

Book Review

Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Mansur Ali, and Stephen Pattison. *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy thoroughly analyzes this topic as it relates to the contiguous countries of England and Wales. The text is sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) "Religion and Society Programme," both of which fund research and studies concerning the arts, humanities, and socioeconomic issues.

The almost 200-page text is encyclopedic due to the wide breadth and depth of its coverage, which is based upon scholarly research. The book is directed toward a scholastic or an administrative audience. The sound organization of its topics, as well as its extensive documentation, makes it a must for most libraries.

I have only three minor quibbles with the book: (1) The hardcover text was first published in 2013, republished in 2016, and is now available from \$49.61 to \$162.03; (2) One needs to be prepared to undertake some research to get past the surface meanings and British spellings of some of the words and titles; and (3) Your geopolitical knowledge of the British Isles, the United Kingdom, Great Britain, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales must be up to date.

The book has eight chapters: "Chaplaincy and British Muslims," "Pastoral Care in Islam," "Chaplaincy People," "Chaplaincy Practice," "Chaplaincy Politics," "The Impact of Chaplaincy," "Muslim Chaplaincy in the United States of America," and "Chaplaincy, Religious Diversity, and Public Life."

The first chapter, which also serves the book's introduction, summarizes the other chapters. According to the authors, the rest of the chapter maps the "drivers for the development of Muslim chaplaincy in England and Wales since the 1970's." The other chapters fulfill the stated objectives and summaries commendably, despite the presence of some abstruse or anomalous passages. Much of the book demands that the reader be well versed in Islamic terminology, although at times even that may be insufficient because the authors may explain Muslim behavior and culture from a parochial perspective. One example is their statement about fasting, wherein tobacco is mentioned as an intoxicant: "Fasting is the third pillar of Islam, requiring Muslims to abstain from food, drink, sexual intercourse and intoxicants of any kind (for example smoking tobacco); ..."

The authors write that "the first pillar divides into seven sub-divisions, all of them related to faith in the unseen realm (*ghayb*)" might be better understood by Muslims and non-Muslims alike with more explanation. I could not find this "seven sub-divisions" phrase substantiated anywhere in the book. Perhaps it is related to what is commonly called "the seven conditions of *tawhīd*" or the seven

conditions pertaining to “there is no deity” or “no one is worthy of worship but Allah (see Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥakamī, *Ma‘ārij al-Qabūl*).

Likewise, the explanation of Muslim behaviors in the sections entitled “Rites of Passage: Birth and Death” and “The Role of the Family in Islam” may relate to certain Muslim localities only, rather than having a general application, as the authors state. An example related to this anomaly is when the text explains certain facets of Islamic life and ideology that may be specific to a certain legal view or socio-ethnic group or society, rather than the general Islamic population. Nonetheless, the book *in toto* presents a balanced mention of Islamic praxis.

Among the most important terms are “chaplaincy,” “Muslim chaplaincy,” and “pastoral care.” A chaplain is defined as “an individual who provides religious and spiritual care within an organisational setting.” In layperson terms, then, “chaplain” is a job title, since an “organisational setting” is the only requisite in addition to providing these types of care. “Religious and spiritual care,” which the text makes synonymous with “pastoral care,” has two parameters: the organization’s rules and the Muslim chaplain’s understanding and application of Islam. Thus, since “there is no formal institutionalised tradition of pastoral care in Islam,” the book’s presentation of these terms and their histories represents a landmark achievement, along with it being “based on the first major empirical study of Muslim chaplaincy.”

Chapter 1 provides a one-paragraph summary of the other chapters “so that readers can identify those parts of the book that will be of most interest to them ... [The reader will get] a rich description of the personnel, practice and politics of contemporary Muslim involvement in chaplaincy in England and Wales, based on extensive qualitative research on religious leadership and pastoral care in Islam.”

After these brief descriptions, the authors present “The Growth and Development of Muslim Chaplaincy” in Britain as being a rather haphazard undertaking from the 1970s to 1990s, a time when “Muslims involved in prison or hospital visiting were often termed in Britain as ‘visiting ministers.’”

The evolution toward becoming “Muslim chaplains” started in 1991, when the Patient’s Charter mandated respect for and the enabling of meeting all patients’ religious and spiritual needs, regardless of their faith tradition. In 1999 the Prison Service Chaplaincy Headquarters, the equivalent of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons, established the position of “Muslim Advisor.” In 2003 the Prison Service replaced the title Muslim “visiting minister” with “Muslim Chaplain.” Around this time, there were more British-born English-speakers from British Islamic seminaries, particularly from the Deobandi school.

