

perfectly rational stance for members of an Egyptian elite conscious of the need to bolster their own authority against the British, on the one hand, and against domestic political forces seeking radical solutions to Egypt's own socioeconomic problems, on the other. This argument is then used as a critique against historians like Elie Kedourie and others, who have argued that Egypt's involvement with Arabism only came at the end of the 1930s, and then as a result of a politico-ideological calculation by the entourage of the young king, Faruq.

The book is based on two versions of 'Azzam's own unpublished memoirs, one in English and one in Arabic, as well as long interviews with 'Azzam himself and members of his family. It remains, however, firmly an account of the man's public life with little about his family and his two marriages, and only fleeting glimpses of his character and personality. This is not to say that Coury is not aware of some of his subject's faults. 'Azzam was clearly a somewhat emotional man, often unsteady in judgment and given to long-winded speeches, but this is always subordinate to the larger purpose of showing the development of the ideas, which 'Azzam first published while working for the newspaper he started in 1919, *al-Liwā' al-Ṭarabulsi*. He then reinforced these ideas and elaborated on them in a life devoted to making connections both across the spectrum of Egyptian politics and in Palestine, Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Arab East. As a member of a family of what Coury calls *fallāḥin dhawātī*, this was obviously something which he had the time and the money to do, whether as a Wafdist member of parliament in the 1920s or when virtually unemployed during the anti-Wafdist ministries of the early 1930s.

Part of Coury's argument is that, for Egyptians like 'Azzam, Arabism was, in a sense, no big deal and can be seen, like Islam, as just one part of an identity with which they felt entirely comfortable. The historical problem then becomes one, not of trying to show why Egyptian politics took an Arab turn at any particular moment, but of illustrating the different ways in which the Arab component either opened up certain benefits or posed particular problems. Coury provides some fleeting glimpses of such nascent contradictions, for example the embarrassment created by a public dispute within the Egyptian delegation attending the Mufti's General Islamic Conference in Jerusalem in December 1931. But this is a theme which he could certainly have done more to explore. Taking an Arab stance, and supporting overtly Arab causes, like Palestine, involved risks as well as benefits, even at this early stage in the game. It could create problems with the British, it could exacerbate divisions at home and, more generally, it could generate tensions with weaker Arab neighbors who both admired and feared Egypt's cultural, educational and, in time, military resources. This last point was something which Egyptians of 'Azzam's generation found particularly hard to grasp. Arabism made perfect sense if you came from the largest and most powerful Arab country. It made rather different sense to a Libyan or a Sudanese.

David Pinault. *Horse of Karbala: Muslim Devotional Life in India*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. 257 pp.

Reviewed by Richard K. Wolf

David Pinault, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, has forged a unique place for himself in the study of South Asian (Shi'i) Islam. An Arabic and Islamic scholar by training, Pinault evinced interest in narrative and storytelling in his first book on *The Arabian Nights*, and adopted persuasive techniques of storytelling in his two studies of Indian Shi'ism, including the book under review. I write this review with a great deal of admiration for Pinault's fieldwork, his erudition in employing Arabic and Persian texts to interrogate oral and written sources in Urdu and local South Asian languages, and his dedication to representing Islam as it is lived "on the ground," in all its complexity and diversity. Pinault's book both describes, and is deeply evocative of, the ways in which Muslims of Hyderabad (South India), Darjeeling (West Bengal), and Ladakh (Northwest India near the borders of Pakistan and Tibet) observe Muḥarram. In the process, Pinault reveals the dynamics of intercommunity politics and religion among Shi'a, Sunnis, Buddhists, and Hindus in these areas.

Pinault's ethnography is richly detailed. Each chapter brings together a satisfying mix of cogent argumentation and description. I was less enthusiastic about the organization of the book as a whole, however. It consists of a series of rather self-contained chapters and, in three instances, of reworked, previously published articles. This leads to a degree of repetition from one chapter to the next, and lends the reader a sense of stasis rather than development. Furthermore, no argument of general significance is made explicit in the book. In all fairness, this was not Pinault's intention, either, as he envisioned the book as addressing three topics: (1) how Muslim communities transform Shi'i practices historically; (2) convergences between Shi'i and Roman Catholic religious sensibilities; and (3) the process of fieldwork. Still, I think there were central arguments that could have served to impel the book theoretically, as he has done so effectively through narrative.

