

Un Bilan Sur L'effet Global D'harun Yahya



Il y a eu un grand bilan concernant les effets des ouvrages d'Harun Yahya dans l'édition d'avril du *Literary Review*, le supplément mensuel de *The Australian*, le journal de l'Australie qui a le plus grand tirage, où des critiques de livres sont publiées. Certaines des déclarations faites lors du bilan ont été comme telles:

... cependant le plus influent au niveau mondial, est le mouvement Islamique créationniste qui a balayé le monde Musulman dans la décennie passée... Basé à Istanbul, sous la direction du riche et excentrique Adnan Oktar..

... Le représentant le plus influent du créationnisme Islamique au cours des deux dernières décennies est l'écrivain Turc et l'entrepreneur Oktar, dont de nombreuses œuvres apparaissent sous le nom de plume de Harun Yahya. L'incomparable dans son brillant costume blanc, ses t-shirts de Versace, bien garnis de barbe et de nuances... **Oktar ne correspond guère au stéréotype d'un érudit Islamique ou fondamentaliste...** Oktar s'est imposé comme autorité sur le créationnisme islamique... Son message sur lequel il insiste le plus est que la plupart des problèmes du monde depuis le début du 20^{ème} siècle peuvent être attribués au darwinisme. "Le darwinisme", dit-il, "est le fondement principal de toutes les idéologies destructrices qui ont apporté des catastrophes à l'humanité de notre époque".

Contrairement à beaucoup d'autres écrivains de sa catégorie, **Oktar célèbre les origines abrahamiques communes du Christianisme, de l'Islam et du Judaïsme et préconise une alliance entre les gens du Livre pour ramener la paix sur terre. Il le voit se réaliser sous une Union Turco-Islamique englobant l'Afrique du Nord, le Moyen-Orient, le sud et l'Asie Centrale ainsi que l'Asie du Sud.**

Les publications d'Oktar qui sont magnifiquement produites et illustrées, sont loin d'être scientifiques. Son ouvrage le plus connu est son Atlas de la Création de 750 pages qui a été distribuée gracieusement et non sollicité à des milliers de bibliothèques et instituts de recherche à travers le monde en 2006. Dans chaque page, des fossiles sont affichés à côté des êtres vivants afin de montrer que le monde est exactement tel qu'il était au jour de la création.

Un autre thème préféré d'Oktar est l'absence des "formes intermédiaires" dans les archives de fossiles. La dotation d'Oktar a offert une récompense de 8,5 milliards de dollars à toute personne qui viendrait avec un fossile d'une forme intermédiaire prouvant l'évolution... **La principale source de son influence cependant est le fait qu'il utilise extraordinairement internet et les médias sociaux.**

Lorsqu'on aurait fait une recherche sur Google à propos du créationnisme islamique, les 20 meilleurs sites seraient probablement ceux de Harun Yahya. Il gère une pléthore de sites internet dans plus de 50 langues qui offrent des

téléchargements gratuits de livres à haute résolution, des vidéos, des images et des économiseurs d'écran configuré pour iPod, iPhone et iPad. **Harunyahya.tv réalise des interviews et des documentaires tout en non-stop alors que la Radio Harun Yahya diffuse 7 / 24 en cinq langues.** Les icônes des chaînes des médias sociaux de Facebook à FriendFeed ornent ses pages internet.

Les logiciels de web-tracking montrent que le site officiel harunyahya.com est populaire en Turquie, aux Etats-Unis, en Grande-Bretagne, en Algérie, au Pakistan et en Inde, cependant son plus grand auditoire est l'Indonésie, qui représente à peu près un quart des utilisateurs. Harun Yahya a accordé une attention particulière à l'Indonésie, en la visitant au moins une fois et parle publiquement de son espoir que l'Indonésie entraînera une renaissance Islamique dans l'hémisphère orientale. Harun Yahya est un nom connu en Indonésie. **Le président Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono est un de ses fans, et s'est référé à lui sans aucune honte, dans un discours en 2008 au Palais d'Etat comme un "très célèbre écrivain Turc et intellectuel qui a écrit des dizaines d'œuvres ... qui sont devenus des ouvrages de référence pour les Musulmans ainsi que les non-Musulmans du monde entier".** Lorsqu'un magazine a demandé au romancier le plus vendu d'Indonésie, à savoir Andrea Hirata, quel était le nom de son livre préféré, il répondit : "Quoi que ce soit de Harun Yahya." **Plus de 100 livres et de vidéos de Harun Yahya ont été traduits en indonésien et grâce à internet, ils sont même disponibles dans les villes les plus reculées.**

