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**ON BEING RELIGIOUS: PATTERNS  
OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT  
IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES**

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## ABSTRACT\*

Using the analytical framework developed by the Berkley research programme in religion and society, this paper will report findings from a comparative study of Muslim piety of over 6000 respondents from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Turkey and Kazakhstan. The findings show similarities as well as significant differences in patterns of religious commitments among the respondents in the study. This is probably the first attempt to compare and 'map out' Muslim religiosity in Muslim countries. The first part of the paper will report the findings and the analysis by gender, life cycle, education and social position. The second part of the paper will discuss the findings using analytical insights from Emile Durkheim and Mary Douglas' sociology of religion. In this section, the paper will also compare selected aspects of Christian and Muslim piety and offer sociological explanations of the significant differences in 'experiential religiosity' between Christians and Muslims. The Christian piety data will be drawn from primary and secondary sources. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the sociological implications of these findings for social political and religious trajectories of Muslim countries.

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\* This paper includes some material included in my book, *Faithlines: Muslim Conceptions of Islam and Society*, Oxford University Press, 2003.



# ON BEING RELIGIOUS: PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

## **Introduction: Religion and Muslim Identity**

Religion is the essence of Muslim identity. This applies to all Muslims whether they are devoutly religious and belong to religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan, or al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin in Egypt or live in largely secular societies such as Kazakhstan and Turkey. It applies to Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries as well as to Muslims in non-Muslim countries such as India, Thailand, Germany, Australia or the United States. Consequently, religious commitment is both the evidence and the expression of Muslim identity.

There is considerable debate among Muslims about the nature as well as the contents of religious commitment (religiosity) which a Muslim must display and adhere to in order to be a Muslim or true believer. One of the key claims in this debate is that, in order to be a Muslim, there must be evidence of religious piety at behavioural, ethical and cognitive levels. Islamic philosophy and theology contain a large body of expository literature dealing with this issue (Rahman 1989; Muslim 1980; Maududi 1973; Kotb (Qutb) 1953; Watt 1979; Esposito 1991; Ali 1950). There are, however, no good studies which explore the nature and contents of Muslim piety sociologically.

Two plausible reasons account for the absence of such studies. Firstly, sociological scholarship in Muslim societies, especially in the field of sociology of Islam, is relatively underdeveloped, which makes such studies difficult to undertake, and, secondly, Islamic sectarianism means such studies are often fraught with intense controversy bordering on hostility. This, however, does not mean that Muslims shy away from making such judgements. At the level of common everyday experience, many Muslims make judgements about the religious piety of their fellow Muslims.

Sociology and commonsense indicate that being 'religious' can mean different things to different people. This was evident in the reactions and comments evoked by the title of my study—Religiosity of the Elite—among the selected (Muslim) respondents who were interviewed in different research sites as part of the process of developing and pre-testing the survey questionnaire used in the fieldwork. In these comments, the meanings given to

the words 'religious' and 'religiosity' by different, mostly highly educated, interviewees covered a broad spectrum of activities.

Many people in Muslim countries are very sceptical and sometimes disparaging of the 'religiosity' or religiousness of their fellow Muslims, particularly those who faithfully observe the mandatory Islamic rituals. In Pakistan, some respondents interviewed as part of my research on Muslim religiosity described them as 'Muslah Muslim' (prayer mat Muslim). For many 'religiosity' was essentially a spiritual experience of very intimate nature not amenable to objective empirical study. The only way to appreciate or comprehend it was, they held, to observe a person's behaviour over a long period not only in the religious domain but also in other domains of life as well.

For them being 'religious' entailed not only religious worship but also an ethical commitment and conduct which covered all spheres of life. This, some argued, was too difficult to observe, document, study and analyse. The term 'religious', in other words, was seen as having a variety of meanings and multiple dimensions. They may well be an aspect of a single phenomenon but they were not simple synonyms. Just because people are religious in one way does not mean that they will be religious in other ways.

### **Muslim Piety**

In my research on Muslim religiosity, one of the key areas I investigated was the nature and expression of Muslim piety. This research was carried out between 1996 and 2003. It surveyed over 6300 Muslim respondents in Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey and Kazakhstan. A brief description of the methodology is given in Appendix A. As there were no previous sociological studies on this subject that could be used as a possible model, I searched for an appropriate framework which could be used in such an investigation. The field observations described above confirmed an important insight of sociology of religion, that is religious piety is a multidimensional phenomenon (Glock 1962; von Hugel 1908; Pratt 1907; Faulkner & DeJong 1966; Stark & Glock 1968). In their seminal sociological studies of religious piety, Stark and Glock address the question of multidimensionality of religiosity or religiousness (Glock & Stark 1965; Stark & Glock 1968).

These scholars take up the challenge of identifying different dimensions of religiosity and also how to measure them methodologically. The core of religiosity for them is religious commitment. They also take up the task of defining and operationalising it and undertake a linguistic analysis in order to determine the different things that can be meant by the term and the different ways in which an individual can be religious. They then try to analyse whether religiousness manifested in one of these ways has anything to do with it being expressed in others (Stark & Glock 1968, p.11-21).

Building on the earlier works of von Hugel and Pratt, Stark and Glock conceptualise religiosity as multidimensional rather than a uni-dimensional phenomena. This conceptualisation can also be attributed to the Berkeley Research Programme in Religion and Society. The multidimensional conceptualisation takes into account distinctions in the way religion may be expressed, as well as in the degree of intensity with which it may be practised.

Any serious student of religion will acknowledge that expressions of religion vary greatly among world religions. Different religions expect quite different things from their followers. For example, regular participation in Holy Communion is obligatory for Christians, but it is alien to Muslims. Similarly, the Muslim imperative of performing *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) during one's life is alien to Christians. The expectations of Hinduism and Buddhism are again different from those of Islam and Christianity.

However, according to Stark and Glock (1968), although there is great variation in the religious expressions, there also exists a considerable consensus among the world's religions as to how religiosity ought to be manifested. Stark and Glock identify five core dimensions of religiosity within which all of the many and diverse manifestations of religiosity prescribed by the different religions of the world can be ordered. They label these dimensions the ideological, the ritualistic, the experiential, the intellectual and the consequential (Stark & Glock 1968).

The ideological dimension is constituted by the fundamental beliefs which a religious person is expected, and often required, to adhere. The ritualistic dimension encompasses the specific acts of worship and devotion which people perform to express their religious commitment. Often it comprises public or communal, as well as private or personal acts of

worship. All religions have certain expectations, however imprecisely they may be stated, that a religious person will at some time or other achieve direct knowledge of the ultimate reality, or will experience a religious emotion. This includes all those feelings, perceptions and sensations, whether felt by an individual or a person or a religious group that involve some type of communication with God or a transcendental Being. Stark and Glock label this the experiential dimension.

The intellectual dimension refers to the expectation that religious persons will possess some knowledge of the basic tenets of their faith and its sacred scriptures. The intellectual dimension is clearly related to the ideological dimension, since knowledge of a belief is a necessary condition for its acceptance. However, belief need not follow from knowledge, and nor does all religious knowledge bear on belief. The consequential dimension encompasses the secular effects of religious belief, practice, experience and knowledge on the individual. It includes all those religious prescriptions which specify what people ought to do and the attitudes they ought to hold as a consequence of their religion.

Validation and verification of the multidimensionality of religion have been achieved primarily through studies of inter-correlations of scales which seek to represent different dimensions (King and Hunt, 1969, 1972, 1975, 1990). Dejong, Faulkner and Warland (1976) found evidence of six dimensions of religion. Their evidence also showed a cluster of three dimensions encompassing belief, experience and practice which they labelled as 'generic religiosity'. The cumulative evidence from sociological and psychological studies of religious commitment continues to provide support for Stark and Glock's multidimensional conceptualisation of religiosity (Dejong, Faulkner & Warland, 1976; Hilty & Stockman 1986; Himmelfarb 1975).

On the basis of the evidence reviewed above, the study and analysis of Muslim piety was guided by Stark and Glock's conceptualisation of religious piety. This conceptualisation was subjected to extended interviews with knowledgeable Muslim respondents in Australia, Pakistan and Indonesia. In addition, in all these countries, several focus group discussions were organised in which the participants were invited to review critically, and to evaluate various dimensions of religiosity as part of the larger task of reviewing the draft of the survey questionnaire. The final version was to be used in a multi-country study of religiosity in Muslim countries.



