rahman Ibrahima, the "Prince among Slaves" who returned to his native Africa, and Allan D. Austin compiled a sourcebook of antebellum documents pertaining to African American Muslim slaves, a book that remains the single best collection of primary sources on African American Muslims before the Civil War.¹⁴

At the same time, the study of Islam in America began to emerge as its own subfield, generally under the rubric of religious studies but shaped heavily by Islamic studies scholars teaching in other departments and in American seminaries. Most of the subfield's gaze was directed toward immigrants who had come to the United States after 1965. Even if the 1980s saw the academic embrace of various American ethnic populations in a narrative of multicultural inclusion, Muslims (i.e., the first-generation immigrants who were the focus of Islam in America studies) were seen as exceptional. American popular culture in the wake of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 refused to include Muslims as a piece of the American multicultural puzzle. The "Muslim" was transgressive and potentially dangerous. According to Melani McAlister, Muslims and Islam became important symbols in larger debates about U.S. military, economic, cultural, and political interests as U.S. foreign policy turned its attention to the Muslim world after the Soviet Union collapsed.¹⁵

Academic literature about Muslim American immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s tried to push back against increasing the easy association of Muslims with unjustified violence and other bad behavior by asserting that prejudices against Arabs and Muslims are as morally wrong as discrimination against other groups; that biased U.S. policy, especially concerning Israel, was rightly challenged by immigrants; and that, like earlier immigrants, Muslim immigrants suffered from a tension between their "traditional" cultures of origin and the "modern" and secularizing

¹³ Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, N.J., 1976).

¹⁴ Terry Alford, *Prince among Slaves* (New York, 1986), and Allan D. Austin, ed., *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1984).

¹⁵ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, 2005), pp. 198–265.

tendencies of mainstream culture.¹⁶ The idea that Muslims faced challenges between assimilating into mainstream American culture and preserving their traditional Islamic values became the most salient theme in Islam in America literature.

Yvonne Y. Haddad emerged as the dean of this school of interpretation, writing and editing an incredibly varied and long list of publications about Muslims in North America. Her 1987 work, *Islamic Values in the United States*, coauthored with Adair T. Lummis, overlooked Elkholy's book to assert that "no other study has attempted ... to consider the role of the mosque/[Islamic] center in helping Muslims to integrate into American life and culture." Employing interviews and questionnaires, Haddad and Lummis demonstrated that "some Muslims are feeling at home and welcome assimilation into American life, while others are genuinely concerned that it will jeopardize the maintenance of Islamic values."¹⁷

This topic, the tension between Islamic values and assimilation into American culture, has had great staying power in the scholarly literature. John Esposito, in a 2000 introduction to *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (coedited with Haddad), continued to defend its relevance as a central fact of Muslim American life: "Integral to the experience of Muslims, like all religious or ethnic minorities, is how to deal with the question of integration or assimilation.... The primary question facing Muslims in America is whether or not they can live Muslim lives in a non-Muslim territory."¹⁸ Even if this theme was important for some Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s, identifying it as the "primary question" of Muslim American existence drew attention away from the ways that Muslim Americans were already assimilated. For most, the question was irrelevant.

Haddad's role in creating the subfield was much greater than the analysis she offered of Muslim American life. As the doyenne of the new field, she edited a number of scholarly volumes and convened groundbreaking academic conferences on Islam in America. Her 1991 edited book, *The Muslims of America*, emerged from a conference at the University of Massachusetts, and offered new scholarship on Muslim American political engagement, Muslim American women, Muslims

¹⁶ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV Arab* (Bowling Green, 1984); Yvonne Y. Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (New York, 1991), pp. 217–235.

¹⁷ Yvonne Y. Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States* (New York, 1987), pp. 6, 171.

¹⁸ Yvonne Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito, eds., *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (Tampa, 1998), pp. 3, 5.

in prison, and more. Then, in *Muslim Communities in North America* (1994), Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith edited and published twenty-two chapters on a diverse array of Muslim communities and groups across North America.¹⁹

Both of these volumes included research on African American Muslims, which by the 1990s reemerged as a legitimate subject for study. Aminah McCloud and Richard Brent Turner led the way. McCloud wrote an overview of more than twenty different Black Muslim organizations; these groups had different Islamic doctrinal orientations, sometimes aligned more with Sunni Muslims than with the Nation of Islam.²⁰ Turner showed the pivotal role played by Pan-African thought and the Ahmadiyya movement in the creation of African American Islam and traced the evolution of the Nation of Islam.²¹

