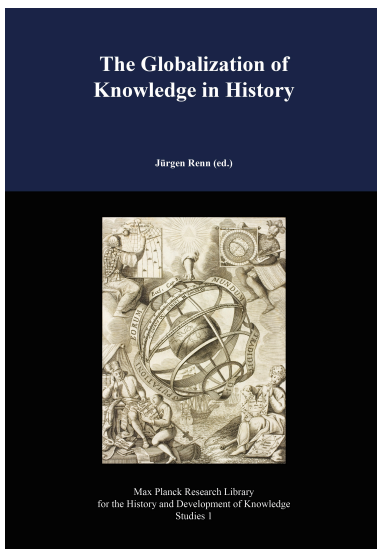Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge
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Birgit Krawietz:
Normative Islam and Global Scientific Knowledge

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Chapter 12
Normative Islam and Global Scientific Knowledge
Birgit Krawietz

The German poet and publicist Hans Magnus Enzensberger sensed that the massive intrusion of everyday technical products of Western civilization into North Africa and the Middle East must result in deep narcissist mortification that calls for compensation (if not revenge):

> Everything that daily life in the Maghreb and the Middle East depends on, every refrigerator, every telephone, every electric outlet, every screwdriver, not to mention high-tech products, presents itself to every capable Arab as silent humiliation. (Enzensberger 2006, 38, cf. 39–41; translation by the author)

However, a relatively low level of participation in the creative production of globally commoditized items is not unique to the Arabic Islamic world or the Islamic world as such (here always understood as a collective singular), but the same is true for most parts of Africa, Latin America and—until recently—also Asia. In addition, it is doubtful that Muslims outside or within Europe and the United States still perceive the wearing of trousers, the driving of cars, or the use of computers and the Internet, for instance, as typically Western. As a rule, Muslims do not pursue cultural difference by seriously considering avoiding or generally banning such amenities of modern life. Countries like the bulwark of the religious law of the Sharia, Saudi Arabia and the Arab states on the Persian Gulf, in particular, inundate their inhabitants with many more modern technical items than the average European civilian is accustomed to.

This does not mean, though, that I adhere to the thesis of Bassam Tibi. The German political scientist of Syrian background cruises the media and lectures on all continents that the Islamic world has emulated only a semi-modernity. In his perception, which is hailed by broad Western audiences, it is only in the fields of science and technology that the Islamic world opened up to a thorough modernization, whereas in the sphere of religion, culture and basic values, such as democracy, human rights and gender justice, it refuses influences and grimly adheres to its atavisms. Despite the media success of Tibi and those who have meanwhile followed suit (many of whom do not have any intimate knowledge of Islam as a religion or of Islamic societies), many Western scholars of Islamic Sciences reject such biased Western interpretations. Moreover, the potential con-

flict—and certainly not paradigmatic clash—between global scientific knowledge and normative Islamic knowledge runs deep *within* Islamically influenced societies themselves—and therefore likewise also among Muslims in "the West." Both sets of knowledge and action—dogmatic and scientific—have been offered, adopted and appropriated throughout the Islamic world—including even social phenomena, such as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism since the 1970s.

Although fundamentalisms are often presented as a reaction to globalization, their actors in fact wholeheartedly employ the modern means of globalization and thereby become themselves effective globalizers. Against the thesis of a growing homogenization via cultural universals (such as reading, writing, hygienic standards and the like) as well as through the import of a globally available consumer culture, ethnologists, sociologists and the like have underlined the active and self-defining aspect of the rejection, adoption or selective use of certain goods and facilities. Denying a clear-cut total dichotomy between representations of normative Islam on the one hand and global scientific knowledge on the other does not mean that nowadays we cannot identify manifestations of normative Islamic thinking or distinguish them from secular knowledge. It has merely become even more difficult to decipher the broadened range of possible new shapes and combinations.

In the following, I will address the larger-than-life topic invoked in the title of this chapter in three major steps:

1. Part one starts with the development of different types of knowledge and deals with traditional institutions of higher Muslim learning (*madrasas*).
2. The focus then shifts to the democratization of access to secular knowledge through the introduction of Western achievements, such as modern educational systems and print media.
3. Finally, some structural problems that Western Islamic Sciences and other disciplines have in coping with normative Islam and its place in the modern world shall be identified.

