

Living in a Pluralistic World: Class 11
Ansary - West of Kabul, East of New York: Email, pp. 3-82
© Copyright Bruce Owen 2007

- Announcements
- Quiz
- Ansary: Email (p. 289-292)
 - [what is the main point?]
 - warns of having to go through Pakistan touching off a war with the Islamic world
 - oops- got it wrong about Pakistan; Musharraf cooperated
 - but DID get it right overall: turning into a war of the West vs. Islam
 - "that's Bin Laden's program"
- Ansary: pp. 3-82
 - [is this an ethnography?]
 - [is Tamim Ansary a cultural relativist?]
 - walled cities of a few linked families: kinship back forever
 - speak Farsi (Persian; language of Iran)
 - family compounds in cities
 - not men's and women's world, but public vs. private worlds p. 16
 - no one ever alone p 17 [as with sick or otherwise needy in El Nahra: Muslim, or pre-industrial human?]
 - loose network linked by sense of shared great ancestors: a clan p 17-18
 - 1st cousin marriage [as in El Nahra]
 - eat on floor [as in southern Iraq]
 - not a thing-centered world, but a relationship-centered world p 19
 - genealogy instead of TV! p 19 [like Mohammed in Guests of the Sheik; knows ancestors as if personally]
 - Islam and praying customary, natural, peaceful, relaxing, not enforced p 19-20
 - Ansary's mother considered neither male nor female, but American
 - never wore chadr'ri (burqa)
 - gained respect as a teacher
 - [why did all the Afghan boys sent to the US come back with American wives?]
 - eating with one's hands is a refined and difficult skill, and we couldn't do it very well p. 26
 - compounds with buildings around the inside walls, front room for visiting males [like El Nahra]
 - women lived freely inside compounds, wore veils and had male escorts between them
 - no one left, or wanted to p 31
 - success of Ansary's grandmother, a Hazara slave [he is modeling the stories he grew up with, making genealogy and ancestors real, establishing identity based on family]
 - child's personalized view of early Islamic history [should sound very familiar!]
 - Prophet Muhammad
 - wife Khadija (his first wife; note no mention of Fatima by this Sunni)
 - 1st *khalifah* (caliph): Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law

- 2nd *khalifah* Omar (Umar I), general, expansionist, but Ansary does not think of coercion p. 47
 - story about sitting in the shade talking when a pompous foreign official arrives
 - [is this believable?]
 - [Omar, like Abu Bakr and Muhammad, said to have lived simply]
 - a spiritual awakening, not a conquest
 - Muslims overcame Persian Sassanids to E and Byzantines to N
 - "Most Muslims believe the Arab armies prevailed because they brought a vision of social order so appealing that the native people overthrew their rulers so as to embrace Islam."
- 3rd *khalifah* Uthman
 - [did not continue the tradition of living simply]
 - official Koran - sides with Meccans
 - assassinated
- 4th *khalifah* Ali
 - some (Sunnis) said Muhammad was not special, successor could be selected
 - others (Shiites) said he contained a mystical force, now present in Ali
 - fought governor of Syria, agreed to negotiate, was assassinated for it by his own partisans: Shi'ah
- Ansary, like most Afghans, a Sunni
- Religion class story about the boy who stole 5 cents and ended up killing parents
 - "Never give in to any temptation whatsoever"
 - [an absolutist strain that will recur later...]
- Helmand Valley Authority: irrigation project
 - Ansary's father to be Vice President of the project
- Ghaznavid Empire, followed by Seljuk Turks
 - destroyed by Mongols under Genghis Khan
 - wiped out Islamic civilization; "a massive force of slobbering boors" p. 56 [a bit ethnocentric?]
 - Genghis Khan killed everything, sowed salt in the soil [true? think about salinization around El Nahra...] p. 57
- Melancholy, submission to fate the Afghan character [also in El Nahra?]
 - Sufi heritage, mysticism: life is a dream that "flows on past"
 - children did not expect their wishes to count p. 59
 - resignation to fate: "what it means to be an Afghan" p 59
- Move to Lashkargah
 - no compound walls p. 65
 - Americans could shop in the PX; Ansary and Kayeum kids couldn't p. 68
 - "Americans with an asterisk" p 67
 - HVA intended to impose Western progress
 - young men forcibly recruited to attend school
- Royal family in 1959 decides to abandon burqas - not in Koran
 - boys and girls to study together in Lashkargah

- Ansary's sister Rebecca the only girl added to 150 males
 - skirt, head scarf
 - three more added soon
- boys stay away
- causes outrage
 - plot to rise up and kill all westerners, foiled because a few started too early in Kandahar
- girl asks boy for a pencil
 - rumors fly
 - boys beaten without stating cause - for repeating rumors
- most boys and men publicly humiliated as failures

-