To whom this may concern,

I chose to present this text for two reasons. First, Avi Staiman said she appreciated my translation. Second, it is particularly hard to stay true to a text that is written crudely, with many repetitions, and colloquially. This text, thus, represents a literal translation of the text. It has as little input of mine as I could to represent best the writing of author.

Thank you,

Jean-Philippe Bombay

**Islamic Legal Studies : A Critical Historiography**

**Ayesha S. Chaudhry**

**(Traducteur: Jean-Philippe Bombay)**

Is the Qur’an a book of law? Is Islamic law rooted first and foremost in the Qur’an? What is the relationship between the Qur’an and Islamic law? These are questions that are asked of Muslims the world over, and at their root, the questions that arereally being asked are these: Where is Islamic Law? Where can we find it? Where is it located? The answers to these questions, which are variations of the same question, differ based on who is asking and answering them. And with a religion that belongs to 1.6 billion living Muslims, it is not surprising that the answers to these questions are varied. Is the Qur’an a book of law? Yes and no. Is Islamic law rooted in the Qur’an? No and yes. What is the relationship between the Qur’an and Islamic law? It’s complicated. The answers to these questions do not tell us very much, and the fact that we learn so little from them probably means that they are not the right questions.

So, then we should wonder, who is asking these questions? And why? After all, these questions are not leveled at other scriptures in the same way; such as, is the Bible a book of law? This alerts us to the fact that questions are asked and answered in a complex political and social web of power. The ability to ask questions and demand answers is usually a function of power. And asking questions, especially questions that feel irrelevant and unimportant, is a performance of power that ought to be evaluated. If most Muslims do not care about, nor are animated by these questions, then these questions do not center Muslims, and in fact, they decenter Muslims. If Muslims are decentered by these questions, then who is being centered? Whose questions about Muslims and Islam matter more than the questions of Muslims themselves?