

Islam, politics, anthropology

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Our main aim in this book is to reflect critically on the study of Islam and politics in anthropology. Islam and politics are, of course, incredibly fraught topics. Anthropology itself has a long and not unproblematic engagement with the study of Islam and Muslim societies, and so first we would like to return to that history before considering ongoing anthropological debates and suggesting new terms of analysis of the relationship between Islam and politics.¹ Our understanding of politics is deliberately broad. We pay attention to the state and formal politics, involving various social actors and organizations. But we are also interested in everyday politics and various kinds of micropolitics, arenas where anthropology proves especially adept. It is at the intersection of these multiple levels - where the field of politics is constituted in practice - that we situate the analytical focus of this book.

While some might claim that the events of September 11, 2001 were among the most central defining moments in the representations of Islam and Muslim societies, stereotypes about Islam and Muslims have actually been remarkably resilient. The figure of the 'mad mullah' who radicalizes the uneducated, naïve, but largely benign Muslim masses in nineteenth-century British accounts of Muslims' anti-colonial politics (see, e.g., Ansari 2005; Edwards 1989; Jalai 2008) and twentieth-century French accounts of allegedly dangerous 'Sufis' and/or 'Wahhabis' who threaten to lead ordinary Muslims in their West African colonies astray (see, e.g., Harrison 1988; Launay & Soares 1999; Triaud 1992) are the genealogical antecedents of contemporary characterizations of 'radical' Islam and Islamism² in much Western media and public culture. Meanwhile, images of (veiled) Muslim women have acquired iconic status in the western imaginary as representations of the oppressed and subordinated Other *par excellence*.³ After the Iranian Revolution in the late 1970s and the widespread recognition of the limitations of the secularization thesis, many questioned the compatibility of Islam and Muslims with modernity. In a countermove, others tried to prove that Islam could indeed be 'modern' and compatible with democracy. As Mahmood Mamdani (2002) has

remarked, since September 11, 2001 there has been much 'culture talk' about Muslims and their politics wherever they happen to live in the world. We are, therefore, no longer surprised by many commentators' essentializing impulses when the object of study is Islam or Muslims. Like many other anthropologists, we are also cognizant of and increasingly wary of stepped-up attempts by governments, their militaries, and security apparatuses to appropriate anthropological methods and insights into Islam and Muslim societies for possibly nefarious ends in ongoing wars, including the so-called 'war on terror'.⁴ Many of our Muslim research subjects have become well informed and savvy about the images of Muslims (and Muslim women in particular) that circulate, and the kinds of Muslims thought to be 'good' and 'bad' (see Hirschkind & Mahmood 2002; Mamdani 2002). But this is not to assert, as some interpreters of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978; cf. Varisco 2007) have seemed to suggest, any facile or inevitable Orientalist trap, which would *a priori* prevent any compelling representations of Islam and Muslim societies. This is not a position which we, or the contributors to this book, are willing to accept.

Let us turn to some of the specific challenges associated with the anthropological study of Islam and Muslim societies. While academic discourse and Western media alike have produced reified views of Islam and Muslims in abundance, such views have also emerged from within Islam itself, via Muslims' interpretations and representations of their own religion as unitary, timeless, and unchanging (see Launay 1992; Parkin 2000). Representations are never simply reflections on or descriptions of reality, of social and religious processes necessarily already 'out there' in the world; they have generative power. In reshaping conceptual categories, they are orientated towards producing something which is given concrete ground, thereby intensifying a reality already alluded to in discourse itself (Callón, Méadel & Rabeharisoa 2002; Mitchell 2005; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Thrift 2005). It is imperative to pay attention to the genealogies of discourses (academic, state, 'official', global, as well as those of our research subjects and interlocutors), which might become authoritative and normative, and through which politics in Muslim societies is comprehended, experienced, legitimated, or contested. We must also remember that seemingly authoritative discourses and disciplinary practices are neither totalizing, nor are their outcomes necessarily easily predictable. Finally, it is also important to heed the warning of those who have argued against automatically privileging religion as the principal - or perhaps unique - foundation for Muslim identity and political practice (see Abu-Lughod 1989; Al-Ali 2000; Grillo 2004; Silverstein 2004).

Social structure, culture, and the conundrums of modernity

It is striking that professional anthropologists who conducted fieldwork in many colonial settings in the twentieth century in Africa and Asia tended to ignore Islam and Muslim societies or simply left the study of Islam and Muslims to historians and/or those trained as Orientalists (see Launay 2006; Soares 2000). Some anthropologists did, however, write about Islam and Muslims at the height of European colonial rule, notably E.E. Evans-Pritchard. His study of the Sanusiyya - a Sufi order - in Libya (Evans-Pritchard 1949) was perhaps the first anthropological study focused on Islam and Muslim society *per se*. At a time when anthropologists were almost exclusively concerned with small-scale societies or those deemed to be somehow more authentically 'African' or 'Asian', the originality of Evans-Pritchard's book was to show how a specifically Muslim institution - the Sufi order - could be established along extensive

trans-Saharan trade routes and subsequently used to mobilize 'tribal' groups against the Italian occupation of Libya. Despite Evans-Pritchard's attention to the role of religion and of religious leadership in politics in this book, anthropological research which followed often failed to deal seriously with Islam as an object of study, privileging instead research on 'tribal' societies, particularly in the Middle East, where social structure and kinship were a major focus (see Gilsenan 1990 for an overview).⁵

It was Ernest Gellner who developed Evans-Pritchard's social structural approach furthest.⁶ Gellner's work became a key reference-point for many studies of Muslim societies. Although Gellner's model of 'Muslim society' - purposely identified in the singular (1981; see also Gellner 1963; 1968) - posits Islam as resistant to secularization, it is noteworthy that Islam and modernity are not deemed incompatible. In Gellner's neo-Weberian model (cf. Turner 1974), modernity takes the form of progressive rationalization. Gellner argues that Muslim society will over time necessarily eschew the 'traditional' and 'ecstatic' forms of religion associated with the rural (so-called popular or 'low' Islam) for the more modern, puritan, and 'rational' forms of religion (read reformism) associated with the urban and scriptural ('high' Islam). An important element to Gellner's argument is that this will be a permanent break, which occurs as a result of colonial modernization (1981:56ff; 159fr.) when 'the pendulum swings more violently and becomes unhinged' (1981:159). For Gellner, Islamic reformism is indeed perfectly 'compatible' with modernity (see, e.g., Gellner 1981: i/off.).

