

Bernard Lewis & Buntzie Ellis Churchill, *Islam. The Religion and the People* (New Jersey: Wharton School Publishing, 2009)

This is a very well-written and illuminating treatment. Here are some of the things that caught my attention:

Introduction

1. "In the course of history, Christians made war no less frequently and no less vigorously than did other peoples and followers of other religions, but the pacifist message of the Gospels, though rarely followed, is clear. There is no such message in the Koran, and only a Messianic promise in the Old Testament" (2). To see the Gospels as preaching a pacifist message may be questioned but the contrast is unquestionable.
2. "An important and distinctive feature of the Muslim world is the extent to which religion is still seen as defining identity and, therefore, loyalty" (4). So in the UN there is a Muslim bloc, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, a bloc of sovereign states that identify themselves by their adherence to Islam. There is no corresponding Buddhist bloc or Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant bloc.
3. While "Islam" connotes both a religion and a civilization, two words have to be used in speaking of the Christian world - "Christianity", the religion, and "Christendom", the civilization (4-5).
4. "In Islam, the prophet who brought the holy book and founded the faith also founded and headed the first Muslim state, and both promulgated and enforced the one all-embracing holy law. There is therefore an interpenetration of religion and politics, affecting government and law, identity and loyalty, to a degree without parallel in Judeo-Christian history" (5).

Chapter 1. The Faith and the Faithful

1. "For a long time, the outside world, more specifically, the Christian world, showed a curious reluctance to recognize or even to use the name, Islam. As successive waves of Islam invasion brought the new faith into the formerly Christian lands of the Middle East and North Africa, and from there into Europe - first the Arabs in Spain, from their first landing in 710 CE to their final expulsion in 1492 CE, reaching across the Pyrenees even into France; then the Turks in the Balkans, reaching as far as Vienna, first in 1529 and again in 1683 - the European Christians rarely, if ever, referred to these invaders by a religious designation. Instead, they called them by ethnic names, using the name of the dominant group among the invaders whom they confronted. Thus, we find the Muslim invaders of Christendom referred to, at various times and places, as Saracens, Moors, Turks, and Tartars" (8).
2. When European Christians were forced to face the reality that they were confronted by a rival world religion they invented the terms Mohammedan and Mohammedanism, with more recently the terms Islam and Muslim passing into common usage (9).
3. In 1923 there was a compulsory exchange of minorities between Greece and Turkey. This was NOT, as usually described in history books, an exchange of Greeks and Turks. Rather the Protocol "defines the groups to be exchanged as 'Turkish subjects of the Greek Orthodox religion residing in Turkey' and 'Greek subjects of

the Muslim religion residing in Greece.’ So this exchange really involved the deportation of two religious minorities (9-10).

4. In the past, if Muslims came under Christian rule only by conquest they were encouraged by many Muslim jurists and theologians to emigrate to a Muslim country, “since it was not possible to live a true Muslim life under an infidel government” (10).
5. The voluntary emigration of Muslims to non-Muslim countries was not anticipated in Islam. “The basic question is - is one a member of a religion subdivided into nationalities or of a nation subdivided into religions?” (10).

Chapter 2. The Pillars of the Faith

This is a fairly standard treatment.

