



Book Review

Teemu Pauha and Johanna Konttori (eds): *Suomalaiset muslimit*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2022, 263 pp.

Although the Finnish Tatar minority's roots go back to the late nineteenth century, and Tatars have therefore been granted the invidious label of the most 'Finnicized Muslims', Islam has generally been viewed in Finland as a religion of immigrants. However, as this publication also seeks to show, we should no longer speak of 'Muslims in Finland' or 'Islam in Finland', as if the people and their faith were something 'external' to society and the 'Finnish identity'. Instead, the book's title, 'Finnish Muslims' and the topics its collection of articles cover recognize that Muslims in Finland are *Finnish* Muslims. We can therefore now celebrate that Islam can and should be considered a culturally, socially, and politically relevant part of Finnish society.

Nevertheless, a frequent problem in the contemporary political and societal debates on the role that Islam and Muslims can and should play in majority non-Muslim societies is the tendency to see Muslim citizens only through the lens of religion and thus to miss the multitude of their identities. The 'Finnishness' of most Finnish Muslims is missed, which Katri Karhunen picks up in her article on Finnish Muslims in the labour market. However, although she correctly discusses the othering of Islam as a faith that can be part

of Finns' religious life, she lacks a deeper analysis of how Muslim bodies are racialized in Finnish society.

The editors Johanna Konttori and Teemu Pauha remind us in their preface that Finnish Muslims' self-identification depends on their 'Muslimness' and the intersection of other identity markers. In her article on Finnish Islam in the European context Johanna Konttori notes that ties to family members abroad and other transnational connections influence how Finnish Muslims regard themselves as part of Finnish society and the larger worldwide Muslim community. With this in mind research must consider both the national and global historical contexts and contemporary developments that affect the experiences of Finnish Muslims in their everyday lives. A crucial contribution in this regard is the article by Markus Himanen and Karin Creutz on the securitization of Islam in the Finnish context, as it addresses the issue of how the global war on terror affects Finnish Muslims, who have come to develop a Du Boisian double consciousness. When the authorities perceive a person's 'Muslimness' as a security threat, it forces them to constantly reflect on and adjust their behaviour to avoid appearing 'too Muslim' and being considered a 'problem'. Although Himanen and Creutz illustrate this with the example of incarcerated Muslims, this is a general issue among the wider Muslim population.

The ethnically heterogeneous composition of the Finnish Muslim community is reflected in the rich empirical studies this edited volume's articles present. The studied communities and the interview samples consist primarily of Muslims with a mixed background, including Muslim converts. Nevertheless, four pieces examine Finnish Muslims with a Somali background more closely, which only shows that the interest of researchers continues to be directed at the particular issues of the largest ethnic community of Finnish Muslims. While the issue of gender relations is often misused for the malignant purpose of racist anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant discourses, Mulki al-Sharmani and Sanna Mustasaari explore how young Muslims with a Somali background benefit in their private lives from both Islamic family law and the secular Finnish context. Likewise, the article by Johanna Aapakallio on 'honour-based' violence focuses on the fact that this is not only a problem in Muslim communities – femicide in this regard is often falsely generalized as being rooted in Islam – but a structural problem of gender relations in every society. Aapakallio reveals that women are killed by their spouses proportionally more often than in other EU countries.

The adaptability of the Islamic lifeworld to the context of a non-majority Muslim society is a hot potato when discussing the 'domestication' of Islam in national contexts. In her article Konttori notes that when

aligned with comparable tendencies in other European countries, 'Islam in Finland' is to a certain extent expected to be reformed by 'Finnish values'. However, Konttori does not further discuss the problematic side of such hegemonic representations. Yet the article by Tiina Alakärppä on the views of young female Finnish Muslims with a Somali background on the Islamic premise of FGM clearly shows that these women have differing attitudes to those of the older generation, who were not born in Finland. By being aware of the cultural element of FGM and not its religious premise, their argumentation favours Islam as a practised faith, free of 'cultural baggage', and thus adaptable to all geographical contexts. Likewise, her other article on the attitudes of young Finnish Muslim women with a Somali background to sexual intercourse before marriage shows how these women gain their voice and agency in such matters and do not correspond to the stereotypical gendered image of an 'oppressed woman'.

Nevertheless, the issue of the 'domestication' of Islam has political implications. It is tightly bound to the governance of Islam and Foucauldian power-knowledge dynamics, as it concerns questions of what form of Islam is considered civil and 'acceptable' in each national context as believers in their everyday lives practise it. Importantly, this is followed by the question of who can define these forms. It is therefore especially noteworthy that the issue of representation and access to gain-

ing a voice is discussed in the article on the Finnish Shia community by Abbas Bahmanpour and Teemu Pauha. While the authors give an excellent overview of the thus far unresearched Finnish Shia community's history and contemporary structures, they also urge readers to remember that there are differences regarding political and theological questions even within the Shia community.

Another meaningful change of perspective that this edited volume offers is that while the previous publications mentioned above dealt with the Muslim community as newcomers whose life in Finland is marked by questions of 'integration', the articles in this publication address the civic participation of Finnish Muslims. Katri Karhunen discusses how Finnish Muslim women navigate dress code requirements and their religious practice in their professional roles, taking on the critical aspect of how these women confront the misrecognition of their Finnish identities in their workplaces. Riitta Latvio's article on Finnish Muslim women as consumers and initiators of sporting activities provides an interesting insight into how the practice of *hijab* affects not only the dress code itself but also the kinds of spaces where women participate in sporting activities and the types of sports they choose to practise. Finally, Marcus Moberg's and Teemu Pauha's article on Finnish Muslim communities' online presence shows that there is still a lack of professionalization in

reaping the full benefits of online community building and increasing religious literacy.

The last three articles by Anu-leena Kimanen and Inkeri Rissanen, Jussi Ikkala and Niina Putkonen, and Ulla Vähärautio-Halonen discuss the different ways in which the religious identity of Finnish Muslim children is formed and performed in public school classrooms, in extra-curricular religious classes provided by mosque communities, and in the freedom of choice to practise their religion by observing prayer during school hours. Like this publication's other contributions, the empirical insights of these three articles feed into the book's general message, showing the reader how important it is always to consider the diversity of Finnish Muslims' identities, as there is no single definition of a 'Finnish Muslim' through either of its identity components. Both 'Finnishness' and 'Muslimness' are constantly produced and reproduced in a dialectic between the individual experience and the societal dynamics and depend greatly on relationships of mutual recognition.

Linda Hyökki

LINDA HYÖKKI, Ph. D., is an independent researcher with expertise on anti-Muslim racism in Finland and the wider Europe. Email: lindaHyokki@gmail.com