Title—Islam in Pakistan: A History
Author—Muhammad Qasim Zaman
Year—2018

Categories: Islam, South Asia, Culture, Colonialism
Place: Pakistan/British Raj
Time: 1850-2005

Argument Synopsis:
Zaman's *Islam in Pakistan* attempts to bring together the literature on different aspects of Islam in South Asia into a single study. He aims to craft a history of and contestations on Islam in colonial India and Pakistan, looking into the postcolonial period specifically at Pakistan. While Zaman strives to create a comprehensive study, some things do fall outside the scope of the book, namely: the lived practice of Islam, how the media influences Islam, how madrasas are viewed by local communities, and the religious beliefs of ordinary people in the region. In terms of sources, the book relies on written expressions of Islam, of debate and contestation on it, and of the development and change it has continued to undergo. Thus, the bulk of sources come from the official archives of the British Raj and the state of Pakistan. One theme of the book is the attempt to elucidate the effects of the colonial period on Islam in the region. The book is organized thematically, rather than chronologically, with the first chapters providing a broad historical overview to orient the reader before turning to chapters focused on particular groups or themes.

There are many different facets and schools of thought within South Asian Islam, and Zaman chooses to foreground the role played by Islamic modernism. He claims that the modernists and the Islamists are the two groups that have held the most sway and influence in colonial India and modern Pakistan. According to Zaman, the modernists were some of the most influential intellectual and political elite under the British and have continued to control power in modern Pakistan. He defines Islamic modernism as a complex of religious, intellectual, and political initiatives aimed at adapting Islam (its beliefs, practices, laws, and institutions) to the challenges of life in the modern world. Islamists differ as they are uninterested in Western liberal values or reforming Islam to better fit into the modern world, rather they strive to make sharia the law of the land.

Zaman identifies methodological tendencies in historical studies of Islam that he attempts to work against. He acknowledges the danger inherent in assuming that Islam plays the greatest role in people's lives and is the key explanatory factor—he tries to counter this by placing the discussion of Islam within relevant historical, social, and political contexts. Discussions of Islam in the modern world have the tendency to be framed as tradition in conflict with modernity, which ignores critical nuance. This framing is especially problematic in a South Asian context because it was precisely the criticism lobbied at modernists from their political enemies. Overall, Zaman attempts to cover the many instances of suspicion, recrimination, and caricature in the relationship between the modernists and the religious conservatives in colonial India and modern Pakistan.

Key Themes and Concepts:
- Modernists have actually defined the position of Islam in Pakistan, due to their control of the state apparatus since independence
- Defeat by European colonial powers in early colonial period revealed the weakness of traditional norms and practices—Islamic modernists saw this loss as requiring a thorough reform of Muslim thought and practice