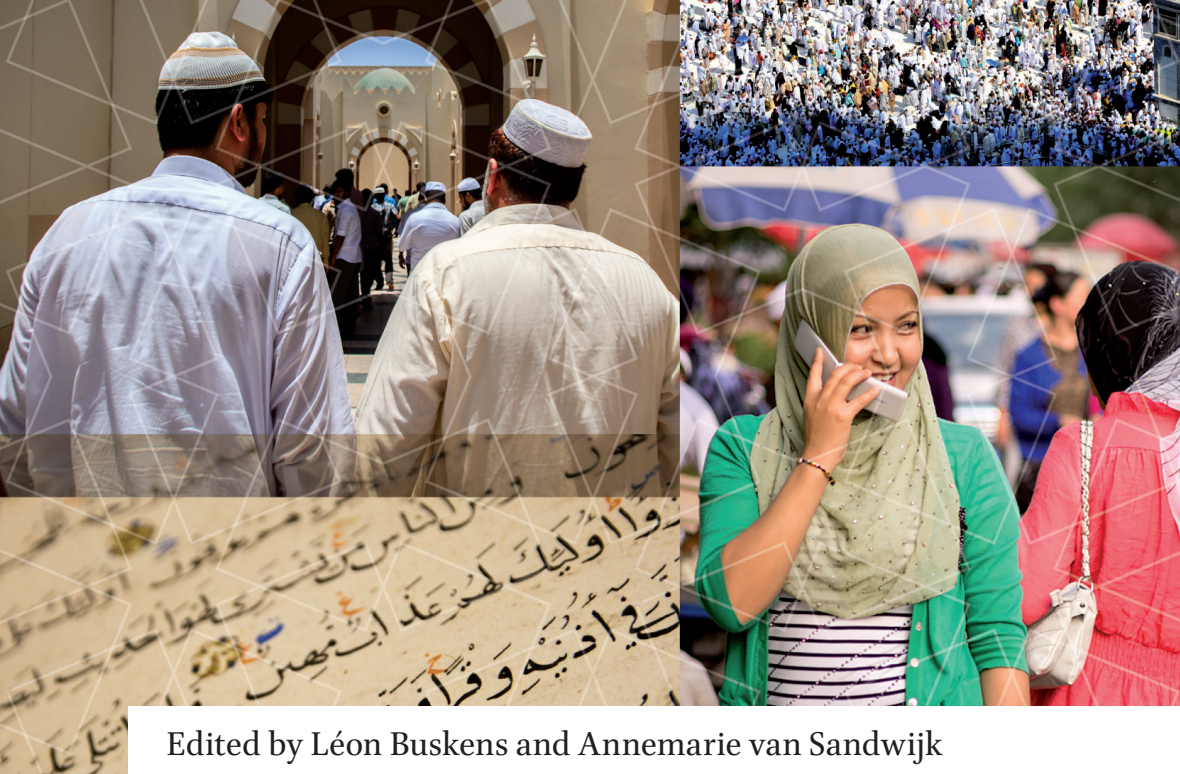




Edited by Léon Buskens and Annemarie van Sandwijk

Islamic Studies in the Twenty-first Century

Transformations and Continuities

Amsterdam
University
Press

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*To the memory of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010)
and Jacques Waardenburg (1930-2015)*

Table of Contents

Preface	9
---------	---

Introduction	11
Dichotomies, Transformations, and Continuities in the Study of Islam	
<i>Léon Buskens</i>	

Texts

Islamic Texts	29
The Anthropologist as Reader	
<i>Brinkley Messick</i>	

Textual Aspects of Religious Authority in Premodern Islam	47
<i>Jonathan P. Berkey</i>	

What to Do with Ritual Texts	67
Islamic <i>Fiqh</i> Texts and the Study of Islamic Ritual	
<i>A. Kevin Reinhart</i>	

Gender

Textual Study of Gender	87
<i>Marion Katz</i>	

Scholarship on Gender Politics in the Muslim World	109
Some Critical Reflections	
<i>Dorothea E. Schulz</i>	

Theology and the History of Ideas

Power, Orthodoxy, and Salvation in Classical Islamic Theology	135
<i>Christian Lange</i>	

Dialectical Theology in the Search for Modern Islam <i>Abdulkader Tayob</i>	161
--	-----

Law

“Classical” Islamic Legal Theory as Ideology Nasr Abu Zayd’s Study of al-Shafī’i’s <i>al-Risala</i> <i>Muhammad Khalid Masud</i>	183
--	-----

Islamic Law in the Modern World States, Laws, and Constitutions <i>Knut S. Vikør</i>	205
--	-----

Networks

Vernacular Cosmopolitanism as an Ethical Disposition Sufi Networks, Hospitality, and Translocal Inclusivity <i>Pnina Werbner</i>	223
--	-----

