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**Frank Peter, Sarah Dornhof, Elena Arigita, eds. *Islam and the Politics of Culture in Europe: Memory, Aesthetics, Art*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013. 267 pages. Paper US \$45.00 ISBN 978-3-8376-2176-1**

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which Islam became “something of a hybrid religion” (219). Nevertheless, the tension remains, for example, in Hoyland’s analysis of the disintegration of the Arab Empire wherein he cites ideological factors and argues that “Islam itself became hostile to an imperial style of government” (211). His use of the term “jihad” involves similar complications. Though *In God’s Path* laudably transcends popular clichés such as the singular roles of Islam and jihad as the ultimate causes of the conquests, it scarcely shows how jihad, a key concept of the book as signaled by its title, underwent changes in different phases of the conquests, particularly when the Arabs chose to professionalize their army rather than rely on tribal warrior bands. The author’s hasty two-sentence postscript to address some complexities involved in the idea of jihad is too little, too late (230). There are other issues. For example, Hoyland’s claim that “Persia suffered a crisis of confidence and its noble families suspected that the ruling Sasanian dynasty had forfeited the favor of gods” lacks supporting evidence (94), and his assertion that “Mu‘awiya fought and killed ‘Ali” clearly calls for correction (104). Such issues notwithstanding, *In God’s Path* would still make a wonderful read for the general public, students in Islamic and Middle East studies, and scholars alike. ✎

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FRANK PETER, SARAH DORNHOF, ELENA ARIGITA, EDs. *Islam and the Politics of Culture in Europe: Memory, Aesthetics, Art*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013. 267 pages. Paper US \$45.00 ISBN 978-3-8376-2176-1

Questions concerning visibility are central to discussions about Islam and Muslims in Europe. The current tide of right-wing backlash against the purported “Islamization of Europe” is fueled in part by the idea that public manifestations of Islamic identities threaten the secular foundations of European liberal democracies. While such movements promote a narrow understanding of Islam that posits its incompatibility with European values, a large body of scholarly work has emphasized the heterogeneity and diversity of European Islam in an effort to shift the conversation away from the visibility of European Muslims to the ways in which they are visualized. Set against the backdrop of a proliferation of novels, films, and television programs engaging with Islam and a growing number of institutional initiatives aimed at incorporating Islam into European cultural memory and art, this edited volume offers a critical reappraisal of contemporary cultural

production in Europe by examining it “in relation to the political rationalities of governing Islam” (9).

The editors have assembled an impressive collection that features essays from scholars working across a broad range of academic disciplines including Cultural Anthropology, Art History, Islamic Studies, and Comparative Literature. Starting with the observation that research on culture often amounts to the study of group identities and collective ways of life, the editors propose an approach that treats culture as a set of semiotic practices that structure the affective and aesthetic dispositions of subjects. In their introductory chapter they argue that much of the existing scholarship on the visibility of Muslims has been framed in terms of a problematic (mis)representation and (mis)recognition, thereby overlooking larger questions about “how to conceptualize the making of images, their ontological status, and the way they are seen” (16–17). In the twelve chapters that follow, the contributors address issues of visibility and the politics of culture as they play out in a number of different fields including music, film, literature, photography, comedy, historiography, and museum curation. What connects these essays is a shared concern with the political consequences of the ways that Islam is visualized in Europe today.

Five of the chapters examine how Muslims are portrayed in contemporary fiction, cinema, TV series, comic books, and plays. One recurrent theme, developed most explicitly in the contributions by Frank Peter and Sarah Dornhof, is the idea that the binary of Islam versus the West has been replaced by a more nuanced narrative wherein the internal heterogeneity of Muslim communities provides the backdrop for conflicts that are depicted as struggles for autonomy within the Islamic milieu. In other words, the focus is on individual and familial conflicts rather than social or structural ones. According to the authors, this shift affirms the agency and self-determination of Muslim subjects by reconfiguring structural constraints as individual challenges with the ultimate effect of reifying a liberal vision of “moderate Islam.”

Other chapters analyze the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in narratives about the place of Islam in European history and civilization. In her chapter on the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Riem Spielhaus chronicles how efforts to re-brand imperial collections of Islamic art are connected to state policies that recognize Islam as a part of German society while preserving Muslims as a group that requires integration. Fernando Rodríguez Mediano shows how the notion of a “Muslim Spain” in Spanish historiography affirms historical continuities with al-Andalus but divests it of its Muslim character through the “de-Islamization” of Arabic influences. Finally, Elena Arigita

examines how the Cordoba Mosque-Cathedral has been invoked, either as a symbol of intercultural harmony or Islamic ascendance, in competing narratives about the city's history during its failed bid to become a European Capital of Culture.

While the essays in the volume offer much insight into the politicization of culture, they are less attentive to economic factors and the market conditions under which cultural artifacts are produced and circulated. Even in the chapters that do consider the emergence of new markets for Muslim consumers, the emphasis tends to be on the Islamization of commodities rather than the commodification of Islam. Thus the essays tend to overlook issues like profit motivation, market share, funding structures, and distribution networks when analyzing the production and consumption of cultural goods.

Nonetheless, this volume should be of great interest to students and scholars of Islam in Europe. The impressive breadth of topics and case studies included in the collection make it an excellent primer for understanding how the transformation of European societies has been reflected and contested in the field of cultural production. ✎

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**RANSOM, MARJORIE.** *Silver Treasures from the Land of Sheba: Regional Yemeni Jewelry.* Photographs of jewelry and costumes by Robert K. Liu. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014. xviii + 246 pages, maps, bibliography, index, 320 color photographs. Cloth US\$49.50 ISBN 9789774166006

**Silver Treasures from the Land of Sheba** is an important study of a neglected topic, Yemeni silver jewelry. The book is organized straightforwardly; the introductory chapters set up the research basics. In the first chapter we learn that when Marjorie and David Ransom were posted to the U.S. Embassy in the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) they arrived already fascinated by Middle Eastern silver work. Over the years the couple collected about 1900 pieces, most crafted from the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. In 2001, when Marjorie was asked to exhibit items from her collection, she realized her limited knowledge of the pieces. Ransom embarked on a formal study that led her to all areas of the by-then-united Yemen.