INTRODUCTION

Bi-smi llâhi r-rahmâni r-rahîm
al-hamdu li-llâhi rabbi l-ʿâlamîn
ar-rahmâni r-rahîm
mâliki yawmi d-dîn
iyyâka naʿbudu wa-iyyâka nastaʿîn
ihdina s-sirâta l-mustaqîm
sirâta lladhîna anʿamta ʿalayhim
ghayri l-maghdûbi ʿalayhim wa-la d-dâllîn[1]

The young man finishes his measured and rhythmic recital and pushes the play button of the tape recorder standing next to him. "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger": the *shahada*[2] is pronounced in Thai, French, Bosnian, Somali, Arabic and English as "Sing, children of the world" by Canadian artist and educator Dawud Wharnsby Ali fills the room. Stencils with the English lyrics of the song are distributed to the twenty-five girls and fifteen boys that are gathered there: "Oh, sing children of the world, come together and hear the call! Sing children of the world, Islam will unite us all! *Subhanallah*, *wal-hamdulillah*, *wallahu Akbar* [Glory be to God, All Praise to God and God is the Greatest]".

The venue is the Deichmanske Library in Grünerløkka, a multi-ethnic former working-class neighbourhood in Oslo that has lately become trendy with students, intellectuals and artists. In the meeting room the boys are seated up front and on the left hand side with the girls at the back and to the right. Ages range from early teens to mid or late twenties. People are casually dressed in jeans, skirts, T-shirts, shirts and pullovers. A couple of girls are wearing *shalwar kameezes* with *dupattas*[3] and roughly half the girls have their hair covered with *hijabs*

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[1] Koran, *surah* 1 *Al-Fateha* (The Opening).

[2] The Islamic profession of faith.

[3] The *shalwar kameez* consists of a *kameez* (long shirt or tunic) and *shalwar* (wide-legged trousers). While originally generally worn only in South Asia, *shalwar kameezes* are nowadays inspired by both Eastern and Western fashion and may be found in a variety of fabrics, cuts and styles. The girls wearing *shalwar kameezes* in the NMU are mostly of Pakistani origin. Boys do not usually wear the *shalwar kameez* on these occasions, although they might wear this outfit at weddings, religious festivities etc. A *dupatta* is a long scarf that is often worn by women around the neck or head together with the *shalwar kameez*.

of different colours and patterns. As the song finishes, we are welcomed to the General Assembly of the Muslim Youth of Norway (Norges Muslimske Ungdom, henceforth the NMU).

The young man who had recited the opening *surah* of the Koran so eloquently presents himself as the leader of the NMU and introduces the treasurer and the secretary, both women in their late teens. The meeting agenda is presented and a 'sister' and a 'brother' are appointed to chair the meeting and to take notes. The activities of the previous year (1998–99) are summarized. Every other Sunday there were *darses* (lectures on Islam) while during Ramadan a study circle was held for both 'brothers' and 'sisters' with an *eid*[4]-party marking the end of the fast. Representatives from various Muslim and non-Muslim organizations had been invited to talk about their work in the Muslim community and a youth delegation from Palestine had visited the NMU. There had been a variety of outings including a bicycle tour, a trip to the woods and ice-skating. A special highlight had been the yearly trip to Sweden when eighteen young women and men had attended the international Islamic youth conference arranged by the Muslim Youth of Sweden.

After past and upcoming activities in the Muslim community have been mentioned or announced, the first issue of the NMU's own Muslim youth magazine, *Explore*, is presented. The front page poses the question: "Who are you? This is a thought that often haunts us. But where do we stand?" *Explore* is said to respond to the growing need for Norwegian-language material on Islam for the 'second generation': "We who are second generation immigrants need to read things in Norwegian to learn more about Islam", the editor asserts. Some boys and girls volunteer to be in the editorial committee for future issues. Everyone is encouraged to contribute with pieces of writing. Following some issues to do with membership and finances, the next point on the agenda addresses a political question that was engaging many Muslims in Norway at the time: the recent introduction in primary school of a new model of religious education called "Knowledge of Christianity with Information about Religion and Life-stances [*Kristendom med Religions og Livssynsundervisning*]" (KRL).[5] Information is given on the

[4] *Eid-al-fitr*: the feast marking the end of the fasting in Ramadan.

