

Book Reviews

PARVEZ, FAREEN Z. *Politicising Islam: The Islamic Revival in France and India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. xiv+269 pp. \$69.75 (cloth).

The presence of Islamic forms of sociopolitical mobilizations across the globe has triggered a large body of scholarship across different social scientific disciplines, ranging from sociology to political sciences and anthropology. Most of these studies have tended to understand the dynamics behind this apparent growth and also sought to unravel the complex relationships that exist between these forms of mobilization and processes of modernization, state formation, women's emancipation, and secularism. Fareen Z. Parvez's *Politicising Islam: The Islamic Revival in France and India* is one of the latest additions to this body of work, yet it also distinguishes itself from the existing works in two ways: first, through the comparative approach of this study as it is set in a country in the so-called global North (France) and one in the so-called global South (India). Second, her work is not only an attempt to describe the complex dynamics of Islamic revivalist movements in different contexts, and thereby deessentialize the idea of Islamism by documenting its complex ramification, it is also an attempt to provide an explanatory model of this variety through an intersectional analysis of secularism, which is here understood as a particular state model of regulating the public presence of religion and class dynamics. The intersection of these two dynamics, Parvez contends, explains the different types of mobilization and claim making that she sets to document and describe throughout her book (13–15).

The book is systematically ordered and organized according to the different field sites and models of analysis that are at the heart of the analysis. Parvez conducted ethnographic fieldwork in France and India with Islamically driven forms of mobilization among what she describes as the “elite” and the “subaltern” segments of the population. This allows her to account for both the interclass as well as the intraclass dynamics, as well as how they correlate with a particular type of Islamic mobilization. Whereas the first chapter sets out the theoretical contours of the project, the second chapter offers a rich historical framework to apprehend the (post-)colonial dynamics of the two contexts, their secular state models, and the role of Islam. The subsequent chapters are organized according to the different types of mobilization she has identified in her different field sites. For India, the chapters are divided along the “redistribution” and “community” based mobilization. The first refers to paternalistic and charity-based mobilizations observed among the Islamic elite of Hyderabad, whereas the community-based mobilizations are typical for what she observed in the slums of Hyderabad, wherein more coherent and cohesive solidarity structures of redistribution prevail. These different types of mobilizations also go along with different views on Islam: the entrepreneurial attitude of the elite in Hyderabad sits well with a more liberal view on Islam, whereas the harsh critique on interest-based banking within the Salafi milieus of the slums offers a framework to make sense of the conditions of poverty and exclusion. The mobilizations in France are, in turn, organized according to what she describes as “recognition” and “anti-politics.” The recognition-based type of mobilization refers to the experiences of the socially mobile second- and third-generation French Muslims in the inner-cities of Lyon, who seek, through the organization of Islamic structures, to establish a space of recognition and negotiation with the French state far away from the *banlieues*. Yet such attempts are continuously curtailed by the state's accusations of communalism (*communautarisme*).

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The Journal of Religion

and disqualification of Muslim activists. The antipolitics, finally, is characteristic for the type of mobilization identified within the *banlieues* of Lyon, wherein an ostensible desire to stay away from the state—which is distrusted—is characteristic of the everyday politics of the residents, combined with a stronger commitment to religious orthodoxy.

Fareen Parvez's book raises important questions on how class dynamics, state regulation, and religious orientation co-constitute and interact with each other. Her work contributes importantly to de-essentialize reigning views on Muslim politics by showing their inner complexity. It also raises important questions on the dialectical relationship between materiality and religiosity, or on the all too prevailing assumption that European countries are simply a space of religious freedom. One of the major strengths of the book is without any doubt the comparative perspective it offers between France and India. This comparative perspective is, however, also its ~~major~~ pitfall, for it occasionally comes at cost of a more subtle and complex analysis that situates the different phenomena and their meaning within their specific location. Notions such as "elite," "middle-class," and "subaltern" are not defined in light of the very different historical and economic contexts. The academically controversial concept of Salafism is, furthermore, unproblematically used, even though Parvez's informants themselves dislike the term and don't use it to assign themselves (152). By restricting the analysis to a matter of class and state politics, the ethnographic richness of the gathered data remains also, at times, underexplored. This is, for instance, the case for the Islamic healing practices (*roqya*) observed in the Lyon *banlieues*, which are primarily read as community tightening practices (170). Such a Durkheimian sociological analysis of religious phenomena stands in the way of a deeper analysis of the different Islamic technologies of the self or a more phenomenological understanding of the everyday experiences of the state.

Interestingly enough, however, it is in the appendix chapter on method that the author's sense for thick description comes to live. In these excellent sixteen concluding pages, one is given a vivid sense of the author's access to the field and how this informs us about the social logics of the different locations. The everyday experiences of in/security, suspicion, and Islamophobia, the author's ethical dilemmas, and the way in which her Muslimness became redefined and repositioned across social and geographical spaces were very well captured and illuminating. One would have therefore hoped that these lived experiences could have been included into and throughout the analysis of the book as a whole, for they not only provide important insights into some of the central themes of this work but also show that the body of the researcher crucially determines the relationship to, and thus the understanding of, the social world.

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