

Foundational Beliefs, Concepts, and Ideas

The Seven Articles of Faith

There are seven articles of Islamic faith which are the foundation of Islamic religious beliefs. These are

1. The unity or oneness of Allah (God) and Allah's complete transcendence
2. Belief in the angels
3. Belief in all the revealed scriptures, up to the Qur'an
4. Belief in the prophets, from Adam up to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on all of them)
5. Belief in the Day of Judgment
6. Belief in destiny determined by God
7. Belief in life after death

In this section, we will explore these seven articles of faith and the related idea of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Surrendering to Allah

In Islam, religious beliefs are fundamentally a personal matter. While Muslims consider the guidance of others to the Truth as revealed to Muhammad and dispelling of ignorance as a charitable act, they are required to convert others or compel anyone to believe what they believe. From a Muslim perspective, to personally surrender oneself

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to the will of Allah is part of one's inner struggle. Muslim belief is summarized in their creed, called the *Shahadah*.

This creed is central to all of Islam. It is the organizing principle around which all other beliefs are formed.



Figure 46: Shahadah
"There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah"

Allah: The God of Islam

Islam emphasizes the singularity, uniqueness, transcendence, and distinctiveness of Allah (God). For Muslims, Allah is entirely different from anything human senses can perceive or human minds can conceive. Allah encompasses all creation, but no human mind can fully encompass or grasp Allah.

Allah is, however, manifested throughout everything they create and, through reflection, humans can easily recognize the wisdom and power behind the creation of the world.

Because of Allah's oneness and his transcendence of human experience and knowledge, Islamic law forbids representations of Allah. Similar to Judaism, Islam prohibits the worship of idols of any form, thus representations of the prophets, and for some Muslims, human beings, in general is not allowed. This belief resulted in Islamic art developing a distinct artistic culture, excelling in the design of decorative patterns including leaf and flower shapes, and Arabic script. Today, the restrictions on banning images of people have been significantly relaxed, but still any form of idol worship, or of images and icons is strictly forbidden in Islam.

Islamic Monotheism

Before the emergence of Islam, many Arabs believed in a supreme, all-powerful God responsible for creation, but, they also believed in a number of lesser gods. With the introduction and spread of Islam, the Arab concept of Godhood lost all polytheistic aspects and became monotheistic with a belief, in one God, Allah.



Figure 47: Calligraphy of the "Basmala" phrase. The Basmala, also known by its incipit Bi-smi llāhi, "In the name of God" is the Islamic phrase bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīmi, "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

Below the pear: "katabahu al-shaykh Azīz al-Rufā'i 1343" ("Shaykh Aziz al-Rufai wrote it 1924/1925").

Arabs, before the advent of Islam, were considered to be living in a state of ignorance of Allah, or *jahiliyya*. Islamic scholars indicate that Islam brought about a complete break from Arab concepts of God that transformed radically Arabic notions of God.

Islamic doctrine teaches that Islam's monotheism continues the tradition of Judaic and Christian monotheism although the Qur'an and Islamic traditions stress the distinctions between Islam and later forms of the two other monotheistic religions. According to Islamic belief, both Moses and Jesus, like others before them, were prophets recruited and empowered by Allah to preach the essential and eternal message of Islam. While the religious and legal codes developed by the Judaic and Christian prophets, the Ten Commandments and the Christian Gospels, and the scriptures took different forms than that of the Qur'an, according to Islamic understanding, at the doctrinal level they are the same teaching.

Muslims believe that Allah revealed holy books or scriptures to a number of Allah's messengers. These include the Qur'an (given to Muhammad), the Torah (given to Moses), the Gospel (given to Jesus), the Psalms (given to David), and the Scrolls (given to Abraham). Muslims believe that these earlier scriptures in their original form were also divinely revealed, but that only the Qur'an remains intact as it was originally revealed to the prophet Muhammad. The recipients of scriptures from Allah are called the people of the book or the "scriptured" people. Like the Jews and the Christians before them, the Muslims became scriptured when God revealed his word to them through a prophet, just as Allah revealed the Qur'an to the prophet Muhammad, commanding him to preach it to his people and later to all humanity.

Although Muslims believe that the original messages of Judaism and Christianity were given by God, they also believe that Jews and Christians eventually distorted them. As such, from a Muslim perspective, the mission of Islam has been to restore what Muslims believe is the original monotheistic teaching and to supplant the older legal codes of the Hebrew and Christian traditions with a newer Islamic code of law that corresponds to the evolving conditions of human societies. For example, Islamic traditions maintain that Jesus was a prophet whose revealed book was the Christian New Testament, and that later Christians distorted the original scripture and inserted into it the claim that Jesus was the son of God. Another example of the differences in perspective is that Muslims believe that the rigorous laws communicated by Moses in the Torah were completely appropriate for their time; however, Jesus later introduced a code of behaviour that stressed spirituality rather than ritual and law.

According to Muslim belief, Allah sent through Muhammad the last and perfect legal code that balances the spiritual teachings with the law, and thus supplants the Jewish and Christian codes. According to the teachings of Islam, the Islamic code, called *Sharia*, is the final code, one that will continue to address the needs of humanity in its most developed stages, for all time. The Qur'an mentions 28 pre-Islamic prophets and messengers, and Islamic traditions maintain that God has sent tens of thousands of prophets to various peoples since the beginning of creation. Some of the Qur'anic prophets are

familiar from the Hebrew Bible, but others are not mentioned in the Bible and are likely to be prophetic figures from pre-Islamic Arabia.

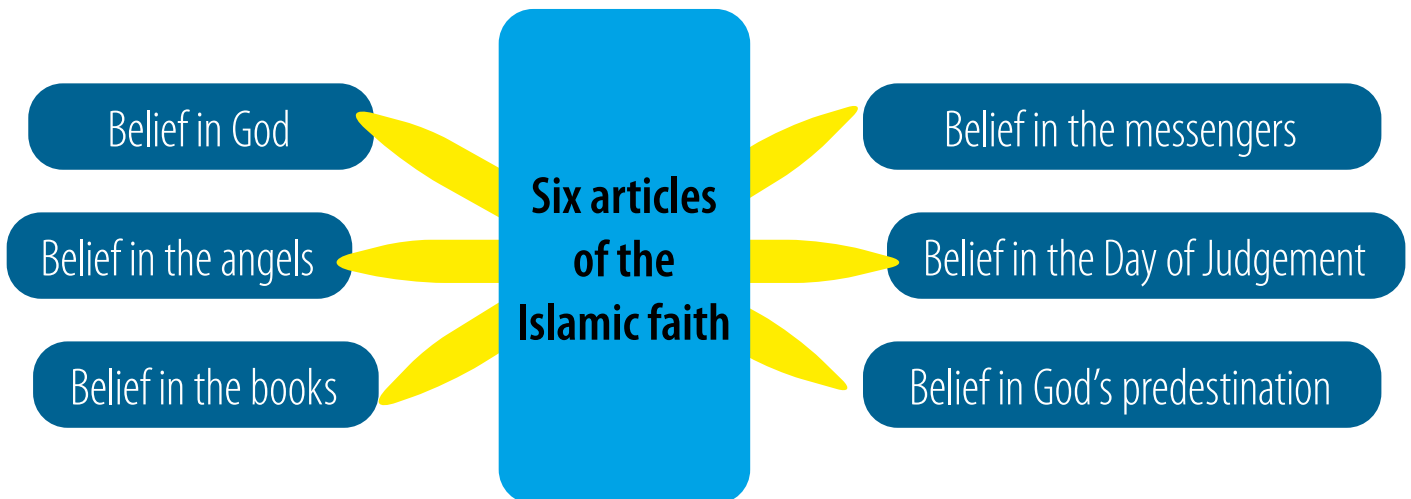
For Muslims, Islamic history is the unfolding of a divine scheme that began with the creation of the world and humanity and extends to the end of time. Creation itself is the realization of Allah's will in history. Humans were created to worship Allah, and human history is replete with prophets who guaranteed that the world was never devoid of the knowledge and proper worship of Allah. Allah's sending of prophets is understood within Islam as an act of mercy. The creator and sustainer, Allah, never abandoned people and always provided human beings with the guidance they need for their salvation in this world and a world to come after this one. Allah is just, and justice requires informing humanity through prophets on how to act and what to believe before people are held accountable for their actions and beliefs. Conversely, once people have been informed by the prophets and messengers sent, Allah's justice also means that those who do wrong or do not believe will be punished and those who do right and do believe will be rewarded. Nevertheless, despite the belief in the primacy of justice, punishment, and rewards as an essential attribute of Allah, Muslims still believe that Allah's most fundamental attribute is mercy.