Chapter 3. Scripture, Tradition, and Law

1. “In early Islamic times, a theological controversy arose among Muslims as to whether the Koran was created by God at the time of its revelation to Muhammad or had existed since all eternity. The prevailing view, since then generally accepted among Muslims, is that the Koran is eternal and uncreated, coexisting with God since all eternity” (25).
2. “In approximately the 10th century CE, Sunni scholars generally agreed that all the basic questions had already been examined and resolved; henceforth, the task of jurists was to apply and, at most, to interpret the teachings that had been handed down to them. Independent reasoning in matters of holy law was no longer necessary and, therefore, no longer possible. This principle, often referred to as ‘the closing of the gate of *ijtihad*,’ was generally adopted by Sunni Muslims. It was rejected in principle by the Shi’a, who still claimed the right of *ijtihad* and took to calling their professional men of religion by the term *mujtahid*. But in practice, their attitudes and policies differed little from those of the Sunnis” (29).
3. “In Western thought and practice, one of the primary functions of the state is legislation - to prepare and promulgate laws and to amend, modify, or even on occasion repeal them, according to time and circumstance. In the classical Muslim perception, there is no human legislative function. The law is divine, eternal, and all-embracing and is promulgated by revelation and elaborated by tradition and interpretation. The legal function of the state is to apply and enforce the divinely given law. This law is known as the *Shari’a*, meaning ‘path’ or more especially, ‘the path to a well or spring.’ In principle, it includes all aspects of public and private, communal and personal life” (30).
4. Ayatollah Khomeini’s 1989 fatwa against Salman Rushdie extended the death sentence to “all those involved in this publication [sc. *The Satanic Verses*] who are aware of its contents” and stated: “I call on all zealous Muslims to dispatch them quickly, wherever they may be found, so that no one will dare to insult Islamic sanctities again. Anyone who is killed in this path will be deemed a martyr.” Lewis observes, “This would appear to be the first occasion when a Muslim jurist claimed jurisdiction over non-Muslims in a non-Muslim country. Since then, others, both Muslims and non-Muslims, have followed the same path” (33).

Chapter 4. The Mosque

1. The Arabic *masjid* literally means “a place of prostration” (39).
2. Traditionally, during prayers, “there is special merit in being in the front row, preferably to the right of the imam” (39).

3. "The worshippers may stand, bow, kneel, or prostrate themselves, but they do not sit in the House of God" (40).
4. "The need for purity precludes the participation or even the presence, during the prayers, of non-Muslims" (41). Gallipoli Mosque in Sydney is at least one exception to this with non-Muslims allowed into the mosque to observe Muslims at prayer.
5. "In early Islamic times, the only religious significance of the crescent was in relation to the calendar and, in particular, in determining the beginning and end of certain Muslim fasts and feasts" (46).
6. Today many *madradas* are heavily subsidized by Saudi Arabia with free tuition, board and lodging (48).
7. "Muslim communal worship is a disciplined act of submission to the One, immaterial God. It admits no drama and no mystery, and, therefore, has no need for either music or poetry, still less for painting or statuary, which the Muslim tradition rejects as blasphemy verging on idolatry" (48).

Chapter 5. Diversity and Tolerance

1. In Christianity the terms orthodoxy and heresy illustrate the concern to avoid deviance from correct belief. "It is precisely on this point that Islam differs significantly from Christianity. Until comparatively modern times, there were in the world of Islam no constituted authorities empowered to condemn incorrect belief and thus, by implication, to define and condemn incorrect belief. For Muslims, as for Jews, what mattered was not so much correct belief as correct behavior, and it is to the definition and elaboration of these standards of correctness that much of the religious literature is devoted" (51).
2. Regarding apostasy: "The death penalty normally included not only the convert but also anyone responsible for converting him" (53).
3. "...this much could be said with a reasonable certainty, that until the rise of secularism in Europe from the 17th century onward, the position of non-Muslims in the Muslim world was in general far better than the position of non-Christians or, still worse, deviant Christians in most Christian countries" (56). This claim needs to be balanced against Mark Durie's analysis in *The Third Choice*, which indicates that even if Lewis is broadly correct, one of the key reasons Christians may have experienced less persecution than non-Christians and deviant Christians in the Europe is because they compromised, finding security for themselves and their families by allowing themselves to be cowed into a shameful quiescence which shied away from boldly confessing Christ as Lord and God.
4. Dhimmi conditions included such things, variously enforced, forbidding non-Muslims to build places of worship higher than Muslim buildings, banning the riding of horses (donkeys were permitted), the bearing of arms and requiring or prohibiting the wearing of certain garments and the wearing of distinguishing signs or marks (57).

Chapter 6. Sunni, Shi'a, and Others

Much of this is standard. Some things that stood out for me:

1. For most Shi'a (Twelver Shiism) 12 generations of Imams are recognised after Ali, with the 12th disappearing, without successor, around 874 CE. He is known as "the hidden Imam", who is expected to return in the future - a Messianic figure. Some in Iran think he has already returned and will soon emerge from hiding to bring about the final establishment of a glorious Islamic kingdom (63).
2. Only Iran and Iraq have Shi'a majorities (66).