[5] This case is further discussed in Chapter One and in Chapter Five. The core of the controversy was the compulsory status of this new religious education (exemption could only be granted from what was identified as 'the confessional aspect') and whether this represented an infringement of the right to religious freedom.

court case initiated by the Islamic Council of Norway (IRN, Islamsk Råd Norge) and the Norwegian Humanist Association (HEF, Human-Etisk Forbund) against the State and the young Muslims present are encouraged to speak up about their experiences with religious education in order to support the case.

Aydin, the former leader of the NMU, closes this part of the meeting with a pep talk about the need the second generation has for more knowledge about Islam. He talks about how people need to know what Islam really is so as to not only get their images of Islam through the media. According to him, as a result of the negative images found in the media, young Muslims lack self-confidence. "You should not let this happen but should have confidence in yourselves", Aydin encourages his listeners. To obtain this confidence, knowledge of what Islam really is must be spread, this requiring active participation on the part of young Muslims. The NMU is an arena for such participation, Aydin underlines. As the time for *salah*[6] approaches, Aydin's pep talk ends and people leave to perform *wudhu*[7] in the corridor bathrooms. A prayer mat is unfolded on the floor, this facing in the direction of Mecca. About half of those present line up behind Aydin and prostrate themselves in unison before God. The others sit together and talk in low voices or busy themselves with preparing for the more informal social gathering that will follow after the prayers. When we finish eating and chatting the committee members and a few others stay on to tidy up the meeting room. The male head of the NMU does the dishes at the request of the female treasurer, joking with me about the current changes in gender relations. Once everything is tidied away, no clues are left in the Deichmanske Library suggesting that it has just hosted the General Assembly of the Muslim Youth of Norway.

Issues and perspectives

Over the last few decades questions regarding the future of Islam in Europe have become increasingly pertinent to researchers as well as governments and their policy makers. One of the main issues being looked at concerns continuities and changes in the religiosity of 'Muslim youth' – a category that currently epitomizes both the fears and the hopes of multicultural Europe. How are Islamic traditions

[6] The ritual prayer which is the Second Pillar of Islam.
[7] The ritual ablutions that Muslims perform before their daily prayers.

engaged and reworked by young people who are born and educated in European societies and what modes of religiosity will they contribute to shaping in the future? This book aims to throw new light on these and other related questions as they are seen from one particular location at the margins of Europe. It provides in-depth ethnographic material about young Muslims' active engagement in (re)defining Islamic traditions, Muslim identities and their future in the Norwegian context. The religiosity of young Muslims in Norway is discussed in the light of broader trends identified in the comparative research on Islam and Muslim youth in Europe such as those of individualization, the effort to move 'beyond culture', the identification with a 'global Islamic community', the politicization of Muslim identities, emancipation within tradition and the formation of pious subjectivities (Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003; Cesari 2004; Fadil 2005, 2006; Jacobson 1998; Jouili 2006; Minganti 2007; Roy 2000; Schmidt 2002; Vertovec and Rogers 1998). The book also contributes to the emerging academic field of 'the anthropology of Islam in Europe' by developing theoretical and analytical perspectives within which to examine continuities and discontinuities in religious identities and practices in the context of international migration, globalization and secular modernity.

As in other European countries, young Muslims have emerged as a presence to be reckoned with in the shaping of Muslim landscapes in contemporary Norway. Active within the frame of mosques and religious organizations as well as in establishing their own forums and organizations, these young people have become a driving force in (re)defining Islamic traditions and Muslim identities. In this book I draw on years of anthropological fieldwork and interviews with Muslim youths and Muslim students in Oslo. The establishment of two largely independent youth and student associations in the second half of the 1990s, the Muslim Student Society (MSS, Muslimsk Studentsamfunn) and the Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU, Norges Muslimske Ungdom), marked the 'coming of age' of a new generation of Muslims born and raised in Norway. The two multi-ethnic organizations represent collectivities within which individual members are situated at the meeting point of different religious, cultural and social traditions and it is here that these members struggle to develop new forms of belonging and new ways of living as a Muslim within Norwegian society. The lived experiences of young Muslims who participate in these organizations are the point of departure for an ethnographic description and analysis of the contemporary (re)shaping of Islamic traditions and Muslim

identities at the intersection between the local, the national and the transnational. The book traces how young Muslims, through their religious engagement, negotiate and mediate between different approaches to Islam, between the Muslim communities and the Norwegian majority society, between 'cultures', between the younger generation and their parental generation and between different gender regimes. The book thus addresses a number of notable issues that have been at the centre of such negotiations and mediations, including the question of the hijab, so called 'arranged' marriages, the role of imams and the representation of Muslims in public debate.

