Chapter 15  Issues of identity: ritual and politics


The pillars of Islam

For a review of literature on the personalization of Muslim faith in the modern world see Frank Peter, “Individualization and Religious Authority in Western European Islam,” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 17 (2006), 105–18. It is also to be noted that this personalization and individualism equates to an attempt to reestablish a community on the basis purely of religious identity—that suggests the de-linking of culture and religion. Fundamentalism and authoritarian religion are both produced and supported by this.

The notion of Islam as a world faith in majority and minority countries displays itself in many works, including the study by M. Ali Kettani, *Muslim Minorities in the World Today*, London, Mansell, 1986, and the focus of interest revealed in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*.

Witness to faith (shahāda)

Michael M. J. Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, provides a valuable treatment from an anthropological perspective of diasporic Muslim adjustment in terms of identity and practice (as well as covering many other topics of interest).

Prayer (ṣalāḥ)


**Fasting (ṣiyām, ṣawm)**


The theme of the “inefficiency” of Ramadān continues down to today as *The Economist* suggested (August 12, 2010, pp. 36–7) in an article “Ramadan in the summer heat: When everything slows down: Is it much harder when Ramadan falls in the boiling months of summer?” Other implications of fasting during the month are also raised. A study has indicated, for example, that the stock market tends to go up during Ramadān because of “seasonal cheer” that “encourages optimism and thus risk-taking.” However, the price of cooking oil goes up because fried sweets are a Ramadān specialty. It is also the season to launch new television shows. However, another column in the same issue indicates that the practice of Ramadān has also drawn on “human rights” discourse, with some people (in


Charity (zakāt, ṣadaqa)

For an example of someone grappling with the difficulties with the modern implementation of zakāt as a tax system, for example regarding the impact of inflation see M. A. Mannan, Islamic Economics: Theory and Practice: A Comparative Study, new and revised edition, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1986, especially chapter 13, “Some Aspects of Public Finance in Islam.”


Ann Elizabeth Mayer, “Islamization and Taxation in Pakistan,” in Anita M. Weiss (ed.), Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan: The Application of Islamic Laws in a Modern State, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 1986, pp. 59–77, points out the difficulties involved in the differences between Sunni and Shi’i taxation systems and the implications of the government imposition of the Sunni version in Pakistan. The giving of charity has become an explosive issue in the United States where accusations that some funds are being channeled to groups declared to be “terrorist” by the government have had a significant impact. See, for example, “For Muslims, Charity can Carry Risks” found at http://www.isna.net/articles/News/For-Muslims-charity-can-carry-risks.aspx.
Pilgrimage (hajj)


impact of ḥajj participation within three levels of religious discourse: governmental, oppositional and popular.


Identity and the Qurʾān in cyberspace


On the emergence of an individualized identity as a result of the “mediatization” of Islam see Ehab Galal, “Magic spells and recitation contests: the Quran as Entertainment on Arab Satellite Television,” Northern Lights: Film and Media Studies Yearbook, 6 (2008), 165–79.

Islamic identity and politics


For an excellent discussion of the political roles of the implementation of the shari’a see Nathan J. Brown, “Shari’a and State in the Modern Muslim Middle East,” International Journal of Middle East Studies, 29 (1997), 359–76.

The challenge of diversity


An “official” translation of Ibn Bāz’s version is available at www.fatwa-online.com under “Categories - Creed - Shirk”; the Arabic text is found at www.khayma.com/hazem/naqd.html. Notably, the extended passage on the errors of the Jews and Christians is absent from the English translations of Ibn Bāz’s document that are widely available on the Internet.


Identity in the modern context

Vivid portrayals of the situation of those who live in rural areas are available in many films; see, for example, Tareque Masud’s 2002 treatment of Bangladesh in the late 1960s, “The Clay Bird” (Matir Moyna).