As a result of these interviews and discussions, five dimensions were identified which were purported to express and signify Muslim piety. These dimensions were the ideological, the ritualistic, the devotional, the experiential and the consequential religious image dimension. Individual respondents as well as the focus groups were asked to indicate the appropriateness of various questions to be included in the survey questionnaire to gather data for the five stated dimensions. The following section provides a brief description of each dimension and the items used to gather data for each dimension.

## **Dimensions of Muslim Piety**

### **The Ideological Dimension—Religious Beliefs**

This dimension comprises the religious beliefs a Muslim is expected and, in fact, required to hold and adhere to. The belief structure of Islam, like other religions, can be divided into three types. The first type of beliefs warrants the existence of the divine and defines its character. The second type of beliefs explains the divine purpose and defines the believer's role with regard to that purpose. The third type of beliefs provides the ground for the ethical strictures of religion. In sociological discourse, these beliefs are generally described as warranting, purposive and implementing beliefs (Glock & Stark 1965).

In Islam great emphasis is placed on warranting and purposive beliefs. Mere emphasis on the beliefs, however, avoids the issue of their salience and function in the life of a believer. These can be indirectly assessed through the believer's ritual behaviour which also relates to the other dimensions of religiosity or piety. In this study, the focus will be on the doctrinally inspired core beliefs Muslims hold and not on the meaning of these beliefs hold for them, since issues of meaning raise other complex questions and require a separate study.

A large number of doctrinally inspired core beliefs were identified from the sacred Islamic texts and were presented to the focus groups and to key selected informants. The following beliefs were most commonly mentioned and, therefore, were chosen to ascertain the magnitude and intensity of the ideological dimension: belief in Allah; belief in the *Qur'anic* miracles; belief in life after death; belief in the existence of the Devil; and belief that only

those who believe in the Prophet Muhammad can go to heaven. All these are primarily warranting and purposive beliefs.

### **The Ritualistic Dimension**

Rituals are an integral part of formal religion. They include acts of religious practice including worship, devotion and ‘the things people do to carry out their religious commitment’ (Stark & Glock 1968, p.15). All religions include rituals of praise, petition, penance and obedience, although emphasis on each of these varies among different formal religions. In sociological analysis, rituals are regarded as playing an extremely important role in the maintenance of religious institutions, the religious community and religious identity. Participation in collective religious rituals plays an important role in the socialisation of the individual through unconscious appropriation of common values and common categories of knowledge and experience (Bell 1997).

Analysis of religious rituals can be approached from at least two ways. Firstly, it can focus on distinguishing individuals in terms of the frequency with which they engage in ritualistic activities. Secondly, it can focus on the meaning of ritual acts for the individuals who engage in them. The analysis undertaken here will focus primarily on the first perspective, but it will also attempt to explore the question of meaning as well. However, a deeper and proper study of the meaning of rituals for the individual Muslim must await a more appropriate future opportunity.

Islam is a ritual rich religion. Muslims are required to perform specific rituals as an expression of their Faith. Rituals such as *Salat* (daily prayers) and *Wudu* (the cleansing of hands, face and feet prior to performing the prayers) have always been and still remain significant in promoting a sense of religious community among Muslims. The frequency of observance of religious rituals is a useful and meaningful indicator of an individual’s religiousness or religiosity.

In view of these considerations, the following rituals were selected to ascertain this dimension: performance of *Salat* (prayers) five times or more a day; recitation of the Holy *Qur’an* daily or several times a week; observance of fasting in the month of Ramadan; and payment of the *Zakat*. The analysis focuses on the frequency of their observance. One of

the assumptions made was that these rituals are interrelated at both individual and collective levels.

### **The Devotional Dimension**

This dimension is akin to the ritualistic dimension. Rituals are highly formalised aspects of religious expression and commitment. Often a religious person participates in personal and somewhat private acts of worship. Social pressure and other non-religious considerations can sometimes motivate people to participate in formal religious rituals. This is especially true in Islam, given the pervasiveness of religious rituals in daily life and also the ease with which a person can participate in ubiquitous rituals like daily prayers. In other words, participation in religious rituals may, or may not, indicate religious commitment or piety. This, however, does not apply to acts of devotion which are private and often spontaneous. For these reasons devotionism is a good and meaningful indicator of religious commitment. Two measures of devotionism were used in this study: consulting the *Qur'an* to make daily decisions and private prayers.

### **The Experiential Dimension**

This dimension is cognitive dimension of religiosity. It includes feelings, knowledge and emotions arising from or related to some type of communication with, or experience of, ultimate divine reality. These experiences are generally ordered around notions of concern, cognition, trust, faith or fear (Glock & Stark 1965, p.31). Such expectations are found in all religions (James 1902). In Islam Sufi traditions, as well as many traditions of 'folk' or 'popular' Islam, great emphasis is placed on personal religious experience or communication with the divine as an affirmation of individual piety (see Gellner 1968, 1981; Geertz 1965).

This dimension invariably involves subjective feelings, sensations or visions which arise out of an individual's presumed contact with supernatural consciousness. Religious experience constitutes occasions defined by those undergoing them as encounters, or contacts, between themselves and some supernatural consciousness. In this study, five feelings were used to assess religious experience: a feeling of being in the presence of Allah; a sense of being saved by the Prophet Muhammad; a sense of being afraid of Allah; a feeling of being punished by Allah for some wrong done; a feeling of being tempted by the Devil.

Experiences of this character can be described as confirming, responsive, salvational, sanctioning and temptational respectively (Stark & Glock 1968).

### **The Consequential Dimension**

All religions concern themselves with the effects of religion on the believers and their daily lives. Some religions are more explicit about these effects than others. In Islam, submission to its religious teachings is seen as the certain way of achieving divine merit in this world and spiritual salvation in the other. Rewards sometimes are immediate and include such things as peace of mind, a sense of well-being, personal happiness and even tangible success in activities of daily life. Islam also warns of the consequences of not subscribing to its fundamental religious beliefs and teachings.

In Islam, for example, great emphasis is placed on warranting beliefs about the existence of Allah and the divine creation of life. Disbelievers are declared to be ‘Kaffirs’ who are condemned to eternal damnation. In this study, two conceptions were identified as defiance of divine injunctions. These were formulated as the following questions: ‘Would you agree that a person who says there is no Allah is likely to hold dangerous views?’; and, a belief that, ‘Darwin’s theory of evolution could not possibly be true’.

### **Muslim Piety: International Comparisons**

#### **The Ideological Dimension—Religious Beliefs**

##### *Belief in Allah*

Respondents in Indonesia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Iran, Malaysia and Egypt were asked about their belief in the existence of Allah. The findings reported in Table 1 show that in all countries except Kazakhstan, an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement that: ‘I know Allah really exists and I have no doubts about it’. The response was strikingly different in Kazakhstan. Only about one-third (31%) of the respondents believed in the existence of Allah without any doubt and 25 percent agreed with the statement that, ‘while I have some doubts, I feel I do believe in Allah’. Fifteen percent of Kazaks said that, ‘I find myself believing in Allah some of the time but not at other times’ and the same proportion said that, ‘I don’t believe in a personal Allah, but do believe in a higher power of some kind’.

**Table 1: Belief in Allah**

|   | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|---|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| <b>I know Allah really exists and I have no doubts about it</b>                           | 97        | 97       | 31         | 97    | 96       | 88     | 85   |
| <b>While I have doubts, I feel I do believe in Allah</b>                                  | 1         | 1        | 25         | 2     | 2        | 4      | 3    |
| <b>I find myself believing in Allah some of the time but not at other times</b>           | -         | -        | 15         | -     | 1        | 2      | 2    |
| <b>I don't believe in a personal Allah, but do believe in a higher power of some kind</b> | -         | -        | 15         | -     | -        | 2      | 4    |
| <b>Other*</b>   | 2         | 2        | 19         | -     | 2        | 6      | 7    |

\*'Other' refers to the percentage of people agreeing with the statements; "I don't know whether there is an Allah and I don't believe there is any way to find out", "I don't believe in Allah", "None of the above responses represents what I believe about Allah", "What I believe about Allah is.."