The book draws on and contributes to several bodies of scholarship and ongoing debates notably those dealing with migration, globalization, transnationalism, multiculturalism, citizenship, the anthropology of Islam and feminist theory. In particular, the book aims to engage theories on the (re)production of religious traditions and identities, as they have been elaborated within migration and globalization studies (see, for example, Grillo 2004, Mandaville 2002, 2003, 2004; Roy 2000, 2004; Vertovec 2003, 2004; Vertovec and Rogers 1998) with discourse-centred approaches to Islam (see, for example, Asad 1986, 1993; Bowen 1993; Brenner 2000; Fischer and Abedi 1990; Ismail 2003; Mahmood 2005; Werbner 2002b). As Bowen (1993: 7) points out, these discourse-centred approaches have been particularly important in analyzing modern Islamic processes of cultural reproduction, and in closing the gap between decontextualized readings of normative texts on the one hand and an ethnographic approach that paid little attention to the social life of texts on the other. They have also shown that the existence of various modalities for (re)producing, mediating and interpreting Islamic traditions, and the insertion of these into particular contexts with varied meaning/power effects, presents us with a multitude of discourses rather than a homogeneous and static symbolic system or social blueprint (Ismail 2003). Inspired by such discourse-centred approaches, in particular those within the Foucauldian tradition, I use the term 'discourse' to refer to a complex of 'statements' made by numerous people in different social contexts that are characterized by certain rules and regularities, this allowing for the fact that 'discourses' are also productive of particular realities and subjectivities (Abu-Lughod 1986; Foucault 1971; Foucault and Gordon 1980). I also use the term in a more precise sense when drawing upon Asad's (1986) conceptualization of Islam as a 'discursive tradition', as discussed in Chapter One.

Within the frame provided by a discourse-centred approach, this book focuses on the discussions and debates that occur as Islamic traditions are (re)produced, mediated and interpreted in a context of international migration, globalization and secular modernity. While discourse-centred approaches to Islam have tended to focus on imams, intellectuals and Islamic scholars, this study undertakes an investigation of how young Muslims increasingly engage in discussion and debate on issues that previously mainly represented areas for scholarly debate and traces the conditions of possibility of such engagement. The book thus examines how Islamic traditions are (re)produced, negotiated and/or opposed by focusing on the discussions and debates that young Muslims in Oslo engage in (e.g. about what it means to be a Muslim, what Islam is and how it should be lived and represented). These discussions and debates are situated and analysed in terms of the social identities of those involved, the social relationships and subjectivities that are sustained or (re)shaped through them and the social contexts in which they come to take on particular forms. In particular, attention is paid to processes of 'objectification', 'individualization' and 'normativization' of Islamic traditions and Muslim identities. The centrality of discourses of authenticity and autonomy and associated regimes of subjectivation to how the (re)production and negotiation of Islamic traditions unfold, and to the shaping of young Muslims' subjectivities, is a theme running through several chapters.

The focus on discussion and debate allows me to pursue a number of issues I think important. One range of questions, which can be broadly perceived of as that concerned with the temporal dimension, concerns processes related to social, cultural and religious continuities and discontinuities over time and the intergenerational (re)production of meaning. Another range of questions, which can be broadly perceived of as that concerned with the spatial dimension, relates to social, cultural and religious diversity in the context of migration, globalization and secular modernity. It is precisely at the intersection of these two broadly defined sets of issues that the central questions of the book emerge. In what ways are Islamic traditions and Muslim identities shaped by their movement across time (from one generation to the next, at one level, and through history, on another)? How are these temporal processes interwoven with social, cultural and religious diversity in the context of migration and globalization, which rearrange the social spaces people inhabit, through a deconstruction and reconstruction of boundaries, identities and practices? And how do the 'local'

discussions and debates of young Muslims in Oslo address and intertwine with debates in what has been referred to as an emerging transnational or global Muslim public sphere (Bowen 2004a; Mandaville 2004; Salvatore 2004)?

