

1 Imams in Western Europe

Developments, transformations, and institutional challenges

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Hashas, Mohammed, Jan Jaap de Ruiter, and Niels Valdemar Vinding (eds), *Imams in Western Europe: Developments, Transformations, and Institutional Challenges*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018
DOI: 10.5117/9789462983830/CHO1

1 Imams in Western Europe

The study of imams, the office of the imamate, and Islamic religious authority is not new, but has an intricate history within the disciplinary confines of Islamic studies. With the advent of what may be called 'European Islamic thought' and 'European Islamic studies,' the role of imams as agents of religious authority and leadership raises new questions in theology, sociology, anthropology, political science, law, migration studies, and religious and interreligious studies.

This book presents an omnibus academic inquiry into contemporary Islamic religious authority with a focus on imams and the imamate – on which, until now, not much has been written in English. Our ambition is to contribute deeper and more fruitful analyses of the changes and challenges experienced by this source of religious authority in the context of the secular-liberal societies of Western Europe since the Second World War and the subsequent migration and refugee flows. At the same time, this research also serves to highlight secular-liberal institutions and their adaptation, or lack thereof, to the multiculturalism that characterizes Western European states. The social facts of globalization, transnational migration, and various interpretations of secularism have challenged the visibility of religion in the public sphere in Western societies. This has most importantly and urgently required religious authorities to revisit their organization, governance, and internal hierarchy, and Islamic religious authority is no exception. Throughout the Muslim-majority countries and in Europe, Islamic religious authority is still struggling to negotiate its place among the institutions of

the modern state in the ‘secular age’ in the words of Charles Taylor (2007). The imamate is one of the institutions that are currently experiencing a shift of roles and functions in society. Scholars and historians of religion in particular are attentive to this shift.

2 Nomenclature

In the English edition of Hans Wehr’s *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1961), the definition of *imām* is a prayer leader, leader, or master, with the plural *a’imma*. In its original meaning, the word implies leadership, control, governance, and authority in different aspects of political, spiritual, and theological affairs. According to Hanna Kassis’s *A Concordance of the Qur’an* (1983), the word *imām* appears twelve times in the Quran, in singular or plural form, with a number of different meanings such as model, example, leader, and guide. Both Abraham and the Book of Moses are described as ‘imam,’ meaning examples or models to be followed. Closely associated with ‘imam’ and drawn from the same root is the word *imāma*, meaning the function or office of the prayer leader, a position of leadership in a small or big group, a mosque, or a community. This is the collective term that denotes the wider Islamic institution of the imam, independent of individual imams. It is neither meant as an occupation or as a rank; rather, it is an office and a function to fulfil. Other terms that share the same root are *umm*, which means mother, but also source, origin, and foundation, and *umma*, which means the nation, people, or community.

With the many specific historical applications of the word ‘imam’ come a variety of understandings that require unpacking. Most plainly, the imam is the prayer leader in a mosque, or simply the Muslim worshiper who leads the recitation of prayer when two or more worshipers are present. He is the example to follow in the bowing down and prostrations of the prayer. In early Islam, ‘imam’ was used to denote the highest office of the Muslims, who in legal and political terms was the lawful temporal leader of the community of believers in the times of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. After the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632, the question of *imāma*, legitimate religious and political leadership and legitimate authority in Islam, became central. According to Sunni sources, Muhammad had not given directions about the appointment of his successor – and paradoxically, for this very first of urgent issues there was little help to find in either the Quran or the sunna, the words and deeds of the prophet. This demonstrates the struggle of the community of believers to deal with the realities of power after the end of

the direct divine guidance delivered through revelation and in the practice of their prophet.

After the wars of succession and the establishment of the hereditary Umayyad dynasty, the word *imam* began to acquire a specific meaning for the Shia. For them, an *imam* is he who is recognized as the legitimate, faithful leader of the Muslim community by claiming direct descent from Muhammad. Amongst the Twelver Shia, such twelve descendants of Muhammad are regarded as divinely appointed spiritual and temporal leaders. In its later, mainly Sunni, application, and in a more abstract sense focusing on leadership through knowledge and merit, the word '*imam*' also came to mean an exemplarily authoritative scholar, specifically one of the founders of the four *madhhabs* ('schools of law and theology').

