



EDITORIAL

It is with great pleasure that we are finally able to present the new issue of ARIA. While we apologize for the lengthy time our readers have had to wait before seeing this issue, we are also happy to announce that we are busy planning for the future of our Review, and that ARIA is, God-willing, going to kick off again in a full-fledged annual form.

The articles in this issue touch on a variety of themes. Musa Ibrahim discusses religion and media through a biographical sketch of one of the Islamic scholars who pioneered Muslim engagements with national and (after the liberalization of the country's media) private television stations in Ghana. The article too can be considered as pioneering, as very little attention has been paid so far to Muslim media in the multi-religious West African country. Later on in the issue, one of our review articles by Muhammed Haron looks at one of the most influential recent publications on the same theme of media and religion in Africa, Dorothea Schulze's *Muslims and New Media in West Africa*. Though appearing in different sections of ARIA, the two pieces could make a useful read together on Islam and media in West Africa.

Another piece pays attention to a very different kind of media. By looking at the religious symbols portrayed in the colourful paintings that can be observed on the rears of most Nigerian lorries, Katrin Schulze takes us on a journey at the intersection between visual arts and religious communication: the intra-religious polemics that shape the Islamic landscape in Nigeria today, in fact, find their way into the lorries' paintings and orientate the artists in their choice of symbols. The intricate web of religious and ethno-political identities in Nigeria is the focus of the next contribution. Looking at the role of Christianity in stimulating the growth of an autonomist political discourse in the multi-ethnic geo-political region of Nigeria known as the Middle Belt, Samaila Sulaiman provides an example of the blend of religious identities and geo-political aspirations which feeds on, but at the same time feeds communal conflicts in Nigeria as in many parts of the Continent.

The next contribution by Antonio Morone critically looks at the debates aroused by the recent decision of a local Italian administration to erect a memorial monument to Colonel Rodolfo Graziani, the man who was responsible for some of the most controversial pages of the Italian colonial history in Ethiopia and Libya during the Fascist time. Some of our readers will probably remember Graziani for his role in the capture and execution of Omar al-Mukhtar, one of the heroes of the anti-colonial struggle in Islamic Africa, whose life has been celebrated in the movie *Lion of the Desert*, starring Anthony Quinn as Omar al-Mukhtar and Oliver Reed as Rodolfo Graziani. The film, which became a cult movie in Africa and the Middle East, has been banned for years in Italy by an anachronistic censorship law, confirming Morone's point that there is indeed a "trouble with Italy's post-colonial memory." To conclude our section of miscellaneous articles, Cathlene Dollar deconstructs the widespread representation of the Tijaniyya as an 'African' *tariqa* by looking at the political role of the Sufi order in early Republican Turkey.

After a collection of different articles, our issue presents four special ‘focuses.’ In continuity with what we did in the last issue, when we had two contributions on ‘Boko Haram,’ we start with an article by the editor on the same topic. We hope that there won’t be any need to cover the phenomenon in the coming issues, and that the security that used to characterize the daily life of most northern Nigerian towns will be re-established soon.

Our second focus, following an established, cherished *sunna* of this Review, is South Africa. Samadia Saadouni and Shaheed Tayob’s complementary contributions look at two different aspects of the presence of Islam and Islamic institutions in the public sphere of the country: respectively the political engagement of the Islamic NGOs and the growth of the Halaal industry, the latter seen as ‘cultural intermediaries’ between traditional religious norms and the market capitalist economy. In a highly original piece, Gadija Ahjum takes a different perspective by looking at the inner space of individual Islamic actors, and traces the making and re-making of the religious identity of a female member of the Qibla movement.

The piece on the biography of a Qibla activist introduces the readers to the third focus, i.e. biographies of Islamic leaders. The four biographical sketches on Shaykh Hasan Cisse (Zachary Wright), on Shaykh Hasan Dedew (Alex Thurston), on Shaykh Yahuza b. Sa’ad (Muhammadu Gwadabe), and on Shaykh Ismaila Idris (Ramzi Ben Amara) represent three countries (Mauritania, Senegal, Nigeria) and the two main global organizations which have shaped the contemporary Islamic landscape of West Africa by their conflicting projects of religious revival: the Tijaniyya and the Salafiyya.

In a fourth section of this issue, three articles discuss different sets of primary sources for the history of Islam in (West) Africa. In an original contribution, Mauro Nobili gives an overview on the theme of the figure of *‘Uqba al-Mustajab*, mentioned in oral and written sources as the putative ‘founding ancestor’ of several West African Muslim groups. The different historical ‘Uqbas to whom these legends refer — concludes Nobili — do not reflect a limited knowledge of early Islamic history; they are the result of conscious attempts to establish different claims of authority. The manuscript heritage of Nigeria is the focus of the following two contributions. Salisu Bala introduces the manuscript collection of the Jos museum and describes selected rare manuscripts, while Mukhtar Bunza presents an overview of the Arabic medicinal manuscripts of pre-colonial West Africa, written by the leaders of the Sokoto Jihad and their successors.

The issue is ‘sealed’ by two reviews of recent material that documents the life of South African anti-apartheid Muslim icon Imam Haron and discusses his legacy: Barney Desai and Cardiff Marney’s book *The Killing of the Imam* and Khalid Shamis’ film documentary *The Imam and I*.

To conclude, we extend a warm thank to all the reviewers who have contributed to this issue, as well as Abdulaleem Somers and Cathlene Dollar for their very precious help at different stages of the work.