



Jocelyne Dakhliya.- *Al-Islām wa al-gharb: min idiyulūjiyā aṣṣidām ilā Jadaliyat an-nizā*. Tarjamat Khalid Ben-Srhir (ad-dār al-Baydā: Mu'assat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Aziz, 2019), 330p.

جوسلين داخلية.- الإسلام والغرب: من إيديولوجيا الصدام إلى جدلية النزاع، ترجمة خالد بن الصغير (الدار البيضاء: مؤسسة الملك عبد العزيز، 2019)، 330 ص.

*Al-Islām wa al-gharb: min idiyulūjiyā aṣṣidām ilā Jadaliyat an-nizā* is the title the Moroccan historian and translator, Khalid Ben-

Srhir, shrewdly opted for when he translated Jocelyne Dakhliya's *Islamicités* from French to Arabic (2019). Jocelyne Dakhliya is a French historian and anthropologist. She is the director of studies at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS), a historian co-director of the *Annals* and a specialist in historical anthropology. Dakhliya's work is concerned principally with the political and cultural history of Islam in the Maghreb countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. She is the author of many books, the most common of which are *Le Divan des Rois* (Aubier, 1998), *L'empire des passions: L'arbitraire politique en Islam* (Aubier, 2005) and *Islamicités* (Presses universitaires de France, 2005). In her introduction to Arabic translation, Dakhliya explained that the starting point and the general background of her book are political contexts that followed the 9/11 events and their repercussions. Besides, her book culled from the lectures she delivered to her students in EHESS, trying all the harder as an erudite researcher to destabilize the premise which is predicated on the holistic unity of religions, to analyze, rectify and interrogate the contents of the panoply of new unprecedented publications on Islam.

The author emphasizes a fact that has become conspicuous and cannot be withheld and which has been gradually consecrated: French society is clogged about the question of Islam and its relationship with the West. Mindsets, thus, were contradictory to the degree of extremism. Initiatives such as the creation of the *French Council of Islamic Religion* have not succeeded in mitigating this demonstration of extremism. The end is out of reach, according to the author. That is why she is so critical: Why are we all facing

this stalemate? It is a quandary that generates unprecedented intellectual and ideological confusion. Although there are numerous publications and studies on Islam and the West, initiated by thinkers, scholars and academics, or by specialized institutions and centres, the gap between the two parties has not diminished, and the fog has not dissipated any international understanding. Rather, the author attributes this misunderstanding and growing hostility to the proliferation of such publications and studies, at a time when the world needs not to inflate publications, but to open the door to direct dialogue and “rehabilitate the view we form today about the Muslim world.”

Unlike so many talkative works on Islam and the questions it poses to contemporary societies, Jocelyne Dakhli's *Islamicités* offers a demonstration of what a real specialist discourse can bring about vis-à-vis a “problem” also (badly) discussed. This advocacy for a dispassionate approach to Islam (as religion) and Islam (as a fact of civilization) is lukewarm. Dakhli's thought-provoking book should also be read as a call for a real intellectual mobilization to restore to the facts of culture and civilization, and thus to religious facts, their historical dimension, and to try to persuade in this way all those who are afraid of “clash of Islam” and who mourn the “lost territories of the Republic.” Seeking to understand the reasons behind acute anxieties over Islam, especially among many French intellectual elites, the author shows how important it is to rejuvenate the historical construction that “makes” the so-called difference of Islam. To break resolutely with the essentialist and de-historicized approach and to make more noticeable the internal diversity, however little evoked, of the social facts produced by this religion, are the main axes of a necessary reflection to respond to those who exploit the register of cultures and the identities to render Islam as an emblem of a threatening otherness.

The first chapter “Renouncing the golden age” offers a riveting illustration of the originality of an approach that breaks with the presuppositions of this or that “camp” to restore all its rights to analysis. Thus, the lessons learned from the readings of Islam in terms of growth or decline have in common, the author recalls, to be based, positively or negatively, on an essential difference between it and the West. Not without daring, as a consensus seems to be established on these issues, Jocelyne Dakhli brings into sharper focus certain themes, that of Andalusia for example, so often underscored in interfaith model of cohabitation, dialogue and co-existence between Muslims, Christians and Jews. Since they are based on the nostalgia of a golden age erected as a model that carefully removes the question of politics, such apologies do not prove, in fact, largely unproductive.

