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Claiming and Making Muslim Worlds

Introduction

The contributions to this volume examine different ways in which Muslims have laid claim to, and shaped their worlds in the 20th and 21st centuries. While the negotiation of identities and the ordering and reordering of societies is a common process, why do we choose 'Muslims' as a 'field' of enquiry? Would we ask similar questions about Christians or Buddhists?[1]

Thus, the very choice of the field of research raises a number of fundamental questions which arose in the very particular historical context of the first two decades of the 21st century, when the devastating and highly symbolic attacks on the World Trade Centre by the Islamist organisation al-Qaʿida in September 2001 triggered what was termed the 'Global War on Terror'. Of course, the identification of Muslims as the Christian (and Western) 'Other' goes back almost to the inception of Islam. The long history of mutual relations and perceptions underwent many permutations, which need not be rehearsed here. Suffice it to say that the Age of Imperialism, where this book takes its starting point, coincided with an often violent reconfiguration of these relations. While the 20th century itself witnessed multiple shifts, which we reflect on below, at the time of planning the research on which the book is based, mutual perceptions had taken another distinct turn for the worse. Since the end of the Cold War, some political scientists and area studies specialists have become adherents of a school of thought that promotes the notion of a 'Clash of Civilizations'.[2] With the

1 "We" refers primarily to the editors of this volume and reflects, more generally, the orientation of the ZMO research programme between 2008 and 2019. We are grateful for the feedback received from many colleagues at ZMO, and would like to specifically acknowledge the comments of Kai Kresse and Sarah Jurkiewicz.

2 The classical post-Cold War shift occurred with Samuel Huntington's thesis of the 'Clash of Civilizations', which was presented as a lecture in 1992, published as an article in *Foreign Affairs* (72;3, 22–49) in 1993, and appeared as a book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster) in 1996. The term is said to have been derived from Bernard Lewis's 1990 essay "The Roots of Muslim Rage". Other prominent authors who contributed to this trend are Bassam Tibi (*Krieg der Zivilisationen: Politik und Religion zwischen Vernunft und Fundamentalismus, Hamburg:* Hoffmann und Campe 1995) and Martin

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transformation of the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union into an insurgency aimed at Western regimes and their allies, the emergence of al-Qaʿida, and the attack on the World Trade Centre, being identified as 'Muslim' has become highly problematic in Western contexts. At the same time, and partly sparked by these developments, but also partly in response to internal dynamics, debates among Muslims about identity and what it means to be a 'proper Muslim' also gained traction, often in ways that mirrored the encounter with the non-Muslim 'Other'.

What gets lost in such politically volatile contexts are the self-attributions, conceptualisations, and practices by which ordinary people constantly envision, create, and remake their lifeworlds. Twinning the discursive potential of 'claiming' and 'making', we wanted to restore a voice to the myriad ways in which 'Muslimness' is manifested, while at the same time unmuting marginal voices that are excluded from the hegemonic discourse within Muslim communities. Such internal differences, constitutive to Shahab Ahmad's approach to Islam, are evidenced, for example, in the chapters by Haniffa or Frede.[3] While this is one important reason for this book to highlight multiple Muslim 'worlds' rather than claiming the unity of one 'world of Islam', another is the observation that factors other than Islam can be just as constitutive for local perspectives, as shown in the chapter by Scheele.

So, how are plural Muslim lifeworlds and conceptual world-making interwoven? And how are these imbricated with etic group concepts such as that of the *umma*, the community of believers? The chapters of this book provide answers which are specific to certain regions, places and times. This is very much linked to the epistemological stance uniting the authors of this volume regarding the regions and people they study: While most subjects appearing in these studies profess Islam or are classified as Muslims, this does not per se explain much about their lives. Instead, we ask how people who either declare themselves to be Muslims or who are, in specific contexts, labelled as such by non-Muslims, understand and use or do not use Islam in their daily lives and in different contexts.[4] We also ask how states and individuals in Muslim majority and minority contexts actively refer to Islam in a global setting where 'Islam' – or rather particular variants thereof – has become synonymous with fanaticism, and worse, for many non-Muslim governments since the end of the Cold War?

Kramer (*Ivory Towers on Sand: The failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*, Washington: The Washington Institute 2001).

3 The plurality of Islam is one of the main topics of Ahmad 2016 and McBrien 2017.

4 Otayek and Soares 2007.

This negative equation is quite irrespective of earlier Western support for jihadists when it seemed expedient, as in the case of the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s.[5] Worse, still, current Western support is often made conditional on cooperation in the 'fight against terrorism', which, as shown in the chapter by Frede in this book, has further fuelled contestations about 'moderate Islam', thereby at times suppressing other urgent debates about good governance.[6] In this complex setting it is essential to pay minute attention to who uses which labels, and in which contexts they become relevant. Because of this, we insist on speaking of plural worlds rather than of one 'world of Islam'. The importance of Islam needs to be explained in each and every case, notably as we are dealing with people and contexts that are quite far apart in time and space.

In this introduction we will further explore some of the conceptual questions just indicated. We begin with a brief discussion of how we understand and approach Islam. Furthermore, we engage with the question of different scales in the study of Muslim worlds, and then consider some of the theoretical and methodological challenges involved in this endeavour. Finally, we highlight the sections and topics on which this volume focusses. The selection of case studies combines historical, anthropological, political, and literary perspectives. In doing so, this volume reflects a long-standing multi- and interdisciplinary engagement with translocal and globalising practices in the overwhelmingly Muslim societies of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) and its scholarly context. The contributions to this volume thus represent a selection of papers presented at a conference held at ZMO in early April 2019 entitled "Claiming and Making Muslim Worlds: Across and Between the Global and the Local". The volume can be considered one of the major outcomes of the ZMO research programme between 2009 and 2018, entitled "Muslim Worlds – World of Islam? Tracing Connections, Practices and Crises of the Global in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East".[7]

5 Mitchell 2002, Lansford 2003, especially chapter 4.

6 Fisher and Anderson 2015. We thank Frédéric Madore for suggesting this reference.

7 This research programme was generously funded by Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung. For more information on the programme, see: https://archiv.zmo.de/forschung/projekte_2008_2013/Forschungsprogramm%2007-09-07.pdf. An overview of the projects conducted within this framework can be found here: https://archiv.zmo.de/forschung/index_e.html.

