

Ingvild Flaskerud

Preface

As the new managing editor of the *Scandinavian Journal of Islamic Studies* (SJIS), I am delighted to present this topical issue in which we explore the interplay between Islam, art, and popular culture as sites for possible configurations of Islam, Muslim cultures, and identities. As noted in the introduction by the editors, Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati and Douglas Mattsson, approaching religion through the medium of artistic/aesthetic expressions is part of a broader trend in the academic study of religion/s. In the first of the four studies presented in the current issue, Alma Munk Kronik explores conceptualizations of interreligious relation and religious coexistence between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Copenhagen. The discussion is based on ethnographic studies at the Goldschmidts Musikakademi, the Islamisk–Kristent Studiecenter, and MuJu & Co. In the second article, Jonas Otterbeck introduces readers to a Muslim ballet school in London where students dance to poetry with the purpose of cultivating Islamic *adab* (etiquette) and *akhlaq* (ethics). Shifting the to Iran, Ingvild Flaskerud next explores how signs associated with Twelver Shiite visual, material, and performative religious culture were used by the ‘Green Movement’ to mobilize opposition against the Iranian authorities in 2009. In the last article, Thomas Brandt Fibiger turns to the Gulf region to examine some of the spectacular new museums established in recent decades. Focusing on how ‘religion’ is exhibited, he discusses how its presentation connects with notions of ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘Islamic civilization’ so as to situate the nation as a global actor. In “Meet the Doctor”, Douglas Mattsson presents an interview with Gustav Larsson who recently (2024) defended his dissertation, “Positioned orthodoxies: Muslim diversity in contemporary Sweden”, at Linnaeus University. In the thesis, Larsson examines the ways in which notions of Islamic orthodoxy are constructed within and used to maintain boundaries

around certain Muslim congregations in contemporary Sweden. In his conversation with Mattsson, he reflects on results he found particularly interesting and surprising and on challenges he encountered.

The editorial board of the journal has undergone some changes since the publication of our last issue. Jesper Petersen has resigned as managing editor and I am honoured to accept the invitation to take over the managing editorship as the journal continues in its work of strengthening the connections between research communities across Scandinavia studying Islam and Muslims. The editorial board would like to thank Jesper Petersen for the time and energy he has invested in the journal, and for his work in steering its profile from the well-established Danish journal of Islamic studies, *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning* (TIFO), to a Scandinavian-based and Scandinavian-oriented journal publishing articles on Muslims and Islam in Scandinavia as well as on Muslims and Islam across the world by researchers affiliated with Scandinavian universities. Jesper Petersen has also connected our journal with the Directory of Open Access Journals, with the result that the journal now follows an internationally approved standard for peer review and open access. We believe that these changes will strengthen the journal's quality and accessibility and enable it to become a valuable platform for mediating and discussing research into Islam and Muslims in Scandinavia and elsewhere, as well as to strengthen collaboration between Scandinavian researchers and colleagues internationally. The editorial board would also like to thank Sara Jul Jacobsen for her valuable editorial contributions to the journal over many years.

The board is now in the process of strengthening its Scandinavian profile, and we are excited to be joined by three new members who will make this possible. From the University of Bergen we are joined by Eirik Hovden, research professor in Arabic and Middle Eastern history, from Stockholm University we are joined by Susanne Olsson, professor in the history of religions and from the University of Lund we are joined by Anders Ackfeldt, who also acts as Deputy Director at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. I myself am affiliated with the University of Oslo. These additions will renew the board's expertise and broaden its network. Hovden has worked on Islamic law, legal history, and Islamic history in Yemen, with a focus on the Zaydi Islamic tradition. From 2020 to 2025 he led the

TMF starting grant on mechanisms of change in Islamic legal texts, using the conceptual lenses of canonization and codification. Olsson's research interests include the Egyptian philosopher Hasan Hanafi and his interpretation of Islam, Islamic preachers, mass media and social change in Egypt, in addition to juridical interpretations related to minority Muslims and Salafi-oriented Islam in both a global and a European context, including Sweden. Ackfeldt holds a PhD in Religious Studies and his research interests include how Islam is produced in American and global hip-hop culture by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Analyzing lyrics, sounds and images, he has explored the Islamic semiotic resources used by artists and through a social-semiotic exploration, discusses how Islamic themes feature in US hip-hop culture. My own research similarly moves between Muslim majority and minority contexts. Focusing on Twelver Shiism in Iran and Norway, I have conducted ethnographic research on the use of images for devotional and ritual purposes, on women as ritual experts, and on various material and embodied methods in the formation of virtue ethics.

As always, we extend our thanks to the Independent Research Fund Denmark for their generous funding, and to all our peer-reviewers, without whose contributions we would not be able to share our research with you.