Book Reviews

Islamic Education in the United States and the Evolution of Muslim Nonprofit Institutions

SABITH KHAN AND SHARIQ SIDDIQUI, 2017
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This work is a scholarly contribution to the study of Islamic education and philanthropic benevolence in giving, through an empirical evaluation of the United States' most diverse religious sector: Muslim American communities. It sheds light on this small yet young subset of Islamic education within this sector, namely, the richly diverse and dynamic activities of these communities' philanthropic landscape as well as the influential and at times controversial history of the nonprofit landscape in Muslim communities, specifically in relation to the subset of Islamic education and pedagogy. Through the notion of discursive traditions, this study sheds light on the importance of context, diversity, and reasoning in those Muslim traditions that affect Muslim philanthropic institutions in the U.S. Such a refreshing approach should be welcomed.

Khan and Siddiqui believe that an impartial and critical examination of Muslim philanthropy, one that employs empirical methods, will be instrumental in explaining and clearing up the confusions, misperceptions, and stereotypes about Muslim schools, Islamic education, and the resulting public support and funding.

In their study, the authors review three main problems that, in their opinion, have shaped the perception of Muslim communities in mainstream society: (1) a lack of an empirical methodology in the academic study of these communities; (2) the viewing of Islamic philanthropy through the lens of "national security," which either supports or counters global militant campaigns and groups; and (3) the accountability to which these communities are held for not only the mistakes of this sector, but also for the U.S. public's perception of Muslims in this country.

Their approach is to distance scholarship from incorrect assumptions about Muslim communities, by using an empirical methodology to address the scope of private philanthropy. Through an examination of the roles of public funding (namely voucher programs or grants), other forms of government support, and interviews with school board members and principals, the authors provide an in-depth review of how those schools shape and manage an Islamic identity in their communities. They were surprised by their findings.

Khan and Siddiqui shed light on the fact that Islamic education is growing and evolving into an independent entity with a force of its own that is

unique to the Muslim landscape. Generally, Islamic schools in America have been controversial for their growth, which has been affected by the public's perception of Islam, Muslims, and Muslim institutions. However, this study emphasizes the Brookings Institution's findings that the public's perception has become more positive, which is seen by the increase in size and number of mosques or Islamic centers (p.125). This positive result is also shown by Dr. Ihsan Bagby's survey of the growth of mosques in America regardless of public perception. Bagby's study indicates that with the Muslim community's growth, there is a parallel and associated rise of Islamic education, both formal and informal. However, Khan-Siddiqui's study primarily focuses on formal Islamic educational institutions—schools, daycare centers and mosques or Islamic centers.

This book is laid out in seven chapters. Chapter 1, a historical overview of Islam and Muslims in the United States, places the existence of diverse Muslims in the nonprofit sector, from the formation of the Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada (FIA) leading to the formation of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Muslim Students Association, which were continuations of FIA's work. In addition, this chapter emphasizes that the founders of ISNA were historically Sunni African-American Muslims, activists, and cultural pluralists who harnessed the role of religious practice with the congregational, spiritual, and social life of Muslims balanced with the mainstream nonprofit tools used in American society.

Chapter 2 studies how Islamic philanthropy can be understood as a "discursive tradition" that continues to evolve under the influence of various factors in public society, U.S. philanthropy, international relations, ethics, race, internal diversity, community building, and "crisis." This chapter posits that Muslim philanthropy emerges from "crisis" modes, addressing itself as a "discursive tradition" (p.12). Talal Asad defines this according to the Foucaldian approach, reinforced with the critical perspective of James Gee (p.18). Asad defines discursive tradition as "a tradition of Muslim discourses that address itself based on notions of past and future, in relation to a specific Islamic practice in the present" (pp.18, 19). This crisis mode provides a theoretical framework by giving a context to Islamic philanthropy seen through the lens of a crisis situation, when the Muslim community responds to both internal and external challenges; and where Muslim American groups seek to legitimize and shape their work, gain supplicants, and form their Muslim identity.