NOTE: N for different countries were Indonesia = 1472, Pakistan = 1185, Kazakhstan = 970, Egypt = 786, Malaysia = 803, Turkey = 527, Iran = 614 and these numbers apply to all tables presented in this paper

### *Belief in the Qur'anic Miracles*

Respondents were asked: 'The *Qur'an* tells of many miracles, some credited to the Prophet Muhammad and some to other Prophets. Generally speaking, which of the following statements comes closest to what you believe about Islamic miracles?' The responses are given in Table 2. Almost all Pakistanis, Malaysians and Egyptians believed that miracles happened the way the *Qur'an* says they did. They were closely followed by Indonesian, Turkish and Iranian respondents. Interestingly, a significant minority of respondents in Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Iran and Turkey subscribed to the belief that the miracles can be explained by natural causes. The response of the Kazaks respondents was strikingly different from others. Only 29 percent believed in the *Qur'anic* miracles and almost half of them did not believe in the miracles at all. A smaller percentage in Turkey and Iran held similar beliefs.

**Table 2: Belief in Miracles**

|   | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|---|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| <b>I believe that miracles happened the way the <i>Qur'an</i> says they did</b> | 84        | 98       | 29         | 94    | 95       | 70     | 78   |
| <b>I believe that miracles can be explained by natural causes</b>               | 14        | 1        | 28         | 2     | 3        | 11     | 11   |
| <b>I do not believe in miracles</b>   | 2         | 1        | 44         | 4     | 2        | 19     | 11   |

### *Life after death*

Respondents were asked to indicate how certain they were that there is life after death. The results reported in Table 3 show that over 90 percent of Indonesian, Pakistani, Malaysian and Egyptian respondents completely believed in life after death and 84 percent of Iranian and 70 per cent of Turkish subscribed to the same belief. Only a small percent of Kazaks (13%), however, completely believed in life after death, but 34 percent said that it is probably true that there is life after death. Unlike their fellow Muslims from the other six countries, 31 percent of Kazaks said that they did not know if there was an afterlife and another 17 percent were not sure.

**Table 3: There is Life After Death**

|                            | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| <b>Completely true</b>     | 93        | 95       | 13         | 91    | 92       | 71     | 84   |
| <b>Probably true</b>       | 5         | 1        | 34         | 5     | 3        | 11     | 6    |
| <b>Not sure</b>            | 1         | 1        | 17         | 1     | 2        | 7      | 5    |
| <b>Probably not true</b>   | -         | -        | 3          | -     | -        | 2      | 1    |
| <b>Definitely not true</b> | -         | 1        | 2          | 1     | 2        | 5      | 1    |
| <b>Do not know</b>         | 1         | -        | 31         | 1     | -        | 5      | 3    |

### *Belief in the Devil*

The question about how certain they were that the Devil really exists generated almost an identical pattern of response to that about belief in an afterlife (see Table 4). Over 90 percent of Indonesian, Pakistani, Malaysian and Egyptian respondents believed that the Devil really exists. In Iran and Turkey, 73 and 69 percent respectively held the same belief. In contrast, only seven percent of the Kazaks shared the same belief and another 29 percent said that the Devil probably exists. Over 60 percent of Kazaks were not sure or did not believe or know that Devil existed, followed by 17 percent of Iranians and Turkish respondents who expressed similar beliefs.

**Table 4: The Devil Actually Exists**

|                        | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| <b>Completely true</b> | 91        | 94       | 7          | 95    | 94       | 69     | 73   |
| <b>Probably true</b>   | 7         | 2        | 29         | 4     | 5        | 13     | 10   |

|   |   |   |    |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|----|---|---|----|----|
| Not sure/Probably not true/ Definitely not true/ Don't know | 2 | 2 | 63 | 1 | 1 | 17 | 17 |
|---|---|---|----|---|---|----|----|

*Belief that only those who believe in the Prophet Muhammad can go to Heaven*

Muslim piety entails complete faith in the divine revelations and that these revelations will lead the faithful to the righteous path of salvation. One of the most significant acts of faith for a Muslim is to believe in the Prophet Muhammad as a saviour. Following his example—*Sunnah*—is the path for a pious Muslim life and hence salvation. For Muslims, Muhammad is the most revered human being and an object of their total devotion and affection.

The responses from different countries to this question are reported in Table 6. They show that 77 percent of respondents in Pakistan, 65 percent in Malaysia, 61 percent in Indonesia, 47 percent in Egypt and 39 percent in Turkey believed that it was completely true that only those who believe in the Prophet Muhammad would go to heaven. Only 20 percent of Iranians and only 9 percent of the Kazaks shared the same belief with their fellow Muslims from other countries. Surprisingly, 70 percent of Turks and Kazaks and 50 percent of Iranians were either not sure or did not share this belief with their fellow Muslims from Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Egypt but even in these countries a sizeable percent ranging from 18 to 38 percent were either not sure or did not subscribe to the belief of salvation through Prophet Mohammad. These findings show that the pattern of response to this belief among Muslims from different countries is significantly different compared with the other beliefs examined here.

**Table 5: Only Those Who Believe in the Prophet Muhammad Can Go to Heaven**

|                     | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Completely true     | 61        | 77       | 9          | 47    | 65       | 39     | 20   |
| Probably true       | 13        | 4        | 21         | 15    | 10       | 10     | 9    |
| Not sure            | 7         | 8        | 21         | 17    | 15       | 14     | 17   |
| Probably not true   | 4         | 2        | 4          | 9     | 2        | 10     | 9    |
| Definitely not true | 6         | 4        | 9          | 8     | 3        | 19     | 32   |
| Do not know         | 9         | 4        | 36         | 4     | 5        | 7      | 13   |

## Index of Orthodoxy

An index of orthodoxy was constructed using the following methodology. The response: ‘I know Allah really exists and I have no doubt about it’ was given a score of one and all other responses were scored as zero. The score of one was given to the response: ‘I believe that miracles happened the way the *Qur’an* says they did’, and other responses were scored as zero. Similarly, the response: ‘completely true’ to ‘Life after death’, and ‘the Devil really exists’ and ‘Only those who believe in the Prophet Muhammad can go to heaven’, were scored as one and all other answers were scored as zero. Using these scores an index of Ideological Orthodoxy was constructed. In this index, the highest score of five signifies high orthodoxy and a score of zero signifies low orthodoxy.

Table 6 reports the results of the index of orthodoxy for the seven countries. Pakistan, with 76 percent of respondents scoring five was the most orthodox country in terms of religious beliefs followed by Malaysia (55%), Indonesia (49%), Egypt (39%) Turkey (33%) and Iran (14%). Islamic religious orthodoxy does not seem to exist in Kazakhstan. If we combine the scores of four and five, then over 80 percent of Pakistanis, Malaysian, Indonesian, and Egyptian and 60 percent of Turkish and Iranian respondents are orthodox, but the Kazakh respondents are a mirror image of them, with a large majority (75%) scoring zero and one.

**Table 6: Index of Orthodoxy of Religious Beliefs**

|             |          | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| <b>High</b> | <b>5</b> | 49        | 76       | 1          | 39    | 55       | 33     | 14   |
|             | <b>4</b> | 34        | 20       | 3          | 50    | 35       | 26     | 46   |
|             | <b>3</b> | 11        | 2        | 6          | 7     | 7        | 13     | 16   |
|             | <b>2</b> | 5         | 1        | 14         | 3     | 3        | 11     | 10   |
|             | <b>1</b> | 1         | -        | 24         | 1     | 1        | 8      | 8    |
| <b>Low</b>  | <b>0</b> | -         | -        | 51         | -     | -        | 10     | 6    |

Further analysis of the evidence showed that the level of orthodoxy was influenced by socio-demographic factors. In general, gender had an effect on the level of orthodoxy in religious beliefs. Older persons were slightly more orthodox in their religious beliefs. In Egypt and Indonesia, educational attainment was positively associated with orthodoxy, but not in Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, where the trend was the opposite. In Egypt, Turkey and Indonesia, religious elites were more orthodox than the general public. However, in



Pakistan, Muslim professional elites were less orthodox than the general public. In Kazakhstan, the religious beliefs of the general public and the elite were more or less homogenous.

