

Education in Islam—Myths and Truths

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After announcing a call for papers for a special issue on “Islam and Education—Myths and Truths,” *Comparative Education Review (CER)* received 34 submissions. This unusually high turnout signals, no doubt, more than scholarly interest in the topic. Noteworthy about these submissions was that many authors mentioned 9/11 directly or indirectly, that several dealt with the madrasas in various parts of the Islamic world today, and that the overwhelming majority of manuscripts treated education in the modern and contemporary Islamic countries. This indicates clearly that the interest in the topic is broad and has a sense of urgency related to the current political situation on the global level and in terms of the relationship between the Islamic world and the West. Another feature of many of these submissions was the authors’ sense that there was a great deal of inaccuracy or even sensationalism about Islamic education in the Western media and in the statements by policy makers and journalists. The authors wished, thus, to set the record straight by providing accurate, documented information, based on the use of reliable, scientific methodologies.

It was impossible to publish all these submissions in this issue of *CER* for many reasons, not the least of which was the maximum possible size of any issue of *CER*. Thus, after a lengthy process of vetting and peer review, the nine studies included in this volume were selected by the two guest editors, Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh. A few others, whose completion could not meet the journal’s deadline, will likely appear in later issues of *CER*. We are grateful to the Spencer Foundation for a grant that made possible the extra pages in this issue and allowed us to publish as many articles as we did.

Nine studies obviously cannot satisfy the wide interest in education in Islam, let alone cover the achievements of Muslim scholars and educators over almost a millennium and a half, from the beginning of Islamicate civilization until today. These studies, however, like others published elsewhere, are a start. The studies in this issue touch on education in medieval, modern, and contemporary Islam. They cover different areas of the Islamic world, from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Pakistan to Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco. Their authors discuss both theory and application. The contributions show the great diversity in forms of Islamic education. And they are methodologically quite varied, using censuses, statistics, surveys, field research, historical reconstruction, or a combination thereof. What these studies could not provide is the thread that joins them together and indicates where each of them fits in the larger history of education in Islam. That is

what I will attempt to do in this editorial. For that purpose, a periodization has to be created for the topic.

Periodization, any periodization, is risky for any study in any field, as scholars know. It is even riskier when one is dealing with an enormously large geographical area, whose peoples speak different languages, have innumerable cultures, and over the centuries have undergone varied historical experiences. However, the usefulness of periodization is unquestionable. In the particular case of education in Islam, the utility is increased, and periodization becomes an urgent exercise, due to the absence of a comprehensive study of this topic. What will be proposed here, thus, represents a beginning and not by any means a final word on it. In the course of presenting my vision of the development of education in Islamic societies, I will try to elaborate on areas not covered by the articles in this issue and touch more briefly on the areas discussed in depth by contributors, allowing their voices rather than mine to be heard. Since the premodern period is covered only by one article, I shall devote much of this editorial to it.

In a way, education could be envisioned as one of the cornerstones of Islamicate civilization and its backbone, Islam. Although Islam emerged in a largely illiterate society on the Arabian Peninsula, the scripture that lay at its foundation, the Qur'an, called itself, among other things, "The Book," and its study was made incumbent upon Muslims. More generally, seeking knowledge was encouraged in the Qur'an and in numerous traditions (hadiths) of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, as well as his actions. As Muslim society grew exponentially as a result of swift conquests and slow but steady conversion, the place of knowledge in that society also grew in a unique way.¹ The result was the foundation of a diversified, vibrant civilization, that acted as an inspiration to a large sector of the inhabitants of the *oikoumene* then, and that made room for the efflorescence of the secular in the midst of the religious. Books, in manuscript form, traveled from Samarqand to Córdoba within months of their publication; whole markets of booksellers emerged in all urban centers; scholars traveled enormous distances and endured real hardships "in search of knowledge"; compilation was viewed almost as a form of worship; and litterateurs sang the praises of books. Because of that, expressions of things educational abounded from the earliest days of Islamicate civilization, beginning thereby the first, and longest, stage of education in Islam, the largely independent, premodern stage that extended from the first years of Islam in the seventh century until the nineteenth century.

