

DRIFTING MAPS / 1

EDITED BY SERENA MARCENÒ AND GIULIA SAJEVA

MIGRATIONS: GOVERNANCE, POLICIES, AND RIGHTS

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DRIFTING MAPS

n. 1

Series editor: Serena Marcenò (University of Palermo)

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MARCO DI DONATO¹

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Reliving and Reframing the Cultural, Religious, and Ideological Migration of Ideas

1. *Introduction*

If, as recognized by Allievi (2009), religion and migration are two interrelated sides of a single coin, a deeper and better, as well as more accurate understating of Islam (including social, political, cultural, ideological factors) could highly influence how migration is perceived as well as managed. The perception of Islam as a “threat”, especially after 9/11, has contributed to a different, and increasingly hostile attitude. In Europe, the series of subsequent terroristic attacks, particularly those of 2015, 2016 and 2017 reinforced the Islamophobic narrative, thus leading towards a “securitarian” approach in terms of the management of the arrival of the “others” coming from *Dar al-Islam* (Land of Islam).²

Interestingly, according to Europol’s annual EU Terrorism Trend Reports covering the years 2011 to 2021, the so-called “Jihadist / religiously inspired” attacks are actually statistically lower than “Left-wing and anarchist” actions, as well as being numerically fewer than “Ethno-nationalist and separatist” occurrences.³ Furthermore, when examining the increasingly securitarian approach and hostile attitudes to Islam in Europe, it is also important to note that the religious claims of supposed Islamic-inspired groups (e.g. the so-called Islamic State) in their

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2 In consultation with the editors, the author has opted for simplified translations of Arabic names and terms.

3 For a detailed list, please consult <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/terrorism-eu-facts-figures/> (accessed June 2023).

calls for *jihad* or in their *khilafah* theoretical understanding, have been considered and measured as religiously untenable and invalid by several scholars as well as leading representatives of Islamic institutions. However, in spite all of this, a homogenized Muslim “other” has been created and branded as a perpetual enemy (Bakali, Hafez 2022).

As noted by Hourani (1994), the European fear of an “Islamic upsurge” obsessed the European mindset during its era of empire and has recently returned; continuing to influence general attitudes towards diversity in the Old Continent. In line with what was suggested by Hamid (2019), the main problem when analyzing the Islam-Migration nexus and the widespread anti-migration sentiment in Europe, is that “the immigrants in question are Muslim, not that they are immigrants” (Hamid 2019, 5)

Within this framework, this paper aims to upscale and disseminate Campanini’s proposal of Islam as a “religion of the West”, whilst suggesting how to reconsider the process of ideas of migration between East and West. It also proposes a reading of the shared history between the East and the West in Hanafian terms by using the theoretical framework proposed by the Egyptian philosopher regarding dominions cycles. The main objective is to propose theoretical suggestions (to be upscaled in future, more structured research) for recognizing structural differences and detecting the diverse and complex nature of dialoguers in the framework of hegemonic processes naturally inclined to annihilate, depersonalize and dissolve cultural identities.

2. Islam as “Religion of the West”

In Massimo Campanini’s recent book (2016), the author summarized that Islam, compared to the so-called “West”, is not as “alien” as has been described by a superficial mass media-approach and reinforced by widespread Islamophobic propaganda. In his historical and theoretical reconstruction, Campanini took as a starting point the following: Islam did not suddenly arise from the deserts of Arabia without historical or ideological connection with Christianity and Judaism.

Campanini opens his book underlining common themes between Islam and Christianity, pointing out that they can easily find a shared common perception of the basic principles of faith, namely that both religions:

- have monotheism as a common principle.⁴
- are transmitted through a direct revelation.
- are accompanied and sustained by a Text: a written form of the word of God.
- are directly connected to a specific prophet acting as a founder: Muhammad for Islam and Jesus for the Christianity.⁵ It is also necessary to note that both prophets are recognized as historical characters.
- are ascribed to the principle of Universalism.
- have Messages based on a previous Revelation and, in a certain sense, are upscaled and refined versions of the same, previous, Message.
- propose an eschatological common approach, even if with substantial differences in the concept of salvation and, I would say also, forgiveness.