### **The Ritualistic Dimension — Religious Practice**

Islam is a ritual-rich religion. Muslims are required to perform specific rituals as a religious duty or as an expression of their faith. Four religious rituals commonly performed by Muslims were used to ascertain the ritual dimension in this study: performance of daily prayers; payment of *Zakat*; fasting in the month of Ramadan; and the recitation of the Holy *Qur'an*. The results of the investigation are reported in the following section.

#### *Performance of Daily Prayers*

All adult Muslims are required to observe prayers five times a day as a religious duty. Respondents were asked, ‘How often do you perform *Salat*?’ They were offered a number of responses which are listed in Table 7. The responses in Iran were slight different but they have been made comparable with the other countries). Indonesian respondents observed their duty to pray most strictly, with 96 percent of them praying five times or more daily. They were followed by the Egyptians, of whom 90 percent prayed five times or more every day. Only 57 percent of Pakistanis prayed five times or more. The Kazaks were the least observant of the daily prayers, with only five percent indicating that they prayed more than five times a day. In fact, an overwhelming percentage of Kazaks either never prayed or only prayed sometimes. The evidence, therefore, reveals significant diversity in observing mandatory daily prayers among Muslims.

**Table 7: Perform *Salat***

|                            | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| One to four times daily    | 1         | 19       | 4          | 3     | 5        | 4      | 5    |
| Five times a day           | 47        | 46       | 4          | 70    | 72       | 25     | 65   |
| More than five times a day | 49        | 11       | 1          | 20    | 19       | 8      | 2    |
| Only on Fridays            | -         | 5        | 2          | -     | -        | 15     | 1    |
| Only on special occasions  | -         | 2        | 9          | 1     | -        | 15     | 3    |

|                            |   |    |    |   |   |    |   |
|----------------------------|---|----|----|---|---|----|---|
| Never                      | - | 10 | 67 | 3 | - | 25 | 8 |
| Occasionally/<br>Sometimes | 2 | 2  | 14 | - | - | 15 | 9 |

### *Payment of Zakat and Fasting*

Two other practices expected of a Muslim are the payment of *Zakat* (poor tax) and fasting in the month of Ramadan. Respondents were asked if they had paid *Zakat* and observed fasting during the previous 12 months. The results reported in Table 8a show that for *Zakat* show that Indonesians, Egyptians and Malaysians take their *Zakat* obligations most seriously followed by Turks and Pakistanis. Even the Kazaks who are generally not active in Islamic practice appear to be more active in fulfilling their *Zakat* obligations with half of them saying that they have paid *Zakat*. The Iranian respondents were least observant of this practice with only 31 percent saying that they have paid *Zakat*. In Iran, around 30 percent did not respond to the question. The low percentage for the Iranians, who are Shia Muslims, follow a slight different practice in relation to *Zakat* compared with the Sunni Muslims and that may account for their low percentage. The pattern was similar to the one observed in the case of prayers. Indonesians, Malaysian and Egyptians were significantly stricter observants of their *Zakat* duty than Pakistanis, Iranians and Kazaks. In relation to fasting, Indonesians, Egyptians and Pakistanis reported almost universal observance, whereas only 19 percent of the Kazaks reported having fasted during the past year (Table 8b).

**Table 8a: Paid Zakat**

|     | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran* |
|-----|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|-------|
| Yes | 94        | 58       | 49         | 87    | 80       | 64     | 31    |
| No  | 6         | 39       | 52         | 13    | 20       | 36     | 39    |

\* Note on Iran: Total does not equal 100% as %30 of respondents did not answer this question

**Table 8b: Fasted**

|     | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|-----|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Yes | 99        | 93       | 19         | 99    | 99       | 83     | 78   |
| No  | 1         | 5        | 81         | 1     | 1        | 17     | 15   |

**Table 9: Read the *Qur'an***

|  | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|--|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| I read it regularly once a day or more               | 30        | 32       | 2          | 23    | 24       | 4      | 12   |
| I read it regularly several times a week             | 16        | 15       | 3          | 26    | 20       | 10     | 13   |
| I read it regularly once a week                      | 2         | 3        | 3          | 9     | 4        | 7      | 9    |
| I read it quite often but not at regular intervals   | 31        | 18       | 8          | 24    | 25       | 5      | 21   |
| I read it once in a while                            | 12        | 20       | 18         | 7     | 15       | 4      | 22   |
| I read it only on special occasions                  | 4         | 5        | 64         | 7     | 9        | 21     | 9    |
| I never recite the <i>Qur'an</i> , or read it rarely | 4         | 5        | 2          | 3     | 2        | 49     | 15   |

### *Recitation of the Holy Qur'an*

All Muslims are expected to read the Holy *Qur'an* since it is the most important sacred text of Islam. Its recitation alone is regarded as a source of merit for the individual. The recitation of the *Qur'an*, therefore, is a very common practice among Muslims. Respondents in the study were asked, 'How often do you read the *Qur'an*?' They were presented with several possible responses and asked to choose the one which most applied to them. The actual choices and the results are given in Table 9. The results show that about half of the Indonesians, Malaysians Pakistanis and Egyptians read the *Qur'an* regularly once a day or several times a week. The corresponding percentages for Turks and Iranians were 14 and 25 respectively. These patterns were in sharp contrast to the Kazaks, among whom only five percent acknowledged reading the *Qur'an* regularly.

### **Index of Ritualistic Behaviour — Religious Practice**

To obtain an overall estimate of the observance of religious practices, an index of ritual behaviour was constructed using the following methodology. Performance of prayers five times or more a day was scored as one and all other responses as zero; the yes response to having paid *Zakat* and fasted during the last year was scored as one and no response as zero; the response indicating reading of the *Qur'an* once a day, or several times a week regularly, was scored as one and all other responses as zero.

The resulting index ranged from four, indicating high score to zero indicating low score. Table 10 shows the distribution of respondents in the various categories. The findings confirm the evidence presented for the individual items. The Indonesians, Malaysians and Egyptians showed the highest commitment to Islamic rituals, followed by the Pakistanis, Iranians and Turks. The Kazaks had a strikingly different pattern. Only four percent of them had scores of five and four and 84 percent scored one and zero indicating very low commitment to religious rituals. These findings clearly indicate both similarities and differences between Muslim populations in their religious commitments as measured by the index of religious rituals.

There were some important variations in religious practice when data was analysed by socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. In Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey and Indonesia, women were more observant of religious rituals than men, and the difference was especially pronounced in Egypt and Indonesia. Kazak men and women were least likely to observe religious practice. In general, age was positively associated with the performance. Educational attainment was also a major factor in making people stricter observers of the religious rituals. In general, education tended to be inversely related to religious practice. The religious elites were significantly stricter in practising religious rituals than the general public or Muslim professionals. The Kazaks practised religious rituals least.

**Table 10: Index of Religious Practice-Ritualism**

|             | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|-------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| <b>High</b> | 4         | 44       | 24         | 1     | 45       | 34     | 7    |
| <b>3</b>    | 49        | 31       | 3          | 40    | 47       | 18     | 28   |
| <b>2</b>    | 7         | 28       | 12         | 10    | 16       | 43     | 35   |
| <b>1</b>    | 1         | 15       | 41         | 4     | 3        | 21     | 18   |
| <b>Low</b>  | 0         | -        | 2          | 43    | -        | -      | 11   |
|             |           |          |            |       |          |        | 13   |

### **The Religious Devotion**

Stark and Glock (1968) identify devotion as a dimension of religious commitment. The difference between devotion and ritual is that, whereas the ritual acts are highly formalised and typically public, acts of devotion are typically personal acts of worship and contemplation. All religions encourage such acts of devotion. In Islam many Muslims pray privately, which is beyond their formal religious duties. One act of devotion which is both private and spontaneous for Muslims is their commitment to the Holy *Qur'an* and the belief that it's teaching is the best guide to behaviour. Consequently, many Muslims consult the *Qur'an* for guidance in their daily lives.

In this study the respondents were asked, ‘Thinking now of your daily life and the decisions that you have to make about how to spend your time, how to act with other people, how to bring up your children, presuming you have them, and so on, what extent does what you have read in the *Qur’an* help you in making everyday decisions?’ The respondents were given a number of options and asked to indicate the one that applied to them most closely.

