In this case, preservation of an Islamic identity is a luxury affordable only to the prosperous. In the final chapter of the book, Omar Khalidi examines the history of immigrant mosque building in the United States. Complete with numerous photographs of different mosque styles, Khalidi’s article wrestles with the issue of the feasibility of applying traditional Middle Eastern/Islamic architectural patterns in American neighbourhoods. After discussing mosque design in several states, Khalidi concludes that traditional architectural designs reinforce a view of Islam as a static, unchangeable religion; he urges mosque designers to build centres of worship that fulfil Islamic requirements but also reinterpret tradition to meet the requirement of a new environment.

This volume thus provides the reader with a smorgasbord of food for thought. While a final chapter tying these issues together and offering concluding remarks would have been most welcome, the work nonetheless is extremely valuable to those interested in the tensions between religious and cultural identity. The recurring themes of the work (diversity within the Muslim community, intra-faith religious and political tensions, and adaptation to North American societies and vice versa) allow the reader to make connections between articles. While one might not initially see a link between a Canadian school board decision, for instance, and mosque architecture, the authors are able to use case studies such as these effectively to illustrate the broader themes of the volume as a whole.

Amy J. Johnson

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This book is a significant contribution to the study of the history and ideological evolution of political Islam in Palestine, starting with the 1920s and the days of the British mandate to the Intifada [intifadah] and ending with possible future scenarios.

At the outset, Milton-Edwards states the book’s high ambitions, namely to debunk or modify four popular assumptions about the history of the Islamic movement in Palestine. These include first, the Western media’s portrayal of it as essentially “fundamentalist” and terrorist, and second, the
notion that politically active Muslims in Palestine belong to one monolithic group, i.e., the popular disregard for the fact that Palestinian Islamic groups cover a wide spectrum from radicals to moderate reformers. Third, the author sets out to demonstrate that advocates of the "resurgence theory" are wrong to claim that it was the decline of Arab secularism which triggered the rise of political Islam. Instead, Milton-Edwards argues that in the period after 1967 until the mid 1970's, political Islam got eclipsed by the growing appeal of secular nationalism, and that it was mainly the consequences of Israeli occupation, which triggered the Intifada in 1987 and encouraged the formation of such movements as the Hamas [Hamās] political party. The last assumption, namely that the strategy of contemporary Islamist movements in Palestine has been solely dedicated to armed struggle as the means to achieve its political objective, has already been touched upon in the first and second point, but it emphasises the author’s aim to examine political Islam’s strategy of social transformation over a seventy-five year period and to reveal the motives for the recent armed campaign.

Adopting a political-ethnographic approach, the book draws upon a wealth of primary sources in the form of over fifty interviews with activists of the Islamic and national movements, as well as a large number of “bayānāt” (leaflets) issued by Hamas and Islamic Jihad [Jihād], in addition to well-chosen secondary sources. Nevertheless, the author insists that she is writing from a Western point of view, given the limitations she encountered during her field research such as the closure of Palestinian authorities and the crackdown on the Islamic groups she studied.

The ‘Introduction’ serves to clarify the often obscure and fluctuating definitions of terms like Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic resurgence. The main argument with regard to the first is that contemporary Islamic groups in Palestine should not be confused or equated with Islamist movements in Iran, Saudi Arabia or Egypt at different points in time, but should be examined in their own context which the history of Palestine provides. As for Islamic resurgence, the author tackles the third assumption above in more detail, claiming that Palestinians did not abandon nationalism directly following the war in 1967, but that the revival of Islam really took off after the defeat of PLO forces in Lebanon in 1982. Moreover, the author claims that Israel itself encouraged the growth of some of the Islamic movements to weaken support for the PLO. The author also stresses that some of these movements did not always have a political agenda but should be viewed in terms of a religio-cultural revival of Islam. This implies that the resurgence of Islam did not take place primarily because Palestinians had lost faith in secular nationalism. The author stresses the significance of the Intifada which allowed “Islamists to
organise and achieve levels of political power within society that they had never previously enjoyed” (p. 9).

Subsequently, the book follows a chronological approach to discussing the subject. The first chapter discusses the emergence of political Islam in Palestine by focusing on two individuals. Shaykh ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām struggled against the British mandate and the Zionist movement in the 1920s and 1930s by calling for *jihād* against Jewish settlers and organising weapons-training for his secret groups of supporters, hence providing a role model for Hamas and Islamic Jihad much later. Indeed, the followers of Shaykh al-Qassām played a pivotal role in the Palestinian revolt during 1936-1939.

In contrast, al-Ḥāj Amin al-Ḥussaynī, the Muftī of Jerusalem and hence prime representative of institutional Islam in the area, failed to stop the land sales by members of his own class to the Zionists and to provide the religious response needed to help his people cope with the momentous changes in Palestinian society at the time. This was due to the power struggles among the ‘ulamā’ and notable families, and the fact that he felt obliged to follow a policy of moderation towards the British, which however did not save him from expulsion by the colonial power in 1937. Thus, by contrasting these two individuals, Milton-Edwards seeks to demonstrate that the impact of al-Qassām’s ideas made the message of later organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Liberation Party to be understood more easily by the Palestinians even though they had no real power until much later. She also prepares the ground for drawing a parallel between the virtual paralysis and absence of institutional Islam in the political field at that period and in more recent times. However, reducing Islamic politics at the time to essentially two individuals might give too simplistic a picture.

The second chapter deals with the rise of nationalism in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during 1948-1967. Indeed, in this and subsequent chapters, the author distinguishes very clearly between the developments in the two areas as well as between political and institutional Islam.