The chapter provides a very rough overview spanning many centuries and has to cover a geographical zone ranging from North Africa in the West to Indonesia in the Southeast. No detailed attention can be paid to the different doctrinal outlooks of the majority Sunni Islam and the minority Shii Islam (10–15%).[1]

12.1   Knowledge Transmission and Institutions of Higher Learning

It goes without saying that Muslims do realize the difference between religio-normative and scientific knowledge. The Islamic tradition itself routinely distinguishes between so-called ^{c}*ulum naqliyya*, "transmitted sciences" and ^{c}*ulum ^{c}aqliyya*, "rational sciences." The former deal with knowledge transmitted primarily through revelation from "the God" (*allah*) via the angel Gabriel to the caravan

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[1]Shii Muslims regard only the fourth Caliph, Ali, and his family as legitimate political and in the earlier period even spiritual successors to the Prophet Muhammad.

guide Muhammad in Mecca and later Medina (both in today's Saudi Arabia). The revelation process extended over a period of approximately twenty years. Sura five, Verse three of the Koran: "Today I perfected for you your religion" is assumed to be the concluding piece. The Prophet Muhammad died soon afterwards in 632 CE. In the oasis town of Medina he had been able to set up a small community based on Islamic guidelines. However, he did not manage to rally also the Jews and Christians of Medina or elsewhere to his cause. Muhammad regarded himself as the final messenger in a series of previous prophets including Moses and Jesus, who had been sent to other peoples with basically the same spiritual message. The second step of knowledge transmission was from the Prophet Muhammad to the growing community of his Arab followers. The latter preserved the "recitation" (*qur'an*) of God's speech in their minds and hearts (partly also in written form). In the middle of the seventh century CE, the third Caliph (political successor and symbolic leader of the Muslim community), ᶜUthman, organized a redaction of what became the official Koran corpus. This holy book is still an enigmatic piece of writing and the exact chronology and order of the various revelation parts is far from solved. However, to treat it like any other piece of writing (for a long time even to translate it) or to apply tools to it similar to those of historical Bible criticism is considered a threat that still causes serious repercussions.[2] Muslims regard the Koran as much "holier" than Christians consider the Bible because the book itself constitutes *the* central Islamic authenticating miracle—and not some magic deed of God's messenger. Islam is a religion of in*liber*ation, not one of divine incarnation. Since the Prophet Muhammad already practiced an ideal Muslim community, Islam is concerned with pious normative ortho*praxy*, less with orthodoxy. Therefore, experts in Sharia law, which theoretically comprises every aspect of the life of the individual and the society at large, have enjoyed a central role for ages.

For more than 1400 years, Muslims worldwide have been wrestling with this heritage. They have developed several disciplines dedicated to the interpretation of the sacred sources. So the Koran does not stand alone. There is also the Prophetic tradition (*Sunna*), that is, the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad as well as the Sunna of his followers in the early phase of Islam. Their pristine enactment of the Prophet's rulings, stemming from his interpretive Koran reading, ad hoc decisions, or subjective intellectual reasoning, is regarded as especially authoritative. Religious-normative argumentation regularly draws on examples and general guidelines taken from the first three generations of Muslims. In the early centuries of Islam, the transmission and development of such knowledge was not officially institutionalized. Pious circles in mosques or private homes provided the usual background for such activities. After the capital of the Islamic Empire had moved from Medina and Mecca, then Damascus (671–750), to its most impor-

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[2]One of the last highly prominent scholars who had this bitter experience is the Egyptian Koran expert and scholar of Arabic literature and hermeneutics Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, cf. (Abū-Zaid 2004). For important debates, see (Wild 1996).

tant location, Baghdad (762–1250),[3] Iraq provided a flourishing ground for the blossoming and differentiation of the *ᶜulum naqliyya*, "transmitted sciences" that are also called "Koranic sciences." These finally comprised Arabic grammar (*al-nahw wal-sarf*), lexicographical writing (*ᶜilm al-maᶜani*), Koranic exegesis (*tafsir*) proper including further sub-disciplines such as the abrogation (*naskh*) of certain earlier verses by later ones, the historical circumstances of specific revelations (*asbab al-nuzul*) or hyperbolic speech (*majaz*) in the Koran, further artificial Koran recitation (*tajwid*), the science of tradition, that is, the Sunna as laid down in utterances of the specialists (*hadith*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the principles of legal interpretation (*usul al-fiqh*), the fundamentals of religious dogma (*usul al-din*), the edifying life of the Prophet (*sira*), heresiography (*al-milal wal-nihal*) and the like.[4]

Given the vastness of the fast-growing Islamic Empire—the powerful conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in the West and initial intrusions into India started at the beginning of the eighth century—many foreign influences and local traditions in the conquered territories participated in the shaping of an—at no time unified—Islamic culture. A certain range of "secular" knowledge, such as geography, history, poetics, astronomy, mathematics and—to a lesser degree—logic has been accepted if not demanded to varying degrees, since such disciplines bore a vital importance also for religious studies. Mathematics, for instance, was deemed necessary to quantify legitimate inheritance shares and due shares of alms tax (*zakat*) on a person's movable property, as well as to pinpoint prayer times in different areas of the Empire. Other genres, such as lexicography, started as a religious discipline necessary for the interpretation of the Koran, but developed into independent research activities.

