

Islam and New Kinship: Reproductive Technology and the Shariah in Lebanon, Fertility, Reproduction and Sexuality series vol. 16, New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.
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Review by Dr Stephen Bigger.

This series of 18 volumes to date of academic contributions to knowledge combines issues of medical technology, culture and anthropology. Studies of how IVF and other fertility treatments affect family, relationships and kinship are well represented in the series. Two dominant themes stand out in this book: how kinship studies have met new cultural and technological challenges; and how traditional Islam is approaching this new situation using Lebanon as a field study. Both aspects I found took my understanding further forward, with a well researched discussion.

When I began anthropological kinship studies in 1970, kinship and kinship systems were big business. Both theory and fieldwork were dominated by terms such as patrilineal and matrilineal cousin marriage, taken as evidence for kinship systems for purposes of family/clan alliance, or using exogamy to seal inter-tribal relationships. Even as I began, the old kinship studies were shot out of the sky by Rodney Needham (1971) who rejected the concept of kinship as empty, and David Schneider (1972) who proposed that 'kinship' was an imported notion, and as "misleading theoretical baggage" (1984: 53). 'New kinship studies' developed through feminist work (Strathern, 1992, Carsten, 2004). Issues considered include adoption, artificial insemination (especially by donor), egg donors, lesbian and gay family groups, surrogate motherhood, all linking with the technology of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and cloning. Given this new world of supported fertility, who counts as kin and who not? Is it an issue if two people who meet and have a sexual relationship may find that they are unknowingly siblings, cousins or even father/daughter or uncle/niece? If it does matter, why does it matter? On medical grounds (the danger of birth abnormalities)? Or moral grounds (what they might be)? or religious grounds (i.e. that it is forbidden in scripture or religious law)? If there are issues, how might the fertility authorities ensure that siblings coming from particular donor sperm know that they are siblings? And is it appropriate that they know who their genetic father is?

These jungles are then applied to Islam, and in particular the Islam studied in Lebanon by this anthropologist author. The first thing to emphasise is that Islam does not speak with one voice. Individual specialists interpret Quranic injunction and hadith in very different ways, so that it is possible to seek second or third opinions. Islam provides examples of independent opinion (*ijtihad*) but within an authoritarian system of revealed 'truth', that is the Quran and hadith, or sayings about the life and teaching about Muhammad. Islam opposes adoption as a lie, and as encouragement for fornication (i.e.

there is a safe solution for the child 'illegitimately' born. That does not mean that a child cannot be incorporated into one's family, but not *as son or daughter*. They are not, it is a *quasi relationship*. Also, kin and non-kin treat each other in different ways, for example through *hijab*, the dress code. If a girl is 'fostered', would she always have to cover up in front of her foster father? If donor semen is used in IVF treatment, is this a form of adultery? Would the child be treated differently from the child of an adulterous relationship? This book reveals a considerable degree of creativity and flexibility in individual *fatwas* (authoritative religious opinions).

This book takes an impressionistic look at a section of Islam, an opportunity sample, by interviewing key religio-political figures in Lebanon. It reveals a chaos of approaches rooted in local understandings of Islamic thought and law. Female voices are in short supply, even though women are greatly affected by the attitudes revealed. Clarke summarises a version of a western view on sexuality, linking McClennan's primitive promiscuity (in 1870 evidence of barbarism) through Bertrand Russell to modern promiscuity (now a sign of cultural progress) and points to some Islamic opinion that Islam thought of it first (that is, through temporary marriages). On the circumstance of the man breaking contractual duties and divorcing the temporary wife (of course there is no stigma to this for him, but there is for the woman) the solution offered is to repair the hymen clinically (also a risky process, followed by more pain in breaking it again in a later marriage) in order to present her in her next marriage as though a virgin. The view that there should be no stigma in the first place is the theological justification of the deception.

That paternity testing is more common in Lebanon than in Canada, where paternity can be more obscure, is evidence of a deep need, even obsession, for legitimacy in kinship in the Islam sampled here. Infancy is regarded as possession – fathers welcome *their children but not children generally*. Adoption is not approved, children regarded (however falsely) as of other paternity can be dismissed and rejected. In polygyny, a second wife could be a surrogate for an infertile wife (if she has not already been divorced) provided that the common husband's sperm is used. Milk kinship (that a woman who breast-feeds a baby is regarded as kin) covers other aspects of surrogacy. Hence, paternity testing is a necessary defence of the accused wife, as well as the malicious husband. It is therefore an area of family conflict which clerics arbitrate. The kinship relationship is patrilineal so the husband's line only is valued and regarded as legitimate. Egg donors may be acceptable, but why go that way when a man can simply marry a younger wife.

There are throughout the interviews accusations of moral decadence in the west (i.e. the non-Muslim world), where a woman's family may contain children with different partners, where there might be some uncertainty about actual paternity, and where adoption is a recognized option. Children are regarded as kin, and valued, irrespective of the vagaries of conception.

This moves attitudes, informally, towards matrilineality, with the family unit focused on the mother. There is a greater openness here in sexual morality, and a sharper focus on child protection. The moral judgements made in this contexts are female friendly and child friendly. The Muslim attitudes discussed are only male friendly, and reveal repressive sexual regulations aimed at women, much less at men since multiple marriage for men is permissible and divorce easy, on which occasions legitimate children can be torn from their birth mothers and brought up in the paternal family. This emphasises paternal rights (religiously sanctioned) over child protection and regards a 'legitimate' child as owned, as a family possession. The room for abuse is widespread and deep-rooted, especially when linked to family 'honour' which sanctions the murder of apparent offenders.