Our Relationship to Allah

According to Islamic belief, in addition to sending prophets, Allah shows his mercy in the dedication of all creation to the service of humans. Mercy toward humanity is highlighted by the privileged status Allah gave to humans.

According to the Qur'an and later traditions, humans were appointed on Earth by Allah to serve as vice regents (caliphs), and Allah entrusted them with the great responsibility of fulfilling Allah's scheme for creation.

Islamic concepts of the privileged position awarded to humanity differs significantly from the early Jewish and Christian interpretations of the fall from Paradise of Adam and Eve that is the basis for the Christian doctrine of original sin. In the Judaic and Christian biblical stories, Adam and Eve fell from Paradise because they disobeyed God's instructions and, therefore, all of humanity is expelled from Paradise as punishment. Thus, Christian theologians developed the doctrine that humans are born with and carry the



sin of their first parents still on their souls. Christians, based upon this telling of the story, believe that Jesus Christ came to redeem humans from this original sin so that humankind can return to God at the end of time. In contrast, the Qur'an teaches that Adam and Eve repented their initial disobedience, and were forgiven by Allah. Consequently, Muslims believe that the descent by Eve and Adam to Earth from Paradise was an honour bestowed on them by Allah and not a fall from grace. Adam and his descendants were appointed as God's messengers and vice regents, and were entrusted by Allah to be guardians of the Earth.

Day of Judgement

Muslims believe that, on the Day of Judgment, humans will be judged for their actions in their life on Earth by Allah. They believe that those who followed Allah's guidance will be rewarded and sent to Paradise, while those who rejected or ignored Allah's guidance, will be punished and sent to Hell. Muslims believe that when a person dies and their soul passes into the afterlife, Allah will reconstitute the person's physical body so the person can stand before Allah on the Day of Judgement. It is on this day that the person's soul will either be sent to Paradise or to Hell.

Muslims conceive Paradise to be a place or state of eternal beauty, abundance, and majesty. On the other hand, Hell is conceived as being a place or state of great suffering, torment, and anguish. According to Islamic tradition, Allah does not aspire or wish to make anyone suffer or send them to Hell. Ultimately, it is a person's choices that determines where they will go in their after life. If one chooses to live an evil life and ignore the will of God without repentance, Hell is where the soul will be sent. Going to Hell may be avoided by one sincerely submitting to Allah and obeying their commands. Ultimately, Allah's judgement of people's actions will be based on their intentions and motives.

Angels

The nature of humankind's privileged and special relationship to Allah may also be seen by comparing it with that of angels. Islamic tradition teaches that angels were created from light and that they are immortal beings that commit no sins and serve as guardians, recorders of deeds, and links between Allah and humanity. The angel Gabriel, for example, communicated Allah's message to the prophet Muhammad. In contrast to humans, angels are able to not believe in Allah and, with the exception of Satan, they always obey Allah.

Despite these characteristics of angels, Islamic doctrine teaches that humans are still superior to angels. According to Islamic traditions, Allah entrusted humans, not angels, with the guardianship of Earth and commanded the angels to bow before Adam. Satan, along with the other angels, questioned Allah's appointment of fallible humans to the honourable position of vice regency. Satan, an ardent monotheist, disobeyed Allah and refused to bow down before anyone but Allah. For this sin, Satan was doomed to lead human beings astray until the end of the world. According to the Qur'an, Allah informed the angels that he had endowed humans with a knowledge angels could not attain.

Islamic Theology

Throughout the centuries, Muslim scholars and theologians have debated Allah's attributes, especially with regard to justice and mercy. At first, Islamic theology developed in a context of controversial debates with Jews and Christians. However, as Islamic articulations of the basic doctrines became more developed and complex, Muslim theologians soon began to debate among themselves their different interpretations of the Qur'an, leading to developing the foundations of Islamic theology.

Islamic scholars have engaged in recurring debates over the nature of Allah and, in so doing, have continued to refine the Islamic concepts of Allah's otherness and Islamic monotheism. For example, some Islamic theologians interpreted Qur'anic attributions of traits such as hearing and seeing to Allah as being metaphorical in nature so as to avoid comparing Allah to created beings. Another controversial Islamic theological debate was with respect to the question of free will and predestination. For some Muslim theologians, only humans are capable of creating evil because Allah is just and can only create goodness. This group argued, if not, Allah's punishment of humans would be unjust because Allah had created their evil deeds. This particular view was rejected by other Muslim theologians on the basis that it limits the scope of Allah's creation, when the Qur'an clearly states that Allah is the sole creator of everything that exists in the world.

Another controversial issue was the question of whether the Qur'an was eternal or created in time. Theologians who were devoted to the concept of Allah's oneness maintained that the Qur'an must have been created in time, or else there would be something as eternal as Allah. This view was rejected by others because the Qur'an, the ultimate authority in Islam, states in many places and in unambiguous terms that it is the eternal word of Allah.

Many other theological controversies occupied Muslim thinkers for the first few centuries of Islam, but by the tenth century the views of Islamic theologian al-Ashari and his followers, known as Asharites, prevailed and were adopted by most Muslims. The way this school resolved the question of free will was to argue that no human act could occur if Allah does not will it, and that Allah's knowledge encompasses all that was, is, or will be. This view also maintains that it is Allah's will to create the power in humans to make free choices. Allah is therefore just to hold humans accountable for their actions. The views of al-Ashari and his school gradually became dominant in Sunni, or orthodox, Islam, and they still prevail among most Muslims. The tendency of the Sunnis, however, has been to tolerate and accommodate minor differences of opinion and to emphasize the consensus of the community in matters of doctrine.

As is the case with any religious group, ordinary Muslims have not always been concerned with detailed theological controversies. For ordinary Muslims, the central belief of Islam is in the oneness of Allah and in his prophets and messengers, culminating in Muhammad. Thus Muslims believe in the scriptures that Allah sent through these messengers, particularly the truth and content of the Qur'an. Whatever their specific religious practices, most Muslims believe in angels, the Day of Judgment, heaven, paradise, and hell.

Prophet Muhammad's Humanity

For Muslims, the belief in the message of Muhammad is second only to the belief in one God, Allah. In Islam, after the doctrine concerning the oneness and nature of Allah (*al-tawhi*), the second most important doctrine is that of prophecy (*nubuwwah*). Muslims believe that Allah has made prophecy a critical aspect of human history. It is a cycle of prophecy which began with Adam and culminated with the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad. Muslims believe that Allah, over the course of history, sent every nation and people a prophet and thus each has experienced a revelation as a result.

Allah alone has the power to choose the prophets who are sent to guide humans. There are different types of prophets (*anbiya'*), ranging from those who bring some news from Allah (*nabi*) to messengers (*rasul*) who bring major revelations or messages. There are also prophets who play a major role in determining the history of humans, such as Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, who gave rise to major new religions. In all cases, the prophet receives their message from Allah and the prophet's words and deeds are not the result of their own genius or historical borrowings. A prophet owes nothing to anyone save Allah. Revelation (*al-wahy*) in Islam is understood to be the reception of a message from Allah through an angelic instrument of revelation without the interference or influence of the receiver of the message, who is the prophet.

Understood in this sense, revelation is clearly different from inspiration (*al-ilham*), which is possible for all human beings by virtue of their being human, but which usually only occurs within those who prepare their minds and souls through spiritual practice for the reception of divine inspiration.

Like all prophets before him, Muhammad was a mortal being, commissioned by God to deliver a message to his people and to all humanity. But, as with other prophets, Muhammad was distinguished by Allah from ordinary people through certain powers and abilities. For example, Muslims believe that Allah granted Muhammad the capacity of being sinless to support his work as a prophet. Muhammad is, therefore, portrayed in the Qur'an as a person who can make mistakes but who does not sin against Allah. Allah intervened to correct Muhammad's mistakes or errors in judgment, so that he could live an exemplary life that could serve as an example for future Muslims to follow. This emphasis on Muhammad's humanity serves as a reminder that other humans can reasonably aspire to follow in Muhammad's footsteps and also lead an exemplary life.