Very much a developing word and concept, the *imams* discussed in this book are prayers leaders, community leaders, and religious professionals in the present Western European context. As such, while the authors of this book take great care to be specific in describing their object of study in each chapter, the word '*imam*' has taken on a shorthand meaning in contemporary parlance. In much of the current literature, the '*imam*' is an Islamic religious professional who holds the responsibility for a variety of religious, social, and communal functions among Muslims. This book is concerned with the figure of the *imam* – mostly male, but also female, such as *murshidas* ('female guides') – and the functions that revolve around his or her work: being a preacher, chaplain, teacher, community organizer, mosque spokesman, chairman, director, and organization representative. *Imams* sometimes perform all of these functions themselves, or they are performed in collaboration with others in the community and society at large.

3 Vested interests in imams in Western Europe: Current status

Socio-anthropological and security studies of Islam and Muslims in Western Europe after World War II hardly focus on religious authority, let alone *imams per se*. Political Islam, transnational Islamic movements, and radical Muslims have been central to the study of Islam and Muslims in European scholarship until recently. Studying religious authority, let alone thinking of training programmes for *imams* and community leaders, has been out of sight for decades. The Grand Mosque of Paris initiative in the mid-1990s might be considered the first one aimed at training *imams*, but it did not win support and attention from state or non-state actors until the mid-2000s, after the terrorist events of 11 September 2001 in the United States.

Western Europe, most of which bound together by the institutions of the European Union, has not, and apparently will not, develop shared policies on religious affairs on Islam in particular, since each member state has its own particular relationship with religion. Strategic reports solicited or prepared by institutions of the European Union on the topic of Islamic religious leadership are scarce, to the extent that the first report on the topic was prepared by a body not of the European Union (King Baudouin Foundation, 2007). One example of a report on this topic that was co-financed by an institution of the European Union is *Education and Training of Islamic Faith Leaders in Europe: A Comparative Evaluation of Approaches in France and Germany*, prepared by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and co-financed by the Commission DG Home Affairs of the European Union (Hussain and Tuck, 2010).

Earlier scholarship on Islam and Muslims in Western Europe did not take the authority and roles of imams as a central topic of research, with the exception of the work of Franck Frégosi (1998) on France. Examples include the works of Felice Dassetto (1996), Jytte Klausen (2005), Jørgen Nielsen (1999), Tariq Ramadan (1999), and Wasif Shadid and Pieter Van Koningsveld (2002), to name but a few. Belonging, integration of second-generation immigrants, citizenship, loyalty, secularization, modernity, and representative bodies of Islam were the major topics that mostly consumed scholarly attention until 2001.

As post-World War II immigrants and their descendants are becoming citizens of Europe, and the debate about Islam in Europe is emerging as a debate about European Islam, the question is taking a different turn. It is the localization of the religious leaders of these Muslim citizens and residents that appears to be of paramount importance, and rightly so. Scholarship has turned toward examination of this theme to some extent; three recent works, by Willem B. Drees and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld (2008), Juan Ferreiro Galguera (2011), and Ednan Aslan and Zsofia Windisch (2012), have begun to shed light on the topic. The first (Drees and van Koningsveld) mostly concerns religious freedom, and briefly gives space to the topic of imams in countries like the Netherlands and Italy. The third (Aslan and Windisch) mostly focuses on central Europe and the long experience of the Balkan countries, especially Bosnia-Herzegovina, with forming and training teachers and imams for the European context. It is the second (Galguera) that appears to be the first comprehensive, descriptive text in English that tries to map the major imam-training centres in 27 countries of the European Union. Galguera shows how few of these centres are actually available, how scarce their funds and local

training faculty are, and how states and stakeholders are working more and more to develop them. Still, the study requires follow up to see how many of the institutes that were in the planning stage during the time of data collection have found their ways to realization, what they are teaching to the new imams of Europe, and what the best practices, their strong points, and their challenges are.

It is important to state the obvious: many have vested interests in the future of Islam in Western Europe, and therefore also in the imams and Islamic leadership that are experiencing change and innovation, as Felice Dassetto, Silvio Ferrari, and Brigitte Maréchal (2007) inform us in their report *Islam in the European Union: What's at Stake in the Future*. Overall, these interests can be divided into internal and external ones.

On the internal level, it is Muslims and congregations in mosques that are looking to imams for direction and leadership – both literally, during prayer, and in the more comprehensive sense of navigating life and circumstances in Europe. Mosques, their directors and boards, and the networks and organizations working on Muslim issues in Europe, are all concerned with the religious and social maintenance of the community. They employ imams for the primary function of leading the prayer, giving the Friday *khutba* ('sermon'), and guiding and counselling the community in the event of marriages, divorces, births, funerals, and the like.