Les chercheurs Jason Wiles et Anila Asghar de l'Université McGill au Canada ont voyagé au Pakistan et en Indonésie en 2006 dans le cadre d'un projet sur l'éducation de l'évolution. En groupes de discussion dans les écoles secondaires à Kalimantan, Sumatra-Ouest et à Yogyakarta ils ont vu que **les livres de Harun Yahya étaient largement utilisés en tant qu'outils de référence non seulement par les étudiants mais aussi par leurs professeurs de biologie.** En effet, ils ont signalé que la plupart des enseignants à qui ils parlaient en Indonésie ne croyaient pas à la théorie de l'évolution qu'ils doivent enseigner... Taufikurrahman, un biologiste au prestigieux Institut de Technologie de Bandung et partisan de Harun Yahya, a proposé de modifier le programme de biologie en Indonésie.

DAVID BOURCHIER

Islamic creationists are in step with their Christian counterparts

WHERE do we come from? It turns out the population of the US is in closer agreement with the Islamic world than it is with Europe or Australia. Only 40 per cent of Americans accept Darwin's theory of evolution, a figure on a par with Kazakhstan.

Until recently, it was primarily creationists sponsored by groups such as the US-based Institute for Creation Research that led the crusade against teaching biological evolution in schools. Less known, but more influential globally, is the Islamic creationist movement that has swept the Muslim world in the past decade. Based in Istanbul under the leadership of the wealthy and prolific Islamic scholar Harun Yahya, it has already succeeded in displacing the teaching of evolution from state schools in Turkey and aims to do the same from Chad to Indonesia.

Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is an Abrahamic religion, but the Koran is less specific than the Old Testament about exactly how and when the world was created. There is therefore no "six-day" creationism in Islam. Islam has long been seen as compatible with science and rationality, and Islamic scholars have been quite willing to accept the word of geologists that the world is 4 billion years old and that the universe began with the big bang.

There is one point, however, that Islamic creationists, and indeed most Muslims, insist on: that God created Adam and Hawa (Eve) as human beings and that all humans are descended from them. The notion that Adam, Islam's first prophet, was descended from apes is regarded as preposterous. Many creationists, Christian and Muslim, also insist that all living things were created by God at the same time and in their final form. Gradualism has always been grotesque and humans have always been human.

The publicist Oktay Altan's evolutionary epic *On the Origin of Species* (2007) met relatively little resistance in the Islamic world. Rebuttals were published as early as 1091 but the three did not provoke the outrage and soul-searching that it was in Turkey that opposition to Darwinism first crystallized in an organized way. Following the eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of World I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk established an assertedly secular republic in a land where 94 per cent of the population identify as Muslim. Atatürk's drive to modernize Turkey along Western lines alienated many Muslims and created a chasm between Islamists and the secular-oriented elite.

Opposition to secularism in Turkey began as early as the 1920s, but it was not until the 70s that Islamist intellectuals seized on Darwinism as a stick with which to beat their enemies. Against a background of intense and sometimes violent political polarization, with Islamists and right-wing nationalists ranged against Marxists and leftist Kemalists, Darwinism came to stand not only for secularism but also atheism, Westernism and Marxism in short everything that the Islamists argued had gone wrong with Turkey over the half-century of the empire. Islamic anti-Darwinism, then, as a distinct discourse was born in the midst of a culture war between Islamists and leftist defenders of a secular Turkey.

