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"Okrucieństwo w majestacie prawa. Prześladowanie kobiet w świecie islamu", Nonie Darwish, Warszawa 2011 : [recenzja]

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Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

other terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda, eg. Abu Musa'ab al-Suri, who was the main ideologist of al-Qaeda in the early 2000s. In the midst of the current civil war, some of them are now coming back to Syria to fight the Assad regime once again.

Consequently, by exploring the relatively unknown history of the *Ikhwan* and its uneasy relations with the Ba'ath party, full of rivalry and mutual animosities, *Ashes of Hama* contributes to our understanding of the contemporary Syria. After reading it, the Ba'athist claims of the current war being the "final act of Syria's long struggle between Islamism and secular pan-Arabism" receive essential context and are more comprehensible. Likewise, the book's narrative helps to recognize the internal complexity and diversity of the *Ikhwan* with its radical and moderate factions.

Simultaneously, the author shows in a clear manner that the Muslim Brotherhood is in fact only a part of a broader Islamist movement among the Syrian opposition, yet it attracts most of the Western attention. Furthermore, Lefèvre raises important questions which should be of concern for the leadership of the contemporary *Ikhwan* in Syria, particularly how can they re-establish their support networks after a long time in exile, especially in the rural areas, and what role could they possibly play in post-Assad Syria?

One might wish to see a few aspects of the contemporary Muslim Brotherhood more deeply explored in Raphaël Lefèvre's work, principally its socio-economic and political agenda, which remains vague, as well as its relations and attitude towards the jihadist groups currently fighting in Syria. It would surely help in building a coherent and complex image of the Syrian *Ikhwan* among the Western audience. Despite these few minor oversights, *Ashes of Hama* is a valuable, well researched and very timely volume which enhances our knowledge about the issues essential for understanding the past, the present and the future of Syria.

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(rev.) Nonie Darwish, *Okrucieństwo w majestacie prawa. Prześladowanie kobiet w świecie islamu* [Cruel and Usual Punishment: The Terrifying Global Implications of Islamic Law, Nashville 2008], KEFAS Publishing House, Warszawa 2011, pp. 352

In the democratic countries of the West, one of the fundamental principles of the state political model is the separation of the activity of religious organizations from the state bodies. However, the principle of the separation of the church and the state is alien to the states from the circle of Islamic culture, where all law derives from the teachings of the prophet Muhammad.

Sharia, that is the essence of the Muslim law, encompasses all the aspects of human life, such as politics, economy, banking, trade, concluding contracts, marriages, divorces,

children upbringing and taking care of them, sexuality, sin, crimes and various social issues¹.

Darwish tries to show Western communities how big a threat is the spreading of the law of Islam to the Western civilizations. At the same time, she emphasizes that she is not against emigration of people from the Muslim countries to the Western states – after all, she is such an emigrant herself, but she warns the West against excessive tolerance to attempts (partly successful already) to use sharia by immigrants instead of the laws of the place of their permanent residence.

Nonie Darwish was born in Egypt. In 1978, when she was 30, she moved to the United States – as she mentions “leaving to America set me free from life under the burden of the most cruel law system in the world. This was the best gift I received, when deciding to leave Egypt”. Darwish is an activist for the human rights, she gives lectures throughout America and she also appears in radio and television broadcasting stations, such as CNN, Fox, Al-Arabiya, Israeli TV etc. She also visits many American universities, such as Harvard, Brown, Stanford etc. She has established the organization *Arabs for Israel*, and performs the function of the director at the *Former Muslims United*. Both organizations oppose jihad and opt for reforms in the world of Islam.

In her first book: *Now They Call me Infidel: Why I renounced Jihad for America, Israel and the War on Terror*, Darwish shares her private experiences that made her give up Islam and then convert to Christianity. The author’s latest book, *The Devil We Don’t Know: The Dark Side of Revolutions in the Middle East*, published in 2012, has not appeared in Poland yet.

Cruel and Usual Punishment is divided into two parts: *Sharia: the Family* and *Sharia: the State*, and within these parts, into eight chapters. Darwish shows how sharia regulates all the aspects of private and public life. With the help of sharia, the dominating culture of Islam regulates the personal life (on a micro-scale) and state life (on a macro-scale). Giving examples, the author shows that absolutely every aspect of life is determined by sharia – marriage, inheritance, sexual intercourses, family relationships, trade, economy, law etc. Additionally, the most severe punishments are provided for the conduct against the rules – the death penalty included.

