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Nile Green, *Global Islam: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020, 160pp., ISBN 978-0190917234.

When the journalist named Shotaro Noda (1868–1904) became the first Japanese Muslim in 1891, the event was widely publicized in the Ottoman press. This circumstance gives us a sense of Nile Green's *Global Islam*. Not because converting a Japanese to Islam is an unimaginable event, and certainly not because the Ottoman press succeeded in publishing such news coming from the top of the world; the conversion was caused by the Ottoman outreach to Japan. Green's book describes a methodology that involves looking at contemporary Islam in a new direction. A multifaceted approach to the spread of religious ideas involves taking into consideration the numerous connections and channels through which they spread.

Beyond its informative purpose – the book is part of the *Very Short Introductions* series of Oxford University Press, Green's book harmoniously puts together the pieces of a complicated puzzle. In fact, rather than presenting brand-new elements of Islamic history, the author emphasizes the connections between events in different parts of the globe. In the author's words, "[...], global Islam comprises the different forms of Islam disseminated by activists, organizations, and states that made effective use of the mechanisms of globalization. This means that global Islam is neither the sum nor the outcome of fourteen centuries of Islamic tradition. Rather, it is the result of attempts to reform, reject or occasionally recover such traditions in response to a century and a half of intense interaction with non-Muslim states, societies, ideas, and institutions." (p. 131)

The first chapter is a matter of methodology as it deals with the difference between the two concepts of world Islam and global Islam. Historians of Islam used to analyse the past with the tools of the nineteenth century. But globalization has fundamentally altered our ways of reading events to the extent that

it is no longer possible to study religious processes in isolation. By taking the interconnectedness of the world as its point of departure, the author uses the term world Islam by referring “to the older versions of Islam that developed and adapted to different local and regional environments during the millennium before the onset of modern globalization.” (p. 8) On the contrary, global Islam refers to the versions of Islam spread across geographical, political, and ethnolinguistic boundaries by Muslim activists, organizations, and states, in the era of modern globalization. In other words, globalization has produced a very wide range of religious actors with different personal, social, and political backgrounds. Yet, what they have in common is the common use of the opportunities of globalization. While religious beliefs and practices differ, contemporary global religious actors share the same wide array of tools and means of communication and exchange. Rather than homogenizing religious perspectives, globalization promoted an increasing number of rival claimants to religious authority and authenticity. In order to trace the different phases and mechanisms of globalization, the author divides the contemporary history of Islam into three segments, each of fifty years, from 1870 to 2020.

The second chapter focuses on the historical period from 1870 to 1920. It covers the main events in the light of the interaction between the Islamic religion and globalisation. Beyond the well-known experiences of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and his Syrian student Rašid Riḍā in Egypt, the chapter draws a broader picture of the first phase of global Islam by including different kinds of endeavours such as the Ottomans’ and the Russians’. It is widely known that in this historical period the first transnational Muslim missionary organization, the Ahmadiyya, began to spread and it opened the door to the next generation of inter-regional religious organizations. Yet, the book contextualizes the Ahmadiyya experience within the history of global Islam allowing us to have a deeper understanding of what exactly it meant. Despite the fact that most Muslims consider this movement heretical, it marked the transition from networks of individuals with similar goals to global Islamic organizations. As pointed out by the author, “In Southeast Asia as in China, the easier connections with the Middle East afforded by steam and print empowered new activists and nascent organizations that sought to undermine the regional forms of Islam that had spent centuries adapting to their local environments.” (p. 42)

If Islamic unity ideals first arose in response to European power, between 1920–1970 “the rise of secular nationalism in the Middle East, India, and elsewhere in Asia presented a powerful ideological threat to those who promoted Islamic visions of society and politics.” (p. 47) The third chapter deals with those Islamic visions that resulted from the geopolitical transformations that

occurred in those fifty years – including the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of the Soviet Union, and the spread of secularism, nationalism, and socialism. Consequently, Egypt and Pakistan emerged as key regions in the area. Also, two important doctrinal movements, Salafism and Deobandism, spread widely across the globe. Egyptian Salafists embarked on a campaign against one of the most representative features of world Islam, namely the rituals and doctrines of the Sufis in an effort to “return” to the pure Islam of their ancestors. Yet, it was the combination of Salafism and Wahhabism that created the rigid and sectarian version of the Salafi method, sponsored globally by Saudi Arabia.