According to Campanini's arguments, Christianity and Islam maintain the irreducibility of certain characteristics (e.g., the trinity) but cannot be considered as alien to one another, which is the crucial point. It is worth emphasizing that Islam *is not a new religion* claiming to be the refinement of the original monotheism. At the same time this affirmation must not be intended, in any way and in any case, as diminishing its originality and uniqueness. It is quite the opposite. As widely recognized by several studies, this is a very important feature that characterized the first part of Muhammad's activity in Mecca, trying to position himself in the chain of prophecy related to Adam. In the same way, after the *hijra* to Medina, Muhammad made several efforts to be recognized as a Prophet also by the local Jewish communities and, in several

4 In reality, monotheism is a common principle to Judaism as well.

5 This is a sensitive and debated point for Christianity, as also recognized by Campanini in his text.

ways, he presented “his” Message as completely in line with the previous one:

“Say [Muhammad], We [Muslims] believe in God and in what has been sent down to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes. We believe in what has been given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We do not make a distinction between any of the [prophets]. It is to Him that we devote ourselves.” (Q. 3:84).⁶

Despite his efforts to this effect, the local Jewish communities of Medina never recognized him as a Prophet. An interesting writing by the polemist author al-Jahiz (d. 869) can help us understand the reasons behind this hostility and give us an additional testimony regarding the good relationship in place between Christians and Muslim during the 9th Century. In one of his polemist writings, the author asks himself why Muslims seem to be more favorably disposed towards Christians (in comparison with the Jews) despite the presence of the trinity concept, which is absolutely irreconcilable, in his view, with the Islamic monotheism. His answer to that is that Jews and Muslims in Medina were as close as only relatives can be, and that people tend to hate that which is most similar to them and what they know best (Goiten 1980). In this statement we can also find two additional elements that are useful for our discourse: the actual closeness between Christians and Muslim and the theological correspondence between the Jewish and the Muslim theological framework.

Here, it is vital to note that my argument does not intend, in any way, to set aside the well-established differences between Christianity and Islam. My contention is that it is necessary to observe and recognize the conjuncture points between Islam and Christianity in order to mitigate the above-mentioned sense of alienness.

Contemporary thinkers such as Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (d. 2010) emphasized the need for a better knowledge based on “dialogue” (*hiwar*), underling the necessity to establish a “dialogue with Christianity by recognizing common roots and by respecting

6 All Qur’anic verses here are directly taken from the English version, by quoting verbatim the Muhammad Abdel Haleem translation.

mutual differences”.⁷ Fadlallah argued in favor of an absolute requirement for dialogue with other religious communities and expressed this point on many occasions and within *fatawa*, sermons, writings, and articles during the course of his life.

In *Hiwar fi-l Quran* a specific section is dedicated to the relationship with Christians. To describe common relationships, Fadlallah uses a very clear Arabic term, which is *ta’atif* (translatable from Arabic as “empathy”) and other terms that can be translated to “sympathy”, in the sense of closeness. In order to better describe this sense of both empathy and sympathy, he cites an event in the classic history of Islam: the so-called Little Hijra in 615 AD, when, following the growing tensions in Mecca due to the revolutionary message preached by the Prophet Muhammad, the latter was forced to send a small group from the community of believers to seek shelter at the court of the Negus of Abyssinia.

Fadlallah and his dialogue proposals allow us to quote here some reflections by Alessandro Bausani. In Bausani’s view, which I agree with, dialogue between Islam and Christianity should not start from the already recognized and extremely numerous points of contact but rather (after a standard recognition of commonalities), by debating the divergences. Additionally, dialogue must not be driven by a “too much rushed ecumenism that could create more confusion than clarity” (Bausani 1974). A real interreligious dialogue, noted Poggi (1974), must be capable of having a courageous approach reaching the extreme limits of both interlocutors, identifying commonalities but, on that basis, being capable of tracing back mutual pathways reaching and addressing convergences and differences.

Before Campanini, Bulliet (2004) formulated an unedited proposal of an Islamic-Christian civilization based on the prolonged weaving between brotherhood in European and Islamic societies. In his view, if we accept the idea of an Islamic-Christian civilization, it would then be possible to consider conflicts between Islam and Christianity no longer as external, but rather as “internal wars” between two sides of the same coin. In this view, Bulliet also

7 For the life and thought of Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, refer to Di Donato 2019.

contends that the argument based on the limits and alleged Islamic defeats in understanding “Western standards of civilization”, will no longer be sustainable.