Chapter 7. Some History

1. During the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988) both sides frequently alluded to the Battle of Qadisiyya in Iraq (c. 637 CE), with both claiming it as a great victory. At that time the Muslim Arabs were victorious and the Persian Empire was swallowed up by Islam. For Saddam Hussein it was a victory of Arabs over Persians, but for the Islamic technocrats of Tehran it was a victory of true believers over unbelievers, bringing true faith the previously heathen peoples of Iran (71-72).
2. Islamic history is very limited in its scope: "For Muslims, naturally, history primarily means the history of Islam and of the Muslim community. Events outside the lands of Islam were, therefore, for traditional historians, of no importance.. with rare exceptions, pre-Islamic history was known only from the allusions to that history contained in the Koran and the Muslim tradition... (72).
3. For Muslims the name Pharaoh was only known from the Koran and served as a prototype of the arbitrary pagan tyrant so that when President Sadat of Egypt was assassinated, the leader of the group concerned proclaimed, "I have killed Pharaoh!" (73). He was killed not because he made peace with Israel but as an oppressor of Muslims.
4. Saddam Hussein's heroes included Saladin, who defeated the Crusaders, and Nebuchadnezzar, who disposed of the Jewish state in his day (74).
5. "In the Western world, from an early date, history is defined by nation or by country; indeed, for some, though not all, the two words are synonymous. In the Islamic world, identity, and, therefore, loyalty were primarily defined by religion" (75).
6. Umar, the second Caliph, decreed that no non-Muslims might dwell in or even visit the Holy Land of Islam (76).

Chapter 8. Government and Opposition

1. Abu Bakr, accepted as Muhammad's first successor, styled himself "Khalifa of the Prophet of God" (khalifa connotes both deputy and successor). Umar, his successor, regarded it as blasphemous to use this title for himself, pointing out he was the Khalifa not of God but of his predecessor: Khalifa of the Khalifa of the Prophet of God - a title which, if adopted, would get longer and longer with each successor. The major formal title during the caliphate, as proposed by Umar, was "commander of the faithful" (82-83).
2. In the late 18th and 19th centuries the Ottomans revived the idea of a genuine all-Islamic caliphate, but this was finally abolished by the Turkish Republic in 1924. Osama bin Laden speaks of the "shame and humiliation" suffered by the Muslim world since the suppression of the caliphate and seeks its revival and renewal (84).

Chapter 9. The Wider World of Islam

1. New waves of militant fundamentalism "are often more radical and more dangerous among the Muslim minorities in Europe and America than in the Muslim countries." It is a new and painful experience for some Muslims to be a minority subject to the rule of an infidel government and Western governments, unlike Muslim governments, have little experience, knowledge and capacity to deal with such minorities, being also constrained by their own standards of tolerance and coexistence (95).

Chapter 10. Islam and the Economy

1. While some have argued that *riba* means usury (excessive interest), this view has commanded little or no acceptance among Muslims in the past (97).
2. The “exports of the entire Arab world, other than oil, amount to less than those of Finland - one single European country of some five million inhabitants” (98).
3. “The basic principle of Islamic banking is risk-sharing: I don’t lend you \$1,000.00 at a rate of interest; I invest \$1,000.00 in your enterprise. I take a share of your profit or suffer a share of your loss. This was the basic principle, and, on the whole, it seems to have worked fairly well. When it goes bad, as it sometimes does, it is for reasons other than any inherent flaw in the system. During the Middle Ages, the Muslim world developed a very elaborate system of banking and credit. By the 9th century CE, for example, a merchant could draw a check [a Persian word] in Iraq and cash it in Morocco” (100).
4. “In Islamic usage, the word *bid’a*, literally ‘innovation,’ has a negative connotation. Tradition is sacred; novelty is suspect. The possibility of a good innovation is admitted, in which case it is designated as such. The Arabic term is *bid’a hasana*. But unless it is specifically described as good, an innovation is presumed to be bad. And that is not conducive to economic development” (104).
5. “All Americans are familiar with the slogan: ‘No taxation without representation.’ What we sometimes forget is that the converse is also true: No representation without taxation. Middle Eastern rulers with oil wealth at their disposal do not need to levy taxes from their own people. They, therefore, do not need to have elected assemblies to help them in that process. This gives them power over their subjects without parallel in societies where governments depend on subjects both able and ready to pay taxes. Oil wealth has sometimes also made it possible to give enormous power and influence to what otherwise might have been marginal fringe groups. The power and influence of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia, and from there in much of the Islamic world, is an obvious example” (107).

