BOOK REVIEW


In recent years the study of Islam in South Africa has burgeoned, as local scholars have become more numerous and active. Formerly the preserve of a few scattered non-Muslim enthusiasts, the study of Islam in South Africa, has become increasingly the domain of Muslim scholars. The appearance of a comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography is thus all the more to be welcomed, as new publications have proliferated. An earlier (1964) bibliography by Ruth Hampson listed some 230 entries. The present bibliography has 985 entries, plus 138 serial titles. The geographical scope is that of the present Republic of South Africa. Entries are numbered.

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The history of Islam in South Africa began just over three centuries ago, with the arrival at the Cape of Good Hope of an exiled Muslim religious leader and rebel against Dutch rule in Java, Shaykh Yusuf, together with his family and some followers. He has been the subject of surprisingly few articles, and only one book in English (# 317) by Suleiman Essop Dangor. Shaykh Yusuf's writings, some of which have survived, are not well known, but are being rediscovered and studied (Mustapha, # 806; Von Kleist, # 829), and published (# 392). Following him in the 18th century there was a succession of less well-known figures, most of whom still await detailed study. Only fragmentary archival materials await the researcher in the Cape Archives, however, there is doubtless more to be gleaned from the Algemeen Rijksarchief in the Hague, and in the Arsip Nasional in Jakarta. In some cases little more than the names, some dates, and a little anecdotal information survive. There are, however, a group of krāmats in and around Cape Town, which commemorate some of the deceased. A handsome guide (# 197) to these
has recently been published.

During the 18th century Islam was confined largely to exiles and convicts sent by the Dutch East India Company to the Cape, and increasingly, to slave converts at the Cape. With the advent of British rule at the Cape at the beginning of the 19th century, some of the restrictions on Muslims were lifted, mosques were permitted and built, and Islam enjoyed a period of rapid growth, especially among slaves and free blacks. The archivally-based work of Rob Shell (# 282-4, 424-6) explores these themes.

A great deal of useful work has been done on the linguistic history of the Cape Muslims in the 19th century by the great language scholar and historian, Achmat Davids. More than forty of his articles, papers and books, many on "Arabic-Afrikaans" are listed here along with those of his forerunners, Samuel Rochlin, Hans Kähler, and Adrianus Van Selms.

A whole new chapter in the history of Islam in South Africa began in Natal in the 1860s, with the importation of labourers from India, both Muslim and Hindu, to work the sugar plantations. Initially limited to the coastal regions, they soon spread to towns in the interior. Their presence today in the towns of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng and Northern Transvaal is very evident. From their beginnings as labourers and tradesmen, they have prospered, becoming highly literate, and have entered the professions in increasing numbers. Together with the Muslims of Cape descent, they number between 1 and 2 percent of South Africa's population of 43 million. Work on their history has been done at the University of Durban-Westville, and elsewhere.

The bibliography's introduction includes useful discussions of research trends, statistics of the materials listed, library collections, etc. In itself it is a welcome overview to the study of Islam in South Africa.

The arrangement of the bibliography is in sixteen broad subject areas: bibliographies, general studies, biographical studies, history, education, language and linguistics, art and architecture, etc. There are useful Author and Subject indices. There is also a useful, though incomplete, list of source journals.

There is no attempt in this volume to include publications dealing chiefly with Islamic doctrines; these are to be the subject of a separate work, currently in preparation.

Many entries are annotated, some at considerable length. Annotations tend to be descriptive and neutral in tone, even where the work treated may be polemical. References to book reviews in the annotations on books are most welcome.

The language of most entries is English, but there are works in Afrikaans, Arabic, German, Bahasa Malayu, Bahasa Indonesian and Turkish. Annotations are in English.
It is thus very comprehensive and even includes a number of works not yet published. Your reviewer was able to identify only three recent Indonesian titles on Shaykh Yūsuf as lacking, together with several older Dutch entries on him.

The whole effort does great credit to the compiler and the publisher. Despite all the work that has been done in recent years, however, Samir Zoghby's observation (in # 15) in 1978, that "Many aspects of South African Islam still need to be studied" still stands.

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