

# Exploring the Multitude of Muslims in Europe

*Essays in Honour of Jørgen S. Nielsen*

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## Editors' Introduction

Though the history of Islam and Muslim influence in Europe is both long and complex with periods of interreligious coexistence as well as periods when Muslims ruled over or were majorities in certain parts of the Old Continent, the presence of Muslims in Europe seems to the vast majority of Europeans today to be a novel phenomenon. To many this presence is marked by uncertainty and met with fear, invariably reducing Muslims in Europe to the single issue of security. However, long before “the Muslim question” became so overstressed and securitized, the complexity of the increasing presence of a multitude of Muslims in Europe was recognised by a few pioneering scholars in the emerging field of the studies of Islam and Muslims in contemporary Europe. Jørgen S. Nielsen was a part of this nascent development. As he wrote in the foreword to the first edition of his *Muslims in Western Europe* in 1992, “[only] a few academics began to see valid research possibilities in the issues arising out of the Muslim presence in Europe ...” In the recently updated fourth edition co-written with Jonas Otterbeck, he elaborates that “... it was not until the mid-1980s that a recognition of the Islamic dimension of community and ethnic relations began to spread beyond small specialist cadres,”<sup>1</sup> but stressing also that this was echoed by emerging research amongst sociologists and anthropologists in France, Germany, Britain and Scandinavia. Jørgen S. Nielsen, of course, did not write this to point to the fact that he was a pioneer in this field, but rather was able to write so because he has been at the heart of the development of research on Muslims and Islam in Europe since the late 1970s.

In September 2016, Jørgen S. Nielsen celebrated his 70th birthday. The articles in the present volume are collected in expectation of that joyous occasion. As often is in academia, it is only now that we have been able to gather and publish all the contributions from friends and colleagues. As will be evident in the following, 2017 also marks a number of jubilees in Jørgen S. Nielsen's life and career. In this editors' introduction we give an overview of his biography, a selection of the themes in his work, and return to look at the impact and timeliness of his contribution to the study of Islam and Muslims. Looking through his biography here, readers might want to cross-reference with the highlighted bibliography printed in this volume to see how his production corresponds with the stages and positions of his career. These articles collected in this volume are introduced and we see how they indeed echo the themes and

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<sup>1</sup> Nielsen, J.S. with Jonas Otterbeck, *Muslims in Western Europe*, The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh University Press. 2015, 174.

curiosity in Jørgen S. Nielsen's own exploration of the multitude of Muslims in Europe.

### Life and Career<sup>2</sup>

Jørgen Schøler Nielsen was born 18 September 1946, in Frederiksberg, Copenhagen, to Marie Schøler Nielsen and Erik W. Nielsen. His father was a trained theologian, ordained Lutheran Minister, and in the years after the Second World War – from 1950 – he was working in London as Research Secretary with the International Missionary Council. Jørgen S. Nielsen had his first few years of schooling in England, but in 1959 the family moved back to Denmark as his father was appointed General Secretary to the Danish Missionary Society, and Jørgen S. Nielsen did his secondary schooling at Sankt Annæ Gymnasium in Denmark. In 1965, the family would return to London as Erik W. Nielsen had the previous year been appointed Director in the Theological Education Fund associated with the World Council of Churches. By then Jørgen S. Nielsen had completed his Danish schooling and moved with them. In London, he did his A-levels in German and History in order to qualify for university.

His father's work and travels in Asia, Africa and the Middle East were inspirations for Jørgen S. Nielsen and he shared in many of the interests and discussions on religion, theology and dialogue.<sup>3</sup> While his father's focus was on the education and capacity building in the churches, the challenges they faced were marked by the political, social and cultural disruption in the wake of the decolonisation after Second World War. These global trends would also have an impact on Jørgen S. Nielsen and he reflects on them in one of his first publications, which was an edited collection of travel letters from his father, titled *A World on the Way to Freedom?* (1974)<sup>4</sup>

Consulting his father, they agreed that language was key to understanding a new and changing world. The choice was between Arabic or Chinese, and of the two, Arabic covered more of the surface of the globe. A further dimension to this choice was the question of how the Christian communities, which his

2 We owe many thanks to Meline Nielsen for sharing with us her thoughts on Jørgen S. Nielsen's life and work.

3 For a full account of Erik W. Nielsen's life, work and travels, see his biography by Harald Nielsen, *Erik W. Nielsen - og hans bidrag til efterkrigstidens danske missionsteologi*, Copenhagen: Dansk Missionsråd, 2012.

