

Who Gets the Past? The Changing Face of Authority and Knowledge in Muslim-Majority Societies

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Struggles for control of the mantle of religious and often political authority in Muslim-majority societies are often phrased in seemingly opaque interpretations of the past and of what constitutes valued knowledge, blurring lines between tradition and modernity and concealing the vigor of the underlying debates. This paper assesses how the relatively recent shift to mass education, especially mass higher education, and new communications technologies have reshaped these struggles in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Turkey, and North Africa even as the protagonists claim to sustain old ideas and practices of political and religious authority.