There are certain periods, regions and movements in history in which the Islamic world adopted foreign influences on an extraordinary scale and thereby tremendously transformed itself and others. The most famous example is the allegedly Golden Age in al-Andalus in Muslim Spain, which extended as far as Toledo. Its high—according to some, even utopian—quality is perceived in different dimensions. They range from peaceful interfaith coexistence and relationships, through translation activities (Arabic texts into Roman languages, Greek and Hebrew manuscripts into Arabic), agricultural advancements that the Arabs introduced to the Iberian Peninsula and progress in sciences such as modern medicine, to architectural cross-influences including libraries and places of learning. The time frame is a matter of ongoing debate, since some confine this idyll solely to the middle decades of the tenth century while others speak of several centuries. Different Muslim dynasties took part in the flourishing cultural activities of towns like Cordoba (the cultural center of the civilized world at the time), Granada and

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[3]The caliphate was afterward reinstalled in Cairo and later transferred to Istanbul. The Turkish government abolished it in 1924.
[4]The best vivid accounts are (Berkey 1992; Chamberlain 1994; Lowry et al. 2004). On the manifold sub-disciplines, consult (Fischer and Gätje 1982).

Seville. In 1492, the Reconquista finally put an end to Islamic political rule in Western Europe. However, the scientific, philosophical and cultural activities of the Arabs and their transmission of ancient writings were decisive for the European rediscovery of Aristotle and thereby helped to launch the European Renaissance.[5]

Another fruitful cultural-scientific laboratory was at work in Iraq during the Abbasid reign. A blossoming Greek-Arab culture emanated from the "House of Wisdom" (*bayt al-hikma*), an important translation center, library and place of study in Baghdad. It assembled experts on manuscripts in Greek, Syriac and other languages from far afield, especially the Byzantine Empire. Strong emphasis was put on scientific writings from the ancient world, such as natural sciences, medicine and philosophy. Under the impact of the Mu^c^tazila, a rationalistic theological school, three Abbasid caliphs in the first half of the ninth century including the famous Harun al-Rashid systematically fostered this institution.[6] Such an accumulation of knowledge also has to be related to the introduction of paper in the Islamic world, presumably by a Chinese prisoner of war in the middle of the eighth century. Paper was much cheaper and easier to handle than the previously preferred writing material papyri. Around the year 795, the first paper mill was erected in Baghdad. For a period of more than three centuries, mainly Hellenized Christians of the Middle East were engaged in significant translation and cultural transfer activities. The "rational sciences" (^c^*ulum* ^c^*aqliyya*) thereby flourished in the Islamic world for the first time.

Whereas the Renaissance hailed the Graeco-Arab heritage, Muslim scholarship often harbored reservations about philosophy (*falsafa*). Along with assumptions such as the original eternity of the world, logic is another bone of contention. Intellectual instruments that allow statements of what God must have meant by specific utterances or the indication that His message itself contains severe contradictions were regarded as suspicious or had to be reformulated in the sense that God's logic is of a higher order and often cannot be comprehended by the inferior human mind. Nevertheless, there have been many important philosophers in the Islamic world, like al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroës). However, philosophy was never officially accepted as the cornerstone of institutionalized higher Islamic learning, but in the end, even text-bound hardliners among the Muslim jurists, like the Hanbali school of law, opened up to the use of certain operations of logical thinking.

The institutionalization of religious knowledge in the sense of the transmitted Koranic sciences is intimately related to the influence of the Turkish dynasty of the Seljuks, which reigned in Iran, Iraq and Anatolia from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Although they did not invent it, these Central Asian people and newcomer Muslims set up an official madrasa system that finally spread to many parts of the Islamic world. The *madrasa*, which means in Arabic "school"

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[5]On the rediscovery of Aristotle in the twelfth century, see (Peters 1968).

[6]There are other phases of strong cultural mingling, such as the insertion and development of Persian culture in the ninth and tenth centuries, but this affects primarily the literary sphere.