In contrast to Gellner's British social-structural model of 'Muslim society' writ large, Clifford Geertz in *Islam observed* (1968) proposed a cultural anthropological reading of 'meaning' and 'culture', which vary according to context in the Muslim world. While Islam here is not, as in Gellner's words, the 'blueprint of a social order' (1981: 1), it nevertheless provides people with enduring 'frames of perception' and 'blueprints for conduct' (Geertz 1968: 98). Geertz contrasted the overall 'cultural styles' of Morocco and Indonesia, in his view much more important than 'social structure'. However, Geertz's attention to 'meaning' was accompanied by a notion of social 'order'. One can see, for example, that both Morocco and Indonesia have undergone what he calls a 'scripturalist interlude' before returning to the dominant - that is, seemingly hegemonic - cultural styles of 'maraboutism' and 'illuminationism', respectively. In other words, Geertz deploys two different understandings of 'religion', firstly, as enduring 'culture', and, secondly, as a set of historically contingent sensibilities and practices. While scripturalism in Indonesia and Morocco emerges as a 'counter-tradition', setting the basis for an engagement with colonial modernity and for the development of nationalist politics, Geertz claims that the logic of a particular 'cultural system' cannot be entirely transcended. Political processes, which might be constrained by 'culture', can engender neither enduring transformations nor historical shifts.⁷ Moreover, Geertz's modernity, like Gellner's, is a Western prerogative that spreads with colonialism. While it might be taken up or contested, it will invariably lead to problematic outcomes, such as fledgeling states that have failed to transform themselves into fully modern functioning polities.

Shortcomings notwithstanding, Gellner and Geertz both pointed to the importance of religion in societies undergoing profound social transformations. It is significant that both were writing in the heyday of modernization theory, when the secularization thesis was near-hegemonic in social-scientific thinking about 'modern' societies. They helped counter this by tracing the emergence under colonialism of novel religious and political sensibilities. They understood 'modern' ways of being Muslim - often glossed

as 'scripturalism', 'reformism', and so forth - as the articulation of nationalist politics and sought to link these with particular social groups' responses and engagements with colonialism. This is of course a far cry from more recent characterizations of Islam as basically hostile to modernity (see, e.g., Giddens 1999: 4-5; Huntington 1996).

If the Iranian Revolution and the critique of Orientalism spurred many to grapple with the challenges of studying Muslim societies, the post-Cold War era seemed to herald the possibility of new ways of thinking about Islam and Muslim societies. However, commitments to Weberian notions of the progressive rationalization of religion under conditions of modernity have endured. Writing at the intersection of anthropology and political science, Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori (1996) have analysed what they called 'Muslim politics', in a broad synthesis of developments in various settings. They have advanced the argument that, in recent years, Muslims throughout the world have come to 'objectify' their religion. In this process of objectification, which echoes the shift from religiousness to religious-mindedness that Geertz had outlined,⁸ Muslims have developed 'heightened self-consciousness' of Islam as a religious 'system' (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996: 39; cf. Deeb 2006 on the 'authentication' of Islam). Eickelman and Piscatori argue that with mass education, increased literacy, and the spread of new media technologies (cf. Anderson 1991; Gellner 1983), there has been an increased fragmentation of authority in Muslim societies. As a result, a greater diversity of people deign to speak about what Islam is. The 'traditional' interpreters of Islam - Muslim scholars or '*ulama* - have lost their monopoly and now compete with other Muslims (see also Zaman 2002). This shift away from an assumed dichotomy between '*ulama* and the so-called 'popular Islam' of ordinary Muslims opened new possibilities for understanding Islam and Muslim societies.

Focusing on the links between education, literacy, and media and changes in religious authority, Eickelman and Piscatori's analytical turn placed contemporary Muslim politics within epistemological shifts and social processes - reflexivity, increased rationalization, and democratic participation, for instance - ordinarily associated in mainstream social theory with Western modernity (see also Hefner 2005; cf. Soares & Otayek 2007). But for those scholars who have subsequently identified hybrid or alternative modernities in various Muslim societies (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1998; Brenner 1996; Göle 1996; 2002; White 2002; cf. Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005; Navaro-Yashin 2002), modernity itself remains a specific Northern European or North American intellectual tradition spreading to the rest of the world in the wake of colonialism. In other words, positing the existence of domesticated or indigenized modernities depends on a Eurocentric model implying a lack of authenticity to non-Western modernities and simultaneously denying equal participation of the Muslim Other (Clarence-Smith 2007; cooke & Lawrence 2005: 17fr.; Mitchell 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2002: 9ff). The arguments of many Muslim intellectuals, oft repeated by our research respondents, attribute this epistemological denial to articulations of colonial and post-colonial power relations (see Clarence-Smith 2007; Washbrook 1997). The consequence of this lopsided model is that Muslims are presented as having to 'engage' with modernity, an external force encroaching on and disrupting their lives. Nilüfer Göle, for example, argues that for many Turkish women, Islamism 'permits a critique of customary Islam and a way to cope with modernity', allowing 'Islamist women to reconcile their social-professional demands with their Islamic identities' (1996:104). In contradistinction to such perspectives, we want to insist that modernity is necessarily singular and global, always instantiated locally - *in the West as elsewhere* - within wider

configurations of social, political, and economic power and historically specific trajectories.

Anthropologists have sidestepped hubristic debates about whether ‘modernity’ is single or multiple, when it started and possibly ended, and whether it has existed at all. They have instead identified the global regimes of power produced and legitimized by so-called ‘modernity-talk’ (see, e.g., Mitchell 1991), and they have explored ‘modernity’ as a folk category, entailing an ambivalent relation with ‘tradition’ and an orientation towards ‘progress’ in the present and future (see, e.g., Ferguson 1999; C. Osella & F. Osella 2006). Many scholars have also abandoned the futile task of determining whether Islam might be compatible with ‘modernity’ and have shifted attention to ways in which Muslims produce themselves as ‘modern’ in everyday life and have moved to provincialize ‘Western’ modernity (cf. Salvatore 1997; 2007). This entails explorations of competing, yet overlapping, discourses on what being ‘modern’ entails, as in Yael Navaro-Yashin’s study of Turkey (2002). For the Lebanese Shi’i women whom Lara Deeb has studied, being modern entails ‘both material and spiritual progress’ (2006: 5). This leads to their self-distancing from what is deemed to be ‘tradition’ in education, economic activities, and religion (see also Bowen 2003; F. Osella & C. Osella 2008; Otayek & Soares 2007; Soares 2005; Starrett 1998). Everyday experiences of modernity and the diversity of ways of being Muslim and modern have also been taken up in a number of studies on veiling and re-veiling (El Guindi 1999) which both underscore relationships between fashion and piety (e.g. LeBlanc 2000; Meneley 2007; Moors & Tarlo 2007; White 2002) and acknowledge the role of consumption in the production of political subject positions (Navaro-Yashin 2002; cf. Özyürek 2006).

