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From the Reference Desk

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From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*, and Head of Reference Emeritus, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29401) <gilson@cofc.edu>

McFarland has recently released two single-volume references that should get the attention of both academic and public libraries. The *Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine* (2011, 978-0786447077, \$55) by **John Andrew Morrow** will have a definite niche appeal while in all likelihood, **Theresa Bane's** *Encyclopedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures* (2012, 978-0786463602, \$75) will attract a broader audience. Nonetheless, both of these titles are well-researched and treat their topics thoughtfully, providing valuable resources for interested readers.

As **Mr. Morrow** notes in his introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine*, many people are familiar with Mohammed as a religious leader and prophet. However, far fewer realize that he was also well-versed in herbalism and is considered "the founding father of Prophetic medicine." Although there are literally thousands of herbs used in Islamic medicine, **Mr. Morrow** restricts himself to discussion of the approximately one hundred core herbs that are mentioned in *The Qur'an* as well as those "noted by the Twelve Imams considered by most Shiite Muslims to be the divinely appointed successors to the Prophet." Many of these herbs/plants are familiar, like clove, garlic, ginger, fennel, and saffron. However, their medicinal properties are lesser known, and that is where this reference comes in to play. Each entry provides an informed discussion of properties and uses as well as a safety rating for the herb under consideration and a review of relevant scientific studies. In addition, botanical and common names, the plant family, issues in identification, and a Prophetic prescription drawn from the textual accounts are provided. Each entry also has an impressive bibliography or list of notes guiding further research. The *Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine* has a lot to recommend it. **Mr. Morrow** provides a solidly researched, authoritative work on a fascinating topic little known outside the Islamic world. Naturally, practitioners and followers of herbal medicine will be drawn to this title. But one also suspects that there will be those interested from a scriptural perspective in the evidence of herbalism in the textual foundations of Islam as noted by **Mr. Morrow**.

Libraries interested in a more comprehensive treatment of herbal medicine might consider *Bartram's Encyclopedia of*



Herbal Medicine: The Definitive Guide to the Herbal Treatments of Diseases (Da Capo Press, 2002, 978-1569245507, \$111.11, also available used via Amazon).

Admittedly, the *Encyclopedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures* covers a topic with more popular appeal. However, it is equally serious in its approach as **Mr. Morrow's** work. It is also broader-ranging. In compiling her book, author **Theresa Bane** draws on far more than the tenets of Jewish and Christian demonology. She also mines the demon traditions of other belief systems from Ashurian to Zoroastrianism as well as the "lore and mythology of virtually every Ancient society." By doing so, **Ms. Bane** comes up with a nearly exhaustive list of close to three thousand demons. They are arranged alphabetically by name of demon with each entry providing variant names, a concise description of the demon's appearance, where it fits in the infernal hierarchy and often, how it behaves. Each entry ends with a brief list of sources in which references to the demon can be found. In her preface, **Ms. Bane** talks about "a handful of books that proved very useful," but she also provides a dense, multipage bibliography of all of the sources that she uses. A general index rounds out the volume. It should also be noted that The *Encyclopedia* refrains from any reference to accounts of demonic possession or exorcism. Rather, it provides students and interested researchers a "massive collection of demons, clearly defined and cataloged." Some might argue that given the brevity of the entries, the title should be the *Dictionary of Demons in World Religions and Cultures*. But that is a minor quibble. Interested readers will find the information contained in this volume of solid value. **Ms. Bane** should be complimented on the amount of research that has gone into creating this work. Her efforts complement the more topical approach taken by **Rosemary Ellen Guiley** in *Facts on File's Encyclopedia of Demons and Demonology* (2009, 978-0816073146, \$82.50).

Both these encyclopedias should be equally at home in reference and circulating collections. In fact, each of these titles are handy compendiums, full of fascinating facts that many readers could very well want in their personal collections. At this time, neither is available online.

Sage's Encyclopedia of Global Religion (2012, 9780761927297, \$325) is one of those reference works that helps lend definition to an emerging field of scholarship. Edited by **Mark Juergensmeyer** and **Wade Clark Roof**, two respected authorities on the sociology of religion, this two-volume set treats religion as a global, transnational phenomena, bringing together relevant topics, concepts, and theories as well as numerous religious traditions and practices.