(but has to be distinguished from basic Koran instruction in the so-called *kuttab*), is an institution of higher Islamic learning. Mostly financed by a pious endowment (*waqf*) from a local notable—at times even the emperor or a member of the ruling elite—it hosts students and provides an established setting (including dormitories) and a well-defined curriculum to acquire ^{c}*ilm*, religious knowledge, which guarantees an informed, pious way of life and a smooth pathway to paradise. Such instruction is therefore considered commendable. It is an irony of fate, though, that this Sunni restoration or Sunni revival (Hodgson 1974, vol. II, 45–49) as embodied in the successful trans-Islamic madrasa system was implemented by what were initially occupiers stemming from Central Asia.[7] Although there are many variations of the institutional and architectural profile of the madrasa, this institution came into existence from Morocco in the West to India in the East and far beyond.

Against the background of such multiple settings, there is no clear-cut dividing line between the religio-normative and the scientific realms of knowledge. The circumstances for inclusion or exclusion always shifted depending on the political framework, the dynastic, political and religious orientation of the relevant ruler or governing elite. Some sultans, that is, political rulers developed a considerable eagerness for certain sciences. Others had specific spiritual leanings, for example, toward Sufism, the Islamic mysticism that aspires to "hidden knowledge" (*ma^{c}rifa* or ^{c}*ilm al-batin*) for the initiated. It is less an intellectual discipline than a way of life and personal endeavor to build the inner spiritual self (and important social networks). Many scholars practiced Sufism on a personal level in interaction with a Sufi master, Sufi circles or adepts without necessarily offering relevant readings as intra-curricular activities of the madrasa. At times, a Sufi lodge, a Khanqah, was architecturally integrated into a madrasa; at other times, Sufism, like philosophy, was frowned upon or even persecuted.

Today, opinion differs on the madrasa as the epitome of traditional Islamic thinking. One could say that it recently advanced to become one of those ambivalent tropes of Orientalist perception that oscillate between fascination and revulsion. On the one hand, it offers architectural highlights of Oriental splendor, like the madrasas of Bukhara and Samarkand. On the other hand, the Taliban's seizure of Kabul in 1996 cast madrasas in a very bad light. Many Taliban (students) had spent years in Pakistan refugee camps near the Pakistan-Afghan border and picked up their fundamentalism in religious schools of that region. Madrasas in general therefore increasingly became perceived as a potential breeding ground for radical Islamism. They appear a relict symbolizing a backward-oriented type of education that preaches an obsolete radical Islam incompatible with the demands of modern life. For this reason, the Muslim systems of education and their underlying order of knowledge have once again become an important issue of Islamic Studies and many publications have followed suit.

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[7]For a comparison of the madrasa with medieval European universities, see (Makdisi 1981).

Apart from the fact that madrasas have changed over time and especially since the nineteenth century, the main points of criticism are: the central role of memorization to the neglect of individual text interpretation, lack of reflection and critical thinking, a strong oral tradition, focus on authority and authoritative transmission of texts by passing a certificate (*ijaza*) from teacher to student and monastic control and discipline that leaves no room for individual recreation or personal scientific endeavors. Further criticism points to otherworldly, "medieval" content reflecting animosities toward the Crusaders, blindness to empirical rectification, habitual circular argumentation always bound to the imagined perfect community of the early Muslims as a role model, lack of trust in the future because utopia has already taken place, sycophancy toward possible funders and—to conclude this enumeration of complaints—education of only male students or complete gender-segregated schooling, thereby reinforcing male hegemony in Islamic culture. This is not the place to relativize such allegations.

Western lay observers often do not realize that a mosque (*masjid*) cannot be equated with a madrasa in the sense of a center of higher learning. Although a larger mosque for Friday prayer (*jami^c*) may comprise private or even official study circles, the full-fledged infrastructure of a madrasa complex must still be distinguished from this type of mosque. This is especially true for the poor conditions of Islamic learning in Europe or North America these days. In most cases, the mushrooming mosques in these countries must not be mistaken for important Muslim think tanks. Although some Western (diaspora) mosque centers have recently developed a broader range of services and facilities, the majority of them do not carry out original religio-normative research. Mosque centers are usually not the best place to inform oneself about creative Muslim norm production on newly debated issues. Instead, for more or less progressive normative suggestions, one should turn to institutions such as the Islamic University of Rotterdam, the new professorships for confession-tied Islamic Studies in Germany (e.g., Münster, Frankfurt, Osnabrück and Erlangen) or the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research.[8] It would be a mistake to assume that an open house in an ordinary Western mosque allows even a glimpse of the richness and refinement of normative Islam.[9]

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[8]On the latter, see (Caeiro 2010).