Culture and Religion

Middle Eastern Studies and Islam Oscillations and Tensions in an Old Relationship <i>Léon Buskens</i>	241
---	-----

Notes on Contributors	269
-----------------------	-----

Overview of NISIS Autumn Schools, 2010-2014	275
---	-----

Index	279
-------	-----

Preface

With pleasure, modest pride and in my quality as chairman of the board of the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies (NISIS), I present to you this volume *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-first Century: Transformations and Continuities*. It contains a selection of articles written by scholars who were invited to talk about their work at the seasonal schools that were organised by NISIS in the past years. In the introduction to this selection of articles Léon Buskens, academic director of NISIS, will explain how this volume came about. Let me say a few words about NISIS and the scholarly field it covers.

NISIS is a research school, founded in 2010, in which nine Dutch universities participate. The aim of the school is to address Islam in a broad thematic and interdisciplinary way. This broad approach has certainly contributed to the success of NISIS. Through the organisation of seasonal schools every six months and network days where ongoing research is presented, we have created an academic community of researchers working on Islam at Dutch universities. But we have also built up and extended an international academic network of scholars, and we work together closely with several research institutes in and outside Europe. The contributions to this volume are the fruits of this endeavour.

NISIS considers interdisciplinarity and thematic focus not just a hollow mantra to please the academic community, funding agencies, and policy makers. Islam is more than a religion in the strict theological sense. If we confine ourselves to doctrinal normativity and Islamic law to analyse what Muslims motivate and how they build religious landscapes and lifeworlds, we seriously narrow down our understanding of Islam. Conversely, if we consider the rich body of theological work that has been written over centuries, the normative frameworks that guide people, and the canonised practices to which Muslims refer as irrelevant, we also seriously limit analytical rigor.

This may sound as a truism, but in an academic landscape that is still largely dominated by disciplinary boundaries, interests, and money flows it is vital to show that only a broad approach to the study of Islam can overcome disciplinary myopia. In addition, we have organised our schools around specific themes that bear relevance to social issues and put the study of Islam in a wider perspective. We have invited renowned scholars from all over the world to give keynote lectures and discuss the work of young scholars. Through the strict interdisciplinary and thematic format

of the schools we want young scholars, who are typically trained in a single discipline, to engage with other scholarly approaches and to reflect on their own work. The thematic approach encourages them to “think outside the box” of their own research topic.

NISIS started in 2010 with the generous funding of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and of course with the active involvement of the nine participating universities. The recent academic audit of the first five years was excellent. It gave us the energy to continue our work. Hopefully, we will be able to make this volume the start of a series in the years to come.

Thijl Sunier

Chairman of the NISIS board

Professor of Cultural Anthropology

Chair of Islam in European Societies

VU University Amsterdam

Introduction

Dichotomies, Transformations, and Continuities in the Study of Islam¹

Léon Buskens

1 Introduction

This book aims to offer an overview of some of the important issues in the study of Islam that scholars discuss at present. The study of Islam is part of a tradition that started in Western academia on a professional scale about two centuries ago, and has always been linked to social concerns. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the major question was how to govern Muslims living in the newly established colonies, such as British India, the Dutch East Indies, and, later, French Algeria. About a century later colonial government still was an important issue, linked at that time to the declaration of jihad by the Ottoman caliph in an effort to help his German allies. Again a century later questions of governance continue to play a crucial role, now mainly linked to the presence of Muslim citizens in Europe, the control of natural resources in the Middle East, and to what is perceived as global security and a “war on terror.” Scholars have managed to capitalise on these public issues, not only to make a living, but also to pursue their intellectual interests. They have constituted an impressive body of knowledge, even if this is not always as useful or made use of as much as the authors might suggest in their applications for funding.

This academic tradition has not only led to an accumulation of knowledge, even if some of it is almost forgotten or badly neglected, but has also witnessed major changes in interests, questions, methods, aesthetics, and ethics. Although interest in travelling in the Muslim world and gathering information through autopsy, exchange with local erudites, and collecting was practiced earlier on, as the work of Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815), for example, demonstrates (cf. Kommers 1982; Vermeulen 2008), the past four decades show a notable shift from philological and historical to anthropological and other social science approaches to Islam. In some countries the dominance of anthropology is now being replaced by the primacy of political science and its offspring, such as international relations and security studies.

