

PAPER DETAILS

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***The Muslim Difference: Defining the Line between Believers and Unbelievers from Early Islam to the Present*, yazar: Youshaa Patel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 341 sayfa, ISBN: 978-0-300-24896-8**

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Öz

Müslümanlar, İslam'ın emir ve yasaklarını yerine getirdiklerinde bu, farklı olmalarını da beraberinde getirir. Günde beş defa abdest alıp namaz kılmak, müslümanların günlük rutinlerini etkilemektedir. Yatsı namazını kıldıktan sonra çok geçmeden yatmak ve sabah namazı için erkenden uyanmak bunun en önemli örneklerindendir. Oruç tutan müslümanların geceleyin kalkıp yemek yemeleri, gündüz de yemek, içmek ve cinsellikten uzak durmaları, müslüman farklılığı üzerinde önemli bir etkidir. Haccetmek, müslümanlar için birbirleriyle benzeşme ve diğer din mensuplarıyla farklılaşmanın zirve noktasını teşkil etmektedir. İslam'ın ortaya koyduğu israf yasağı, müslümanların gösterişten uzak, sade bir yaşam ve giyim tarzı benimsemelerini gerektirmektedir. Bu özellikle ipekli kıyafetlerin erkekler tarafından giyilmesinin önüne geçmektedir ve ipeği kıyafetlerinde yoğun olarak kullanan kültürlerle farklılık oluşturmaktadır. Bu farklılıkları birlikte değerlendirdiğimizde İslam'da farklılığın bir amaç değil netice olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Farklılık üzerinde etkili olan emirler, farklılık oluşturmak için emredilmiş değildir. Mesela oruç, farklılık üzerinde etkilidir ama müslümanlara orucun emredilmesindeki amaç, onları diğer insanlardan farklı kılmak değildir. Hz. Muhammed'in ipekli elbiseye yaklaşımı da bu çerçevededir. O, bunun âhiretten nasibi olmayanlara ait bir kıyafet olduğunu söylemiştir. Buradaki amaç, farklılık oluşturmak değil, israfın ve gösterişin önüne geçmektir. Dini vecibelerin yerine getirilmesi ile ortaya çıkan farklılık inanç özgürlüğü kapsamındadır. Ancak İslami emir ve yasakların bir neticesi olarak ortaya çıkan müslüman farklılığı, doğrudan bir hedef haline getirildiğinde yapaylığı ve toplumdaki yabancılaşmayı beraberinde getirir. Bunun İslamofobiyi desteklediğinde de şüphe yoktur.

Anahtar Kelimeler

İslam Hukuku; Müslüman Farklılığı; Hac; Oruç; İslamofobi

Atıf Bilgisi

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Abstract

Fulfilling the orders and prohibitions of Islam will make Muslims different. Performing ablution and praying five times a day affects the daily routine of Muslims. The fact that fasting Muslims wake up and eat at night and abstain from eating, drinking, and having sex during the day is an essential factor in the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. For Muslims, performing the pilgrimage constitutes the pinnacle of their similarity to each other and their differentiation from members of other religions. The prohibition of waste established by Islam requires Muslims to adopt a simple lifestyle and clothing style that is away from ostentation. It primarily prevents silk clothes from being worn by men and creates a difference between cultures that use silk extensively in their clothes. When we evaluate these differences together, we can say that the difference in Islam is not a goal but a result. Commands that act on difference are not commanded to create difference. For example, fasting is effective on difference; however, commanding Muslims to fast is not to make them different from other people. The Prophet Muhammad's approach to silk clothes is also within this framework. He said that this was the clothing of those without a share in the afterlife. The aim is not to create a difference but to prevent waste and ostentation. The difference that occurs when religious obligations are fulfilled is not abnormal. This is within the scope of freedom of belief; however, when Muslim difference is transformed from a consequence of Islamic commands and prohibitions into a direct goal, it will cause artificiality and alienation of Muslims from their society. There is no doubt that this supports Islamophobia.

Keywords

Islamic Law; Muslim Difference; Pilgrimage; Fasting; Islamophobia

Citation

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The author, educated in England as a child of a Muslim family, was kept apart from his classmates by his primary school teacher, causing differences in his agenda from an early age. However, the factor that motivated the author to research on this subject was a Friday sermon he listened to in the United States. In the sermon, the preacher said that it was a religious necessity for Muslims to be different from non-Muslims. Therefore, diversity as a research topic attracted the author's interest.

In the first chapter, the author states that in the early years of Islam, Muslims imitated pre-Islamic Arab practices and the People of the Book in many matters. The author's primary examples are the fast of 'Āshūrā', the tenth day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar, and the first qibla, the Masjid al-Aqsa. The author describes Muslims' imitation of the People of the Book as mimetic rivalry. According to him, the dominant feature in this is periodicity. Muslims pointed out similarities based on imitation in the early periods and differences in later periods. In this case, Muslims saw the practices they imitated in the early periods as obstacles in their path in the following periods. However, here, it is seen that the author needs to take into consideration the phenomenon of abrogation. Abrogation is a change in the religious ruling without instability or contradiction. On the contrary, some provisions change due to the evolution of time, conditions, and the audience receiving the revelation; religious provisions are based on wisdom.

