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Al-Shajarah is a refereed international journal that publishes original scholarly articles in the area of Islamic thought, Islamic civilization, Islamic science, and Malay world issues. The journal is especially interested in studies that elaborate scientific and epistemological problems encountered by Muslims in the present age, scholarly works that provide fresh and insightful Islamic responses to the intellectual and cultural challenges of the modern world. *Al-Shajarah* will also consider articles written on various religions, schools of thought, ideologies and subjects that can contribute towards the formulation of an Islamic philosophy of science. Critical studies of translation of major works of major writers of the past and present. Original works on the subjects of Islamic architecture and art are welcomed. Book reviews and notes are also accepted.

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Book Reviews

Bachar Bakour, *Al-Buti and the Syrian Revolution*. Islamic Book Trust, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, 2020. 349 pp. ISBN-10: 9670526817; ISBN-13: 978-9670526812.

Reviewers: Homam Altabaa, PhD, Assistant Professor, AHAS Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Email: drhomam@iium.edu.my; and Iylia Marsya Iskandar, Journalist. Email: iyliamarsya@gmail.com.

Al-Buti was a notable Sunni scholar who left an indelible mark on contemporary Islamic thought with his legacy of ideas on contemporary and classic social, doctrinal, and legal issues. During the 2011 Syrian Revolution, to the surprise of many, al-Buti was very vocal in opposing the protestors against the Syrian government. Al-Buti refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the protestors' cause in Islam as he believed that uprisings and revolutions would surely create chaos and sedition while opening doors to foreign intervention and catastrophe among innocent Muslim and non-Muslim civilians.

Bachar Bakour's *Al-Buti and The Syrian Revolution* underscores, through balanced academic analysis, a critical juncture in the history of contemporary Syria, where a horrific war claimed the lives of thousands and displaced millions of others in a calamitous manner around the world. The author has thoroughly examined al-Buti's views on the Syrian revolution and the ensuing war. His insights into al-Buti's legal and *maqasidic* thinking were based on interviews, document analysis and his personal experience as a young Syrian scholar. The book provides critical insights into al-Buti's positions on the Syrian Revolution and political Islam, Islamist movements and his relationship with the ruling family in Syria.

The book, published in 2020 by Islamic Book Trust, has six parts and a conclusion. The first chapter illustrates Islam's vital historical and modern role in shaping the identity and culture of Syrian society, especially in urban centres. Then, the chapter

provides an efficient overview of the major religious groups in post-independence Syria such as the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, Sufi orders, and Salafi groups within the framework of the official religious institutions. This section puts particular emphasis on the Muslim Brotherhood by presenting the thoughts of its influential figures, highlighting its social role through mosques and charity projects and finally investigating their bloody clash with the Syrian authorities in the eighties of the previous century during the rule of Hafez al-Assad, the predecessor and father of the current President of Syria.

The second chapter centres around al-Buti's background, exploring essential stages of his life as a scholar that span his education, scholarly career, and contributions to modern Islamic studies. Meanwhile, the third chapter accounts for al-Buti's critical view of contemporary Islamists and their movements. He viewed many as opportunists who put political interest over real Islamic *da'wah* by misapplying certain parts of Islamic law. The book details seven problematic issues with Islamists, as pointed out by al-Buti, and attempts to apply these issues to contemporary Islamic movements. The issues include the ruthless and hasty pursuit of the Islamic state, the *takfir* of an armed struggle against rulers, imposing the Shariah top-down, and prioritizing politics over all other social aspects. The book suggests that these issues can be used as a criterion to distinguish between moderate and extremist Islamic groups.

The following chapters build on these views of al-Buti on Islamic movements to analyse his polemics against the Arab Spring, a series of anti-government uprisings and armed rebellions that flared across numerous countries in the Arab world in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Some Islamic commentators viewed these protests as planned movements initiated by foreign powers, while others were convinced that the uprisings were genuine and spontaneous reactions by laymen to the suffering endured through decades of corrupt dictatorship. Then, the chapter outlines the primary roots that caused the eruption of protests that collectively began to form the Syrian revolution. This chapter also explores the responses of Syrian religious scholars towards the initial protests in southern Syria. It compares his arguments with other varied

responses from religious scholars and examines his affiliation with regimes. There were three distinct responses to the protests by Islamic scholars; the first was firmly against inciting unrest, the second was strongly against the government, and the third was silent without stating a firm position.