Five Pillars of Islam

As discussed earlier, Islam is a way of life that is built on the concept of one's complete submission to Allah (God). One who voluntarily surrenders their will to Allah is called a Muslim. The most important of Muslim practices is that of the Five Pillars of Islam. They are the essential duties required of every able adult Muslim. The five pillars are each described in the Qur'an and were practiced during Muhammad's lifetime.

The Five Pillars are

1. *Shahadah* is the profession of faith, recited out loud, and with full understanding; “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”
2. *Salat* is the performing of ritual prayers in the proper way five times each day at set times.
3. *Zakat* is almsgiving; the compulsory giving of a set proportion of one’s wealth to benefit the poor and the needy. *Zakat* is a type of worship and of self-purification.
4. *Sawm* is fasting . During the month of Ramadan all adult Muslims must give up the following things during daylight:
 - Food or drink of any sort
 - Smoking, including passive smoking
 - Sexual activity
5. *Hajj* is a pilgrimage to Mecca during the month of *Dhul-Hijjah* (the twelfth and final month in the Islamic calendar) at least once in one’s lifetime if they can afford it and are physically able.

While some of these practices are also part of Jewish, Christian, and other Middle Eastern religious traditions, collectively they make Islamic religious practices distinct from those of other religions. The five pillars constitute the core practices of the Islamic faith. From a Muslim perspective, the five pillars provide the framework for one’s daily life, and blend their everyday activities and their beliefs into an expression of religious devotion. Carrying out the five pillars demonstrates that one is putting their faith first, and not simply trying to fit their religious life around their secular lives.

Women in Islam

Muhammad and Women’s Roles in the Umma

Beliefs and Practices

The role of women in Islam in contemporary societies is often a controversial and sensitive topic for many within and outside of Islamic communities. As with many other religions, at times social structures and cultural traditions conflict with or contradict certain aspects of the religious beliefs or teachings. Patriarchal social norms and cultural systems have impacted women in Islam as they have in many other religions.

The Qur’an views women and men to be equal in human dignity; however, this spiritual or ethical equality is not necessarily reflected in Muslim practices or customs. In Islamic practice, gender roles manifest themselves, partially because men and women are sometimes allotted different rights and

experience different cultural expectations. Perspectives regarding gender roles are varied within Islam, according to different interpretations of the Qur'an, different sects of the religion, and different cultures and regions.

Regardless, gender relations in many Islamic communities can be said to be based upon maintaining social distance between members of the opposite sex. After puberty, Islam discourages any kind of casual touching or privacy between unrelated persons of the opposite sex.

Muslim women experiences in society and within Islam vary widely between and within different nations and cultures.

Many elements have played a role in shaping or influencing their experiences historically or in the contemporary world. This applies to the social, spiritual, and religious status of women over the course of Islamic history. The various elements that have influenced or shaped the experiences of Islamic women include

1. the *Qur'an*
2. the *Hadiths*
3. *ijma'* (a consensus, expressed or tacit, on a question of Islamic law)
4. *qiyas* (principle by which the laws of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* or Prophetic custom, are applied to situations not explicitly covered by these two sources of law)
5. *fatwas* (non-binding published opinions or decisions regarding religious doctrine or points of law)

Additional influences include

- pre-Islamic cultural traditions
- secular laws
- religious authorities and government agencies such as the Indonesian Ulema Council and Turkey's Diyanet
- spiritual teachers, particularly in Islamic mysticism or Sufism

In the early Islamic period, women prayed in mosques unsegregated from men, were involved in *hadith* transmission, gave sanctuary to men, engaged in commercial transactions, were encouraged to seek knowledge, and were both instructors and pupils. Muhammad's last wife, Aishah, was a well-known authority in medicine, history, and rhetoric.

Historically, women and men in Islam, were seen to be moral equals in the eyes of Allah and were and are expected to fulfill the same duties as required by the five pillars of Islam. At the time of Islam's founding and in comparison to other religious traditions of the time, Islam generally improved the status of women when compared to earlier Arab and non-Arab cultures of that time. These improvements were

- prohibiting female infanticide and recognizing women's full personhood
- providing for women's rights within Islamic law including

- providing for the contractual nature of marriage and the requirement that a dowry be paid to the woman rather than to her family
- guaranteed women's right to inherit, own, and manage property
- right to live in the matrimonial home and receive financial maintenance during marriage
- a waiting period following death and divorce

The Qur'an states that men and women are spiritual equals. This is exemplified in Qur'an 4:124 which states

If any do deeds of righteousness be they male or female and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

As well, Muhammad reflected in his behaviour and life a great respect and concern for the well-being of Muslim women. While he married up to thirteen different women during his lifetime, he is believed to have respected and consulted women and considered their opinions seriously. As well, he appointed at least one woman, Umm Waraqah, to be imam over her household.

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith advocated the rights of women and men equally to seek knowledge. The Qur'an commands all Muslims, regardless of gender, to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, Muhammad encouraged education for both males and females: he declared that seeking knowledge was a religious duty binding upon every Muslim man and woman. Like men, women have a moral and religious obligation to seek knowledge, develop their intellect, broaden their perspective, cultivate their talents, and then utilize their potential for their personal benefit and their society.

Muhammad's interest in the education of women was evident in his life. He used to teach women along with men, and his teachings were sought by both women and men. It is believed that, at the time of his death, there were many female scholars of Islam. Women during the early development of Islam played significant roles. Women contributed significantly to the canonization of the Qur'an, prayed in mosques unsegregated from men, were involved in hadith transmission, gave sanctuary to men, engaged in commercial transactions, were encouraged to seek knowledge, and were both instructors and pupils in the early Islamic period.

Additionally, the wives of Muhammad, especially Aisha (Muhammad's third and youngest wife), also taught both women and men. Many of Muhammad's companions and followers apparently learned about the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic law (*fiqh*) from Aisha. She was a well-known authority in medicine, history, and rhetoric.

The Qur'an refers to women who pledged an oath of allegiance to Muhammad independently of their male kin. Some distinguished women converted to Islam prior to their husbands, a demonstration of Islam's recognition of their capacity for independent action. Caliph Umar appointed women to serve as officials in the market of Medina. Biographies of distinguished women, especially in Muhammad's household, show that women behaved relatively

autonomously in early Islam. While, no woman held religious titles in Islam, many women held political power, some jointly with their husbands, others independently. In Sufi circles, women were recognized as teachers, adherents, “spiritual mothers,” and even inheritors of the spiritual secrets of their fathers.

The reality, however, is that in spite of these facts, the status of women in pre-modern Islam generally was in conflict with Qur’anic ideals and instead reflected the prevailing patriarchal cultural and social norms. Thus Islamic and cultural traditions often discriminated against women. Women in some countries have, in the past faced, and continue in the present to face severe restrictions in their lives and independence.

Challenges Faced by Muslim Women Today

Some of the challenges Islamic women face today in some countries include the following

- There continues to be significant gaps in terms of gender equity in some countries: For example, the *World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report* measured the world gender gap with respect to four categories: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment in their 2012 (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf) report and found that members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation scored poorly overall. They found that 25 out of the 35 worst performing nations of a total of 135 nations were members of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). These included Burkina Faso, Suriname, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal, Oman, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Mali, Morocco, Côte d’Ivoire, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Chad, Pakistan, and Yemen.
- Although Islam abolished female infanticide, one of the most common crimes in many Muslim majority countries is the “honour killing” of women by male relatives.
- Whereas Qur’anic concepts of marriage suggest collaboration, mutuality, and equality, Islamic tradition defines a husband as being the dominant person and decision maker with respect to all aspects of the wife’s and family’s life.
- Though the Qur’an permits no fault divorce, many Muslim societies have made divorce difficult for women both legally and socially.
- Though the Qur’an stipulates that both parents must agree with respect to raising their children and abstain from using their children against each other, in many Muslim countries divorced women automatically lose custody of their children when the boys turn 7 and the girls 12.
- Some Muslim traditions have undermined the Qur’an’s spirit and intention with respect to polygamy, inheritance rights, *purdah* (isolating and keeping women at home), and veiling. The original intent of these customs was to protect women and provide for their autonomy, but instead they have often become instruments of oppression.