1 With many thanks to Annemarie van Sandwijk for her editing and critical comments.

The Netherlands has played an important role in establishing this academic tradition.² Leiden University has one of the oldest chairs for the study of Arabic in the world (created in 1599) and a world famous collection of manuscripts and rare printed books from Muslim lands. In the course of the nineteenth century this tradition developed into the scholarly study of Islam, with luminosi such as Keyzer, the Juynboll family, L.W.C. van den Berg, Dozy, De Goeje, Van der Lith, Veth, and Houtsma. Colonial questions led scholars to work on more than purely philological questions, such as ethnography and law. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) built on these foundations and became one of the creators of the academic study of Islam, together with his Hungarian friend Ignaz Goldziher. Snouck Hurgronje was an acute philologist, a gifted fieldworker, and a well-connected networker. One of the results was the compilation of an *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, of which the current third edition is still published by Brill in Leiden. Although Snouck Hurgronje can be considered as one of the founders of an ethnographic approach to Islam, his successors were mainly interested in a philological approach.

The philological approach underwent a renewal in the 1970s through the work of the students of the former colonial civil servants turned professors. Some colleagues did important work in Qur'anic studies and Islamism, others turned to relations between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and to the study of Islam in Europe. Utrecht University became a centre for the study of Sufism, through the work of Frederick de Jong, Bernd Radtke, and Martin van Bruinessen. Scholars worked together in the Dutch Association for the Study of the Middle East and Islam (MOI), which published a series of edited volumes and the journal *Sharqīyyât*, which later merged with *ZemZem*. Jacques Waardenburg played an important role in this endeavour, which resulted in a new handbook for the study of Islam in Dutch (1984), as did Joost van Schendel, who facilitated many important publications by Dutch scholars, first as a publisher at Het Wereldvenster and later with his own publishing house, Bulaaq, in Amsterdam.

2 Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen (2014) offer an overview of Arabic studies in the Netherlands until 1950, with further references. Otterspeer (1989) provides the context of the interest in Islam by surveying other branches of Orientalism as well. Boland and Farjon (1983) offer a bibliographical overview of the Dutch tradition of studying Islam in Indonesia with an excellent introduction. The journal *Sharqīyyât* 15 (1-2) (2003) published a special anniversary issue with overviews of developments in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in the Netherlands especially since the 1970s: "25 jaar Midden-Oosten- en Islamstudies en de MOI," which was complemented by Strijp (1998).

The study of Muslim societies was taken up in the Netherlands, as in many other countries, by anthropologists looking for new accessible fields, mainly in the Mediterranean. Scholars at the universities in Amsterdam and Nijmegen took the lead, while for several decades VU University Amsterdam organised fieldwork trainings in Tunisia, Morocco, and Gouda (cf. Buskens and Strijp 2003). Many anthropologists neglected or ignored the work of colonial and early postcolonial predecessors, such as Wilken, Snouck Hurgronje, and C.A.O van Nieuwenhuijze. However, Henk Driessen paid attention to these historical roots and combined his anthropological interest with historical and philological expertise to produce a new handbook for the study of Islam (Driessen 1997). Paul Aarts has consistently promoted a political science approach at the University of Amsterdam for several decades. Over twenty-five years of cooperation with Indonesia in Islamic studies, under the direction of Wim Stokhof and funded by the Dutch Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs, has revitalised the study of Islam in Indonesia and created strong networks with young scholars at the various Islamic universities (cf. Kaptein 2003).

In the first decade of the present century the social science approach was strengthened by the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM). The work of ISIM gained considerable exposure through its newsletter, in which its editor (and present NISIS board member) Dick Douwes paid extensive attention to international developments in Islamic studies. The creation of the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies (NISIS) in 2009 at the incentive of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science was meant to provide society with useful knowledge. Scholars involved in this venture explicitly aim at bringing together the rich European tradition of the philological and historical study of Islam with more recent trends in studying Muslim societies from the social sciences, as the composition of the NISIS board demonstrates.

This book embodies part of the NISIS endeavour to look for new approaches consistent with contemporary scholarly and public concerns by presenting some important issues in the study of Islam and Muslim societies that NISIS members have been discussing with colleagues from abroad. The papers collected in this volume were initially presented at the opening conference of NISIS and at a series of three autumn schools between 2010 and 2012. The final essay elaborates on the relation between Islamic and Middle Eastern studies that I initially presented at the NISIS autumn school "Islam: Culture or Religion?" organised by Christian Lange at Utrecht University in 2013. Albeit not presenting a fully comprehensive volume, the papers that we managed to obtain give an overview of major

developments, questions, approaches, and methods that scholars of Islam discuss at present. Although the aim of the authors was not to write histories of their respective fields of inquiry, their surveys often implicitly, and occasionally also explicitly, present the dynamism of the tradition which they form part of. Most authors both pay attention to major transformations and to underlying continuities. Looking for productive new questions and methods, while being critically conscious of working within a tradition, has been the main guiding principle in the organisation of this volume.