Studying Islam

The notion of Muslim worlds is arguably a construct that warrants some explanation. Islam is but one, and oftentimes not even the most evident, category with which people identify or from which they draw their motivations. Nevertheless, even where Islam is explicitly evoked by the actors themselves, it often serves as a unifying device. It is at such junctures of explicit reference that we speak of Muslim worlds, as we could, in similar instances, speak of Christian, Buddhist, or other worlds. At the same time, Islam can serve as a smokescreen that masks divisions and contradictions within societies. The complex nature of human engagement and interaction rarely, if ever, allows for a labelling under one single signifier such as religion. What this volume offers is the study of a multifaceted Islam and its interrelatedness with other aspects of cultural and politic life, by demonstrating multiple ways of being Muslim and relating to one's own 'Muslimness' and to that of others.

The contributors to this volume start from an empirical observation, namely the existence of people professing Islam and forming the vast majority population in much of the Middle East, as well as large parts of Africa and Asia, in addition to larger or smaller minority populations elsewhere. 'Muslim worlds' nevertheless remains a complicated heuristic category in terms of common assumptions, debates about Islam and religion, as well as questions regarding notions and definitions of 'worlds'.[8] The spread of Islam from the first hijri century (7th century C.E.) has certainly created a common mould that has been termed 'Islamicate World' by Marshall Hodgson, a term that accepts Islam as a holistic complex which shaped cultural and social thoughts and practices, irrespective of individual religious identities within this complex.[9] It is equally certain that within this very general mould, a multitude of variations have emerged. Rather than following Hodgson's 'World', however, we opt for the plural and thereby not only emphasise the internal differentiation, but also aim to counteract an inherent Arabocentric impetus as well as an essentialising generic perception and presentation.

Ever since the rise of a more distinctive notion of 'religion' in the late 19th century European tradition, the question of how to fit 'Islam' into that category has troubled scholars. Bergunder argues that this results from the fact that even

8 For a more extensive discussion of these issues see Freitag 2013 and the commentary by Meyer 2014.

9 Hodgson 1977, 56–60.

within the discipline of Religious Studies, the concept has hardly been subjected to rigorous reflection, resulting instead and implicitly from the European experience of secularisation, for which religion became the 'Other'. This was enhanced by the encounter with other systems of meaning-making in the 19th century.[10] The obvious question is how Islam fit such a model arising from a specifically European experience? Western scholarship, some of which Tayob engages with in the final chapter of this book, often reflected this difficulty.

A number of attempts have been made to disentangle the resulting conceptual problems. To give but two examples: Talal Asad – critical of the European tradition but remaining quite close to the concept of religion – has famously framed Islam as a "discursive tradition" in order to account for quite diverging interpretations of doctrine and practices in different regions and periods.[11] Shahab Ahmad's recent approach is considerably wider: he defines Islam as "meaning-making for the self in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muhammad".[12] Such "meaning-making" can lead to hugely varying and at times contradictory understandings and actions, which are, in Ahmad's reading, fully in line with 'Islam'. Significantly, his emphasis on the "Balkans-to-Bengal complex" moves away from an Arabocentric view of Islam, even if it does not include sub-Saharan and Southeast Asian Muslims (and self-consciously marginalises Islam in the Arab lands).[13]

Ahmad's inclusive notion is an explicit answer to, and criticism of, a concept of 'religion' that implies a specific conceptual divide between a 'religious' and a 'secular' sphere.[14] While some authors, such as Tayob, have been striving to reform or decolonise the study of religious studies in order to define a more comprehensive and thus globally comparative applicable field of study – an effort also reflected in his chapter in this volume – others, such as Schulze, have suggested to remove "the classical cultural terminology (…) from our scholarly toolbox".[15]

Varisco has suggested that there "is so much debate about the methodological problems in past sociological models of religion that borrowing contested terms may simply beg the theoretical questions".[16] However, it is important to

10 Bergunder 2011, for some of the basic discussions Segal 2016, c.f. Masuzawa 2005, 18f and passim.
11 Asad 2009 [1986], 10ff.
12 Ahmad 2016, 405.
13 Ibid., 73–85.
14 Ibid., 176–245.
15 Schulze 1998, 197, Tayob 2018.
16 Varisco 2005, 138.

reflect on the prevalent and rather narrow definitions of religion in order to understand that neither does Islam neatly fit into what might be intuitively understood to be 'religion', nor is such a notion of 'religion' at present a particularly helpful category. The aim of this volume is not to define Islam or who is a Muslim.[17] Rather than assuming the existence of Muslim worlds, or indeed considering Islam as the primary signifier for the identity of Muslims, we investigate, on the basis of specific cases and situations in different parts of the world, when, and in which contexts Islam is being invoked, used, or contested.[18]

World claiming and making – Islam and the everyday

'Claiming' and 'making' can thus be read as two approaches towards conceptualisations of Muslim worlds that emphasise 'living Islam' (Marsden 2005) and Muslim subjectivities rather than normative agendas, state institutions, and political elites. The terms also highlight the processual character of engaging questions of identity and memory politics without considering Muslims as primarily, if not exclusively, determined by their religion and its canonical sources.