The first part, entitled *Sharia: the Family* concerns two issues – the history, or the roots of sharia, as well as the situation of women in the world of Islam.

Firstly, Darwish explains the historical and environmental determinants of the tribal culture of Bedouins inhabiting the Arabian Peninsula, describes their culture and the way of life, and shows in what way Mahomet used all those specific features to create a new religion that would allow him to unite the tribes and enable their expansion. Darwish shows how the customs of the Arabian Peninsula, dating from the 7th century AD, were codified as the law which applies to all Muslims to this day.

¹ N. Darwish, *Okrucieństwo w majestacie prawa. Prześladowanie kobiet w świecie islamu* [*Cruel and Usual Punishment: The Terrifying Global Implications of Islamic Law*, Nashville 2008], Warszawa 2011, p. 36.

Next, Darwish presents the situation of women in the world of Islam. Her descriptions and observations are the more precious, because Darwish was born and brought up as a Muslim – therefore it may be stated that this is a “first hand” account so to speak, but given from the perspective of a “woman of the West”, whom she became in the United States.

The situation of women is accurately rendered by the first sentence of the book by Darwish, who writes: “for the first thirty years of my life I was a real slave”. Darwish reveals the cruel rules women are subject to in the world of Islam. She supports it both with theoretical examples – by quoting particular verses of the Quran or *sunnah* and their interpretations, and describing the events from everyday life, which ended up in the international media many times (e.g. the case of the raped Saudi girl²).

The women of Islam have no chance to shape their lives, they are controlled by men all the time – by their fathers and, later, by their husbands. Every aspect of their lives is limited to a minimum – they have no right to take free decisions about marriage, sexual intercourse, work, travelling, or even to have their own views. Darwish as an ex-Muslim testifies that women subject to sharia are second class citizens, for whom death is the penalty for committing a “sin”, both from the authorities and the society.

In the second part of the book *Sharia: the State*, the author shows what does the life of non-Muslims look like under sharia law. She describes in particular the position of Christians and Jews, who are discriminated and persecuted, as well as deprived of the fundamental rights.

The author dedicated much attention to jihad and acts of terrorism performed by Muslims. She warns that Muslims use lie and deception in relations with infidels, which is a great threat not only in personal, but also political relations, which the Western leaders seem not to notice.

According to Darwish, “the idea of the human rights is alien to nations in which sharia law is in effect, thus they have developed only the idea of oppression, shame, as well as alienation and sex segregation, which is propagated by sharia”. The author points out that the lack of awareness and respect for the fundamental human rights and a consistent ban and suppression of freedom of thinking breeds terrible social consequences. The draconian law of sharia is an ideal tool in the hands of rulers, because it allows the absolute subordination of the society to the state.

After the thorough analysis of Quran and the rules resulting from it, as well as quoting other studies, Darwish presents the position that Islam should not be called religion but a political and legal system. Many times the author compares Islam to communism, as a system that also in principle aspired to a total enslavement of the society, or to fascism, indicating that racism and class discrimination are an inherent part of the Muslim society.

The main objective of the author is to make the Western societies aware of the global threat connected with the expansion of Islam, and together with it – of sharia. The book

² Ibidem, p. 106.

reflects Darwish's personal involvement in struggle for discovering the truth about sharia and keeping freedom and democracy in the Western countries, which, in her opinion, are unaware of the threat connected with Islam and consequently, they are too tolerant towards the Muslim immigrants.

Darwish persuades the readers that the West must finally realize what the true nature of sharia is, which is nothing more than the law of tyranny, "a fatal disease which destroys well functioning societies". Darwish emphasizes that the aim of Islamic fundamentalists is introducing sharia in all countries of the world. In her opinion, such a scenario may materialize if the West does not change its current policy towards Islam, based on tolerance and openness.