In 2003 The Markfield Institute of Higher Education, which specializes in Islamic subjects, established the “Certificate in Muslim Chaplaincy,” a diploma that is accredited by the British Accreditation Council. In 2007, as a result of the collaborative efforts of England’s Department of Health, the Muslim Spiritual Care

Provision in the National Health Service (NHS), a project run by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in partnership with the Department of Health, completed a three-day intensive training course for aspiring Muslim healthcare chaplains.

A little bit of extratextual research showed that the aforementioned information represents far more than meets the eye. One of Great Britain's Office for National Statistics websites reads:

Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in the NHS [National Health Service] is a project run by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in partnership with the Department of Health. It is working towards achieving an adequate supply of chaplains in the Muslim faith community. 2001 Census data on Muslim population was used by the Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in the NHS *to secure funding for employment of imams paid for by the Departments of Health's central funding of chaplaincy services* [reviewer's emphasis].

This work is ongoing and the project is working to increase the number of Muslim chaplains available to the NHS by creating awareness about the need, together with running training courses and maintaining a database of all aspiring chaplains. It also aims to provide chaplaincy coverage in all geographical areas where the Muslim community is represented in significant numbers.[†]

The rest of the chapter is devoted to specifics about the research project upon which the book is based, namely, the Muslim Chaplaincy Research Project. It also details the methodology, including single paragraphs on the demographics of the major areas of Muslim chaplaincy employment: prisons, hospitals, and educational institutions.

The stated purpose of Chapter 7, "Muslim Chaplaincy in the United States of America," is to discuss and compare chaplaincy there in order to better view its development and practice in the United Kingdom. This chapter self-admittedly draws upon extensive online research from websites like the Pew Research Center to describe the makeup of the American Muslim population and to review both the excellent resources and descriptions of Muslim chaplaincy groups, as well as their training and accreditation. Interviews conducted at the Islamic Society of North and America's (ISNA) annual convention in Chicago in 2011 formed the chapter's second major source of information.

[†]<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/2011censusbenefits/howothersusecensusdata/thirdsectorandcommunitygroups/casestudymuslimcouncilofbritainandmuslimspiritualcareprovisioninthenhs>

A major feature of the chapter is clinical pastoral education (CPE) and the importance of Muslim chaplains in the United States being credentialed with CPE along with being trained as an *'ālim* (scholar) in the traditional Islamic sciences.

The discussion focuses on hospital chaplaincy and, tangentially, health care exigencies for chaplains in higher education, the military, and prisons. The major takeaway is that the benefits for chaplains in these areas make such training imperative: “there is a need to develop *al-Fiqh al-Waqi* (contextual fiqh), or *al-Fiqh al-Aam wal Khas* (particular fiqh, as opposed to general understanding of fiqh)...[every] chaplain [has] to understand three important realities in their pastoral practice, these being: i) the dominant culture, ii) the sub-culture, iii) individual need.”

Muslim chaplaincy within the American prison system comprises a major portion of this relatively new field. Information concerning how the office of prison chaplaincy grew due to inmate litigation would have made an important contribution to the book. Although the authors did expand upon Dr. James Jones' D. Min. thesis, “Islamic Prison Ministry,” held to be “the first reflective piece of writing about Muslim prison chaplaincy,” they did not elucidate upon their own observation that “Muslim chaplaincy has a history in the US [that] begins with the early experiences of NOI ministers and volunteers in the 1930's....”

Indeed, the watershed decision of *Cooper v. Pate* (1964) expanded and redefined prison chaplaincy in general and Muslim chaplaincy in particular by noting that Thomas X. Cooper, a member of the Nation of Islam (NOI) was being punished for his religious views [Justice Rehnquist (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruz_v._Beto)].

Cruz, a Buddhist, won *Cruz v. Beto* (1972), a case based on religious freedom. However, he offered his legal help to Muslims only after they rioted against being punished – forced labor in cotton fields six days a week – because Cruz had helped them present their legal claim that the prison's authorities were violating their civil rights (<http://www.writwritermovie.com/downloads/ww.press.kit.pdf>).

The cases of *Pierce v. LaVallee* and *Sostre v. LaVallee*, [wherein] “federal judges ruled that the men had rights to practice their religion. Sostre and two other Nation of Islam [prisoners] sued the warden, claiming they had been denied the right to buy the Quran and practice their religion and had been put in solitary confinement as punishment” (<https://wamu.org/story/17/04/17/how-one-inmate-changed-the-prison-system-from-the-inside/>) preceded that of *Cruz v. Beto*. These three cases and others directly affected and shaped prison chaplaincy.

An analysis of these and similar court cases would have enhanced an already excellent text and added a stronger incentive for the American reader. And Allah knows best.

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