Some chapters in this book trace and explore mundane practices which are claimed to be 'Islamic' or are linked to Islam. They consider how these practices become integrated into the lives of the respective actors and activities at all levels between the local and the global. This is one important aspect of the chapters by Haniffa and Stephan-Emmrich. We are further curious to better understand how meanings of 'Islam' circulate, including the practical communicative and technological infrastructures of circulation. Do ideas change or are adapted when they are moved to another context or presented in a different form? Prominent examples are the evolution of 'Islamic Socialism' by the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Egypt in the late 1950s, the development of a Third Worldist 'Progressive Islam' in contexts as diverse as Egypt and Malaysia, and some of the Islamic leftist trends calling for the Iranian Revolution.[19] Likewise, and more recently, themes like 'Islamic environmentalism', animal rights, 'Islamic feminism', or assisted reproductive technologies have garnered atten-

17 Schielke 2010, Kresse 2013, 77f.

18 Schielke and Debevec 2012, 1–12, Soares and Osella 2010, 12.

19 Abaza 1998; Abrahamian 1989, 105–25, Bakhtiari 1989.

tion, sparked popular and academic debates, and brought activists to the streets.[20]

Beyond individual actors, political movements and states have, in different ways, either drawn on Islam (or Islamically inflected rhetoric) or defined their position in explicit response to decidedly Islamic positions. Thus, controversies can occur both at the level of the confrontation of (non-Muslim) states with Muslim minorities, as in the case of Sri Lanka, discussed by Haniffa, but also when it comes to (Muslim) statist attempts to define an authoritative version of Islam against competing interpretations, as in the case of Mauretania, discussed by Frede. The nation-state, which became a standard political entity during the first half of the 20th century, is increasingly confronted with competing political models in an Islamic garb. One such example is the recent caliphate declared by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in 2014. Even where Islam is evoked, regional affiliations can provide powerful motivations to challenge the state, as shown in the chapters by Scheele and Sounaye. Such influences of 'Muslim politics' challenge both relations between states and dynamics within states.[21] Casini's chapter illustrates how the changing notions of Muslimness and political Islam are reflected in Arabic novels in Egypt and Kuwait, while El Guabli demonstrates their explicit exclusion in the Moroccan process of national reconciliation. As is evident from these examples, the individual 'worlds' invoked can be of quite different scales, and the relationship between different localities can be of very different orders, which raises the question of how we understand and approach such 'worlds'.

Muslim worlds: Localities, spaces, scales, and temporalities

If we speak of 'Muslim worlds' in the plural, this recognises the necessary attention to historical and spatial contexts instead of assuming some uniform kind of 'globality'.[22] Arguably, the nature of this plurality has itself changed and trans-

20 Hancock 2018, Foltz 2000, 2005, Islam and Islam 2015, Badran 2005, Cooke 2001, Inhorn 2011, Inhorn and Tremayne 2012.

21 Hoeber Rudolph, 2008, Mandaville 2007, 4.

22 Freitag and von Oppen 2010, 13–16. For the emergence of the ideas, c.f. Aydin 2017. A living example is the title of the leading German periodical of Middle Eastern Studies, *Die Welt des Islams* (The [sic!] World of Islam) even if the content of the journal reflects more plurality than the (rather old) title suggests.

formed in the context of post-modernist pluralisation and relativism, as Schulze has argued with special reference to contemporary Islamist groups.[23] As Bamyeh asserts, Islam oftentimes forms more of a "reserve discourse" which "remains available when everything else fails", even if such Islamic discourses have become more present since the late 1960s for a variety of reasons.[24]

Beyond the understanding of what might be considered theological or intellectual positions and debates, and of how Islam is integrated into the everyday, we are interested in the actual interactions of Muslims. We argue that – beyond the largely theoretical notion of one community of believers *(umma)*, enacted most prominently during the annual pilgrimage *(hajj)* – Muslims live in different geographic, political, linguistic etc. contexts. These they connect at specific moments in specific ways. They thus contribute to and are influenced by multiple processes of translocal (ex)changes, which are commonly termed 'globalisation', and which are here understood to consist of a multitude of intersecting, competing, and multi-directional processes. In addition to the increasing economic (inter)dependence, the frequency and depth of international exchanges on all levels has palpably intensified since the latter half of the 18th century, and received the latest boost through new communication technologies.[25] Such exchanges can be facilitated, but in no way naturalised by the common idiom of Islam.[26] This, then, creates historically specific translocal and, nowadays, transnational Muslim spaces or worlds. These often evoke specific tensions or questions between different ways of being Muslim, as emerges, in different ways, in the contributions by Mato-Bouzas, Scheele, Haniffa, and Stephan-Emmrich. Thus, we argue that Muslim worlds on this more spatial level, too, need to be identified and historically situated, rather than considered a permanent, objectifiable entity.[27] Thus, any attempts at mapping them to better understand the "erasing and redrawing [of] boundaries" in globalising processes will need to take this historicity into account.[28]

In an earlier work concerned with conceptualising translocality, Freitag and van Oppen engaged particularly with global history and emphasised the differences between the more nuanced approach of translocality and much of global history writing and globalisation studies. Used descriptively, translocality de-

23 Schulze 1998.

24 Bamyeh 2019, 218, see also Ahmad 2019.

25 Bayly 2004, Osterhammel 2009, 1010–55, Mandaville 2007, 322–27.

26 For a telling anecdote illustrating this point, see Ahmed 2016, 4,

27 On the political genealogy of the notion of "one Muslim world" in the West, see Aydin 2017.

28 Such mapping is suggested by Vásques and Marquardt 2006, 318.

notes "the sum of phenomena which result from a multitude of circulations and transfers".[29] As a research perspective, translocality aims at highlighting the diverse and at times contradictory outcomes of the interactions and movements of people, goods, ideas, and symbols. It calls for attention to the spatial, social and temporal ruptures, limitations, and exclusions as much as to the described connections and entanglements. This offers a very differentiated way of looking at globalisation phenomena, recognising their limitations, conditions as well as the teleological tendencies often inherent in globalisation discourses.[30] Translocality also allows for very different scales of engagement, while terms like 'transnational history' already naturalise the (Western model of the) nation state as a crucial referent.[31] While we of course recognise the current salience of this state model, as is evident especially from section two of this book, we aim at historicising it, thereby recognising it as a historically recent (and not teleologically predetermined) development.[32] Methodologically, the study of translocality benefitted particularly from the suggestions made by Werner and Zimmermann regarding the need to bring together different archives and scales of entanglement in what they have called 'histoire croisée'.[33] This resembles in many ways anthropological approaches to multi-sited fieldwork which have called for observing the processual relations between places instead of concentrating on a single, preferably marginal, locality.[34] Finally, the study of translocality sharpens the need for a reflexive approach.