The consequences of Bulliet and Campanini’s proposals are enormous, but it is also probably necessary to properly re-read and additionally problematize some elements of the polemist debate between Islam and Christianity in order to debunk some commonplace misconceptions. As I have already argued elsewhere (Di Donato 2018),⁸ the reading of polemist writings such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) could be correctly re-framed and, in some cases, reconsidered. It seems to me that also in some of his most hostile writings towards Christianity, Ibn Taymiyya is targeting not the whole Christian message and theological framework but mainly what he considers its “exaggeration” and, we could summarize, the problematic interpretation of the Text. As title of example, in line with the Qur’anic message, Ibn Taymiyya recognizes the virginity of Mary and the related miraculous birth of Jesus, without, however, characterizing Jesus as the son of God. In addition, his miracles are not denied. In Ibn Taymiyya’s view, the exaggerations intend to capture his attention in the same way as the Qur’an. Also, Campanini noted in different occasions that Qur’anic verses and related interpretations usually condemn unscriptural claims, sentiments, and cults of Christians with, for example, particular reference to Mariolatry.

Additionally, however, we should remember, in line with Hourani and several other scholars that the first centuries of debate of Christian polemic writings on Islam have been characterized by a substantial ignorance by European Christians regarding the Islamic theological architecture as well as its sources. While philosophical works were accepted and translated, the Islamic theology (in terms of Islamic law and spirituality) was almost neglected and disregarded. In Hourani’s view, only at the beginning of the modern era (between the 16th and 18th Centuries) was there a shift in this approach. We will focus on this in the next paragraph.

Widening our view to the more general contributions of the

8 For a more detailed discussion on this point, refer to Di Donato 2018, pp. 68-71.

broader Arabic (and then not only Islamic) culture to the European one, the dynamics of interaction do not seem to change.

“It has often been said that if it had not been for Arabs, Europeans would have had no Renaissance. It might be better said that the Abbasids, and especially al-Ma'mun – an unstinting patron greater than Maecenas or the Medici, and mid-way between them in time – were themselves princes of the Renaissance, of which the later European episode was a continuation, following a long hiatus” (Mackintosh-Smith 2019, 276).

According to Anawati (1994), the list of sciences that have been directly and positively affected by Arabic culture is extensive: astronomy, astrology, medicine, experimental sciences, mathematics, philosophy, poetry and several other sciences can be added. In the 13th century, European universities adopted the *Kitab al-Hawi*⁹ of al-Razi (d. 925)¹⁰ and the Ibn Sina (Avicenna) Canon of medicine considering both of them at the same level of Hippocrates and Galen (Geymonat 1970). In terms of mathematic research, the 13th century Europe was capable of performing incredible advancements only thanks to the Arabic sciences' contribution, as demonstrated by Fibonacci (d. 1242) who was originally educated in Arab arithmetic and was widely influenced by it in his activities (Geymonat 1970). Arabic sciences also influenced the field of optical studies thanks to the contribution of Ibn al-Haytham, better known in Europe as Alhazen (Geymonat 1970). As recognized by Geymonat, the same can be said for studies and research on magnetic fields or alchemy.

Regarding linguistics, influences have also been widespread:

“Looking beyond the dictionary to the atlas, Arabic is even further flung. It is not only confined to Spain and its many Arabic placenames like Guadalquivir (al-Wadi al-Kabir, the Big Valley). Via the Iberian Peninsula, Arabic makes it to London's Trafalgar Square (al-Taraf al-Agharr, the Gleaming Point), and to the New World and San Francisco Bay, where Alcatraz is the island of al-ghattas, the diving bird, the

9 *The comprehensive book on medicine*, commonly translated under the title *Continens Rasis*.

10 Persian physician and philosopher.

pelican (the word wandered even further and metamorphosed into ‘albatross’). On the Brazilian coast, Recife is the Arabic rasif, quay, while in the Amazon, one can encounter people of mixed Portuguese and native blood called, disparagingly, mamalucos (mamluks, slaves). Beyond the Andes and out to sea again, even Chile’s Robinson Crusoe Island has a local administrator called an alcalde (al-qadi, the judge) and a guesthouse called an aldea (al-day’ah, the country estate)” (Mackintosh-Smith 2019, 360).

Furthermore, Griffel (2011) convincingly argued that the philosophical connection between the Arab-Islamic world and European scholars lasted for several centuries, starting in the 12th and 13th Centuries and continuing up to the 16th, with the translations of articles and books from Arabic to Latin (whilst also underling a set of misunderstandings related to this).

