**Response to comments**

Re the suitability of the proposal for a series like ‘Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation’, yes, maybe you can dedicate one or two sentences (but without naming any titles) in the same section. I wouldn’t dedicate a separate section to it and would not allocate too much space to it either. In some cases, the inclusion of a particular title in a given series might not be self-evident (just in the same way that an author may think that an article is a fit for a given journal, but the journal rejects the paper based on the unsuitability of the subject matter), so the author may wish to justify its inclusion, and that’s what Maria Marsh may have had in mind. Otherwise, I wouldn’t think of this as too important an issue to be addressed in detail: external reviewers normally are expected to comment on the suitability of a proposed title for a publisher/series, and in this case it is obvious. I would only try to justify this if I thought the suitability of the title would be lost on the external reviewers (or the specialist series editors). In other words, even if you fail to justify the relevance of the proposal to the series, the external reviewers would themselves get back to the publisher to say this is a fit, while what a publisher is least interested in hearing about a proposal is that it’s more or less the same as another title they or another publisher have published. That’s literally the kiss of death to any book proposal.

I would say the ideal number for comparable titles (including competing titles) is between five and ten, preferably around six to eight. It must be borne in mind that the similarities and differences of each title needs to be discussed in the proposal, so there is a limit to how many titles can be enumerated. Just cite anything that is obviously of a similar nature to your proposal, regardless of its age. Sometimes the fact that no book has been published on a given (important) topic in half a century can be the clinching argument for the proposal’s acceptance.

As for EUP, the difference between publishers like CUP and OUP on the one hand and EUP (and American university presses) on the other is that the former publish hundreds (if not thousands) of academic titles every year while the latter only publish a few dozen (in EUP’s case 70-80 per annum). Given the nature of their business model, then, EUP and co have carved out very small niches for themselves and are careful not to step outside those niches, which is why they distinguish between competing and comparable titles: them having published comparable titles means that they are not stepping outside their niche by including your proposal, while the differences between your proposal and competing titles (on the wider market) ensure the project’s marketability. So, you may want to actually conjure up a couple of comparable titles published by the same publisher when proposing the project to a publisher like EUP (or an American university press). These may be surveys or textbooks as well, as it is the subfield (i.e., niche) that is more important here rather than the type of the book.

You definitely shouldn’t overstretch the proposal’s significance or overcompensate for the paucity of literature on mediaeval Islamic political thought, but the paucity of literature is itself something you can point out. Otherwise, just don’t overthink it: this is mostly a pro forma thing meant to convince the non-specialists at the publisher that the project is worth sending out for review. Once it is on the external reviewer’s desk, they should have no problems discerning the contribution it makes and the way in which it stands out.

I had forgotten about those two titles by PUP, but my impression is that prestigious American university presses (I wouldn’t consider publishing with the likes of Harvard, by the way) are more likely to opt for less niche titles with broader ambits (e.g., Jack Tannous’s book published with PUP) and/or major theses (e.g., Stephen Shoemaker’s *Death of a Prophet* published with Penn University Press). Therefore, I am not surprised that PUP published Mona Hassan’s book, though Yılmaz’s book would have been a less obvious choice. They are also more averse to philologically-laden projects, so far as I have observed. Generally, though, I’d say you may try your luck with PUP in the unlikely event that CUP, OUP, and EUP turn out to be not interested (and keep Brill your last option).

The proposed project is based on a PhD thesis of which one chapter has already been published, so you may want to be careful with giving away further material prior to having got a contract. I wouldn’t think publishing half of another chapter scuttles the chances of getting a contract with a proper publisher, but, to err on the side of caution, I would first get a contract and then contact my would-be publisher to secure their permission for the prior publication of the segment. Once you have got a contract, the publisher is unlikely to scrap the deal over such a thing, and, at any rate, you can always backtrack (while of course it would be bad form to say in the proposal that ‘hey, I’m gonna publish half of this chapter in advance, but won’t do so if you don’t like the idea’).