4 Jørgen S. Nielsen (ed.), *En verden paa vej mod frihed?* edited travel letters of Erik W. Nielsen, Copenhagen: DMS-forlag, 1974.

father knew well, interacted and were in dialogue with Islam, which became a future perspective in Jørgen S. Nielsen's career and academic life.

Jørgen S. Nielsen chose Arabic Language and Literature as his BA at University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, which was followed by an MA in Middle East Area Studies with a focus on Islamic law in 1970. He then applied to go to Cambridge University to study theology, and he was accepted. Before going, however, he took a year out to travel, and he chose Lebanon. Through his father's contacts, he volunteered as an English teacher at a Maronite Secondary School in a village in southern Lebanon, almost on the border to Israel. He was very fond of it and got along with the people there, and ended up staying for a year.

During that year, in 1971, his father died. This was a tragic loss, not just for Jørgen S. Nielsen, but for the whole family. Following that and as a result of his growing affection for Lebanon, Jørgen S. Nielsen wanted to stay in Lebanon and applied for a doctorate in Arab History at the American University of Beirut, effectively abandoning the idea of theology. He drew very much on his MA in Islamic law, and wrote on the 12th and 13th century administration of law in Mamluk Egypt. Under the supervision of Constantin Zureiq, Kamal Salibi and Tarif Khalidi, he defended his thesis on "Mazalim under the Bahri Mamluks 622/1264 – 789/1387" for a PhD in Arab History, which he obtained in 1978.

During the early years of his doctorate, Jørgen S. Nielsen met his future wife, Meline, in Beirut as he was boarding at the Near East School of Theology, and Meline was employed as Assistant Librarian at the library. Jørgen S. Nielsen was teaching and had a position as a Graduate Assistant teaching world history, and was aspiring to a position at AUB with the History Department.

In 1975, however, the Lebanese civil war started. Jørgen S. Nielsen was finalising his research, and in 1977, his first son, Mikael, was born, and that same spring he submitted his dissertation. By then Jørgen S. Nielsen was looking to Europe, to Denmark and the United Kingdom, for positions in order to get out of wartime Beirut. While Copenhagen did not provide any opportunities for Jørgen S. Nielsen, the newly established Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham hired Jørgen in January 1978 as Lecturer in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. The initial contract was for three years, and by then the family hoped to be able to return to Beirut as, surely, the war would have ended by then. Meline did post graduate studies in library studies and later joined the Library there. With this position, his focus would move into the contemporary scene and very much also address the situation of Muslims in Europe and in the United Kingdom.

As the war in Lebanon continued, the family expanded by a second son, Philip, and Birmingham became home. Jørgen S. Nielsen engaged himself

further in the challenges of the job. While he started as Lecturer, he would become senior lecturer and then principal lecturer, and in 1988, he was appointed director of the Centre for the Study of *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. While at the Centre, Jørgen would edit the *Series of Research Papers on Muslims in Europe* from 1979 to 1989, and for a greater part of the 1990s, he would edit the journal *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* together with John Esposito from 1996 onwards. In 1996 Jørgen S. Nielsen was appointed Professor of Islamic Studies, at the Department of Theology of the University of Birmingham, and in 1999, he helped bring about the merger of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations with that Department. From 2001 to 2004 he served as Director for the Graduate Institute for Theology and Religion and as Deputy Head of the Department.

Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, with the growth of Islam in Europe as a research field and the rise in academic interest in the subject, Jørgen S. Nielsen not only built up the Centre, recruiting students and strengthening the interdisciplinary and cross-departmental academics, but he also established a vast array of contacts and connections around Europe and the Middle East. Jørgen S. Nielsen consulted for governments and NGO's across the both Europe and the Islamic world, joining expert committees, working groups, and expert councils in addition to regular teaching, dozens of PhD examinations and appointment committees in academia. Throughout these almost forty years, Jørgen S. Nielsen wrote thirty monographs and edited books – many of which were co-authored and co-edited with contributors to this volume – he published more than hundred articles and have had more than several hundred speaking appointments and invitations to give key notes, literally around the world.<sup>5</sup>

When the Danish Institute in Damascus was looking for a new director, it would prove an opportunity to have a break from university life in Birmingham and to return to the Middle East once more, which he did in that position from October 2005. The very day he travelled there was the day the infamous Mohammed Cartoons were published in Denmark, and while the crisis did not break until early 2006, Jørgen S. Nielsen found himself very much in the middle of it. As the crisis roared, his excellent relations with the Syrian religious leadership, the government and civil society representatives helped Danish diplomacy to calm things down. And while the time in Damascus was overall peaceful, he would again need to assist with evacuations and Danish diplomacy during the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War in Lebanon.

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<sup>5</sup> See the bibliography of Jørgen S. Nielsen in this volume.

In the wake of the Danish Cartoon Crisis, the priority research area “Religion in the 21st Century” at University of Copenhagen, under the direction of Hans Raun Iversen, had been working towards a wider and more inclusive study of Islam across the faculties of the university. With Iversen and Danish colleagues at the Faculty of Theology, Jørgen S. Nielsen applied to the Danish National Research Foundation, which won him the Danish National Research Professorship and a grant to set up the Centre for European Islamic Thought in Copenhagen in October 2007. Not only did Jørgen S. Nielsen launch the *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* project and subsequently the *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, but also one of the major successes was the participation, with Jørgen S. Nielsen as Deputy Director of the RELIGARE project. Financed by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission as a conglomerate of twelve European research institutions, RELIGARE was a three-year investigation into religious diversity and secular models in Europe, running from 2010 to 2013. It examined the current socio-legal realities, including the legal rules protecting or limiting the experiences of religious or other faith-based communities across Europe. Its purpose was to explore adequate policy responses to the realities and expectations of both religious and political communities in Europe and the protection of human rights in terms of equality and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.<sup>6</sup>

While Jørgen S. Nielsen officially retired from the Faculty of Theology in 2013, he remains Honorary Professor at University of Copenhagen and to this day he remains deeply engaged in the academic work and networks on Islam and Muslims. He is still busy with writing and editing, and when the University of Birmingham offered him a part-time position in 2016, he became Professor of Contemporary European Islam there.

### Impact and Timeliness

One of the interesting things in reading back into Jørgen S. Nielsen's life and work is to see how for the Arabist and historian, religion was always present – both as the subject of study, but also in context. This is true for Islam, of course, but also for Christianity. The assumptions of the secular which were dominating in the study of sociology of religion and related fields, never had any hold over Jørgen S. Nielsen's thought. This, perhaps, is in part due to his upbringing and education, where a very global Christian humanist world view prevailed with his father's international work. However, in part it is also due to the fact

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<sup>6</sup> Read more about RELIGARE on [www.religareproject.eu](http://www.religareproject.eu), accessed 10 August 2017.



that Jørgen S. Nielsen brought a view of the complex of religions intertwined and intermingling in society back to the United Kingdom after years in the Middle East, most significantly of course Lebanon before the war. Secularism had never taken hold there, and the religious dimension was present in almost all interactions of society. Trained as a historian and receiving his PhD at the American University of Beirut, he brought this particular scope for the complexities of Muslim-Christian relations in the Middle East back to the United Kingdom in the early 1980s. And as things would have it, this became highly relevant to the research needed for the next 30 years or more.

Jørgen S. Nielsen's work and research seems not only timely, but as suggested above, even ahead of its time. Reviewing the many paths and observations in his publications, it seems that at the end of his writing he often makes extensive observations on the very conditions of Muslim life within the complex of European states churches and international society. As in February 2008, in his inaugural lecture for the Danish National Research Foundation professorship, he reveals not only his own position in the developments during his career, but – rather controversially – also gives his understanding of the responsibility of the scholar of contemporary Islam:

... a core dimension of what we are engaged in is the fact of rapid and complex change. This must have an impact on how we understand and interpret what we record and engage with. The academic researcher obviously focuses on what has been and what is, after all that is where our data are to be found. Ironically, the polemicist does the same but in a more blatantly selective manner and with an agenda focused on selected current political or religious priorities. But I would suggest that the scholar of contemporary Islam needs also to include a focus on potential. This is not the same as prediction, although I am sure we shall often be asked to predict. It is, rather, an understanding of the possibilities that the intellectual tradition has accumulated and an acknowledgment that the social, economic, cultural and political changes of our times influence, and will continue to influence, the intellectual routes which Muslim thinkers globally, and particularly in Europe, are developing and will continue to develop. It is also an acknowledgment that, whether we like it or not, western scholars of Islam are participants in this process.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Nielsen, J.S., *Islam in Europe: retrenchment and renewal*. Originally presented as Inaugural Lecture, Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, 8 February 2008.