The sixth chapter evaluates the validity of al-Buti's arguments on the revolution, explores obedience to a ruler through contextual linguistic analysis, and explores "obedience" as a concept in Islamic political thought compared to *fitnah*. The concept of obedience in this book is divided into three types: obedience to a just ruler, obedience to necessity, and obedience to emergency. The author believes that obedience to contemporary rulers falls under the third type, obedience to the emergency. Finally, the main arguments of the whole book are summarized in the final chapter.

Some key findings of this book include al-Buti's affiliation with two distinctive figures who have left their marks on his intellectual and spiritual life and his stance on rebellion and politics in Islam. The first is his father, Mullah Ramadan, who laid the foundation of al-Buti's thought as he, too, refused to stage an armed rebellion against rulers and condemned the manipulation of *da'wah* for political interests. The second is a Kurdish Islamic leader and thinker, Badi' al-Zaman Said al-Nursi. It can be seen that al-Buti mirrored his views on armed rebellion. Al-Nursi, who quit politics in 1921 and dedicated his life to *da'wah*, is one of the scholars against armed revolts as they create chaos and bloodshed among innocent Muslims, even though he had his fair share of political turmoil. Despite being influenced by other intellectuals, the book has concluded that al-Buti is more of an independent scholar than a mere ally of any political party or regime. This conclusion has been deduced after assessing interview transcripts with leading experts on the Syrian political and religious scenes. Al-Buti has served as an informal mediator between high-rank officials and the Muslim public for the latter's benefit.

On the other hand, readers would also appreciate the writer's insights into al-Buti's shortcomings in the discourse on the revolution. Al-Buti was against both peaceful demonstrations and armed revolution as he feared an uprising that would leave Syria with

small, segregated states. As time went on, al-Buti's fears came to life, as in the time of writing the book, dividing Syria into small sectarian states was a recurrent theme on the negotiating table. However, the book has discovered points that need more balanced treatments and convincing arguments in his discourse. This includes al-Buti's perspective of obedience to rulers, citing the obedience verses and traditions. However, current leaders who are criminal and corrupt nationalists do not resemble the intended *ulu al-amr* nor have their characteristics. Not only that, in his ideas on *fitnah*, al-Buti also offered a one-sided solution. He advised demonstrators to return home, halt rebellions and reform from the bottom up. However, he should have included the government in this proposed solution despite its major involvement in fighting the rebellion.

This book helps readdress several ideas of al-Buti and provides an accurate understanding of his political arguments. The writer has provided a new narrative for and a contextual construct of his views, in addition to critiques and insights into the Syrian revolution and other related issues. Thus, the book is essential for those interested in the practical modern discourse of political Islam, the Syrian revolution, and the legacy of al-Buti.

Daud Batchelor, *Muhammad the Ultimate Leader: From Western Business Perspectives*. Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2019. 174 pp. ISBN 978-967-0526-70-6; eISBN 978-967-0526-71-3.

Reviewer: Osman Bakar, Emeritus Professor, Al-Ghazali Chair of Epistemology and Civilisational Studies and Renewal, ISTAC-IIUM. Email: osmanbakar@iiium.edu.my.

The present book under review is rather appealing. Its message is quite simple yet profound. As its title suggests, the book is about knowing the leadership qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the lens of Western business perspectives. The thesis of the book is that non-Muslim Westerners may be persuaded to embrace a more positive view of the traditional Muslim claim that

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	
ء	ب	پ	پ	ز	ز	ز	ز	گ	—	g	g	g
ب	ب	ب	ب	ژ	—	—	ř	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	پ	پ	پ	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m	m
ت	ت	ت	ت	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ث	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ş	ş	ş	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	ḍ	ی	y	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	—	-a ²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al ³	—	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	—	—	—	—	—
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh	—	—	—	—	—
ڈ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	q	—	—	—	—	—
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	—	—	—	—	—

¹ – when not final

² – at in construct state

³ – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iy (final form i)	iy (final form i)
	و	uww (final form ū) uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	ev
	ی	ai or ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	ا	u	u or ū
	ا	i	o or ö
	ا	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چ jh گ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

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