Civil society and the public sphere

Eickelman and Piscatori’s *Muslim politics* (1996) undoubtedly went far to show that Muslims and Islam are not inimical to modern democratic politics, and yet it is none the less informed by a rather normative approach to civil society and remains premised on a set of liberal political philosophical assumptions. Indeed, it seems to endorse the universalizing narrative that political liberalism allows for a diversity of views to be expressed in open debate, and that processes of rational deliberation in a marketplace of ideas will eventually, and perhaps even inevitably, lead to pluralism in civil society.⁹ Such optimism about and commitment to so-called ‘rational’ political debate and civil society were perhaps partly a symptom of the immediate post-Cold War era.¹⁰ In the 1990s, many, including anthropologists, hailed the imminent flourishing of ‘civil society’, often assumed to be the arena of authentic social practice and politics (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 2000; Hann & Dunn 1996). In anthropology this is best exemplified in the work of Robert Hefner (2000), who identified ‘civil Islam’ in Indonesia. In Hefner’s view, this civil Islam is compatible with democracy, democratic institutions, and pluralism. Certain Muslim organizations in Indonesia have the ability to check state power, and their objective is not necessarily to Islamize the state or to impose Islamic law or sharia (see also Bayat 2007a).

Civil society is often assumed to be the sole space available for democratic civic engagement (cf. Bowen 2003; Peletz 2002). But, in a salutary note, Jenny White warns that civil society ‘cannot be assumed to guarantee liberalism’ (2002: 27). In her study of Islamist mobilization in Istanbul, she illustrates how ‘vernacular politics’ are at once based on ‘local culture, interpersonal relations, and community networks’ (2002: 27), whilst remaining connected to wider party politics (cf. Henkel 2005). Civil society

perspectives have subsequently been modified by the introduction of the more malleable notion of the public sphere (see, e.g., Salvatore & Eickelman 2004; Soares 2005). This has had the positive effect of unsettling narrow Eurocentric definitions of civil society and the public sphere as essentially secular and Islam as incompatible with modern democratic processes (cf. Bayat 2007a). Talal Asad's (2003) and Peter van der Veer's (2001) efforts to historicize the 'secular', along with Armando Salvatore's comparative analysis of public spheres in Catholic Europe and Islam (Salvatore 2007; see also Eickelman & Salvatore 2002; Scott & Hirschkind 2006), have contributed to critical assessments of spaces of public debate and confrontation in both 'the West' and Muslim societies. A number of recent studies have looked at the expansion of the public sphere and various new publics, as well as the effects of media technologies in contemporary religious discourse and practices (Edwards 1995; Eickelman & Anderson 1999; Hirschkind 2006; Larkin 2008; Messick 1996; Meyer & Moors 2006; Soares 2005; Turner 2007; Werbner 2002; cf. Coleman 2000).

In his study of those involved in producing and listening to cassette sermons in Cairo, Charles Hirschkind (2006) has shown how the public sphere is not limited to the kinds of deliberative practices that many hail as the hallmarks of rational political debate. Analysing what he calls an Islamic 'counter-public', Hirschkind reveals the equally significant disciplinary mechanisms within the public sphere and cautions us against idealistic and even romantic notions of debate (cf. Starrett 2008). Navaro-Yashin has convincingly argued that rather than 'seeking to isolate an almost ideal-typical picture of an "autonomous" public sphere' (2002:132; cf. Eickelman & Salvatore 2002), attention should be paid to the political processes and discourses producing 'civil society', in which the state is thoroughly imbricated.¹¹

Other commentators offer critical insights into the popular politics of marginalized members of society, whereby participation in 'civil society' presupposes familiarity with specific forms of communication and associational practices, as well as social networks normally associated with, or dominated by, the educated middle classes (see, e.g., Chatterjee 2004).¹² Some underscore the potentially depoliticizing effects of civil society and its linkages to global governance (Ferguson 2006; Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Weiss 2004; West & Sanders 2003) and neoliberal capitalism (Elyachar 2005; Mitchell 2002). Attention to civil society is often unable to account for or analyse 'uncivil' orientations (Harriss-White & White 1996; cf. Appadurai 2006) or outright state control and manipulation of such arenas (Bayat 2007a: 49ff; Navaro-Yashin 2002: ii7ff). Instances of intolerance, repression, and violence - including state violence - directly shape encounters in civil society and in the public sphere (see Asad 2007; Jasani 2008; Peteet 1994). Finally, the focus on the public sphere naturalizes a hierarchical opposition between 'public' and 'private', which might preclude the exploration of the political within domestic spaces (see, e.g., Khan 2006; Ring 2006). Privileging post-enlightenment styles of reasoned, rational debate can lead us to overlook embodiment, affect, and the ways in which persuasion, debate, and difference-making may proceed by other means.