As a result, improvement of the status of women has been and continues to be a major issue in modern, progressive Islam. Since the mid-1800s in Islamic communities, many Muslim women and men have questioned the legal, cultural, and social restrictions on women, especially concerning education, seclusion, strict veiling, polygyny, slavery, and other issues. Muslim women and Islamic feminists have advocated reforms, established schools for girls, opposed veiling and polygyny, and engaged in student and nationalist movements. Nationalist movements and new states that emerged in the post-World War II period saw women and gender issues as crucial to social development. State policies enabled groups of women to enter the traditionally male-dominated political sphere and professions previously closed to them. However, some of these reforms were not always positive among all groups and there was some religious backlash.

Today, the debate continues over the appropriate level of female participation in the public sphere. Women are often viewed as essential to either reforming or conserving Islamic tradition because of their roles in maintaining family, social continuity, and culture. The status of women has also been a key factor in defining national identity. Although governments of twentieth and twenty-first century Muslim nations have promoted education for both boys and girls as a means of achieving economic growth, the percentage of girls enrolled in schools in developing countries with large and rapidly growing populations still remains low as indicated by the *World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap 2017 Report* referenced earlier. In some nations, concern for the employment of men has served to support the call of more conservative groups where women stick to traditional roles as housewives and mothers. Nonetheless, economic necessity has driven women to take whatever work they can find, and they often find themselves employed as low-paid, unskilled labour. On the other hand war, conflict, and labour migration have increased the number of female-headed Islamic households.

Nevertheless, there has been significant progress as well. Today Muslim women are active in many spheres and are leaders as well. These spheres include local and national community organizations; development projects; economic, education, health, and political projects; relief efforts; charities; and social services. Legal reforms have also improved the status and condition of women in many countries. This includes

- making polygynous marriages illegal or difficult
- permitting wives to sue for divorce in religious courts, especially in cases of cruelty, desertion, or life threatening contagious diseases
- providing women with the right to negotiate and make their own marriage contracts
- requiring ex-husbands to provide housing for a divorced wife while she has custody of their children
- limiting the ability of parents and guardians to force and contract women to marry against their wishes

- increasing the minimum age for marriage and providing opportunities for girls wed against their wishes as minors to end the marriage upon reaching the age of majority
- enhancing the rights of women with regard to child custody
- allowing women to make stipulations in marriage contracts that limit the husband's authority over them

Although Muslim women in the contemporary era have again assumed leadership roles in Islamic communities and nations, there is still conflict between traditionalists, who advocate for continued patriarchy, and reformists, who advocate for equity and the liberation of women.

Muslim Women Leaders of the Past

The Qur'an, refers to women who pledged an oath of allegiance to Muhammad independently of their male family members. Some distinguished women converted to Islam prior to their husbands, a demonstration of Islam's recognition of their capacity for independent action. Caliph Umar appointed women to serve as officials in the market of Medina. Biographies of distinguished women, especially in Muhammad's household, show that women behaved relatively autonomously in early Islam. In Sufi circles, women were recognized as teachers, adherents, "spiritual mothers," and even inheritors of the spiritual secrets of their fathers.

While no woman held religious titles in Islam, many women held political power, some jointly with their husbands, and others independently during Islam's history. The best-known women rulers in the pre-modern era include

- Khayzuran, who governed the Muslim Empire under three Abbasid caliphs in the eighth century
- Malika Asma bint Shihab al-Sulayhiyya and Malika Arwa bint Ahmad al-Sulayhiyya, who both held power in Yemen in the eleventh century
- Sitt al-Mulk, a Fatimid queen of Egypt in the eleventh century
- the Berber queen Zaynab al-Nafzawiyah who reigned from 1061 to 1107 CE
- two thirteenth-century Mamluk queens, Shajarat-Durrin Cairo and Radiyyahin Delhi
- six Mongol queens, including Kutlugh Khatun (thirteenth century) and her daughter Padishah Khatun of the Kutlugh-Khanid dynasty
- the fifteenth-century Andalusian queen Aishahal-Hurra, known by the Spaniards as Sultana Madre de Boabdil
- Sayyidaal-Hurra, governor of Tetouán in Morocco who reigned from 1510 to 1542 CE
- four seventeenth-century Indonesian queens

Despite these examples of Islamic female leaders in Islam's history, in general, the status of women in pre-modern Islam conformed not to Qur'anic ideals but to

the dominant patriarchal social and cultural norms. Thus, the improvement of the status of women has become a major issue in contemporary progressive Islam.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, many Muslim women and men have questioned the legal and social restrictions on women, especially with respect to education, seclusion, veiling/head coverings, polygyny, slavery, and the keeping of concubines. Muslim women have published works advocating reforms; established schools for girls; opposed forced veiling, head coverings, and polygyny; and engaged in student and nationalist movements. Nationalist movements and new states that emerged in the post-World War II period perceived women and gender issues as essential to their social development. In many Islamic majority states, changes in policies and laws enabled groups of women to enter the male-dominated political sphere and professions previously barred to them, even though these policies often caused popular and religious backlash.

The debates continue today over the appropriate level of female participation in the public sphere. Women are typically viewed as key to either reforming or conserving tradition because of their roles in maintaining family, social continuity, and culture. Women's status has also been used as a means of defining national identity. Although governments of twentieth-century Muslim nation-states have promoted education for both girls and boys as a means of achieving economic growth, the percentage of girls enrolled in schools in developing countries with large and rapidly growing populations remains low. Concern for men's jobs has given added incentive to the conservative call for women to adhere to traditional roles as housewives and mothers, although economic necessity has led women to undertake whatever work they can find, usually low-paid, unskilled labour. War and labour migration have increased the number of female-headed households.

Many Muslim women and their allies are advocating for change within their communities and mosques. Islamic scholars, community activists, and ordinary Muslims are working peacefully to challenge male authority, and demand that their Allah-given rights to gender equality and social justice be respected. In Canada, women such as author Raheel Raza have been vocal advocates for change.

Muslim Women as Religious Leaders

Around the Islamic world, women are reading or re-reading Islam's classical texts and questioning the way they have been traditionally interpreted by men for centuries. In the Middle East, activists are contesting outdated family laws based on Islamic jurisprudence, which give men the power in marriages, divorces, and custody issues. In Europe and the United States, women are challenging customs that impede women from praying in mosques or holding leadership positions. In 2015, the first women-only mosque opened in Los Angeles and in 2019, the Women's Mosque of Canada opened in Toronto.

There is considerable debate and controversy among Muslims regarding the conditions in which women may act as *imams* and lead a congregation in *salat* (prayer). Although there is no text in the Qur'an and no statement from the Prophet (*hadith*) that restricts women from fulfilling the role of *Imam*, traditionally, religious leaders and scholars arrived at a near unanimous opinion that only men should be *imams*. A few Islamic sects, however, do make exceptions for women to lead

taraawih (optional Ramadan prayers) or lead a congregation consisting only of close relatives.

Amina Wadud is an American Muslim philosopher with a progressive interpretation of the Qur'an. Amina converted to Islam and concerted her efforts on relation of gender and Islam. She has been part of several civil society organizations and movements promoting principles of equality for women under principles of Islam. In 2005, she led Friday *salat* (prayers) for a mixed sex congregation in the United States. The event drew significant controversy and mixed reactions across the Muslim community. While some scholars applauded her actions, many criticized and opposed her actions.

Historically, certain sects have considered it acceptable for women to function as *imams*. This was true not only in Arab lands in early Islam, but as well in China over recent centuries, where women's mosques developed. The debate, however, has been reignited during the 21st century. Muslim activists have argued that the spirit of the Qur'an and the letter of a disputed *hadith* (saying of Mohammed) indicate that women should be able to lead mixed, as opposed to female only congregations. They argue that the prohibition against the practice originated from sexism/patriarchy in the medieval environments and from flawed and biased patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, rather than from a spirit of "true Islam."

In Turkey and a few other nations, including Canada, women are being trained to be *imams* and increasingly leading mixed-sex congregations. In Canada, since 2008, the Noor Cultural Centre and, since 2019, the Toronto Unity Mosques, for example, have both female and male *imams* lead their congregations. Nevertheless, the norm in most mosques across Canada is for men to be *imams* and the religious leaders of the congregations.

Islamic feminist writers and advocates have emerged, advocating for women's rights on everything from the right to choose whether or not to wear a *hijab*, to the right to vote and hold political office in countries where they are still excluded from doing so.

For example, Muslim women scholars such as the late Moroccan scholar Fatima Mernissi, UCLA's Khaled Abou El Fadl, Harvard's Leila Ahmed, Egypt's Zaki Badawi, Iraq's Abdullah al Judai, and Pakistan's Javaid Ghamidi have all argued that religious interpretations that date from the seventh century to today, indicate that Muslim women are not required to cover their hair.

