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**Lorenzo MACAGNO, *Outros muçulmanos. Islão e narrativas coloniais***

Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2006, 254 pages

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## REFERENCES

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- 1 The vague title of this book fails to indicate that the subject is Mozambican Islam in late colonial and post-colonial times. The topic is of crucial relevance to the future of Mozambique, for a large and growing proportion of the population is Muslim, especially in the north, with Nampula as its centre. Islam was generally neglected in the colonial period, except at its very end, and was a taboo subject for much of the time that Samora Machel was in power. However, a growing volume of work on Mozambican Islam is at last appearing in print, not least in the *Lusotopie* special issue of 2007.
- 2 Lorenzo Macagno has written a work that is more anthropology than history. There are many useful indications as to Islam's colonial past, but the chronological framework weaves backwards and forwards disconcertingly, and the focus is on the twenty-first century. That said, the author has made some interesting use of archives, as well as secondary sources and oral interviews. He also provides helpful black-and-white photos, some of them showing text in Arabic script.
- 3 The central thrust of Macagno's work consists in presenting the struggle between "Sufi" and "Wahhabi" forms of Islam as roughly mirroring the transition from colonialism to independence, even if these general labels should be treated with great care. The Portuguese mainly backed Sufi brotherhoods in their last decade in power, although they failed to co-opt the Rifa'i order, for reasons that remain unclear. The brotherhoods in

turn manipulated the Portuguese by labeling reformers as anti-colonial. As long as Samora Machel stuck to his anti-religious rhetoric after independence, both sides suffered, but the relaxation of Frelimo's religious policies tended to favour the Wahhabi, who denounced brotherhoods as collaborators with colonial rule. The change in Frelimo's stance was hastened by the spread of Renamo's guerrilla operations, although Macagno correctly points out that Renamo was not so much pro-Muslim as adept at painting Frelimo as anti-Muslim. An attempt to unite Mozambican Islam in 1982 failed, and two major associations persisted. The *Conselho Islâmico* was reformist and broadly aligned with Sa'udi Arabia, whereas the *Congresso Islâmico* tolerated Sufism and was oriented towards Pakistan. This seems, in part, to have reflected sources of funding, the *Conselho* receiving aid from Sa'udi Arabia, and the *Congresso* financed by the South Asian business community.

- 4 Macagno's treatment of Sufism is full of rich ethnographic detail, especially in the case studies presented in chapters 4 and 5, but his generalizations pose problems. He claims that Sufi orders were only introduced into northern Mozambique in the late nineteenth century, whereas it would probably be more accurate to say that Sufi orders were revitalized at that time, notably the ancient Qadiri and Shadhili brotherhoods. He also portrays the orders as traditionalist, and thus viscerally opposed to modern reforms, whereas the reality was more complicated. The Rifa'i order, taking centre stage in chapter 5, is certainly not typical of the rich and varied tapestry that is mystical Islam.
- 5 Material on the Wahhabi strand of Islam is less ethnographically informed in this study, and the presentation of generalizations is marred by certain problems. The origins and genealogy of Wahhabi ideas are not discussed, and the author does not grapple effectively with the immense problems involved in applying the label "Wahhabi" to various kinds of fundamentalists, or simply reformists. The condemnation of angels, genies, "saints", and descendants of the Prophet as intermediaries between God and humans could be accepted by many strands of Islam.
- 6 Moreover, the author's approach excludes other currents of Mozambique's Islam, notably modernism and Shafi'i loyalism, and this is related to another major omission, that of the Hadhrami Arab factor. Despite citing a clutch of authors who have detailed the enormous significance of Hadhrami *sayyid* families in the Islam of eastern Africa, Macagno seems unaware of the long and complex influence of these people, who spear-headed moderate forms of reformism. They have long dominated the Shafi'i school of law, and have also acted through their own austere Sufi order, the Tariqa 'Alawiyya. Usually based in the Comoro Islands, these Hadhrami *sayyid* clans descend from the Prophet through al-Husayn, although they are often given the title of *sharif* in eastern Africa, technically reserved for descendants of al-Hasan. Many recognizably Hadhrami individuals feature in Macagno's story, and he also notes the importance of the Comoro Islands in providing the most reputed Islamic education in the region. However, he ignores the background in Hadhramaut (Yemen), even failing to provide family names. This is particularly unfortunate in his otherwise fascinating account of how one Hadhrami family took control of the Qadiri brotherhood in Mozambique.
- 7 Similarly, too little is said about the non-Shafi'i and non-Sunni origins of most South Asian Muslims, who have been particularly important in financing Islamic activities in eastern Africa. In discussing the 1906 split between Indian and African Muslims, Macagno does not mention that Sunni Indian Muslims were generally of the Hanafi School of law. This again needs to be considered in the question of the "Asian" mosque in Maputo in the

1960s. As for the sects, also mainly South Asian in origin and membership, he mentions in a footnote that one of the five Islamic associations in Nampula in 2000 was Ithna ‘Ashari, that is Twelver Shi’i. However, he does not go into detail, and he fails to explain why there was none for the Khoja (the Nizari Isma’ili led by the Agha Khan), or the Bohora (the Must’ali Isma’ili). This lack of sensitivity to non-Sunni Islam is compounded by not mentioning that the sultan of Zanzibar belonged to the Ibadhi sect.

- 8 Macagno makes other points of interest, generally drawn from the pioneering work of Edward Alpers for the colonial era, although he tends to wander away from his central focus on Islam when discussing Portuguese colonialism and Frelimo. He notes that the semi-official colonial category of *evoluido* suited polygynous Muslims with an education largely in Arabic and Swahili, and that many opted for a *bilhete de identidade* after the Portuguese reforms of the early 1960s. The switch in Portuguese attitudes to favouring Muslims during the liberation war is noted, as well as the part played by Fernando Amaro Monteiro in this process. Macagno also stresses the patrilineal attractions of Islam for men in matrilineal societies, which predominate in northern Mozambique.
- 9 The presentation of the text is rather poor. The footnotes are gargantuan, containing far too much substantive text. Indeed, many interesting observations are buried deep in footnotes. Archival citations are at times misleading, leaving it unclear whether a source has been published. The transliteration of Arabic terms does not follow the rules of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, or any other standard format, to the point that it is sometimes quite difficult to grasp what certain names and expressions refer to. To give but one example, the famous Sayyid ‘Umar bin Sumayt, mufti of the Comoro Islands, appears as Saide Omar Bem Simedede.
- 10 Despite these various blemishes, this is a useful book. The ethnographic case studies will stand in their own right as sources for future historians and social scientists. The interpretative framework will undoubtedly give rise to much controversy, and indeed polemic, but this has the advantage of stimulating further studies on the neglected topic of Mozambican Islam.

September 2009