Gender politics

Anthropologists and feminist scholars have long underscored the centrality of gender in nationalist, secularist, and religious discourses in Muslim societies, and more recently in projects of colonial and neo-colonial governmentality.¹³ The latter, informed by Foucauldian and post-Orientalist theory, has substantially transformed

anthropological understandings of power and its articulation with seemingly hegemonic projects of self-fashioning. If earlier literature emphasized patriarchy, subordination of women, and gendered practices such as veiling (see, e.g., Kandiyoti 1996; Wikan 1991), in recent years anthropologists have moved towards studying Muslim women as political actors. These range from activists, including secularists (e.g. Al-Ali 2000; De Jorio 2001; in press) and Islamists (e.g. Deeb 2006; Göle 1996; Haniffa 2008; Huq 2008; White 2002), to ordinary Muslim women (Brenner 1996; Hegland 1998; Isik 2008; P. Jeffery, R. Jeffery & Jeffrey 2004; Kandiyoti & Saktanber 2002; LeBlanc 2006; Mahmood 2006; Ong 1995; Ring 2006; Schulz 2008). What emerges is that Muslim women - their bodies, desires, and public and private lives - have been the object, at least since colonial times, of scrutiny, debate, and intervention, whereby they are represented, to extend Kandiyoti's insights, simultaneously as 'victims of social backwardness, icons of modernity or privileged bearers of cultural authenticity' (Г99ГЯ: 431; see also Abu-Lughod 1998). Women have stood at the centre of political projects which produce and reproduce (real and imaginary) boundaries between public and private life (see, e.g., Bayat 2007b; Navaro-Yashin 2002; White 2002), whilst redefining notions of morality, family life, sexuality, and self-presentation (see, e.g., P. Jeffery *et al.* 2004), and articulating novel orientations towards education, employment and consumption (Meneley 2007; Moors & Tarlo 2007; Navaro-Yashin 2002; White 2002).

Anthropologists have emphasized Muslim women's active participation in contemporary political processes from a multiplicity of cultural/religious positions and social locations, whereby instances of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1986; Boddy 1989), overt critique (Al-Ali 2000), pragmatic instrumentalism (Göle 1996; White 2002), or pious submission (Deeb 2006; Huq 2008; Mahmood 2005) are all expressions of agency through which complex processes of subjectivation are articulated. Neither feminism (in secular or Islamic forms) nor pietism is more or less culturally 'authentic' - albeit sometimes reified as such in discourse. Rather, they represent trajectories of self-fashioning differentially available to women, all entailing a degree of normativity and inculcation, whilst opening up possibilities for reflection, deliberation, and expressivity (see, e.g., Huq 2008; Mahmood 2001). Anthropologists have explored the wider political contexts producing and framing debates between competing understandings of women and their lives (notably Al-Ali 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2002; White 2002), yet still little is still known about power relations between women activists within and between specific movements, how authoritative discourses are produced and who participates in their elaborations, and how certain categories of women might become the objects of intervention (for exceptions, see De Jorio 2001; 2002; in press).

The initial overemphasis on 'patriarchy' has not allowed for explorations of masculinities, particularly those emerging within novel forms of political and social engagement. 'Patriarchy' has become a taken-for-granted term which, by constructing men as an undifferentiated social category, glosses over regimes of power informing men's everyday lives (cf. Abu-Lughod 1989). Yet, early studies by Barth (1959) in Pakistan and Bourdieu (1977: 171ff.) in Algeria had explored production and reproduction of power, leadership, and domination as articulated through patron/client relations and public performances of masculine values, such as honour, hospitality, and gift-giving, as well as knowledge, piety, and mystical power. Research on masculinities (see, e.g., Janson 2008; Marsden 2007; Peletz 1994; Walle 2004) and sexuality (e.g. Boellstorff 2005) notwithstanding, to date transformations of Muslim masculinities - such as those observed in the context of evangelical Christianity and Hindu nationalism - and their

articulation with women's lives (see, e.g., Amireh 2003; Ring 2006) have eluded inquiry (for exceptions, see Harris 2004; Peteet 1994; Verkaaik 2004).

Politics unbound

Many anthropologists have taken issue with ideological or essentializing analyses of politics among Muslims as an epiphenomenon of Islam (cf. B. Lewis 2002 [1988]). However, some recent work continues to ascribe a degree of exceptionalism to Muslim societies, forestalling possibilities for comparison. Post-Orientalist anthropological scholarship has, unsurprisingly, had little influence beyond the confines of the discipline. Sustained attempts towards comparative understandings of 'fundamentalism' notwithstanding,¹⁴ social scientists - especially those working on Muslim-majority countries - do not engage with ongoing debates about religious 'revivalism' elsewhere, such as Hindu nationalism (Hansen 2001; Verkaaik 2004).

Attempts to de-exoticize Islamism and Islamist movements or challenge Muslim exceptionalism have had, thus far, limited success (see, e.g., Dresch & Haykel 1995; Eickelman & Piscatori 1996; Hirschkind 1997). Some researchers, particularly in sociology and politics, have begun to employ 'social movement theory' to make sense of the emergence and success of novel forms of social activism in various Muslim contexts (see, e.g., Bayat 2005). We want to point out the excessive formalism of such theory, as well as its tendency to downplay (Clark 2004; Wiktorowicz 2001; 2004) or simply take for granted (Bayat 2007a; 2007b; White 2002) differences in motivation and commitment between social actors, for example on the basis of gender and class (see Sen 2007 for a critique). Nevertheless, social movement theory does open up some lines of inquiry. 'New social movements' often share a critique of statism - whether because the state appears too strong or not strong enough - as well as an aversion to the formal politics of political parties, elections, and so forth; meanwhile notions of 'participation' and 'empowerment' as political tools have acquired global currency. All this should lead us towards interrogation of those wider processes and discourses which produce apparent reframings, if not 'depoliticizations', of everyday politics in the context of global capitalism, whereby many expressions of social activism appear as congruent with novel forms of capital accumulation (see Elyachar 2005; cf. Feillard 2004; Haenni 2005; Maurer 2005; Rudnyckij 2009; Sloane 1999; Tripp 2006). Research on Islamic social activism also opens up novel areas of anthropological inquiry around the transformation and reframing of religious gifting (*zakat* [mandatory alms] and *sadaqa* [voluntary alms]) as acts of 'charity' and 'philanthropy' (see, e.g., Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan 2003; cf. Singer 2008) directed towards fostering reform.