Women today are active participants in grassroots organizations; development projects; economic, education, health, and political projects; relief efforts; charitable associations; and social services. Modern reforms in many countries have advanced women's rights and improved their status and social conditions.

As well, in the contemporary era, women have again assumed leadership roles in the Muslim world and in Muslim communities. A few examples follow:

- Benazir Bhutto was prime minister of Pakistan (1988–1990, 1993–1996)
- Tansu Çiller was prime minister of Turkey (1993–1996)
- Atifete Jahjaga was president of Kosovo (2011–2016)

- Megawati Sukamoputri was President of Indonesia (2001–2004)
- Shaykh Hasinai is the current prime minister of Bangladesh (1996–)
- Halimma Yacob is the current President of Singapore (2017–)

Nonetheless, tensions remain between traditionalists, who advocate continued patriarchy, and reformists, who advocate continued liberation of women.

In the west, Muslim women have also assumed leadership roles in various countries. In Canada, Yasmin Ratansi is an Ismaili Canadian and was the first Muslim woman elected to the Canadian House of Commons in 2004. Maryam Monsef, is an Afghan Canadian politician, who was elected to represent the riding of Peterborough–Kawartha as a Liberal member of the House of Commons of Canada in 2015. As of the time this document was drafted, she is the current Minister for Women and Gender Equality in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Cabinet.

In the United States, Michigan Democrat Rashida Tlaib and Minnesota Democrat Ilhan Omar, were both elected to the US Congress in 2018. Omar, in addition to being one of the first Muslim women in Congress, is the first Somali-American member. She originally arrived in the United States as a refugee.

Change and Evolution

Muslims in Canada and throughout the world are from many different ethnic, cultural, linguistic, geographical, and national origins. Along with these differences, many Muslims in Canada and elsewhere identify with or belong to different schools of Islamic thought or Islamic schools and sects. It is, therefore, important to think of Muslims in Canada as belonging to diverse Muslim communities rather than one large and homogeneous Islamic community.

Muslims are united in one *ummah* (community) by their common belief in the unity of Allah and their reverence for Prophet Muhammad. But, as with most major religions, there is also great diversity within Islam. Islamic teachings as reflected in the Qur’an and hadith have been interpreted and practiced in different ways since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Differences and debates about the nature of political authority, spiritual leadership, and the development of various schools of Islamic law have been central and, over time, and in different geographic regions, have led to the emergence of various schools and sects of Islamic thought and practice.



Figure 48: Unknown Artist, Imam ‘Ali with Hasan and Husayn Painting With Calligraphy Persian, 19th century

Diversity of Islam

Sunni and Shi'a

Perhaps the most significant and oldest distinction is the division between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Sunni and Shi'a are two of the oldest lines of Islamic faith groups and it is important to distinguish and acknowledge the differences. As religion influences every aspect of life in Muslim families and communities, understanding the difference between Sunni and Shi'a beliefs is required if one is to understand contemporary Muslim communities.

Both Sunni and Shi'a share common beliefs with respect to the fundamental aspects of Islam and they share the same sacred scriptures, The Qur'an. There are, however, significant differences that flow from their different historical experiences, political and social developments, and differing ethnic composition.

The division followed from the death, in 632 CE, of Islam's founder Prophet Muhammad and the disagreement that developed over who should succeed and lead the emerging Muslim community after the Prophet. While, both Shi'a and Sunni agree that Muhammad was the final prophet, they were split over who should inherit Prophet Muhammad's political and religious leadership roles.

The majority of Muhammad's followers chose Abu Bakr who was the father of Muhammad's wife Aisha and a personal friend as successor. This group eventually became known as the Sunnis or ones who follow the Sunna (Muhammad's teachings, actions, and beliefs). But others believed that Muhammad's successor should be a direct descent of the Prophet. They believed that Muhammad had chosen Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, to follow him as leader. This group eventually became known as the Shi'a, the supporters of Ali, a contraction of *shiaat Ali*.

Abu Bakr's supporters initially won and Abu Bakr became the first Caliph (the title given to the chief Muslim civil and religious ruler and successors of Muhammad); however, Ali eventually became the fourth Caliph much later in life and ruled for a brief period.

The division into two schools or sects of Islam was solidified when the ruling Sunni Caliph's troops killed Ali's son Hussein in 680 CE in Karbala (located in modern Iraq). Sunni rulers had a virtual monopoly on political power in the Muslim controlled lands, while the Shi'a were regulated to the margins of the state. The Shi'a looked for guidance from their imams of whom the first twelve were direct descents of Ali. Thus, over time, the theological distinctions and differences in religious practices of the Sunni and Shi'a began to evolve and diverge.

Diversity within Sunni Islam

Early in the 21st century, Sunnis represented the majority of Muslims in all Muslim dominant countries except Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, and perhaps Lebanon.

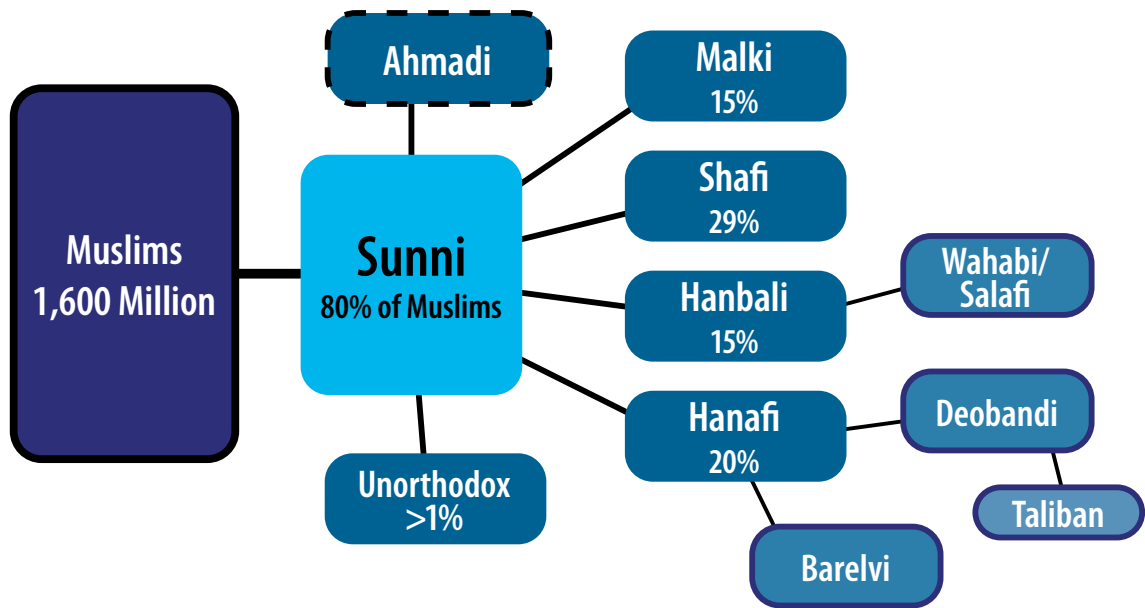
The key aspects of Sunni Islam that distinguish it from other forms of Islam are the beliefs surrounding the first caliphs that were the successors to Muhammad and the emphasis on incorporating the views and customs of the majority of the community, as distinguished from the views of more marginal groups. The development and implementation of consensus (*ijma'*) by the Sunnis allowed

them to incorporate various customs and practices that arose through ordinary historical development in spite of the fact that they were not necessarily rooted in the Qur'an.

The Sunnis recognize the Qur'an and six versions of Hadith (six "sound" books), which are the record of the actions, practices, or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. As Sunni Islam developed, four main schools of thought (*madhabs/Maddhab*) of religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*) emerged. These were Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali. The four schools are named after their founders Abu Hanifa, Anas bin Malik, al-Shafi'i, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, respectively. The four schools differ in their interpretation and application of the Qur'an and the Hadith. These four schools developed and evolved over time, some with sub-sects and some being more prominent in certain geographical and political regions. Zahirism is sometimes seen to be a fifth school of Sunni Islam, but in some cases is thought to belong to the Hanbali school.

The chart that follows provides an overview of the major Sunni sects and their representation in different nations.

Sunni Sects



A brief description of each of the four main Sunni sects and Zahiri Islam follows.

