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## BOOK REVIEW

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Scourfield, Jonathan, Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Asma Khan and Sameh Otri. 2013. *Muslim Childhood: Religious Nurture in a European Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. xv + 239pp. ISBN 978 0 19 960031 1. Hbk. £55.

Dessing, Nathal M., Nadia Jeldtoft, Jørgen S. Nielsen and Linda Woodhead, eds. 2013. *Everyday Lived Islam in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate. xii+183pp. ISBN 978 1 4724 1753 4. Hbk. £60.

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Although both these books reference Europe in their title, and share fieldwork investigating the ordinary lives of Muslims as a common subject, their focus is in fact quite different. *Muslim Childhood* is an account of a single, discrete project, whilst *Everyday Lived Islam* is a more wide-ranging volume. Both are products of the Arts and Humanities Research Council / Economic and Social Research Council Religion and Society Grants programme, both make valuable contributions to the field of Muslim Studies, but in very different ways.

*Muslim Childhood* is an account of an extensive qualitative fieldwork project with 60 Muslim families in Cardiff, focused especially on how these families attempted to pass on their faith to children in “early and middle childhood,” that is, those aged 12 and under. The central focus of the research project is why Muslims are more effective at passing on their faith to their children than other religious groups. The research team conducted in-depth interviews with both children and parents, and their sample was diverse, representing a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, a variety of schools of thoughts within Islam and people who lived in a variety of densities of Muslim population. The breadth and diversity of the sample base is one of the strengths of the study: as the authors note, they were able to choose participants to ensure a good spread, rather than simply having to take whoever came forward. They used a variety of approaches, including interviews, card sorting exercises and child-friendly research techniques such as a pots and pasta sorting exercise, voice diaries and photo diaries. The four researchers themselves were also diverse, both male and female, of differing ethnicities, experience and perspectives.

*Muslim Childhood* presents four reasons for the greater effectiveness of the transmission of religious faith within Islam in comparison with other faiths. First, cognitive transmission, whereby frequent repetition of bodily practices and religious teaching in a variety of contexts enables memorization that aids transmission of faith from a young age. Second, socialization within families and community tend towards embodiment and creation of a particular *habitus*. Third, the notion of minority defence. That is to say, recognition of Islam as a minority religion within the UK encourages transmission of the faith. Fourth, the prevalence of religious organizations, in particular supplementary schools for Arabic and

Qur'anic education. These combine, the authors suggest, to make it more likely that Islam will be successfully passed from one generation to the next.

The case presented in *Muslim Childhood* is cogent, coherent, very thoroughly researched, and presented clearly and compellingly. It provides an excellent model both of the process of engaging in fieldwork and how to write it up. The collaborative nature of the research project was likely integral to its success, and the authors make a point of discussing the skills each member of the team brought to the project as a whole. Money must also have played its part: a project of this scale would require significant funds, and the collaborative nature of the work probably made securing the research grant more likely. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and gained much from it. The only quibble is the price of the book itself. I would recommend it for any university library and to any individual who is able to afford it. I can only hope that Oxford University Press decides to publish a paperback edition to give *Muslim Childhood* the wider audience it deserves.

*Everyday Lived Islam in Europe*, by contrast, is a solid contribution to the field, but not a sparkling one. It is a book of three parts: theoretical discussion, case studies and brief concluding reflections. An edited collection produced from a diverse range of perspectives, it does not have the coherence of *Muslim Childhood*. Part I consists of three chapters. In the first, Linda Woodhead provides a valuable nuance to the discussion of lived and doctrinal religion through the introduction of the categories of tactical and strategic religion. This is a very strong chapter and well worth reading, and she presents a compelling case for a terminological shift that more accurately reflects the power dynamics involved. She argues that strategic religion is more established and powerful, and tactical religion more subversive, reactive and sometimes individual. The other two chapters in this section are solid contributions, especially Jeldoff's discussion of the script of conflict normally used to frame Muslim studies fieldwork and Dessing's honest discussion of issues in gaining access to fieldwork sites.

Part II consists of seven case studies which contain some interesting insights. I was personally especially struck by DeHanas' use of the term "elastic orthodoxy" to describe how young Muslims in the East End of London constructed their identity. It was noticeable, however, reading this volume straight after *Muslim Childhood*, that these were all research projects conducted by an individual fieldworker with relatively few resources. One of the personal lessons I take from reading both volumes one after the other is the richer nature of collaborative fieldwork in comparison with solo efforts.

I was disappointed by Jørgen Nielsen's closing reflections. They are only 12 pages long, and a footnote confirms that the first two and a half pages are a summary of something he published in 2001. Rather than provide a summary of the current state of play with a clear outline of potential future directions of research, sadly, all of Nielsen's reflections came across as a dated rehash of where things used to be several decades ago. It is a weak end to an otherwise decent book. I would recommend anyone interested in fieldwork in religion reads Woodhead's chapter, and has a look at the case studies that may be of personal interest, but given the price, this is more a book for the library than one's personal collection.