The responses, as well the distribution of respondents in the seven countries, are given in Table 11. The findings show that if we combine the two response categories, ‘I can remember specific times when it has helped me in a very direct way in making decisions’ and ‘I often consult the *Qur’an* to make specific decisions’, then the Indonesians are the most devoted, followed by the Egyptians, Iranians, Pakistanis and Turks. The Kazaks once again are the least devoted. This finding is consistent with the findings reported above about ritualism.

**Table 11: How the *Qur’an* Helps You in Making Everyday Decisions**

|   | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|---|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| I hardly think of the <i>Qur’an</i> as I go about my daily life   | 2         | 33       | 45         | 13    | 1        | 9      | 12   |
| I can’t think of specific examples, nevertheless I feel sure that the <i>Qur’an</i> is still of help in my daily life | 34        | 17       | 30         | 33    | 67       | 21     | 34   |
| I can remember specific times when it has helped me in a very direct way in making decisions                          | 23        | 44       | 11         | 16    | 9        | 16     | 27   |
| I often consult the <i>Qur’an</i> to make specific decisions  | 41        | 5        | 5          | 36    | 21       | 8      | 24   |
| Other   | 1         | 1        | 19         | 2     | 2        | 46     | 4    |

#### *Private Prayers*

Information as to whether the respondents prayed privately was obtained only from Indonesia and Pakistan. The results showed that about half of Indonesians and Iranians and two-thirds of Pakistanis and Turks performed private prayers. Women were more likely to pray privately than men, and age was also positively associated with the performance of private prayers. About half of the respondents from the elites and the general public in Indonesia said that they prayed privately. In Pakistan, the religious elite was most likely to

pray privately (77%) and the general public least likely to do so (56%). In general, educational level did not influence the propensity to pray privately in both countries.

An index of devotionism was constructed for countries for which these data were available namely, Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Malaysia using the following methodology. Affirmative response to the question about private prayers was scored as one and the negative answer was scored as zero. The response categories three and four in the question about how the *Qur'an* helped the person in making everyday decisions were scored as one and all other responses were scored as zero. The index score, therefore, ranged from two (highly devoted) to zero (not devoted). The index of devotionism showed that about one in four respondents in all countries were highly devout and a majority were moderately devout. The Kazaks were the least likely to express their religiosity through ritual observance and acts of religious devotion.

### **Experiential Dimension**

The experiential dimension relates to some kind of personal communication or experience of the ultimate divine reality. It is an expectation found in all religions. In Islam, there are well-known Sufi and other religious traditions which place great emphasis on divine experience of some kind as an affirmation of an individual's religiosity. Data for experiential dimension was collected only from Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Egypt. The questions about this dimension were not answered by a significant number of Kazak respondents and, therefore, were not included in the analysis.

The responses to the experiential questions are reported in Tables 12 a, b, c, d and e. As the tables show, the five questions were: feeling you were in the presence of Allah; a sense of being saved by the Prophet; a sense of being afraid of Allah; a sense of being punished by Allah; and, a sense of being tempted by the devil. The findings show some striking differences and similarities across countries. A large majority of respondents in all countries listed in Table 12a below reported that they were either sure, or thought, that they were in the presence of Allah. The proportion of Pakistanis, Indonesians and Malaysians was comparatively significantly higher.

**Table 12a: Feeling You Were in the Presence of Allah**

|                      | Indonesia | Pakistan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Yes, I'm sure I have | 63        | 57       | 35    | 37       | 41     | 42   |
| Yes, I think I have  | 20        | 25       | 26    | 48       | 29     | 30   |
| No                   | 16        | 18       | 39    | 15       | 29     | 21   |

**Table 12b: A Sense of Being Saved by the Prophet**

|                      | Indonesia | Pakistan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Yes, I'm sure I have | 29        | 36       | 33    | 24       | 21     | 37   |
| Yes, I think I have  | 29        | 27       | 12    | 49       | 28     | 30   |
| No                   | 42        | 37       | 55    | 27       | 50     | 33   |

**Table 12c: A Sense of being Afraid of Allah**

|                      | Indonesia | Pakistan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Yes, I'm sure I have | 83        | 82       | 51    | 76       | 53     | 69   |
| Yes, I think I have  | 15        | 13       | 13    | 22       | 36     | 22   |
| No                   | 2         | 5        | 35    | 2        | 10     | 9    |

**Table 12d: A Sense of Being Punished by Allah**

|                      | Indonesia | Pakistan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Yes, I'm sure I have | 53        | 66       | 66    | 63       | 44     | 65   |
| Yes, I think I have  | 34        | 26       | 7     | 33       | 33     | 25   |
| No                   | 13        | 8        | 27    | 4        | 22     | 10   |

**Table 12e: A Sense of Being Tempted by the Devil**

|                      | Indonesia | Pakistan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Yes, I'm sure I have | 63        | 67       | 51    | 62       | 34     | 59   |
| Yes, I think I have  | 29        | 24       | 17    | 35       | 32     | 26   |
| No                   | 8         | 9        | 32    | 4        | 34     | 15   |

Only about one-third to one quarter of the respondents, however, were certain that they had the sense of being saved by the Prophet, and if the two positive responses are combined, then the proportion of persons having the same experience increased to 63 percent in Pakistan, 58 percent in Indonesia, 73 percent in Malaysia, 67 percent in Iran, 49 percent in Turkey and 45 percent in Egypt. A majority of the Egyptians had not experienced being saved by the Prophet. Unlike the Indonesians, Malaysians, Turks and Iranians and Pakistanis who almost universally reported being fearful of Allah. Almost one-third of Egyptians reported not having the same experience but even among them 64 percent reported being afraid of Allah.

This evidence suggested that for an overwhelming number of respondents from all the six countries Allah was fearsome. Is this merely a function of the question? It may possibly be the case, but the similarity in the responses across the six countries suggest that there are some underlying sociological and psychological reasons producing this image of Allah, as the evidence from the next question will indicate.

The response to the question: ‘A sense of being punished by Allah for something you had done?’ showed a pattern similar to the one noted above. Almost two thirds of respondents in Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia and Iran reported the sense of being punished and about half of the Turkish and Indonesian respondents felt the same way. The general conclusion that can be drawn from this evidence is that for a large majority of Muslims, the sense of fear and punishment is an important part of their experience of the divine reality of Allah. At the same time, there are significant differences among Muslims in terms of not having had such experiences. Both the similarities and differences point to the sociological and psychological foundations of these experiences of the divine which in turn raises some important questions. These will be explored in a separate section. Finally, the response to the temptation question (sense of being tempted by the Devil) shows that the general pattern is similar to the divine punishment question.

### **Index of Experiential Dimension**

An index of experiential dimension was constructed using the following methodology. The response category, ‘Yes, I am sure I have’ was scored as one for all the five questions, and all other responses were scored as zero. This produced an index ranging from five to zero.



The distribution of respondents on this index from the three countries is shown in Table 13. The Indonesian and Pakistani respondents are more likely to have had a divine experience compared with the respondents from the other countries. The index also shows that a majority of Muslims from all countries have had some religious experiences of the divine reality.

**Table 13: Experiential Dimension**

|      |   | Indonesia | Pakistan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|------|---|-----------|----------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| High | 5 | 17        | 22       | 21    | 15       | 12     | 16   |
|      | 4 | 22        | 23       | 13    | 12       | 14     | 14   |
|      | 3 | 22        | 22       | 12    | 29       | 15     | 22   |
|      | 2 | 20        | 16       | 16    | 17       | 11     | 19   |
|      | 1 | 12        | 9        | 11    | 13       | 13     | 13   |
| Low  | 0 | 7         | 8        | 27    | 13       | 36     | 17   |

Analysis of the data also revealed that in general there were no significant gender differences in experiential religiosity. In Indonesia, the younger respondents were more likely to have experienced high levels of religious experiences, whereas in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Egypt the pattern was the opposite. More educated respondents were likely to have greater religious experience in Indonesia, Egypt and Pakistan but it was the opposite in Iran and Turkey. In general, the religious activists were likely to score higher on the index of experiential religiosity. Muslim professionals tended to have lower scores in all countries. A significant number among the general public also reported having had the religious experience but in most instances their proportions were lower than the religious activists.