Part of what I perceived to be a diffuseness of focus emerges from the book's title, which may have been a choice of the publisher. A few chapters deal with Ḥusain's steed, but it does not constitute a focus for the whole book. Nor is the book about Muslim devotional life in India, per se. It is about public practices of Shi'a, and to a limited extent Sunnis, during the month of Muḥarram. Left out are women's practices, everyday practices, and Shi'i communal and household observances related to the commemoration of the fourteen *ma'ṣūmīn* that occur almost every month of the Islamic calendar. While these are not exactly lacunae in the book, their absence is noticeable, given the title.

Chapter one presents Pinault's encounter with his first fieldsite, Hyderabad, and the component of Shi'i ritual that has been a central focus of

Pinault's work in both of his books on Muḥarram; that is *mātam*, literally "mourning," but in this context, the practice of self-flagellation with hands or sharp implements. Originally intending to conduct Arabic manuscript research in the Salar Jung Museum, Pinault's curiosity was piqued by ritual practices not mentioned in his Arabic sources. Interest in what lay beyond textual Islam, combined with inspirations about how one might present life within Islam to the American university student, propelled Pinault from archival research to ethnography.

Chapter two introduces the reader to Shi'i Islam, outlining major events following the death of the Prophet, both as viewed by contemporary Shi'a in the Indian subcontinent and as portrayed in selected historical Arabic texts (e.g. al-Ṭabarī). This is followed by a useful and condensed historical discussion of Shi'ism in India, focusing primarily on Avadh and Hyderabad. He introduces the theme of Muḥarram as both a context for intercommunal blending and cooperation, and as one for conflict, an approach common to many studies on the subject. In the process of making this book accessible to the general reader, Pinault occasionally allows himself to make statements that might trouble the South Asianist. Such is the case with his attribution of the "ecumenical quality" of Muḥarram to "the relationship between religion and society in traditional India" (p. 17). He, in fact, tries to draw attention to something important, namely that identities that are now commonly called "religious" were often adopted nominally by subjects of rulers or landowners. In other words, they were largely economic, political, and local, rather than necessarily grounded in morality or belief. But even this type of identity formation needs to be situated historically and geographically, for I am not sure that "traditional India" ever existed in a particular place or at a particular time.

Pinault uses insights from Diana Eck's influential work on the phenomenon of *darshan* in Hinduism, a powerful moment of encounter between a devotee and an embodiment of divinity characterized by mutual "seeing." He suggests that many "religious" practices, including those performed by people who call themselves Muslims, share something of this pattern, which he calls "darshanic," involving also "adorning, clothing, and touching some figural representation of the divine" (p. 18). While I am in sympathy with Pinault's strategy of locating ritual practice in the realm of a pervasive cultural matrix rather than in religion, writ large, I wonder whether the level of generality at which Pinault uses the concept can any longer define something typically Indic.

Chapter three is entitled "Blood, Rationality, and Ritual in the Shia Tradition." In certain kinds of *mātam*, metal implements are used to cut the chest, back and head, causing blood to flow. Pinault interprets evidence to suggest that blood is considered impure because it is linked to a loss of control. However, while Shi'a doctrinally consider blood impure, in practice in South Asia, they would seem to make an exception in the case of *mātam*. Pinault hypothesizes that Shi'i popular devotion has been influenced, via Sufi

traditions, by a Sunni legal position, which holds that martyrs' blood is pure. Pinault proceeds then to examine a range of texts, exploring the debt Shi'i religious symbolism owes to Sufism. His analysis here is subtle, skilled, and textured.