This position was not new, for in 1997, Jørgen S. Nielsen had already understatedly observed:

Muslims in the late twentieth century seem paradoxically to be trumpeting the traditional much-vaunted tolerance of the Islamic state and of Muslim history while simultaneously complaining of the intolerance of western governments and European society and apparently ignoring the abuse of political power in many of their own states. The paradox depends on where you stand.<sup>8</sup>

Thirty years ago, in 1987, writing on *Islamic Law and its Significance for the Situation of Muslim Minorities in Europe*, Jørgen S. Nielsen observed about exactly the legal, social and religious integration of Muslims into a new, European context that:

At a time when economic recession, social unrest, and doubts about the supremacy of European models of society and politics have set in, the response of reinforcement of tradition and rejection of all things alien merely serves to underline the essential strangeness of Muslims in Europe. Part of this response includes a renewed emphasis in some quarters on the Christian essence of European cultures and national identities, thus further drawing attention to a perceived fundamental incompatibility between Islam and European Christendom.<sup>9</sup>

To observers of Islam and Muslims in Europe and followers of Jørgen S. Nielsen's work, it should come as no surprise that observations from ten, twenty and thirty year ago are entirely applicable to today's situation. Part of the explanation is the cyclical nature to many of the debates on Muslims in Europe; major debates on headscarves, halal slaughter, sharia and Muslim personal law, and so on, seem to be in their third, fourth, if not fifth iteration. However, an equally significant part of the explanation is that as a historian looking at the present, Jørgen S. Nielsen's observations are of an unquestionable clarity and quality in both his diagnosis of the situation and peril of Muslims in Europe and of his understanding of the European context's history, culture and religion.

8 Nielsen, J.S., "Muslims in Europe into the Next Millenium," in: *Islam in Europe: The Politics of Religion and Community*, Vertovic, S., and Ceri Perch (eds.), here as cited from Nielsen, J.S., *Towards a European Islam*, MacMillan Press 1999, 133.

9 Nielsen, J.S., *Islamic Law and its significance for the situation of Muslim minorities in Europe*, Brussels: CCME, 33 1987.

The observation that perhaps resonates most clear with today's predicament, is the following from a time before the terrorist attacks September 11, 2001, the repeated terrorist attacks in Europe and the rise the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

The current negative European perception of Islam [...] must be modified in the context of the historical perspective behind it. The threat to the democratic traditions of Europe comes not, in the first instance, from Islam and Muslims but from our own fear of that which is perceived to threaten the *modus vivendi* achieved in the nineteenth-century nation state. By resisting, and even attacking, Muslim self-assertion as anything other than an assertion of the right to dignity, self-respect, and democratic participation, we risk forcing Muslim movements, and articulate young Muslims in Europe, to resort to attack as the best form of self-defence.<sup>10</sup>

### Contributions to the Volume

The title of this volume in Jørgen S. Nielsen's honour, *Exploring the Multitude of Muslims in Europe*, echoes his academic life and work as much as it characterises the contributions within. Looking through his publications and editorships it becomes apparent that there is hardly a group of Muslims in Europe that has not drawn his scholarly attention. He has worked on Muslims in almost every part and country in Europe. This is clear not only from his editorship of the *Muslim Minorities* series, the *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* and the *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, but also in his *Muslims in Western Europe* (4th ed., with Jonas Otterbeck) and *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe* (with Dassetto, Allievi & Marechal) as well as a large number of subsequent articles and papers. Thematically the same is true, as there is hardly a perspective or challenge concerning Muslims in Europe, which he has not considered. Historically immigration, Christian-Muslim dialogue, and the former Ottoman space is explored. Adding to that a number of methodological and thematic approaches; theology and sociology of Muslims as minorities; Islamic law and secular legal systems of Europe; history of Muslims both in Europe and the Middle East; Christian and Muslim relations; polemics and dialogue; sharia understood as discourse; questions of method, ethnicity, diversity and pluralism; Muslim political participation; and the future of law and politics in secular Europe. All these key words echo titles of monographs and edited volumes by Jørgen S. Nielsen, in