In this stage, education was articulated in two forms: institutions and compilations. Both derived their inspiration from indigenous Islamic needs, experiences, and accomplishments. Let me begin with the institutions. By

¹ See Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

far the most widespread and important of them were the *kuttab*, the mosque, and the madrasa.

The *kuttab* (place of writing; also called a *maktab*) arose in the first Islamic century (or AH, corresponding to the seventh of the Common Era, or CE), providing elementary education in specific quarters outside of the mosque, possibly adjacent to a mosque but also possibly in the open air or in a tent. The subjects taught at the *kuttab* varied from place to place but included memorization and recitation of the Qur'an, reading, writing, spelling, vowelizing letters, arithmetic, and some basic religious duties, like the rules of ablutions and prayer. The *kuttab* was run by a teacher, called in Arabic a *mu'allim*. The *mu'allim* taught all year round, except for holidays and special occasions. The ages of the pupils varied, since attendance was voluntary, and so a pupil might spend 5 years or more in a *kuttab*. The teacher normally agreed with the pupils' parents on a particular sum of money that would constitute his wages, and, if the number of pupils became large, the teacher might go into partnership with other teachers. The teacher would himself pay for fodder for his mule and also for rent on the place in which he would teach, although he might enter into an agreement with the pupils' parents whereby they would pay that rent. Should the pupils' parents offer the teacher a present on the occasion of one feast or another, like the Prophet's birthday, the teacher could accept it. The teacher's duties included examining the pupils' writing boards and calling their attention to any errors in them. On some evenings, the teacher tested the pupils' mastery of Qur'an memorization one by one, although he might test them in twos or threes if he deemed that appropriate. When the pupil had completed the recitation of the entire Qur'an, he was given an award. The weekly day of recess was Friday. In the Maghreb, however, Thursday was also a holiday, whence its nickname *khamis al-talib* (the pupil's Thursday). Contrary to the scholars who taught at mosques, teachers of the *kuttab* were generally not accorded a high social status, although the usefulness of their profession was universally acknowledged. In modern times, the need for *kuttabs* as a means for elementary education has been severely eclipsed by public and other schools. Many *kuttabs*, however, survived thanks to the generosity of philanthropists, the attempts at reforming the *kuttab's* curriculum and assets, or the desire by various groups to inculcate in the youth an anticolonial spirit. The *kuttab* survived in the form of Qur'anic schools, as seen in this issue of *CER* in the article by Sobhi Tawil.

The mosque (*masjid*, or place of prostration), the quintessential Islamic institution of worship, doubled almost from the start as a place of teaching, thus becoming the oldest and most ubiquitous institution of learning in Islam. Teaching in mosques was normally initiated informally by learned religious scholars who were able to share their knowledge with others. The students (*talib*, pl. *talaba* or *tullab*; Persian *taleban*), always adults, attended classes in

study circles (*halqa*, also called *majlis*, sit-up place) created around scholars (*'alim*, pl. *'ulama'*; also *shaykh*, pl. *shuyukh*, masters) specialized in religious knowledge (*'ilm*). This knowledge covered a number of disciplines: the Qur'an and its ancillary disciplines, especially exegesis; hadith, with its sub-disciplines; law and its sources; theology and dogma; the auxiliary disciplines connected with Arabic language, including poetry and oratory; and later also some of the "foreign" sciences, especially logic and later medicine. The circles were open to all, of all ages, and had an informal structure. The students had great freedom in choosing what classes, or circles, they wished to attend, and the choice was often wide, not only in terms of subjects taught but also in terms of educational level. Those who aspired to be leaders in any of the disciplines would attend many circles, work on their own, and "travel in search of knowledge" (*al-rihla fi talab al-'ilm*) for as long as they wished, until they earned sufficient recognition by the leading scholars of their day. In the early period, this recognition was expressed orally; soon, however, it became more formalized and took the form of a written *ijaza*, that is, a license from the professor to the student to teach the materials that he had learned with him. Neither teachers nor students received any regular pay in early Islam, although the teachers were paid in some cases, and this practice eventually became customary. In addition, the students had no residence connected with their studies within the mosque's structure. Mosques could gain lofty reputations and become very influential: often armed with adjunct libraries from gifts and bequests, and illustrious teachers from all over the Islamic world, they attracted scores of bright and dedicated students who eventually became leading men of learning in Islamicate civilization. The oldest mosque to play this role was, as expected, the Prophet's mosque in Medina: it was in there that several Companions of the Prophet taught shortly after his death. Outside of Arabia, the oldest and most well-known mosques were the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and Umayyad mosque in Damascus, both founded toward the end of the first Islamic century (seventh century CE). In the Maghreb, the Qarawiyyin mosque in Fez was founded in AH 245/859 CE, while the Zaytuna mosque in Tunis was founded in AH 250/864 CE. But the mosque that was to become the most influential educational institution in Sunni Islam was the Azhar mosque, founded in Cairo in AH 363/972 CE. In the Shi'i world, the most influential mosques include the Imam 'Ali mosque at Najaf, Iraq, founded in AH 368/977 CE.