“After all, most people in the West think of Islamic Civilization as a phenomenon of the past. Ernest Renan’s view that Islam is stuck on a lower developmental stage than Western societies in the eternal fight between rationalism and religion is still widespread in the West. Like Renan, many people are convinced that Islam needs to undergo either a period of Reformation or a period of Enlightenment.” (Griffel 2011, 61).

The above list of examples is incomplete, but at the same it is already impressive. Despite all this, Western Islamophobic propaganda continues to insist on highlighting differences and distances, perpetuating hostility between “Us” and “Them” by focusing on cultural and religious differences for increasing the sense of common and shared alienness.

The misuse and misrepresentation of the concept of *jihad* is probably the most widely known example in this “alienation process” and has probably represented the preferred narrative option in this for the Islamophobic propaganda. Academic studies (Afsaruddin 2022) have already clearly and repeatedly demonstrated that only defensive armed combat is allowed in the Qur’an (Q. 2:190), and it is worth noting that *harb* (the Arab word used to indicate war in general), is never used in the Qur’an along with the phrase “in the path of God” and is not even related to the very concept of *jihad* (Afsaruddin 2022).

In the same way, European historiography has overemphasized (in some cases intentionally) the impact of the Crusades and their importance in terms of religious struggle, while for Arab historiographers, the arrival of the Mongols and the subsequent devastation of Baghdad was more shocking than losing and reconquering Jerusalem.

“Their advent seemed apocalyptic. ‘The news of the Tatars,’ as Arabic writers called them (after a Turkic people they had subjugated and who then joined their campaigns), ‘is a tale to devour all tales, an account that rolls into oblivion all accounts, a history to make one forget all histories.’ So it seemed to Abd al-Latif, a physician of Baghdad. In contrast Ibn al-Athir, the great contemporary chronicler, saw the Mongols in the light of a dark future: ‘Probably not until the end of time will a catastrophe of such magnitude be seen again.’” (Mackintosh-Smith 2019, 365).

The fundamental point is why has the West forgotten or is hiding its Islamic and Arabic roots? Why not consider the value of this migration of ideas to mitigate the sense of alienness that is fueling European Islamophobia and driving the management of migratory flows, as well as the interaction with European Muslim communities? Why not acknowledge the value of Islam as part of a common, shared, cultural milieu?

3. Reconsidering hegemonic processes in the migration of ideas

Could the reconsideration of Islam as part of the Western cultural pathway, directly impact the migration phenomena in Europe? As recognized by Allievi (2009), migration phenomena are directly and historically connected with the perception of migrants as Muslim, especially for those coming from what is considered as *Dar al-Islam*, namely countries where most of the population is composed of Muslims. This reflection is not free from methodological problems, as indeed is recognized by Allievi, but my point here is different. In fact, the point that I would like to stress here is the one of alienness: the recent migration waves towards Europe are considered as the *first* contact between two

worlds that are, basically, evaluated as alien to one another. The presence of the perpetual enemy is perceived as a danger for the local “common sense” or in Hamid’s (2019) words the “shared consensus”:

“Anti-Muslim sentiment is driven by culturalist objections and arguments, particularly in countries like France, the Netherlands, and Sweden that have become more and more homogeneously secular in recent decades, and where Muslim immigrants and second-generation citizens express levels of religious observance that serve as a stark contrast with what was presumed to be a shared consensus” (Hamid 2019, 8).

While for some European societies, this could really be considered a truly first-time approach to Islamic culture, for academics, however, the magnitude of the interactions, challenges and clashes between the different Mediterranean shores is considered commonplace. Dozens of studies underline the extent to which historical experiences such as *al-Andalus* and *Siqilliya* have contributed to shaping European culture. The list of examples provided in the first paragraph should serve as a sufficient explanation.

Despite this, both in “Our” as well as in “Their” common sense, misunderstandings and misconceptions are abundant. Here it is important to underline that these misunderstandings and misconceptions are also inherent to the Islamic world related (in past years) to the recent explosion of Salafi-inspired movements and parties in Europe as well as in North Africa and the Middle East region.