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10 Op. cit., Nielsen 1999, 137–138.

which many of the contributors to this volume were involved. More than most Jørgen S. Nielsen has identified and demonstrated the need for an interdisciplinary study of Muslims in their variety throughout Europe and beyond.

A number of aspects of this is explored in the articles of the present volume. There are 14 contributions from scholars from 11 different countries working on such diverse Muslim groups as Bektashis, Bosnians, Turks, Ahmadis, Tatars, jihadis and a Muslim poet critical of liberal Muslims.

In the first of three parts in the volume, we have collected contributions conceptualising Islam and Muslims. Thus, the first article is by Thijl Sunier (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), who takes us back to the dawning realisation that Muslims in Europe were not just labour migrants or refugees settling eventually to be absorbed into the host societies along the well-known trajectories of civic integration. In the light of the Iranian Revolution, the three Gulf Wars, the issues of headscarves and the Rushdie affair, it dawned on policy makers that Muslims were part of a global community. In the 1990s and 2000s, the question of how to fit Islam into national frameworks became a key issue in national debates on the position of Muslims, but it also promoted the role of nation states as cultural agents. Taking the Netherlands as his case study, Sunier guides us through three decades of religious integration, considering the genesis of Muslims as a policy category with its own specific epistemology developed for policy interventions and characterised by reductionism, alienation and "cheap solutions." Invoking the example of Jørgen S. Nielsen, Sunier reasserts the need for broader perspectives on the complex situation of 21st Century European religious integration.

Using his dynamic model of the metaphorical kite conjoined in a cross-section of values, social norms, state and international law, Werner Menski (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) observes how skilful many Muslims have become over time in navigating and balancing competing expectations in Europe. Continuously, they risk accusations of illegality, because they do not start their decision-making processes from a state-centric position of citizens, but think and act first as Muslim individuals and members of communities. In conversation with Jørgen S. Nielsen's scholarly work, Menski revisits many of his contributions and connects the work in legal pluralism theory to explore the complex socio-normativities of living as a Muslim in Europe.

By posing the question "Does European Islam Think?" Mohammed Hashas (LUISS Guido Carli University) engages in a critical reading and discussion of Jørgen S. Nielsen and Olivier Roy on the question of how Muslims in Europe articulate European Islam. Hashas contraposes his deduction of Roy's writing that there is no theological thinking taking place among Muslims in Europe with Jørgen S. Nielsen, who in turn has argued that European Islam does

indeed think. Through Jørgen S. Nielsen's writings since the early 1970s and onwards, Hashas demonstrates that a European Islamic theology is forming that brings together the dynamic potentials of the Islamic tradition and European modern realities. In his conclusion Hashas underlines that Muslim thinkers in Europe are very much aware of the challenges that Europe and its modernity pose, and also that European Muslims can influence the debate over Islam and modernity in the Islamic classical centres.

Taking his cue from a key observation of Jørgen S. Nielsen's, Niels Valdemar Vinding (University of Copenhagen) sets out to explore the concept of churchification in relation to Islam in Europe. Through examples from Jørgen S. Nielsen's research and a number of additional and similar usages across Europe, churchification is discussed as a pedagogical or rhetorical device, as a tool of normativisation, as an expression of institutionalisation, and finally as both a deliberate strategy and a counter-strategy of Muslims in Europe.

One of Jørgen S. Nielsen's long-time colleagues and co-authors, Samim Akgönül (University of Strasbourg) explores and discusses the "perpetual first generation strategy" amongst Turks – the largest ethnic group amongst Muslims in Europe. In a specific French context, where laicism is undergoing change French Islam is evolving alongside. Faced with a choice to change or resist, Turks in France apply a strategy that enables them to retain close ties with Turkey, the Turkish language, and the Muslim religion as worshipped in Turkey. The generations born in France do lose their command of Turkish, but this shortcoming is compensated for by religion, customs, and loyalty to "the motherland" and the cultural accumulation of the parents who had originally emigrated from Turkey. As Akgönül sees it, multiple loyalties are indeed experienced, but often expressly rejected.

