

Jørgen S. Nielsen, Samim Akgönül, Ahmet Alibašić, Brigitte Maréchal, and Christian Moe: *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 1 (2009)*. Leiden: Brill, 562 pp.

The *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, first published in 2009 (covering 2008), and with the next volume (covering 2009) due to appear in October 2010, stands a good chance of becoming a standard and valuable source for all those interested in Muslims and Islam in Europe. It is in a sense “made in Denmark,” since its editor-in-chief is Jørgen Nielsen. Nadia Jeldtoft also worked on the *Yearbook* as editorial assistant, and contributed a useful essay on the nature of the data.

The *Yearbook* contains three main sections. The first and largest (359 pages in the 2009 volume) provides general information on Muslims and Islam in individual European countries. The second section (156 pages) contains five articles on current issues of importance. The third section (28 pages) reviews the ten most important books published in the period covered (2007-08). Such a selection is inevitably somewhat personal, and one might advance alternative candidates for inclusion, but all the books reviewed deserve attention.

This review will first briefly consider the *Yearbook*'s second section, and then its (most important) first section.

The five current issues of importance selected for the second section are (in order of presentation) Turkish-EU relations, the role of music in European Muslim youth culture, veiling controversies, media, and religious freedom in the light of the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons. Given that these issues must have been selected in 2007 or

2008, the editors' choice showed remarkable prescience. Ayhan Kaya's discussion of the impact of the EU project on Turkey, both in terms of Turkish reforms and of Turkish views on the EU, covers in depth the rise of Turkish “Euro-scepticism,” and so is highly relevant to the 2010 debate on how (and perhaps still whether) the West “lost” Turkey. The relevance of this to the *Yearbook*'s central topic of Islam in non-Turkish Europe, however, might have been more clearly brought out: If Turkey turns away from the West, what will this mean for non-Turkish Europe's large population of Turkish origin? Likewise, Dominic McGoldrick's detailed review of recent litigation on the *hijab*, primarily in the European Court of Human Rights, in Turkey, France, and the United Kingdom, shows how the legal issues raised relate to bigger philosophical and political questions, and so is most timely as Western Europe is swept by actual or proposed “burka” bans – the adoption of the word “burka” to mean *niqab* being a rare example of European unanimity. Niraj Nathwani's review of legal issues raised by the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons, which like McGoldrick's article refers especially to the European Court of Human Rights, is also relevant to the issues of 2010, from the discourse of the Trykkefrihedsselskab to the Swiss minaret ban. Nathwani argues for an approach that emphasizes not the protection of religious feelings but the fight against racism and xenophobia.

The issues treated in the other two articles are less immediately topical, but still both current and of importance. Miriam Gazzah shows, with special reference to Dutch-Moroccan youth culture, how traditional Moroccan-style music links young Dutch-Moroccans to their families' origins and to Islam, while hip-hop provides a means of protest and resistance. Isabelle Rigoni looks both at mainstream media treatment of Muslims and at

Europe's Muslim media, focusing especially on France and the United Kingdom.

The second and third sections of the *Yearbook*, then, are both well worth reading. It is presumably for the first and biggest section, however, that the *Yearbook* will be bought. This main section covers all of Europe (save Iceland) up to the former Soviet border, plus Turkey (part of which, of course, lies in geographical Europe). The biggest absence is Russia, an absence presumably remedied in the 2010 *Yearbook*, which will cover 46 countries, rather than the 37 countries covered in the 2009 *Yearbook*. Each country profile is written by an expert in or from the country in question, save for five cases in which the profile is written from a next-door country. Brian Arly Jacobsen contributed the entry for Denmark.

Data on each country is presented systematically under 15 headings. These emphasize the political aspect of the overall topic: Muslims and state. After a discussion of the origins, size and variety of the Muslim population in each country comes a sub-section on the basic framework of Muslim-state relations and a sub-section on "main Muslim organizations," being in many cases those with which the state is in contact. Eight major issues of importance to both states and Muslims are then surveyed: education (under two headings, that of children and higher education), state "chaplaincies," festivals, *halal* food, dress codes (the topic of McGoldrick's article in the second section), and family law. Two other sub-sections cover issues discussed from a different perspective by Rigoni in the second section: media and "public opinion and debate." Each country survey ends with "major cultural events," the issue for which "no data" is most often reported.