Darwish does not make do with showing that threat in her book, but she goes one step further and she formulates a nine-point plan for the Western states that should be followed in order to oppose the expansion of Islam. The original plan by Darwish assumes the redefinition of the concept of religion, regarding sharia as an illegal law, increasing the control of immigrants from Muslim countries, stopping granting visas to Islamic imams coming from the Muslim countries, closing mosques and seats of Muslim organizations that use religion to encourage Muslims to murder and hurt people of other faiths or atheists, elaborating of immigration forms, demanding mutuality, stopping the inflow of petrodollars to the Arab countries, and strengthening the Jewish and the Christian fundamentals of the Western civilization.

Darwish's remark, which seems to be worthy of interest, is that the secularization of Western communities makes in a way "free room" for Islam, which takes advantage of it and spreads with lightning speed. Moreover, the aim of Islamists – the total control – is totally counter to the objectives of advocates of freedom and democracy. Darwish sheds light on the consequences of life under sharia and leaves it to the readers to decide how to react to this.

Presenting robust views and actively opposing the expansion of Islam, Darwish comes in for harsh criticism from the representatives of this religion. Nevertheless, typical charges against people criticising Islam, that is the ignorance of the Arabian language and consequently, the impossibility of understanding the Quran, sunnah and other sources of law, as well as unfamiliarity with Muslim communities, cannot be directed at the ex-Muslim Darwish, born and brought up in Egypt. It is curious that the author, who is an advocate for reforms concerning particularly the women's rights, many times experiences criticism also from Muslim women, who accuse her of distorting the picture of women's life under sharia. The author repeatedly stresses that she meets with the indifference of young Muslim women to death and corporal punishments used towards Islamic women for even minor departures from the rules of sharia. Darwish is often criticizes for her support for Israel. Paradoxically, her father Colonel Mustafa Hafez, an officer of the Egyptian army, stayed in Gaza in the years 1951–1956 and was responsible for air raids on the south border of Israel, where many civilians were killed. When Darwish was 8, her father died as a result of a bomb attack, which was the Israeli response to attacks launched by him. The author remembers the

impression made on her by the visit of President Nasser, who asked her and her siblings: “which of you is going to avenge your father’s death by killing Jews?”

In spite of subjectivity – which is, however, difficult to avoid in her case – the book by Darwish makes a good study of Islam and sharia and fills the gap in the information about the everyday functioning of this system from the inside. Some shortcomings are of editorial nature – the same thoughts, and even expressions, are repeated in almost identical form in different parts of the book. Sometimes one may have reservations about the language the author uses, as colloquial phrases appear in many places. However, one cannot resist the impression that such a form of message is determined by deep emotions Darwish feels, after all describing also her own experiences. What’s more, the book reflects Darwish’s great involvement in protection of democratic values and her genuine fear of the expansion of Islam. The active attitude of the author certainly has an effect on the language of the book, which renders a great deal of emotions.

The great value of the book is Darwish’s personal experiences from the period when she lived in Egypt as a Muslim, as well as an extensive knowledge of the Arabian law sources in their original versions, thanks to which the book has both practical and theoretical value.

One of the drawbacks of this book are the incomplete footnotes (numbers of pages are missing) and a lack of index. Incidentally, one may notice the inaccurate Polish translation of the title, which suggests that the book applies solely the prosecutions of women in the world of Islam. Such a title detracts the value of complexity from the book which after all describes Islam and sharia both in the private and state aspects.

Darwish emphasizes that her aim is not to propagate hatred towards the particular group of people but “show the truth about the baseness of the Muslim sharia law”.

In 2008 Darwish was honoured with the Clare Boothe Luce Award “Woman of Exceptional Courage” for her attitude. There is no doubt that is a justified choice, and Nonie Darwish is indeed a woman of incredible courage.

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(rev.) Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Marcin Wojciechowski, *W cieniu. 12 rozmów z Marcinem Wojciechowskim* [In the Shadow. 12 Conversations with Marcin Wojciechowski], Agora SA, Warszawa 2012, pp. 288

Adam Daniel Rotfeld, b. March 4, 1938 in Przemyślany near Lviv. Polish Foreign Minister in 2005, a distinguished scholar, one of the best in the history of polish diplomats. Man for difficult issues, an expert on international security, indisputable authority in the international arena.

The most important moments in his academic career include: completing studies at the Diplomatic-Consular School of Foreign Service in Warsaw, where he defended his master’s degree in public international law, obtaining the title of Doctor of Law at the