Externally, at least three levels of interest or concern can be listed. First, public institutions are trying to accommodate the needs of Muslim citizens, including their spiritual needs. A number of public and private institutions, such as hospitals, prisons, the armed forces, and universities, are employing imams as chaplains to offer a service to Muslims commensurate with what other religious communities receive. With this service comes a long list of demands and requirements in terms of training, security, and professionalization.

Second, at a discursive level, many politicians, opinion-makers, and leading media outlets across Europe are concerned with the public and communal positions of imams and the impact these are assumed to have not only on Muslims but also on a long list of public concerns. This appears to be a shared concern across Europe – Western Europe in particular – and there is a dire need to train home-grown imams or imams that know the European context and its values and needs.

Third, outside Europe, a number of international actors, institutions, movements, governments, and ministries follow the case of imams in Europe and intervene in their affairs. These actors are either invited by the community to contribute to their religious life through education,

personnel, and funds, or are invited through bilateral agreements between states. Such agreements are few and have often come too late to answer the needs of the community, especially as various Western European Muslim denominations do not receive state funds nor receive recognition for the training offered by their schools and seminaries, which is one of the main reasons why the issue of imam training and recruitment is problematic.

This leads to the next point, which can be described as an intertwining space of concern for both internal and external stakeholders. In many ways, the question of Islam and imams in Europe speaks to the current status of secularism and the relationship between religion and the state. Normative claims have repeatedly been made that modern liberal democracies are characterized by the separation between church and state. Just as often, such claims have been challenged: each Western European state has its own version of secularism, and often has a 'preferred' or 'historical religion' that benefits from state institutions more than others, whether minimally, as in the case of the very *laïc* ('secular') France, or maximally, as in the cases of Spain and Italy. Borrowing the words of Jocelyne Cesari (2013), there is a clear 'externalization' of Islam from the European context and culture, which impacts its institutional integration.

Focusing on imams sheds light on the state's relationship with national Muslim bodies, its wish to relate to one single Muslim body (and/or the failure of these), its control over the building of mosques and Islamic centres, the security issues related to terrorism that urge the state to interfere in Islamic affairs, and lastly, the overall role of the imam in the European context. The state sees in the imam more than a simple prayer leader; he is perhaps incorrectly seen as a Muslim equivalent of a rabbi or priest. It is assumed that imams are leaders and representatives of their communities, and that states and governments can address them to fix social issues and grievances. Especially since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the interest in opening training programmes for imams, religious leaders, and activists has grown, though still dominantly from a security approach – which, however, does not always lead to the desired fruits that engaged religious figures will solve issues related to religious discourse in the public sphere, deradicalization of the youth, and Muslims' integration into society. Too much is expected of the imam at a time when the mosques and institutions where he functions lack a faculty of experts that enjoy legitimacy from both Muslim trainees and their community, institutional visibility, and financial support. There is clear institutional ignorance and negligence of the field and its importance for quite a number of believing citizens in society.

This book seeks to explore the role, function, and position of imams and the implications of the imamate as a religious-institutional authority in Western Europe. The first part intends to be more theoretical, with a focus on themes related to religious authority, theology, and their manifestation in the modern context of Western Europe. The second part mostly consists of country-specific case studies based on fieldwork. The two parts are complementary, though at times they might intertwine.

4 **The parts and their contributions: Part I**

In the first chapter of the first part, Jasser Auda revisits the concept of the Land of Islam and the criteria that make a land, Europe in this case, open to be interpreted as a Land of Islam. Based on reading the definitions offered by classical and modern Islamic political theology, Auda proposes that security, justice, and the freedom to practice Islamic basic rituals do give an Islamic aspect to lands that are not dominantly Islamic in demography or governance: lands where justice, security, and freedom of worship prevail are Islamic lands, irrespective of the (lack of) religiosity of their lawmakers and governors, which certain interpretations of the Islamic tradition prioritize. Through this reading, Auda proposes that European Muslims, including their imams, should move from an 'integration' to a 'contribution' approach toward Europe.