In history, the conversation about how to bring together global and microhistory – which in turn has many points of contact with historical anthropology – has been particularly fruitful.[35] There are many different ways of how micro- and global history can be brought into conversation, for example by juxtaposing contemporaneous (micro)stories from different settings or by tracing translocal connectivities.[36] The shift in "conceptual topology"[37] has taken many directions since, from travelling with labour migrants, pilgrims, pastoral-

29 Freitag and von Oppen 2010, 5.

30 Ibid., 5–16.

31 E.g. Struck, Ferris, and Revel 2011.

32 For a useful sociological perspective on a different concepts of statehood, see Schlichte 2018, particularly 49–52. Herren's (2018) insistence on the multiple and interweaving (or "networked") layers of statehood at the international scale is also important.

33 Werner and Zimmermann 2006.

34 Marcus 1995, Coleman and Hellermann 2011.

35 See the contributions in *Past & Present* 242, Supplement 14, November 2019.

36 For two different approaches e.g. Zemon-Davis 2011, c.f. Ghobrial 2019, 15f.

37 Coleman and Hellermann 2011, 2.

ists, and heritage tourists to tracing the biographies of translocal families or the flow of concepts, fashions, and consumer goods.[38] In that sense, it has widened the scale and at the same time redirected the focus of interest. It also engendered a conceptual shift towards an approach which is focussed on close collaboration between researchers and interlocutors who at times become co-researchers. The authors in this volume differ not only in their disciplinary approaches but also in the focus and scale of their engagement, which is taken up in a more empirical manner in the first section of this book.[39]

One major insight of Global History, at least in its more recent forms, has been the critique of nation-centred historiography and of Eurocentrism in the context of globalising experiences.[40] The universalist agenda of global history has encountered an interesting counterforce: interest in its research agenda is unevenly spread, as Ghobrial has argued with reference to Arab historians, who are still preoccupied with the writing of national(ist) historiographies. He is also critical of a pitfall of a globalist agenda which might neglect local events, contexts, and sources in its drive to widen geographical units.[41] While one would probably need to somewhat nuance Ghobrial's concern in light of new approaches to global history, his empirical finding about a regionally very disparate interest in global history remains valid. It would be interesting to further investigate to what extent the interest in global scales in history and translocal anthropology can be correlated with the stakes that different countries and regions have in the current wave of political and economic globalisation.

An interest in connectivities and entanglements must, of course, be sensitive to inequalities and hierarchies within and without the relevant 'worlds' or units of observation.[42] This means that it might reveal more layers of differential power and influence than the standard Saidian critique of Orientalist writing would suggest. It is probably more appropriate to think of

> globalization as a set of contradictory bundles of social and discursive practices of hegemony, rather than a uniform and ubiquitous process that simultaneously haunts the whole world. Globalizations, in the plural, then include top-down projects and processes

38 See, for example, Schramm 2020, Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder 2018, the contributions in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 45;3, 2019, Schielke 2020.

39 De Vito 2019.

40 Conrad 2016, 1–6; 162–84, for a broader definition of global history ibid. 62–89.

41 Ghorbrial 2019, 9f. This means by no way that he would subscribe to views that Global history is "a ruse of the mighty and powerful", Conrad 2016, 189, but simply that he and others are pointing to other priorities in history writing.

42 Conrad and Eckert 2007, 23–24.

> put forward by multi-located and conflicting elites, as much as multiple 'counter-global networks' emerging from below.[43]

How, the contributors to this volume ask, do Muslims shape translocal spaces with or without religious connotations, how do they envisage Islam in political contexts, and how do they react to, adopt, or appropriate new internationalising norms and ideas in different contexts? They thus take the discursive and pragmatic agency embedded in the term Muslim worlds, i.e. the ways and potentialities of diverse world-making, as an angle of analysis, rather than the homogenising notion of an 'Islamic world' that centres on religion at the expense of all other aspects of life.[44]

This becomes clear, for example, in the very different contexts of the chapters by Kempen, Frede, Haniffa, Scheele, and Sounaye. They show in an exemplary way how international power differentials, cultural and religious labels, but also different locations of economic and political power within and beyond states shape the relevant Muslim 'worlds'. At the same time, they also highlight that we cannot conceive of such Muslim 'worlds' without taking into account what happens beyond their Islamically connoted horizon, however small or large the cases are. This holds true whether we are talking about very small and localised case studies, or larger transnational contexts.[45]

Although not thematised in this volume, it is important to realise that the observation that Muslim 'worlds' can never be considered in isolation also holds true in the inverse sense, i.e. what occurs in Muslim 'worlds' also impacts those who would not consider themselves to belong to this realm. This is as true for religious actors taking cues from one another in their competition for audiences as it is for political relations or for definitions of the self and the 'Other'.[46] It should be clear by now that 'Muslim worlds' are, in such a scenario, a heuristic device, rather than referring to objective and static entities. They are designed by the theoretical interest of the observer, not by some absolute reality.[47]

43 De Vito 2019, 370.

44 For a deeper discussion of this see Schielke 2010.

45 De Vries 2019, 24.

46 Ibrahim 2017, McBrien 2017, Green 2011, Bunt 2018.

47 On this see Schmidt-Wellenburg, 2020 and Kauppi 2020, 46–47.

Towards a non-hegemonic approach

By foregrounding local perspectives and interpretations, this volume goes against the grain of predominant conceptual, historical, and geographical research repertoires that assume the centrality of the global North in the historical process since the 19th century, which is often described as 'globalisation'. Its authors take local perspectives and conceptualisations seriously, rather than assuming a singular and homogenous Muslim world.[48]