[9]The Egyptian-American lawyer and Sharia expert Khaled Abou El Fadl never tires of pointing out in many of his publications the sharp contrast between differentiated high-quality scholarship of pre-modern times and the deplorable normative production of modern fundamentalists. Nowadays Muslim polemists and fundamentalists are unable to live up to the standards of the traditional heritage they claim to represent or revive.

12.2 Broader Access to Global Secular Knowledge Through Westernization

Madrasas today either partially opened up to a limited range of modern secular knowledge or were fused into the modern educational system.[10] The third and most frequent possibility was the introduction of totally new structures of learning (and earning money) that challenge the importance of the old-style madrasa. In the course of the nineteenth century and especially from its second half on, the traditional institutions and scholars (*ᶜulamaʾ*) in the Middle East and North Africa lost their previous role. Islamic hegemony was gradually reduced and to a great degree replaced by new forms of organization and instruction. Such developments also occurred in South Asia, where the worldwide majority of Muslims live. The Dar al-ᶜUlum Madrasa in the North Indian town of Deoband, for example, was founded in 1866 on the model of a British college, that is, by emulating "the formal setting of curriculum, paid staff, a campus with teaching halls and hostels," a format that was innovative in its time (Reetz 2010, 5).

Several reforms were carried out in the Islamic world, also in the spheres of the military, various state institutions and the judiciary. Under the impact of European reform ideas, the regimes—and first of all the Ottomans—tried to shape their economies in accordance with European role models. Many regions of the Islamic world finally became part of the mainly British or French colonial system. The introduction of new health systems, armies based on European models, modern-style universities and the establishment of industrial production and new vehicles such as cars, steamships and trains, influenced attitudes toward worldly goods and rationales as well as esteem for technical and other skills and knowledge. Dramatic changes also took place in the field of Islamic law. On European initiatives, Islamic law was partly canonized (*taqnin*) for the first time in its history, like the Anglo-Muhammedan Law in British India or the Ottoman *Majalla*. In addition, complete legal codes of European origin were transplanted into the new state law of some Islamic countries. As a consequence, a new class of state employees was needed with a new educational background.

Primary-level education was structured in these new terms and modern schools replaced many *kuttabs*. In Cairo in 1872, the Dar al-ᶜUlum was founded to educate teachers in modern subjects (in 1940 integrated into Cairo University). Secular knowledge reached the Islamic world increasingly through translations into Arabic, Persian and the like. Families in the Middle East started to send their children abroad to pick up European languages and study at one of the centers of European learning.[11] English and French (partly also Latin and Greek) entered the new school and university curricula. New teaching materials became necessary.

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[10]For several detailed accounts and case studies, see (Hefner and Zaman 2007).
[11]For the report of a Muslim religious scholar who accompanied the first student mission to France, see (Al-Tahtawi 1989).

Christian Church authorities in Syria and Lebanon introduced the printing press to the Arab world in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, it extended beyond this sphere. Newly founded Christian schools in the Middle East transmitted Western scientific knowledge to their students—later also including Muslims. In 1876, graduates of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, the first modern university in the Middle East, founded the monthly newspaper *al-Muqtaṭaf*, "the Anthology," which was later edited in Cairo. For decades, this magazine created a new platform for popularizing natural and rational sciences. The *Muqtaṭaf* was not the only publication of this type. Others focused, for instance, on history writing or literature and literary critique. In 1828, Egypt published the first Arabic newspaper, its state gazette. Other newspapers and magazines followed, especially since the second half of the nineteenth century. Starting from Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, this new format of orientating knowledge shaped a new form of public realm through massive borrowings from the European press and other publications. Glaß not only underlines the importance of manifold essays to instruct broadening audiences, but also stresses the vivid interaction via letters to the editor, spurring immediate reactions among those who wished to become involved, as well as launching a series of debates on a national and even international level (Glaß 2004). The so-called cultural renaissance (*al-nahda*), which started in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and encompassed the Middle East, fundamentally renewed the conception of knowledge and used the Arabic language as its basic tool. It was effectuated by large-scale adoption and appropriation of Western science and culture. It also created a market and taste for hitherto unknown literary genres, such as novels, theater plays, short stories and autobiographies. In consequence, bookshops, great magazines, opera houses and theatres contributed to shaping urban life and creating a broader public sphere.