This contribution of Islam to Europe is further raised by Thijs Sunier, who underlines the crucial but neglected role of ordinary Muslims in the making of religious authority and leadership. Sunier argues that the sources of Islamic religious authority are more diverse and unstable than ever before. The Islamic landscape is complex; multi-socio-political, economic, and media factors play a big role in forming such complexity. The multiplication of religious audiences and their followers has opened a market of competition among both old and new generations of leaders, each trying to use and find a place in the media world that broadcasts their performance and rhetoric widely. The new media has especially become a challenge to traditional religious authority. Modern schools that use up-to-date technology to disseminate a plural and reformulated religious discourse and interpretation of religious norms are challenging the old centres of learning in special Islamic centres. The same norms are being lived and practiced differently by different generations or by the same generation in different locations, be they marginal or central. Ordinary Muslims play a major role in this process, which consequently shifts religious authority from classical leaders to new

stakeholders, according to Sunier. Such a multiplicity of interpretations of religious norms worries the nation states that are trying to domesticate Islam and Muslims' behaviour in the public sphere – an endeavour that endangers the neutrality that a secular state should uphold.

Away from both the externalization of Muslims and Islam in Europe and the negligence that ordinary Muslims and emerging religious authorities face, Jonathan Laurence brings in the Roman Catholic question in America in the nineteenth century to argue that Muslims in Europe are experiencing a similar historical moment of adjustment to a new context through implantation, institutionalization, and professionalization. American Catholics in the early nineteenth century lacked churches, dioceses, professional priests, and colleges; to meet the needs of the ever growing Catholic communities in the mid-nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church had to create an 'American College' in Rome to train proper Catholic priests, and similar colleges were created elsewhere in Europe to cater to the need for professionalization and houses of worship. Laurence provides some comparative statistics to show that Muslims are not lagging when compared with the example of American Catholics. Like them, Muslims in Europe lack professionalism, places of worship, and colleges – but these have been increasing for the last couple of decades. This increase is especially caused by continuing contact with Muslims' countries of origin and influential capitals like Rabat, Algiers, Ankara, and others. Laurence argues that the power of the countries of origin over their diasporas will change with time, and is already changing; what will remain is what he calls 'spiritual fatherhood' or 'spiritual leadership', through which the capitals that train the imams and religious leaders for Europe will maintain a link with their diaspora. Laurence says that this should not be read as a political defeat of the countries of origin, but rather a mere transfer of power to the Muslims who are trying to implant themselves into their new soil, Europe. This leads to the formation of local Islams: French Islam, German Islam, British Islam, and so on.

The localization of religious authority is further probed by Mohammed Hashas, who argues that the imamate, as a new field of study and policy focus for Islamic scholarship and modern nation-state institutions, is becoming a nationalized and dependent religious authority under the surveillance of state institutions, unlike the past independence of local communities in choosing their own imams. Hashas gives the example of the role of the imam as stipulated by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in Morocco: a role that lists duties and obligations that make the imam subject to state institutions and focalizes the discourse of Islamic ethics rather

than political issues, which imams are not allowed to deal with. Hashas also gives the example of imams in France as another instance in which the nationalization of this religious function is underlined by state surveillance, in which the religious power the imam holds is of an ethical-spiritual dimension. These examples illustrate that this religious function that has gained prominence and attention in recent years has been nationalized, institutionalized, and rendered dependent, with a clearly defined role of ethical (i.e., non-political) teaching.

The chapter by Farid El Asri also deals with the question of religious authority and its multiplication among Muslims in Europe. El Asri emphasizes the dynamics of a once-silenced Muslim presence, and the growth of various bodies that complement and at times strongly compete with each other as representatives of a pluralist community. He focalizes the growth of engaged young generations of Muslims and their attempts to organize their communities through acculturation, integration, and cohabitation through various interpretations of religious norms. El Asri also discusses his view of the development of training programmes for imams and religious leaders, and the challenges facing them.

Still related to the question of imams' training, but from a Swedish perspective, Göran Larsson highlights the complexity and difficulty of teaching Islamic theology in secular Western universities. First, he reviews the differences between religious and theological studies, presenting 'academic theology' as the convenient approach/discipline that studies religion, and theology in particular, critically and not apologetically, irrespective of the differences among religions. Afterwards, he dwells on the initiative of the Swedish Ministry of Education in 2009, which was followed up in 2014, to offer a training programme for imams in state universities. In the questionnaire that circulated widely among Muslim representative councils, associations, and religious leaders, the informants showed interest in a training programme for subjects that deal with language, society, and other topics, but not for pursuing Islamic theology studies in secular universities. Larsson argues that Muslims who are interested in such training leave out theology because they do not consider a secular university (with faculty who are probably not Muslim) to be an able or legitimate source of learning about Islamic theology, particularly subjects concerning the creed. These Muslims often obtain training elsewhere in the Islamic world. Moreover, Larsson also illustrates how difficult it is for the teaching faculty in Western secular societies to provide such training for very diverse Muslims belonging to different *madhhabs* and different models of imam training in their countries of origin.

