



CLEAR FOCUS PRODUCTIONS

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AD252 Islam in the West

Puritanical Influences

Narrator: Given the mostly Sufi background the British Muslims, I asked Phil Lewis why puritanical and anti western readings of Islam are proving so influential.

PL: Take 1977 as one particular year. IN 1977 communist Russia as it then was, was spending one billion dollars a year on communist propaganda. In the same year the Saudi's were spending twice or three times that. And have done so every year since. So that means huge amounts of Saudi petrol dollars have gone into creating major Muslim mosques in European cities. In supporting various organisations across the west. In giving large numbers of Muslims scholarships to study Islam in Medina. And with that goes a particular understanding of Islam. Which to be charitable is scripturalist. Which is to be less than charitable is an austere literalist puritan version of Islam. Which is ill at ease with Islam diversity, let alone religious otherness, Christians and Jews. It's a textual Islam.

Whenever one thinks about how those texts are understood and interpreted. And even those majority Muslims who aren't drawn into a sort of Waharbi Salofi frame of reference are beginning to have to define themselves over and against this kind of scriptural deposit. So a more open accomodatory Sufi tradition would not have to be much more articulate about the Koranic and Hades text which legitimise their reading of Islam within the Sufi tradition. You could almost call it a kind of protestantisation of Islam. And this has resonance for some sections of young British Muslims. Because they are reacting against the Islam of their parents generation. Their parents if you like unreflective oral Islam, doesn't give them the resources to answer questions. So they're forced back to texts. And that's where the text often available and in ready supply, and well produced are Salofi texts.

So in many ways the Salofi influence has been way out of proportion to those who would actually buy into it, as a particular reading of Islam.

Narrator: However, Ron Jeeves argues that south Asian Islam already had it's own home grown puritanical forms.

RJ: They developed organically in the Indian sub continent as a part of the process of Islam feel under threat. One of it's reactions to be under threat was to retreat, isolate and look for a pure form. So you get that reaction coming right through from the 17th century in India, even before the Diabundi's. And of course one can talk about Malawnamaldudi with his ideas that to practice Islam fully and totally, one requires an Islamic state. Implementing Shiria fully. So in a sense you have both the Diabundi's and the 20th century organisations Jumati Islami in fact having if you want similar or parallel ideas to Wahabism.

I always kind of feel controversially that the Saudi regime has always had a kind of sense of guilt. In that I think it suspects that both politically and materially it's no longer.. and these are the Saudi rulers. Are no living by the tenets of the puritanical Wahabism if Wahab. And one way of appeasing that guilt after the oil was discovered, was to spend large amounts of money on promoting Wahabism through education, through mosques and so on. And when they do that, outside of the context of Saudi itself, they tend to look for organisations that may not be Wahabi, but at least have similar ideas or similar ideologies to Wahabism.

So in terms of Mosque support, it's much much easier in the UK say if you're a Diabundi mosque. Or you're wanting to build a Diabundi mosque, to be able to go back to Saudi and say 'we're building a mosque can you support us?' Than if say you were part of the kind of Berelvi tradition, which Wahabism has always been hostile to, because of it's Sufi

sympathies. You can't then really go cap in hand. So you've got to raise the money internally.