But along with the refereed scholarly work on Muslim Americans emerged a genre of Islamophobic literature that depicted American Muslims as potential enemies, a Trojan horse for Islamic extremism. *Militant Islam Reaches America!*, for instance, was penned in 2002 by professional jihad-watcher Daniel Pipes. Pipes, who later created the group CampusWatch.Org, argued in this book that militant Islam was the most potent threat to the West since Soviet communism. He declared that militant Muslims wanted to impose *shari'ah*, or Islamic law and ethics, in every nation, including the United States. He warned that these militants would use a variety of means, some cunningly nonviolent, to supplant the Constitution with the Qur'an. Perhaps surprisingly, Pipes refuted the notion that the United States was in the midst of a "clash of civilizations" with Islam. He claimed instead that there was an internal war within Islam between more "modern," secular views of the faith and militant Islam, an ideology that sought the destruction of American democracy and the reign of Islamic fascism.²²

These polemics about the "Muslim threat" viewed Muslim Americans as outsiders, people whose essential foreignness had been unaffected by their life in the United States. In this story the Muslim protagonists were seen either as foreign agents or, in a more sympathetic light, as people fighting with themselves to square their "traditional" Islamic views with "modern" American culture. Pipes associated Americanization with

¹⁹ Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, eds., *Muslim Communities in North America* (Albany, 1994).

²⁰ Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York, 1995).

²¹ Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington, 1997).

²² Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (New York, 2003).

secularization, ignoring the conclusions of most U.S. historians that religion has been a formidable variable in American public life.

Such Islamophobic literature was the strange bedfellow of Islam in America studies. It posed some of the same questions as the more respectable scholars of Islam in America but gave different answers. If the question was whether Muslim Americans had been successful in becoming Americanized, the Islamophobic answer was that, regrettably, the Muslim could not do so by virtue of being Muslim. It was vulgar, but it did reverberate with Americans often inclined, because of their political and religious biases, to dislike Muslims.

THE PROLIFERATION OF STUDIES ABOUT AMERICAN ISLAM AFTER 9/11

In the final decade of the twentieth century and after 9/11, the study of Islam in America became an important academic subject. Monographs and articles multiplied, and scholars used data about Muslim Americans to weigh in on various questions in such fields as political science, social work, anthropology, religious studies, and gender studies. This scholarship more fully revealed the diversity of religious thought and practice among Muslim Americans, complicating the kind of overarching claims one could make about the Muslim American experience as a whole. Linda Walbridge studied the life of Twelver Shi'a Muslims in Greater Detroit, showing the dynamics of this group's attempt to maintain its religious traditions.²³ Marcia Hermansen wrote a helpful survey of different Sufi groups in the United States, and Frances Trix penned a more in-depth study of a Sufi community in Michigan.²⁴

Barbara Metcalf's edited work, perhaps the most innovative of religious studies books on the subject in the 1990s, gathered a group of religious studies scholars to interrogate practices of "space-making" among Muslim Americans.²⁵ Chapters in the book uncovered the types of domestic, international, national, regional, gendered, and ritualized spaces that Muslims had invented in their homes, on the street, in their

²³ Linda S. Walbridge, *Without Forgetting the Imam: Lebanese Shi'ism in an American Community* (Detroit, 1997).

²⁴ Marcia Hermansen, "In the Garden of American Sufi Movements: Hybrids and Perennials," in Peter B. Clarke, ed., *New Trends and Developments in the World of Islam* (London, 1997), and Frances Trix, *Spiritual Discourse: Learning with an Islamic Master* (Philadelphia, 1993).

²⁵ Barbara D. Metcalf, ed., *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (Berkeley, 1996).

mosques, and in or on their bodies. Scholars also examined the American mosque itself. Akel Ismail Kahera theorized about the aesthetics and gendered spaces of the mosque, while Ihsan Bagby's coauthored 2001 report on the American mosque became a much cited study that charted the demographics of Muslim congregants in the United States.²⁶

No subject in the study of Muslim Americans was more popular than that of women and Islam, which was viewed both inside and outside academic circles as the mother of all topics, the hermeneutical key to comprehending Islam and Muslims as a whole. Muslim American women themselves created a great deal of scholarship on the topic. Generally progressive and activist in nature, the body of literature included Gisela Webb's *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America*, which featured leading voices in American Islam, including Amina Wadud, Mohja Kahf, Aminah McCloud, Riffat Hassan, and Azizah al-Hibri.²⁷ Khaled Abou El Fadl, a scholar at UCLA, made the case for gender equality and pluralism from a shari'ah perspective.²⁸ Omid Safi's *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* featured a section on gender justice, including a chapter on gay and lesbian sexuality in Islamic tradition.²⁹

Anthropological literature portrayed the everyday life of Muslim Americans in far more ethnographic detail than had previously been available. Carolyn Rouse's important *Engaged Surrender: African American Women and Islam* depicted the lives of African American Sunni women in Los Angeles who employed the Qur'an and Islamic religious traditions in attempts to live more ethically.³⁰ These women utilized their own interpretations of Islamic texts to guide their decision making on everything from what they ate to how they lived with their husbands. Loukia Sarroub honored the efforts of Yemeni American schoolchildren to transform their public schools into places where they, along with their teachers, could negotiate competing religious and cultural identities.³¹

²⁶ Akel Ismail Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics* (Austin, 2002), and Ihsan Bagby et al., *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait* (Washington, D.C., 2001).