The information presented in each sub-section is brief. Taking all countries and sub-sections together, the average length of each discussion is two thirds of a page. Some discussions (for example of children's education in Germany or main Muslim organizations in the UK) are given two pages, and the composition of the Muslim population in France is given three. At the other extreme, *halal* food in Bulgaria is covered in three lines, and for certain countries all that is reported under certain headings is "no data." There is, for example, no data on "major [Islamic] cultural events" in Estonia, where the population of practicing Muslims is "some hundreds." This might seem unsurprising, but it is also reported that Estonia has four "main Muslim organizations."

Estonia's several hundred practicing Muslims are covered in six pages, while France's four to seven million Muslims are covered in a little over twelve pages. This is not quite as disproportionate as it might seem, however, since the central purpose of the main section of the *Yearbook* is to provide basic information. Occasionally, however, the information is perhaps too brief and basic. The one page on public opinion and debate in Denmark, for example, does not provide enough space for even a mention of the Dansk Folkeparti.

Given the basic nature of the information provided, use might have been made of table form, but the editors decided against this, fearing that such presentation could give the data in question "unjustified authority" (p. 4). This was a wise decision: As the editors and Nadia Jeldtoft are at pains to stress, the nature of the topic is such that all data is necessarily imprecise. Not only is there the well-known problem with counting "Muslims," especially in France, but there is the deeper problem of quite who is

“Muslim,” and in what sense, in the first place. And even if a total number could somehow be arrived at, it would be of limited significance, given the very uneven distribution of such persons across the national territory. While a country either does or does not have Muslim “chaplains” in its armed forces, the significance of this varies a lot with context. The editors, then, definitely made the right decision.

A little more uniformity of treatment, however, might have been desirable. Issues treated under individual sub-headings differ somewhat from country to country, sometimes for good reasons, and sometimes not. Public opinion (as opposed to the public debate) is covered for Denmark, for example, but not for Germany. When confessional Islamic religious instruction is given to Muslim children in public schools, it is sometimes explained who gives this and how it is financed, but sometimes it is not. Data on “chaplains” generally covers the armed forces, prisons and hospitals, but only sometimes covers universities, and does not always provide comparative data for Christian and Jewish chaplaincies. The occasional lack of comparative data and variation in the extent to which individual national backgrounds are explained is another frequent minor problem. Such problems will, no doubt, be remedied in subsequent volumes of the *Yearbook*.

The *Yearbook* is, then, an invaluable source of basic data, a useful source of articles on current issues of importance, and contains an interesting selection of book reviews. It might, however, be criticized for excessive emphasis on political issues, at the expense of the cultural and religious. Gazzah’s article on Dutch-Moroccan youth culture in the *Yearbook*’s second section is a rare exception to this political emphasis. There is nothing on youth culture in the country profiles in

the *Yearbook*’s first, main section, and not much on Salafism, either.

The biggest problem with the *Yearbook*, however, is its price. The 2009 *Yearbook* sells at €159, and the 2010 *Yearbook* is to sell at €199. Such prices may be acceptable for books that will be read occasionally in a library, but the *Yearbook*’s main section is intended to be a reference work, and reference works need to be accessible. Few scholars will be able to pay €199, even if the other potential readers the Brill website lists (“government and NGO officials, journalists, and policy makers”) may. In fact, it is not clear that a physical book is the appropriate form for the main section of the *Yearbook* in the first place. This section, at least, would surely be much more useful in electronic form. As well as allowing easy access to researchers, electronic publication would make it possible for country profiles to be updated as and when new information becomes available, not updated once a year with data that is already one or two years out of date. It is especially important that information be as up-to-date as possible when a topic is changing fast. On the *Yearbook*’s current schedule, we will have to wait until the end of 2011 to hear about the Swiss minaret ban; all we learn from the *Yearbook* available in August 2010 is that a referendum was planned, and that “no Swiss political party has directed its political views against Islam” (p. 350).

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