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Elite and popular religiosity among Dutch-Turkish muslims in the Netherlands

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand the beliefs and practices of Dutch-Turkish Muslims from the perspective of elite and popular religiosity, exploring the characteristics of both kinds of religiosity and the various sociological consequences, thereby considering the demographic and socio-economic factors in relation to both in the context of the plural society of the Netherlands.

The design of the present study has been shaped by a 'mixed-methods' approach, in which quantitative and qualitative methods are merged into one research project. Within a four-year period (2010 - 2013), the project began with qualitative research to explore the various forms and motivations of elite and popular religiosity, so that the results of this qualitative research could inform aspects of the quantitative approach. The second method consisted of a questionnaire survey that formed the main part of the project. I developed instruments of an elite and popular religiosity scale through the operationalization of concepts I used in light of my qualitative research of elite and popular religiosity. 1165 participants took part in the survey, ranging in age between 18 - 68 years.

This theoretical and empirical study yielded the result that the forms and motivations of high religiosity vary across different groups. Based on the findings of this study, out of the total group of participants who experienced high religiosity, six out of ten participants experienced popular religiosity, while only two out of ten experienced elite religiosity. I also found that respondents who experienced popular religiosity were less open and friendly towards other religions. Moreover, men who experienced popular religiosity had reduced views on the equality and rights of women compared to men who experienced elite religiosity. It also turned out that participants who experienced popular religiosity expressed more (racial/ethnic) prejudice, and showed more conservative in-group attitudes than participants who experienced elite religiosity.