In the second chapter, the author discusses the hadith known as the hadith of imitation. In the hadith of imitation, the Prophet stated that being similar to a community means being one of them. According to the author, the hadith scholars' approach to this hadith is manipulative. They first attributed a negative meaning to imitation based on this hadith. Then, they guided their readers with the topics they included about this hadith in their books. The question we need to seek the answer to here is: To what extent does the meaning expressed by the hadith of imitation take place within the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunna? Even a fundamental level of examination on this subject leads us to the following conclusion: "There are many verses and hadiths that are in the same direction as the imitation hadith in terms of meaning. The Qur'an repeated the mistakes of past peoples, infidels, and the people of the book. Believers are warned not to make the same mistakes or be like them." This situation is overlooked in the author's approach.

In the third chapter, the author discusses the rights of dhimmis. According to the author, the provisions regarding dhimmis in Islamic law have no equivalence in the understanding of the modern state. The author's speculations regarding the approach of Islamic law to dhimmis depend on the Pact of 'Umar (I) b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644). However, conditions are added later in the Pact. Moreover, this is what constitutes doubt. Because its authenticity remains controversial, nothing further must be said. Considering that Islam has been experienced in a vast geography for 14 centuries, the representative power of the historical experience put forward by the author needs to be stronger. The Constitution of Medina, which was prepared with the participation of different religious, political, and ethnic groups in Medina and envisaged coexistence under the presidency of Muhammad, is an essential legal document in this respect. With this document, it was recorded that all religious groups in Medina had equal rights and obligations. In the author's view, Muslims should not despise non-Muslims and should establish friendly relations with them. It requires superiority not in group membership but in piety (*taqwa*).

In the fourth chapter, the author focuses on the symbolic power of difference. Fulfilling the orders and prohibitions of Islam will make Muslims different. Performing ablution and praying five times a day affects the daily routine of Muslims. The fact that fasting Muslims wake up and eat at night and abstain from eating, drinking, and having sex during the day is an essential factor in the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. For Muslims, performing the pilgrimage constitutes the pinnacle of their similarity to each other and their differentiation from members of other religions. The prohibition of waste established by Islam requires Muslims to adopt a simple lifestyle and clothing style that is away from ostentation. It primarily prevents silk clothes from being worn by men and creates a difference between cultures that use silk extensively in their clothes. When we evaluate these differences together, we can say that the difference in Islam is not a goal but a result. Commands that act on difference are not commanded to create difference. For example, fasting is effective on difference; however, commanding Muslims to fast is not to make them different from other people. The Prophet Muhammad's approach to silk clothes is also within this framework. He said that this was the clothing of those without a share in the afterlife. The aim is not to create a difference but to prevent waste and ostentation. The difference that occurs when religious obligations are fulfilled is not abnormal. This is within the scope of freedom of belief; however, when Muslim difference is transformed from a consequence of Islamic commands and prohibitions into a direct goal, it will cause artificiality and alienation of Muslims from their society. There is no doubt that this supports Islamophobia.

In the fifth chapter, the author clarifies the historical background of Ibn Taymiyyah's approach to the subject. As the author highlights, the scholar who most emphasized the Muslim difference in the classical period was Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). He transformed Muslim difference from a consequence of religious life into a goal and described the resemblance of a Muslim to an infidel as blasphemy. The verses prohibiting making friends with polytheists and ordering only believers to be friends are also evidence of this approach. The author establishes a connection between the doctrine of difference proposed by Ibn Taymiyya and the political and military crises of his time. According to him, Ibn Taymiyya's marginal views on Muslim differences are related to the period in which he lived. Ibn Taymiyya was living under Mamluk rule, which was facing Mongol attacks. One of the central policies of the Mamluks against the Mongols was to ensure the unity of the Muslims and to cleanse the region from the Crusaders. They suspected the Crusaders of espionage and saw them as an internal threat. These security concerns were the basis for Ibn Taymiyya's view of being similar to non-Muslims as blasphemy. He found a way to ensure the unity of Muslims by returning to the understanding of Islam of the first Muslims. The most essential building block that enabled this was for Muslims to avoid imitating non-Muslims.

After analyzing Ibn Taymiyya's approach, the author reminds the reader in the following chapter that imitation also has positive aspects. According to him, imitation is also a method of self-improvement. Taking good people as examples and trying to be like them is only possible through imitation. This view is more functional for Muslims living in predominantly non-Muslim societies. If a Muslim living in such a society sees imitation as blasphemy and strictly avoids it, he cannot adapt to the society in which he lives. In the last

chapter, the author examines this issue by focusing on the views of Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935). In this context, he compares belonging to Muslim and non-Muslim social structures. The author proves that reinforcing belonging to the Muslim community is a normative value in Islam. These include congregational prayer and pilgrimage. These clearly show that the unity of Muslims is good. There is no significant debate on this subject. However, can the same be said for belonging to a society whose majority is non-Muslim? It is not easy to answer this question with the same clarity. According to reformists such as Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā, it is more suitable for believers to develop a sense of belonging by assimilating into a non-Muslim majority. Conversely, the author finds the reformist approach, morally weak, which only provides a utilitarian solution to the problem. According to the author, sharia is not just a law; it is a virtuous way that reveals how to live a good life. The utilitarian logic of the fatwa of reformists, particularly ‘Abduh, needs to be revised to establish a deep connection with non-Muslims. Therefore, imitation has become a tool for Muslims’ success in the political, military, and scientific fields.

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