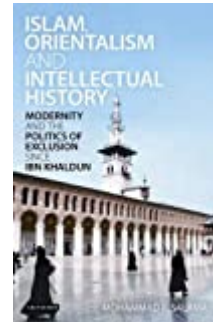


Mohammad R. Salama. *Islam, Orientalism and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of Exclusion since Ibn Khaldun.* London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011. 304 pp. \$96.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84885-005-7.



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Getz on Salama

Mohammad Salama's *Islam, Orientalism, and Intellectual History* is an exploration of the development of two linked oppositional binaries in the context of their shared discursive journey over the past four hundred years or so. The first of these pairs is "fiction" and "history," whose break has been researched by such luminaries of cultural studies as Peter Gay, Perry Anderson, Hayden White, and Michel de Certeau, all of whom appear in this volume. The second, pioneered by Edward Said, situates "Islam" in opposition to the "West." The influence of Said's work is clear in the title of the book, and pervades the study thoroughly. Yet in giving this genealogy, I do not mean to suggest that this volume is either orthodox or derivative. Instead, it is an important and in many ways groundbreaking work of significance across several fields.

Salama's most obvious innovation in this volume is to bring these two pathways of study together, but this fusion is supported by additional important strategies. First, this book is truly a history, and one in which intellectual patterns, scholarly debates, and epistemologi-

cal formulations and ruptures overlay a narrative of actions and experiences relevant to Egypt especially and the world more generally. Moreover, this is a history that is explicitly public, aimed at "examining the possibility of restoring the referent 'Islam' to a functional code of knowledge" (p. 9) and explaining the contemporary discourse of the relationship between Islam and West leading up to and continuing since the destruction of the Twin Towers on 9/11, an event of such significance that it can be signified merely by the date on which it occurred. Finally, the volume emerges from physical experience as well as discourse, and especially from the author's personal experiences being denied access to the United States and stranded in limbo for three months upon his attempt to begin work at a U.S. university.

Yet I still have not explained the significance of this volume well. There are plenty of monographs and scholarly articles about discourse, about Islam, about intellectual history, and about personal experiences in the post-9/11 era. This book is more than the sum of those parts. It is a particularly erudite, wide-ranging, and sophisticated

study that refuses to be grounded in a disciplinary approach and that raises more questions than it answers. It is a diagnosis of a disease in society and a pathology in scholarship that renders a large part of the world speechless, maintains a status quo in global politics, and that has proven powerful enough to refuse multiple attempts at scholarly intervention. Finally, it is a darn good read.

The book itself is structured as an archaeology of the dual binaries described above that begins with the Enlightenment and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. The first chapter functions largely as a historiography with a particular interest in the relationship between knowledge and power. It is also something of a subversive historiography that expresses a resentment of historiologies that, the author argues, act to entomb alternate forms of knowledge within a disciplinary structure and Hegelian view of the past. In the second chapter, this process of encapsulation is explored further through a discussion of European and North American intellectual engagements with Ibn Khaldun. Salama interprets this body of scholarship as illustrative of wider themes in Western engagements with Islam, and does so in a way that uses Said's work as a point of departure but also tries to move beyond a strict interpretation of the orientalist creation of a monolithic "other" while still acknowledging the process of silencing and encasing what Ibn Khaldun and other Islamic scholars experienced. The third chapter focuses upon Hegel's view of Islam, centering Hegel in a universe that includes both everyday discourse and the work of scholars like Francis Bacon. In this chapter Salama continues his argument that the two binaries ("West" vs. "Islam" and "literature" vs. Hegelian "history") developed in tandem and thus suggest that guild historians today are generally unable to escape the Hegelian worldview, and thus cannot question the events of 9/11, for example, outside of a single epistemology. Salama continues to chart this Hegelian world view in chapter 4,

which focuses on British nationalist civilizational thinking in the context of empire from *Robinson Crusoe* to Lord Cromer and Mary Shelley. He argues that this worldview established European, Christian, and white as the norm (and normal) while presenting Muslims as exceptional and even aberrant. Moreover, he shows that these Britons failed to take the steps necessary for moving beyond this shared national discourse. Instead, they readily accepted the conceptualization of Muslims as irrational, barbaric, and violent.

Finally, in chapter 5 Salama moves the story to colonial Egypt. Here he attempts to look at the development of "globalized Islam" both as a signifier asserted by the West and as an internally constructed identity within twentieth-century Muslim communities. Here, Salama argues that pan-Islamic ideals and "nationalism" emerged directly from the tensions of empire between liberalism and the realities of colonial oppression. Tied to a position of inferiority in a system that preached equality, Egyptian intellectuals and their audiences responded with resentment, indignation, and a language and poetics of revolt in poems, novels, and memorialization that help to sustain pan-Islamic identification today.

Salama's history of written history and human experience is one that both identifies the origins and mechanisms of Islamophobia and shows how they contributed as well to the encoding of Islamic nationalism. These two ideas are joint products of modernity, sustained in part by the division between scholarly history and literature. Together, they shape a global discourse in which the events of 9/11 and overseas intervention on the part of the United States and Europe are allowed free reign, and thus profoundly influence the experiences of daily life. This book is a timely intervention that is more than the sum of its parts, and will no doubt inform further studies by both social scientists and humanities practitioners, and hopefully policymakers as well.

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