



**Allen James Fromherz and Nadav Samin, (eds.)- *Knowledge, Authority and Change in Islamic Societies: Studies in Honor of Dale F. Eickelman* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 308p.**

The present volume serves as a *Festschrift* for the great American scholar Dale F. Eickelman and to his own commitment to global scholarly communion, mainly his contributions to anthropology, Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, and the broader humanities and social sciences. Continuing his professor's footsteps, Clifford Geertz, and lauding Jacques Berque, Eickelman breaches the walls of discipline and clarifies not only the big issues faced by anthropologists of the Middle East and North Africa, but also broader discourse about the nature of religion, authority and social change. The chapters in this book uncover how Eickelman's scholarship as a versatile, intellectual toolbox, are useful for (re)thinking about the nature of knowledge, authority and change in a variety of contexts.

In his book *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth Century Notable* (1985), Dale Eickelman demonstrates that power is knowledge. He deploys the rural nobleman and *qadi* from Boujad, Hajj 'Abd ar-Rahman al-Mansuri, to make important observations about the nature of knowledge and power. Culling from the Eickelman's experience in Boujad, Harvey Goldberg, in an engaging chapter, entitled "An Anthropologist's 'Day in Rabbinical Court' in late Ottoman Tripoli," juxtaposes his encounter with Mordecai Hacoheh and the latter's depiction of the rabbinic court – *beit din* – in Tripoli at the end of the Ottoman period. The meaningful parallels between Goldberg's research on a Jewish court in the metropolitan center of Tripoli, Libya, and Eickelman's work in a Muslim court in rural Morocco, show the social basis for knowledge as power as similar across multiple religious and geographical categories.

Muhammad Qasim Zaman's essay "Islamic Education in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century India" provides insights into the madrasa tradition in late Mughal and early colonial South Asia. Synthesizing moral philosophy with an anthropology of Islam pioneered in part by Eickelman, Zaman treats the madrasa not as a physical institution but as a set of practices, norms, and expectations that collectively constitute an educational tradition and reproduction of knowledge as a means of inculcating students with degrees of social power. It is through these practices that knowledge has been diffused and absorbed, students trained to become *'ulama* and networks of scholars fostered. These practices have helped forge a relationship with earlier authorities and they have served, as they still do, to establish new claims to authority. Besides, in the light of the research he undertook on the role of madrasa education in Pakistan, Muhammad Khalid Masud's study follows Dale F. Eickelman's pioneering research (1992) on mass higher education and its implications in the Middle East. He thinks that there is a constant conflict between tradition and modernity, so Pakistani policy-makers see that these madras are need of modernization.

Knowledge and power are also expressed and conveyed within the field of anthropology itself. Abdelrhani Moundib's comparison and close reading of the early works of two great anthropologists of Islam, Clifford Geertz and Eickelman, saliently demonstrates that there is no discrepancy between the theses of Geertz and Eickelman about Islam in Morocco. Moundib brings to sharper focus the most important findings of the interpretive trend on Islam in Moroccan society as an approach whereby they tried to understand the nature of the Moroccan social system, and pin down the mechanisms of change that derive from the concepts with which people form their individual and cultural representations of a worldview and build their social relationships. The author accentuates the practical implementation of this methodological trend by comparing two significant works: Geertz's *Islam Observed* (1971) and Eickelman's *Moroccan Islam* (1976).

Is a preference for "scientific" notions of knowledge an expression of power and dominance over sincerely (or even insincerely) held belief in the jinn? This is the cogent question behind the Simon O'Meara chapter, "Out of Sight in Morocco, or How to See Jinn in Museums?" O'Meara explores Dale Eickelman's counter-intuitive insight that seeing in the modern-day museum is something that needs teaching. Indeed, there is a focus on the museological display of Islamic art from the place of the mostly invisible jinn as well as why it was necessary to create the conditions for the display of Islamic art so that the jinn could in principle be seen in the museum – so that the jinn and the unseen world, the *'alam alghayb*, had a place there.