The Black American Muslims and mainstream Sunni Muslims are the two paradigmatic cases for analyzing the relevant discourses. This study seeks to understand the role of reason and tradition within these discourses in the context of a changing discursive tradition and show that American philanthropic discourses during crisis situations can shed light on how Muslim Americans exist and practice amidst the changing landscape of the discourse's context. The assumption

here is that there is a constant evolution of Islam's discourse and praxis, as opposed to an "essentialist" understanding of Islam or Muslim societies. Ultimately, this study shows how American Islam is evolving and the effect of discourses within and outside the community shaping that evolution.

Chapter 3 lays the foundation for the significance of nonprofit institutions and philanthropy in comprehending both the Muslim American identity and one's religious identity. This study, which analyzes the history of Muslims from colonial times to the present, asks why Islam in the United States failed to survive beyond the first generation and how nonprofit institutions help sustain the Muslim American identity and religious values. Thus, the focus is on philanthropic building as a method of "sustaining identity" through the study of Islamophobia, existing research on Muslim Americans, Muslim American nonprofits and philanthropy, and the growth of Islamic schools.

Chapter 4 argues that one's identity as a Muslim American has been an evolution that has attracted the limelight in a post-9/11 world. The authors show that identity is critical to understanding how philanthropy occurs in the United States as a process, based on Stuart Hall's notion. Hence, they contend that the Muslim identity is a work in process and present six forces that are shaping the development of a Muslim American identity.

Chapter 5 is a databased presentation of the results of a national survey of full-time Islamic schools and their governing practices during times of crisis, such as 9/11 or the recession of 2008. It examines the changing nature of philanthropy and the specific factors affecting the governance practice of Islamic schools, and then investigates how schools navigate identity and performance to search for legitimacy during such times.

Chapter 6 studies Islamic schools as "interlocutors" of tradition or "signposts" of Islam's future in this country. Using data from 20 interviews conducted with principals and board members of such schools in the United States, the authors focus on organizational identity and community support to understand their growth and uniqueness. Utilizing the Grounded Theory approach enables them to theorize how these schools can be introspective, how their role in relation to mainstream society can be understood, and what strategies these schools can espouse in order to endure.

Chapter 7 looks at the prospects for future growth and development by drawing upon the book's preceding chapters. It sheds light on the real issues, which are Muslim identity and the legitimacy of their institutions in America (p.14):

> Muslim institutions … are not purely "religious" institutions that are pursuing an ideological agenda, nor are they purely "nonprofits" that are serving people. They blend both the traditions of being "American" institutions in that they embrace both the legal and cultural elements of serving people as well as being rooted in the stories, narratives and myths of what it means to be a "Muslim" in today's America, where many Muslims feel their identity is under threat (pp.134, 135).

However, a future study is needed to further address the diversity of Muslim communities and their nonprofit institutions. Some suggestions for a future study are presented below:

- Focus on the Islamic discursive traditions existing within religiously diverse Muslim communities, i.e. Sunni, Shia, Ahmadiyya and others.
- Examine the influence of cultural diversity among religiously diverse communities.
- Address informal Islamic schools among different religious and cultural groups and how they shape Islamic education and identity.
- Analyze whether most Islamic schools are accredited. Do Islamically educated parents, in turn, send their children to Islamic schools?

Khan and Siddiqui provide a compelling approach and invaluable resource that sheds light on the intersection of philanthropy, religion, and the nonprofit sector in the United States. This study builds on, and yet is critical of, previous works and contributes to the scholarly discourse on both philanthropy and the Islamic philanthropic tradition. It is a scholarly gift to the philanthropic world of pedagogy and to those who are interested in understanding this community's historical, educational, religious, and philanthropic tradition.

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Policy Patrons: Philanthropy, Education Reform, and the Politics of Influence

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How do private foundations redress social problems in the United States? Unlike various other democracies around the world where the state looks after its subjects, the United States offers room for private organizations to play an active role in redressing social problems that impact the larger public. The genesis of such private organizations dates back to the Catholic charities that funded parish schools during the late 19th and early 20th century. Initially, private foundations that eclipsed these charities were run by social scientists. However, since the early 1990s, a new cohort of private foundations have emerged—one established by billionaires who wish to implement managerial practices of corporate work settings in the operation of K-12 schools. Their increased influence on K-12 education