Anthropologists have also usefully explored ways in which Muslim societies have been transformed in the wake of increased global interconnections (Ahmed & Donnan 1994; Fischer & Abedi 1990; Manger 1999; F. Osella & C. Osella 2007; Parkin 2000; Simpson & Kresse 2007; Soares 2005), with some envisaging the emergence of an actual (Grillo & Soares 2004) or virtual (Roy 2004 [2002]) 'transnational Islam'. But contemporary circulations of people, religious practices, and political orientations should be located within long-term, historical connections (see cooke & Lawrence 2005; Eickelman & Piscatori 1990) through pilgrimage, circulation of scholars (Laffan 2002; Zaman 2005), as well as trade (Freitag 2003; Freitag & Clarence-Smith 1997; Ho 2006; F. Osella & C. Osella 2007; Simpson 2006) and migration (e.g. Diouf 2002; Riccio 2004; Werbner 2002; 2003). Such linkages have long been crucial to the production of an imagined *umma* - the global community of Muslims - and to the rhetorics of shared interests

and goals which sometimes inform politico-religious imaginaries, opening up possibilities for building connections between hitherto local groups and for the emergence of transnational Islamic movements such as the worldwide missionary movement, Tablighi Jama'at, which originated in colonial India (see, e.g., Horstmann 2007; Janson, 2005; Metcalf 1994; Sikand 2002) and the activist group Jamaat-e Islami with branches in many countries (Ahmad 2008; Huq 2008).

While anthropologists have often pitted an allegedly tolerant and hybrid local Islam - that of Sufism and saint veneration, for example - against the presumably culturally inauthentic, purifying practices of modernist or reformist individuals and groups (see F. Osella & C. Osella 2008; Soares 2000; 2005; 2007a for critiques), historians have underscored the doctrinal continuities and overlap between Sufism and Islamic 'reformism' (see, e.g., Metcalf 1982).¹⁵ But Sufism and Muslim saints have not necessarily disappeared with the advent of modernity, the ideological assumptions of many observers notwithstanding. To the contrary, some have proved rather adept at engaging with the demands of modern life and engendering reform (see, e.g., Ewing 1997; Marsden 2005; Schielke 2006; Soares 2005; 2007b; van Bruinessen & Howell 2007; Werbner 2003). At the same time, reformism in some of its organized forms has proved open to substantial transformations, allowing wider socio-political processes to shift its strategies and goals (see, e.g., Ahmad 2009; Bayat 2007a; Metcalf 2001; Shehabuddin 2008).

Islamism, post-Islamism, and questions of piety

Some of the most thought-provoking recent scholarship about Islam and politics comes from outside anthropology. Working within the distinctive tradition of analysing Islam and politics that has developed within the social sciences in France, political scientist Olivier Roy (1994; 2004 [2002]) has argued that since Islamists (those for whom an Islamic state is a major objective) have failed to capture state power in most places, a period of post-Islamism is underway. In his way of thinking, 'neo-fundamentalists' - those Muslims concerned with the Islamization of the individual - are now in the ascendancy. Another French political scientist, Gilles Kepel, advances similar ideas and suggests that post-Islamism involves abandoning more radical ideas and adopting such discourses as human rights, sometimes combined with conservative social agendas (see Kepel 2002). Sociologist Asef Bayat (2007a) has also written about post-Islamism, in a somewhat different frame. Like Roy and Kepel, Bayat argues that Islamism seems to have run its course and 'the appeal, energy, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism are exhausted' (2007a: 10-11). However, Bayat emphasizes Islamist engagement with rights, democracy, and so forth (2007a: 10-11). Arguably, this formulation of post-Islamism takes a decidedly normative cast, focused largely on those some would call 'progressive' Muslims rather than on a broader range of persons - including those espousing non-liberal views (see Mandaville 2007: 347-8).

In our view, it is premature to hail the advent of post-Islamism. After all, some Muslims might seek to gain state power in the name of Islam and might eventually succeed in doing so. But in any case, the attention to state power and to the formal politics of elections and political parties is entirely too limited from an anthropological perspective. Scholars such as Roy and Kepel fail to take seriously modes and spaces of political action beyond the purview of formal politics and the state; it is precisely in these areas that anthropology has been particularly skilled in applying its tools.

In many ways, Talal Asad's (1986) essay on the anthropology of Islam marked a major turning-point.¹⁶ Rather than treating Islam as blueprint or script for society or even as 'culture', he argued that one should think instead of Islam as a 'discursive tradition'. A discursive tradition is a formation that has produced historically contingent categorizations of doctrine and practice. This contrasts with such categories as 'reformism' and 'scripturalism', which many, including anthropologists, have too often taken for granted as fixed, knowable forms. Asad's influential programmatic statement inspired quite a number of North American anthropologists to focus specifically on the complexity of the discourse of Muslims (see, e.g., Bowen 1993; Lambek 1992; Launay 1992) and such issues as transformations in law (e.g. Bowen 2003; Messick 1993; Peletz 2002) and education (Hefner & Zaman 2007; Starrett 1998).

Drawing on the later works of Michel Foucault and on Talal Asad (1993; 2003), some anthropologists, including Charles Hirschkind (2006) and Saba Mahmood (2005), have analysed modes of ethical self-fashioning among Muslims in so-called 'piety movements'. By focusing on Muslim individuals and activists, these authors directly challenge the state-centric approaches that appeal to political scientists.¹⁷ In her work on women in the Egyptian piety movement, Mahmood has advanced a very compelling critique of Western liberal notions of agency, notions which prevent analysts from taking seriously those Muslim women whom we might gloss as Islamists who do not share the liberatory agendas of Western observers. Mahmood's critique also helps to dispel anthropologists' incomprehension of Muslim participation in Islamist movements and move analysis away from unhelpful deterministic binaries of resistance and subordination (see also Abu-Lughod 1998; Torab 1996). Like Hirschkind, she provides analytical and methodological tools for studying Islamists and the so-called 'piety-minded'.¹⁸ Studies of ethical self-fashioning illustrate the utility of focusing on individual experiences and the importance of fine-tuned ethnography, which helps considerably to de-exoticize the Muslim Other (see also Isik 2008). Arguably, this is anthropology at its best.

However, the focus on individual self-fashioning also has serious drawbacks. With attention on ethical self-fashioning, politics, especially in Mahmood's work, gets reduced to micropolitics. Differences in orientations, which might vary by social location or class, are also glossed over (Bayat 2007a: i58ff). One advantage of some other studies (e.g. Huq 2008; Navaro-Yashin 2002; White 2002; cf. Mahmood 2001) is that they situate Islamists and/or women involved in piety movements in relation to others, including secularists. Deeb (2006), for example, shows how Shi'i women fashion themselves against images of 'the West', as well as non-Shi'i women in Lebanon. Broader macropolitics also do not get sufficient attention in some recent studies of ethical self-fashioning. Worryingly, inadequate attention is devoted to how the state intervenes to promote, co-opt, thwart, or isolate various forms of Islam and ('good' or 'bad') Muslims, processes which are more acute in the post-9/11 world (cf. Mahmood 2006; Soares & Otayek 2007).

