

The Role of the Islamic Tradition in Water Issues: Focus on America and Beyond  
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Recently, policy makers have begun to realize the important role that religion can play in shaping policy and people's actions concerning water. As an important religion in many areas experiencing or expecting to experience water problems, Islam has come under the scrutiny of policy analysts, as well as other government and non-governmental professionals. Although, it is easy to recognize the importance of understanding Islam in countries where Muslims make-up the majority, however, it can be just as imperative to comprehend the relation between the Islamic tradition and water in places, such as America, where Muslims are the minority. In fact, attempting such an investigation raises important issues concerning the focus, future, and relevance of studies on Islam and water.

Therefore, as a religion scholar, I illustrate the need for new scholarship concerning the role of Islam in water issues. Beyond providing an overview and context, research on Islam and water issues needs to become more critical and in depth, recognizing what Islam can address, what it cannot or does not, and what needs to be considered more carefully. Through an analysis of past scholarship, I recommend three possible areas for future research and provide some possible resources to begin such an inquiry. I suggest a broader engagement with the Islamic tradition, an investigation of the specific manifestations (both through practice and belief) of localized forms of Islam, and an exploration of issues seemingly outside the scope of water issues

Far from being an exhaustive study, my analysis demonstrates the complexity of the issues and the amount of new research that needs to be compiled and synthesized. Therefore, I hope that this paper will serve as a call to action for scholars and as an overview and suggestion for those hoping to incorporate an understanding of Islam into their own work.

Key Words: religion, Islam, public perception, values/attitudes