So how can we speak about Muslim worlds? Ever since the call for 'provincialising Europe', i.e. for considering the European experience as one among many strands of human experience and thus for no longer considering European experiences and concepts as paradigmatic, this question has gained in acuteness. This was not merely a recognition of the impact of colonialism but, at a much more profound level, deeply linked to fundamental questions regarding the production of knowledge about non-Western societies (and ultimately, about knowledge production in general) within a global postcolonial scenario.[49] This begins with the ways in which not only notions of the religious and the secular, but whole academic disciplines, and particularly those dealing with non-Western and non-Christian societies, were formed. In the process of ordering scholarly disciplines in Western academia in the 19th and early 20th centuries, anthropology was given the task to deal with the sociology of societies deemed to be lacking literate traditions, while Oriental Studies dealt with literate non-Western societies, and sociology with Western societies.[50] These disciplines produced the major approaches and concepts which are still in use to describe and analyse societies today. This raises fundamental philosophical and political questions about the adequacy of Western concepts for non-Western societies, or about the context in which concepts coined for non-Western societies were developed, resulting in questions about their adequacy and concerns about hegemony.

The multiple inequalities between and within different knowledge systems, from status and recognition to available means for research and language, place

48 See some of the points in more detail in Freitag 2013.

49 See Chakrabarty 2000.

50 Masuzawa 2005, 19 and Mignolo 2009, 171, and for International Relations Derichs 2017, 14f. For the debate about history, see in particular Chakrabarty 2000, but also the critical challenges to his position, e.g. by Argyrou 2001, Kaiwar 2014, notably 156–222, and 301–75, respectively.

very real obstacles to meaningful engagement on an equal footing.[51] Essentialising categories stand in the way of exchanges between researchers from different systems. They threaten to overshadow debates about Islam among Muslims, notably in geopolitically charged contexts such as the West African one discussed in the chapters by Frede, Sounaye, Scheele, or in diasporic contexts such as that of Asian communities in Dubai, as discussed by Mato Bouzas and Stephan-Emmrich.[52]

Not only proponents of decolonial theory argue that the choice of terminology and concepts already assumes a hegemony of (Western) knowledge, which is deeply rejected by proponents of a delinking from Western epistemology.[53] Connell argues that far beyond a quest for "indigenous knowledge systems" which might boost specific postcolonial identity politics, there exists an enormous wealth of conceptual, methodological, and theoretical thought which is normally ignored in Western – and often also in 'Southern' – academia.[54] Numerous authors have emphasised the importance of heightened reflexivity when conducting field- and archival work, not only on one's own positionality, but also with regard to the categories we use, the choice of objects of knowledge and research practices.[55] In this demand, both social scientists and microhistorians concur.[56] In anthropology, fieldwork has for a long time become associated with a "self-conscious shifting of social and geographical location", enabling researchers to engage in precisely this kind of fundamental rethinking by engaging with the situatedness of knowledge and building bridges between different types of knowledges.[57] This is, in a next step when it comes to academic practice, then also linked to questions about the 'ownership' of knowledge, access to research outcomes and the need for a much humbler approach to knowledge by academics. Indeed, the widespread study in Western universities and the international systems of accreditation, often performed by specialised institutions or universities in the West on a global scale, result in an increasing standardisation on the basis of Western approaches and, often enough, sources at the cost of neglecting local resources for knowledge production. For example, it is striking to observe that a large number of non-Western theses about local

51 Amir-Moazami 2018, 13–19.

52 On such internal debates e.g. Hirji 2010.

53 E.g. Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 105–52.

54 Connell 2017, 8, for "South" as an exclusively relational category, see Comaroff and Comaroff 2012.

55 Santos 2018, 28f, De Vito 2019, 360f. For International Relations, see Derichs 2017, 162f.

56 Schmidt-Wellenburg and Bernhard 2020, 18, De Vito 2019, 371f.

57 Gupta and Ferguson 2008, 97f.

histories are exclusively based on imperial documents, instead of attempting to locate and use local sources.

While the call for a serious integration of local knowledge into our conceptual repertoire is well-taken, the case of the project of the Islamisation of Knowledge demonstrates some of the difficulties that may be encountered. Abaza reminds us that this project was very much linked to the rejection of Orientalism, by which it was hence strongly, albeit adversely, influenced. What is more important is that the project, which itself has a postcolonial and globalising agenda with particularly strong proponents in Malaysia and the US, is fuelled by Gulf money. Thus, it has itself become an expression of hegemonic ambitions within Islamic thought. Furthermore, proponents of this project overlook or deny that Islamic knowledge is itself deeply embedded in global interactions. Inadvertently, it thus resembles the very Western epistemology which it rejects, in perplexing ways by its search for an exclusivist identity.[58] Wedeen's dictum that "scholarly work and policy exist in the same semiotic world", formulated in the context of a critical study of US political science pertaining to the Middle East, certainly could be as much applied to the project of Islamisation of knowledge as to her initial object of study.[59]

Is there a way out of the conundrum to either stick to the current social science and humanities tools, to replace them by an entirely new system or possibly to even accept that there will be many divergent scientific approaches? This would mean to abandon attempts at arriving at understandings which transcend particular societies or even groups. This question goes to a central issue in the debate about post- and decoloniality which in itself is extremely heterogeneous.[60]

There are no ready answers, given the different levels at which these problems are situated and how difficult it is to rethink our analytical toolbox.[61] In order to at least mitigate the problem of conceptual Eurocentrism, we attribute particular importance to local concepts and categories in full awareness of the fact that these are, as demonstrated with regard to the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project, themselves often contested.[62] Far from reducing them to

58 Abaza 2000, c.f. Marfleet 2000, 29, Derichs 2017, 25, and 33–59.

59 Wedeen 2016, 59, c.f. Anderson 2016, 233.

60 Beyond the debate on Chakrabarty, mentioned earlier, see also the intervention by Butler, Laclau, and Žižek 2000.

61 The notion of an abyssal line separating North and South was first formulated by Frantz Fanon and then taken up again by Santos who speaks of epistemicide by "the Eurocentric modern sciences", Santos 2018, 20f.