Chapter four discusses women's roles in Shi'i devotional literature. Pinault shrewdly notes that purdah is maintained not only by physical and visual separation, but also by men who willfully avoid the temptation of gazing upon women. The chapter focuses not on women's practices (Pinault had little direct access to them), but rather on how men and women understand the significance of particular women in the Karbala narrative. Here Pinault, drawing on the work of Nahid Yeganeh and Nikki Keddie, makes an important point about the historically contingent nature of Shi'i identifications with historical personae. He quotes a popular devotional anthology of the Iranian author, 'Abbas Qummi (d. 1941), suggesting that Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet, is an ideal role model for Shi'i women—a passive, "guiltless victim," "patien[t] in suffering." During the Iranian Revolution, Fāṭima's symbolic place was apparently deemphasized. Rather, the Shi'i community found itself more closely "reflected" in the image of Fāṭima's daughter, Zaynab, who was seen not as passive, but defiant (pp. 83-85).

Chapter five is entitled "Shia Ritual Observances in a Sunni Setting: Muharram Observances in the Hill Station of Darjeeling, West Bengal." Pinault discusses here the long-noted carnivalesque character of Muḥarram, which he discovered anew in the apparently unusual setting of Darjeeling. In place of wailing and flagellation, Pinault found stick-fighting, drumming, and elaborate processions.

Until this point in the book, Pinault has been, to all appearances, commendably relativistic with regard to the practices he was witnessing, trying to understand (for some) the disturbing practice of *mātam* on its own local terms. In explaining the Sunni approaches to Muḥarram, however, he betrays a sentiment that appears to counter his larger project. Although he recognizes that some Sunnis emphasize, in their understanding of Karbala, the ultimate moral victory of Ḥusain, and of Islam, he does not take this motivation as a type of legitimate Islamic action: "I saw for myself that Darjeeling offers much more blatantly un-Islamic goings-on than the making of *tazias*" (*tazias* are floats representing the tombs of the martyrs; they vary tremendously in size and are carried in procession) (p. 94). He then concludes: "It's true that Darjeeling shares in common with Hyderabad the observance of Muḥarram. But the difference between the two is like the difference between slam-dancing and ballet" (p. 108). This statement is lacking in sensitivity, and is also factually inaccurate. As in Darjeeling, Sunnis and Hindus in Hyderabad observe Muḥarram with elaborate drumming and competitive gaming, including a spectacular ritual of firewalking in Mushirabad. Shi'a also attend these gatherings. None of Pinault's publications indicates that he had the opportunity to work in these mixed, intercommunal settings in his Hyderabad fieldwork. But even in the relatively homogeneous Shi'i events

Pinault would have attended, there were elements of crossover. For some generations now, Shi'a have invited Sunni musicians to lead the "Bibi-ka Alam" procession with *shehnai* (shawm), *nagara* (kettle drum) and hired *tasa* (shallow kettle drum) players to announce the beginning of the month. Photographs from the late nineteenth century show what appear to be *marfa* (a small, hand-held kettle drum) players in this procession as well. Such participation is muted in the current political climate, so muted in fact that many Shi'a whom I interviewed were unaware of it. Pinault uncovered something not peculiar to Darjeeling, but a particular configuration of Muḥarram observances found across the subcontinent, consisting of themes such as play, competition, aesthetic elaboration, and mimesis. The ways in which they are articulated in relation to the themes of mourning, intercession, and scripturalism vary across the subcontinent.

Chapter six discusses the subject alluded to in the title, the steed of Ḥusain, which, according to legend, returned riderless and served as a sign of Ḥusain's death. Pinault traces here the religious symbolism of the horse in the *julūs*, or Muḥarram procession. He cites studies that trace the pre-Islamic use of horses in funeral practices in the region that is now Iran, and collections of travelers' accounts from the seventeenth century mentioning their use in connection with Muḥarram. He allies Zuljina morally with the practice of *mātam* because the horse itself is seen to mourn Ḥusain. Interestingly, this also invokes the mystic theme of Muḥammad's *Mirāj* on the chimeric Buraq, as something like the ascension of Husain to paradise, by presenting a contemporary Shi'a poem that calls Zuljina the "Burāq of Karbala."