Interestingly, among the more than 750 entries there are also a high number of individual country profiles that focus on discussions of religion in "every nation of the world from the smallest Pacific island to the largest countries of Asia and Europe." However, these individual profiles do not detract from the global overview promised in this work. They enhance it. These country entries not only offer profiles from every corner of the globe, they pay close attention to both the historic and contemporary diversity of each nation's religious traditions while noting their transnational and global elements. A quick examination of the Reader's Guide grouping articles by broad category gives readers a strong sense of the remaining content. There are articles covering events and historic topics, influential texts and figures of veneration, movements and organizations as well as entries on social issues and global trends from anti-Semitism to global migration. As is the norm with **Sage** publications, the set is replete with "see also" references and further readings for each entry. The articles are organized alphabetically with a list of all topic entries as well as a list of contributors including their institutional affiliations. And as mentioned above, there is a very helpful Reader's Guide that groups related articles by broad topic. A detailed and comprehensive general index provides page access to specifics. There are few, if any, illustrations, so the set appears dense and text-rich. For some readers relevant illustrations may have been welcome to provide some visual relief. However, given the scope of coverage and the amount of informative content contained in the set, illustrations would have required another volume and higher cost.

The quality of the scholarship in the *Encyclopedia of Global Religion* is obvious and while historic developments are noted, the predominant perspective is contemporary. The articles are descriptive and factual, offering thorough overviews with every attempt being made at objectivity. In short, this is the kind of carefully-considered treatment that the topic deserves. Academic libraries where religious studies are an active part of the curriculum will welcome this title for its ability to pull together disparate aspects of the subject and for offering a cogent overview to student and scholar alike. Those wanting a comprehensive treatment of belief systems will also be interested in **ABC-CLIO's Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices** (2010, 978-1598842036, \$595).

The *Encyclopedia of Global Religion* is also available electronically via **Sage Reference Online**. Those interested in pricing should email **Sage** at: <librarysales@sagepub.com>. Information about **ABC-CLIO** eBooks can be found by phoning: 800-368-6868 ext. 2 or by emailing: <suborder@abc-clio.com>.

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The Middle East: A Guide to Politics, Economics, Society, and Culture (2012; 9780765680945, \$299) is another two-volume set worthy of consideration. Published by **M.E. Sharpe Reference** and edited by **Barry Rubin** of the **Global Research in International Affairs Center**, this reference attempts to explain a number of the major themes that contribute to the complex nature of this region so central to much of the world's current concerns.

However, unlike some other reference works that are primarily focused on the political and military conflict that has beset the Middle East, this work concentrates on significant themes that are often overlooked. The emphasis in these two volumes is on culture, religion, women, economics, governance, the media, and the differing peoples that make the region their home. Added to this, the structure and arrangement of this work is somewhat different. This is not a collection of short to mid-length entries arranged alphabetically but rather a set divided into seven parts containing topic-specific essays. The arrangement within each part varies with some, like those on governance, economics, media, and women utilizing both a topical and a country-by-country approach, while the parts on culture, religion, and the people of the region sort by cultural areas including Arabic, Persian, and Israeli or peoples like the Berbers, the Kurds, and Turkic minorities. Regardless, the essays in each part are substantial, and each of the seven parts also has an introduction that sets the stage for what follows. In addition, there are multi-citation bibliographies ending each essay that readers will find of real value in pursuing further research. Although there is a table of contents that provides a full sense of the structure and coverage offered, a good general index leads readers to specific information whether the interest is in subjects ranging from marriage and divorce to discrimination and human rights to the Internet and the impact of various Websites. The index also has a fairly extensive section of subcategories under each of the countries in the Middle East for those that want to pinpoint information about Egypt, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, etc.

The Middle East: A Guide to Politics, Economics, Society, and Culture offers lay readers and students a context in which to put contemporary events, hopefully making them more understandable. The essays are written in a straightforward, reader-friendly style that should engage upper-division high school students, undergraduates, and interested lay readers. Given the length of the articles, it is perhaps equally appropriate for circulating collections where patrons will have longer access. If shelved in reference it should be viewed as a complement and balance to titles like **ABC-CLIO's** *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: a Political, Social, and Military history*. (2008, 978-1851098415, \$395) and **Lynne Rienner Publishers'** *Encyclopedia of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2010, 978-1588266866, \$395).