Chapter 11. Women in Islam

1. Namik Kemal’s magazine article written in 1867 (with limited impact) concerning Muslim women: “Our women are now seen as serving no useful purpose to mankind other than having children. They are considered simply as serving for pleasure, like musical instruments or jewels. But they constitute perhaps more than half of our species. Preventing them from contributing to the maintenance and improvement of others by means of their efforts infringes the basic rules of public cooperation to such a degree that our national society is stricken like a human body that is paralyzed on one side. Yet women are not inferior to men in their intellectual and physical capacities... The reason why women among us are thus deprived is the perception that they are totally ignorant and know nothing of right and duty, benefit and harm. Many evil consequences result from this position of women, the first being that it leads to a bad upbringing for their children” (112).
2. “The jurists lay down that the guardian can only give the bride in marriage with her consent, but in the case of a virgin, silence may be taken as consent. A father or grandfather - but no other guardian - may give a virgin daughter or granddaughter in marriage without her consent, but the jurists impose a number of restrictions on this power to safeguard the interests of the bride” (113).
3. “A Muslim woman may in no circumstances marry a non-Muslim. A Muslim man, according to most schools of jurisprudence, may marry a woman of the permitted religions - in practice, Jewish or Christian. But the children must be brought up as

- Muslims. A woman is allowed only one husband, and the existence, therefore, of an undissolved previous marriage constitutes a total ban. A man is allowed up to four wives at any one time, and there can be no valid marriage with a fifth. The law does, however, allow concubinage, that is, the sexual use of female slaves" (113).
4. "In Iran, the government of the Shah raised the age of marriage for girls to 18; the Islamic revolution, which came to power in 1979, has lowered it to 9, the age of A'isha, the youngest of the Prophet's wives, when he consummated his marriage with her" (114).
 5. Laws that seek to guarantee uncontested property for a divorced wife have served as a strong inducement for husbands to accuse their wives of adultery when wanting to divorce them (115).
 6. "According to his biographers, the Prophet left ten or eleven widows, as well as some slavewomen" (116).
 7. Islamic arguments for polygamy: "Because of menstruation, women are unavailable sexually to their husbands for several days, sometimes as many as ten days, every month; they are unavailable for longer periods during pregnancy and childbirth. According to Islamic thought, since male sexual impulses are deemed to be stronger than those of women, it is impossible for a man to be satisfied with just one woman. In the Western world, the resulting need is met in two ways, by adultery and prostitution. Neither of these is decent or acceptable. The Muslim solution of polygamy is both, providing an outlet for male needs, and at the same time giving respectability to the women and legitimacy to any children that may result. Before the advent of Islam, there was no limit on the number of wives a man might have. Islam imposed a maximum limit of four. **These arguments do not lack cogency if one accepts the underlying presumption - that the prime purpose of marriage is to satisfy male sexual needs**" (116; my emphasis).
 8. "When the Prophet's nine-year-old wife, A'isha, chatted briefly with a young boy during a journey, she was accused of adultery, which was punishable by death. The Prophet, following a revelation, ruled that such a charge had to be supported by four adult male witnesses. This rule, designed to protect women, is commonly used to protect their assailants and is interpreted to mean that a woman accusing anyone of an attack on her is required to produce the four adult male witnesses, which is highly unlikely. In present-day Western legal systems, a prime issue in judging an illicit sexual encounter is whether it is consensual or coerced. In Shari'a, this is not an issue. Instead, the prime issue is whether the relationship is lawful or unlawful" (118).
 9. "There have been a number of attempts in recent years to legislate against honor killings. A draft law proposed by King Abdullah of Jordan, criminalizing honor killing, was rejected by the Jordanian parliament. Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan have passed such laws, but public opinion has prevented their effective enforcement. It is difficult to get a conviction, and even with a conviction, it is unusual for the perpetrator to receive more than a nominal penalty" (119).
 10. "In pre-Islamic Arabia, as far as we know, the veil was worn by married women of a certain rank, but not by women in general. With the advent and expansion of Islam, the custom of wearing the veil spread rapidly in Arabia and elsewhere and became normal for ladies in towns. It was not, however, generally adopted by the women of the nomads, peasants, and some of the urban lower classes. To some extent, this relative freedom continued through medieval into modern times. But in most of the Islamic world, veiling and, increasingly, the seclusion of women, became the norm" (120).