### **A Note on Experiential Religiosity**

Perhaps one of the most notable findings reported above is the presence of wide spread feelings among respondents in Pakistan, Indonesia and Egypt of being afraid of Allah and a sense of being punished by Allah. What sociological factors can account for these differences in the religious commitment? What factors may account for these findings?

Sociological insights of Emile Durkheim and Mary Douglas's sociology of religion can provide a useful framework to answer these questions. One of the key analytical concerns

of Durkheim's sociology was the social control of cognition. He explored this problem through sociological analysis of religion. Durkheim's analysis of religious life and behaviour was based on a fundamental postulate that 'the unanimous sentiments of the believers of all times cannot be purely illusory' (Durkheim 1915, p 417). However, while he did not regard the 'unanimous sentiments of the believers' as 'purely illusory', he saw them as partly illusory, because he did not accept the explanations and justifications of their beliefs and practices offered by the faithful.

He argued that 'the reality' on which religious experience was based was not always as expressed by the believers. This did not mean that religious experience was 'false'. On the contrary, he claimed that all religions are true in their own fashions and there are no religions that are false. They were true in the sense that they stated and expressed in a non-objective, symbolic or metaphorical form, truth about the 'reality' underlying them and giving them their 'true meaning'. The 'reality' according to Durkheim was 'society'. The believer was 'not deceived when he believes in the existence of a moral power upon which he depends and from which he receives all that is best in himself: this power exists, it is society' (Durkheim 1915, p 225).

For Durkheim, religion is a system of ideas by means of which individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations that they have with it (Durkheim 1915, p 226). Religion, therefore, can be seen as 'representing' society and social relations in a cognitive sense to the mind or intellect. In this sense, religion afforded a means of comprehending or rendering intelligible social realities as well as expressing or symbolising social relationship. In other words, for believers, religious beliefs, experiences and practices are a particular way of understanding their society and their relations with it as well as a way of expressing and dramatising these in a particular symbolic idiom.

Building on Durkheim's sociology of religion, Douglas explores the question of particular interest to students of religion: What social circumstances encourage particular kinds of religious sensibilities? She argues that the ways in which social reality constructs consciousness are as important as the ways that reality is itself socially constructed. Certain social settings encourage certain ways of seeing the world. Douglas's grid/group theory is designed to explain this relationship (Douglas 1970). In her work, she offers a sociological

theory of the plausibility of different forms of religion, worldview and ideology. She attempts to relate different varieties of belief to different types of society. Individuals in different social settings, Douglas argues, are biased towards different cosmologies. People do not believe what makes no sense to them, and what makes sense to them depends on their social environment. Her theory emphasizes the human drive to achieve consonance in all layers of experience as the bridge by which cosmology and social experience are connected. She argues that the symbolic world of a people becomes structured like its social world.

The above are at best overly simplified sketches of selected aspects of Durkheim and Douglas' analyses of the relationship between beliefs and social structure. These have been sketched out to offer an explanation of the findings about aspects of experiential religiosity reported in this paper. Why is the Muslim experience of the Divine characterised by a feeling of fear and a sense of being punished for something they have done? As mentioned above one of fundamental postulate of Durkheim's sociology of religion was that, 'the unanimous sentiments of the believers... cannot be purely illusory'. But he argued that the real bases of religious experience were not those as expressed by the faithful but were grounded in the nature and 'reality' of the society. Religion for Durkheim is a system of ideas by means which individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations that they have with it. From this perspective, the Muslim representations of the Divine (Allah) as fearsome and punishing are in reality symbolic or metaphorical representations of the society of which they are part and their relations with it. It is interesting to note that only in Turkey, the most democratic and relatively economically advanced country among the countries included in this analysis, about half of the respondents had scored of zero or one.

### **The Consequential Dimension**

The consequential dimension refers to the secular effect of religious belief, practice and experience. Religious beliefs and ideologies invariably compete with other beliefs and ideologies (i.e. magic, science) in society as explanations of questions dealing with the meanings and nature of the ultimate divine reality and the nature and purposes of human life, condition and destiny. In modern times, science has become the major rival of religion in explaining the nature, purposes and meanings of human conditions and destiny. The beliefs and statements which counter some core religious beliefs usually evoke social and psychological pressures on the individual to reject such beliefs.

In this study, two questions were used to investigate the consequential religiosity. The questions were ‘Do you agree that a person who says there is no Allah is likely to hold dangerous political views?’ and ‘Do you agree or disagree with Darwin’s theory of evolution?’ These questions were chosen because they challenged two fundamental religious beliefs widely held by Muslims. For each question the respondents were offered multiple choice type responses which are indicated in Tables 14a and 14b.

The findings show an overwhelming majority of people in Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia and Egypt agreed that a person who does not believe in Allah is likely to hold dangerous views. In Kazakhstan, a majority of persons did not think so, or were uncertain about the consequences of disbelief in Allah. In Iran and Turkey, the responses were 37 and 46 percent respectively. Similarly, Darwin’s theory of evolution was held to be false by a majority of the respondents in Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia and Egypt. In Kazakhstan, two or three times the respondents in the other three countries expressed qualified or unqualified support of the theory, and one-third of the Kazak respondents said that they had never thought about the theory. This question was not used in the Iranian survey.

**Table 14a: Would You Agree That a Person Who Says There is No Allah is Likely to Hold Dangerous Political Views?**

|           | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Agree     | 84        | 74       | 19         | 89    | 71       | 46     | 37   |
| Disagree  | 7         | 14       | 50         | 11    | 8        | 46     | 21   |
| Uncertain | 9         | 12       | 31         | -     | 21       | 9      | 37   |

**Table 14b: Do You Agree or Disagree with Darwin’s Theory of Evolution?**

|                                       | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| The theory is almost certainly true   | 2         | 5        | 10         | 3     | 2        | 7      | -    |
| The theory is probably true           | 14        | 9        | 27         | 5     | 9        | 15     | -    |
| The theory is probably false          | 11        | 12       | 14         | 15    | 7        | 7      | -    |
| The theory could not possibly be true | 61        | 60       | 14         | 52    | 54       | 56     | -    |
| I never thought about this before     | 12        | 14       | 35         | 25    | 28       | 15     | -    |

### **Index of Consequential Religiosity**

An index of consequential religiosity was constructed using the following methodology. The agreement with the question that a person who says there is no Allah is likely to hold dangerous political views was scored as one and other responses as zero. For the Darwin Theory, the response that the theory could not possibly be true was scored as one and all other responses were scored as zero. Almost half of the respondents in Pakistan, Indonesia and Egypt scored the highest possible score of two and in Malaysia and Turkey the correspondence proportions were 40 and 32 respectively. The Kazaks were the opposite with 71 percent scoring zero.

Further analyses of the data showed that in general men were more likely to be more conservative than women, and conservatism increased with age. In general, religious activists were more conservative compared with the public and Muslim professionals. In Egypt, all groups were equally conservative. In Kazakhstan, gender and age had no effect on the consequential religiosity, but together with Turkey the more educated Kazaks were less conservative.

**Table 15: Index of Consequential Religiosity**

|             | Indonesia | Pakistan | Kazakhstan | Egypt | Malaysia | Turkey | Iran |   |
|-------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|----------|--------|------|---|
| <b>High</b> | 2         | 53       | 46         | 3     | 48       | 40     | 32   | - |
|             | 1         | 40       | 42         | 26    | 45       | 47     | 37   | - |
|             | 0         | 7        | 12         | 71    | 7        | 14     | 23   | - |

### **Concluding Remarks**

This is probably the first attempt to ‘map out’ different aspects of Muslim religious commitment quantitatively. As such, it has probably several limitations; the most important of which is whether the analytical approach used is the appropriate way to study it. Sociological methodology relies on proxy variables to study and understand social reality. The proxy variables focus on the manifestations of social reality and not on its ‘essence’. That task is left to the theorists with sociological imagination and serendipitous insights

based on the evidence. This opens the quantitative approach to a legitimate criticism of whether the chosen variables are in fact the most appropriate ones.

The analytical approach adopted in the analysis of Muslim religious commitment discussed in this chapter has relied largely on the work of the Berkeley Research Program in Religion and Society and especially on the work undertaken by Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark. The research publications arising from this program have made some of the seminal contributions to the Sociology of Religion. The Berkeley research, however, was devoted primarily to the study of Christianity. It can be argued that the dimensions of religious commitment used in the Berkeley Project may not be appropriate for the analysis of Muslim religious commitment.