The contribution of Solenne Jouanneau provides a typology of French imams according to their presence in the country since World War I, the various paths of their institutionalization, and the challenges they have faced during this process. Her chapter is a synthesis of six years of fieldwork on imams in France, during which she interviewed about thirty imams and about fifteen senior civil servants from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as accessing state archives. Jouanneau also examines the French Law of 1905 and how state institutions tend to transgress it with regard to Islamic issues, such as imam selection. She outlines different ways the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been intervening in the selection of imams since the 1990s: using diplomatic relations and the consular networks of the sending countries to select ‘consular imams’; using the residence permit cards that imams apply for in monitoring their good conduct as only ‘good imams’ can secure residence cards; and monitor the imam-training programmes, their content of good practices, and their ‘legitimate beliefs.’ Jouanneau critiques this interference and argues that it actually backfires, because imams and programmes that are controlled by the state risk losing legitimacy and authority among Muslims.

In the Netherlands, Welmoet Boender and Jan Jaap de Ruiter propose a different reading of the function of the imam in the public sphere, away from the traditional and limited space of the mosque. They consider the engagement of Yassin Elforkani – the ‘imam of the young’, as he describes himself – to be that of an organic public intellectual. Integrating religion into the definition of the public intellectual, they show how this imam uses different arguments (theological and non-theological) to challenge both the sceptical part of Dutch society and its religious Salafi counterparts in order to position himself and others that share his ideas in the heart of intense public debates.

Claudia Carvalho takes us into the digital world to examine how religious authority is both practiced and challenged. The Internet has opened a new space for the agency of Muslim women and youths, who have not found themselves or their ideas in traditional spaces of worship (mosques) or represented by traditional forms of religious authority, including imams. The privatization and individualization of religious knowledge is manifest in their online discussions. Based on online fieldwork tracing the discussions of 50 Muslim women of Moroccan origin or converts in Catalonia, Spain, in 2013-2014, Carvalho describes these ‘potential jihadists’ and their praise of the Islamic State, their dreams of joining it, and their use of classical concepts like *hijra* (‘migration’) and *da’wa* (‘proselytizing’) to recruit jihadists

online. Carvalho ends her chapter by referring to a female religious scholar's argument that this individualized digital jihadism is not representative of the community or of Islamic scholarship.

Continuing with the study of female religious authority in a country that is present in Europe through both its diaspora and its programmes of training imams, Sara Borrillo presents the gender-based reform of Morocco's Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in 2004, which institutionalized women's participation in official Islamic bureaucracy and knowledge production. The reform introduced *murshidāt* ('female religious preachers') and *ālimāt* ('female religious scholars') into the Islamic public discourse and authority structure. Borrillo reads this reform as a form of empowerment of women in the public space, but in which they remain under the tutelage of male authority and the state apparatus. She also analyses it from Islamic feminist perspectives as a form of women's agency and subjectivity. Unlike in secular-liberal societies, where gender equality in institutions is the norm, in Morocco female agency is still looked at from 'complementarity' of genders perspective. For this reason, the Moroccan state was able to intervene and provide a space for women in the public sphere and public institutions. In Europe, the empowerment of Muslim women takes a different path because the state cannot intervene in religious affairs to offer Muslim women a special space in their community.

5 The parts and their contributions: Part II

The second part is concerned with the institutionalization of Islam in Western Europe as seen through the role of imams. These processes are directed both by the Muslims themselves and by the states they settle in. This part contains ten chapters of case studies on imams: their day-to-day life, education, and institutional challenges and aspirations. The cases are located in the following countries: the United Kingdom (Mansur Ali and Alyaa Ebbyary), France (Cédric Baylocq and Romain Sèze), Spain (Juan Ferreira Galguera), Finland (Tuomas Martikainen and Riitta Latvio), Sweden (Göran Larsson), the Netherlands (Welmoet Boender and Jan Jaap de Ruiter), and Italy (Francesco Alicino, Yahya Pallavicini, and Khalid Rhazzali). Niels Valdemar Vinding opens the second part with a chapter on the typology of imams in Europe, based on his fieldwork.