2 Aims and Activities of NISIS

NISIS brings together scholars studying Islam and Muslim societies based at nine universities in the Netherlands: the University of Amsterdam, VU University Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Leiden University, Maastricht University, Radboud University in Nijmegen, Erasmus University in Rotterdam, Tilburg University, and Utrecht University. Each university is represented by a member of the board: Gerard Wiegers (formerly Rudolph Peters), Marjo Buitelaar, Maurits Berger, Susan Rutten, Karin van Nieuwkerk, Dick Douwes, Herman Beck (occasionally replaced by Jan Jaap de Ruiter), and Nico Landman. The board is chaired by Thijl Sunier of VU University Amsterdam. At the request of the presidents of the participating universities, Leiden University acts as the coordinating university, housing and staffing the NISIS office, with the writer of this introduction currently being its director. NISIS is an open and inclusive school aimed at welcoming scholars involved in research on Islam who are based in the Netherlands. The only distinction made is between senior scholars who have already obtained their doctorate, and junior members who are still preparing a thesis. NISIS represents most of the academics based in the Netherlands active in the field.

The founding members of NISIS were encouraged to cooperate on a national level by the generous financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, initially for a period of six years, now extended until the end of 2017. They agreed that the main aims of NISIS should be: (1) to advance interuniversity cooperation; (2) to provide high-quality training and research on Islam and Muslim societies in the Netherlands; (3) to reinforce the international profile of Dutch scholarship in Islamic studies; (4) and to link scholarly expertise with debates in society. Starting in 2010, NISIS has offered scholarships to eleven PhD candidates, coming from various countries, to pursue their research in Islamic studies at one of

the nine universities involved, and has developed a training programme to educate a new generation of specialists on Islam and Muslim societies in the Netherlands. As this academic field has a strong international dimension we consider it very important to bring our scholars and students into contact with colleagues from abroad.

The interests and expertise of the nine board members, its director, and its executive secretary Petra de Bruijn cover all disciplines and areas that NISIS promotes, with a strong presence of anthropology and religious studies, but also law, history, and philology. Diversity in disciplinary, thematic, and regional expertise is present in the research of all members, both junior and senior scholars. Many combine several disciplines, work on various themes, and in more than one area. NISIS pays particular attention to exchanges and transnational linkages. Integrating the recently developed studies of Islam in Europe in the broader field is also an important aim. We encourage conversations between scholars working on history and philology with social scientists, as we consider fruitful collaboration a necessary condition for the further development of our field.

All scholars participating in NISIS share an understanding of Islam as a historical and socio-cultural phenomenon. They are part of an academic tradition of more than two centuries in which a historical-critical approach, which concentrates on the study of texts, has been fused with a social science perspective. This approach does not essentialise Islam as a force in itself, but stresses human agency through ideas and practices. It also emphasises the importance of studying Islam in a broad context as a cultural practice, not limited to a narrow definition of Islam as a religion. A non-normative perspective is not only most productive in scholarly terms, but also helps to address major questions arising in society and policymaking, and might be of great value for inter-Muslim debates as well.

NISIS has developed a training programme for its junior members, in which both spring and autumn schools play a vital role. The spring schools take place in the Mediterranean, until now twice in Rabat, and once in Istanbul, Tunis, and Madrid, and are organised in cooperation with the Institut d'études de l'Islam et des sociétés du monde musulman (IISMM) in Paris and with various local partners. They bring together scholars and PhD and Research Master students from many different countries, as NISIS also provides ten scholarships to invite young researchers from all over the world to each spring and autumn school. The autumn schools take place at one of the nine participating Dutch universities, with prominent speakers mainly from abroad, and again PhD and Research Master students based in the Netherlands and abroad. The schools offer both keynote lectures and

workshops where junior researchers discuss their work with the keynote speakers. These schools have also reinforced the national visibility of NISIS and have expanded international cooperation with partners abroad. Scholars and students from all over Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia, including India, Indonesia, China, and Japan, with Muslim and other backgrounds, have participated in the schools.

The keynote lectures during the schools were not only aimed at scholars in the field, but also attracted a general audience interested in acquiring high-quality academic knowledge on questions which play an important role in contemporary public debates. Similar multiple aims are also served by the annual network day, addressing both scholars and a broader public. Scholars working outside academia, but engaged in research, are also eligible for membership, thereby strengthening the bond between academia and society. Since the 1970s, thanks to the work of scholars such as Maxime Rodinson, Talal Asad, and Edward Said, practitioners in the field have become increasingly conscious of the public dimension of their work, and have started to reflect on this dimension as an integral part of their research practices. This newly gained self-consciousness makes it in some ways easier to address society and to make solid academic knowledge available to the public. However, in today's highly politicised debates on Islam and Muslims, it is often not easy for scholars to make themselves heard in the cacophony of opinions and half-truths (cf. Otto and Mason 2012).