11. "Khomeini spoke with great anger of what he saw as inevitable immorality resulting from the employment of women to teach adolescent boys" (123).
12. "There is little likelihood of a restoration of concubinage in those places where it has been abolished, nor is it likely that there will be a return to polygamy among the educated classes in Middle Eastern cities" (124).

Chapter 12. Dress

1. "From time to time, various medieval Muslim rulers required the Christians and Jews to wear special garments or headgear, so that they might be recognised at sight and not be mistaken for Muslims. In 1009 CE, an edict in Egypt even required Christians and Jews in the public bathhouse to retain a distinguishing emblem - a cross for Christians, a small bell for Jews. In general, however, such sartorial discrimination was exceptional, and the evidence is that even where these rules existed, they were not strictly enforced" (128). Durie takes issue with this view in *The Third Choice*.
2. Lewis speaks of a reluctance on the part of Iranian Muslims when traveling abroad to wear neckties, which he suggests is due to "its vaguely cruciform shape... seen as a Christian emblem" (130).

Chapter 13. Language and Writing

1. A 10th century Arabic encyclopedia expresses Muslim veneration for Arabic: "The perfect language is the language of the Arabs and the perfection of eloquence is the speech of the Arabs, all others being deficient. The Arabic language among languages is like the human form among beasts. Just as humanity emerged as the final form among the animals, so is the Arabic language the final perfection of human language and of the art of writing, after which there is no more" (138).
2. The first President of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Ataturk (d. 1938) "decided to abolish the Arabic script, except in purely religious contexts, and to replace it with a modified Latin alphabet, which from then onward became the official script of the Turkish language" (140).

Chapter 14. War and Peace

1. "Muslims are nowhere commanded to turn the other cheek, or to love their enemies or even their neighbors, and they are not promised a time when 'they shall beat their swords into plowshares... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Bible, Isaiah 11:4). Koranic precepts and Muslim practice are much closer to the earlier books of the Old Testament and more particularly to Joshua" (146-147).
2. "In the traditional view, the world is divided into two parts: the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*), where Muslims rule and Muslim law is enforced, and the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*), the rest of the world where infidels still rule. According to traditional teaching, the obligation of jihad will continue until all the world either adopts Islam or submits to Muslim rule" (148-149).
3. "At certain times and places, jurists sometimes recognised an intermediate zone between the House of War and the House of Islam, which was called the House of Truce (*Dar al-Sulh*) or House of the Pact (*Dar al-'Ahd*). This was used for territories where non-Muslim rulers continued to govern their own subjects, with some measure of autonomy, but under broader Muslim suzerainty and usually subject to the payment of some kind of tribute. The classical example was the treaty made by the caliph in the year 31 of the hegira (652 CE) with the king of Nubia in Africa,

in accordance with which the Nubian king continued to rule his own territory but agreed to deliver an annual levy of some hundreds of male and female slaves to the Muslims" (150).

4. "Of the first four caliphs who succeeded the Prophet, known in Sunni historiography as 'the rightly guided caliphs,' there were murdered, and their reigns ended in a civil war, the first of many" (152).
5. "The emergence of the by now widespread terrorism practice of suicide bombing is a development of the 20th century. It has no antecedents in Islamic history [the assassins only killed by dagger and refused to commit suicide], and no justification in terms of Islamic theology, law, or tradition. It is a pity that those who practice this form of terrorism are not better acquainted with their own religion, and with the culture that grew up under the auspices of that religion" (153).