While there are aspects that all of the examined countries share, it is difficult to propose a scheme that can place all of these case studies into a single clear framework – an idea to which we return in the concluding

remarks of this introduction. There is the question of the success or failure of national representative Muslim organizations in the concerned countries; the relationship between the government and any national Muslim bodies that was ultimately formed; the state's desire to deal with a single Muslim body (and the failure of these); the control over the building of mosques and Islamic centres; the role of imams, not only as bearers of religious authority but also as intermediates between civil authorities and Muslim communities; security issues related to terrorism that urge the state to interfere in Islamic affairs; the desire of parts of Muslim communities to establish good relationships with the state; the lack of financial support for imams (i.e. salaries) and their education; the competition of various external bodies to import imams; the fear of being accused of dismissive attitudes in society; the desire to establish imam-training programmes and Islamic studies programmes in universities; and other related issues.

The second part opens with an exploratory analysis of the institutional and epistemic authority of imams, which Vinding develops into a typology. He focuses on the two expressions of religious authority in Islam, and argues for their centrality to the legitimacy of imams and their work. His proposed typology can be understood as an expression of the interrelations embodied by imams during their movement within the diverse institutional frameworks of both Western and Islamic knowledge.

The study of the French and Italian contexts takes up a good amount of space in this book, which shows how the imamate can be approached differently in the same geographical-institutional-and-political context. Jouanneau's chapter in the first part focalizes the question of the relationship between churches/mosques and the state, ending with a critique of state intervention in the internal dynamics of the Islamic 'cult', particularly by choosing imams. In this part, Sèze, whose conclusions are based on fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2012, describes the internal dynamics of the imamate as a function in quite a secular context; he argues that imams tend to take up a leadership role in their communities, as well as acting as markers of Muslim identity. In their public discourse, imams critique both the state laws that limit Muslim religious freedom and visibility and the 'excessive' visibility of some Muslims, in the words of the author. To gain societal recognition, imams exhort their co-religionists to be active and engaged citizens. Baylocq explores more of the details of this French debate by examining the role of the theologian-imam Tareq Oubrou. He presents Oubrou's intellectual trajectory and his key theological concepts, like 'sharia of minority', his overall contribution to the institutionalization of Islam in France, and his founding role in the birth of a French Islam.

Ali and Ebbiary each consider a specific case of an imam-training programme in the United Kingdom, highlighting the programmes' shortcomings and achievements. Ali starts his chapter by describing the important training most functioning imams in the United Kingdom take from the widespread South Asian schools of Darul Uloom, including their Dars-i Nizami curriculum. Ali focalizes the work of chaplaincy and proposes it as a model for imamship (i.e. the imamate): he sees that imams have to learn a number of professional skills, most importantly how to 'talk with' believers in a tolerant mode, instead of 'talking to' or only preaching to them in the traditional sense. Ali calls 'immanent spirituality' a value, which imams are advised to adopt and make apparent in their work.

Ebbiary deals with the shortcomings of the Darul Uloom seminaries in the United Kingdom and the critiques they receive, and then examines the establishment and vision of the Cambridge Muslim College (CMC), founded in 2011. Cambridge Muslim College is presented as a project to train more advanced, highly educated imams and religious leaders – the hub that gathers and trains the 'best' graduates from the Darul Ulooms. In Ebbiary's words, Cambridge Muslim College was 'established to provide a higher education experience for the graduates of the traditional Indian-style Darul Ulooms in the United Kingdom [...] with a curriculum emphasizing citizenship, political and cultural awareness, interfaith understanding, community building, counseling, and other pastoral skills.'

This part also considers the southern part of Europe, which is especially important due to its large number of Muslims. Until very recently, hardly any Muslims lived in Spain, but due to growing immigration since the 1970s the kingdom now has a sizable Muslim population. While the country was the cradle of the Moorish presence for eight centuries, during the 'Reconquista' in 1492 most Muslims left or fled the country, or converted (in)voluntarily to Christianity. Ferreiro Galguera considers the presence of Muslims in Spain in the context of Spanish legislation since 1975, especially since the Cooperation Agreement of 1992, which recognizes certificates of theology studies from theology centres at universities. Ferreiro Galguera describes the efforts of Muslim communities to obtain recognition under this law. He recounts that while there used to be Islamic studies courses offered by two universities and two courses organized by two Islamic organizations, now there is only one solid imam-training programme in the country, organized by the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI) in cooperation with the Islamic University of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Ferreiro Galguera says that Muslim institutionalization in Spain still has a long way to go. He calls for the establishment of a 'European Institute' or 'University of Islamic Studies',

like Al-Azhar in Cairo, which would work in close collaboration with Islamic authorities in Muslim countries to develop legitimate training for Islamic religious authorities in Europe, as well as for interreligious dialogue.