We are also concerned with the totalizing nature of what might be called the 'piety' turn. Indeed, we detect the problematic vestiges of American culturalist approaches, whereby contemporary expressions of religiosity cannot escape overdetermination by deep-rooted cultural orientations. Such post-Orientalist reifications of 'culture', as Navaro-Yashin rightly observes, risk 'reproducing essentialism in leaving a precipitation of cultural authenticity or tradition underneath the layers of European costume, thereby overlapping, by default, with cultural revivalism and nationalism in the

contexts studied' (2002: 8; cf. Marsden 2005: 252ff.). In contrast to totalizing pictures of ethical self-fashioning, Magnus Marsden (2005; see also Marsden 2008a; 2008b) has demonstrated how men and women in Pakistan struggle to lead moral lives and to be 'good Muslims'. This requires intense intellectual and emotional engagement, informed by multiple aesthetic and affective values, and is fraught with ambivalence (Marsden 2005).

Elisions of the complexities and contingencies of everyday lives are indeed problematic, and no less so than in the earlier work of Gellner and Geertz. Our own ethnographic research indicates how people move in and out of formal or informal religious groups, often shifting their allegiances, for example, according to the rising popularity of a particular mosque or preacher. They sometimes simply grow bored or lose interest, or domestic and work duties might take a toll on the time at their disposal; life crises, such as illness or a death, might lead some to reconsider religious commitments and orientations. People lead their everyday lives in complex cultural, religious, and political environments, evaluating and responding to different competing local and global media messages, as illustrated by Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) on television-viewing in Egypt. In other words, participation in piety movements and the taking up of specific forms of ethical self-fashioning should be understood within the context of a variety of available, and perhaps competing, styles and practices (cf. Mahmood 2001), as well as a broader field of politics. Struggle, ambivalence, incoherence, and failure must also receive attention in the study of everyday religiosity (see, e.g., Ewing 1997; Marsden 2005; Schielke 2006; Simpson 2008; Soares 2005).

We think it is useful to draw here on some recent work that has attempted to theorize ways of being Muslim in contemporary societies. In contrast to some of the recent work inspired by Foucault, we would like to consider the notion of *islam mondain*. This term, which could be translated as 'Islam in the present world', points to ways of being Muslim in secularizing societies and spheres (see Otayek & Soares 2007: 17-19).¹⁹ Although many Muslims today are engaged in various kinds of ethical self-fashioning and concerned with the correct practice of Islam, this is only one part of what is effectively a new kind of sociality. In many places, Muslims are making efforts to produce themselves as modern religious subjects within contexts of considerable political and economic uncertainty, as well as increased global interconnections. Adeline Masquelier (2007) has shown how marginalized youths in Niger have been refashioning how to be young and Muslim. Such youths' individual self-fashioning involves processes of the affirmation of Islam and being Muslim, which melds hip-hop style and music with less rigid ritual punctiliousness and a striking indifference to the intra-Muslim sectarian divides that frequently preoccupied their elders. The model of Muslim self-fashioning that *islam mondain* seeks to capture is, however, not only compatible with participating in and producing modernity (however defined), but also 'socially and ethically compatible with the neoliberal economy' (Otayek & Soares 2007: 19; cf. Haenni 2005; Hefner 1998; Rudnyckij 2009; Sloane 1999).

We emphasize that we are not advancing a new version of the anthropological approach that Islam is whatever Muslims in a particular setting say that it is (see note 16 above). Nor, for that matter, are we proposing understandings of Islam as 'culture', or the well-rehearsed argument that Islam varies according to 'cultural' context. The notion of *islam mondain* helps us to think beyond such theoretical impasses, as well as beyond normative categories and unhelpful binarisms - for example, the popular or 'low' Islam of ordinary Muslims versus the 'high' Islam of Muslim scholars (the '*ulama*');

reformism or Islamism versus so-called ‘traditionalism’ - which have for so long hindered analysis of Islam and Muslim societies. *Islam mondain* also allows us to get past such categories as ‘Islamist’ or ‘piety-minded’, or such vague formulations as ‘Islamic resurgence’ (or ‘revival’ or ‘renewal’, for that matter) to apprehend some of the complex ways of being Muslim in the contemporary world in which Muslims reflect upon being Muslim, upon politics, morality, family, consumption, employment, media, entertainment, and so forth (see also Marsden 2009). *Islam mondain* does not privilege Islam over anything else, emphasizing instead the actual world in which Muslims find themselves. This allows us to avoid, on the one hand, narrowly instrumentalist analyses of the relation between Islam and politics, and, on the other, analyses that reduce the politics of Muslims to an epiphenomenon of Islam or the micropolitics of ethical self-fashioning. The chapters in this book explore some of these contemporary ways of ‘being Muslim’ and the complex politics of Muslim self-fashioning, including debates about religious practice, the nature of the state, citizenship, and efforts to simply get by in the current historical conjuncture.

Islam and politics today

The contributors to this volume follow time-honoured anthropological traditions of emphasizing the heterogeneity of experience, and the complexity and contingencies of everyday Muslim lives. But they do not stop there. The authors are attentive to the interplay of religion and politics without ever reducing one to the other, as often happens in the social sciences. In this way, this set of chapters attempts to chart new terms for analysis.

As we have suggested, in stressing the uniqueness of Muslim experience - a position that sometimes verges close to cultural determinism - some recent studies over-privilege the coherence and disciplinary power of Islam. We learn here about the ambiguities in young Egyptian men’s lives and everyday practice, with all its contradictions and imperfections (Schielke this volume). While young men give up drink, drugs, and other illicit activities during Ramadan, they often enough return to these pleasurable practices once the ‘holy month’ is over. This is not to suggest that they are not concerned with questions of morality or ethical self-fashioning, as those involved in piety movements no doubt are. However, the study of religious and moral subjectivity and the affirmation of Islam (the so-called ‘Islamic resurgence’) in a place like Egypt can be usefully broadened further. Aishima and Salvatore (this volume) show the importance of considering the careers and trajectories of some leading Muslim public figures and their various publics in Cairo. As they argue, ‘doubt’, rather than certainty, was of central importance in the making of the careers of two Muslim media stars, one a member of the Islamic university al-Azhar establishment, Sufi shaykh, and radio personality, and the other a lay thinker, medical doctor-turned television star, both with aspirations to attain the not unambiguous status of recognized ‘Islamic intellectual’ in the context of the considerable uncertainties of the post-colonial period. With their attention to questions of knowledge, ethics, and morality, such public figures play important intermediary roles between the ever-present Egyptian state and individual Muslims.