The second part of this volume takes us through legal aspects, institutionalisation, ideological entrepreneurship and critical producing of Islam and Muslims in Europe. The director of the Erlangen Centre for Islam and Law in Europe, (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) Mathias Rohe, opens this section of the volume with the question of legal accommodation of Muslims by looking at alternative dispute resolution among Muslims in Germany within the existing legal framework and the public debate. Muslim alternative dispute resolution is generally encouraged in many strong European states. He is arguing for unity in diversity under one legal order by granting far-reaching internal dispositions instead of establishing parallel legal systems – of course under the enforcement of law by state institutions. However, and this is true for Germany as for many other European countries, the public climate has become unfavourable even to academic debate on this

important topic, demonstrating a widespread lack of knowledge regarding the complexity of sharia as well as of the basics of the rule of law in European states. By outlining the state of research, emphasising the empirical evidence and arguing the specific legal cases, Rohe argues for the vast benefits to both Muslims and society as a whole in making the law a living experience for the overwhelming majority of Muslims, who wish to live self-determined lives with the efficient protection of the state for those in need for it.

Keeping with the theme of Islamic law, Egdūnas Račius (Vytautas Magnus University) investigates the possibility of inclusion of Islamic law into the legal system in Lithuania. His analysis begins with the legal needs of the Muslim community and from there searches for the place of Islamic law. Račius concludes that there is nominally comparatively much legal space for the application of the Islamic law in Lithuania, but it has not been unfolded. This is because of low demand from the Muslim side and limited feasibility, but should that ever change, there is a high likelihood that the Lithuanian legal regulations and the social attitudes will become less accepting of such a direction.

In his article intriguingly titled “The King, the Boy, the Monk and the Magician. Jihadi Ideological Entrepreneurship between the UK and Denmark,” Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (University of Copenhagen) presents his analysis of a jihadist treatise written by the radical ideologist Abu Qatada in London and published by the “bookseller” Said Mansour in Copenhagen. The treatise is a lengthy exegesis of a hadith found in the Sahih Muslim collection. This hadith tells the story of a boy as a paragon of piety who peacefully defies a tyrant king – much in the vein of early Christian hagiography. The jihadist treatise, however, transforms the victimhood of the boy into a legitimisation of suicide operations. It is thus a good example of the need for a legitimising ideological text – and for creating one if it does not exist.

Thomas Hoffmann (University of Copenhagen) explores the provocative phenomenon of Yahya Hassan, a young Danish poet, whose significant style, international fame and cometlike career made headlines beyond the newspaper culture sections and spurred a fierce debate. Hassan is an anarchistic and transgressive voice from the fringes of contemporary Islam. As a Qur’anic scholar, Hoffmann unfolds the multiple layers in Hassan’s poetry and reading style that shares important features with traditional Qur’anic recitation. Through Hoffmann’s analysis, Hassan’s radical praxis is shown to indirectly expose the liberal and moderate Islam as a new orthodoxy, thus echoing calls for a more critical approach to liberal Islam.

The third section of this volume further explores the multitudes of Muslims in Europe. Long-time friends and colleagues of Jørgen S. Nielsen’s, Naveed Baig,

Lissi Rasmussen and Hans Raun Iversen, investigate the spheres between activism and scholarly work that Jørgen S. Nielsen has been personally engaged in for more than twenty years. Ethnically homogenous Denmark has been at the forefront in the recent development of nationalism and Islamophobia in Europe. Baig's, Rasmussen's and Iversen's contribution emphasises the importance of two of the present work areas of the Copenhagen-based Islamic-Christian Study Centre (IKS) for equal treatment of all Danish citizens. The first example is providing spiritual care needed by patients with ethnic minority background in Danish hospitals and thus young Muslims' quest for education in Islamic spiritual care. The other example is providing a parental environment for youngsters – primarily with Muslim backgrounds – in prisons of Copenhagen and after their release. The experiences of IKS have shown that the continuous effort to create relationships, unity, and trust over time provides better conditions for coexistence in society: diapraxis provides an even better way to mutual human understanding than religious dialogue alone.