CQ Press/Sage has published a second edition of *Encyclopedia of the United States Census* (2012, 978-1608710256, \$175). The intent appears to be updating and clarifying our understanding of the background, purpose, and workings of this decennial event. After examining the book one comes to the conclusion that editors **Margo J. Anderson**, **Constance F. Citro**, and **Joseph J. Salvo** have succeeded admirably.

Given the recent changes to the way the information is being compiled, this second edition of the *Encyclopedia* has particular relevance. No longer relying on the long-form sample to accumulate the necessary "social and economic data," the census now uses the American Community Survey. The ACS is a "continuous measurement methodology" that samples the population on a monthly basis adding efficiency, increased response rates, and more reliable results. A thorough explanation of the ACS is provided in the very first essay in the *Encyclopedia* and offers a firm jumping-off point. Of course, other articles discuss the principle techniques, procedures, and mechanics required in census taking, there are also many that focus on issues and concepts, demographic results, census controversies, public policy context, and constitutional foundations. In addition, there are short articles providing "snapshots of the nation at each of the decennial censuses from 1790 to the present." Each article has a bibliography and relevant "see also" references. As you might expect, a number of value-added features are

included. Tables, charts, diagrams, and maps are used to good effect throughout the *Encyclopedia*. Appendices provide data on past census leadership, U.S. population and area figures from the 1790-2010 censuses, Congressional apportionment reflecting changes in the census from 1789-2010, the growth and cost of the census, sample census questionnaires, and the Standards for the Classification of Federal data on Race and Ethnicity. A glossary of terms follows these appendices with a useful index to specific terms and subjects ending the volume.

The *Encyclopedia of the United States Census* is a typical **CQ Press** production offering scholarly expertise in an accessible and well-designed reference. The entries here are full-blown essays that cover 140 topics, all written by scholars and experts familiar with the purpose, history, and function of the census. It is a top-notch effort that the editors and contributors can be proud of and that researchers in need of information about the census will welcome. Again, this is another title that could find a home in either circulation or reference. It will be of primary interest to academic libraries supporting courses in demographics and population studies, as well as public administration, political science, and policy studies. The *Encyclopedia* is also available electronically. For more information, search <http://www.cqpress.com/product/Encyclopedia-of-the-US-Census-2nd.html>. **CQ Press** is also providing an online guide to the American Community Survey at <http://acsguide.cqpress.com/>. 🌳

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Column Editor's Note: *Those connected to libraries of all types have very likely at least heard of Michael Gorman — among many other distinctions, he was the 2005-2006 ALA President and has been honored with a number of awards for his service to libraries and his support for access to information. For better or for worse, he is also known for his stance on the Google Books Library Project. In this month's Monographic Musings, ATG reviewer Patricia Dragon examines Gorman's recent autobiography, published by ALA Editions. Happy reading, everyone! — DV*

Gorman, Michael. *Broken Pieces: A Library Life, 1941-1978*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2011. 978-0838911044. 248 pages. \$35.00.

Reviewed by **Patricia Dragon** (Head of Special Collections Cataloging, Mtdata, and Authorities, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <dragonp@ecu.edu>

Michael Gorman's Broken Pieces: A Library Life, 1941-1978 is the autobiography of a central figure in libraries of the past 40 years, from his boyhood in working-class England to his faculty position at the **University of Illinois**. It is stuffed full of vivid anecdotes from school days with teachers both repressive and enlightening, reflections upon his parents and childhood through adult eyes, and stories about a child's discovery of libraries as places to escape existence, and later, as the locus of a fulfilling career. These broken pieces add

up to a compelling portrayal of what makes the author who he is. Laboriously indexed and with meaty citations, it is also the work of a scholar detailing pivotal developments in library history in the 20th century, with particular reference to cataloging. Throughout, the earnestness of **Gorman's** passion for libraries is the central, unifying theme.

What stands out in **Gorman's** recounting of his early working days are the fascinating descriptions of his colleagues, reminding the

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