



## Emanuel Schaeublin (Gold), Abstract

### Islam in face-to-face interaction: direct zakat giving in Nablus (Palestine)

Zakat is the Islamic obligation to give away a share of one's moveable wealth for the sake of the community—primarily supporting people in need. Based on fieldwork in the Palestinian city of Nablus (2013–2014) where institutional channels for distributing zakat had become blocked due to security crackdowns in 2008, this article analyses direct zakat practices where givers and receivers confront one another in face-to-face interaction. In Nablus, openly displayed material want was assumed to 'expose' people living in poor households as well as their relatives and neighbours. Against this background, direct zakat manifested itself as discreet gestures of 'covering' need, while people *not asking openly* for support tended to be praised for their shyness and piety. In direct zakat transfers, people actively cared for how they appeared to one another in social interactions. This 'ethical work' of presenting oneself involved reading signs, embodying Muslim virtues and invoking God as the sole source of material provision. Considering the Islamic tradition's presence within social interactions, this article seeks to understand how Muslim piety exceeds the individual and how the moral responsibility to cover the needs of others is socially distributed.

KEYWORDS: Islam, money, ethics, face-to-face interaction, gift, shame, zakat, charity, Goffman, God, politics, discursive tradition, Palestine

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