62 Riecken 2019, 328–36 on conceptual Eurocentrism, c.f. Derichs 2017, 167.

"native epistemologies",[63] in our understanding, more systematic attempts need to be made to, first of all, grasp local (emic) concepts and categories. Some authors have decided to focus on similar practices which might have yielded comparable results, for example when it comes to understandings of how people can accommodate strangers in their midst.[64] A careful consideration of how such practices relate to, are in tension with, or can be fruitfully aligned with the established (Western) academic vocabulary can help us to globalise, expand and modify our analytical vocabulary. Obviously, this demands a careful, historically sensitive process of epistemic translation in order to "reveal their contextual embeddedness".[65] Appiah has aptly called this "thick translation" in reference to Geertz' call for a "thick", i.e. analytically enriched, description.[66] In a slightly different take, Diagne argues that we might not be able to express the universal in a common conceptual language.[67] Like Appiah, he promotes the idea of translation as a way towards an understanding of "the universal in a world liberated from the assumption of a universal grammar and the narrative of a unique *telos*".[68] In his work on Swahili Muslim Publics, Kresse convincingly demonstrates how such a culturally sensitive process of what might be called approximative translation can be imagined, which would also have to include reference to conventions of intonation, but also to social practices.[69]

Most of the practitioners of different disciplines in this volume do not address these fundamental conceptual questions, even though most would probably be able to agree on the existing tensions and on universality as an aspirational horizon which recognises the existing particularities.[70] They do, however, share our belief in the importance of close and sustained cooperation between academics from different scholarly traditions and with diverse linguistic and regional backgrounds and expertise, as well as in exchanges between activists and academics. Only such exchanges, we argue, can contribute to overcoming or at least mitigating some of the epistemological blockades and limitations evident in older approaches to the study of humankind. This requires many

63 Conrad 2016, 195.

64 Freitag 2020.

65 Derichs 2017, 3, ibid., 1–7, for a succinct discussion of the problem at hand.

66 Appiah 1993, particularly 817–19, Hermans 2003. Again, a wide variety of approaches in practice emerge, see, for example, the more action-oriented approach in Santos 2018.

67 C.f. Jackson 1–26.

68 Diagne 2013, para 23.

69 Kresse 2018, 10–27, a similar approach, albeit on a more explicitly comparative scale, informs Freitag's discussion of cosmopolitanism (Freitag 2020).

70 Zerilli 2002. Vatin, 2015, formulates one such quest to move forward.

instances of un- and re-thinking, and a distinct willingness to engage critically with central tenets of academic methodology.[71]

The composition of contributors to this volume mirrors this approach which is also at the heart of research at ZMO. Sustained cooperation built on reciprocity, trust, communication and fairness, based on rules of good academic practice, can contribute to a research agenda reflecting interests of researchers of different backgrounds.[72] Such cooperation, we argue, helps to continuously challenge many of the naturalised assumptions, theoretical conceptions and practices of academics from different environments while, at the same time, it is also building research alliances beyond traditional research environments. Anderson relates a crucial moment in her academic career which illustrates the fundamentally important dimension of such cooperation: She recalls how her Tunisian adviser questioned some of the underlying assumptions which had prompted her to propose the study of peasantry, thereby revealing the close connections between this project and wider US political concerns at the time. She also emphasises the importance of the encounters with Tunisian and Libyan colleagues for altering her perspectives, and making her take note of what she alone "would never have seen".[73] Her experience mirrors that of many of us who had the good fortune of similar encounters and collaborative undertakings.

The sections of this book

The contributions to this volume are organised into three sections, namely 'Making translocal Muslim spaces', 'Defining and controlling Islam in the nation-state', and 'Claiming and translating norms and ideas'. As will become evident in the brief introduction of the contributions that follows, these sections are not mutually exclusive, but rather focus on what we consider to be the articles' core contributions.

71 Even if one does not follow Santos 2018, 107–207 in everything, the call for a re-examination of methodology is well-taken.

72 This list is inspired by Messner, Guarín, and Haun 2013, 15–22, which is used by Derichs 2017, 176f. The issue at stake here is not global cooperation but fruitful collegiality in a small and relatively sheltered research environment, their criteria describe well the ground rules for cooperation, even though their translation into practice can prove challenging.

73 Anderson 2019, 442.

Making translocal Muslim spaces

Global intellectual, spiritual, and labour networks (have) manifest(ed) themselves in a plethora of translocal Muslim spaces. Even though Islam was, and is, not always at the centre of these interactions, it remains a latent resource for building trusting relationships, claiming authority, and negotiating identity and Muslimness, as the four chapters in this section explore. They engage with the actual formation and maintenance of translocal spaces, which are historically contingent and, we argue, need to be based on concrete practices.

The case studies investigated by Mato Bouzas and Stephan-Emmrich illustrate the making of translocal spaces by investigating distinct practices of migration, support networks, and the circulation of thoughtful charitable gifts. In these cases, translocality results from labour migration to the Gulf; in Mato Bouzas' case from the Baltistan region in north-eastern Pakistan, and in Stephan-Emmrich's from Tajikistan. In both instances, Islam emerges as an important emotional and ideational bond that strongly enhances and gives meaning to the practices described. Mato Bouzas' case, namely that of development aid, is based on specifically Shi'i networks. In Stephan-Emmrich's case, the Tajik migrants' perception of the Gulf as an ideal space of Sunni Islam crosscuts ethnic and linguistic affinities and, at the same time, forges bonds that veil unequal work relations.