Chapter seven uses Muḥarram observances as a point of departure for discussing the relationship between Muslims and Buddhists in Leh township, Ladakh. He argues that Muḥarram rituals are "performed in such a way that a certain degree of communal reconciliation can be displayed while distinctions among the communities (most notably between Shi'a and Sunnis) can be maintained and highlighted" (p. 141). This seems to me a reasonable assessment of the situation, and would apply to the intercommunity Muḥarram observances I have observed in a number of South Asian locales. What follows is a historical thumbnail that gives the background for communal conflict and reconciliation in Leh, and an excellent ethnographic description of the rituals themselves. At times, however, Pinault lapses into the kind of generality I criticized earlier. For instance, in stating that, "It was clear that Zuljenah constituted the focal point of sacredness for the entire procession" (p. 144), the term "sacred" is problematic as a cross-cultural term. Pinault is generally careful in discussing theological ideas and debates over practices: what, then, does sacred mean here?

Chapter eight is an extremely useful discussion of Shi'i lamentation rituals as devotional pathways to God through the spirits of the martyrs. Pinault discusses the theological issue of intercession and its status with respect to the Qur'anic doctrine of *tawḥīd*. As in the other chapters, he returns to the practice of *mātam* as a case in point. According to the Twelver Shi'i tradition,

"the Imams earned their intercessory abilities through Husain's martyrdom at Karbala, and believers in every age may gain access to the Imams' intercession by vicarious participation in the tragedy of Karbala" (p. 160). *Mātam*, it seems, offers vicarious participation in that it allows the individual to "taste their [martyrs'] sufferings" (p. 160). Pinault briefly dwells on comparisons with redemptive suffering in Christianity and Buddhism, and then turns to debates about the appropriateness of bloody *mātam*, citing historical changes in thought issuing from Iran. The chapter closes with the argument that *mātam* marks the boundaries of Shi'i and Sunni identities: Shi'a do it, Sunnis do not. My own research generally supports this contention, especially as regards *mātam* with knives and chains. But there are parts of South Asia where both communities are so integrally involved in one another's processions and rituals that it would be difficult empirically to distinguish between Sunnis and Shi'a solely on the basis of who performs *mātam* with the hands and who does not. Even in the "ideal-typical" cultures of particular regions, Pinault's argument does not hold up absolutely. Sunnis, whom I interviewed in Hyderabad, Sindh, said that they perform *hāth-ka-mātam*. This does not lessen the importance of Pinault's findings for the regions in which he conducted fieldwork. The phenomenon is more political than paradigmatic. *Mātam*, like drumming, is a practice that articulates social-religious difference during Muḥarram in certain places and at certain historical junctures for particular reasons.

Chapter nine is a fascinating discussion of a Ladakhi lunar observance called *Yawm-e Asad*, or "Day of the Lion." Muḥarram is celebrated according to the Ḥijrī calendar, and thus varies with respect to the seasons. However, the imagery of Muḥarram, especially the thirsting children on the battlefield of Karbala, evokes a torrid climate, hardly compatible with the winters of mountainous northwest India. *Yawm-e Asad* is a "second Muharram" observed during the summer, ostensibly to provide an environmental climate suitable for the mimetic moral one. Ironically, the occasion is treated rather lightly. As one of his informants put it, "[the preachers say] You people should try to imagine his [Ḥazrat Ḥusain's] sufferings. And instead we go outside looking for shade and relax" (p. 201).

Chapter 10 is not a conclusion, but rather an interesting reframing of the study. It includes reflections on teaching and observing Shi'i traditions in America. Pinault describes here a *julūs* in Chicago, judging it as something "off," "self-conscious," and "flat," and suggesting it is an example of what Ronald Grimes calls an "infelicitous performance" (pp. 218-219). Pinault appears to have been less vigilant and assiduous as an ethnographer in this American setting, as it is not clear for whom the ritual was unsuccessful and unsatisfying. Later in the chapter, as Pinault turns refreshingly to the teaching of Islam, he reminds educators of the sticky problem of instructing students who belong to the traditions in which the professor is an "expert."

Pinault revisits the theme of *mātam* once more in this final chapter, explaining why he chose to focus on something so "disgusting" (to his stu-

dents) as bloody *mātam*. "When we stop to reflect on why a given religious custom is repugnant," he writes, "we may come to understand something of the disturbing quality of the unfamiliar. . . what repels the outsider carries special meanings for the insider" (p. 215). I suspect some readers will find Pinault's fascination with the bloody and spectacular aspects of Muḥarram problematic, even "orientalist." I do not. Perhaps a fear of such reactions led him to avoid using this central theme for the title.