By the tenth century CE, social and scholarly needs led to the emergence of the third enduring Islamic educational institution, the madrasa (place of study), alongside the mosque. From the eleventh century, madrasas were built by members of the ruling elite and soon became the ubiquitous colleges of Islam, starting most famously with the standard-setting network of Nizamiyya madrasas built by the vizier of the Seljuks, Nizam al-Mulk, first in Baghdad in AH 459/1067 CE, then elsewhere in the Islamic East.

In many ways, madrasas were similar to mosques. Both offered education to adults from the postelementary level to the advanced level, and in both this education was essentially religious. Teachings encompassed law and its subdisciplines but also the usual fields of Qur'an and its sciences, hadith, theology, and dogma, and sometimes Sufism (i.e., Islamic mysticism), in addition to some "foreign" sciences, such as medicine and astronomy. But in almost every other respect, the madrasa differed from the mosque, essentially because it was an institution created expressly for the purpose of education. This difference affected its funding, architecture, organization, staff, faculty, students, and curriculum.

Almost all madrasas in the premodern stage of education in Islam were funded by endowments (*awqaf*, *ahbas*) provided by their founders, who exerted enormous patronage control over them. Patrons decided whether to open madrasas for the teaching of all legal rites (*madhahb*, pl. *madhahib*) or to restrict them to one, and these patrons were sometimes honored by being buried in mausoleums within the madrasas. The endowments of the madrasas varied considerably in size and educational scope, depending on the wealth and goals of the endower. But, since most madrasas were founded by influential people in power—viziers, sultans and caliphs, albeit sometimes also by wealthy philanthropists, some of them women—most madrasas could depend on substantial revenues that would keep them functioning for a long time. Endowments might consist of shops, mills, houses, baths, pieces of land, or all of these. The proceeds of working or renting these places were used to cover all expenses of the madrasa, from the employees' wages to the cost of replacing the madrasa's furniture and repairing its buildings. Endowments in the form of books sometimes started, or boosted, a madrasa's library, and the libraries of madrasas often vied with, or surpassed, the libraries of mosques. Architecturally, many madrasas were gems of Islamic art, as one can still see today in the Sulaymaniyya complex in Istanbul, the Sultan Hasan madrasa in Cairo, and the Ulug Beg madrasa in Samarqand. In the Shi'ite world, the Hawza complex in Najaf and the sanctuary at Qom, Iran, are perhaps the best known. Unconstrained by the architectural restrictions of the mosque, and constructed at the peak of the self-confidence of Islamic civilization, madrasas were often showcases for the power of their founders, some having baths, hospitals, kitchens, fountains, running water, lush gardens, magnificent facades, domes, and multiple buildings. One of those buildings would be the madrasa's own mosque, which was in some areas differentiated from the public mosque by the lack of a minaret (as is the case in the Maghreb). If a madrasa did not have its own mosque, it would have a prayer hall.

What made the madrasa unique, architecturally and otherwise, was its identity as an educational institution. In this it was, unlike the mosque in its primary conception, organized, formal, and, above all, residential (although

some mosques did later become partially residential). As such, the madrasa had an administrative structure, a defined body of residents, and a distinct curriculum. All madrasas had three basic categories of residents: the staff, the faculty, and the students, each of which had to be accommodated in the madrasa's architecture.