Following the election of the rightist Motherland Party in 1982, state schools in Turkey for the first time began teaching creationism as part of the biology curriculum.

This is not to say that the scientific establishment in Turkey, or indeed of other Islamic countries, shares the popular appetite for creationism. The national system of 14 Islamic universities, including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Indonesia put their names to the International Panel on International Issues statement on evolution in 2006 that affirmed the "common scientific origins...of all organisms living today, including humans."



Harun Yahya, the voice of Islamic creationism

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The creator, for Islamic creationists, is not, therefore, the West but evolution. This is what makes Islamic creationists to overlook doctrinal differences with Christian creationists and see themselves as part of the same struggle.

By far the most influential exponent of Islamic creationism during the past two decades is Turkish writer and entrepreneur Oktay, whose numerous works appear under the pen name Harun Yahya. Unmistakable in his brilliant white suits, Versace T-shirts, well-trimmed beard and shades, Oktay hardly fits the stereotype of an Islamic scholar or fundamentalist. Indeed, it was only after training as an interior designer (and a stint in

head-the-union era) apparent in the numerous representations of himself in his films and in his recent prose, Oktay, with the coming end of Islam and the emergence of a Muslim Islamic revival.

While Oktay's theology, especially his self-imposed mission about the omnipotence of God, have attracted some criticism from Islamic scholars, he enjoys a remarkable degree of respectability. The *Real Islamic Strategic Studies Center* in London rated Oktay 4/5 in its listing of the 500 most influential Muslims last year. In its citation, the center listed Oktay's 1.4 million fans and his scholarly and scientific efforts as justification for his high standing.

Oktay's publications are beautifully produced and illustrated but are anything but scientific. His best known work is his 750-page *Islam of Creation*,

which was distributed free and unsolicited to thousands of libraries and research institutes across the world in 2006.

One page after page, ancient fossils are displayed next to living organisms to drive home the point that the world is exactly as it was on the day of creation. The trouble is that biologists have pointed out that the age of many of the fossils is greatly overstated and in some cases the images are not of the same phylum, let alone the same species. In one instance, a caddisfly as under is portrayed as the ancestor of a modern caddisfly that is actually a flying fly, complete with book.

Another favorite theme of Oktay's is the supposed absence of "transitional forms" in the fossil record — the evidence, animals that are half-one thing and half another — opposing biologists' arguments that all fossils are transitional. Oktay's argument has offered a reward of \$8.5 billion to anyone who comes up with a fossil of a transitional form that proves evolution.

There is no doubting the effectiveness of Oktay's publicity machine. Over media day, he now sponsors conferences across the world and regularly flies journalists to Istanbul to interview him.

The main source of his influence, though, is his phenomenally easy use of the internet and social media. Google Islamic creationism and the chances are that the top 20 items will be by or about Harun Yahya. He operates a plethora of websites in more than 50 languages that offer free downloads of high-resolution books, videos, images and screensavers configured for iPad, iPhone and iPod. Harun Yahya's content overlaps extensively and documentarily with Harun Yahya Radio streams 24/7 in five languages. Strips of social media are even being Facebook to Facebook about his web pages.

Web-tracking software shows that while Harun Yahya's main site, *Harunyahya.com*, is popular in Turkey, the US, Britain, Algeria, Pakistan and India, its largest audience is in Indonesia.

Indonesia, home to the largest Muslim population, is similar to the Turkish people in that it has always had a considerable but head-on-Islamic constitution, a secular-oriented elite and a military that traditionally has been supportive of Islamists. Both are multi-party democracies in which Islamists have played an increasingly assertive political role in recent years. Harun Yahya has great special attention in Indonesia, visiting at least once and speaking publicly of his hope that Indonesia will lead an Islamic renaissance in the eastern hemisphere.

Harun Yahya is a household name in Indonesia. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is an avid reader, referring to him in a 2008 speech at the state palace as a "very famous Turkish writer and intellectual who has written dozens of books... which have become reference books for Muslims and non-Muslims the world over". When Indonesia's best-selling novelist Andrea Hirata was asked by a magazine to name his favorite books he answered: "Anything by Harun Yahya."