After the withdrawal of the colonial powers, in many countries of the "Third World," nationalism has been strongly associated with secular and liberal ideas (Hourani 1962). In the first half of the twentieth century and well until the 1960s, secularization seemed to be the coming thing, including the strong public presence of women who had given up veiling. Some regimes had their flirtations with Arab socialism, such as Egypt and Syria, Iraq, Algeria and South Yemen. However, all the great narratives of Western-style progress rapidly wore off. The key experience was the traumatic defeat of Arab Forces in the Six Day War against Israel. Bombastic rhetoric had lured the Arab masses to believe that they would be strong enough to defeat "the Zionist enemy." After this and some other illusions had proven completely unsubstantiated, Islam has become an increasingly important factor with its doctrinal and normative reservoir, which seems to offer solutions for all sorts of questions and gives the impression of guaranteeing "authenticity" (*asala*) in a frightening world of modernity (*hadatha*). While some secular Arab intellectuals, like Sadiq al-ᶜAzm, Muhammad Arkoun, Said al-ᶜAshmawi, Abdallah Laroui, Georges Tarabishi and Fuad Zakariyya, are highly critical of such

authenticity discourses,[12] it would be a mistake to discard their strong social importance for the construction of identity. Eager Muslim propagandists even went one step further and declared the Islamization of worldwide knowledge including social sciences to be a working program (Abaza 1992, 2002).

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1970s should not be understood as a total watershed. Islam as a modern ideology for the masses was (re-)invented, for instance, when the movement of the Muslim brotherhood was founded in 1928. Like ardent secular nationalists, dedicated Muslims started to employ the new media. Religious reform magazines, above all, the famous "Lighthouse" (*al-Manar*), served as discussion forums for progressive Islamic ideas. Its editor, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), followed the credo of his teacher Muhammad ᶜAbduh (afterwards also the Grand Mufti of Egypt and Rector of Egypt's most important university, the venerable Azhar) that there was no fundamental contradiction between belief and reason. Print media not only enabled people to make contact with globalized secular knowledge; access to their own Islamic heritage (*turath*) also became popularized (Hamzah 2008). For the first time in history, the classical works of normative Islam, including the Koran itself, were—at least physically—open to the semi- and uneducated. Increasingly, old inner-Islamic conflicts flared up because people in one region suddenly became aware of what others believed, criticized or practiced. Historically local strivings suddenly turned into a framework for staging doctrinal conflicts elsewhere. Publications for larger masses (and no longer only expensive manuscripts for the privileged few) supplanted the *hajj* (the annual pilgrimage to Mecca which every Muslim is supposed to undertake once in his lifetime) as the most important stage to foster a consciousness of belonging to one global community of believers (*umma*). Reform ideas were henceforth picked up in remote areas of the Islamic world. In various regions, Islamic normativity also provided a counter-strategy to—mainly Western—"cultural imperialism" (*ghazw thaqafi*).

Whereas classical Islamic normativity had mainly featured comprehensive manuals of Islamic law, modern normative publications shifted the interest to specific topics that need to be discussed at a certain length. The inner-Islamic system of counseling (*iftaʾ*) correlates with Christian catechistic structures of question and answer as well as with Jewish Responsa literature. The Fatwa system is an alert mechanism to respond to novel situations by providing pious advice on newly emerging problems. Modern topics such as blood transfusion, organ transplantation, reproductive health, modern insurance systems and the like can thereby be treated in a relevance-oriented manner (Krawietz 1991). Experts on Islamic law have always respected non-religious knowledge (increasingly also labeled *ᶜilm*) to a certain degree and advised their pious petitioners to consult a medical doctor on

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[12]Tarabishi even polemically "denounces the entire *turath*-discourse as a regressive (*nukusi*) reaction to the traumatic shock (*sadma, radda*) caused by the confrontation of the omnipotent overfather 'West,' depicted with phallic symbols (*khanjar Israil*, with its air-force in 1967)." He claims that this "led to a neurotic flight towards collectives depicted with female, maternal images (such as *umma, jamahir*)" (Riexinger 2007, 65, fn. 9).

certain issues. Those scholars who concede knowledge lacuna and accept scientific advice are much better off than those who practiced, for instance "scientific Koran interpretation" (*tafsir ᶜilmi*), a trend that identified things like telephones, planes, electricity, or the detection of microbes as already announced by the Holy Book. Without being able to go into any details here concerning the multiple forms of fusing scientific and normative knowledge in modern publications and products, certain confines of accepting a scientific hegemony become evident. An expert on Sharia law transgresses boundaries when he declares, for example, that fasting is detrimental to an otherwise healthy Muslim athlete or when he doubts the legitimacy of capital punishment on the basis of sociological findings on its deterrent effect. Another phenomenon is the increasing importance of a so-called "moral economy," that is, normative Islam as a marketing strategy to attract certain segments of customers. An example of this would be a Halal certificate for correctly slaughtered meat.