3 Dichotomies and the Structure of Islamic Studies

Several of the schools organised by NISIS aimed at scrutinising persistent dichotomies which structure Islamic studies. Although the pairs might be “good to think with,” the approach during the first three autumn schools was to deconstruct three of these dichotomies, in order to look for more productive questions and methods. The three oppositions under review came up during the course of NISIS meetings, as they were impossible to avoid, both in popular and in academic discourses: texts and practices, the classical and the modern, and centres and peripheries.

3.1 Texts and Practices

The relations between texts and practices have been at the heart of the study of Islam and Muslim societies since the nineteenth century. At first scholars discussed the question in a normative way, in order to determine

the sources of knowledge about the norms which the colonial authorities were to apply to establish law and order. Their perspective resembled in some respects the normative angle of Islamic scholars, who also wrote treatises admonishing Muslims who deviated from the rules laid down in texts. For philologists texts had primacy, but soon researchers, often with a background as “practical men” in the field, started to refer to their own empirical observations, pleading to take practices at least as seriously as books. Only after the Second World War would an anthropology of Muslim societies gradually evolve, being dominated in the beginning by folklorist dichotomies such as Redfield’s great and little tradition.

Texts are present in many Muslim societies, but it took anthropologists several decades to take them seriously as objects of study in themselves, partly due to the great divide between philology and anthropology, influenced by a tradition of mutual misunderstandings and biases. Scholars in both traditions had to come to terms with misleading assumptions about the universalism of literate culture, for example, still present in Jack Goody’s seminal work. In spring 2010 NISIS was very fortunate to welcome Brinkley Messick for the inaugural lecture at VU University Amsterdam on “The Anthropologist as Reader.” Messick has been one of the first anthropologists to take texts in Muslim societies as objects of study, resulting in the seminal monograph *The Calligraphic State* (1993). In his contribution to this volume he offers a genealogy of the ways in which anthropologists have dealt with texts, thereby anchoring the issue much more strongly in the discipline. He also demonstrates his own approach studying the library and the archive for his research on the historical anthropology of shari’a in Highland Yemen. Ghislaine Lydon also contributes to this thriving field of inquiry with her studies of texts as social phenomena in her research on the legal and commercial history of the Sahara (e.g. Lydon 2012; Krätli and Lydon 2011). Unfortunately, she was not able to transform the lecture she gave during the third autumn school into a contribution for this volume.

During the first autumn school on “Texts and Practices” Jonathan P. Berkey discussed the social uses of texts from a historical perspective. His lecture was another important demonstration which taught fellow historians and philologists, but also anthropologists, how to question the cultures of writing, reading, and storing texts in Muslim societies. Berkey’s contribution to this book offers a clear summary of several of his intellectual interests so far, referring also to his seminal work *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (1992).

The problems addressed in the section on texts with which this volume opens underlie to a large extent many of the other questions. A. Kevin

Reinhart presents a theoretically informed view on how to study rituals, which has again become a central concern in the study of Islam during the last decades. The present debates show how much has changed since the founding fathers, in the Netherlands represented by Orientalists such as Dozy, De Goeje, and Wensinck, discussed the “origins” of Islamic rituals. Reinhart severely and outspokenly criticises earlier approaches. His understanding is guided by Seligman’s and by Humphrey and Laidlaw’s work, looking at ritual as an act, as “subjunctive creation.” The view that meaning is produced through the ritual act itself leads us to understand how people attach meaning and how rituals produce sentiments.

The second section on gender presents two papers given on this issue during the first autumn school. Scholars of Muslim societies started to study gender in connection with the turn to the social sciences and social history. Pioneering work has been done in this area in the Netherlands, and it has been continued by younger researchers, as Willy Jansen, one of its first scholars, documented in an earlier survey (Jansen 2003). Marion Katz looks at gender from her position as a prominent historian, an approach less well represented in the Netherlands. As many other contributors to this volume, and in the field in general, she turns to legal sources. Her overview concentrates on studies published in the United States and Britain. Katz stresses the dialectical relations between norms and practices and the huge diversity in local understandings. The prominent German anthropologist Dorothea E. Schulz solidly situates the study of gender in Muslim societies in gender studies in general, especially in relation to Sub-Saharan Africa. Her overview demonstrates how the study of Muslim societies has also made significant contributions to more general debates.

3.2 Classical and Modern

During the first autumn school the opposition between “classical” and “modern” Islam repeatedly came up. Occasionally it seemed as if historians working on older periods turned to the work of anthropologists and other colleagues studying contemporary societies much more frequently for inspiration than the other way around. For a long time the study of history and texts provided the main model of academic scholarship. Research on the present and on practices was considered of secondary importance, which properly trained philologists could master without much additional training or grounding in theory. Nowadays the situation has been reversed. Historians and philologists have to justify their antiquarian interests and turn to the social sciences for theoretical and methodological guidance,

expounding on lessons that society can learn from the past. Some call their library and archival research “fieldwork” and claim to study “multicultural” and “cosmopolitan” societies of a millennium ago. In the meantime questions of periodisation and the “modern” and “modernity” have received considerable attention, with the notion of “multiple modernities” as a way out, which has been criticised in its turn.

