The issues of inculturation have become a constant theme in the missiological studies. It has become normal to us that faith in Jesus Christ adjusts itself in its expression to the prevailing socio-cultural conditions. The same faith was expressed somewhat differently in the ancient Greek realities of the first centuries of Christianity, differently in the Middle Ages, when the dominant language and culture was Latin, differently in the nineteenth century and after Vatican II, especially when it “de-Europeanized” itself in the African, Asian or Latin America realities.

This book can be of an example of a similar analysis to us in relation to Islam. Quite often one can come across the belief that Islam, unlike Christianity because of the constant binding of prayer rites with the Arabic language, did not change so much over the centuries in different places. The author of this book, analyzing the situation of Islam in South Asia, specifically in great India, (including today’s Pakistan), examines similar progressions in that religion over the span of several centuries. Today’s sometimes fundamentalist approaches to some issues did not always characterize themselves in such a manner in different Islam traditions.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first two form a kind of introduction to the context of the foundations of Islam, The Categories of Doctrinal Islam (first chapter), and to the context of India during the times of the Great Mughals Dynasty. The next four chapters form the second part and discuss the issue of the subsequent transformation of Islam. The third chapter deals with the codification of Islam and its redefining in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fourth chapter deals with the Anglicisation of “Old Islam”. The fifth chapter deals with the edification of the next “new”, more open course of Islam. The sixth and last chapter deals with nationalism and the “new Islam”.

Some terms used in the book seem to be strange neologisms. The author had to convert some concepts into their English form. But even more, some new concepts arise from the author’s attempts to break some stereotypes about Islam as seen in the West. When compared to a rational and open Christianity, Islam is often seen as violent and dogmatic. The author shows that the colonial times have left us a picture of Islam which is in fact untrue. The thesis of the clash of civilizations presents itself well in the example of the “Hindu” India and “Muslim” Pakistan uprising in that region in 1947. But looking at the situation of the Mughal times, the current patterns of divisions between the “Muslims” and “Hindus” does not work well.

To show more clearly the complexity of the problem, the author introduces the concepts of the “Sober Path” and the “Intoxicated Ways” to describe two different versions of Islam. The first concept portrays the societies that correspond to the position of always subordinating the intellect and intuition to Revelation. Schools that corresponded to the doctrine of inclusion and portrayed that reason and intuition are equivalent paths to knowledge as Revelation are defined by the second term.

Two key authors of the first chapter are al-Ghazali and al-Hujwiri. The first author (died 1111) in his great work Munqīd min al-Dalal wrote about the disillusionment of scholastic teaching which led him to a different search for “truth”. The second author lived at about the same time in South Asia. His tomb is in Lahore, today’s Pakistan, and died 1072. In his book Kashf al-Mahjub, though using different terminology, showed the same question searching for the truth of Revelation but also in Intuition and in Intelligence. Without going into details we can say that with the “Sober Path” hospitality and hostility are mixed towards ‘others’. On the other hand the “Intoxicated Way” presents several different options. Was doctrinal Islam exceeded in this way? No, if Islam is not treated formally, then legislatively. Even the “Sober Path” has a certain ability to recognize certain local customs. One cannot link the “Sober path” as hostile to theology and the “Intoxicated path” as the theology of hospitality. These are the assumptions developed in the following chapters.

The second chapter is an introduction to the context of India. The author relates the two terms of Sober and Intoxicated Paths to the realities of the state of the great Mughals in India. The
representative of the Intoxicated Path is Jalal al-Din Akbar and, of the Sober Path, Muhi al-Din Awrangzib. The author discusses in the commonly accepted thought abbreviation that Akbar presented the “anti-Islamic hospitality towards India” and Awrangzib the “pro-Islamic hostility” to the world that surrounded him. Both were well educated in both traditions. They did not cross either of them, but rather they provided different Muslim solutions to adapt to the diversity of India. Doctrinal Islam “hospitality” in the context of the elite Mughal culture manifested itself in different dimensions. But there were also visible signs of “hostility” such as the destruction of non-Muslim places of worship. It may be noted that the Intoxicated Way is not fully “hospitable” and the “Sober Path” is not quite the “enemy”.

The third chapter begins the second part of the book. In this chapter the author tries to show the process of the codification and the emergence of a “New Sober Path.” In this process he first presents the teaching of Shah Wali Allah and the pre-colonial trends of Shah Muhammad and Tariq Isma’il Muhammadiyya as well as the movement centred around the Deoband school. At the end of the seventeenth century, Muslim legalism began to shift from “conceptual” to “textual”. Wali Allah and others were involved in the Mughal state-sponsored process of editing the law which was later called “Codification”. Thus was born the “new Sober Path”.

The fourth chapter deals with the next stage, namely, “the Anglicisation and the Old Islam”. Gradually Muslim schools, the madrassas, began to loose importance. In place of Arabic, Persian and Urdu, came English. Persian, the previous state language of communication, slowly became the “Muslim” language.

The fifth chapter deals with the formation of the “new” Intoxicated Way. In the days of the British Empire in India, we see among various representatives of the “schools” of Islam varying degrees of hospitality and hostility to knowledge not based on the Koran and the various traditions.

The sixth chapter deals with nationalism and the “new Islam”. In the post-colonial time the main point of reference for societies was no longer the “sultanates” but slowly the “nation”. This idea of nation became a strong point in the movement which later led to the creation of Pakistan as a country separate from India, which was determined by the Hinduism identity. This is the “new version of Islam.”

The author entitled the summary of the book as Towards a 'Post-orientalist' History. One does not know if he had here in mind diverse Christian efforts to de-Europeanise Christianity. Regardless, one can see a clear parallel in this attempt to present Islam as a religion which is not only restricted to the cultural circle of the Orient (as depicted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) or as a religion only associated with Islamic nations (as often developed in the twentieth century). Trying to get the right perspective, the author reached to early Muslim thinkers. The use of the word “paradigm” is perhaps a distant reference to the classical work of Bosch.

The embeddedness of Islam in India was not an obstacle but a way to connect with the broader “Islamic world”. The complexity of the situation of that time, before the arrival of the English, collided with a new economic reality, cultural regionalization and the decentralization of political power. This resulted in creating a new way in Islam which was adapted to the new situation. In addition a new method of education was also introduced. In such a situation, an attempt was perused to replace what was left of the “old” way with the “lamp of ancient systems with the bulb of modern European thought, thus mapping the branches of a 'new' Intoxicated Way” (p. 340). This new socio-political world of Islam was different from the old principally in relation to the community. In the colonial times there was no institutional “centre” for the doctrine of Islam. The colonial authorities often treated the Muslims as a religious-political “minority” in the Hindu community. “The new Islam” accepted its position as a minority and therefore opted for the creation of “its own” country which was later realized in the form of Pakistan.

The author of the book believes that the choice of Sharia law in many modern countries doesn’t really express a normative Islam but is rather the result of capitalist processes and colonial times. This is evident even today in countries like Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, but also in the movements of Al-Qa’ida or the Taliban. The attempt to
associate the new “narrow” path with doctrinal Islam is incorrect because the “wide” version played and continues to play an important role. As stated by Hali in 1870, “it is impossible to find 10 Muslim who will be happy to see one another”. The author concludes with a summary of his opinion which was his idea when writing the book. “It remains to be seen whether contemporary Muslim - currently shackled by the authority invested in the 'new' Sober Path and European thought and institutions, both of which conceive of Islamic doctrine as rigid and Muslim practice as set – can break these bonds to better address the issues confronting them today.” – Wojciech Kluj, OMI.