Despite variations between madrasas, the staff of the madrasa, whose wages were provided by the madrasa's endowment, was composed of an imam who led the prayers, a muezzin who was in charge of calling to prayer, a custodian (*qayyim*) who cared for the madrasa's mats, lamps, and general cleanliness, and a gatekeeper (*bawwab*), whose task was opening and closing the madrasa's gate at the appropriate times and granting entry permission to its visitors. Other staff members were the *waqqad* (probably the person in charge of heating), the supervisor of the endowment (*nazir al-waqf*), the cashier (*al-qabid*), and the witness (*shahid*). When the madrasa was large and had a substantial endowment, then it would have several imams, muezzins, custodians, and so on.

The faculty of the madrasa, who could be quite numerous in large madrasas, were, like the scholars teaching in mosques, specialized scholars in the various fields of Islamic and Arabic studies. Unlike the scholars, however, the faculty were salaried right from the early days of the madrasa, with their income supplied by the madrasa's endowment. Some of these faculty were honored by gifts and robes of honor from the political elite. Some, more importantly, had handsomely endowed chairs. Because of that, teaching in a well-endowed madrasa was quite attractive to distinguished scholars, between whom there was often competition. It was not uncommon for sought-after scholars to hold multiple positions simultaneously in several madrasas, especially in madrasas that vied with each other in prestige over the distinction of their faculty. It was also possible for a particularly lucrative professorship to be divided among several scholars, with some holding, for example, "half" a professorship and hence cashing half the salary connected with it. The size of the faculty depended on the size of the madrasa's endowment, so that the larger the endowment, the larger the faculty. When there were many faculty members, the most distinguished among them would be referred to by the term *sadr* (or *ra'is*) *al-mudarrisin* (lead teacher).

But the area in which the madrasa most differed from the mosque was in its students—although the mosque eventually came partly to resemble the madrasa in that respect. The madrasa's students, primarily, were residents of the madrasa, each being housed in a room of his own. The student was expected to use the room for the purpose of study and not rent it out or abuse it in any way. Only in exceptional cases would a madrasa have no student residences. Next, the students received more than a free education: they were also given stipends from the madrasa's endowment. Because this money was provided for the sake of their education, attendance of classes

and Qur'an recitation sessions were required of all students, and absences were allowed only when students were ill or had another valid reason. Students were not allowed to take up professions or crafts to earn an income, since they were supposed to devote themselves to their studies full-time. Students who did so risked losing their stipends. Since the madrasa provided post-elementary, specialized, and advanced instruction for adults, the students varied in age, but some sources mention that they should be at least 20 years old when they joined the madrasa. Since no more than 20 students were assigned to a single professor, study in madrasas was more systematic than in mosques. How long students were permitted to stay in the madrasa varied. In the case of some madrasas, we know that if a student had resided there for 10 years and had shown no sign of scholarly accomplishment, he would be expelled from the madrasa by force, since his continuation needlessly drained resources from the madrasa's endowment. In sum, as one jurist noted, the ideal madrasa student was one who possessed a fine natural disposition, intelligence, and discernment and who occupied himself by benefiting from the opportunities presented by the madrasa and by being beneficial to others after the termination of his sojourn at the madrasa.

With regard to the madrasa's curriculum, the books studied there were often the standard books in hadith, such as the *Sahihs* of Bukhari and Muslim; in positive law (*furu'*) and legal thought (*usul*), such as the *Risala* of Shafi'i; in Qur'an exegesis, such as Zamakhshari's *al-Kashshaf*; and in Arabic language and grammar, such as the *Kitab* of Sibawayh and the *Alfiyya* of Ibn Malik. Sufism was also taught in some madrasas in areas where Sufism was not frowned on by the religious establishment. As for Qur'an recitation, its presence in the curriculum was pervasive, being a daily requirement of the students. In the non-Islamic sciences, students read books on logic, such as Ibn Ridwan's *al-Maqalat*, and medicine, such as Avicenna's poem on medicine, written in *rajaz* verse. Abridgments of larger tomes, as well as summae of various disciplines, were often taught by means of poems written in the swift and simple meter of the *rajaz*, which suggests that they were meant to be memorized by the students. Madrasas varied greatly in the matter of when and how different disciplines were taught. A fatwa of a jurist from Tlemcen (in present-day Algeria), is worth citing here as an example of how the academic year fluctuated between vigor and languor. This fatwa says that, during winter, religious scholars taught students exhaustively and meticulously a small number of areas of their expertise, bringing to students' attention previous research on these issues as well as their own evaluation of this research. During this season, the scholars did not permit themselves to be idle or take any time off. Once this season was over, they relaxed and sought recreation. They then started to read the standard books with the students and to guide them in their studies. Covering books from beginning to end and ensuring familiarity with the issues they dealt with were considered