We considered it important to scrutinise these issues more closely in the second autumn school in 2011, by looking at three fields of inquiry which have again become quite prominent nowadays: theology and the history of ideas, mysticism, and law. Our speakers were invited to address the questions mentioned above, especially the issue of periodisation, and to look more closely at the opposition between the “classical” and the “modern.” We are grateful to the speakers whose papers on theology and the history of ideas and law we can include in the present volume. Unfortunately Carl Ernst and Mark Sedgwick were unable to send us their contributions on Sufism.

The third section of this volume presents the two papers by Christian Lange and Abdulkader Tayob, which complement each other. Theology and the history of ideas have been central and respectable concerns in Islamic studies since its beginning. They brought texts as sources, philology as a method, and interpretation together, with a strong emphasis on high culture, the relationship of Islamic thinkers with the legacy of classical antiquity and Judaism, and idealist philosophy. In the Netherlands this line of research was represented by earlier scholars such as Wensinck and his students, by the studies of G.W.J. Drewes on the intellectual history of Muslim Indonesia, by the great research project *Aristoteles semitico-latinus* directed by H.J. Drossaart Lulofs and continued by Remke Kruk, by Hans Daiber’s studies on philosophy and theology, by Jan Peters’ work on the *Mu‘tazila*, by Sjoerd van Koningsveld and his students (among whom are NISIS board members Herman Beck and Gerard Wiegers) researching relations between Muslims and Christians in al-Andalus and the Maghrib, and by the studies of Hans Jansen, Fred Leemhuis, and Kees Versteegh on the interpretation of the Qur’an. Recently the field has come under stress, suffering from limited funding and declining interest from students.

The appointment of Christian Lange by Utrecht University meant a welcome strengthening of this important specialty. His contribution to this volume presents the history of ideas as a discipline, stressing the importance of contextualisation. He demonstrates his approach with an analysis of the classical case of al-Ghazali, ideas about the community of believers, and notions of heterodoxy and orthodoxy. He demonstrates the use of literary approaches in order to analyse the religious imagination.

Abdulkader Tayob also contributed significantly to the development of intellectual history and Islamic theology while teaching as an ISIM professor at Radboud University in Nijmegen, before accepting a prestigious invitation to return to South Africa. In his contribution he addresses the issue of Islam and modernity, discussing the views of Western scholars and Muslim thinkers. As Lange, he also focuses on the issue of membership of the Muslim community. He stresses the role of Muslims as agents, and he engages in a conversation with Talal Asad and his notion of Islam as a “discursive tradition” (Asad 1986).

The fourth and penultimate section offers two papers on law. The study of Islamic law has been a central concern since the beginning of Islamic studies in European academia (cf. Buskens and Dupret 2014). Scholars working in the Netherlands have contributed extensively to this field, and continue to do so. One might even argue that the study of Islamic law is a Dutch specialty. From the beginning Dutch scholars have engaged in exchanges with scholars from abroad, as the work of Salomo Keyzer and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje demonstrate. After decolonisation these studies suffered from a decline, sadly demonstrated by Joseph Schacht moving from Leiden to Columbia University, also due to the impolite behaviour of some of his Dutch colleagues. With the settling of larger groups of Muslim immigrants, at about the same time as important geopolitical changes in the Middle East such as the “oil crisis” and the “Islamic revolution,” Dutch scholars started to take a renewed interest in law. Major promoters have been, also through their involvement in the Dutch Association for the Study of the Law of Islam and the Middle East (RIMO), the late Jan Brugman, Frans van der Velden, Gerard-René de Groot, Jan Michiel Otto, and Rudolph Peters, a former member of the NISIS board on behalf of the University of Amsterdam. Gautier Juynboll and Harold Motzki have both changed our understanding of the formative period of Islamic law. The field is well represented in NISIS by board members Maurits Berger (Leiden) and Susan Rutten (Maastricht), who both study the place of Muslims in European legal systems, and by its current director. The current interest is strengthened by the work of a new generation of NISIS members who recently defended or are currently preparing their doctoral theses at various Dutch universities.

Muhammad Khalid Masud contributed extensively to the renewal and dynamism of the study of Islamic law in the Netherlands during his directorate of ISIM. Together with Annelies Moors and Léon Buskens, he organised a number of scholarly meetings encouraging an anthropological approach to Islamic law, which further elaborated on his idea of “the social construction of shari‘a” well (cf. Masud 2001). In his contribution to the present volume

he continues this approach by studying contemporary understandings of al-Shafi'i's classical *Al-Risala*. He demonstrates how history can serve as a critical tool in debates inside Muslim societies. In the same way as his former colleague in ISIM Abdulkader Tayob he explicitly incorporates an Islamic perspective, making historical research speak to contemporary concerns of Muslims.