²⁷ Gisela Webb, ed., *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America* (Syracuse, 2000).

²⁸ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women* (Oxford, 2001).

²⁹ Omid Safi, ed., *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (Oxford, 2003).

³⁰ Carolyn Moxley Rouse, *Engaged Surrender: African American Women and Islam* (Berkeley, 2004).

³¹ Loukia K. Sarroub, *All American Yemeni Girls: Being Muslim in a Public School* (Philadelphia, 2005).

JoAnn D'Alisera illustrated the transnational and diasporic identities of Sierra Leonean Muslim Americans in the nation's capital.³²

The flowering of academic literature after 9/11 also indicated how Muslim Americans, like Muslims more generally, had become increasingly popular sites for both the academic and popular gaze. As some non-Muslim Americans expressed anxiety over what they thought was the violent, woman-hating, intolerant, and generally backward nature of Muslims, many scholars, including Louise Cainkar, sought to protect the Muslim body from state detention, media manipulation, and mob violence.³³ Journalistic accounts about Muslim Americans often expressed greater concern than the academic literature about Muslim American radicals and fundamentalists, using subtitles such as the "Struggle for the Soul of a Religion."³⁴ Even as the administrations of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama aggressively pursued Muslim American radicals through the use of the state security services and various sting operations, both Bush and Obama hailed the contributions of Muslim Americans to U.S. society as part of foreign policy.³⁵

By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, a new generation of Islam in America scholars was also challenging the journalistic and older scholarly accounts that cast Muslim Americans as victims of a conflict between Islamic and American values. Working separately but guided by many of the same historiographical themes, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri and Edward Curtis rejected old narratives of "Islam versus America" by producing sweeping chronicles about Islam *in* America. Integrating Muslims into the major questions, themes, and periods of U.S. history, GhaneaBassiri published a major monograph, and Curtis produced an encyclopedia, a short history, and a sourcebook of primary source documents.³⁶ One of the important methodological moves in this new scholarship was to ground Muslim Americans

³² JoAnn D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography: Sierra Leonean Muslims in America* (Philadelphia, 2004).

³³ Louise Cainkar, *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience after 9/11* (New York, 2009).

³⁴ Paul M. Barrett, *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion* (New York, 2007).

³⁵ See, for example, Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/, accessed November 22, 2010.

³⁶ Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge, 2010); Edward E. Curtis IV, ed., *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History* (New York, 2010); Edward E. Curtis IV, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (New York, 2009); and Edward E. Curtis IV, ed., *Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States* (New York, 2008).

in U.S. history, showing how larger political and social forces shaped and even constrained their behavior and how Muslim American protest and dissent (as much as Muslim American patriotism and consent) adopted American cultural forms. In addition, these works stressed how Muslim Americans could identify as U.S. nationals in both a legal and an ideological sense while also celebrating their ethnic loyalties and diasporic consciousness. Such multiple identifications were seen as Americanization, not alienation.

Finally, this new scholarship attempted to show how studying Muslim Americans could reveal new directions for the study of U.S. history. Using a Muslim American lens, it reconsidered major historical subjects such as antebellum social reform (including abolitionism and emigrationism), consumer culture in the Gilded Age, the development of domestic surveillance after World War I, domestic dissent during the Cold War, and U.S. foreign policy toward Muslim-majority nations in the post-Cold War era. In most cases, according to the new historiography, the symbolic and embodied presence of Muslim Americans has played a key role in inscribing religious, racial, ethnic, class, and gender norms in American life. Muslims have often provided a foil against which non-Muslims could define American identity. At the same time, images of Muslim Americans defy easy categorization in binary terms; it is not as simple as non-Muslims using stereotypes of Muslims to define what America is not. Instead, images of Muslims and the activities of Muslim Americans themselves have been part of three-dimensional social, political, and cultural domains in which the meaning and functions of American Islam have led in multiple directions.

As some scholars and a president wove Muslims into the larger story of America, however, Islamophobes continued to speak as if there were an inevitable clash between Islam and America, particularly in the discussions surrounding the proposal to build a Muslim community center near Ground Zero in lower Manhattan. The passage in 2010 of a referendum in Oklahoma to ban consideration of *shari'ah*, or Islamic law and ethics, in civil court and the continued physical attacks on Muslim places of worship throughout the country revealed just how foreign and threatening Muslim Americans were seen by many Americans. Whether the vision of Muslims as *part of* America would become the dominant narrative in both scholarship and popular discourse, as it had for so many other religious, racial, and ethnic groups, was by no means assured.

Further Reading

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