More than 300 of Harun Yahya's books and

Continued on Page 12

Continued from Page 14

videos have been translated into Indonesian and, thanks to the internet, they are available even in the remotest towns.

Researchers Jason Wiles and Anifa Asghar from Canada's McGill University travelled to Pakistan and Indonesia in 2006 as part of a project on evolution education. In focus groups at high schools in Kalimantan, West Sumatra and Yogyakarta they found Harun Yahya books were widely used as reference material not only by the students but also by their biology teachers. Indeed, they reported that most of the teachers they spoke to in Indonesia did not believe in the evolutionary theory they were employed to teach.

It is little wonder that the surveys they conducted indicated a good deal of confusion among the students.

While 85 per cent agreed with the principle of biological evolution, and most said that evolution was based on evidence, 60 per cent said that evolutionary theory could not be correct since it disagreed with the account of creation in the holy book.

While biological evolution is generally accepted among academic biologists in Indonesia, this is not always the case. It is not unusual for science faculties to have Islamic activists among the staff and it was one of these activists, Taufikurrahman, a biologist at the prestigious Bandung Institute of Technology and a supporter of Harun Yahya, who proposed changing the biology



Richard Dawkins

curriculum in Indonesia to incorporate intelligent design, creationism's better-dressed cousin.

Taufikurrahman's proposal was attacked by biologists at other universities and was not taken up by any political party. However, it did trigger a wider debate in Indonesia about Darwinism v creationism, which revealed considerable public support for creationism in the wider community. Taufikurrahman subsequently emerged as a candidate for mayor of Bandung, standing for the Islamist Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS), Indonesia's fourth largest political party following impressive gains in the 2009 general election.

The PKS is the only main political party in Indonesia with links to Harun Yahya sources on its websites and it is quite conceivable that it will be tempted to propose introducing creationism

into the school curriculum in its election platform for 2014. PKS strategists have close relations with Turkey's conservative ruling party, the Justice and Development Party, and are keen to emulate its success.

A problem in Indonesia, as in much of the Islamic world, has been the reluctance of the domestic scientific community to take a clear and united stand against creationism, perhaps out of fear of being cast as anti-Islamic. Because of the way Harun Yahya has succeeded in framing the debate, many see the choice as between God and Darwin, with no middle ground.

Richard Dawkins has, perhaps unwittingly, bought into the argument from the opposite perspective, using Darwin to attack God. As science writer Salman Hameed has observed, if the choice is put in this way, religion will win every time, regardless of the evidence.

One way to depolarize the debate may be to highlight the achievements of early Muslim scholars in this area. Al-Jahiz, for instance, the Afro-Arab writer born in AD781, made the following argument in his seven-volume *Book of Animals*, prefiguring Darwin by a millennium:

Animals engage in a struggle for existence; for resources, to avoid being eaten and to breed. Environmental factors influence organisms to develop new characteristics to ensure survival, thus trans-

forming into new species. Animals that survive to breed can pass on their successful characteristics to offspring.

There are also statements from the 1970s, before the time of Harun Yahya, such as that by highly influential Pakistani Muslim scholar Abul Ala Maududi:

The most that can be said in this connection is that both the theories of the creation of the species may be equally possible. Their creation might have taken place according to the Darwinian theory of evolution or each of the species might have been brought into existence individually.

Zaki Badawi, the foremost Muslim scholar in Britain for many years, also left the door open when he said: "I don't see a contradiction between [the theory of evolution] and Islam."

So there may still be room to move. Certainly many Muslim scientists are uncomfortable with a situation in which Islam is being criticised for departing from its centuries-old association with science and discovery.

What is clear, though, is that Islamic creationists are winning the propaganda war. Until biologists in the West and in the Islamic world can construct a narrative that will define the debate and present compelling reasons to embrace the wonder of evolution, then Harun Yahya will be streets ahead. ■

<https://www.harunyahya.info/fr/articles/un-bilan-sur-leffet-global-d8217harun-yahya>