

The Sociology of Islam

Secularism, Economy and Politics

Edited by
Tugrul Keskin

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The contribution of Islam to world civilization is undeniable, however in the last one hundred years, Muslims have been faced with all the effects and ramifications of modernity, caused by the emergence of global capitalism. What does modernity ultimately mean for Muslims, and how will the historical precepts of Islam meet with changes in our globalized world?

To date, most scholars on Islam have tried to understand Muslim societies from historical observation alone; however, this simplistic academic approach does not allow us to understand the entire transformation that has taken place in Muslim societies. Sociological scholarship, on the other hand, argues that it would be difficult to understand Islam without first understanding the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the social structure of Muslim societies which are embedded in the relationship between religion, the economy, politics and society.

This book, therefore, will make a connection between the economic system and its social and political consequences within Muslim societies. To do this, it examines the role of Islam within Muslim societies in the context of ongoing and increasingly powerful neoliberal economic processes in a globalized world. The Muslim understanding of secularism, modernity, the state, collective identity, immigration, and Islamic political thought and economic life are all shaped by forces of globalization and new market conditions. However, Islam also influences the West and its perceptions of Islam because of the interdependent relations brought about by the global economy. These interdependencies create social and political transformation on both sides.

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I dedicate this book to the children of the Stolen Generation in Australia who have been oppressed, colonized and killed in the name of the civilization project. Removing children from their Aboriginal families in Australia between the years 1909 and 1969 was an official government policy. As a result of this inhumane act, one out of every ten Aboriginal children was taken forcefully from their families and placed in missionary schools. I therefore dedicate this book to those who have suffered at the hands of 'civilization' and the empire, to the children of the Stolen Generation and to David Gulpilil Ridjimiraril Dalaithngu, who reminds us of this stolen past and future ...

Contents

Contributors	xi
Preface	xxiii
1 The Sociology of Islam	1
<i>Tugrul Keskin</i>	

ISLAM, ECONOMY AND POLITICS

2 Islam and Moral Economy	21
<i>Basak Ozaral</i>	
3 Has Modernity Ruptured Islamic Political Tradition?	45
<i>Ovamer Anjum</i>	
4 Neo-liberalism and 'Third Way' Islamic Activism: Fethullah Gülen and Turkey's New Elite	61
<i>Joshua Hendrick</i>	
5 From Islamism to Post-Islamism: The Coming of a New Intellectual Trajectory in Pakistan	91
<i>Husnul Amin</i>	

GLOBALIZATION AND ISLAM

6 The Multicultural <i>Ummah</i>	129
<i>Corri Zoli</i>	

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

- | | | |
|---|--|-----|
| 7 | Power Struggle in the Religious Field of Islam:
Modernization, Globalization and the Rise of Salafism
<i>Melanie Reddig</i> | 153 |
| 8 | Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Chandra Muzaffar:
How Theology Impacts Reformist Views on Islam
and Secularism
<i>David L. Johnston</i> | 177 |
| 9 | Civil Islam, Means and End of Liberal Piety:
Ethnographic Notes from among Turkey's
Charitable Foundations
<i>Jeremy Walton</i> | 201 |

MUSLIM SOCIETY IN THE WEST

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 10 | Indigenous and Immigrant Faces of Islam in Poland
<i>Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska</i> | 229 |
| 11 | Muslim Converts and Islamophobia in Britain
<i>Leon Moosavi</i> | 247 |
| 12 | Islam in Brazil: Reflections on Economic Life
and Religiosity in a Minority Context
<i>Cristina Maria de Castro</i> | 269 |
| 13 | Italian Secularism Revisited?: Muslims' Claims in the
Public Sphere and the Long Struggle Towards
Religious Equality
<i>Enzo Pace and Annalisa Frisina</i> | 291 |

ISLAM AND MUSLIM SOCIETIES

14	Tradition and Response: Islam and Muslim Societies in a Nigerian City <i>David O. Ogungbile</i>	319
15	Religion–State Relations in Malaysia <i>Joseph B. Tamney</i>	343
16	The Islamist Movement in Syria: Historical, Political and Social Struggle <i>Radwan Ziadeh</i>	377
17	Many Hijabs: Interpretative Approaches to the Questions of Islamic Female Dress <i>Rachel Woodlock</i>	395
18	Pluralistic and Informal Welfare Regime: The Roles of Islamic Institutions in the Indonesian Welfare Regime <i>Siti Kusujiarti</i>	419
19	What They Say: About the Treatment of Expatriate Workers in the United Arab Emirates <i>Kathryn Schellenberg and Mohamed Daassa</i>	453
	Index	487

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

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 THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

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 THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

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The chief characteristic of the Islamic Concept of Life is that it does not admit a conflict, nay, not even a significant separation between life—spiritual and life—mundane. It does not confine itself merely in purifying the spiritual and the moral life of man in the limited sense of the word. Its domain extends to the entire gamut of life. It wants to mould individual life as well as the social order in healthy patterns, so that the Kingdom of God may really be established on the earth and so that peace, contentment and well-being may fill the world as waters fill the oceans. The Islamic Way of Life is based on this unique approach to life and a peculiar concept of man's place in the Universe.

