

Series editor's foreword

We are pleased to present the third volume of “Wiener Islamstudien”—works in the field of Islamic Studies from the University of Vienna. This series aims to make intellectual contributions to Islamic discourse while providing material that is academically rigorous and accessible to the general public.

The current volume on Muslima Theology highlights an important emergent phenomenon in contemporary debates about the situation of Muslim women. This is the growing role played by female Muslim theologians and academics working in the field of religious studies who are critically reflecting on their position within Islam through making interpretive contributions that challenge the prevalent patriarchal readings of religious tradition.

Numerous books have been published about ‘Women in Islam’ and it remains a popular topic in popular debates. A naive perception is that the position of women has already been defined within the Islamic religion for all eternity and one only needs to open the classical books in order to obtain the answers to today’s questions on gender issues. This overlooks the fact that Islam as it exists today, in all its variety and richness, developed historically. After all, today’s Muslims are not the first generation to be faced with the task of dealing with new social and religious situations and the need to find reasonable ways to resolve the concomitant challenges and crises.

Previous generations of Muslims found their own answers to such questions in various cultural and geographical regions of this world. It is therefore not possible to speak of a single Islam, rather we encounter a multitude of cultural and historical expressions of the religion in the most diverse cultural environments. In its dynamic history throughout the past centuries, Islam has been able to continually adapt and incorporate diverse theological traditions of interpretation and practice.

The work of female Muslim theologians in this volume indicates that Muslim women are increasingly drawing on the dynamic origins of the religion and deriving from them a theology fit for the needs of our time. While rooted in authentic Islamic sources and interpretive methodologies, the contributions from Muslima theologians featured in this collection clearly demonstrate their creative and future-oriented approach.

This volume, initially intended as a project within the Department for Islamic Religious Education at the University of Vienna, would not have come about without the valuable contribution of my colleague Prof. Dr. Marcia Hermansen. In addition to her valuable introduction to the topic, she also took charge of the entire editing and transliteration requirements of the volume. The success of this work is due to her indefatigable commitment.

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of an international team of graduate student assistants including Elif Medeni, Danny Gibboney, and Jason Renken. Dr. Barbara von Schlegell also provided valuable assistance during the editing process.

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