We also learn about how young Chitrali Muslims in rural Pakistan ‘cultivate an appreciation for the heterogeneity’ of life through their leisure activities, including village tours in their region (Marsden this volume, p. 57). Such tours foster ‘a modality of understanding and perceiving the wider world founded not on the active

cultivation of embodied ethical dispositions but in the appreciation of a mindful, if often sceptical, curiosity about heterogeneity' (p. 68). Focusing on rural Muslims, Marsden shows how they are cosmopolitan *avant la lettre* and clearly not 'traditional' Muslims in the Gellnerian sense. Such ethnographic cases help us to understand the complexity and diversity of Muslim experiences of and responses to modernity, which should not be limited to urban piety movements that have been receiving so much attention. Kenyan coastal Muslims, in similar fashion, draw on their experience of double marginality - within a Christian-dominated state, but also as Muslims living in a place considered to be at the 'periphery' of Islam - to develop an orientation towards 'patience' and 'endurance', but also a self-critical and conscious independence of mind. This provides them with the intellectual tools necessary to deal with the political contingencies and predicaments of everyday life as a marginalized minority (Kresse this volume).

While we recognize the importance of studying textual traditions in Islam, an overemphasis on theological debates and religious milieus has sometimes produced a re-exoticization effect, which sets certain modalities of religious expression as a uniquely 'Muslim' way to be modern. As a result, little attention gets paid to the historical processes through which practices and discourse are produced, taken up, or contested within specific (economic, political, and social) contexts by particular actors. In Mali, a country that is overwhelmingly Muslim, recent heated debates over women's rights and modern emancipatory projects in the public sphere show the importance of shifting the analytical focus towards reflexive forms of religiosity. Women activists have increasingly had to position themselves *vis-à-vis* certain readings of Islam and presumed 'correct' Muslim practice, including the comportment of women. In the process, many Malian women are, 'more vocal in questioning public readings of Islam that reinforce male hegemony' and have become more reflexive and outspoken on religious matters (De Jorio this volume, p. 93). Beirut's pious Shi'i Muslim gender activists taking part in a seminar on 'public participation', sponsored by the Hizbullah Women's Committee, debate their political location and experiences on the basis of reflections which bring together wider 'transnationally constituted discourses about Muslim women and about Western women' (Deeb this volume, p. 109). The relationship between piety and politics in such a context is very complex and connects the local with the national and the global. Islam itself can also become the means through which to explore relationships with - and commitment to - secular modernity in the very different context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. Here, debates regarding the adoption of the veil as an expression of religious piety lead to nostalgic interrogations of past, present, and future engagements with the modern, ultimately suggesting that modernity is neither linear nor predictable (McBrien this volume).

In his contribution, Ahmad engages with some classical debates in political anthropology to reflect on the nature of the state and the relationship of religion and politics in India. Many assume that in Islam there can be no functional differentiation between these spheres. The well-rehearsed argument is that for Muslims religion and politics are fused and inseparable. In an original rereading of Maududi's writings, Ahmad argues that the very conditions of the colonial state in India, with its unprecedented reach into the lives of colonial subjects, propelled Maududi to theorize the need for an Islamic state. While the influence of Maududi's ideas on Muslim intellectuals and Islamist movements in the twentieth century is well known, Ahmad's genealogy of 'the Islamic state' also helps us to understand the Shi'i women in Lebanon who are the subject of Deeb's contribution, as

well as the Muslim women activists in Bangladesh (Huq this volume). In other words, orientations towards the 'Islamization' of the state are not simply self-generated within Islam itself, but emerge within the context of wider political events and debates.

Given all of the recent attention to piety movements and questions of moral reform, there has been insufficient sustained attention to the question of politics, including political actors, who might seek to take control of state power and to Islamize society, as well as those involved in everyday politics. The claim that all Islamist political projects are doomed to failure seems rather premature. In her ethnography of the Bangladesh Islami Chatri Sangstha (BICSa; Women Students' Islamic Association of Bangladesh), Huq considers the female-student wing of the dominant Islamic political party (Jamaat-e Islami) in the country. Although these Muslim women activists are certainly concerned with questions of moral reform and the cultivation of an appropriately Muslim subjectivity, they are also deeply involved in politics and endeavour to advance a political programme that seeks to Islamize society and state. The BICSa women emphasize that their activism is part of their *jihad*, which should remain non-violent. Such activism has tangible personal, as well as political, effects, widespread popular and scholarly caricatures of violent Islamic *jihad*, apolitical liberal or progressive Muslims, and peaceful Sufis notwithstanding.

At the same time, the Osellas and Rudnyckyj alert us to novel articulations between religious and economic practice, whereby economic development and success in the global economy become linked to the cultivation of specific ethical dispositions. Rudnyckyj deploys the notion of 'market Islam' to foreground ways through which 'spiritual reform' is mobilized in conjunction with mainstream business management strategies to address what are perceived to be obstacles to effective participation in an increasingly competitive free market, namely a widespread moral and religious crisis within Indonesian society. Self-styled business management consultants are thus employed by private and public corporations to instil a new and Islamic work ethic amongst their employees, stressing self-discipline, commitment, and honesty. Work, in other words, is reframed as religious and moral duty. Moving away from Weberian theory, Rudnyckyj argues that while market Islam can sustain both Islam and neoliberal capitalism, it cannot be reduced as an epiphenomenon of either.

The Osellas discuss the practices of a number of wealthy Gulf-based South Indian Muslim businessmen who project themselves as 'community leaders' through participation in and promotion of charitable activities, especially in education. While they seek ways of embedding their business practices within an 'Islamic' framework of ethics and moral responsibilities, they are also committed towards re-orientating local Muslim subjectivities and practices towards the requirements of neoliberal capitalism and the opportunities it affords them. The Osellas argue, though, that while orientations towards ethical self-transformation are mobilized to sustain novel forms of capital accumulation, reformist Islam might be equally called upon to set moral boundaries for engagement with the neoliberal economy.