Italy is well represented in this publication, with chapters from Alicino, Rhazzali, and Pallavicini. Alicino describes the complexity of the institutionalization of Islam in a country that has a special legal relationship with the Catholic Church, whose headquarters are in the Italian capital, Rome. Alicino describes Italy's relationship between church and state as 'limited secularism'. The absence of the recognition of Islam as a religion in Italy leads to the ongoing disorganized structure of its Muslim communities, characterized by growing initiatives for mosque-building and the setting up of imam-training programmes, despite the lack of institutional recognition, training *cadres*, and financial support.

Rhazzali puts the Italian imams into context. After presenting a map of imam types in Europe, he localizes their situation and types for the Italian context, furthering this typology with a map of the mosques in Italy to illustrate the geographical distribution of Islamic religious authority in the country. For Rhazzali, Muslim communities' search for an identity in Italy consists of claiming 'Italianicity' from an autonomous perspective.

Pallavicini is a practicing imam and the chairman of *Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana*, the Italian Islamic Religious Community (CO.RE.IS); his contribution gives the reader an inside view of the institutionalization of Islam in Italy, which is quite burdensome and slow. Echoing Rhazzali's argument, he states that 'imported imams, or those either appointed by international Islamic organizations from abroad or religious institutions of foreign governments, represent in the eyes of CO.RE.IS an obstacle for the active participation of the faithful and the ministers of the faith in the country's activities'; imported imams 'are [...] conditioned by a vision that is not fully compatible with how Italian Islam should look like'. This is why CO.RE.IS has been involved in training home-grown imams since 1995.

Finland is another country with a recent history of Muslim migration – although it has historically been home to the Islamic Tatars, whose religious affairs were taken care of by earlier legislation. The new migrants posed new questions, including how to set up imam-training programmes. The chapter by Martikainen and Latvio gives lucid insight into the efforts of the Finnish government and the feedback of the Muslim community, particularly its leaders and imams. At the moment, the issue is still undecided; both the government and the Muslim communities are still discussing the possible solutions, and new initiatives have been taken to further the processes of negotiation.

6 The imamate: challenges and future prospects

These two parts aim to contribute to the emerging field of imams as agents of religious authority, who develop new forms of understanding the imamate in relation to national institutions that are either already in place or in development. Taken as a whole, three major points can be retained from these studies. First, there are significant efforts, many led by the Muslim communities themselves, to address the void of representation and leadership within the community. This representation is spiritual, cultural, and institutional. Spiritually, the imam is the nearest person who is given the responsibility of leading rituals with spiritual significance, and therefore becomes the symbol of Islamic presence in the land or country; it is through mosques and the imams that inhabit them that Muslims feel their spirituality is first non-spatial, and then part of Europe. Culturally, the imam is an identity marker; it is through him that Muslims identify with the mosque and their religion (leaving aside the fact that imams are not always welcomed by or considered the best representatives of their communities). The role of the imam in the cultural aspects of marriages, divorces, male circumcision festivities, funerals, and general consultations represents an affiliation with a particular way of life and spiritual-cultural belonging in a multicultural context. Institutionally, the imam is often, but not always, an institutional axis for the community of believers – although in this he is sometimes in direct or indirect competition with other Muslim representative bodies. Whether he is directly the point of focus himself, or it is the community and the mosque where he functions that is at the centre of such institutional care or contact is open to further examination, as this book illustrates in different contexts and countries. These three aspects of the imam's role render the figure of the imam and the imamate worth investigating.

Second, the imamate is winning more and more interest from various stakeholders because of its spiritual, cultural, and institutional roles. After decades of negligence, Western European nation-states have woken up to the fact that Muslim communities lack imams who know the country where they function, its language(s), history, laws, and other related information. They have also come to realize that imams cannot solve integration problems – even if the states want to give them that responsibility in the attempt to prevent the radicalization of youths from Muslim backgrounds. European states have discovered that the imamate has been under the influence and control of various other external actors, including embassies, consulates, and international Islamic movements. This renders the issue extremely delicate, and divisions among Muslim representative bodies about how to deal with

state institutions are not new. Despite this contestation of the imamate, many Muslim communities and the concerned imams actively seek the recognition that will normalize their presence in Europe, through, among others, institutional representation, funding, and civil society activism.

