

And Then We Work for God: Rural Sunni Islam in Western Turkey

THIS is an excellent study about the construction and interpretations of Islam in two different villages of Manisa, a town located in the Aegean region of western Turkey. The study offers a rich and nuanced explanation of how ordinary people interpret and understand Islam as they navigate their daily lives. It attempts to explain 'how people practice Islam' in a changing socio-economic context, and Hart claims that Islam for rural villagers 'is a path to the next world' (p. 2). However, the villagers, who are ambiguous about what constitutes the correct road to the next world, struggle to find it. Consequently, there is much debate and disagreement among villagers hoping for provisional consensus. In the process, the people continue to prepare themselves for this world and the hereafter, and do so by utilizing three competing and complementing understandings of Islam: the official state Islam represented by the Directorate of Religious Affairs, known as Diyanet; Sufi and neo-Sufi orders; and cultural Islamic tradition or 'folk Islam', as Ernest Gellner calls it. According to Hart's extensive explorations, the villagers pick and choose from these three representations of Islam to construct the 'everyday Islam' that they practice in their daily lives. They strategically and selectively utilize these competing sources as they reconfigure their understandings of Islam to empower their positions and practices. Hart finds not a single, rigid understanding of Islam but a constantly evolving Islam as they instrumentally shift, negotiate and reconstruct their fluid religious identities. Hence, what their Muslim identity is all depends on who speaks for Islam in which social and political situation.

Hart's ethnographic portraits also indicate how gender difference inform people's understanding of Islam, and

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Jumlah Halaman

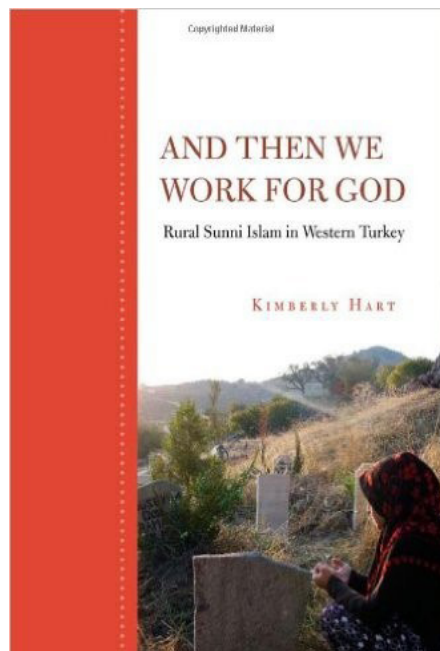
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how, in turn, their perception of Islam shapes gender power relations and cultural practices in the two rural villages.

For Hart, men are more open to the influence of the official state Islam than women. Mosques, according to her, have become the centre of masculine Islam—the mosque being the property of the state and the imam a state employee. Her exploration gives primacy to women's voices, demonstrating their power to manipulate the superstructure of official Islam as they engage in the 'folk Islam' of Sufi orders and heterodox interpretations. This remarkably rich ethnographic study thus favours a bottom-up approach to 'everyday Islam' and its interaction with secularism, politics and local economy.

Hart's ethnography challenges some of the core assumptions of modernization theory about rural life as a rigid social sector insulated from the broader socio-economic transformations and ideological debates (such as defining 'purified' Islam) that go on in urban centres. It indicates the degree to which rural life is integrated into the modern institutions of the Turkish state and economy. Its complex approach takes the reader beyond Paul Stirling's and Carol Delaney's controversial and Orientalist studies about the Turkish village. Hart's multilayered study offers a context-sensitive interpretation of religion, illustrating the ways in which ordinary Muslim believers in rural settings reconfigure Islam in relation to and in opposition to competing interpretations in a changing socioeconomic context. It can accordingly be welcomed as the first thorough and significant study of Islam in a rural setting in Turkey, previous studies having been either city-centric or tending to privilege Istanbul-centred interpretations.

