

pilgrimage

of spiritual charisma and wisdom. Asceticism, which is often connected to renunciation, can further entail demonstrating minimal concern for one's physical comfort or well-being, avoiding conventional means of earning a livelihood, abstaining from excesses, performing supererogatory prayers and fasts, adopting unconventional appearances, and physically or mentally withdrawing from society. These elements have figured prominently in the development of Islamic spiritual traditions, such as the Karrami and Sufi traditions. Stricter understandings of asceticism have also led to religious antinomianism and social deviance, as manifested by a group known as the Qalandars, who purposefully contravened normative conventions by adopting countercultural appearances and behavior. All of these modes of pietistic expression are pregnant with political potential and have been consciously and unconsciously displayed by public personas to curry favor with particular factions, demonstrate religious authenticity, or protest the perception of impiety.

Often, the memorialized lives of ascetics and mystics were cast as poignant social and political commentaries against the conditions of their respective eras. Such figures were frequently depicted as chastising rulers, avoiding political appointment, or withdrawing from the community altogether. Their acts of piety and asceticism are both correctives and critiques. Such characterizations, however, extend well beyond explicitly spiritual circles and are a hallmark of the 'ulama' (religious scholars) in general. Biographical records and chronicles are replete with references to a scholar's assiduous religiosity. Mentions of piety are often as important as mentions of position, accomplishment, and lineage in biographies. Pietistic descriptions serve to legitimate a person's social standing and scholastic projects, particularly important given the historically persistent sense of contestation and competition between various figures and schools of thought. In the modern era, a number of Islamist parties have wedded their political and social agendas to a pietistic, if not ascetic, way of life based on particular readings of the Qur'an and sunna.

The politicization of piety is also evident in the sphere of sovereignty. The legitimacy of a ruler was often buttressed with descriptions of his religious scrupulousness. Both the Rightly Guided Caliphs of the Sunni tradition and the Shi'i imams attest to this biographical convention. A sovereign could also consciously cultivate a persona of piety through public acts of worship. The ceremonial patronage of the hajj pilgrimage caravans and the attendance of congregational prayers were the two most prominent historical acts of this sort. A modern example is Egyptian president Anwar Sadat (d. 1981), who acquired a reputation of piety and was subsequently dubbed "the believing president" (*al-ra'īs al-mu'min*) by the Egyptian media in the early years of his presidency. In other cases, a pietistic portrait could accentuate a leader's exceptionalism, as in the case of the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz (ca. 680–720). In that same historical vein, attributions of impiety have also been applied to mar the reputations of unfavorable past rulers, as seen in Abbasid portrayals of their caliphal predecessors, the Umayyads.

See also Muhammad (570–632); Sufism; sunna; 'ulama'; 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz (ca. 680–720)

Further Reading

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pilgrimage

Pilgrimage in Islam takes three principal forms. The annual hajj and the year-round 'umra involve travel to Mecca and its precincts, and *ziyāra* involves travel to the tombs of revered religious figures, notably Muhammad's grave in Medina. Jerusalem, as one of the three sacred precincts together with Mecca and Medina, also historically has been a pilgrimage destination.

Hajj and 'Umra

The Qur'an enjoins all able believers to perform the hajj to Mecca, its sanctuary, and environs but does not detail the associated rituals. For these, Muslims rely on Muhammad's one hajj in 631 into which he incorporated many pre-Islamic practices, such as the circumambulation of the Ka'ba, the cubical stone structure that housed personal and tribal idols. The documents of treaties between tribes and succession documents such as that of the caliph Harun al-Rashid were also often stored in the Ka'ba. In 630, when Muhammad retook Mecca, his first act was to destroy the idols in the Ka'ba. Muslims hold that the Ka'ba (also called *bayt Allāh*, or "the House of God" or "Temple of God") was built by the first man and prophet, Adam, and then periodically rebuilt, most significantly by Abraham: this undergirds political rhetoric and interfaith discussion about Islam as an Abrahamic religion. Non-Muslims are, however, barred altogether from Mecca and Medina. Some Muslims, such as Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, have called for the removal of non-Muslims from the entire Arabian Peninsula, including foreign troops posted in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

In the sixth century, Mecca prospered because of trade through the city and pilgrimage to its sanctuary, control of which was in the hands of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh. Such control conferred prestige, legitimacy, and jurisdiction; the Shi'i Fatimids, though based in Cairo, for instance, extended control over Mecca and Medina during their ascendancy. Modern Saudi monarchs, following Ottoman practice, have adopted the title "custodian of the two holy sanctuaries [Mecca and Medina]" (*khādim al-haramayn*

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al-sharīfayn). Guardianship came to include the obligation to appoint caravan leaders and guarantee safe passage for pilgrims. Other Muslim potentates have sought legitimacy through ceremonial acts such as sending ornamental keys for the Ka'ba door, official palanquins (*mahmal*), or a brocaded drape for the Ka'ba (*kiswa*).