best for students. In this way, the students would be well prepared to tackle the thorough scholarly study of the fine issues they are exposed to in winter.

Although it is clear that the madrasa was a complex establishment with a pedagogical, administrative, and financial structure different from that of the mosque, both institutions shared the same modes of instruction. There, reliance on memory was highly prized, repetition was cultivated, and the taking of notes from dictation (*imla'*) was highly valued, given the usefulness of citing materials verbatim during disputation. Discussion of texts was personal and transmission based, focused first on the teacher's commentary on issues, then on his probing of the student's understanding and ability to solve difficult problems. The measure of the student's success was marked in both institutions with the above-mentioned *ijaza*, which recognized the student's qualification to teach all or some of what his professor taught.

The image one gets about the premodern institutions of learning—the applied form of interest in education in Islam—is an extremely lively, diverse, and unmistakably Islamic one, those institutions having been hallmarks of premodern Islamic society where most of the pillars of Islamic thought developed. The theoretical form of that interest, as expressed in various compilations—statements, treatises, and books—is less dynamic or pervasive. Education never actually developed into one of the disciplines of learning that Islamicate civilization nurtured, as it did, for example, in fields such as theology, law, philosophy, and astronomy. But Islamicate civilization did indeed contribute to educational thought. This thought, insofar as the aims, contents, methods, and ethics of teaching and learning are concerned, is the subject of Sebastian Günther's article in this issue. As Günther shows, in past centuries a host of Muslim intellectuals contributed to discussions on educational theory, pedagogy, and didactics, including the ninth-century Iraqi litterateur al-Jahiz and Tunisian jurist Ibn Sahnun, the tenth-century Turkish-born philosopher, social scientist, and musicologist al-Farabi, and the eleventh-century Iranian philosopher Avicenna and towering theologian and Sufi al-Ghazali. Many others continued to feed this tradition. Consequently, Günther asserts, one could certainly talk about a rich, diverse, and sometimes original pedagogical tradition in Islam, one that is not dissimilar to the same tradition in medieval Europe. He concludes his study by emphasizing the importance that we be aware today of the contributions of medieval Islamic educational thought when we evaluate contemporary issues in humanistic education. Which features of premodern Islamic education survived into modern times, and why, is not discussed by Günther. We shall come to this point later.

While tremendous change occurred during Safavid and Ottoman times, it was the integration of the Islamic world into the new world colonial system that most altered the ways in which Muslim intellectuals and educators envisioned Islamic education. With that integration, the second stage of education in Islam began, covering the period from the nineteenth century until

the middle of the twentieth. Its hallmarks were the beginning or intensification of the encounter between Islamic lands and the West. Subsequently, most Islamic lands were colonized by various Western powers, especially Britain, France, Holland, Portugal, and Italy. Acting aggressively, these powers caused no less than a seismic transformation in the Islamic world, calling into question norms, practices, and traditions that characterized the Islamic way of life at the political, economic, legal, social, and individual levels. In the process, the colonial powers presented and sometimes enforced alternative, Western ways. It was during this period that the last universal Islamic caliphate, the Ottoman, was ended and new, individual nation-states born, that new government bureaucratic structures were erected, and that Christian missionary schools and colleges were founded, using foreign languages and teaching foreign literatures. Two examples of such colleges are the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, founded in 1866, and Robert's College in Istanbul, founded in 1872. But the most important change was probably the introduction of secular precollege school systems to the newly formed Islamic countries. Such systems were adopted by most of these countries' national governments, which were working under the calculating eyes of the colonial powers.