Knut S. Vikør is internationally known as one of the moving forces behind the current upsurge of interest in Islamic law in Western academia, through his many case studies and monographs, and through his textbook *Between God and the Sultan*. He contributes to the section on law by studying the relationship between politics and law. As a case study he addresses a particular stage in the debates about the revision of the constitution in Egypt. Although many changes have occurred in Egypt since he wrote this article, his questions and analyses still offer important lessons for all those who are concerned with the manifold debates about Islam, politics, and constitutions taking place in many parts of the Muslim world.

3.3 Networks

The third autumn school in 2012 dealt with "Centres and Peripheries: Networks Connecting Muslim Societies in Past and Present," striving to overcome this opposition by focusing on connections, exchanges, and networks.³ Six areas were singled out for special attention, some of which have also received considerable attention in the Netherlands, such as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Arabia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and Europe. Unfortunately, this volume only offers one of the six lectures, on South Asia. We are very grateful to Pnina Werbner for sharing her research on transnational linkages and networks, published in a series of monographs and articles, with us. In her case study based on her fieldwork in Zindapir she links the issues of hospitality and tolerance to the concept of cosmopolitanism.⁴ Her study demonstrates how to study linkages with the outside world: by paying attention to travel and pilgrimage, which are prominent in Sufism, and by relating them to representations of the outside world and views of others. Her attention to local forms of cosmopolitanism has special relevance considering the debates about Muslim xenophobia and fanaticism in the West.

3 Ulrike Freitag was one of the speakers during this autumn school. For her view on translocality see Freitag and Von Oppen (2010).

4 On the notion of cosmopolitanism, see Freitag (2010).

The two subsequent autumn schools dealt with two more pairs of notions: “Islam: Culture or Religion?” (2013), and “The Religious/Secular Divide in the Muslim World” (2014). An elaborated version of the lecture on the relation between Islamic and Middle Eastern studies in the Netherlands in an international perspective that I gave at Utrecht University is offered as the last contribution to this volume.

4 Conclusions: Transformations and Continuities

The contributors to this volume offer surveys of the fields in which they are specialists. Some of them demonstrate how to practice scholarship by presenting case studies. The essays identify new trends in Islamic studies. For example, the strong current interest in Islamic normativity is well represented in the essays by Messick, Reinhart, Katz, Masud, Vikør, and to a certain extent also by Berkey. Although the book does not contain a contribution explicitly discussing the recent turn to political science, which is quite strong in several countries, interest in the political dimension is present in a more implicit way in several of the chapters (cf. Osella and Soares 2010).

During the schools the importance of addressing various regional research traditions became clear. All too often Islamic studies is identified with Middle Eastern studies. Scholars working in other fields have often developed new questions and original approaches which enrich Islamic studies considerably, as, for example, the work of Dorothea Schulz and Benjamin Soares on Sub-Saharan Africa makes clear (cf. Soares 2014). Research on Muslims in Europe, which is pursued by all NISIS board members, is still quite isolated from the main debates in Islamic studies, which deprives scholars of useful cross-fertilisations. The third school demonstrated the importance of going beyond the opposition between “centres and peripheries” by replacing it with notions such as “translocality” connections, and networks (cf. Freitag and Von Oppen 2010).

A common theme throughout this volume is the attention to diversity in Islam and in Muslim societies – geographically, historically, and socially (in terms of gender, class, etc.) – which complies with the general understanding of Islam furthered by NISIS. Although in this introduction, as in the name of NISIS, we often use “Islamic studies” as shorthand, we are conscious of the problems of this term. The research interests of most members of NISIS are much broader than Islam. Many would perhaps prefer to identify themselves with a discipline such as history, anthropology, philology, or law,

than with Islamic studies. In order to understand the particular forms of Islam, knowledge of the context is fundamental. For some members Islam is a peripheral research object, one of many issues under study, and they would rather not be confined to “Islamic” or “religious studies.” As mentioned earlier, the notion of Muslims making their own Islam, and hence a stress on human agency, is a crucial starting point for the research undertaken.