This phase was characterized by two main shifts within the Islamic global dimension: a revolutionary shift in politics that led to the introduction of a political theology that sought to address the weaknesses of Muslims. Also, the religious authority field underwent a radical revolution with the marginalization of the traditional Sufi-ulama power and the secularization of Islamic evangelism (Muslim Brotherhood and Tablighi Jamaat). The same phenomenon did not happen in the Shiite context as both Ismaili and Twelver Shiism did not engage in developing wide “lay preacher” organizations and by doing so they succeeded in maintaining religious authority in the imams’ or ulama’ hands. In the aftermath of World War II, new religious actors emerged. Firstly, Saudi Arabia, for the pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina, but also for the petrodollar wealth and the Muslim World League, an umbrella organization for many Salafi-Wahhabi initiatives throughout the world, established in 1962. The other key post-war state promoter of global Islam was Pakistan, way before 1973, when the third Constitution of Pakistan declared the country an Islamic Republic. While Pakistan’s postcolonial polity and society searched for identity and meaning, not only did the Karachi-based World Muslim Congress established in 1949 play a crucial role, but also several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In the meantime, traditional Sufi masters resisted the Deobandi and Salafi critiques, albeit with less transnational organization and propagation means (publications, translations, etc.).

The fourth chapter focuses on the period 1970–2020, which spans from the Islamic revolution to the internet. Political developments such as the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan add up to two further developments: the increasing role of national states and the advancement of transport and communication technologies (cheap air travel, digital media, the Internet). Moreover, as a result of migration to Europe and North America, a large number of Muslim organizations were formed in the diaspora to address the religious needs of these communities.

Saudi Arabia's oil boom coincided with the establishment of state-sponsored institutions that promoted Islamic mosques and religious centres throughout the world. Nevertheless, Saudi policy revealed a controversial approach. While at home the Saudi religious leadership promoted politically quietist Salafi-Wahhabi ideas, "it was in Afghanistan that the Saudi struggle against socialism [reaped] its greatest geopolitical harvest as its sponsorship of a violent version of Salafism slipped increasingly out of its control" (p. 90). The result was a violent conflict among Muslims. Saudi Arabia's role as a religious exporter influenced an extraordinary number of places in Africa, turning this continent into an instrumental player in disseminating Salafism, especially after the 1980s. However, it was central Asia that became global Islam's most prominent frontier after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Not only does Green's book provide a comprehensive approach to the history of contemporary Islam, but it also offers novel insights into the role of Islamic *da'wa* (calling to Islam) on global Islam development. In his study of the history of mobilizing Islam during the Ottoman era and through the transnational Islamic organizations afterward, Green succeeded in tracing briefly the Islamic *da'wa* development in the last two centuries, both inside and outside of the Muslim *Umma*. The book successfully connects the first attempts at printing Islamic *da'wa* such as the Chinese translation of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (Treatise on Divine Unity), originally printed in 1897 by 'Abduh, which appeared two decades later than its release, with the development of more effective strategies of propagating and disseminating Islam, like the weekly program *Sharia and Life* by the world's most visible preacher, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, recently passed away.

Global Islam is perhaps characterized by a central paradox. The increasing access to communication tools provided by globalization has resulted in an ever-increasing number of rival religious activists, organizations, and states. However, global Islam is not a synonym with faith and practice of the world's Muslims as a whole. Neither is a simple representative of the varied beliefs and opinions of Muslim-heritage populations around the world. In fact, due to the small proportion of Muslims involved in the promotion of global Islam, the spread of global Islam goes beyond a simple reflection of demographics or beliefs. As Green pointed out, "[...] global Islam has been produced and distributed by small but active minorities, albeit minorities who are able to make maximum use of the power of networks, communications, and, in some cases, state policies and resources. It would therefore be a mistake to simplistically extrapolate the beliefs and opinions of the world's highly diverse Muslim populations on the basis of a series of unelected religious organizations, however much the latter have claimed to represent ordinary Muslim opinion." (p. 139)

Yet, Green's book is not just about the connections forged by Muslim preachers and activists from 1870 onwards. It is also about the possibilities they found in living their religion across the globe. The printing press, steam engine, and communication were the tools that made those possibilities a reality.

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