12.3 Problems with Normative Islam in Western Islamic Sciences and Beyond

Under the impact of migration and globalization, normative Islam is no longer a regional phenomenon. Addressed to the whole of mankind, it nowadays pervades and stirs up many societies worldwide. Through various means and media—most recently through the Internet—a Muslim believer in any country of the world can derive his normative orientating knowledge and appropriate it for personal daily practices or conflict resolutions, or let new popular brokers of knowledge do it for him (Gräf 2010). No official exclusion or abolition of the Sharia on the state level in one country would be able to hinder such multiple normative appropriations, which usually do not interfere with modern state law. Besides, it is impossible to say how many of the approximately 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide adhere to the doctrine of the normative primacy of the Sharia and what the exact practical implications and conflicts of such an outlook are for the state system they live in. Western jurisprudence is concerned with Islamic law only insofar as the latter enters the respective state law in a limited number of fields (mostly regulations of international private law) (Rohe 2004). Under such demanding circumstances, one might wonder whether modern Islamic studies can still be addressed as mere area studies and to what degree its experts are sufficiently able to deal with the phenomena described in this chapter. To be able to analyze the ways Islamic legal norms are (re)invented, mixed with one another and combined with secular knowledge, one would first need to have not only philological expertise, area studies competence and intimate knowledge of globalization theories, but also an idea of the contents and contexts of pre-modern Koranic sciences. Experts in Islamic sciences also need the ability to distinguish fundamentally between norms and facts. It would be desirable for them to be familiar with hermeneutical and methodological questions of Islamic law (*fiqh*) in order to trace how Muslim jurisprudence

constructs creative solutions for new problems (*ijtihad*). Such challenges are uncomfortable and these skills are hard to master altogether for scholars of Islamic sciences, who have so many other issues to deal with. To my mind, the following has to be conceded: Western Islamic sciences are much less able (and willing) to deal with the sphere of traditional normative Islam and its multiple transformations in modern times than lay observers would dare to suspect. As such, their label "scholars of *Islamic* studies" is often misleading (Ammann 2008).

What are the reasons for this relative deficit? First of all, Europe has a very strong philological tradition in Arabic that stood in the long-time service of extended Bible studies. A deeper analysis of the political, cultural, economic etc. background of the modern Islamic world started only just over a century ago. Normative issues did not enjoy any special interest in this regard. Channels that might have enabled a deeper understanding for orthopractical systems, namely Jewish community life and rabbinic studies, were damaged and finally uprooted in Germany during the Third Reich. After the atrocities of World War II, there was a heightened sense of the necessity of divine law and the fundamental ethical outlook it provides. Theology is definitely the central field for experts on Christianity, but the high estimation of and interest in Islamic theology that set in left too many questions open about its mighty twin, Islamic law. Theology was treated as the key Islamic discipline—in unreflected analogy to the Catholic and Protestant creed. And Christian religious representatives lost many years in their quest for adequate official counterparts to engage in interreligious dialogues. Needless to mention, the problem of representation of Islamic authorities is still unsolved (Krämer and Schmidtke 2006). Other scholars of Islamic studies were mainly concerned with history, political systems in the Islamic world, the emerging study of modern Arabic, Persian or Turkish literature and so on. The impression reigned for decades that such fields emerged and emancipated themselves as disciplines in their own right from their previous status as mere sub-fields. Hardly any of these scholars would have imagined that their sphere of expertise also had significant normative Islamic underpinnings and bore intimate relations with normative Islam. And many of them are still in denial.

The rise of fundamentalism changed the situation and, everywhere in the West, brought about a strong demand for (I hesitate to call it an interest in) the study of Islamic law. Since then, there has been a steady flow of books and articles whose merits cannot be denied. However, there are so many complex problems intertwined with issues of modern history, politics and the arts that cannot be adequately addressed without including references to normative Islam. Nevertheless, there have been very few efforts to integrate the study of Sharia law interpretations into overarching topics of cultural history. Some of the barriers are of a persistent psychological nature, other resistances have mainly institutional-structural causes. Let us first turn to the emotive subtexts. For many people, Islamic law seems to symbolize an archaic stage of existence, long since overcome by modern man. It took the West a very long time to get rid of the worst burdens of its religious-

dogmatic heritage and it is seemingly unwilling to reopen Pandora's box once again by confronting living versions of a potentially dangerous sister heritage. As long as secularization theories and globalization scenarios assuming an overpowering trend of global homogenization could be still upheld, the illusion reigned that one never had to look back. However, accusations and punishments of apostasy, the killing of non-Muslims on charge of blasphemy (like the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh), pseudo-Islamic video executions, circumcisions in European capitals, withdrawal from coeducational swimming instruction, some Muslim officials' refusal to shake hands with women, the phenomenon of "repentant" artists and so on, could no longer be overlooked with the superior indignation of the civilized and cultivated. Despite all such occurrences, the quest to explore the aspirations, range and peculiarities of normative Islam and its discursive functions for Muslims nowadays has been quite limited.