Chapter 15. Radical Islam

1. "Belief is a private matter and is not pursued; but an attack on the holy law threatens the very foundations of the Islamic polity and the Islamic society" (156).
2. Many contemporary Islamic movements are not seeking to modernize Islam, but rather to restore it to its pristine purity and, therefore, are incorrectly labeled 'reformist' by outsiders (156).
3. The first major movement of this kind is Wahhabism:
 - a. Founder: Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). Sunni Hanbali scholar.
 - b. Followers prefer to refer to themselves as *muwahhidun*, that is, pure monotheists, or simply, good Muslims.
 - c. Wahhabism especially targets Muslim Westernisers.
 - d. Those who don't share their views are not Muslims but apostates.
 - e. Developed in Najd (now part of Saudi Arabia), it succeeded in converting the local tribal ruling family, the house of Saud, which became significant in the 1920s when the house of Saud gained control of the Hijaz, containing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.
 - f. This political platform plus oil wealth has enabled Wahhabis to carry their doctrines all over the Muslim world, especially to Muslim communities living in non-Muslim countries, notably in Europe and America, where, increasingly, when Muslim parents send their kids to evening and weekend classes and holiday camps and schools they are sending them to Wahhabi operated institutions, where youngsters are taught the Wahhabi version of Islam. "In some Muslim countries where the state educational system is inadequate to address the needs of the rapidly increasing young generation, Wahhabi schools provide what is often the only education available" (158).
 - g. "One of the most important Wahhabi activities has been the establishment of free madrasas, which have had a tremendous impact" (159).
4. Another influential anti-modernist revivalist movement is Salafiyya:
 - a. Derived from the Arabic term *salaf*, "those who have gone before", that is, the pious ancestors who represented the pure and original faith of Islam.
 - b. Founded in Egypt in the late 19th century and spread rapidly all over the Islamic world in various forms.
 - c. Its influence is seen in the ideologies of Pan-Islam, notably in organizations like the Muslim Brothers and Hamas.
 - d. Salafiyya, like the Wahhabis, is overwhelmingly Sunni.

5. The Shiite Iranian Revolution of 1979: A genuine revolution much like the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917: "a major change in the whole society, a great shift of power and ideas, with an immense impact on... the world of Islam" (159).
6. Groups of radical and often violent factions, e.g. al-Qaida and Hizballah, "the Party of God."
7. To refer to some of these strident Muslims as "fundamentalists" is inappropriate, since the term is "American Protestant, and inaccurate, because it refers to doctrinal issues quite different from those which concern Muslims" (162).
8. The blurring of distinctions between Islam and fundamentalism is encouraged by the unwillingness of Muslim leader to condemn terrorist acts unequivocally, e.g. when Farag Foda, a well-known Egyptian secularist writer, was murdered in June 1992: "Not only did religious dignitaries fail to condemn this act of murder; one of them even argued that because a secularist is, in effect, an apostate, and because the penalty for apostasy is death, Foda was justly executed - though, he added, it would have been preferable if he had been tried and sentenced by a court before his execution. When high dignitaries of the religious establishment respond to murder in this way, one can hardly expect radical leaders and their followers to be more fastidious" (163).

Conclusion

1. Having faced the threats of Nazism and Bolshevism, civilization now faces a third threat, another form of totalitarianism, involving the perversion not of a country, nor of an ideology, but of a religion, Islam.
2. The work of those pushing this agenda "is facilitated and even helped by the widespread mood of guilt and self-denigration in the West, often expressed in the form of multiculturalism and political correctness" (166).
3. "The immediate target of their attack is the Western world, previously known as Christendom. If and when they dispose of that enemy, they will surely turn to the rest of the world, the house of unbelief and, therefore, of war" (166).
4. Chillingly, Lewis comments: "If we are to survive this threat - and it is by no means certain that we will - it is important to understand, precisely and accurately, the source, nature, and purpose of the attack - that is to say, the very identity of the enemy that we confront" (167).
5. "For some, the enemy is simply Islam, and the war, a new phase in the millennial struggle between Christendom and Islam for the enlightenment - and incidentally, the domination - of the world. This is a dangerously misleading formulation. It is true, Islamofascism arose among Muslims and is led and used by Muslims, in the same way that Nazism and Bolshevism was led and used by Germans and Russians. But there was an Islam before the rise of Islamofascism, and there will no doubt be an Islam after its demise. It is important to understand this, and to realize that in a profound historical sense, many Muslims see themselves not as our enemies but as our fellow victims" (167).

Lewis appends "Some Practical Matters" with very helpful explanations on the following sub-topics: transcription, the Arabic article, gender, plurals, personal names (particularly helpful), the Muslim calendar, and food and drink. A glossary ("Terms and Topics") completes the work.