Mawdudi, *The Islamic Way of Life*

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Preface

Tugrul Keskin

The idea for this book flourished in my mind a couple of years ago, when I was planning to attend the Southern Sociological Society (SSS) meeting. The Sociology Department at Virginia Tech was the organizing institution for the annual meeting, and we had planned to organize panels and paper submissions, and were tasked with arranging the entire conference. Michael Hughes, who was president of the SSS at the time, and my mentor Dale Wimberley recommended that I organize a panel on Islam and Muslim societies. At first I hesitated at the idea of organizing a panel on Islam in the American South of Jim Crow. I thought it may not be a good idea, and wondered who would participate and how many sociologists study or focus on Islam and Muslim societies in the South. But my concerns were unfounded. As a result of this very successful, positive experience, I continued to organize panels on Islam and Muslim societies at the SSS annual meetings over the next three years. I met with some of the contributors in these meetings, including some wonderful sociologists who influenced my academic path.

It is always difficult to list and thank all the people who help or contribute to a project or research effort, because a large undertaking such as this is a multidimensional effort, and is produced by not just the researcher alone, but there is an important role played by those within his or her social environment including friends, family, colleagues and teachers. I would like to first thank all the contributors.

Thanks to all my friends for their critical insights and support, and to those colleagues and fellow sociologists without whom this work would not have been possible. In particular I would like to recognize Dale Wimberley, Ted Fuller, Ellsworth Fuhrman, Tim Luke, Michael Hughes, Terry Kershaw, Wolfgang Natter, Ananda Abeysekara, Judith

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

Blau, Kemal Silay and Birol Yesilada for their valuable theories and perspectives which I have explored further within my research. Thanks also to William Robinson, William Domhoff, David Harvey, Bryan Turner, Charles Kurzman, Amy Goodman and thinkers, authors and political figures who are not with us today but contributed to and shaped my academic views, such as Mawlana Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, Ernest Gellner, Maxime Rodinson, Malcolm X, Franz Fanon, Edward Said and Karl Marx, whose work has influenced me in many ways. More generally, for their encouragement and support, I owe a debt of the deepest gratitude to my loyal friends and colleagues, Kaeyoung Shin, Husnul Amin, Ismail Secer, Dogu Aytun, Hamdi Palamut, Mustafa Yildirim, Basak Gokcora to name just a few.

Last but not least, to my wife Sharon, without whose help and patience during my studies this book would not have been possible. I appreciate her guidance and understanding in difficult times. They must all surely know that this project was undertaken as much at their expense as it was at my own, I only hope I have not disappointed them. Responsibility for all remaining shortcomings and mistakes are exclusively my own and my thanks also go to so many others whose names I could not list.

1

The Sociology of Islam

Tugrul Keskin

*Those who do not rule in accordance with God's
revelations are the disbelievers.*

Al-Maeda (44) *The Qur'an*

The theological understanding of Islam has been studied for the last 1,400 years. But this understanding cannot fully explain current social, political and economic transformations in the world today. In the modern world, we have a global financial system, a nation state, an oil-based economy, neo-liberal capitalism, popular culture, urbanization and social movements. In order to understand these phenomena in relation to Islam and Muslim societies, we must apply a sociological understanding of Islam as Ibn Khaldun did in the Muqaddimah in the fourteenth century.

In this context, the study of Islam as a religion is a very specific subject, but according to sociologist Anthony Giddens, every structure (such as Islam) has human agency. In the context of Islam, the agents are Muslims, and as sociologists, we systematically study Muslim behaviour within the structure of the religion. We also look carefully at the current and historic socio-economic and political context and the impact it has on human agency and behaviour. In this way, sociology is uniquely positioned to provide a multidimensional perspective and approach to the study of Islam and Muslim societies. Therefore, the sociology of Islam can be described as a systematic study of the social, political and economic aspects and transformation of Muslim societies in the context of an increasingly globalized world.

Today, we witness rapid changes in society, politics and the economy as a result of technological innovations, urbanization and the increased growth in access to education, as well as to media, as an overall trend.