

R. Stephen Humphreys

FROM THE EDITOR

With this issue we officially welcome three new book review editors to the *IJMES* staff. Professor Dina Rizk Khoury (George Washington University) takes over responsibility for historical studies, Prof. Laurie Brand (University of Southern California) deals primarily with the politics of the Arab countries and the Arab–Israeli conflict, and Prof. Sabra Webber (Ohio State University) with the fields of anthropology, sociology, and women’s studies. All three bring with them well-earned reputations for scholarly achievement and disciplinary sophistication, and I am very grateful to them for their willingness to take on an unglamorous but vital task. I have already benefited not only from their effectiveness in matching books with reviewers, but also from their ability to offer good advice in areas outside their “official portfolios.”

Naturally I wish to extend my thanks and deep sense of gratitude to the review editors whom they replace. Professors James Reilly (University of Toronto) and Mark Tessler (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee) have labored for many years on behalf of *IJMES*. No words of mine can adequately recognize their professionalism and dedication. I am acutely aware of how much time has been stolen from their own research and teaching by the constant flow of books from our office to theirs. Professor Arlene MacLeod (Bates College) informed us at the outset that she could serve for only a limited time, but she made an outstanding contribution to *IJMES* during the three years she held the job.

A few words on the contents of this issue may be useful. The first three articles deal with the issue of how to define acceptable belief and practice and how to decide whether someone belongs inside or outside the Islamic fold. Professor Judd and Dr. Wiederhold look at how labels (Murji²i, Zahiri, etc.) can be used for this purpose in ways both artful and unconscious, and Prof. Jackson revisits the much studied but often surprising polemics on ethics between Mu⁶tazilis and Ash⁶aris. All three scholars focus on some phase of the Middle Ages, but the contemporary significance of these debates is not hard to grasp. The last two articles deal with language, which is perhaps the most crucial index of ethnicity and cultural identity. Among many other things, colonialism and nationalism threw into doubt long-accepted categories of ethnicity and culture—and hence the way these categories were embodied in language. Doctors Noorani and Trix show us two very different responses to what we might call the crisis of language at the beginning of this century.