The Egyptian administration in the Gaza Strip meant that the Muslim Brotherhood there was tightly linked to its centre in Egypt. It became a political training-ground for many future leaders of the Palestinian national resistance movement since its message remained broadly reformist, despite the rhetoric about the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic state, focusing on the refugee camps and social regeneration. However, after the assassination attempt on President Nasser [Nāṣir] in 1954 and the brutal crackdown on the movement, it was forced underground and subsequently became a militant and more radical force, in alignment with the communists, and losing many of its well-known figures to Fatah and then the PLO in 1959.
and 1964 respectively. Thus, the author claims that by the war in 1967 the Muslim Brotherhood played no role in Gazan politics.

With regard to the West Bank under the Hashemite Rule, the Muslim Brotherhood survived the turmoil thanks to their amalgamation with the Jordanian branch which in turn represented “only” a loyal opposition, not a threat to be eliminated, since it did not call to arms, but just on Muslims to return to the mosque and pray. In contrast, the Liberation Party, founded in 1952, advocated the resurrection of the caliphate by overthrowing corrupt Arab states and was thus repressed, without ever attracting a widespread following.

The third chapter focuses on the period between 1967 and 1976 with its crisis of identity, the manipulation of Palestinian nationalism by all the Arab regimes in the area, and most importantly, the impact of the Israeli occupation on Islamic politics. Indeed, it is in this chapter where the author provides most of the evidence against the “resurgence theory”. “The option of armed struggle (fedayeen [fidā’iyūn] or fighters) assumed a high level of legitimacy and there was a rapid rise in the status of the Palestinian national movement” (p. 78). Islamic practice became increasingly a “private affair” and economic change resulting in the further secularisation of society weakened the appeal of the Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood’s links with Amman were severely disrupted and left it incapable to operate effectively, a fate it shared with the Liberation Party. Moreover, institutional Islam was torn between Jordan and Israel and could not do much to address the needs of the refugee Muslims in the West Bank.

Regarding the Gaza Strip, the author points to the curious fact that the Muslim Brotherhood didn’t regret Egypt’s defeat by Israel in the 1967 war so much, but instead rejoiced in the defeat of Nasserism which had oppressed them in the past. However, the movement could not compete with the appeal of the PLO, since it failed to adopt a genuine “Palestine-first” position. However, this changed after the defeat of the fedayeen movement in Gaza in 1971, and the gradual rise of Shaykh Ahmad Yasin and his Mujama society, who proved instrumental in the resurgence of political Islam in the second decade of the occupation.

The fourth chapter then examines in more detail the reasons for the Islamic resurgence as indicated in the introduction of the book. It is interesting to read that the Mujama, not unlike the current Islamists, first–unhindered by Israel struggled against the nationalist movement since it was perceived to be the “enemy within”, the obstacle to an Islamic revival. The book goes on to discuss the emergence of Islamic Jihad before going back to the Mujama, possibly creating unnecessary confusion and repetition, especially when the
author refers to the Muslim Brotherhood as the key political player in the period, having already established Islamic Jihad as the catalyst for the outbreak of the Intifada. At the end of the chapter, one is left wondering how significant the Mujama really was during that period (1977-1986) compared to the Islamic Jihad. Similarly, the argument of the nationalist defeat in Lebanon (against the “resurgence theory”) is dealt with too late and too briefly, despite having been presented as very significant earlier.

Despite that particular weakness, the fifth chapter presents a detailed account of the Intifada and points to the link between the Mujama and the new Hamas organisation. The development of Hamas since the late 1980s and its structure is examined in detail, covering its change in policies and positions towards the peace process. Particularly interesting is the sub-chapter “Links with Israel” (p.151). Milton-Edwards is certainly right when she writes, “the signing of the Oslo Accords heralded immense changes in the nature of politics in the Palestinian arena. […] The leaderships of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Liberation Party (LP) were faced with a major political dilemma. How could these organisations respond to the rule of the PLO” (p.173)? The Black Friday massacre in November 1995 symbolised the clashes between the Palestinian Police Force and the Islamic groups whose suicide bombings alienated many Palestinians.

The sixth and last chapter is devoted to a comparison of the ideologies of the Islamist groups, mainly that of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Here, Milton-Edwards is at her best, providing an extremely lucid and perceptive account of the prevalent ideological discourses as well as the challenges which these movements have to face in order to survive. However, it might have been more useful for the understanding of certain events if this chapter had come earlier in the book. In the Epilogue, the author outlines various future scenarios, ending on a realistic-optimistic note:

. . . if Yasser Arafat could be persuaded by Israel to co-opt Hamas, and if Hamas were to accept a cease-fire (hodna), then some sort of political compromises between these forces could be achieved. [...] In practice it [i.e. Hamas] is willing to make intermediate political decisions that may appear to contradict the principle or the spirit of the movement. Like the secularists in the Palestinian national movement, Hamas will be able to argue that making short-term concessions to Israel when in a position of weakness will allow the movement to regroup and strengthen itself for the attainment of the ultimate goal: Islamic liberation of Palestine (p. 218).

In sum, Milton-Edwards might have been able to deliver an even more convincing case for her highly interesting arguments if she had structured the
book more around the four main assumptions she set out to prove wrong or to modify. In addition, a sub-chapter on Hamas’ social works as well as a more detailed account of Israeli occupation policies might have strengthened her analysis. However, overall, this book is a fascinating and thorough account of Islamic politics in Palestine and a very useful tool in trying to understand today’s events in the area.

Sylvia I. Bergh

★★★