Muslim teachers and their students then faced secular schools that not only ignored religion altogether but also that introduced entirely new curricula, school structures, and teaching methods. In addition, they placed the education of women at the same level as that of men. The curricula included new fields of study, including scientific subjects and foreign languages and literatures. Enrollment, promotion, and graduation followed a disciplined, clearly defined process, with age identifications, registration, grades, exams, schedules, and a specific number of years for both elementary and secondary education. The methods of instruction were impersonal and utilitarian, a far cry from the methods that had been used in *kuttabs*, mosques, and madrasas throughout the previous millennium. What made the problem infinitely bigger was the swift success of these schools among Muslims, and the emergence of a plethora of secular schools, both foreign and local, state-sponsored and independent. From the perspective of Muslim educators, it was necessary to keep the Islamic educational institutions relevant, despite the challenging environment. How this could be achieved was the subject of heated debate in this period, with some Muslim intellectuals advocating reform and others refusing it. The rise of nationalism and the important role assigned to educators in nationalist circles complicated the picture even further. The center of this debate was Egypt. Indira Falk Gesink's article in this issue deals with that subject.

According to Gesink, the challenge to the Islamic form of education—financially, administratively, hermeneutically, and pedagogically—began in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Muhammad Ali, the semi-

independent ruler of Egypt, undertook sweeping reforms. These brought to Egypt, among other things, a centralized, European-influenced network of civil schools aimed at the creation of officers, technocrats, and administrators. A debate about reforming Islamic education followed, with its modernist advocates, such as Tahtawi, Afghani, Abdu, and Rida, invoking the Islamic principle of *ijtihad* (individual reasoning) and its conservative opponents, such as al-Safti and al-Mahdi, invoking the equally Islamic principle of *taqlid* (following precedents). Gesink traces the partial but steady success of the modernists and the eventual transformation of al-Azhar into a “bureaucratic university,” noting, though, the preservation of the Islamic method of teaching there as elsewhere.

The article by Mandy Terc sheds light on another way in which Muslims tried to face the challenge of the West, namely by establishing Western-style schools that differed from the government’s secular schools by the addition of a religious, Islamic component to the curriculum. Terc traces this phenomenon in the schools built all over Lebanon by a Sunni private foundation established precisely for that purpose, the Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association. Terc shows that, from the time of its founding in 1878, the Makassed was conceived as the means for preserving the identity of Lebanese Muslims. Terc carries the discussion further to cover the postindependence period (after 1943), including Lebanon’s long civil war (1975–90) and contemporary times, highlighting the ways in which the Makassed stood firmly by the conciliatory formula it had developed to accommodate both its Islamic and national identity.

The issue of national identity and its relation to the government secular school system is also the subject of Orit Bashkin’s article, although this article focuses on the government of Iraq between the two world wars. Then a constitutional monarchy under tight British control, the Iraqi government’s ministry of education tried to use the secularized school system to forge an Iraqi national identity, with support from many intellectuals who favored pluralistic educational models. Despite some successes, though, the government’s efforts were constantly challenged by various segments in Iraqi society divided along confessional, sectarian, and ethnic lines, as well as by resistance to the state’s disciplinary power. All this made Iraq’s educational system a place where the modern and the premodern would sit uneasily side by side.

The third stage of education in Islam may be called the postindependence stage. It covers the period from the time Islamic countries gained their independence from the colonial powers—around the mid-twentieth century—until today, although it must be kept in mind that clear boundaries between the colonial period and the postcolonial one are often difficult to define. This is a stage in which the issue of Islamic empowerment and identity remain central, in view of the anti-Islamic or un-Islamic nature of the colonial legacy in the area of education and the challenge posed by the nation-states, several