Hanafi

This is often considered to be the oldest and most liberal school of Islamic law within the Sunni tradition. This Sunni school has the most followers (approximately 35% of Sunni's) and is the major school of Arab Sunnis in Iraq. Historically, it has been the doctrine followed by most of the major Muslim dynasties in Islamic history. The foundational texts of the Hanafi school are those authored by Abu Hanifa and his students Abu Yusuf and Muhammad al-Shaybani.

The founder of the Hanafi school, Abu Hanifa, was born in Kufa, Iraq, circa 700 CE. He was one of the earliest Muslim scholar-interpreters to seek new ways of applying Islamic tenets to everyday life. During his life, Abu Hanifa experienced opposition to his views and persecution. He was imprisoned and then poisoned leading to his death circa 767-768 CE. Abu Hanifa's interpretation of Muslim law was very tolerant of differences within Muslim communities. As well, he differentiated between belief and practice, giving priority to belief over practice. Hanafi's views differed significantly from al-Shafi's, with both considering the other to be their rival.

Most of the Hanafi school follows the al-Maturidi doctrine. The doctrine was formalized by Abu Mansur Al Maturidi and brought the beliefs already shared by the majority of Sunnis under one school of systematic theology (*kalam*). It is considered one of the orthodox Sunni schools.

One of its distinguishing characteristics is that it makes significant use of reason or opinion in legal decisions. The Hanafi school is basically non-hierarchical and is decentralized, and has limited contemporary rulers to incorporate Hanafi religious leaders into any form of a strong centralized state system.

Hanafi legal doctrine remains the most influential school in the Islamic world today, being used in Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. In terms of family and personal law issues, Hanafi *fiqh* is dominant in Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, and, for several minority populations, in Iran and Malaysia.

Maliki

This school accounts for approximately 25% of Sunnis. It was founded by an Arab Muslim jurist, theologian, and hadith traditionalist, Malik bin Anas, (circa 710-795 CE). He authored the *Muwatta*, which is the oldest and most revered Sunni hadith collection and the first legal work to incorporate and join *hadith* and *fiqh* together.

Just as is the case with the Hanafii school, the sources of Maliki doctrine are the *Qur'an*, the *hadith*, consensus (*ijma'*), and analogy (*qiyas*); however, the Malikis' concept of *ijma'* differs from that of the Hanafiis as they understood it to mean the consensus of the community as represented by the people of Medina. But overtime, they came to understand consensus to be that of the doctors of law, known as *'ulama*.

Imam Malik's book *al-Muwatta* (The Beaten Path). Is considered to have made a major contribution to Islamic law. The *Muwatta* is a code of law based on the legal practices that were in place in Medina. It covers diverse aspects of Islamic practice ranging from prescribed rituals of prayer and fasting to the correct conduct of business relations. The legal code is supported by some 2,000 traditions attributed to the Prophet.

Malikis were prominent in Africa and, for a while, in Spain and Sicily. Malikite doctrine and practice remains widespread throughout North Africa, the Sudan, and regions of West and Central Africa. It is also a preferred school in Gulf States like Bahrain, Dubai, and Kuwait.

Shafi'i

This school also accounts for approximately 25% of Sunnis. Shafi'i was founded by Palestinian-Arab Muslim theologian Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafii in the early 800s CE. He was also was a student of Malik bin Anas. The school rejected local traditional community practice as the source of legal precedent, and instead prioritized the acceptance of the Hadith as the foundation for legal and religious judgments.

Like the other schools of Islamic law, Shafi'i mostly draws on the *Qur'an* and the *Hadiths* for Sharia. Where there is ambiguity in either, then the school first seeks guidance from *ijma*, the consensus of Islamic scholars. Next in the process of legal decision making, it draws on *qiyās* (analytical reasoning). Finally, if there is still no consensus, the Shafi'i school then relies on individual opinion (*ijtihad*) of the companions of Muhammad, followed by analogy.

The Shafi'i school today has followers in Somalia and parts of Africa, the Middle East, Indonesia, Malaysia, and parts of India, Singapore, Myanmar, Thailand, Brunei, and the Philippines.

Hanbali

The Hanbali school represents approximately 15% of Sunnis. The founder of this school was an Arab Muslim jurist and theologian Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal Abu Abd Allah al-Shaybani born in Iraq. The Hanbali school is the smallest of four major Sunni schools.

It recognizes as sources of law, the *Qur'an*, *hadith*, *fatwas* of Muhammad 's Companions, sayings of a single Companion, traditions with weaker chains of transmission or lacking the name of a transmitter in the chain, and reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*) if absolutely necessary. Hanbali supports the practice of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) through study of the *Qur'an* and *hadith*. It rejects taqlid, the blind acceptance of the opinions of other scholars, and advocates for the literal interpretation of textual sources. The Hanbali school is considered to be the most conservative of the Sunni schools, but the most liberal in most commercial matters.

Today, it has the most influence in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but also has many followers in United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, and Iraq.

Zahiri

This is sometimes considered the fifth school of Sunni Muslims. It is based on jurisprudence founded by Dawud al-Zahiri in the ninth century CE. This school is characterized by reliance on the outward (*ẓāhir*) meaning of expressions in the *Qur'an* and *hadith*, but rejects analogical deduction (*qiyās*). After limited success and decline in the Middle East, the *Zāhirī* school flourished in the Caliphate of Córdoba (Al-Andalus). It is believed by some to have survived for about 500 years in various forms before merging with the *Ḥanbalī* school. It has, however, experienced a revival in the mid-20th century in parts of the Muslim world.

Some scholars describe Zahirism as a distinct school of Islam, while others see it as belonging to the Sunni family of religious thought, and thus still recognized by contemporary Islamic scholars. This is especially true of members of the Ahl-i Hadith movement, who have identified themselves with the *Zāhirī* school of thought.

As well, there have been various movements in Sunni Islam which have affected beliefs and practices at different points in time for different Sunni schools. For example, there were some more liberal and more secular movements that advocated that *Sharia* should be interpreted on an individual basis, and that rejected any *fatwa* or religious edict by religious Muslim authority figures. In addition, there have been several fundamentalist movements in Sunni Islam, which reject and sometimes even persecute liberal Muslims for attempting to compromise what they see as being traditional Muslim values.

More recent divisions have emerged. Followers of the classical Sunni schools of jurisprudence have competed with Islamists and Salafis such as Wahhabis and Ahle Hadith, who follow a literalist reading of early Islamic sources, for the claim that they represent orthodox Sunni Islam. As well, in South Asia the Bareilvi and Deobandi schools have emerged and represent an additional schism within classical Sunni Islam.

Diversity within Shi'a Islam

The *Shī'at 'Ali* (means “the party of Ali,” for which Shi'a is an abbreviation) considered certain designated descendants of the Prophet to be the only legitimate successors to Muhammad as political as well as religious or spiritual leaders of the Islamic community (*ummah*). They believed that Muhammad's special qualities had been passed on to Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet. Therefore, in their eyes, Ali was the most qualified to lead the community and succeed the Prophet Muhammad after his death. Shi'a Muslims, unlike Sunnis, believe that the leadership of the Islamic community after Muhammad should have been passed on continuously to a direct relative or descendent of the prophet that is designated to be the successor (known as the *Imam*). According to the Shi'a, a community without the direct revelation of a prophet must always have an *Imam* who will maintain the revelations and guide the community in applying it to new situations. Therefore, in the Shi'at tradition, there is a lineage or a series of *Imams*, which begins with Ali and continues after him for several generations. The exact members of the lineage and the number of

Imams, however, varies among the different schools that fall under the Shi'a umbrella. Some of the Shi'at schools derive their names for the number of *Imams* they recognize (e.g., Twelver).