Culling from sociology, linguistic anthropology, and field sites in the Middle East, James Piscatori elucidated the impact of recent changes in the Muslim world, showing how being Muslim has been transformed. He premises on his pioneering collaboration with Dale Eickelman in *New Media in the Muslim World* (2003) to ask new and probing questions about the transformative influence of the Internet on social group formation and interaction.

In a similar manner, Susan Slyomovics reconsiders the public sphere and challenges to authority. In her interviews of political prisoners from 1999-2000, Slyomovics described the legacy and impact of the "Years of Lead." The post-Hassan II (d. 1999) era has allowed for the creation of "New Publics" and a reckoning with the past. She conducted numerous interviews with Moroccan political prisoners. These encounters occurred in public spaces newly opened to overlapping communities of political prisoner associations and human rights organizations. She therefore managed to highlight the avenues available to political prisoners as the voiceless for getting the word out.

Dale Eickelman's pioneering contributions to a range of subfields within the anthropology of Islam, Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, and the broader social sciences are conspicuously prolific. El-Sayed el-Aswad tries to survey Eickelman's handling of different forms of knowledge – religious, traditional, secular and modern – as well as of various forms of communication and new media that have operated as drivers impacting Muslim countries such as Morocco, Oman, Egypt,

Indonesia, Iran and Turkey, *inter alia*. Also El-Aswad brings to the fore Eickelman's emphasis on knowledge, attained via education, media, information technology, travel, migration and globalization as the underlying force or power to transform socio-political structure and religious authority.

Dale Eickelman notes that in Islam continuous debates around notions, such as the "common good" (*al-maslaha al-'amma*), the proper performance of religious duties or "tribe" (*qabila*) make these terms essentially contested concepts, for which "there are irreconcilable arguments about the right usage" (Eickelman 2016). Among Muslims, such concepts constantly stir up heated discussions and conflicts over the nature and the practical implications of how to be a true believer and how to interact with scriptures, religious authority, and the locally embedded notions of culture and tradition. Essentially contested concepts are pertinent to Muslim religious life and historical experience no less than to all other religions and comprehensive ideologies that serve as matrices for building the collective conscience. Simeon Evstatiev reveals that modern, transnational Salafism— as a complex concept – is no exception.

As the title of the volume indicates, the concept of change is very important. Indeed, Dale Eickelman addresses change in Islamic societies, and challenges the assumptions of modernization theory, which suggests the decline of religion and religious influence. Eickelman's work in Oman beginning from the late 1970s and early 1980s shows us his insights about religiosity and the possibilities of an anthropology that would engage seriously with religious scholarship, oil wealth, history, and technology and of conducting field research in the Arabian Peninsula. Mandana Limbert points out that in 1978-1979, when Eickelman first visited Oman, Qaboos bin Said al-Bu Saidi bin Said al Bu-Saidi had only been in power for eight to nine years. Limbert moves us forward forty years to 2018 and the changes experienced in the Omani town of Hamra, but also the resonances with the challenges witnessed by Eickelman.

This *Festschrift* for Dale Eickelman is as rich and multidisciplinary as Dale Eickelman's *œuvre*, which demonstrates an astounding range and mastery of multiple subjects across many fields, areas and geographical zones. He has explored Islam and gender, education, the media and the public good. From Russia to Central Asia, Oman, Morocco and China, his scholarship spans the global frontiers of the Islamicate world. Eickelman's work as president of Tangier American Legation (TALIM) and as human relations and relationship coordinator/director of the Dartmouth American University of Kuwait (AUK) Program, for instance, improves mutual understanding between peoples. He locates culture out in the open, not in "locked boxes, lids closely shut with the key held by the elite, but in a vast diversity of communities, connections, and conditions." Thus, Dale Eickelman doesn't just look into communities in new ways. He helps create and sustain them.

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