The unfolding of post-9/11 politics in Euro-America provides the background to Starrett's contribution. Islam and Muslims have become not simply objects of public scrutiny and debate, but, as Starrett argues, also 'objects of imagination' with implications for politics and for experiences of the modern by non-Muslims, even in places where Muslims are nearly absent' (Starrett this volume, p. S222). Controversies regarding teaching and learning about Islam in American state schools—with schools alleged to have coerced children into Islam—have entered not only the public sphere, but also the judicial

system. And it is through such debates that a number of social actors - schools, courts, parents, activists - redefine wider relationships between 'knowledge' and 'belief', between 'religion' and society. Paradoxically, '[b]y encouraging public education as a response to political and cultural tensions, educators may in fact be heightening the public's concerns about Islam as a comprehensive threat' (Starrett this volume, p. S221).

Together, the contributors to this book help to challenge the dominance of formalist definitions and models of political participation in the social sciences, whilst also rejecting widespread assumptions about Muslim exceptionalism. Rather than privileging 'religion' or reducing contemporary politics to an epiphenomenon of Islam, they identify multiple orientations and strands in Muslims' lives and stress complexities, contingencies, and contradictions in the political engagements of Muslims. Although formal organized politics and state interventions are articulated through and certainly help to frame various projects of ethical self-fashioning, the chapters in this book show how in generating debates about the value or morality of social action, everyday politics allow for participation, reproduction, or contestation of broader social and political projects.

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NOTES

¹ We cannot present here an exhaustive overview of the debates about the production of Islam, Muslim societies, and 'religion' more generally as objects of anthropological inquiry. On the anthropology of Islam, see Abu-Lughod (1989); Asad (1986); Launay (1992); Lindholm (2002); Soares (2000); and Starrett (1997). On religion as a category, see Asad (1993).

² Our definitions of Islamism and Islamist are simple and restrictive. Islamists are those for whom an Islamic state is often a major objective (hence Islamism) and who might self-designate as such.

³ For a discussion see Abu-Lughod (2002); Grewal (1996); and/or who might self-designate as such and Hirschkind & Mahmood (2002).

⁴ See, e.g. the recent and ongoing debates in the pages of *Anthropology Today* and *Anthropology News*. See also Assayag (2008).

⁵ For this reason, it is not surprising that as late as 1983 Akbar Ahmed was chiding his fellow anthropologists for continuing to 'study Muslim groups without reference to the Islamic framework' (1983:139).

⁶ Space limitations do not allow us to discuss the extensive literature in political anthropology that focused on various Muslim societies that followed Evans-Pritchard's study of the Nuer (1940), including Frederik Barth's study of the Pukhtun (1959), I.M. Lewis's work on Somalia (e.g. I.M. Lewis 1961), and Ernest Gellner's book on 'tribal' Morocco (e.g. Gellner 1969). Moreover, in our review of some of the vast bodies of literature related to Islam and politics that follows, we will of necessity be selective and focus primarily, though not exclusively, on anthropology.

⁷ For a more recent example of such a cultural approach, see Hammoudi's book on 'culture and authoritarianism' (Hammoudi 1997).

⁸ See Geertz's notion of ideologization as 'the movement from religiousness to religious-mindedness' (1968:107).

⁹ This is, however, not always unequivocal in their text. When they write, for example, about the fragmentation of authority in Muslim societies, they point out that this might lead to 'an Islamic-tinged authoritarianism' in the medium term, but 'may well precipitate a civic pluralism' (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996:159) in the long run.

¹⁰ These views are substantially different from the dystopic predictions on the future of Muslims' politics of Ahmed & Donnan (1994) and Ahmed (1992).

¹¹ We are reminded here of a number of anthropological studies which have added complexity and nuance to the understanding of people's imagination of and actual relations with the state and its modern practices (see, e.g., Das & Poole 2004; Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Gupta 1995; Hansen & Stepputat 2001; Messick 1993; F. Osella & C. Osella 2000; Ruud 1996; Trouillot 2001; West & Sanders 2003).

¹² Bayat (2007b) and White (2002) both note differences between Islamist politics - associated with educated, urbanized middle or lower classes - and the 'politics of the poor'. The latter are ostensibly informed by pragmatism and driven by the necessity to secure jobs, housing, and education (cf. Ismail 2000).

¹³ Space limitations prevent us from engaging fully with the vast literature on gender and Islam. For reviews of some of that literature from an anthropological perspective, see Abu-Lughod (1998; 2001) and Kandiyoti (1991; 1991b).

¹⁴ See, e.g., the five volumes published in the 1990s as a result of the 'Fundamentalism Project' directed by Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby.

¹⁵ 'Reformism' is particularly troublesome as a term, in that it covers broad trends - from 'Islamic modernism' to 'Islamism' - stretching back at least one hundred years (and arguably much further), and encompassing a variety of positions which lay more or less stress upon specific aspects of processes of renewal. It is nevertheless useful for identifying the differences between such projects and other such contemporary preoccupations such as 'political Islam', 'Islamic fundamentalism', and so on.

¹⁶ In characteristic fashion, Asad took both Gellner and Geertz to task, rejecting both social structural and cultural approaches to Islam. He also directed harsh criticism towards those such as Abdul Hamid el-Zein (1977) and Michael Gilsenan (1982), who asserted that Islam was whatever one's informants said that it was. This is the so-called 'Islams' approach, in which Islam varies by context, and anthropologists talk about various Islams with geographic qualifiers - Moroccan, Egyptian, Indonesian, and African Islam. This is a trend that is not entirely out of fashion even within anthropology.

¹⁷ In a related argument, Faissal Devji (2005; cf. Asad 2007) has tried to shift attention to the question of 'ethics' in understanding those involved in *jihad*.

¹⁸ 'Piety-minded' is a term that Marshall Hodgson used (see Hodgson 1977: *passim*), though anthropologists writing about piety among contemporary Muslims do not usually cite Hodgson's work.

¹⁹ Cf. Bayat (2007) on the 'Islamization' of everyday life in Egypt and Iran; and R. Jeffery, P. Jeffery & Jeffrey (2006) on 'banal Hinduism'.

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