

and policies. However, this does not allow the authors to construe that “the longer the history of representative institutions of a country, the greater the chances that democracy as a form of government has taken root in society” (p. 25). Such assertions need to be tested through a comparative study of parliaments and parliamentarians with a larger number of cases.

Early Muslim Scholarship in Religionswissenschaft: The Works and Contributions of Abū Rayān Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī.

By Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman. Kuala Lumpur: The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 2003, pp. 256, ISBN 983-9379-33-X

Reviewer: Muhidin Mulalic, University Tenaga Nasional, Institute of Liberal Studies, Selangor, Malaysia.

The book under review highlights al-Bīrūnī’s (d. 973-1048) methodological study of civilizations and religions which qualifies him to be called the “the Father” of *Religionswissenschaft* (science of religion) worthy of emulation by contemporary scholars. It is ironic that even though the science of religion was initiated by Muslim scholars, they soon lost interest in this field and the lead has been taken over by the Western social scientists. Since the Western scholars exclude religious spirituality and holiness from their study, their methodologies may not be appropriate for the study of religions.

The author elaborates at length that the Qur’ān refutes the transcendent unity of religions but it provides extensive information on diverse religions and emphasises religious tolerance and understanding among diverse religious communities. The Prophet (SAS) accepted and tolerated multilingual, multi-religious, multicultural, and multiracial societies within the Islamic civilization. Thus, the foundation for *Religionswissenschaft* is to be found in the Holy Qur’ān and the prophetic traditions. Relying upon these divine sources, Muslim theologians, historians and geographers, have produced works that represented world civilizations and religions.

The author provides a brief account of the life and times of al-Bīrūnī and his major contributions, scholarly journeys and service under several sultans. She sketches the learning centres that developed under Muslim rule and the consequent flourishing of sciences, and translation of ancient heritages. It is this golden age of Islamic civilization, according to the author, that made al-Bīrūnī's success possible.

The author is very lucid in explaining al-Bīrūnī's *Kitāb al-Āthār* and *Kitāb al-Hind*; their importance, objectives, contents, and methodology. Both works are significant for they contain primary accounts of numerous civilizations and religions. The author argues that *Kitāb al-Āthār* covers a wide range of religions and religious communities, their history, calendars, beliefs, sects, worship, and practices. Its descriptive and narrative style is simple and appealing for it was meant for general knowledge seekers of ancient civilizations and religions. *Kitāb al-Hind*, on the other hand, covers the Hindu religious tradition and civilization. In contrast to *Kitāb al-Āthār*, it was meant for the learned readers. Therefore, al-Bīrūnī emphasizes more on Hindu beliefs, theologies, philosophies and civilization by using analytical, comparative, phenomenological and multi-dimensional approaches.

Al-Bīrūnī was exposed to humanities and natural sciences which helped him to develop the methodology of *Religionswissenschaft*. The methodology is based on scriptures, authentic texts, direct observation, and reasoning. Al-Bīrūnī used logic and science, particularly mathematics and astronomy, as his methods of criticism for all religious aspects except for beliefs. Being aware of his audience, al-Bīrūnī uses a comparative approach in his works making the religions interesting, understandable and comprehensible. Al-Bīrūnī emphasised his own religiosity but abstained from polemic and subjective criticism.

The chapter "Al-Bīrūnī's Knowledge and Perspectives of Religions" examines major religions, minor religions and cults. Among the major religions discussed are Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. However, bulk of the discussion is devoted to the Hindu religion based on *Kitāb al-Hind*. Al-Bīrūnī does not merely comment upon Hindu scriptures, their transmission, content, codification and sacredness, but also translated some of the Hindu scriptures.

However, Kamar Oniah argues that al-Bīrūnī neglected the psychological-social dimension of religion and considered the educated as the superior representatives of religion. This explains why al-Bīrūnī considered that Hindu Brahmins (priests) believe in one god while the lay people believe in a multitude of gods. On Christianity, the author observes that al-Bīrūnī's account is minor. Elaborations on Christianity are only used for the purpose of comparison with Hinduism. Likewise, al-Bīrūnī's treatment of Judaism is very brief explaining the Jewish scriptures, holidays, and festivals, especially the Sabbath and Yom Kippur.

The author uses mostly *Kitāb al-Āthār* in explaining the minor religions and cults; that of the Persians, the Khawarizmians, the Sughdians, the Magians, the Zoroastrians, the Manicheans, the Samaritans, the Sabians and the ancient Greeks. Following al-Bīrūnī's example, the author provides very brief, at times insufficient, accounts covering mostly worship and practices of minor religions and cults. However, as the author observes, these accounts are very useful because most of these religions have disappeared; therefore, such information is extremely important to the scholars of humanities and social sciences.

Kamar Oniah's work is well worth reading. She has succeeded in explaining al-Bīrūnī's *Religionswissenschaft* and its role in the Islamic civilization. The work is aimed primarily at Muslims motivating them to study other civilizations and religions for a peaceful world order. In addition, the work calls upon the contemporary scholarship to reconsider the relevance of present methodologies in the study of a cosmopolitan and globalized world community. Influenced perhaps by al-Bīrūnī's format and presentation, Kamar Oniah provides a clear thematic organization to the book with a meaningful introduction and conclusion.

The author is indeed very critical and analytical in her approach. The work, however, needs elaborations, especially on the chapter that discusses various religions. The author very briefly, relying mostly on al-Bīrūnī, describes the major religions, minor religions and cults. In some cases scriptures, theologies, dogmas, worship, and practices are very narrowly, if not descriptively and literally, presented. In this respect, probably more primary sources, comparisons, and elaborations could have been used. Al-Bīrūnī

could have been better appreciated if the author had used, for instance, analogical and allegorical styles of presentation to understand Hinduism. Additionally, the book is marred by several technical mistakes (e.g., p. 26, 33, 56 and 59), few repetitions (e.g., p. 5-6 and 27-28) and references to materials that do not appear in the text (e.g., p. 19, 72 and 82). These shortcomings do not undermine the utility of the work. This book should inspire others to study diverse civilizations and religions by using the scientific methodology without becoming secular.

Understanding Terror Networks. By Marc Sageman. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. Pp. 232. ISBN 0-8122-3808-7

Reviewer: Abdul Rashid Moten, Department of Political Science, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Understanding Terror Networks, according to its author, is “a general empirical study” of the terrorists “to add to what is known and to correct some widely disseminated misconceptions” (p. 61). It is an attempt to identify the origins, the objectives, and the social network of the members of what Marc Sageman calls the Global *Salafī jihād* Islamic *jihād*—the interlocking series of radical Islamist terrorist networks guided by Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants manning the al-Qaida organisation. According to Sageman, the Islamist fanatics in this violent, revivalist social movement target the West, but their operations mercilessly slaughter thousands of people of all races and religions throughout the world. “The Global Salafī jihad is a threat to the world.... Elimination of this movement is imperative” (p. 175).

The Salafists are those who preach the restoration of authentic Islam and, to Sageman, they include every one beginning from Ibn Taymiyyah and Mohammed ibn Abd el-Wahhab to Syed Qutb, Mawdudi and their followers and the Tablighi Jamā‘at. Sageman traces the origin of the *Salafī jihād* (the violent, revivalist social movement with al-Qaida on the lead) to Egypt. Most of the leadership