Mato Bouzas' article differentiates between the translocal Muslim connections by exploring the intricacies of intra-Shi'i interactions with 'the Other'.[74] One of its dimensions is the clash, within the translocal Shi'i network, of regionally different notions of morality. Thus, beyond creating bonds, this cooperation also enhances notions of difference, hierarchy, and – eventually – opportunity. In this particular case, the relevant units are Baltistan and Kuwait (and/or 'the Gulf'). An obvious cause of hierarchy is the wealth differential — possibly bolstered by a claim to more authentic religious knowledge on the side of the Arab nationals on the Peninsula.[75] While this is – to some degree – speculative in the case of Mato Bouzas' paper, it comes out very clearly in the one by Stephan-Emmrich. She deals with the gifting of high-quality copies of the Quran by Gulf charities (in her case mostly from Dubai) to migrants from Central Asia. This missionary work not only carries spiritual rewards, it also helps to establish a hegemonic understanding of an Arab Islam among a population that

74 For a comparable case study, in this case referring to Kerala, see Osella and Osella 2010.

75 This can be linked to the strengthening of a more Arabocentric identity in Gulf societies, for this see Onley 2005, 62.

seemingly easily shifts between the Persianate and the Arab 'culturescapes'. This almost quintessential manifestation of 'material religion' also transmits a project of political influence and the ideal notion of a socio-economic hegemonic project, the model of Dubai.[76] Quite obviously, both the hegemonic message as well as the reminder of the migratory process also hints at the many painful processes and experiences involved in labour migration — a reminder that translocal linkages are not, in and of themselves, a positive phenomenon.

Wien's chapter moves us to consider a quite different situation, namely that of two transnational migrants. Nur Hamada, the main female protagonist, was a Syrian Druze feminist who, together with her brother Amin, perhaps best described as an impresario with poetic inclinations, travelled the US and Europe before, and disappearing from the records by 1940. Wien investigates how these two characters that he – following Goebel and Brubaker – describes as 'ethno-political entrepreneurs', managed to play on American and European imaginations of Islam, both by converts and by Christians or agnostics. This illustrates yet a different context, namely that of Western societies in which Muslims were, at the time, still a more or less exotic minority attracting a specific group of admirers and followers among the artistically inclined bourgeoisie while, at the same time, starting to build a basic infrastructure of faith.[77] Wien makes an important point which links his contribution to those by Mato Bouzas in this, and Kempen in the last section, namely that Muslimness was very much defined in interaction both with other Muslims and with non-Muslims.

Defining and controlling Islam in the nation-state

While translocal space continues to play a certain role in this second section, its focus shifts to the often-uneasy relationship between nation-states, Islamic institutions and ordinary Muslims. In the current international order, the naturalised – albeit by no means natural – nation-state remains the internationally condoned unit of political organisation. The four chapters illustrate in different

76 On the strong influence of Dubai as an iconic model, see chapters 2, and 18–21 in Wippel, Bromber, Steiner, and Krawietz 2014; for the notion of and importance of 'material mediation', see Meyer 2003.

77 Famous examples of such converts in Europe are Muhammad Asad (orig. Leopold Weiss), Esad Bey (orig. Lev Nussimbaum, aka Kurban Said) and Hugo Marcus. Studies about the latter by Windhager 2002, Reiss 2005 and Baer 2020 also reveal something of the imaginations linked to Islam, whereas the contributions in Nordbruch and Ryad 2014 concentrate more on the religious and scholarly aspects.

ways how difficult it is to contain and discipline the potentially universal claims of an imagined affective community as well as those of powerful international organisations and players such as the European Union.

The first three contributions are set in the West African Sahel (Sounaye) and, more specifically, in Mauritania (Frede) and Mali (Scheele). As Sounaye shows, current contestations in the region unfold in a context of increased transnational Jihadism and, in response, a securitisation strongly supported by France and the European Union. The latter has been coupled, on an ideological level, with programmes of de-radicalisation supported by international organisations that target jihadists as radicalised, misguided individuals. These are persecuted and, when arrested, sometimes offered programmes of re-education and reintegration.

The contributions by Frede and Scheele engage with the same context. Frede demonstrates how the wider perspectives on Islam in the Sahel translate into a contestation over a particular Mauritanian institution, the *mahdara*, a local version of an (advanced) Quranic school. She traces how an established institution of Islamic learning, which is more socially inclusive than state institutions, has found itself at the centre-stage of state and public debates around Islam, and inspired attempts by different sides to influence the curricula. As a consequence, Frede argues, Islam becomes ever more politicised and divorced from its spiritual foundations. Scheele draws even nearer in scale of observation by moving to the local level of northern Mali – and indeed beyond Mali – as the national boundaries on the very fringes of the Sahara are not the only ones that are important, since many of the actors concerned hold multiple nationalities. Here, the "horizon of affect" or, perhaps more aptly, horizons of kinship and genealogy seem far more relevant than state bureaucracies in which the local actors have few stakes.[78] Similar to Stephan-Emmrich's case study in the last section, Islam, in Scheele's perspective, is one idiom in which regional and transregional struggles are couched, but also an idiom which allows to overcome genealogical and ethnic divisions.

El Guabli engages, like Frede, with a context in which the state attempts to domesticate Islam and monopolise its interpretation. The chapter is set in the period when the so-called 'Years of Lead', i.e. of authoritarian rule in Morocco, were finally discussed critically in public (ca. 1998–2018) and an official process of reconciliation was institutionalised through the work of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission between 2004 and 2006 to establish the facts about state violence, and compensate its victims and their surviving relatives. El Guabli

78 Brandel and Randeria 2018, 75f.

notes how Islamist victims of this violence have been almost systematically overlooked in the formal process as well as in public debates. In a discursive process of 'compensating' for this absence of a group which is still at odds with important tenets of the state-defined version of Islam, there has been an attempt at 'Islamising' some of the existing memories. Guabli identifies a hitherto untapped archive of Islamist memory and calls for further critical examinations of these politically distinct visions discernible in national memory.

