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The Mahdi wears Armani

An Analysis of the Harun Yahya Enterprise

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Doctoral Dissertation

Doctoral dissertation in the Study of Religions, to be publicly defended, by due permission of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Gothenburg, at Södertörn University, Alfred Nobels Allé, 13 June 2013 at 13:00, in room MA624. The examination will be conducted in English.

Faculty Examiner

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Abstract

The prolific Turkish author and preacher Adnan Oktar has built up a large Islamic publishing enterprise under the name of Harun Yahya, and has attracted international attention in particular for his campaign against the theory of evolution. The aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the Harun Yahya enterprise by describing, analyzing and contextualizing four key themes in the works of Harun Yahya, namely conspiracy theories, nationalism/neo-Ottomanism, creationism and apocalypticism/Mahdism. Taking written publications published in the name of Harun Yahya as its main material, this dissertation traces the development of the Harun Yahya enterprise from a religious community emerging in Turkey in the mid-1980s to a global da'wa enterprise. Drawing on analytical concepts from social movement theory and rhetorical analysis as well as contemporary perspectives on Islamic da'wa and activism, it approaches Harun Yahya as a religious entrepreneur that seeks market shares in the contemporary market for Islamic proselytism by adopting and adapting popular discourses both in the Turkish and global contexts. It examines rhetorical and argumentative strategies employed by the Harun Yahya enterprise in order to persuade its audience, and argues that changes in the discourse of the enterprise over time reflect changing opportunity spaces in the Turkish and global contexts. It concludes that the Harun Yahya enterprise promotes not merely a certain interpretation of Islam, but also increasingly Adnan Oktar and the Harun Yahya enterprise itself, by rhetorically placing its efforts into a cosmological framework.

Keywords

Harun Yahya, Adnan Oktar, Said Nursi, Turkish Islam, creationism, da'wa, Mahdi, Islamic messianism, apocalypticism, neo-Ottomanism, conspiracy theories, anti-Semitism, market Islam, social movement theory, rhetorical analysis

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