of which, from the 1950s to the 1970s, placed mass education at the head of their goals. This stage also, however, has been characterized by creative, bold, and more mature attempts to reshape Islamic educational institutions in such a way that they are both more integrated to government (secular) policies—considered now a fact of life—and more relevant to the issues facing Muslim and non-Muslim societies alike in a globalized world. Some of this creativity derives from local experiences of Muslims. However, it also concerns broader factors, particularly the perceived or real use, for radicalization purposes, of the Islamic madrasas, which have become quite different from their medieval namesakes. For, although the modern madrasas are residential and stipended like their medieval counterparts, modern madrasas, unlike the earlier ones, are precollege educational institutions, offering both elementary and secondary training for the young and teaching a religious curriculum instead of the government's secular or mixed curriculum. In addition, they are funded by politically and religiously motivated governments and groups. This muddied the reputation of Islamic madrasas and prompted many in the media and politics to connect them with terrorism, to exaggerate their negative character, and to associate all Islamic institutions, and sometimes even to associate Islam itself, with terrorism. Overall, then, the picture of education in Islam in this stage is very complex, with truths mixed with myths. One of the articles in this issue (by Tahir Andrabi and his colleagues) tackles the myths surrounding the pervasiveness of madrasas in Pakistan. Another article, by Sobhi Tawil, points out the role that the local economy plays in the state of Qur'anic schools in Morocco. Helen Boyle's article revisits the issue of memorization of the Qur'an in contemporary Islamic schools in three Islamic countries. Articles by Florian Pohl and by Jeffery Milligan present the creative attempts undertaken by a Muslim majority in Indonesia and a Muslim minority in the Philippines, respectively, to make constructive educational Islamic school models by working mostly within government-provided opportunities or by responding favorably to global, Western-supported ideals of civic society.

The article by Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Tristan Zajonc refutes the myth that enrollment rates in Pakistani madrasas are either high or on the rise. These authors also show there is little correlation between madrasa attendance and poverty. Using field research, published data sources, and analyses of data from censuses and household surveys, the authors apply established statistical methodologies. Their conclusion is that less than 1 percent of Pakistani children are enrolled in madrasas and that this enrollment is not conspicuously rising. Furthermore, school choice by households is determined neither solely by poverty, nor by the religious mindedness of households. As seen in both censuses and surveys, one household could send one of its children to a madrasa, another to a public school, and a third to one of the increasingly common private schools.

Sobhi Tawil highlights in his article the significant role still played by Qur'anic schools in postindependence Morocco, particularly in the northern, mostly rural province of Chechaouen, despite the availability of public schools there. This role, he explains, is shaped by factors relating to the shortcomings of public schools and their relative scarcity in rural areas, resistance to government intrusiveness, and, above all, poverty. It is also related, the author explains, to much of the population's involvement in the increasingly lucrative business of growing, producing, and exporting cannabis, which makes it more profitable for families to send their children to Qur'anic, rather than public schools. The area's rich heritage of religious scholarship further sustains Qur'anic school education in it, as does these schools' tendency to be community based.

Memorization as a method of instruction has been considered in the West as one of the most negative features of traditional Islamic education, fostering passivity in students and making them susceptible to religious and political indoctrination. In her article, Helen Boyle finds this concept, as applied to the Qur'an in particular, to be a mischaracterization resulting from the lack of understanding of the assumptions about memorization, that is, another myth about education in Islam. Relating the concept of memorization to those of understanding, reason, and knowledge, she reexamines the purpose of memorization in light of the ethnographic field research she conducted in Morocco, Yemen, and Nigeria. She concludes that memorization is actually the first, rather than last, step in the learning process in Islamic educational institutions and that the memorization of the Qur'an enables students to "embody" it and hence to make it a constant guide in their spiritual and moral development.

Like Boyle's article, the contribution of Florian Pohl is based on ethnographic field research. Pohl's study is focused on Indonesia's most innovative and successful brand of Islamic boarding schools, the *pesantren*. Pohl frames his research around the issue of secularization. He notes that the assumption that secularization is a precondition for modernity, to the exclusion of religious schooling, is highly questionable—yet another myth. Pohl then examines how the *pesantren* deal with issues of civil society. This examination leads him to conclude that the *pesantren*, despite their being religious schools, do indeed uphold the main principles of civil society, including gender equality, antiviolenace, pluralism, and social and economic justice. They do not support terrorism.