The Salafi attitude could, in the long term, lead towards an increasing problematic relationship with the “others”. In the Salafi political and social-oriented propaganda, the main way to build the Muslim community future is to look at the past, to the “pure community” of the so-called golden age (the *Rashidun*) and exalt its example to retrieve guidelines for Muslim present and future. Additionally, Salafi propaganda ignores (or in any case underestimates or, even worse, selectively uses) the Islamic classical juridical and intellectual production by only relying on the “first community” example. Several studies (see, among the others,

Scott 2004 and Di Donato 2018) have already argued around the untenability of this utopic reconstruction of the past. Several other studies (see, among the others, Hassan 2010 and Afsaruddin 2021) have also convincingly reasoned about the misuse (in a different but at the same time incredibly similar way to the Western media) of Islamic categories (e.g., *khilafah* and *jihad*) in the propaganda of fundamentalist/radical violent movements, by exposing the roots of their pragmatism or, better said, opportunism.

In this process of common and shared misunderstandings, a greater role is played by a common, typical trait of fundamentalist attitudes; that of selectivity (Almond et al. 2003). Fundamentalists discourses appear to be selective in three ways:

- In selecting and reshaping peculiar aspects of the tradition, especially those that clearly distinguish themselves from the others.

- In selecting some aspects of modernity to affirm and embrace.

- In selecting certain consequences or processes of modernity and singling these out for special attention, usually in the form of focused opposition.

In all the above-mentioned typologies of selectivity, the precise content of what is selected may change over time. It is also important to note how these three modes of selectivity are strictly interrelated (Almond et al. 2003, 95) so as to match the significant issues, legitimize actions and sustain ideological positions. Directly associated with this, we can say the “results” of this selectivity approach is, first, inerrancy:

“The companion to selectivity is inerrancy. [...] Inerrancy promotes unambiguous behavioral rules, enabling a movement to draw clear boundaries between the saved and the sinful in behavior as well as in doctrine. Selectivity may have the strategic purpose of setting the movement dearly apart from its enemies.” (Almond et al. 2003, 102).

Thus, the creation of “boundaries” (internal and external), becomes the natural next step. Boundaries are created and maintained based on a set of distinctive behaviors, belief in one’s election and the Manichaeic division of the world into lightness

and darkness (Almond et al. 2003); the distinction between “Us” and “Them”.

This “fundamentalist selective” approach could be also framed and understood in the framework of hegemonic alternation between the East (Arabic-Islamic world) and West or in Hassan Hanafi’s (d. 2021) words, between the “I” and the “Other”, or, even better, between a “dominant subject” and a “dominated object” (Campanini 2016b).

By proposing a cyclical view of history, the Egyptian philosopher determined the alternance between East and West in periods of 700 years. By starting with the Christian revelation, when the West plays the role of the “dominant subject” and vice versa the East that of the “dominated object”, passing through what Hanafi calls the “dark age”, namely Middle Ages, up to the Renaissance (where roles are inverted) and then, to the third phase: the maximum maturity of the European powers from a cultural point of view determined by an absolute mastery at political, social and economic level guaranteed by colonialism (Campanini 2016b).

In Hanafi’s view, we are now witnessing the fourth sequence of these cyclical passages. As already emphasized by Campanini, this theory can be the object of criticism (and it has been, in reality), starting from the negative consideration of the Middle Ages that we know was a period deeply reconsidered for its contribution to the European Renaissance or considering the failure of the Islamic contemporary renaissance represented by the Salafi-jihadism proposals. However, in this article, Hanafi’s theory can be still considered valid because it can help us in detecting the roots of the misunderstanding, especially if we take into consideration the dynamic of hegemonic alternation and related dominions dynamics.

We can interpret this process of creating a hegemonic dominion as a progressive escalation, where the subjugated object evolves into a dominant subject, inverting the roles in what we could suggest appears to be a cyclical, mutual, metaphorical phagocytizing process of:

- 1) Recognizing and detecting;
- 2) Ingestion and assimilation;
- 3) Killing and degradation of the ingested.

Recognition is the initial phase, when the future dominant subject is in a position of analyzing from a status of inferiority, detecting and identifying elements of cultural strengths and weaknesses of the actual dominant subject, imagining measures and countermeasures and defining strategies. In the second step, the ingestion process initiated by crisis and confrontations, allows the phagocytosis process to progressively envelop cultural elements of the dominant subject *with its membrane*, up to and including it. As soon as this process of assimilation is internalized, the process of digestion and subsequently of degradation and digestion, destruction, of foreign molecules can start. The “killer” mechanisms responsible for the destruction of the “pathogen” involved are activated: the cultural characteristics of the ingested (former) dominant subject no longer exists and can be replaced by the new entity. The cycle is then complete: assimilate, digest, incorporate and finally annihilate the several identities of what has then become the subjugated object.