Third, there is high interest from the Muslim community and its stakeholders, as well as from various state institutions, in developing adequate training programmes for the imams, religious leaders, and teachers of Islamic education in Europe. This interest, nurtured by the various factors tackled in this book, indicates the dire need for a well-educated and well-trained imam corps. While European nation-states expect Muslim communities to care about such an important aspect of their internal affairs, for decades governments have ignored the institutional and financial needs of these communities; it is unfortunate that only terrorist attacks have awakened them to this vital need of a part of their society. After the interest in training programmes has grown, most public state institutions have discovered that they too do not have the means or workforce to contribute to such programmes, and the state-representative Islamic councils that have been formed over the last decade or so often enjoy little recognition from Muslim communities for various reasons, as this book shows. The public universities that might contribute to such training often lack faculty trained in Islamic studies, which consequently affects their legitimacy among the community of believers and their representative bodies. It is for these reasons that working with Muslim bodies and their training programmes, and with 'embassy Islam' for the symbolic legitimacy they have in the field, appears the most reasonable path to follow (as the case studies in this book chart) until full-fledged national programmes that can graduate home-grown imams are developed.

Learning from the experience of Islam in the Balkans and the rest of the world where Muslim minorities have developed interesting imam-training programmes also remains an option and opportunity for the exchange of practical experiences and theoretical considerations in the new field of the study of Islam in Europe, and European Islam. Moreover, the historical experiences of institutionalizing religious authorities (e.g. rabbis and priests) in Europe and the United States might suggest the role of time in the slow absorption of the 'Muslim problem' before they take a natural course in social affairs, without fear and suspicion – as is slowly happening now with Islam and Muslims in Western Europe.

Finally, we wish to remind the reader of the broader context in which the issue of the imamate is and should be discussed: modernity and globalization. First, the issue of imam training cannot be disentangled from thorny

questions, such as those concerning Islam and modernity or migration in the era of globalization. It is undoubtedly a form of self-deception to focus exclusively on the training of imams as an effective measure to counteract religious extremism. The imam – it should not be forgotten – is one of the most vulnerable links in the chain of religious institutions and discourses. He is not a leader appointed by a divine authority, but an employee at the behest of his employer – the community of believers or the state, or both. This is why the improvement of imams' legal status is no less urgent than their training.

Second, the discord that threatens to undermine the unity of European societies can by no means be ascribed to the imams' omission of duties; rather, it should be attributed to the forms of fragility caused by globalization. The open world in which we live remodels all societies, no matter how rich, poor, developed, or developing they are. This state of fragility renders it expedient for Europe to renegotiate the place of Islam in its space. For many European leaders, multiculturalism is no longer the pledge of a perfect union between the different constituents of European citizens. In this context, the question of imams might seem like the tip of the iceberg, or the tree that hides a forest of other, bigger problems.

To extricate European societies from the consequences of the collapse of multiculturalism – and, unlike some political leaders, we are not saying multiculturalism has collapsed – it is wise to persevere in endeavours to include Islam in the European socio-cultural and institutional ambit. It is necessary to devise ways and means to harmonize the following three exigencies: (1) it is necessary to respect Islamic traditions – Muslim communities in Europe must not relish the feeling of being discriminated against; (2) it is necessary to respect the sovereignty of European countries – heeding the spirit of modern times, Muslims living in Europe must accommodate their cultural heritage to their new surroundings, discerning between the cultural practices of the Arab-Islamic world and the spirit of the religion; and (3) it is necessary that European cultures evolve freely towards a new historic concordance where citizens of different faiths and beliefs can converge into a more harmonious multitude.

The training of imams is but one small measure that should be part of a range of measures prescribed to banish the suspicions between different constituents of European citizenship, to restrain citizens from committing acts of hostility against each other, to restore mutual confidence between communities, to maintain order and justice, and to preserve liberty. The challenge confronting Europe, a continent in gestation in the age of globalization, is not exclusively related to the religion of Islam, but mainly a challenge to

accommodate the cultures and traditions of immigrants from the Islamic world and post-colonial societies, and in general to adjust to the changing, globalized world. Whether in imams' training or other measures related to migration in general, it is wise to adopt a new approach that would combine respect for Islamic traditions, compliance with the undeniable sovereignty of the host countries, and the responsible use of liberties afforded by the new media of communication. As Ednan Aslan writes, we should not build an image of a 'super-imam' who we expect to be the panacea to all societal ills (Aslan and Windisch, 2012, p. 61). Instead, we have to be realistic and steady in our study of the phenomenon for the betterment of society.

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