Göran Larsson (University of Gothenburg) explores the key role the Ahmadiyya movement played in the early history, establishment and spread of Islam in Europe. Giving his readers a brief outline of the history and theology through the example of key Ahmadiyya texts, Larsson explores conflicts over how to define who is and who is not a Muslim, effectively showing that the definition of a Muslim is not a static or self-evident category. Authority over interpretation and the laying down of categories and typologies is always related to issues of power, very much informing how and why Ahmadiis have been labelled as heretics by many Muslim groups.

Travelling with Jørgen S. Nielsen, Emil Saggau (University of Copenhagen) takes the reader into the cross-roads of the Bektashi Sufi order in between text and lived custom with its syncretic blending of Christian and Islamic traditions. By analysing two central holy Bektashi texts, known as the *Velayetname* and the *Makalat*, Saggau explores the role of Christianity in the unique combination and dialectic between social-geographical, religious and historical factors. Both texts bear resemblance to biblical texts and reuse their themes, but were written specifically for a Muslim audience. Saggau links this rewriting and binding together of the tradition with the transition from a charismatic to an established and traditional order, making this pragmatic religiosity a central trait in the Bektashi order and to a great extent the “trademark” of its religious practice.

In the context of a Bosnian experience, Ahmet Alibašić (University of Sarajevo) refers to two recent developments in Islamic literature. The one is the awakening of local Islamic identities in the wake of global outreach of Salafi and Reformist groups, the other is the securitisation of all things Islamic.

These observations are the basis for a qualitative, quantitative and thematic exploration of Islamic literature from a Bosnian context. Due to an increasing demand for Islamic knowledge from European Muslims and non-Muslims, Alibašić concludes that there is a significant opportunity in the production of Islamic literature. Bosnian Islamic scholars may even be able to bridge a Middle Eastern and Arab world to the European languages – as they have done so often before.

The final contribution in the volume is by Safet Bektovic (University of Oslo). Debates about the Muslim presence in Western Europe and the possibility of developing a European form of Islam have been very topical in many European countries. Muslims react very differently to the idea of a uniquely European Islam, as they comprise mainly immigrants or those with an immigrant background, many of whom have an uncertain relationship with Europe and view the idea of a European Islam sceptically, considering it a political project of secularisation of Islam from the outside. In his article Bektovic explores the Balkan Muslims and particularly Bosnian Muslims' different understandings of Europe and different experiences with secular society. Here, Bektovic argues that a deeper reflection on their religious identities could prove to be fruitful for the general discussion on European Islam. He aims to shed light on the theological, historical, and cultural aspects of what it means to be a Muslim "the Bosnian way" and concludes that neither Bosnian nor European Islam are homogeneous and ready-made categories.

### **A Note of Conclusion**

There are many reasons for Jørgen S. Nielsen's success. Profound academic knowledge, exceptional personal skills, tireless networking, and very solid work of unquestionable quality. However, friends and colleagues recognise Jørgen S. Nielsen by how his personal enthusiasm pours into the work, and how he meets everyone and every challenge with interest, curiosity and humility. Jørgen S. Nielsen seeks to make people more aware whenever he educates students or assists journalists and the public. As for politicians and religious leaders, the objective has always been to make sure they have better information to draw conclusions from. Everyone who might be as lucky as to count themselves among Jørgen S. Nielsen's colleagues and friends are the happy beneficiaries of his time, knowledge and loyalty.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Jørgen for the opportunity to pursue an academic life of my own. Jørgen not only helped this along as my advisor from 2009 till 2013, but he keeps guiding and engaging himself in the questions



I pursue. As his recent PhD candidate, I suggested the idea of Festschrift for his 70th birthday. Together with Egdūnas Račius and Jörn Thielmann, it has been our pleasure to collect, subsequently edit and publish this volume. We owe many thanks to Brill Publishers, especially Nicolette van der Hoek and Nienke Brienen-Moolenaar, for supporting the idea of honouring Jørgen S. Nielsen's life and work through the publication of this volume.

On behalf of the Editors,  
*Niels Valdemar Vinding*