Can reproductive technology help Muslim communities to move forward? For a woman, paternity testing makes it more difficult to pass a child of another liaison off as her husband's; but it is protection from false accusation. Restrictions on AID make it harder for an infertile wife to conceive, or the wife of an infertile husband. There may be some benefit of AIH to a wife who finds conception difficult. If women's views were in general taken seriously, this might lead to a reduction in the obsession for controlling sexual behaviour, and an increase in morality for justice. But such a view challenges male authority and would be resisted. One wonders what Muslim attitudes will be a century from now: how modern Islam develops will depend upon whether it listens to its women and values *all* of its children, irrespective of proprietorial attitudes that lie behind the values chaos that this book reveals. If so, it will restore to Islam the social justice to which it aspired from the earliest days.

This book is a mine of information, carefully researched and lucidly argued. It opens up a fascinating problematic (that is, a can of worms) that only Muslims (all Muslims, male and female) need seriously to address over the coming decades. The shape of future Muslim attitudes depends on the outcomes of this.

When God Comes to Town: Religious Traditions in Urban Contexts

Editors: Rik Pinxten and Lisa Dikomitis
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This is a collection of eight papers in four Parts: Nation Versus State; Urban Transformations; Urban Migration; and Impact of Modernity. Seven of the papers focus on global Christianity (Greece (2), Cyprus, America, Britain, Brazil, Poland) and one on Chinese Taijiquan martial art (westernised as Tai-chi). The papers are academic, with detailed footnotes. Methodologies are varied, but generally historical, ethnographic and auto-ethnographic (especially the Taijiquan paper's analysis of the author's own studentship in the martial art). Together, the volume raises interesting issues about religion in the city, despite the narrowness of the focus.

By narrowness I mean that I would have expected to find discussion of urban Islam (both in Britain and the USA mosques are features of the urban landscape and sparsely rural at all). The building of new mosques by public donation is a feature of cultural solidarity, a statement of arrival and presence, and an anti-secular pressure towards conservatism. Likewise, Hindu temples and Sikh Gurdwaras show the same processes on a smaller scale. On the Christian front, a major urban presence are the various forms of Pentecostalism, which invite study both as responses to urban multicultural pressures, and potential syncretic accommodations between Christianity and traditional trance religions. The title gives broader expectations.

The papers deal with the following. Three papers cover the Greek Orthodox Church: Religion and Nationalism in Greece, featuring the Greek Orthodox church as the established dominant national faith; rural immigrants to the city; and Greek Cypriot villages going back to their villages on pilgrimage. One paper is on Catholicism in Poland, another on religious diversity in Brazil. One paper explores American Protestantism in urban contexts, including mass evangelists, another the size of Friends Meeting Houses in England (Quakers).

I am particularly struck by the chapter on religious diversity in Recife, Brazil. Apart from the interesting description of declining Catholicism, Mormons, Pentecostals, Afro-Brazilian temples, and elite Hindu movements such as Rama-Krishna, this chapter raises the interesting point that the anthropology of urban life and the anthropology of religion rarely coincide. It looks for links between poverty and religiosity, inconclusively, but implies much about hegemony – the dominant position of the Catholic church; the fact that Afro-Brazilian temples were outlawed and persecuted; that the new Mormon church was built to impress; Pentecostal charismatic syncretism in poor areas; a sense of community creating local hegemony and empowerment. In

other words, the city is a site of religious struggle, different groups selling their wares and vying with each other. Another point made is the use of anthropologists – outsiders, presumably non-believers – to study religion in society objectively, seeing its structures, functions, power networks, hegemony, politics and ethics rather than defending any one. Such a methodology I wholeheartedly support.

I will deal at greater length on the Chinese paper, a case study of Shanghai with autoethnographic sections. The author's contention is that changes coming from Western use of tai-chi (and traditional resistance) mirrors resistance to westernising Chinese urban developments. Tai-chi is revealed as a not very old movement, with its roots in religion tenuous, and its current religious status rather tenuous also, reduced to a yin-yang dualism. Nevertheless, it is an interesting piece both on China and a martial art, and I was pleased to have come across it, even though it has little relevance to either religion or urbanism and is scarcely justified in the book's title. The chapter on American Protestantism is likewise slightly off-message, as the urban dimension of out of town revivalist churches and auditoriums, and even tents holding 34,000 people is tenuous, and the basic message of "the Protestant imagination" is global with "no limit to its ambition" (42).

Summing up, this has been an enjoyable book, but the chapters shoe-horned together into an uncomfortable umbrella title. I would like to see more genuine anthropological studies of a wide range of religious traditions, including some such as Afro-Brazilian temples, which are mentioned but not developed here. There are hints here at the sort of critical methodologies that might be developed to explore the extent to which religious activities is socially, politically and culturally appropriate, and whether they encourage and enable (or inhibit) personal development, empowerment and consciousness raising. Finally, one practical point: the papers were written in 2005: four years seems a long production time.

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Review: iron in the soul: displacement, livelihood and health in Cyprus. Lisa Dikomitis (UGent). (2009) ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS. (2009) When God Comes to Town. Religious Traditions in Urban Contexts.. In Culture and Politics/Politics and Culture 4. p.IX-XIV. Add to list. Book Chapter. Lisa Dikomitis (UGent). (2009) When God Comes to Town. Religious Traditions in Urban Contexts.. In Culture and Politics/Politics and Culture 4. p.79-94. 1. 2.