The hajj rituals—which include “halting” (*wuqūf*) at the plains of 'Arafat and Muzdalifa, the symbolic stoning of Satan and ritual animal sacrifice at Mina, and the circumambulation of the Ka'ba (*tawāf*) at Mecca, as well as a ritualized brisk walk (*sa'y*) between the mounts of Safa and Marwa—are performed by Muslims, male and female, from the world over, making it the only significant show of Muslim world unity. This is underscored by the fact that men of all ranks dress the same, in two pieces of unsewn cloth, and women dress in simple cotton garments called *ihrām*. During the *'umra*, the pilgrim is in a sacralized state (also known as *ihrām*), during which sexual intercourse, the cutting or shaving of hair, and the use of scented products are forbidden, but the *'umra* is short, lasting a few hours, whereas the hajj lasts from three to five days. *'Umra* rituals are confined to circumambulation, the brisk walk, and the cutting or shaving of hair to exit the sacralized state.

Sectarian and denominational differences are set aside during the hajj, and all pilgrims travel and worship together; in the past, many pilgrims stayed in Mecca and Medina for several months or years. The hajj consequently has long provided scholars of differing views the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas. Between the 10th and 12th centuries, for instance, North African pilgrims carried the Isma'ili ideas they encountered westward. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the Almoravid and Almohad movements are said to have been planned in Mecca. In the 17th century, returning pilgrims repatriated the books of the Southeast Asian Shaykh Yusuf al-Maqassari (d. 1699), who had been banished from Indonesia to Sri Lanka and then to the Cape by Dutch colonial authorities. In the 18th century, Indian pilgrims brought the ideas of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab to the subcontinent, and in the 20th century, Malcolm X returned to the United States with a new understanding of egalitarian Islam and consequently broke away from Elijah Muhammad's separatist Nation of Islam.

Although never a political capital, Mecca has, nevertheless, at times been the site of political struggle. In Islam's first century, for instance, when 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr disputed the caliphate, he sought sanctuary in Mecca and preached there against the ruling Umayyad caliph, 'Abd al-Malik; he also may have tried to control access to Mecca. According to one account, this prompted the caliph to build the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and to encourage pilgrimage to Jerusalem rather than to Mecca. Pilgrimage reverted to Mecca when Ibn al-Zubayr was killed in 692, but Jerusalem remains an important destination for the pious.

More recently, in 1979, 'Abdallah al-Qahtani proclaimed himself an awaited savior (*mahdī*) and with roughly 500 armed followers captured the Grand Mosque; hundreds, including hostages, died before the militants were subdued. In 1987, Iranian protesters (and bystanders) were killed by security forces after staging a demonstration.

Since ritual prayers are performed facing Mecca, every single Muslim, pilgrim or not, gains a sense of unity, community, and common purpose. Only 2 to 3 million out of some 1.5 billion Muslims perform the hajj each year, many of them repeat pilgrims. Thus most Muslims' actual experience of the hajj is only through national discourses. Sponsorship, regulation, and subsidy by governments politicizes those discourses and, in turn, the hajj itself. The fact that Saudi Arabia has been in charge of the hajj for the past century has meant that it, in particular, has wielded considerable political leverage. In the late 1960s, for instance, King Faisal successfully lobbied Muslim leaders about the need for a coalition of Muslim states (the Organization of the Islamic Conference [OIC]). It is through the OIC that international hajj quotas have been implemented. It was at the 2006 OIC meeting in Mecca that some Muslim leaders, outraged at cartoons of Muhammad published in a Danish newspaper, recalled their ambassadors to Denmark and called for a boycott of Danish products.

For some 20th-century intellectuals, the hajj is more a vehicle of resurgence and sociomoral reconstruction. For 'Ali Shari'ati, it is a prototype and metaphor for the individual, nonclerical production of religious knowledge. Muhammad Iqbal saw the hajj as a way to unite Muslims in order to destroy the indigenous idols of dogmatism and superstition and the Western idols of nationalism and consumerism.

Ziyāra

The veneration of deceased religious figures is widespread in the Islamic world, notably among Muslims who embrace Sufi practices. Pilgrims travel to seek blessings (*baraka*) from saintly figures' tombs and shrines, the custodians of which frequently wield power over pilgrims by controlling access.

Throughout Islamic history, however, many scholars have disputed the permissibility of such visits, holding that they are not part of prophetic practice (*sunna*) and thus constitute heresy and innovation (*bid'a*). Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, makes it clear that a visit to Muhammad's grave in Medina must be incidental to an *'umra* or hajj, and several important reform movements have made opposition to *ziyāra* a major platform.

In Shi'ism, *ziyāra* is made to the graves of the imams and their significant relatives and companions. The most important of these is at Karbala in Iraq, where Husayn, Muhammad's grandson through his daughter Fatima and his cousin 'Ali, was killed by the forces of Yazid I. With the removal of the Sunni Iraqi leadership in 2003, restrictions on visits to Karbala were lifted, and it received a million pilgrims in 2004.

