lacking; it would have given the reader a clearer definition of the shared background and its effects on the subsequent built environment in both cities.

References

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Introductions to Islam and Islamic thought are fast becoming a key component of the market of Islamic studies. In this regard, *Controversies in Contemporary Islam* is but another introduction to the foundations of Muslim thought put into the context of current debates in the Islamic world. O. Leaman aims to present contemporary Islam as a sum of its current debates. For this reason, he endorses a dialectical approach, one previously charted successfully by several studies, opposing different Islamic views and weighing their arguments. This book is a very welcome publication. Its scope and variety are broad enough to include the main issues of discussion among Muslims today. Contrary to its competitors, it keeps its presentation to a reasonable size. More importantly, the author’s insights and analyses engage the reader and sustain dialogue throughout the book. Leaman fully exploits his philosophical skills to ask good questions, to challenge the Muslim positions and to assess Islamic thought critically. He also uses his encyclopaedic experience (as an editor and contributor to numerous entries) to write in a style accessible to a non-specialist reader. Furthermore, he covers the current hot topics such as economics, entertainment and European Islam. This provides the book with a thoughtful concern for the daily issues of Muslims.

The fourteen chapters of this book are exploratory and interpretative in nature. In the first, the author examines Islam and the leadership of the community. Herein, the author approaches the Sunni-Shi’i divide, focusing on the Shi’i narrative. This chapter is probably the weakest in the book. Not only is it unbalanced, but also reductive. Political debates in Islam, whether historical or contemporary, go far beyond the Sunni-Shi’i issue. Chapter two discusses the debates over the Qur’an. It succinctly summarizes both traditional and modernist positions on Qur’anic interpretation. In the third chapter, the author studies theology. In particular, he inspects the arguments for the existence of God in Islamic philosophy and theology. The next chapter masterfully depicts the issue of Islamic design, dealing with the complex meaning of an Islamic city. In chapter five, he discusses Islam and nationalism. Unfortunately, this chapter lacks coherence as it concentrates on topics such as European Islam
and the Balkan conflicts, which are important from the European point of view but which are not subjects of debate within the Muslim world itself. It would have been more informative if the author had addressed how Islam has faced the challenges of nationalism, whether Arab, Persian or Turkish. In the following chapter, the author debates the question of equality, mostly in gender relations. Chapter seven takes on the so-called Islamic economy. The author deconstructs and critically assesses the Islamic finance so much *en vogue* today. He continues in chapter eight with Islamic ethics. In this chapter, he examines how the Prophet is seen as the model of morality (in traditional Sunni Islam). He also deals with the issues of theodicy, abortion and circumcision. In chapter nine, the problem of shari'a and human rights is considered. The author debates the most heated questions of punishment and freedom. Chapter ten revisits the institutions of education and science in Islam. Next, the author evaluates the debates over Islam and the other, especially Muslim attitudes towards Jews and Christians. In chapter twelve he studies Islam and belief, going back to some of the earliest theological discussions in Islam. In chapter thirteen, the author deals with Sufism and its opponents. Finally, chapter fourteen on entertainment weighs the arguments of Muslims who are for music and those who are against. The book does not contain a conclusion. However, it offers a useful glossary of terms and two indexes, one for Qur’anic verses and another for terms.

It is obvious from the aforementioned structure that the organization of the book is inconsistent and illogical. For example, chapter twelve on belief should follow from chapter three. Both deal with theological issues. Politics are discussed separately in chapter one and five. This incoherent outline is a major shortcoming in the book. Furthermore, the author wrote some parts in a hurry. Some passages and sentences were used verbatim more than once. Another serious weakness in the book is its transliteration of Arabic terms. ‘Abd al-Muttalib is transliterated as ‘Abdul-Mutalib (p. 4), Jafar al-Sadiq as Jafar al-Sidiq (p. 5), Munawwara as Munawara (p. 53), Jahliliyya as Jahliliyya (p. 15 and p. 77), Khul’ as Khula and Ma’rifa as Ma’arifa (p. 206). Some dates are not accurate. For example, the date of Iraqi defeat in Kuwait is given as 1993 (while it should be 1991). Some mistakes exist in names as well. For example, the name of John R. Bowen is given as J. Brown (p. 210) and N. J. Coulson as N. J. Coulsen (p. 210). This aspect is really annoying and the author should revise it for the next edition.

Despite its shortcomings, I highly recommend this book for both teachers and students of the anthropology of Islam. In particular, sections dedicated to sport, yoga and music are extremely interesting. Moreover, the author frequently uses findings of anthropologists such as T. Asad and E. Gellner to support his claims. He also displays a genuine interest in analyzing Islamic topics as manifestations of human conditions, beyond the thesis of Islamic exception. Being a scholar of the Jewish tradition as well, the author dexterously compares Muslim and Jewish religious traditions. He brings in useful insights about the ways power, nature and culture interfere with the Islamic
beliefs and rituals. The book’s mark, however, lies in its arguments and conciseness, while covering a broad range of topics. These features make it an excellent teaching book. At the end of each chapter, the author suggests further readings on the topic. The book captures a spirit of dialogue among Muslims that should give the Western reader a more balanced understanding of contemporary Islam.

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During 2004–6, when there was global attention to the phenomenon of sex change in Iran, Afsaneh Najmabadi travelled there to conduct an investigation about transsexuality. She has previously released a number of articles and reports relating to this research. *Professing Selves*, however, is the first opportunity to view her research achievements comprehensively and consistently.

Despite the anthropological and historical nature of the research, the key contributions of this work are the theoretical characteristics of the research. Najmabadi attempts to map out what had been called by Foucault ‘techniques of domination’ and ‘the art of existence’ in the field of Iranian transsexuals. The main question here is, how do authorities govern the process of transsexual identification (p. 2) and at the same time how do transsexual, gay and lesbian Iranians practice a kind of creativity in order to bypass the restrictions of the current law (4). This is a mutual relation between the productivity of system and the creativity of people, dramatized in the scope of contemporary Iran. Representing a new picture of sexuality which is not victimizing, she also highlights the role of Trans-activism in changing the official sexual politics (chapter 6).

Another theoretical point is an indistinction between gender, sex and sexuality in Iran. This indistinction ‘had shaped’ Najmabadi’s thought ‘over three decades’ before the ‘professing Selves’ (7). In the absence of any integrated distinctions in Persian sexual categories, it has been difficult to distinguish between homosexuals and transgenders as such. The modern Persian lexicon of sexual language could not address or express such complexity in the Iranian legal, scientific and popular discourses. So Najmabadi uses the term ‘same-sex’ relationship everywhere, instead of homosexuality. She narrates, however, the history in which ‘transsexuality, which is sometimes confused with intersexuality or homosexuality, emerged as a standard term in the legal and scientific discourse to distinguish between “deviants” (homosexuals) and medical cases (transsexuals)’. This dichotomy has not been very solid for the ‘policing’ the sexual identities. If anything, she argues that the new