In my view, such a characterisation would not be valid for two reasons. Firstly, the analytical framework used in the Berkeley studies (Glock & Stark 1965; Stark & Glock 1968) is distinctively sociological and generic, and can be applied to the study of religious commitment in other religious contexts. Secondly, assuming that this objection has some theoretical validity in the sense that the framework developed by Stark and Glock, among others, is specifically predicated on some broad understanding of the key theological principles of Christianity, my response to this will be that, like Christianity and Judaism, Islam is also an Abrahamic religion and shares several theological and philosophical principles with them. In these conditions, it can be argued that it should be possible to study and analyse religious commitment in all Abrahamic religions using a common analytical framework.

These and other similar arguments may not satisfy the purists, but if sociological scholarship is to advance theoretically as a distinctive approach to the study of social reality, then comparative studies are a major imperative. I hope that at least in this respect, the present study will make a modest contribution to the advancement of sociological scholarship. It is also likely that some of the severest criticisms of my analysis of Muslim piety will come from Muslim scholars. In response to such criticism it should be mentioned that the methodology was not used uncritically. A serious and time-intensive attempt was made to evaluate the methodology through focus group discussions and intensive interviews with informed Muslim respondents in two of the four Muslim countries studied—Indonesia and Pakistan. This evaluation led to several modifications of the analytical framework,

including identification of additional distinctive dimensions of Muslim piety, which were incorporated in the methodology.

Notwithstanding some of its limitations, the findings of this study lend themselves to some important conclusions. Firstly, the findings indicate that a religious renaissance is taking place or has taken place in several major Muslim countries. The evidence shows a robust religious commitment among Muslims from all walks of life. This commitment is characterised by a strong commitment to Islamic beliefs, rituals, religious devotion and experiential religiosity. Muslims share a common self-image of Islam, which is grounded in the traditions of scripturalism. Religion also plays an active role in the everyday activities of large numbers of Muslims. In other words, religious commitment is characterised by Islamic theology and a pragmatic orientation which is usefully applied in everyday life.

The empirical evidence also suggests that Muslim piety is socially constructed. The social construction is influenced by several factors, which include the general religious conditions or climate at the global and societal levels, social and political conditions in the country and social structure. Since its origin, Islam has been a universal religion. This fact is reflected in the size and composition of Muslims in the world. In the contemporary world, Muslims generally reside in the developing countries, but Islam plays a visible role in global affairs. Islamic religious activism is an important political force in Muslim countries as well as in international affairs. Global inequalities have given impetus to search for the creation of a more just social order at the national and international levels. For many Muslims, Islam provides a powerful model for the establishment of such a social order.

These attributes of Islam find regular expressions in the national and international media. This global fascination with Islam is an important factor influencing the religious climate in Muslim countries. It also influences religious commitment among Muslims. That national social and political conditions play a critical role is evident from the nature of religious commitment in the seven countries studied in this research. Unlike the other six countries, Kazakhstan was, until 1990, a communist country very hostile to Islam. Its teaching and propagation was strictly controlled if not banned.

The result is that the Kazak Muslims' piety is very different from the Indonesian, Pakistani and Egyptian Muslims. Whereas piety is strongly grounded in the knowledge of sacred

texts, religious rituals, devotion and religious experience in the three countries, in Kazakhstan, Muslim piety appears to be influenced by the socio-cultural conditions. In Kazakhstan, Muslim consciousness is grounded in the historical identity of the Kazak nation as Muslim. This consciousness coexists with a very secular perspective and outlook evident in the data which has been presented and discussed.

The social structural factors which may influence religiosity primarily relate to the family. The recent research has shown that religiosity, like social class, is largely inherited from the family. In this respect, the first factor which influences religiosity is the religiosity of the family. This is contrary to previous research which indicated that with age the influence of parental religiosity declined (Cornwall 1988; Erickson 1992); more recent research had shown that it is not the case (Myers 1996).

Another factor which influences religiosity is the characteristics of the household. The research shows that people raised in traditional family households with both biological parents, who are happily married, are likely to resemble their parents in religious beliefs (Myers 1996). Empirical evidence shows that socialisation in traditional family structures maximises the transmission of religiosity. In short, since the majority of people inherit religiosity, parental religiosity, quality of family relationship and a traditional family structure play an important and positive role in the inter-generational transmission of religiosity (Myers 1996).

The pattern of religiosity which has been reported here offers some support for these findings. The family organisation in Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Egypt tends to be characterised by traditional family structures and the presence of two parents. These features, therefore, possibly explain the existence of the high degree of traditional religiosity in these countries. Kazakhstan was communist for over 70 years. Under communism, family organisations were radically transformed, which had a major impact on the gender division of labour. The religious institutions were suppressed and devalued. This could partly explain the non-traditional religiosity of the Kazak Muslims.

The empirical evidence reported in this paper can also be used to develop a typology of Muslim piety. There appear to be two types of religious commitments. One type is characterised by ideological orthodoxy, strong emphasis on ritualism, devotionism, image



of Islam grounded in traditional readings of sacred scriptures and personal religious experience. The other type is characterised by a lack of ideological orthodoxy, lack of emphasis on ritualism and devotionism and a non-traditional image of Islam. We can call the first type traditional Muslim piety and the second non-traditional Muslim piety. The first type, as the evidence has shown, characterises the majority of Muslims in Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Iran and Egypt and a small minority in Kazakhstan. The second type characterises the majority of Kazak Muslims and a minority of Muslims in the other three countries.

The design of the study has also provided evidence of the multidimensionality of religious commitment. The findings have revealed the two types of religious commitments which have been identified and described above. What makes this finding conceptually and methodologically interesting is that the two types of commitments are broadly segregated. The traditional type of religious commitment characterises Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Egypt and Iran. The non-traditional type is largely a characteristic of the Kazak Muslims. The Turkish case falls in between the two types. The evidence of multidimensionality inheres in the fact that in all dimensions, the Kazak Muslims display different patterns of responses compared to their fellow Muslims in the other six countries. This finding also provides confirmation of the interrelatedness of various dimensions because of the pattern of their temporal clustering. In this respect, this study makes a unique and useful contribution to the comparative study of religious commitment in the modern world.

The findings that a majority of Muslims in all countries studied except Kazakhstan display a high level religious commitment also challenge the validity of the criticisms levelled against Muslims about their religious commitment by some of the leading Islamists. For example, Muslim scholars and activists like Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi and Syed Mohammad Qutb have vigorously argued that the Muslim masses and elites possess a superficial and weak sense of religious commitment because of their exposure to Godless secular education. Consequently, they are incapable of thinking Islamically. Muslims, they have argued, are unable to wriggle themselves out of the Western modes of thinking and practice in spite of the fact that they are eager to establish the Islamic way of life. According to Maududi and Qutb, their secularism is also reinforced by the influence enjoyed by the Western thinkers and policy makers in the Muslim countries (Maududi 1960; Qutb 1953). The evidence reported here clearly shows a strong Muslim piety across social classes and countries,

especially in the six major Muslim countries. The question then arises about the nature and type of evidence used by Islamists in the construction of their critical discourse.

Frequently, the Islamists identify the absence of genuine Islamic education as the cause of growing westernisation and secularisation in Muslim societies. This is regarded as endangering the distinctive Islamic identities of Muslims. This was the position taken by the participants in the First World Conference on Muslim Education held at Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in April 1977. According to the participants, Muslims in the twentieth century are passing through a period of self-doubt which is threatening their religious identity. The main cause of this is the Western system of education adopted by Muslim-majority countries in order to gain intellectual and material advancement. This system of education was producing cultural duality in the Muslim world. The traditional Islamic education that still persisted was supporting the traditional Islamic groups, whereas the modern secular education was creating secularists who were indifferent to Islamic values or paid only lip service to them.