The perception of Islamic law is still confined within what is regarded as its plausible boundaries. Colonialism and Western scholarship have created some containerized versions of what Islamic law is allegedly about, namely Muslim family law and—in certain countries also—penal and public law. Such issues are often related to and made important by human rights interests. In addition, attention is paid to those residues that seem to prevent a peaceful coexistence with Muslims in the West, such as veiling or Islamic ritual slaughtering. What might be called a pragmatic approach in dealing with normative Islamic aspects could also be interpreted as an escapist attempt to ban such seemingly anarchic forces. Scholars of Islamic sciences often prefer to deliver courses of container-like knowledge on normative Islam. Other accepted avenues—in addition to family law—are on the one hand gender studies and on the other legal pluralism, including locally valid customary law, which is of special interest for cultural anthropologists and legal scholars. That is to say, a certain segment of common interdisciplinary interest has developed in relation to Islamic normativity. These are, currently, its most familiar presentation forms on the academic market. Such shapes are generated and strengthened by the new world of Bachelor and Master studies. Often, Islamic law is presented as an ongoing not-yet, falling short of the enlightenment of Western modernity. In this sense, some countries get better marks for their state law (*qanun*) system than others, because they seem to be already on the right path. In this sense, they are offered to Western audiences as "best practice" examples.

My plea, however, is that normative Islam should no longer be treated as either a confined element of state law, a mere set of ritual regulations and moral guidelines or some other separate small box comparable to a variety of quite confined genres of so-called Koranic sciences, such as Arabic grammatical writing or eschatology. On the contrary, normative Islam is in many cases comprehensive or, negatively speaking, totalitarian in its worldview. Its borders are increasingly fuzzy and often merge into a kind of current how-to manual. Only minor parts of it have been sanctioned as state law in some countries of the Islamic world. The majority of its regulations and discussions receive little Western scientific at-

tention. This is all the more astonishing because Muslims instrumentalize many normative debates to stage certain ideological agendas. The depicted collective self-restrictions of Western scholarship examining Islamic normativity should be overcome. What scholars often try to ignore is the multiple entanglement of normative issues with (even modern) Islamic history and culture in general. Hardly any field of society is so modern or post-modern that it is exempt from normative issues. No wonder many aspects of Islamic cultural history and reform proposals have not yet been treated in decent monographs. In fact, voices of normative Islam are omnipresent, pervading many facets of life and infiltrating many literary genres even beyond the doctrinal Koranic sciences. An encompassing study would also need informed references to the history of knowledge or media theory.

A last factor detrimental to the academic exploration of Islam in the sense of Koranic sciences (theological and normative) is the recent development that normative Islam has been handed over from largely non-Muslim scholars of Islamic studies to the newly installed education of Muslim teachers in Germany (*Islamische Religionslehre* or *Islamische Studien*). To my mind, normative Islam or, to be more precise, the potentials of Islamic jurisprudence for the study of cultures, is too important to be left to this latter—and at any rate still small—group of people.

In sum, despite its official widespread abolition or only piecemeal adoption as state law, Islamic law and normativity are, in one way or the other, omnipresent. This is a time when state-generated systems are challenged by many non-state or translocal actors. The paradigm of the *Umma,* the community of the believers, offers a means for global messages. Islamic law is a battlefield, but not in the usual sense. It is a battlefield because there are so many different parties, interests and ideologies involved, so that it is highly important to trace their respective strategies of presenting, excluding, transforming or criticizing normative Islam. Neither secular Western jurists, nor ethnologists, human rights watchers, or representatives of gender studies will be motivated or able to draw enough attention to those multiple fields of Islamic normativity that are still insufficiently analyzed and lie outside the realm of their interest. Finally, there is no adequate overall terminology, much less typologies, to analyse the multiple patterns according to which pre-modern normative knowledge is today appropriated for global discourses on health, psychology, ecology, moral ethics and so forth.

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