Taken together, the contributions call for a more structured reflection on the many overlapping political and affective geographies. What is the role of the nation state in a constellation where international governmental actors (such as the EU, UN, Islamic organisations, or external nation states), and formal non-governmental actors (such as development agencies, but also religious associations of various kinds) rival the nation state, and where the latter is also challenged by local or regional actors such as ethnic or kinship groups which might or might not be bounded by the borders of the nation-state? The question of the state's legitimacy and ability to mediate or intervene as well as different models of participation and deliberation, seem to play an important role for the ways in which these relations play out, both in the Muslim majority and Muslim minority contexts discussed. Recent debates about governance in areas of limited statehood seem to offer a range of possible insights not only into the conflict constellations but also into historical modes and current conditions of mediating at least some of the effects. While "limited statehood" already takes the normative model of the state as its starting point, the recognition of non-state 'civil' actors and an extension of the notion of governance offer some prospects with regard to rethinking politics in such contexts.[79] In view of the multitude of translocal and transnational Muslim actors and organisations, the nation-state's attempts to define and control 'Islam' are likely to be transient at best, unless that state arrives at achieving wide-spread legitimacy while, at the same time, imposing (its version of) Islam as the most relevant affective community. Given Scheele's insistence on how 'Islam' has become discursively superimposed on and entangled with other possible ways of constructing community, such a development would seem very far off indeed, notably given the often authoritarian nature of states which are engaged in such enterprises.[80]

79 See the contributions in Risse, Börzel, and Draude 2018, notably sections III, IV, and VI.

80 For a current example, see the attempts in Saudi Arabia to impose 'moderate Islam'. To what extent the somewhat idealistic principles outlined in Bamyeh 2004 would offer an alternative, goes beyond the scope of this work.

Claiming and translating norms and ideas

The last section explores the intersections of hegemonic, globalised norms and local sense-making or indigenisation of concepts, especially when contradicting values are at stake. Casini's chapter takes us to a modern genre — the novel. By introducing three major works, he discusses not only developments in the genre since the early 20th century, but also how the genre's evolution mirrors changing concepts of political and religious order. This historicises, in an important way, notions of permanence – notably in connection with religion – and thus opens the view onto visions of world and order by the authors. The notions range, in brief, from a socio-political modernisation framed in an Islamic vocabulary of *shari'a* to religion as a social force in the novels of Tawfiq al-Hakim and Naguib Mahfuz. The last novel is set in Kuwait. It mirrors the concerns of some of the earlier chapters with translocally connected Muslim sectarianism that seems to challenge the nation state. Beyond demonstrating the literary development in its wider Arab and international context, the reflection of current concerns in these novels points to the wider circulations of models, arguments, and ideas. In a somewhat disturbing manner, it also seems to reflect the dangers of particular postcolonial approaches which tend to emphasise the separate identities of disadvantaged groups.

Haniffa takes us to the context of the Muslim minority in Sri Lanka after the long-lasting Civil War (1983–2009). She shows how the Muslim community is struggling at two fronts: While a process based on global notions of post-conflict reconciliation was initiated between the Sinhalese majority and the defeated Tamil population in the North of the island, the Muslim population, dispersed across most regions and not really a party to the war, has been confronted with a growing anti-Muslim sentiment. The image of Muslims is that of a militant minority, leading once again to a discourse of securitisation. Internally, the Muslim community is torn in many different directions, quite in line with developments in the wider Muslim discursive and organisational universe.[81] Haniffa critically discusses how the All Ceylon Jamiathul Ulema has tried to establish a unified discourse in order to secure its own leadership and the recognition of Muslims on the national scale. This process, however, occurred at the cost of imposing rather rigid and conservative politics which had dire consequences, for example for women's rights

Kempen's chapter takes us to a very new phenomenon, or rather one which is new in terms of its framing and public articulation, namely the LGBTQIA+

81 This formulation borrows Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition (Asad 2009).

community in Jordan and in the wider Arab world and diaspora. The Amman-based online magazine, *My.Kali*, explicitly serves a translocal, Arabophone queer community, and adopts positions formulated in a clearly globalised context. It is itself an expression of how gay rights' activists are challenging hegemonic gender norms and concepts in the Middle East. Beyond local resistance, this LGBTQIA+ community is also confronted with Western perceptions of Muslim homophobia which are shared by LGBTQIA+ activists in the West. On the basis of selected articles, Kempen outlines how, in such a complicated constellation, activists insist on their right to appropriate the discourse on LGBTQIA+ rights as well as Islam. They thus show one more facet of an Islam which is subject to different interpretations, internal struggles over interpretation, and can absorb of social questions and problems which might have long-existed without being framed, or conceived, as challenging the existing moral order.

The final chapter of this book is by Abdulkader Tayob and engages, once again, explicitly with Islamic Studies. He expresses a distinct unease with post-colonial readings of Islam which, he argues, tend to gloss over international inequalities and structures of domination. For example, Tayob demonstrates how attempts to stress Muslim agency tend to overshadow old and new hegemonies. Engaging with recent scholarship by, who he calls, 'insider exiles', scholars who are part of the Islamic tradition but at the same time master the Western academic repertoire, he argues in favour of a strand of scholarship which puts an emphasis on ethics. Moreover, he makes an important point about the need to forego the distinction between 'objective outsiders' (i.e. non-Muslim scholars of Islam) and 'committed believing scholars' by stressing the crucial contribution of the latter. He thereby also lays bare one of the many blind spots common among Western academic practitioners: While an acknowledgement of positionality by now is the standard lore of scholars, hegemonic reflexes still distinguish between the positionality of 'objective outsiders' and 'believers'. If we want to advance truly in our understanding of the manifold facets of Islam and Muslim worlds, we do not only need to put them in a broader and comparative perspective, we also have to form a scholarly community which transcends these (and other) false boundaries.

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