The last part of this process, what we have called the “killing mechanism”, echoing a sort of “cultural cannibalism”, is crucial for the definition of the new-born hegemonic process. To define its own constituency, the new hegemonic project will both selectively incorporate cultural elements from the old hegemonic dynamics as well as depersonalizing the concepts that are migrating towards it. In terms of selectivity, we can, for example, rely on Anawati’s reflections that while scientific and philosophical enrichment was welcomed by the European academia of the 12th Century, the same cannot be said regarding Islam as religion or the Islamic theological framework as the Islamic theology (e.g., Al-Ghazali), which was almost ignored (Anawati 1994). Not to mention knowledge of the Qur’an, which was extremely poor. Nevertheless, the migration of Greek ideas (Aristotle, Plato and Plotinus) through the Arab philosophers (Avicenna and Averroes) had a tremendous impact on the Christian theological architecture.

The above mentioned “killing mechanism” is something traceable not only during the 12th Century, namely at the beginning of the Hanafian European 700 years domination, but also during Arabization and Islamization processes that occurred during the territorial phase of Islamic expansion after the death of the Prophet

Muhammad. Both the identarian conceptualization of being Arab or Muslim were continuously evolving by incorporating assimilating and finally killing local cultures elements. Several examples can be noted in this sense, starting with what has been defined the subcontractualization of the Ummayd Empire's expansion:

“[...] Arab warriors seemed to be on an unstoppable roll – except that, by now, they had both reached the end of the known world, and had gathered so many Berbers along the way that the force could hardly be called ‘Arab’ any more. And there was another problem: all the extra raiders had to be paid, or at least be given bed, board and booty (and bedfellows). [...] it was his [referred to the Yemeni commander Musa ibn Nusayr] Berber lieutenant and *mawla*, Tariq ibn Ziyad, whom he sent over the water in 711 to wrest the Iberian Peninsula from the Visigoths. (En route, Tariq gave his name to the shark-fi n mountain in the sea, ‘Jabal Tariq’, garbled by Spanish tongues into ‘Gibraltar’.) The long and glorious history of Arab-Muslim al-Andalus thus began with a Berber ex-slave of the son of a Christian ex-slave. Rather as the Arab minorities of the present-day Gulf states leave the hands-on business of running their countries and expanding their economies to non-Arab masses, mostly from South Asia, Arabs of the Umayyad age were subcontracting the business of imperial expansion” (Mackintosh-Smith 2019, 254).

Indeed, it was exactly this evolution in the meaning of being “Arab” and/or being “Muslim” that determined the decline (obviously, along with several other dynamics) of the Umayyads and the rising of the Abbasid Empire. Abundant examples along the same lines can be recalled by studying artistic developments during this period, as recognized by Leaman when he stated that the “new political power in the early years of Islam went on to adopt many of the artistic ideas and aspirations of the civilizations it overwhelmed as its own” (Leaman 2021, 57).

In this view, the killing mechanism is also aimed at reducing complexities and thus creating a more manageable cultural identity to deal with and, mostly importantly, to export. The dynamic is paradoxical. The new dominant subject will reduce its internal complexity in order to manage it at an internal level, but it will recognize the complex and multifaced nature of its identity in the (external) relationship with the “other”. Once dominant, the new

subject in place will not recognize other cultural identities in their complexities in order to impose its dominion on it. As we will see, this dynamic has been very clearly applied by Western colonialism in Africa or in Asia.

Obviously, the killing/assimilation/digestion/incorporation process is neither immediate, instantaneous, or abrupt. This is the reason why, cultures and identities living on the edge or in the proximity of the passage from one Hanafian era to another seem to be the ones where it is still possible to recognize the complex elements of identities. At the opposite end of the spectrum, cultures and identities living at the apex of each of the 700 years cycle appear to be capable of reducing complexities and imposing one single common sense. Western colonialism is the perfect example in this sense.

More recently, at the top of European dominion, Western colonialism has drawn its success based on the Renaissance, which we have seen is directly interrelated with the Arabic cultural heritage. It is well recognized that the colonial project has been built on the basis of the cultural and scientific exploration of the previous centuries. In this sense, the 1798 Napoleonic mission (invasion) of Egypt is usually considered by historians as the turning point in the colonial history of North Africa and the Middle East. The Manichean division between “Us” and “Them”, in a rough division of the humanity in East and West, Christianity and Islam, developed and underdeveloped, has been used to both perpetrate and justify the Western dominion (Hourani 1994). This process has been very clear in the imposition of Britain’s dominion over Indian territories as well as during the Algerian culture exploitation and devastation by French colonialism.

