As the first nation created as a religious asylum, Pak-
istan has a short but tortuous history of fifty-five years, half of which was controlled by a military regime, 
during the tenure of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979), 
the first popularly elected Prime minister of the coun-
try. Bhutto was arrested and hanged by general Zia 
ul-Haq (1928-1988). While the Islamization rhetoric of 
Bhutto was characterized by its mixture of socialism, 
nationalism and populism, the discourse of Zia ul-
Haq appeared to be of a much more straightforward 
ideological-Islamist type. In opposition to his rule, a 
counter-discourse developed in which Mughal her-
itage was revived.

Without going deep into the details of the selec-
tive brand of Islamization the state promot-
ed, let us say that the regime was above all a 
dictatorship: eleven years of military rule 
(1977-1988) that ended only with Zia ul-
Haq’s death. Zia’s Islamisation programme 
was mainly twofold. Firstly, it comprised a 
deliberate attempt at reforming selective as-
pects of the penal code inherited from the 
British through the Hudood Ordinances 
(1976), the Law of Evidence (1984) and the 
Blasphemy Law (1986). It was then a kind 
of juridical bricolage that tended to harm 
above all women and religious minorities. Secondly, it used propaganda through the media (television, radio, and schoolbooks) in 
favour of religious education, Arabization (Zia ul-Haq himself put on an Arabic accent 
when he was speaking in Urdu), sanctity of the 
mosque, canonical Islam, and women’s 
modesty (veiling, restriction of the image of 
women in commercials and cinema). During 
the 1980s, Pakistan’s national television was 
now a world where study of 
Islam (AKMI), Berlin, Germany. 
Notes
1. Whelock, Virginia, ‘Miniature Painting in Pakistan 
Today’, lecture to the DRISS, Paris, 10 January 
2. See for example, Amelot, Jean-Loupe (1990), 
‘La grande tradition’, Anthropologie de l’islamique en 
Afrique et ailleurs, Paris: Payot, and Graumetry, 
3. Ahmed, Trevor, “Islamic Art and Culture” in 
Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, 
Vol I, III, pp. 57-59. See also Musli Khan 
(1996), ‘Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The 
Muslim Women in India’ in Zoya Hasan (ed.), Fading 
identities: Community, State and Muslim Women, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 
Invention of Tradition, Cambridge: Cambridge 

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Without going deep into the details of the selective brand of Islamization the state promoted, let us say that the regime was above all a dictatorship: eleven years of military rule (1977-1988) that ended only with Zia ul-Haq’s death. Zia’s Islamisation programme was mainly twofold. Firstly, it comprised a deliberate attempt at reforming selective aspects of the penal code inherited from the British through the Hudood Ordinances (1976), the Law of Evidence (1984) and the Blasphemy Law (1986). It was then a kind of juridical bricolage that tended to harm above all women and religious minorities. Secondly, it used propaganda through the media (television, radio, and schoolbooks) in favour of religious education, Arabization (Zia ul-Haq himself put on an Arabic accent when he was speaking in Urdu), sanctity of the mosque, canonical Islam, and women’s modesty (veiling, restriction of the image of women in commercials and cinema). During the 1980s, Pakistan’s national television was now a world where study of Islam (AKMI), Berlin, Germany.

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