One major issue of debate in studies of Muslim youth in Europe is the extent to which their religiosity represents a fundamental continuity or discontinuity with Islamic traditions as these exist in 'the Muslim world' and in 'the immigrant generation'. Centring the analysis on discussions and debates serves to bring out the heterogeneity and processuality of Muslim identities and Islamic traditions in the context of migration and globalization. This does not mean that I underestimate the more tacit and habitual reproduction of religious traditions and the durability and reproduction of religious identities and practices over time (cf. Bredal 2006; Prieur 2002). Rather, one argument I advance here is that discussion and debate should not be seen as per se synonymous with rupture or change or as opposite to 'tradition'. The discussions and debates that I focus on draw attention both to the micro-practices of everyday interaction as these unfold within particular power relationships and to historically sedimented practices, institutions and forms of authority within and through which such discussions and debates play out. Drawing on Asad (1986), I suggest this can be theorized in terms of the notion of Islam as a 'discursive tradition'. Young Muslims in Oslo are introduced into this tradition by means of a number of pedagogical practices and discourses that seek to instruct them on the correct form and meaning of given practices and through these they acquire a set of embodied knowledges and capacities. Whilst tacit and habitual reproduction is central to such processes, so is argument and debate. By describing and analysing "the kinds of reasoning, and the reasons for arguing" (Asad 1986: 16) that underlie young Muslims' engagement with Islamic traditions, the book makes power relations and various positionings within the Islamic discursive tradition visible. In this respect, the perspective I have chosen provides a point of departure for exploring continuities and discontinuities in the complex configurations of power and authority within which such discussions and debates are embedded.

A related debate in studies of Islam in Europe is the one concerning how to theorize observable discontinuities in religious formations. Some theorists primarily stress the migratory process and/or influence of European (modern, secular) societies as fundamental to explaining religious change. Indeed, as Cesari (2005) notes in her introduction to

European Muslims and the Secular State, many researchers in Europe consider that it is Islam's status as a minority religion within democratic and secularized contexts which is the decisive element in the transformation of both Muslim practices and their relationship to Islam. In contrast, Cesari herself suggests an interactional approach, stressing the "dialectic relationship between group resources and their social environment" (2005: 1). While stressing such a dialectical relationship, Cesari characterizes the establishment of Muslim communities in Europe as a release from the 'iron grip' of authoritarian Muslim states on Islamic tradition, this 'liberation' coming in a variety of forms (2005: 4). Others put more stress on transnational and globalizing processes. Roy, for instance, argues in *Globalized Islam* (2004) that the sociology of immigration and ethnic relations is no longer sufficient to understand contemporary transformations in the religiosity of European Muslims and that these are better grasped by the term 'globalization', indicating new forms of migration, mobility, communication and deterritorialization.

Instead of highlighting discontinuities characterizing European or globalized Islam, some writers stress continuities between current developments in the religiosity of European Muslims and historical processes of reform within the Islamic tradition. Assessing what they term the 'European Islam perspective', which depicts emancipatory dynamics within Muslim communities as direct consequences of Islam's transplantation to Europe, Amir-Moazami and Salvatore (2003) criticize the tendency to idealise the European public sphere. Such an idealisation, they argue, underestimates the "*de facto* and also *de jure* restrictive conditions for spaces of social action and claims of public representation for Muslims in Europe" (2003: 53). It also risks reproducing a negative and essentialist understanding of the Muslim tradition, bypassing its own internal dynamics and "the potential of transformation and reform that originates from within Muslim traditions", they argue (see, also, Fadil 2008; Peter 2006).

Addressing Muslim European youth's cultivation of piety and quest for Islamic argumentations, Amir-Moazami and Salvatore point out that these youngsters often resort to the nineteenth and twentieth century reformist tradition, reshaping this in the light of the challenges posed by the European context, however. Both the colonial/postcolonial situation in Muslim majority societies and the situation of Muslim minorities in Europe, each involving different but comparable forms of intervention and domination by other traditions, seem to "increase the

degree of reflexivity as much as the efforts for self-reform in Muslim tradition" (Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003: 71), they argue. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore do not, however, see the reform of Islamic traditions as something unique to the modern or postmodern area or as something reducible to socio-structural fields and the interventions made by other traditions. Rather, by drawing upon Asad's (1986, 1993) understanding of Islam as a discursive tradition (discussed in Chapter One), they argue that Muslim traditions have since their inception been subject to transformations both through their encounter with other competing traditions and through permanent internal interventions that can be accounted for as an impetus to self-reform produced by the "inherent search for coherence" of traditions (Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003: 55).[8]

This book assumes that we need to explore both the continuities and discontinuities of Islamic traditions in Europe by employing a combination of several of the above mentioned perspectives. The religiosity of Muslim youth must be seen in terms of the relocation of Islamic traditions to Europe and the particular conditions of possibility this offers for the shaping of religious identities and practices. These conditions of possibility are significantly shaped not only by the particular socio-historical contexts of various European nation-states and their histories of migration, modes of integration and secular formations, but also by the dynamics of 'transnationalism' and 'globalization'. These latter conditions affect not only the (re)shaping of Islamic traditions among Muslim migrants and their descendants in Europe or the West, but affect Muslim religiosity throughout the world. Current formulations of Muslim religiosity among young Muslims in Oslo, as elsewhere in Europe, proceed through references to (and in relative continuity with) revivalist and reformist discourses as they were developed in the Muslim world from the late nineteenth century on and may thus be seen as part of an ongoing reform of the Islamic discursive tradition, as discussed above.