Both Bianca Scarcia Amoretti’s works, (e.g., Scarcia Amoretti 2013) and Torri’s reflections on India (Torri 2005) provide abundant examples in these contexts. The British colonial state in India decided to create a non-homogenous society imagining the creation of several theoretically homogeneous groups that should have interacted among themselves. The setting up of these different blocks was based on religious or caste principles without considering that the identarian criterion related to religion, was originally very weak in the Indian society. The re-organization of Indian society was a top-down process, basically introducing

a set of “modern” elements that completely reshaped the reality in a way that was not only understandable but even propaedeutic for the British colonial scheme. The first step in this direction was one of simplification and categorization, disavowing the complex elements of the Indian social and political architecture. Almost naturally, these groups started competing for access to the economic and political opportunities provided by the new colonial state. This caused an internal strife between Hinduism and Islam that, before the colonial gamble, was basically absent in terms of religious or at least less relevant conflicts and persecutions.

In this colonial framework, Western modern civil society has also proposed itself as the exclusive result obtained in a strict and uniquely positive relationship with Christianity. This is a problematic reconstruction of its history as already noted many years ago by Bausani (1974). By quoting his reflections, we can most probably agree that rather than evolving in-line with Christian traditional conceptions, modern European societies evolved within a dynamic of opposition. As noted by Margalit and Buruma, the Weberian *Entzauberung der Welt* determined the disappearance of the religious fascination that obscured the principle of causation, which was at the basis of the Industrial Revolution.

If dress and hairstyles are superficial signs of change, breaking down the “monastery walls”, to use another of Weber’s metaphors, was regarded by many, including Karl Marx, as an essential ingredient of modernization” (Buruma, Margalit 2004, 113).

Thus, it is necessary to recognize that the number of stereotypes that are obstructing a deeper and more truthful understanding are multifaced and multileveled: between Islam and the West, within Islam, on a religious, but most importantly a political level, within the self-perception of Western history and culture and among the social strata of different countries.

4. *Conclusion*

Instead of promoting a cultural (not only religious at this point) dialogue having the main objective of recognizing the commonalities and convergences, it is necessary to open the debate to reach the point of recognizing structural differences, destructing vivisections and hegemonic dynamics that are “naturally” tending to phagocytize cultural identities. The scope should not be smoothing out these divergences but rather recognizing them in their profound meaning and accepting the diverse and complex nature of both dialoguers (admitting here that we have only two actors). This process should be mandatory for all parties involved, starting from the deconstruction of hegemonic absolutist characters by analyzing what we have suggested, as a tentative proposal, as the phagocytizing process steps. The scope should be to propose an understanding of the complexities through their recognition, without having the objective of annihilating and dissolving one identity into the other.

If we look back at history in Hanafian terms, I would say that the creation of a European Islam is only a matter of time. As recognized by Amer Sabaileh (2018), accepting Islam as a constitutive reality of the Western social structure requires great flexibility from all parties involved: Muslims living in Europe are called on to develop a way of thinking and acting in harmony with European values, while politicians defining the politics of European countries must guarantee all the religious rights and related freedoms.

All citizens have responsibilities to make a good effort to accommodate themselves to existing laws and social norms. But if Muslim citizens must do so, it also means that majorities have a responsibility to make their own accommodations, especially when it comes to the religious freedom and private religious practices of Muslim citizens; even if that private practice has public implications (Hamid 2019).

Most scholars in the field of the study of Islam and political and social factors are well aware that the next challenge is the West-East relationship that will be represented by the presence of a growing Islamic factor in Europe and outside what has been

classically considered as Dar al-Islam. This element cannot be detached from the migratory issue and will hugely affect it in terms of management and common (mis)understandings. The problem in our contemporary world is, as already underlined by Bulliet in 2004, that we are still missing, or failing to hear, the new voices that will provide answers and solutions for easing these tensions and thus opening a new phase in the Islamic history, most important in the relationship between Christianity and Islam. The parallel rise of Salafi in Europe coupled with the fundamentalist right-wing propaganda will probably widen the rift between the parties involved, giving new space for the fundamentalist discourse and continuing to negatively impact on the migrant's perceptions and on related political trends.

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