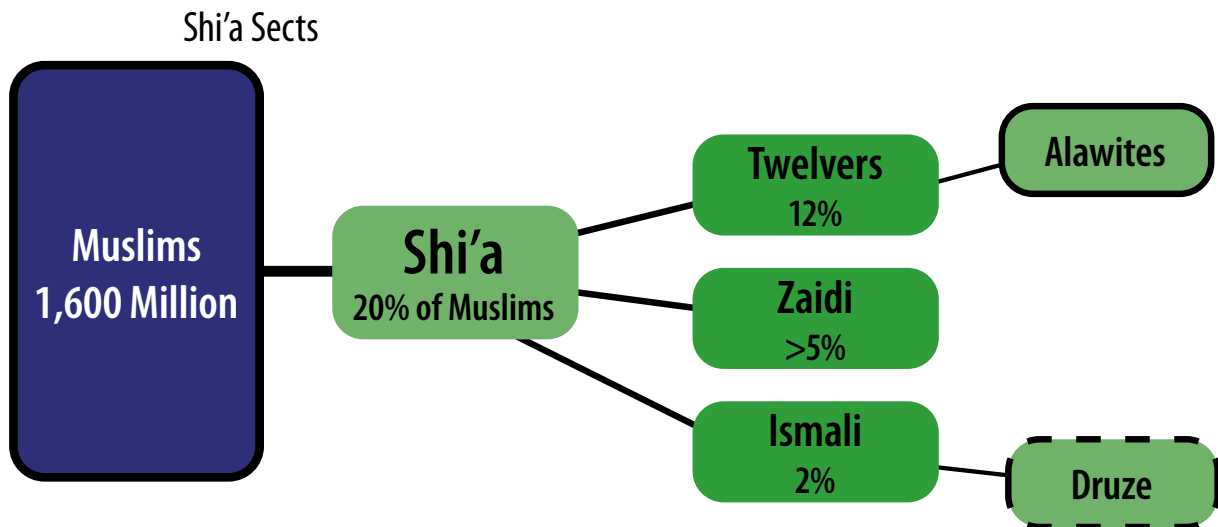
During the course of their history, the Shi'a and their Imams have faced significant opposition and persecution as a result of their beliefs. The lives and the sufferings of Shi'a Imams are commemorated in stories and rituals, as can be seen in the 'passion plays' performed on 'Ashurah, the tenth day of the lunar month of *Muharram*. The date recalls the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Husayn, the third Shi'i Imam. Husayn and a small group of family members and loyal supporters were killed in 680 CE at Karbala in modern day Iraq by the troops of the Umayyad ruler, Yazid I, after Husayn refused to accept his authority. The words of their Imams are also a source of law and spiritual guidance for Shi'a Muslims, in addition to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet.

In contrast to the Shi'i position on the successor to Muhammad, the majority of the early Islamic community, as represented by tribal leaders, chose to recognize Abu Bakr as-Siddiq as the person who should succeed Muhammad and become the first Caliph (*Khalifah*). Over time, they came to insist that Muhammad had given his authority to the whole community, which could then choose its own leaders. For them, the sources of religious authority were the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah* or custom of the Prophet, and *ijma'*, the communal consensus of Muslims. This community thus became known as *ahl al-sunnah wa'l-jama'ah*, "the people of the Sunnah and the community" or "Sunnis."

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq and the Sunni caliphs that followed expanded the borders of the early Muslim empire; the Umayyad dynasty assumed the *khilafah*, or caliphate, after 661 CE and ruled from Damascus. At first, the caliphs had authority in both political and religious spheres, but gradually a distinct class of scholars, or *ulama*, would guide the legal and theological life of the Sunni community.

Imam Al Mahdi

Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdī, also known as Imam Zaman, is the 12th and final Imam of Twelver Shi'a Muslims. Twelver Shi'a Muslims believe him to be the Mahdī, the ultimate saviour of humanity who will emerge with Isa (Jesus Christ) in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace and justice to the world. The majority of Sunni Muslims do not believe that he is the Mahdi. Sunni Muslims believe that the Mahdi has not yet been born and that only Allah knows who the Mahdi is or will be, with the exception that he is to be a descendant of Muhammad. Beyond this point, Sunnis recognize many of the same hadiths which Shi'ites accept, and that predict the Mahdi's emergence, his acts, and his universal Caliphate. Sunnis also have many hadiths about Mahdi which are in their Hadith collections.



Shi'a Islam may be divided into three major sects: Twelvers, Ismalis, and Zaydis. Because the vast majority of Shi'as are Twelvers the term "Shi'a" is frequently understood to refer to the largest sect today, the Twelver's, followed by Ismalis and Zaydis. A fourth sect, the Kaysanites is now extinct. Twelvers are the only sect of Muslims that are consistent with the saying of Muhammad that he would have twelve successors. Divisions within the Shi'a Muslim communities developed over time and primarily as a result of disagreement on the succession of the Imamate. In addition to these three major Shi'a sects, additional groups have emerged from the Shi'a community who, for some, constitute separate and distinct schools or even religions but, for others, are just part of the spectrum of Shi'a groups. These additional groups include the Druze (Druse) and Alawite, among others. Above is a chart outlining each sect or group as it falls under the Shi'a umbrella.

Twelvers

They constitute the largest branch of Shi'a Muslims, account for about 85% of the population, and may also be known as Imami or Jafari, which is a reference to the sixth Imam. The name of the sect derives from the 12 Imams who they consider were the spiritual and political successors to the prophet Muhammad. For Twelver's, the Imams were exemplary human individuals who not only ruled over the community with justice, but were able to preserve and interpret *sharia* (Islamic law) and the esoteric (hidden or secret) meaning of the Qur'an. Sunnah (words and actions) of Muhammad and the Twelve Imams are guides and models for the community to follow. Thus, from their perspective, Muhammad and the Imams must be infallible (*ismah*), free from the potential for error and sin, and divinely decreed through Muhammad. Of the 12 Imams, each Imam after Ali was the son of the previous Imam, with the exception of Hussein who was the brother of Hasan. They believe that the last Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, still lives although he disappeared but will reappear in the future as the promised *Mahdi* or messiah.

Twelver theology is primarily based on five principles or beliefs and ten practices, which evolved over time from the teachings of the Qur'an and hadiths. But they were also influenced by the teachings of the Twelve Imams, responses to religious movements in the Muslim world, and major events and experiences of Twelver history. Though different scholars may have nuanced beliefs about each of the principles, The Five Principles are as follows:

- The Unity of Allah (God) which means that there is no other like Allah and that Allah is not divisible either in reality or imagination.
- Justice of Allah, which means Allah is just, and he is justice itself and justice flows from Allah to the souls of humans.
- The Prophethood which means that Allah sent prophets bearing good tidings and guidance to the people.
- Imamah and Walayah, which means that Shi'a believe in the trilateral structure of authority; authority of God which is absolute and universal, authority of Muhammad which is legitimized by the grace of God, and authority of the Imams who are blessed for the leadership of the community through Muhammad.
- The Day of Resurrection is the day on which Twelvers believe the return or the revival of a group of Muslims back to this world after the appearance of Mahdi (the Messiah) will occur. The belief is derived from the Qur'an which talks about the revival of the dead in past communities and the revival at the Day of Resurrection.



Figure 49: Names of all 14 Masoomeen (Muhammad, Fatimah and descendants of Imam Ali)

In addition to these five principles, there are ten practices that Shia Muslims must perform, called the Ancillaries of the Faith.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Salah: 5 daily prayers 2. Sawm: Fasting during Ramadan 3. Zakat: Almsgiving; similar to Sunni Islam, it applies to money, cattle, silver, gold, dates, raisins, wheat, and barley 4. Khums: An annual taxation of one-fifth (20%) of the gains that a year has been passed on without using. Khums is paid to the Imams; indirectly to poor and needy people | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca 6. Jihad: Striving for the cause of Allah 7. Enjoining good 8. Forbidding wrong 9. Tawalla: Expressing love towards good 10. Tabarra: Expressing disassociation and hatred towards evil |
|--|---|

Twelvers constitute the majority of Muslims in several nations including Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. As well, they are significant minorities in several

countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chad, India, Kuwait, Oman, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, and the United Arab Emirates. Twelver Shi'a Islam is the official state religion in Iran.

Zaydis or Zaidi

Zaydis are the oldest branch of the Shi'a and today they are the second largest group after the Twelvers. Zaydism emerged in the eighth century CE. This branch is named after Zayd ibn 'Ali, the grandson of Husayn ibn 'Ali, the son of their fourth Imam Ali ibn 'Husain.

Zaydis do not believe that Imams are infallible but do promote the idea that their leadership is divinely inspired. They believe that Zayd ibn Ali was betrayed in his last hour by the people in Kufaul Abidin. They rejected Muhammad Baqir as Imam and instead recognized Zayd Zainul Abidin as the fifth Imam. For this reason, they are sometimes known as the Fivers.

They believe that a true Imam should be a descendent of Fatima through Hassan and Hussein.

Zaydis' religious literature puts an emphasis on justice and human responsibility, and its political implications. In other words, they believe Muslims have an ethical and legal obligation by their religion to resist and oppose unjust leaders including unrighteous sultans and caliphs.