(Sumber: Oxford University Press, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, June 10, 2015)

Early Islam: A Critical Reconstruction Based on Contemporary Sources

THE Inârah Institute for Research on Early Islamic History and the Koran began as an originally Germany-based interdisciplinary research society that seeks to employ only the material evidence of—and apply the historical-critical method to—early Islam. This volume is the second from the Inârah Institute to be translated into English. Like the first volume, *The Hidden Origins of Islam* (2009) also edited by Karl-Heinz Ohlig, this one strongly challenges both Muslim and non-Muslim scholarly constructions of the origins of Islam. It is likely, therefore, to be met with either indifference or hostility. This is unfortunate because not only is the revisionist account provocative and intriguing, but it also attempts to address some of the puzzling, even contradictory, aspects in the traditional accounts of the formative period of Islam. At the very least, the Inârah scholars should not be dismissed simply because they seem hostile to Islam. I would argue that to exempt Islam from the same kind of scholarly skepticism that characterizes much of the study of Christian origins and ancient Judaism is to implicitly accept the Orientalist assumption that Islam and Muslims are somehow inferior.

The volume contains two essays by Karl-Heinz Ohlig, two by Volker Popp, one by Christoph Luxenberg, a newly translated essay by Ignaz Goldziher, and one by Markus Gross. What these overlapping essays share is a desire to show that the beginnings of a “Qur’anic movement” originated not in the Arabian Peninsula but out of a particular form Christianity practiced in Mesopotamia, whose tradition moved west to Jerusalem and Damascus with Muawiya (d. 680; traditionally the fifth caliph and founder of the Umayyad dynasty) and again with Abd al-Malik (d. 705; traditionally the ninth caliph). Islam with its prophet named Muham-

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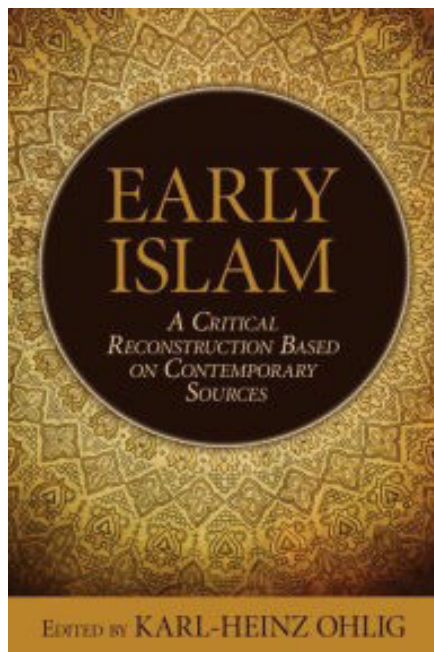
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mad who lived in Mecca and Medina are a product of a reinterpretation of early Islamic history at the time of Harun al-Rashid (d. 809; the fifth Abbasid caliph) or his son, al-Ma'mun. Some of the claims seem tenuous, but then if

one only uses non-Islamic sources, that is hardly surprising. Traditional histories, such as the *History of al-Tabari*, are seen as “kerygmatic history” and almost completely ignored. This history is constructed using non-Islamic documents and material culture such as numismatic evidence and inscriptions.

Popp begins with the volume with a sweeping essay (that could have been published as a separate monograph), which retells the history of the movement that came to be known as Islam. He begins with the Sasanians and the systematic deportations, which included Syrian Christians in the third century. The latter maintained their pre-Nicean traditions and lived as Iranianized Arab. In the protracted and complex conflict between the Persians and the Byzantines, it was the great victory of Heraclius over the Persians in 622 CE, and the consequent autonomy of Christian Arabs and the Arab, which marked the beginning of the “era of the Arabs”—not the emigration (hijra) of an Arabian Prophet from Mecca to Medina. The absence of coins and documents before 641 CE serves for Popp as evidence that most of traditional Islamic history is a later construction, and so he dismisses Arab history completely, not only for the first four “rightly guided caliphs” but also much of what is said of the Umayyads. The legendary ancestor of the dynasty was conceived in the genealogical constructions of the historian and exegete al-Tabari from the ninth-century CE, which linked historical persons (such as Maavia/Muawiya) with figures of a sacred era in Mecca and Medina, which lasted forty years (from the hijra to the death of Ali).

(Sumber: Oxford University Press, *Journal of American Academic Religion*, July 9, 2015)

