

**"FINDING MECCA IN AMERICA HOW ISLAM IS BECOMING
AN AMERICAN RELIGION"****Chicago University Press, 2012.**

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Finding Mecca in America: How Islam Is Becoming an American Religion investigates the distance between Islam and America in a post 9/11 world. The core of this ethnographic study surrounds the integration of ethnic and religious minorities, Muslims in America, and the habitation process of migration and assimilation. The integration of ethnic and religious minorities is vital for social cohesion and a healthy democracy. Integration may fail to occur when ethnic and religious minority groups are violently and symbolically excluded. Mucahit Bilici's liberal approach to what it means to be Muslim in America is argued through the dissection of the historical and political transitions beginning with the advent of Islam in America.

Bilici argues that Muslims overcoming symbolic violence is synonymous with their immersion into the English language. Overcoming cultural boundaries while remaining loyal to an Islamic identity are researched thoroughly through the globalization of the English language. Over time a handful of Islamic terms were given Western interpretations and understood as culturally produced errors of the language such as *hajj* and *hadj*, or *Islam* and *Islaam*. Bilici believes colonialism and globalism are integral to altering the Muslim perception of the English language from a "defensive suspicion to an appropriative embrace" (88). In his view of language, culture, and religion, Islam is redefined as being both an identity and a faith. Religious scholars suggest there are guiding principles of an "Islamic English" surfacing the conservative issue of transliteration (77). He presents both liberal and conservative views of language as either a hindrance or necessity to evolve as a religious *ummah* within America. This is vital in understanding the nation's distortion of the embodiment of the American Muslim.

Bilici illuminates the paradigm of the canopy, a realistic experience to being Muslim in America, which involves a citizen conscious of achieving equilibrium or symmetry between the subjective culture of Islam and the objective culture of America. He argues that through faith, hard work, and service, all immi-

grants are given the ability to remake themselves. The author links the history of Islamic traditions with the original Muslim experience when asking the question, how many Muslims are interested in religious justifications of their presence in America. For example, mosques throughout Dearborn, Michigan have witnessed passionate debates in determining the direction of Mecca. Bilici's inclusion of such historical accounts amplifies the interference of reality and the importance in understanding the quality of direct experiences in challenging the Muslim cultural settlement.

Some Muslims will remain introverted to society while others become extroverted through acts of *dawah*, thus increasing one's spiritual and social capital. Muslim immigrants have had to inscribe their Islamic beliefs on American geography with the emergence of Muslim settlers in North America in the 1970's to the 1980's. From MSA to ISNA, came the ideological transition from individuals to families. His sociological perspective shows the change in America from avoidance to protectionism through greater involvement of families and religious leaders. Some may criticize Bilici's approach as naïve disregard of radical Islamists and more abrasive violent issues of extremism and terrorism stemming from extroverted Muslims. However, Bilici asserts that the exploitation and victimization of Muslims is a gateway to increase citizenship capital. As crises arise, such as 9/11, the recognition of Muslims as either good or bad citizens opens up the path to incorporation (144). Some scholars choose to negatively highlight such exploitation, whereas Bilici is able to positively recognize the inevitability of minority exclusion. Emphasizing Muslim comedians and organizations such as CAIR, he constitutes a broad range of exclusionary activities in which American Muslims have become leaders. *Finding Mecca* proves most persuasive in defining that Muslims need to absorb America as much as America needs to absorb its Muslims.

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