Rather than opposing supposedly distinct civilizational entities, against a background of mechanical metaphors (shock) or organic metaphors (grafting), it would be appropriate to encounter a real historiographical taboo, the one that has long been bogging down the study of the intertwined relationships, over the centuries, between Islam and European cultures. Thus, instead of focusing as one persists on the points of divergence, it is time to take a closer look at the “blind spots of history” that sometimes disclose certain “inventive hybridities,” in any case more of a revealing familiarity of a certain community of culture.

In imparting the arguments previously raised around the question of the golden age, the third chapter, on the theme of “the unanimity of decline;” underscores the need to break with the traditional explanatory patterns, even though the question of the delay turns, from the nineteenth century, to obsession. In reality, what is taking place – or asserting itself even more – around this theme is a different logic that opposes the materiality and technology of the Western world to the spirituality and moral values of the Eastern world. It is therefore necessary to “get out of a model of decline” so as to free oneself from a vision according to which modernity would merge with Enlightenment universalism, but where Islam would offer the matrix of all past solutions. In the field of politics in particular, it is necessary to break with the representations of “all or nothing” to dare to reconnect with the conflict and give back to Islam all its complexity by showing that it also can “enter modernity” (as long as we know what we put under this term).

The next chapter “Truths of Essence” deepens the reflection previously elaborated on another theme, that of the drawdown of Islam to its only religious dimension. In the light of recent events, the analysis of this process accentuates the essentialism that presides over the readings of Islamic facts and which is, in fact, based on cogently negative postulations about the submission “proper to the Muslim belief that would make any exercise of free will impossible, or even vis-à-vis its totalitarianism” allegedly characteristic of its relationship to other religions or civilizations.

This negative representation of Islam is not unrelated to the rehabilitation, less and less shameful, of the colonial fact “disillusions and postcolonial nostalgia.” The currents of sympathy that, until recently, went to the decolonization movements and to the victims of migration seem to have been reversed to make scapegoats of the same actors epitomizing French anti-Semitism. From the “right to the difference,” a formula without doubt generous in its intentions, one easily passes to the impossibility of the assimilation,

including in the school system where it happens that there reigns a certain “racism of left” which translates the undeniable disarray of some teachers. To this denial of integration, the interested parties have little to oppose a community “Muslim being,” which only reinforces the multiple forms of segregation of which they are already the victims. To get out of this dangerous gear will only be possible if both sides of the coin are denied identity. Like what happens for certain populations of the European area in relation to their region of origin, it is a question of re-articulating the relationship, real or imaginary, between “here” and “there,” while hammering the fact that it is now well, whether we like it or not, an internal debate in the French society.

After having traced the “historical dynamic” since the last century at least in the Arab world in particular, Jocelyne Dakhli emphasizes the polysemy of an approach around which multiple individual strategies develop, which cannot satisfactorily report a simple prohibition measure, and which risks in return generating all kinds of solidarity positions. With all the symbolic echoes that it can evoke, the “taking of veil” turns out to be quite revealing of the fundamental hostility of French society against Islam.

The fundamental problem we face today is that of the politicization of culture, which is being assigned an ever more central place in the political debate that resonates more and more with vague geographical and territorial neighborhoods, cities and increasingly abandons a social and political characterization. To this desertion of politics is added a floating of sociological analyzes under the title of “communitarianism” or the invention of the concept of third space, and a renunciation of knowledge, whereas, from the point of view of Muslims, specialists self-proclaimed of Islam, lacking competence in Muslim theology, disseminate religious knowledge based on identity. Jocelyne Dakhli’s book – which professor Ben-Srhir dared to translate to reach as many Arab readers as possible – is very appealing as the author tries in it to foresee a horizon that draws relations between Europe and Muslim communities from the ideology of clash towards the logic of rational political management of conflicts.

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