See also Pillars of Islam

Further Reading

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Pillars of Islam

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Pillars of Islam

In a well-known tradition, Muhammad explains that Islam is “built on five [things].” Sunni Muslims have come to represent these five principles as “pillars” (*arkān*), evoking a physical structure. Preachers throughout the Muslim world frequently remind listeners that just as pillars alone do not make a building, so too must Muslims adopt other acts and practices to complete the edifice of their belief.

The Sunni Pillars

The five Sunni pillars (*arkān al-islām* or *arkān al-'ibāda*) are (1) testifying or witnessing that there is only God and that Muhammad is God's messenger (*shahāda*), (2) establishing the ritual prayer (*iqāmat al-ṣalāt*), (3) giving alms (*ṭiā' al-zakāt*), (4) fasting in the month of Ramadan (*ṣawm Ramadān*), and (5) making the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Mecca (*hajj al-bayt*) if one is able. For Maliki Sunnis, jihad, or struggle in the cause of Islam, is the fifth pillar, the *shahāda* being the foundation on which the other five pillars rest.

The *shahāda*—Islam's fundamental doctrinal statement—must be uttered at least once in one's lifetime. Those born Muslim do this from early childhood. For converts, this testimony marks an entrance into and membership in the Muslim community and polity, resulting in the immediate obligation to practice the remaining four pillars (in the case of recognized monotheists [the People of the Book], the almsgiving tax [zakat] replaces the poll tax [*jizya*] assessed by the state).

“Salat” refers to the five daily ritual prayers prescribed by God. These prayers (and times) are known as *fajr* (predawn), *zuhr* (postzenith), *‘aṣr* (mid-afternoon), *maghrib* (postsunset), and *‘ishā'* (nighttime). The specifics of the ritual prayer are derived entirely from prophetic practice. Most Shi'i denominations combine *zuhr* and *‘aṣr* prayers and *maghrib* and *‘ishā'* prayers, leading many Sunnis mistakenly to believe that Shi'is ignore a basic pillar. Though not one of the five prayers, the Friday congregational prayer replaces the zenith prayer and is also an obligation—one that brings Muslims together in congregational mosques. This ritual prayer is preceded by a sermon (*khuṭba*) and therefore has often been used by political authorities as a platform for the promulgation of state ideology or political doctrines. In the 21st century, many Muslim governments control or provide the text of Friday sermons.

Zakat, repeatedly enjoined in the Qur'an, where it is often paired with the performance of ritual prayer, is a form of charity that embodies the believer's commitment to the well-being of the larger community. It is assessed as a 2.5 percent almsgiving tax on accrued wealth, goods, and stock (excluding certain items, such as jewelry). As its literal meaning—purification—suggests, this (re)distribution of wealth is not only an important communal, fiscal, and sociopolitical act but also one that “purifies” wealth and the wealthy. If one does not have the means to pay zakat, then one is entitled to receive it. Organized collection of zakat began under Muhammad himself. When tribes that had pledged allegiance to Muhammad refused to contribute zakat to his successor Abu Bakr, the latter regarded them as apostates; Shi'is too deem that zakat should be turned over to the appropriate authorities. In time, jurists, who elaborated the provisions regarding zakat in great detail, would formalize the handing over of zakat to the state treasury (*bayt al-māl*). This practice has continued into modern times: in some Muslim countries, ministries or departments are in charge of collection and distribution; in others, nongovernment organizations do so. Recipients include not only the needy but also sometimes poorer countries.

Obligatory fasting (*ṣawm*) takes place the entire month of Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic lunar calendar. There are very few sectarian differences concerning the proper fast—which lasts from daybreak until sunset—but there is considerable disagreement about the method(s) to be used to determine the beginning and end of Ramadan (or any month). The issue centers on the new moon and whether it is to be sighted with the naked eye or through predictive astronomical data. Related are questions about the jurisdiction of a given pronouncement: does a sighting in Mecca bind someone in Medina, and if so, is this predicated on the fact that they are both part of the same political entity? Several countries and communities follow Saudi Arabia's start- and end-dates for Ramadan. Critics view this solidarity as politically or ideologically motivated and at odds with established jurisprudence. There have been numerous international conferences on the moon issue, which has been divisive internationally and, in some areas, such as India and the United States, nationally.

The hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca and its precincts, required of all Muslims who are physically and financially able to make the trip only once in a lifetime. It takes place between the 8th and 12th days of the 12th Islamic month, Dhu al-Hijjah, or “pilgrimage month,” which together with the months preceding and following were regarded as a time of “sacred truce,” during which none were permitted to bear arms in the sacred precincts (*haram*). Muslim pilgrims in fact perform the rituals in a sacralized state (*ihrām*), which include the wearing of the *ihrām*, the name given to the two pieces of unsewn cloth worn by men and the simple cotton garments worn by women.

The Shi'i Pillars

Twelver Shi'is have ten pillars (*furū' al-dīn*), which they call “branches” or “practices” (*furū'*). The six additional ones are a

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