Situating young Muslims' religiosity in the context of the reform and reconstruction of Muslim traditions has also stimulated researchers,

[8] According to Asad (1986), Islam presupposes a form of coherence that renders actual or possible variations in practice a matter of discussion and debate on the part of scholars, clerics and lay practitioners: "Although Islamic traditions are not homogenous, they aspire to coherence, in the way that all discursive traditions do" (1986: 19). Debates and discussions about what is 'correct' and what must prevail are central to the constitution of a 'domain of orthodoxy'.

inspired notably by Mahmood (2005), to take the issue of Muslim piety and ethical self-fashioning more seriously (see, for example, Fadil 2008; Jouili 2006; Jouili and Amir-Moazami 2006), a line of inquiry that is also explored in this book. The focus on piety and ethical self-fashioning has partly been articulated as suggesting an alternative theorization of Islamic revivalism than the one provided by the framework of 'identity politics' (Mahmood 2005: 193). However, there is a need to recognize that processes of reform and revival are significantly shaped by the particular socio-historical contexts and localities in which they unfold. In contrast to the Egyptian piety movement studied by Mahmood, which was only marginally organized around questions of identity, rights, recognition and representation, the framework of 'identity politics' is crucial to understanding the Muslim youth and student organizations that appeared in Europe with the coming of age of the so called second generation of immigrants. Across Europe we have seen how Islam is mobilized as a form of 'identity politics' in order to resist and claim identities, to claim recognition and rights within the framework of the nation state and to forge new modes of public engagement. Instead of seeing the 'politics of piety' (Mahmood 2005) and the 'politics of identity' as mutually exclusive approaches (or the second as somehow being superimposed on religious practices that are first and foremost self-disciplines aiming to fashion the pious self),[9] I situate the religious engagement of young Norwegian Muslims precisely in the dynamic relationship between the two. While these dimensions are analytically distinguishable they are in practice inextricably intertwined with each other and are therefore examined as they articulate across a variety of social contexts. How are young Muslims' engagements with the Islamic tradition shaped by articulations of identity and difference in multicultural Norway? How are Muslim 'identity politics' inscribed into a process involving the revival and reform of the Islamic tradition and the fashioning of pious subjectivities?

Bringing the mentioned lines of theorization and analysis together, the book discusses how ethnic, generational, class and gendered dynamics intersect with processes of internal reform as Islam becomes the basis for young Muslims' 'identity politics', a means for reinterpreting certain aspects of 'migrated traditions', and for constituting oneself as an 'ethical subject' within the theological framework of the Islamic

[9] This seems to be implied for instance by Jouili (2009).

discursive tradition. The creation of Muslim ethical subjects involves relating to inherited traditions and practices within social imaginaries and relationships having to do with the family and the 'ethnic community' as well as being involved in a process of working on oneself, of cultivating and growing into an authentic Muslim identity. The "objectification" of Islam and Muslim identity initiates a gendered process of subjectivation which links aspects of autonomy with aspects of obedience and obligation. Through appropriating Islamic traditions in their everyday practice, I argue, young Muslims also develop new modes for engaging with and participating in Norwegian society, as well as new modes of transnational belonging to the global Islamic *umma* (community).

Outline of the book

Chapter One introduces the ethnographic context, focusing on the composition of the Muslim migrant population and their descendants. It also presents and discusses existing literature on Islam and Muslims in Europe, as well as outlining central theoretical perspectives and analytical concepts that will guide the analysis in subsequent chapters. Some methodological and epistemological issues concerning the study and the problem of naming and categorizing are discussed towards the end of the chapter.

