

awareness of the limitation of its conventional boundaries. For example, in the paper on West Africa, Elizabeth Tonkin asks why "the first indigenous researchers were historians and not anthropologists." Canadian readers will be disappointed that the author of the chapter on Inuit foregoes a valuable opportunity, stating in a footnote that he does not "wish to be embroiled in the controversy over whether . . . these people should be referred to as Inuit." Both of these questions have implications worthy of inquiry for the complex and different roles ethnography has in the intellectual life of different nation-states.

Whatever one might favour or criticize, none will leave this book without a respect for the range and depth of, and implications and consequences of, ethnographic scholarship.

Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition

Michael M.J. Fischer and Medhi Abedi

Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990. xxxvi + 564 pp.

\$49.75 (cloth), \$23.50 (paper)

Reviewer: Gus Thaiss

York University

The title of Fischer and Abedi's book, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, sets the stage for an interesting and challenging look at an important geopolitical area (Iran) and an intellectual debate in modern anthropology (postmodernism). The two are, of course, not separated but are rather intertwined in the text, or, as the authors note: ". . . there is an increasing cultural interreference, or cross-cultural reading, or play between hegemonic cultural forces and counter discourses of resistance, subversion, and alternative realities" (p. xxxi).

As one would expect with a "postmodern" theme, the book can be read and interpreted at a number of different levels of understanding. This perspective in itself is both an aspect of postmodern literary criticism and a basic assumption of Shi'ite Muslim thought in Iran, thus combining, at a quite fundamental level, the two approaches. The structure of the book proceeds along the same vein constantly interspersing Bakhtinian and other insights into the communicative importance of dialogue and discursive interaction with the similar Shi'ite Muslim stress on the dialectical disputation method of teaching and learning.

There is no question but that Fischer and Abedi's book is an extremely erudite study covering not only a vast literature in anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, literary criticism, etc., but also an equally in-depth knowledge of excellent Persian and Arabic sources which makes the work quite useful for specialists in the field.

The main problem with the book, however, is that it reads like a collection of working papers that might have ended up as journal articles (in fact, Chapter Seven is a reprinted journal article), were they not brought together in this book. As such, they appear rather loosely strung together with little to join them except a rather vague sense of a dialogic process among Iranians and postmodernists. Despite this weakness, each of the chapters stands on its own with interesting and challenging insights.

Chapter One is a fascinating life-history written by Abedi recounting his life experiences in Iran and the U.S. As such it covers socialization, psychology, class dynamics, politics, folk religion, clerical styles and social changes in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s. In itself it provides, as the authors note, a useful introduction from "the ground

up'' of life in a Muslim society. Chapter Two covers a wide range of topics, but centres on interpretations of the Qur'an from literary (postmodern) perspectives as well as from within the Islamic tradition discussing, for example, fundamentalist vs. liberal interpretations in a changing Iran. Fischer supplements and juxtaposes these interpretations with graphic media such as posters, postage stamps and film adding a new and fascinating dimension to religio-political discourse in the modern world.

A similar theme is presented in Chapter Three, although here the focus is a "primal scene" in Islam, the Hajj. Again, however, it is not the usual, rather "pedestrian" description of the pilgrimage, but one that utilizes captivating gender metaphors to structure the argument, focussing on the symbolism of Hagar. The chapter progresses through a further exploration of interpretations of the Hajj which have been infused with political meaning in order to give Shi'a Islam even more of a modern revolutionary ideology.

Chapter Four concludes Part Two of the book with a discussion of the city of Yazd (where Fischer did much of his earlier work) and the Baha'i community of that city. It is a heart-rending account of the sufferings and persecution of that oppressed minority within a theoretical context of a rhetoric of victimage.

Chapter Five, which comprises the whole of Part Three, focusses on the Iranian community in diaspora, in Houston, Texas. Fischer and Abedi use the facts of exile and immigration resulting from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to discuss the cultural crisis faced by Iranians in the diaspora. While the context is that studied by the authors, generalizations can be derived from their discussion to apply to Iranians in other areas of the diaspora such as Europe and Turkey where many Iranians reside waiting for their return. The structure of this chapter parallels that of the first, that is, recounting life-histories as "storytelling," invoking and involving the reader in the oral life world of the Iranian community in the U.S. Their style is especially appropriate for immersing the reader in the "reality" of the emigrants' situation.

The remaining two chapters of the book (Six and Seven) are encapsulated under the title "Visual Projections." Chapter Six deals with a further, more detailed discussion of the political use of posters, stamps, cartoons and other graphic media in the furtherance of Khomeini's revolution; while Chapter Seven is an attempt to provide a post-modern interpretation of Salman Rushdie's controversial novel, *Satanic Verses*. As I mentioned earlier, this is reprinted from the journal *Cultural Anthropology*, but its effectiveness would have been even greater, had Fischer and Abedi reprinted, as well, Talal Asad's criticism of their interpretation. Talal Asad was writing from a Muslim viewpoint and by reprinting his rejoinder it would have only added further strength to Fischer and Abedi's stated goal of Debating Muslims.

State and Society in Bali: Historical, Textual and Anthropological Approaches

Hildred Geertz, ed.

Leiden, The Netherlands: KITLV Press, 1991. 293 pp., plates, figures, index. \$26.00 (paper)

Reviewer: Shuichi Nagata

University of Toronto

Hildred Geertz's introduction opens with a question: "How local communities have been linked to various claimants to state sovereignty at different epochs in Bali's his-