INTRODUCTION

Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation

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How were the tragic events of September 11, 2001, experienced by young Muslims across the world? Did those events simply and irrevocably change the world in which they lived through the subsequent massive response, including military incursions in Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States and its allies? Or did 9/11 transform the consciousness of a cohort of young people at a critical juncture in their lives, helping to produce a new generation, self-conscious and actively engaged in the construction of their lives and selves? June Edmunds and Bryan Turner (2005:559) suggested that 9/11 may very well have shaped the consciousness of a new "global generation" of young people. While noting that the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon did not generate uniform reactions in the United States, let alone worldwide, they nevertheless argued that the attacks were "homogenizing in a peculiar way" (572), in the sense that they created a focal point around which new memories, new understandings of the world, and new forms of engagement could coalesce. Thanks to the Internet, which provides the basic technological conditions for the worldwide circulation of images and ideas, Edmunds and Turner argued, 9/11 had the unparalleled potential to serve as a rallying point for the emergence of a new, self-aware global cohort of youth.

As various discourses, most notably the idea of a "clash of civilizations" that purportedly pits Islam against the West (e.g., Huntington 1993), were increasingly deployed and as the United States waged a new kind of war against various Muslim-majority countries and Muslim collectivities, known as the war on terror (or the global war on terror), young Muslims in many places were forced to grapple with what it meant to grow up in a post–9/11 world. How they endeavored to fashion themselves as Muslims, youths, citizens, and social actors

at a point in their lives when they were navigating different potential identities varied widely across geopolitical, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts during this highly fraught global moment. It is precisely the heterogeneity of these orientations and engagements that the contributors to this volume address.

Coming of Age after 9/11

In their study on global generations, Edmunds and Turner (2005) ultimately concluded that the "activation" of a generation by the 9/11 events did not translate into a politically active movement as previous traumas—such as the First World War or the Communist revolution in China—did. The attacks might not have shaped the world's youth in the ways anticipated, but they arguably did profoundly alter the lives of Muslims all over the world who have come of age in the wake of 9/11. Indeed, a new, self-aware cohort of Muslim youth has arisen since the globally experienced attacks of 9/11. The emergence of this cohort has been amply facilitated by the proliferation of new communication technologies and the more widespread use of the Internet in particular. Global as it might be, this cohort is hardly uniform: its members do not necessarily share a common socioeconomic status, cultural sensibility, or political position. Nor are they united in their ways of being Muslim. Instead of giving rise to politically active movements around a shared sense of a history, the generational awareness among young Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11 has triggered a wide range of questioning, experimentation, processes of self-fashioning, and, occasionally, protests. The notion of the 9/11 generation we are proposing here refers therefore not to the cohort of youth who came of age after 9/11 but rather to the global cohort of young Muslims whose historical consciousness, outlook on, and positioning in the world have been distinctly shaped by the aftermath of 9/11. Rather than treating Muslim youth as a "subculture" (Hall and Jefferson 1993; Hebdige 1979) somehow isolated from dominant cultural worlds, we consider instead how the 9/11 generation, as a transient intergenerational stage, is dynamically positioned within larger social bodies and social formations. As "experiential strata," members of this 9/11 generation are "located within a generational flow" (Vigh 2006:93; see also Mannheim 1952:290–291) and as such are always in the process of becoming.

Although there has been much academic work on youth in anthropology (Anagnost, Arai, and Ren 2013; Bucholtz 2002; Chin 2001; Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh 2006; Cole and Durham 2007, 2008; Durham 2000; Frederiksen 2013;

Greenberg 2014; Hansen 2008; Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Jeffrey 2010; Liu 2010; Lukose 2009; Mains 2012; Nilan and Feixa 2006; Pype 2012; Shaw 2007; Stambach 2000; Vigh 2006), Muslim youth and youth in Islam have been surprisingly understudied. The abundant and sophisticated anthropological literature on Islam notwithstanding,[1] knowledge about ordinary Muslim youth living outside North America from an anthropological perspective remains rather limited.[2] If part of what makes Muslim youth Muslim in the contemporary moment is Islam (however it is defined, interpreted, and lived in context) we also contend that much of what makes them Muslim youth is a whole politics about Islam: the landscape of geopolitical conflicts and loyalties, new media, global markets, consumption patterns, and cultural forms, all of which influence their ways of being in the world in the post–9/11 era. Although Muslim youth are increasingly visible in contemporary debates, anthropologists—in contrast to historians such as Mamadou Diouf (2003) or sociologists such as Charles Kurzman (1999) and Asef Bayat (2007)—have largely ignored the place of youth in the politics and culture of Muslim societies. For instance, in her ethnography of the so-called piety movement in Egypt, Saba Mahmood (2005) does not discuss youth—and the sensibilities, subjectivities, and temporalities presumably associated with it—despite the fact that her interlocutors are mostly young women. This is not to fault Mahmood's particular approach but rather to note the limited extent to which the anthropology of youth has intersected with the anthropology of Islam and of Muslim societies. In contrast, questions of gender and particularly Muslim women's practices have been central to the development of the anthropology of Islam (Abu-Lughod, ed. 1998; Boddy 1989; Deeb 2006; Hale 1996; Masquelier 2009a; Meneley 1996; Popenoe 2004; Selby 2012b; Smith-Hefner 2009).

Ways of being Muslim, or "Muslimness," have often been defined in rather narrow terms as religiosity (cf. Asad 1986; John Bowen 2012). However, the shift in the anthropology of Islam to the study of lived Islam has helped to broaden the focus of inquiry to the existential and practical concerns of Muslims (in addition to the references already cited, see Graw 2012; Janson 2013; Marsden 2005; Peterson 2012; Schielke 2009b, 2012). Despite the relative paucity of anthropological works situated at the intersection of youth studies and Islamic studies, a number of ethnographies have considerably enriched this emerging field by focusing on practices of self-affirmation, intergenerational tensions, the search for stable livelihoods, and so on (Deeb and Harb 2013b; Herrera and Bayat 2010; Last 2005). Whether they deal with education, politics, moral

engagements, leisure activities, or other dimensions of daily life, these studies demonstrate that "there is more to the lives of Muslim youth . . . than mere religiosity, conservative cultural politics, and extremism" (Bayat and Herrera 2010:5).

Building on these studies and with an eye to the long shadow that 9/11 has cast, the contributors to this volume take young Muslims in a variety of settings in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and North America as their main focus and explore the distinct pastimes and performances, processes of civic engagement and political action, entrepreneurial and consumption practices, forms of self- fashioning, and aspirations and struggles in which they engage as they seek to understand their place and make their way in a transformed world. By focusing on these young people as a heterogeneous global cohort, we point to some of the ways in which the study of Muslim youth at this particular historical juncture is useful for thinking about the anthropology of youth, the anthropology of Islam and Muslim societies, and the study of the contemporary world more generally.