Like Pohl, Jeffrey Milligan highlights the ways in which Islamic religious schools, in the Philippines, imaginatively made their institutions a vehicle for advocating the moderate concept of the "good Muslim." After historically contextualizing the issue of Islamic education in the Philippines' colonial past, he notes that the postindependence Philippine governments continued the colonial educational policies of favoring Christians and practically dis-

regarding the needs of a marginalized, restive, and poor Muslim minority in Mindanao in the southern Philippines. When the government allowed educational decentralization and when local autonomy came to Mindanao, Muslim activists, both from within the government and without, took full advantage of this opportunity. They founded, in a somewhat experimental fashion, three Islamic models of educational institutions, each of which sought to integrate secular and Islamic education. Despite potential problems, these models seem to be working to build a peaceful rather than a radicalized society.

There is no doubt that Islamic education in premodern times was successful in transmitting knowledge, for this is the only way to explain the heights reached then by Islamicate civilization. After all, it was in the medieval *kuttabs*, then mosques and madrasas, that the majority of the pillars of that civilization received their training and became educators to successive generations of scholars. This success may be credited to the methods used in education. These methods were genuine and derived from the very nature of the Islamic sciences—highly textual, memorized, personally transmitted—which at that time led the rest of the sciences in a religion-based civilization. Not unexpectedly, some theoretical work on education was produced by these scholars. This work, however, did not go too far beyond the areas of didactics and pedagogy and never developed into a field of specialization in the modern sense. In one sense, this limited development reflected the way that Islamicate civilization viewed specialization as such, which was not as a narrow endeavor that excludes other endeavors but rather as a concentration on one or two areas within a number of other ones. In another sense, it indicates that education was essentially considered an auxiliary science underlying the practice of education: it was considered to underpin all areas of scholarly inquiry, all “knowledge,” but was not considered a separate area of inquiry. And this view continued for over a millennium largely because the Islamic way of producing scholarship was the only yardstick by which such scholarship was generated in the wide Islamic world.

When this form of Islamic education faced increasing pressure in the nineteenth century—or earlier in some cases—the very foundations of the production of scholarship were put to the test, threatening to pull down the entire edifice of Islamic education. As the encounter with Europe was transformed into political and economic domination, the alternative model of European education—the secular school—became widespread in all parts of the Islamic world—now recast as nation-states. This led to a great deal of confusion among Muslim scholars and educators, with some advocating reform as a means of survival, while others advocated resilience to change as a means for preserving identity. In the end, the reformists won. In this way the private school was born, with its component of Islamic education, complementary to the secular public schools. But the puritans did not fail. Appealing to matters of piety, identity, and the marginalization of the Muslims

by the West, their efforts—which continue today—created schools meant to replace the secular and national government public schools. These schools take some of their features from the medieval madrasa and discard others, creating a new form of madrasa that teaches the Muslim youth how to be Muslims in the manner of their Muslim predecessors. The fact that they live in environments so different from those of their medieval forebears makes students more rather than less keen on sticking to their Islamic ways. And one of the interesting things this issue shows is how much change occurred within Islamic institutions of education like the madrasa. This mass of Islamically educated Muslims in the modern world made these institutions into a force that could be used by various political powers at work in the Islamic world. In this way, the philanthropist and elitist medieval system of endowment was replaced by a system of political patronage based on exploitative funding, a system in which governments and groups, from the Islamic world as well as from the West, participated. This is how radicalization was wedded to the small but not ineffective madrasa system, in its modern and contemporary configuration.

But this is only one side of the picture. After decades of independence, of debate, of successes and failures, new forms of Islamic institutions of education have emerged in postcolonial Islamic societies. Though they are basically Islamic, they conceive of themselves not as alternatives to the secular public schools of governments, but as complementary to them. In other words, secular education is no longer viewed as an imported, foreign, and illegitimate form of schooling that must be rejected but rather as a legitimate, useful, but deficient system that must be completed. It is in this light that we must understand the fledgling school models being developed in the Philippines, Indonesia, and elsewhere today. Such models indicate that some Muslim intellectuals and educators did not simply react to what the non-Muslims did: they have enough confidence in themselves to experiment in collaboration with the non-Muslims, in the process enriching their circles of interest and engaging with the rest of the world in a dialogue, which is useful to all. This is a very promising turn of events in the world of education in Islam.

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