Chapter Two introduces the two Muslim youth and student organizations that are the ethnographic focus of the book, the Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU) and the Muslim Student Society (MSS). The ethnographic presentation of the NMU and the MSS situates them within the wider context of Muslim organizations in Norway and discusses how Muslim identity is constructed through and interwoven with other types of social differentiations (age, generation, gender, ethnicity, class and education) and how these social differentiations are (re)produced and challenged within the youth and student organizations. On this basis, the chapter begins to explore the manner in which young Muslims address questions about what kinds of communities they are and want to be part of, what they want these communities to become and what kinds of traditions and values should be normative and binding in these communities.

Chapter Three considers a varied range of practices relating to marriage, consumption, ritual, and young Muslims' narratives and written

texts and takes these as a point of departure for analysing the social imaginaries in terms of which young Muslims construct and orient their Muslim identities and practices, 'the global Muslim community', 'Euro-Norwegian Muslims' and 'family and the ethnic diaspora'. The chapter explores how young Muslims in Oslo relate to these social imaginaries and how their social networks and relationships reproduce and cut across the different visions of community that they offer. In addition, the chapter examines how they seek to realize some of the values and objectives associated with the different imaginaries and the simultaneously occurring processes of hybridization and boundary-making thus energized.

Chapter Four focuses on the emergence of new political subjects in the Norwegian public space and investigates the Muslim youth and student organizations as arenas for the creation and expression of a Muslim political subject position. One main lens for analysing the political engagement of young Muslims is provided by theories on 'identity politics' and 'the politics of recognition'. The chapter investigates how dominant social imaginaries in Norway politicize the relation of Muslims to the nation state and the imagined national community and how the Norwegian state's multiculturalist politics and discourses on cultural diversity, as well as historically established formulas for the separation of religion and politics and private and public spheres, form particular conditions of possibility for the creation and expression of a Muslim political subject position. The chapter also explores Muslim identity politics as these are intertwined with 'the reform and reconstruction of Muslim traditions'. The second part of the chapter thus offers an analysis of how central concepts and practices in the Islamic discursive tradition (such as *jihad*[10], *dawa*[11] and hijab[12]) are reconstructed by young Muslims in Oslo, of the individual and collective goods that they seek to realize and of the kinds of political subjectivities that are engendered as these concepts and practices inform, and are informed by, the politics of identity and recognition

Chapter Five considers questions concerning the transmission of Islamic traditions in the context of migration, globalization and secular modernity and gives an overview of various pedagogical actors in the religious education of Muslim youth, these including their parents,

[10] To strive, to struggle.
[11] Call, invitation and appeal to Islam.
[12] Practice of dressing modestly, Islamic headgear.

Koran schools, siblings, extended family and the Islamic courses provided by Norwegian state schools. Identifying 'objectification' as a major characteristic of contemporary Muslim imaginaries, I explore how Islam is passed on and made the subject of reflection and debate in diverse social settings. Drawing on comparative research on young Muslims in Europe, I discuss to what extent we may observe an 'individualization' of the relationship of young Muslims to the Islamic tradition and how such individualization relates to broader changes in patterns of religious authority. I argue that young Muslims' relationship to the Islamic tradition is not individualized in the sense of being disembedded from authorizing discourses and Islamic authorities, but that the objectification of contemporary Islamic imaginaries entails both 'individualization' and 'normativization'.

In Chapter Six, I examine the ways in which people are made to respond to Islamic discourses and knowledges, and how they are subjectivized by means of a set of techniques of the self. Using 'narratives of return' as an ethnographic base, I analyse the 'techniques of the self' through which young Muslims construct themselves as pious moral subjects. The chapter also further probes the process of 'individualization', in particular in relation to how the relationships of interiority and exteriority, intention and action, individual choice and religious duty are made subject to debates and contestation. The chapter highlights how young Muslims' religiosity is significantly negotiated through discourses of 'authenticity' and 'autonomy' and associated regimes of subjectivation.

Chapter Seven is less a conclusion than a theoretical elaboration of the key issues addressed throughout the book. The central question posed is whether young Muslims' claims of a return to an authentic Islam represent a modern 'invention of tradition'. Drawing on Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition, I defend a notion of tradition that does not oppose it to modernity and that encompasses continuity as well as change and reproduction as well as creativity. I subsequently question the tendency to see 'individualization' as the liberation of autonomous subjects from relations of authority and the construction of Muslim youths' and women's agency in terms of a stark opposition between choice and force as related to modernity /tradition. As part of this questioning process, I engage critically with the model of the autonomous subject that seems to underlie such a polarization and argue that the process of individualization can be read as the production of a particular kind of (post)modern subject rather than as the liberation of autonomous individuals from tradition.