

Book Review

Islam, Politics and Social Movements

By Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus (eds.). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, 332 pp.

This book contains thirteen well-researched case studies on social movements in North Africa, India, the Middle East, and Iran. Each movement differs, as the issues and concerns vary according to area. This diversity is made manageable by a neat categorization taking into account geography, periodization, and problematics, for example, and by the editors' clear explanation, in the first part of the book, of how the articles are arranged. In the second part are articles by Von Sivers, Clancy-Smith, Colonna, and Voll. Each author analyzes resistance and millenarian movements in precolonial (i.e., nineteenth- and early twentieth-century) North Africa. Part three, with articles by Frietag, Gilmartin and Swedenburg, deals with more contemporary issues, such as Islam and nationalism in India and Palestine. Part four discusses labor movements in Egypt and northern Nigeria (Beinin, Goldberg, Lubeck), while part five looks at the Iranian revolution and the roles of Imam Khomeini and Ali Shari'ati in defining and inspiring it (Algar, Abrahamian, Keddie).

One of the main issues that must be addressed when dealing with social movements in Islamic societies is whether they are really "Islamic" or whether they just happen to be taking place in Muslim societies. Lapidus, in his introductory essay, brings out the main issues when he says that the movements are studied "in order to explore their self-conception and symbols, the economic and political conditions under which they developed, and their relation to agrarian and capitalist economic structures and to established state regimes and elites" (p. 3). The authors look at social, structural, and ideological features without giving exclusive primacy to one or the other. Burke stresses this point. In his article, he discusses methodological issues and places the studies in the context of contemporary modes of analyses such as the "new cultural" and the "new social history" methods inspired by E. P. Thompson and others. This essay is an invaluable introduction to the case studies. Placing the movements in the context of changes occurring in the Islamic world as well as in the context of wider political and social events, the essay allows one to make comparisons across the different areas covered in terms of popular culture, patterns of collective action, the problem of Islam and secularism, and other aspects.

The articles range from the role of Islamic symbols (i.e., the mosque in India) in articulating new political organizations designed to deal with the

problems of self-identity and self-determination all the way to an analysis of the micropolitical and economic structures of North Africa in which the indigenous movements were grounded. This allows for a wide-ranging description of societies and issues. The four articles on precolonial Algeria and Sudan, for example, discuss such relevant factors as the effect of demography, the problems of a subsistence economy, local rivalries between Sufi brotherhoods, and the rise of charismatic lineages. Swedenburg's discussion on Palestine looks at the area's popular culture, the patron-client relationships that existed at a particular time, the changing agrarian conditions, the expansion of the Zionist presence, and, most importantly, the tradition of resistance that formed part of the peasant's own history. Freitag and Gilmartin analyze the effect of the mosque, as a universalistic symbol, becoming a focal point for the crystallization of a universalistic Islamic identity transcending local divisions. The articles on the Iranian revolution also stress ideological features such as Imam Khomeini's mystic vision and worldview which provided the integration of Islam and politics needed for the revolution.

Such analyses, inspired by the "new social history" approach, provide correctives to those that study only structural features and those which are exclusively ideological. In these papers, Islam is seen as one of several forces that shaped the various movements. The reader acquires an insight into the different ways by which Islam, once it provided either a millenarian ideology of freedom from non-Muslim rule or the typical social structure of the Sufi brotherhoods which could be transformed into organized networks for resistance activities, became intrinsic to the peoples in question. Thus the studies are not of Islam and politics *per se*, but rather studies of Muslim peoples and politics, with religion being just one of several contributing factors. Further, by placing their case studies within contemporary historical and sociological approaches, the writers allow for comparison with movements in non-Muslim societies, a welcome move away from those orientalist and theoretical approaches which see the relation between Islam and politics as direct and non-problematic.

This book is a welcome addition to the material on Muslim society. Its sensitivity to current analytical methods, the close ethnographic descriptions, and the wide sweep of its concern make it useful not only for contemporary Islamic scholars but also for those area specialists and social scientists interested in subaltern movements and protest movements in the modern world.

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