

Garbi Schmidt, *Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), ix, 256 pp., \$64.50 cloth, \$22.95 paper.

Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago is a well-researched, carefully nuanced, and timely contribution to our understanding of Muslim Americans and an excellent corrective to the all-too-common tendency to homogenize both Islam and Muslims. This study stresses the multiple elements of diversity in American Islam by focusing on how ethnicity, class, gender, class, age, and ideology have influenced the presentation and practice of Sunni Islam among immigrant communities in Chicago during the 1990s. Garbi Schmidt is currently a researcher in the ethnic minorities program at the Danish National Institute of Social Research in Copenhagen. This book is a revision of her Ph.D. dissertation and is the result of fieldwork among immigrant Muslim Americans that she conducted in the Chicago area over the course of a year and a half in 1995 and 1996.

Schmidt portrays a Sunni Muslim community in Chicago that is torn between two powerful conflicting impulses. On the one hand, many Chicago Muslim immigrants and their children have been deeply influenced by the pan-Islamic ideals of such twentieth century Islamic revivalist movements as the Muslim Brotherhood and Mawlana Mawdudi's Jama`at-i Islami that vigorously promote a transethnic and transnational Islamic identity. Indeed, some American Muslims see their experience in the United States as a golden opportunity to create a form of Islam in America "that transcends differences and ethnicity (77)." On the other hand Schmidt points out that the Chicago Muslim community is nonetheless deeply fragmented along ethnic and even racial lines. For example when Chicago Muslims choose which particular mosque that they will attend, this choice is almost always based on the individual's ethnic affiliation. Bosnian Muslims will go to the mosque whose membership is predominantly Bosnian and Arab Muslims will go to a mosque with a predominantly Arab membership. Schmidt's research also shows that the Chicago Muslim community exhibits profound cleavages along racial and social class lines. Thus she notes that even though around forty percent of Chicago's Sunni Muslims at the

time of her research were African-American, contacts and alliances between African-American Muslims and the immigrant Muslim communities were surprisingly infrequent. Indeed, despite lip service to transethnic Islamic ideals, the more affluent suburban Arab and South Asian Muslim immigrant communities displayed an almost complete indifference to the economic and social plight of their poorer inner-city co-religionists and some even justified this indifference by claiming that African-American Muslims were responsible for their own misfortunes because they had not practiced Islam correctly.

Islam in Urban America is valuable not only because of its carefully nuanced treatment of this tension in American Islam between transethnic ideals and persistent elements of ethnicity and class but also because it presents the reader with a detailed look at a wide array of American Muslim institutions such as mosques, Muslim full-time schools, Muslim childrens' experiences in the secular public schools, Muslim student associations, Sufi orders, and informal women's study groups. Since about sixty percent of Schmidt's informants were women, the reader has the additional advantage of learning about an American Islamic community and its institutions through the voices of its women.

There is one major flaw in this book. Schmidt admits that she does not cover intra-community relationships between African-American Muslims and immigrant Muslims (10). She also leaves out any detailed analysis of African-American Muslims and their experiences. Although Schmidt does seem to have gained a high degree of trust from and access to the immigrant Sunni Muslim community in Chicago, her access to the African-American Sunni community appears to have been much more limited. Since African-Americans constitute about forty percent of the orthodox Sunni Muslim population in Chicago this is a serious omission.

In spite of this significant omission, *Islam in Urban America* is still an important contribution to the study of Islam as it is practiced in the United States. Those who teach courses on contemporary Islam, American religions, or the immigrant experience in the United States will find this book a valuable addition to their course preparations and their syllabi. It contains a very good

index as well as a helpful glossary of Arabic terms that appear in the text. The reference notes are detailed and thorough. The book does not have a bibliography separate from the reference notes.

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Patricia V. Symonds. *Calling in the Soul: Gender and the Cycle of Life in a Hmong Village*. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004). xlix, 326 pp., \$45 cloth.

Hmong Americans are a diaspora group that came from Laos after leaving southern China in the early 1800s. The U.S. C.I.A. recruited a Hmong army during the 1960s to assist with the American military campaign against communism in Southeast Asia. Hmong refugees began arriving in the United States in 1975 following the collapse of the pro-American Laotian government. There are now about 200,000 Hmong Americans.

One of the biggest challenges in understanding the adaptation of Hmong Americans is the dearth of knowledge about their traditional way of life. Since the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains inaccessible to social scientists, one avenue for investigating the pre-migration culture of Hmong Americans has been to examine contemporary Hmong settlements in Thailand. Patricia V. Symonds' *Calling in the Soul* is a welcome addition to this line of inquiry. The book is an anthropological study of traditional Hmong gender roles as they are manifested in birth and death rituals.

Symonds is superbly qualified to write about the Hmong. She spent over a year living in a remote Hmong village in Thailand and became fluent in Hmong. The book is further enhanced by photographs and drawings of Hmong families, homes, ceremonies, and alters. Another unique feature is the inclusion of long ritual songs and chants in both English and Hmong.

Symonds directly addresses one of the most salient aspects of Hmong social life: it is "a very strictly gender-stratified culture"