The conference participants shared the concerns of Muslim thinkers who argue that under the dominant influence of the secular education system, the Muslim world will lose its identity by losing its Islamic character and will thus suffer from the same moral disintegration and confusion as the West. The Muslim world can preserve that identity and save the *Ummah* from confusion and erosion of Islamic values if the Muslims received a truly Islamic education (see Watt 1983; al-Attas 1979). Interestingly, such criticisms are internalised by Muslims. The evidence of this study clearly contradicts such self-perceptions and shows emphatically a high and strong level of religious piety among them. In fact, the findings provide some support to Gellner's observation about Muslim identity. In his discussion of civil society and Islam, Gellner (1994) argues that the Muslim world is marked by the astonishing resilience of its formal faith. Gellner attributes the weakness of civil society in Muslim countries to the rise of what he calls 'High' puritanic and fundamentalist traditions of Islam, to which most modern and modernising Muslims transfer their social allegiance for the establishment of a just and egalitarian social order. Gellner's observation about the incompatibility of 'High' puritanical Islam and the civil society in my opinion is uncharacteristically deterministic and pessimistic. However, his observation that modern or modernising Muslims tend to transfer their allegiance to 'High' puritanical Islam is supported by the evidence of this study.

I would like to conclude this paper by posing a somewhat provocative question. Given the evidence presented in this paper of high degree of religious commitment among Muslims in six of the seven countries include in this study. If we apply these findings to the Muslim world we can argue that Muslim world displays a strong resilience and commitment to Islam. If we also take note that the Muslim world today is relatively economically and technologically backward as indicated by the following facts. The total scientific output of forty five Muslim majority countries between 1990-1994 was equal to the output of Switzerland ( Anwar and Abu Bakar 1997). In the 1000 years since the Caliph Mamoun, the Arabs have translated from other languages as many books as Spain translates in a single year (UNDP 2000). According to a Brooking Institution study, over the past quarter-century GDP per person in most Muslim states has fallen or remained the same (The Economist September 13, 2003). A broad conclusion which can be drawn from this evidence of scientific, technological and economic stagnation is the that the quality of human capital in Muslim countries is at severe risk, and, combined with the conditions of low educational attainment, gender bias and wide spread poverty the situation is likely to get worse in the foreseeable future. In the third industrial revolution with its 'knowledge economy' in which the creation of wealth will depend primarily in skills, these conditions would have serious repercussions for the economic and social position of the Muslim countries in. the world.

The conditions mentioned above co-exist with high degree of religious commitment in the Muslim world which has been demonstrated by the evidence reported in this paper. Can we then ask the provocative question 'is religion a drag on the economic and technological development of the Muslim world?' The question of the role of religious beliefs in economic action goes back in sociology to Max Weber's work on the role of the protestant ethic in the rise of capitalism. Since then there have been numerous studies of the 'Weberian Thesis' and has produced mixed results. Statistical analyses across different countries have shown that while religious belief may have an impact on economic performance, generally speaking there is no strong relationship between adherence to any one religion and economic performance, once economic fundamentals are taken into account. One explanation of the below average performance of the Muslim countries is not religion but fiscal policies and widespread corruption.

**Table 16: Religious Commitment and Human Development in Muslim Countries**

| Country    | Religious Commitment <sup>1</sup> | Human Development Index <sup>2</sup> |
|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Indonesia  | Very Strong                       | .682                                 |
| Malaysia   | Very Strong                       | .792                                 |
| Pakistan   | Very Strong                       | .499                                 |
| Egypt      | Very Strong                       | .648                                 |
| Iran       | Strong                            | .719                                 |
| Turkey     | Strong                            | .734                                 |
| Kazakhstan | Weak                              | .765                                 |

1. 'Very Strong' category was constructed by averaging the percentage of categories 4 and 5 in Index of Orthodoxy and Index of Ritualism. The countries with an average percentage of 61 per cent or higher were classified as 'Very Strong'. Countries with values of 40 to 60 per cent were classified as 'Strong' and countries with values of less than 40 per cent were classified as 'Weak'.
2. The Human Development Index is for UNDP (2002)

Notwithstanding these observations, I examined the trend between degree of religious commitments and the Human Development Index (HDI). HDI is a widely used composite index of economic and well being. The results of this exercise are presented in Table 16. The evidence is only suggestive and indicates that there is some relationship between religious commitment and HDI. Malaysia is one exception; it has high religious commitment and high HDI score. Does Malaysian case negate the association and or confirm the association. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society with around 40 per cent of population being non Muslims mainly Chinese and Indians. Is the high HDI vale because of the non Muslim population which is also economically more prosperous than the Muslim Malays? It is not possible to answer this question categorically on the basis of present evidence. But I would suggest that the question of the relationship between religiosity and economic performance and technological advancement is worthy of further examination.

## **Appendix A**

### **Methodology**

The data for the study were gathered through an international study of Muslim religiosity. This study was carried out in seven countries namely, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey and Kazakhstan. The initial intention was to interview a sample of the elite and the general public. The elite were to consist of religious elite and the elite from other sphere of society. However, due to technical, political, logistical, ethical and financial reasons, such a sample could not be achieved in any country. The survey fieldwork in each country was carried out with the collaboration of local social science research institutes.

Because of the highly sensitive nature of the issues being explored in the study, the investigators had to rely upon “snowball” and purposive methods of sample selection. This situation required a redefinition of the elite. After considerable consultation with local colleagues, it was concluded that the only way to capture the elite dimension was to focus on highly educated groups occupying professional, economic, social, religious, cultural and bureaucratic positions in the mainstream social structures of their respective societies. The sample in each country was therefore stratified by those who were active in major legal religious organisations and highly educated respondents who were actively involved in professional, business, bureaucratic and cultural organisations. About 30 percent of each sample was chosen from the general public. In each group, between 20 and 45 percent of the respondents were women.

The fieldwork in Indonesia was carried out by the Population Studies Centre of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. In Pakistan, it was carried out by the Social Science Research Centre, University of the Punjab, Lahore. In Egypt, it was carried out by the Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Social Development, Cairo. Finally, in Kazakhstan, it was carried out by the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, Almaty. In Iran, it was carried out mainly in Tehran and the province of Tehran although some of data was collected from Mashhad. In Turkey, the survey was carried out in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. In Malaysia, the sample covered the states of Selangor, Penang, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengannu. General socio-demographic profiles of the seven samples are given in Table 1. The fieldwork for the study was carried out from November 1996 to November 2003. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire, which took on average about 90 minutes to complete.

The survey questionnaire was translated into Indonesian, Urdu, Arabic, Russian, Turkish, Persian, Malay and Kazakh languages by experts in these languages, and key parts of the questionnaire were then back translated into English to minimise translation bias. In most cases, the questionnaire was given to the selected respondents for completion but the interviewers were available for clarifications or questions. Whenever and wherever it was or became necessary, the questionnaire was administered through a face-to-face interview. Almost all of the interviewers were graduates in social sciences. A field supervisor checked each questionnaire for completion. The completed questionnaires were coded in the country where the data were entered and initial frequency tables were run.

**Table 1. Sample Profiles**

| <b>Countries</b>          |                       | <b>Pakistan</b> | <b>Indonesia</b> | <b>Egypt</b> | <b>Kazakhstan</b> | <b>Malaysia</b> | <b>Iran</b> | <b>Turkey</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>Gender</b>             | Male                  | 79              | 74               | 76           | 54                | 53              | 53          | 55            |
|                           | Female                | 21              | 26               | 24           | 47                | 47              | 47          | 45            |
| <b>Age</b>                | <25                   | 17              | 21               | 16           | 21                | 40              | 45          | 34            |
|                           | 26 – 40               | 48              | 40               | 55           | 40                | 35              | 33          | 39            |
|                           | 41 – 55               | 23              | 29               | 19           | 26                | 21              | 16          | 27            |
|                           | >56                   | 12              | 11               | 10           | 15                | 4               | 6           | 4             |
| <b>Level of Education</b> | Less than High School | 6               | 11               | 14           | 14                | 15              | 17          | 39            |
|                           | HS/Some College       | 9               | 22               | 20           | 40                | 42              | 51          | 37            |
|                           | College               | 83              | 66               | 66           | 45                | 29              | 28          | 23            |
|                           | Univ./Professional    | 3               | 1                | -            | 1                 | 5               | 5           | 1             |
|                           | Other                 |                 |                  |              |                   |                 |             |               |

As in any study of this type, problems arose. They were resolved in appropriate ways by the country coordinators in consultation with me. In each country, some minor changes were made to some questions in the questionnaire in accordance with the advice of the local coordinators. These changes were made to accommodate local sensitivities and they did not compromise the overall objectives of the study.

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