

PREFACE

Bruce B. Lawrence

I never imagined that my life would unfold as an academic, much less one focused on the Islamic world. I did major in Near Eastern studies, along with History, when I was an undergraduate at Princeton. I was convinced that I would become a foreign service officer, after first serving a term in the US Navy as a junior officer. The Navy stint inspired me to think about religion, not least because President Kennedy was assassinated while I was serving in DC. I anticipated a gloomy period in world history better served by meditation than mediation. Three years at the Episcopal Divinity School launched me as an Episcopal priest but also made me interested in the life of the mind beyond the boundaries of the church. I was admitted to Yale as a Ph.D. student, intent on exploring Abrahamic roots for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Hinduism, however, displaced Judaism on my agenda, as I became fascinated with the Vedas and ancient Indian thought. I had not yet finished my Yale Ph.D., relating Islamic thought to Indian subjects, when I was hired at Duke. A first job became a lifetime career. I never left Duke, though I did travel to many parts of Muslim Asia during forty years on the Duke faculty. Especially formative were two years I spent in India as a visiting scholar at Aligarh Muslim University. I felt a great affinity for Sufism, not least for medieval Indian exemplars related to a South Asian order, the Chishtiyya. Alas, international catastrophes redefined my academic labor. First, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 shifted me to thinking comparatively about extremist religion, or fundamentalism, across the Abrahamic spectrum, and then the 2001 attacks on the United States compelled me to revisit Islam at its roots, in the Qur'an as scripture, in order to find the different threads of belief that could produce both Sufism and terrorism.

In all these labors I have been assisted by a companion who exceeds me in her zest for travel and her passion for writing. miriam cooke has accompanied me on research/teaching forays that stretch from North Africa to Southeast

Asia, from Morocco to Indonesia, and many other places in between. She has also read nearly everything I have written since 1980, improving the argument as well as the accessibility of all my literary output as a scholar of Islam.

I have also had the benefit of extraordinary colleagues, both at Duke and elsewhere. Carl Ernst heads the list, having been my collaborator, co-teacher, and catalyst since the early 1990s, when he moved from Pomona College to the University of North Carolina. We co-wrote a book on Chishti Sufism that is among the selections in this volume, and we also co-edited a series of monographs, “Islamic Civilization and Muslim Networks,” for the University of North Carolina Press. I should also mention the late Richard C. Martin, from Emory, who helped on numerous publication ventures, including the volume coedited with Carl Ernst that marked my retirement from Duke, *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism*. Among numerous others are two former Duke colleagues, Vincent Cornell (now at Emory) and Ebrahim Moosa (now at Notre Dame). I learned from them about different forays of scholarship and also the beauty of collaboration.

Of equal benefit to me have been loyalty and inspiration from many former students. I esteem them all, from Michael Browder, my first doctoral student, to Brett Wilson, my last, but the one who has done me a singular service is Ali Altaf Mian. Ali entered the Ph.D. program in Islamic studies at the very end of my career at Duke. I had the pleasure of knowing him in several classes, though I was not on his Ph.D. committee. Ali Mian did me the extraordinary favor of registering all my writings in a list that he produced for me toward the end of his course work at Duke. Like most academics, I have a curriculum vitae, one that I updated annually, sometimes semi-annually, in order to demonstrate my level of scholarly production. Ali’s list went beyond a seriatim record, however. He also thought of categories into which different essays, articles, and book chapters might be slotted, and that produced a thematic template of my scholarship, one that I had never conceived or had even imagined as possible.

What you have before you is the outcome of Ali Mian’s diligent labor, from the sketch of an overview to the arrangement of selections within parts, each with an introduction that makes all the chapters register as a coherent whole. Moreover, he has made sense of my scholarship in the broadest possible forum. Above all, I have striven to produce, as he writes in the introduction, “scholarship that crosses territorial and disciplinary boundaries to account for Islam’s difference and multiplicity. Such scholarship is relevant in today’s world, for it bridges barriers between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, between local and global concerns, between popular and scholarly networks.” Ali Mian’s hope

is also mine: “To stage an argument for the political purchase and analytical value of compassionate, engaged scholarship on Islam and Muslims.” May the outcome of this volume be the success of this argument, not least among those who have yet to experience the full challenges of the twenty-first century. May it motivate today’s students to become tomorrow’s citizens, prisoners of hope striving for a global comity enhanced by Muslims, enriched by Islam!