Again and again the question comes up whether Islam and Muslims are appropriate categories to study the phenomena and societies which we try to understand. In the meantime scholars have produced a considerable body of literature on this issue, consisting of essays both small and large (cf. Bayat 2003; Freitag 2013 with comments by Meyer). Although using the term “Islam” might obscure differences and lead us to idealism, we simply cannot afford to do without it, if only because it is such an important emic notion, used by the people we study in highly significant, although extremely varied, ways. Using the plural “islams” without a capital “I,” as El-Zein suggested, does not seem to be very satisfactory, if only for aesthetic reasons (cf. Eickelman 2002, 245). In the end, the questions remain deceptively simple: What do people do with Islam?, How do they shape their Islam?, and How does Islam shape them? Finding proper answers is only possible by refining the questions, discarding gratifying but misleading dichotomies.

For several decades Talal Asad’s idea of Islam as a “discursive tradition” has been a dominant approach, especially among anthropologists. It has led to important new insights and a considerable body of valuable studies. We are now witnessing the rise of criticism of this idea, indicating the diminishing returns on the questions it produces. John Bowen has made a powerful statement of which direction to take with his textbook *A New Anthropology of Islam* (2012). Samuli Schielke formulated a polite but fundamental critique of Asad with his “Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life” (2010). His ideas fit with a general trend to make Islam as such less central to the study of Muslim societies, after a strong focus on it during the last decades. The new buzzwords are “everyday Islam” and “everyday religion,” notions thoroughly familiar to many anthropologists and historians who cherish a strong interest in the everyday experiences of “ordinary people,” who might not always be so busy with religion, but more with making a living, surviving, killing time, and having “fun.” The notion of everyday religion is conspicuously present in the titles of recent edited volumes (e.g. Schielke and Debevec 2012; Dupret, Pierret, Pinto, and Spellman-Poots 2012; Dessing, Jeldtoft, Nielsen, and Woodhead 2014).

Overcoming the false oppositions identified in this volume requires considerable analytical sophistication, thorough familiarity with theories, and many skills – in methods, languages, libraries, archives, the Internet, and in the field and social life. For most ordinary human beings it is difficult to unite these in one person. Some exceptional scholars manage to do so, as the papers show. Over the last decades we have witnessed important advances in the education of students, combining theoretical refinement with solid language training. But we should also question what has been exchanged for this – such as, for example, partly losing knowledge of the grander intellectual traditions in which we work. As Stephen Humphreys stressed in his wonderful handbook *Islamic History*, “nobody masters all the necessary skills” (Humphreys 1991, 3). Although much research has quite an individualist character, for many of us collaborative projects might also be a fertile approach, uniting the strong points of people with different backgrounds, educations, talents, and skills. In order to bring this about scholars from different intellectual traditions should engage in fruitful exchanges, by gaining insight in different academic traditions and disciplines. The present volume offers another invitation to do so. In order to be successful we need to continue our work on reconstructing a tradition of 200 years. An important step is to move beyond the traditional divide between anthropology and philology. The scholars contributing to this volume demonstrate to what kind of results this may lead.

Another dichotomy that often comes up is the supposed difference between Muslim and academic perspectives. The contributions of two scholars with a Muslim background demonstrate that such an opposition is by no means necessary. Both Muhammad Khalid Masud and Abdulkader Tayob have gained an international reputation with their important studies, with which they also contribute significantly to internal debates in the Muslim communities of which they consciously form part. Their work shows how a constructivist perspective situates Muslim representations and practices in their historical and social context and thereby enables open debates within Muslim communities with respect for mutual differences. Both Masud and Tayob participate in a courageous way in the public debates in their countries of origin, occasionally at considerable risk for their own well-being. Their work reminds us of the intellectual and political courage of our dear colleague Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, a professor at Leiden University and later at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, from whom we all learned so much, whose generosity and company we cherished, and to whose memory we dedicate this volume.

In this volume we have given much attention to changes, renewal, and transformations in the academic study of Islam. This process is often summed up as the demise of classical “Islamology” and the rise of a social science approach. NISIS strives to go beyond this simplified understanding of the intellectual tradition of which we form part by questioning the fallacy of the new. Underlying many of the transformations are continuities which are often barely recognised. Edward Said has prompted us to seriously question the genealogy of our knowledge, mainly by pointing to the social bases of its production. We do not only produce our knowledge for society – it is also produced by it. But our genealogical quest needs to move beyond this now less productive questioning of Orientalism, as François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin have recently demonstrated again in their *After Orientalism* (2014).

Critical study of the history of the academic and governmental traditions of which our scholarship is part is not only necessary to think about the material conditions and political dimensions of our work. It may also contribute considerably to a refinement of our understanding by questioning commonplace concepts and methods of research. This kind of reflection will enable us to self-consciously engage with the tradition and move beyond misleading divides between texts and practices, and anthropology and philology. In the European past of Islamic studies we may unearth valuable ideas and sources in our search for new directions. We need to know the tradition in which we are working, thinking, practicing, and studying. History may teach us lessons about the merits and errors of our ancestors. It is unavoidable that we will err and sin again, but we might try to do so in good faith.

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