I must reiterate that my criticisms emerge from a position of great respect for Pinault and his work. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the diversity of Islam as it is practiced in the world today. It would make an excellent and provocative classroom text. And it will provide significant insight for scholars specializing in Shi'i literature, ritual, and discourse in the Indian subcontinent.

Richard C. Foltz. *Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000. Viii + 186 pp.

*Reviewed by Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir*

This concise book by Richard C. Foltz offers a summary of the religions of the Silk Road, starting with Zoroastrianism and ending with the spread of Islam in the medieval era. The author defines his primary aim as "an attempt to weave some two thousand years of Asian history around a particular thread—that of the movement and transformation of religious ideas—into a readable and informative account" (p. vii).

The book is divided into seven chapters. The introductory chapter, "The Silk Road and its Travelers," offers a good insight and useful information on the definition and the problematic nature of the term "Silk Road" and the scholars who studied it, as well as the travelers who passed through it. This section also includes a short summary of the caravan trade, which is particularly interesting. Here, the author manages to give a lively account of the practicalities of this long journey. This short but skillful presentation allows the reader to comprehend some of the processes through which this long historical "thread" was woven.

Foltz also discusses the problems in defining the religions of the Silk Road, as well as identifying the ways these traditions have borrowed from each other. Throughout, he presents the difficulty of placing boundaries between these heterogeneous practices. This short explanation in the introduction is both concise and informative, so that the reader gains a clear understanding without being overwhelmed.

Chapters two to seven are arranged in roughly chronological order. The second chapter, titled "Religion and Trade in Ancient Eurasia," is linked to

the introductory chapter, as it continues to pinpoint some of the historical foundations of the religions of the Silk Road. Two religions, namely Zoroastrianism and Judaism, are recognized as underlying some of the future religious developments in the area. The reciprocal borrowings in these religions are pointed out. Chapters three to seven are organized in terms of the most prominent religions of the area, including Buddhism, Nestorianism, Manichaeism, Christianity, and Islam. The chronological organization of the work makes it more comprehensive. However, the historical arrangement falls short in recognizing or discussing contemporaneous and overlapping events in this vast geography.

Even though religion is the focal point of this study, the author has skillfully combined religion with other aspects of life along the Silk Road, without diverging from the central axis of discussion. In this respect, trade is, by far, the most prominent activity in defining what happens in the realm of religion along the Silk Road. It is clear to the reader that many religions presented in the text revolve around this ongoing trade. More than anything else, trade defines the nature and the existence of many religions in the vast region connected via this cultural trade highway.

One of the most intriguing questions put forward in this work is "[h]ow this very pluralistic religious environment came to be one of the world's most uniformly Muslim regions" (p. 6). Although answering this question is beyond the scope of Foltz's work, the author's view provides the basis for future conceptualization of this issue. In the final chapter, Foltz offers some concluding remarks on the processes of this change, but he does not present any suggestions as to why this might have taken place.

Even though the language of the book is simple, Foltz's work reflects a particularly well thought-out, well-organized piece of writing. It is an easy-to-read summary, as it avoids excessive historical details which would have distracted the average reader. However, the work falls short in its analysis, and the reader sometimes wishes that the concepts were discussed more thoroughly and with more insight from the author. Nevertheless, the book completely fulfills its initial aim of presenting a readable and informative summary of the historical outline of the religious history of the Silk Road.

Endnotes of each chapter are presented at the end of the book. This system makes it an easy read for the common reader, and proves to be useful for all who would like to inquire further about some of the issues. Furthermore, an extensive bibliography is provided. The index is not divided into themes, but mostly constitutes names of people, places, and general concepts discussed in the text. Three maps and eleven photos are included in the text. The maps give some idea of the geography of the area, but are hard to comprehend, mainly due to the quality of publication. The reader would have benefited from the photos and illustrations much more if they were referred to in the text.

I recommend Foltz's work for the general audience. It would be particularly valuable for students trying to gain an initial understanding of both the