Zaydis are close in some ways to Sunnis, especially Hanafis, in their doctrine. Zaydis are mostly present in Yemen, where they make up almost 40% of Yemen's Muslim population, and in Saudi Arabia, where they number nearly one million.

Isma'ilis (Ismailis)

The Isma'ilis are a branch or sub-sect of Shi'a Islam. At one point in history, they were the largest branch of Shi'a and achieved their maximum political power in the tenth to twelfth centuries during the Fatimid Caliphate in Tunisia. Isma'ilis broke from the main body of the Shi'a due to differences respecting the successors of Muhammad, which essentially was the same issue which divided Sunnis from the Shi'a. In the case of the Twelvers and other Shi'a and the Isma'ilis, the dispute was over who should be the seventh imam. The Isma'ilis believe that Imam Isma'il ibn Jafar should be the seventh Imam and the appointed spiritual successor to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. The other Shi'a believed Musa al-Kadhim, the younger brother of Isma'il, should be Imam.

The Ismaili's believe in an unbroken line of Imamatus who are the hereditary spiritual successors from Muhammad to Ismail and then to the present. Currently, His Highness the Aga Khan, is their leader, and the 49th Imam in direct lineal descent from Prophet Muhammad.

In keeping with most Muslims, Ismailis believe in the oneness of God and that Muhammad, was the final Prophet and Messenger of God for all humanity. Isma'ilis believe that the Qur'an is to be read as a set of allegories that requires reinterpretation over time

After the death of Muhammad ibn Isma'il in the eighth century CE, Ismailism further developed into the belief system as it is expressed today. It has an explicit focus on the deeper, mysterious, and secretive meaning (*batin*) of the Islamic religion. Shi'a Islam developed into two separate directions. The Isma'ili path which is metaphorical and focuses on the mystical path and nature of God, with the Imam of the era representing the manifestation of a deeper truth and intelligible reality. In contrast, the Twelver path is a more literal interpretation, focusing on divine law (*sharia*) and the deeds and sayings (*Sunnah*) of Muhammad and the Twelve Imams who were guides and a light to Allah.

Although there are several schools of Ismailism, as indicated earlier, today the term generally refers to the Nizaris which is the largest group. Isma'ilis have a significant presence in Pakistan and India, but they are also found in other Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and other nations.



Figure 50: Isma'ili Arabic manuscript from the 12th century for Brethren of Purity, an Isma'ili group

Druze (aka Druse and Muwahideen)

The Druze, who live almost exclusively in the mountains of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, are a distinct Arabic-speaking ethno-religious group who originated in

Western Asia and who self-identify as *Al-Muwahhidūn*, which literally means, “The People of Monotheism”. They are listed here as falling under the Shi’a Islamic umbrella, but some would not classify them as even being Muslim.

Their origins have been somewhat of a mystery and are debated. The search for an answer has engaged linguists, historians, and sociologists. There has been much debate over whether they are of Arabian, Turkish, Caucasus, or Persian origin.

The Druze religion emerged in Egypt in the 11th century as an offshoot of Isma’ilism during the reign of the sixth Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (ruled 996–1021 CE). It is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion based on the teachings of Hamza ibn-’Ali ibn-Ahmad and the sixth Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, and Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. The *Epistles of Wisdom* is the foundational text of the Druze faith.

As previously indicated, while the Druze faith incorporates elements of Ismailism, it also draws non-Islamic thoughts and beliefs such as Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Pythagoreanism, and other philosophies and beliefs. This has resulted in a unique and mostly secretive theology. The Druze have an esoteric interpretation of religious scripture, which emphasizes the role of the mind and truthfulness.

Druze believe that Allah chooses to appear to humans at various times, and in reincarnation or rebirth of the soul. They believe that at the end of one’s cycle of rebirth, which occurs after successive reincarnations, the soul will be united with the cosmic mind.

Druze teachings are mainly founded on the letters of al-Hamza, written between 1017–1020 CE, and transmitted within the community from generation to generation through initiated scholars. Druze consider Jethro of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, to be their ancestor and they revere him as their spiritual founder and chief prophet.

The Druze do not have an official liturgy or prayer book, no holy days or fast days, and no pilgrimages. They do accept The Seven Precepts which they believe are the essential components of the Pillars of Islam. The precepts at the core of Druze faith, include

- truthfulness in speech
- belief in one God
- protection of others, and the belief that every hour of every day is a time to reckon oneself before God

Druze believe that the various rituals and practices adopted by the three major Abrahamic faiths have turned those believers away from the “true faith.” While the spiritual elements of their religion are highly guarded and known only to the elders, the known practices are believed to be made up of various religions which include Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Generally, it is believed that the Druze have been a closed group who have not sought converts and do not encourage marriages with persons from other faiths. The Druze are a highly secretive group whose communities are

divided into two strata: *al-Juhhal* (the ignorant or unlearned) and *al-Uqqal* (the knowledgeable or learned). *Al-Juhhal* constitutes the majority of Druze members, approximately 80% of the community. They do not have access to the holy writings of the Druze, do not attend the religious meetings, and in general are not expected to follow the ascetic rulings of the *al-Uqqal*. In contrast, the *al-Uqqal*, which includes both men and women, are the learned minority, participate fully in their religious services, and have access to the secret teachings of the scriptures, *Al-Hikmah al-Sharifah*.

The Druze mostly live in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. They are a religious minority in every country in which they are found, and they have often experienced persecution, except in Lebanon and Israel. Although the faith has its origins in Ismaili Islam, they are not generally considered Muslims with a few exceptions.

Other Diverse Groups with Islam Roots

The Sunni and Shi'a are the two main branches of Islam, but there are other aspects of diversity within Islam. A brief description of some other significant groups follows.

Sufism

Sufism [*tasawwuf*] is not a separate sect of Islam, but rather a stream of interpretation emphasizing the interior path of mystical love and knowledge of Allah. A tradition describes the Prophet's spiritual journey, the *mi'raj*, in which a celestial steed carried him to Jerusalem, from where he ascended into the highest heavens and came face to face with Allah. Taking the *mi'raj* as a template of the spiritual journey, Sufism began as an imitation of Muhammad's simplicity and spiritual life at time when the Umayyad caliphs (661–750 CE) lived extravagantly. Many attribute the origins of the name "Sufi" to the coarse wool (*suf*) garment worn by early ascetics. Others suggest the term derives from the Arabic word for purity (*safā'*).

Sufis may belong to any of the main schools of Islam, and may be Sunnis or Shi'a. Sufism is based on a master-disciple relationship with a teacher that belongs to a *Tariqa*, or order. Most *Tariqas* have a master teacher who can trace his roots back to the Prophet. Sufis, in keeping with many other observant Muslims, are dedicated to the worship of Allah and abstain from worldly pleasures. Sufis are distinctive in their practice, and how they nurture their and others' spiritual dimension. Sufi rituals focus on the remembrance of God, and take different forms, including the following:

- **Dhikr:** Sufis are aware that one of the names of the Prophet was Dhikr Allah (Remembrance of God). *Dhikr*, as practised by Sufis, is the invocation of Allah's divine names, verses from the Qur'an, or sayings of the Prophet in order to glorify Allah. *Dhikr* is encouraged either individually or in groups and is a source of tranquillity for Sufis.

- **Muraqaba:** It is a form of meditation that has aspects common to the practices of meditation in many faith communities.
- **Sufi whirling:** Sufi whirling (or spinning) is a form of active meditation (*Sama*) which originated among Sufis, and is still practiced by the Sufi Dervishes of the Mevlevi order. Traditionally it is a dance performed within the *sema*, through which *derwishes* seek to reach the source of all perfection, or *kemal*.
- **Music:** *Qawwali* is a form of Sufi devotional music popular in South Asia, usually performed at *dargahs* (shrines).

The Moth and the Candles

This artistic tribute to the Sufi victims of the terrorist attack on al-Rawda Mosque in the town of Bir al-Abed, Egypt in 2017, alludes to the verses belonging to the mystical tradition of Islam called Sufism, which speaks of a moth (the lover) drawn to the flame (the beloved). The lover and the beloved are common metaphors in Sufi poetry, intended to express the relationship between Allah and the believer and the yearning of the believer (the lover) to unite with the divine Allah (the beloved).

Sufis have experienced persecution in many Muslim-majority nation countries at different points in time. This has included the destruction of Sufi shrines and mosques, the suppression of orders, violence and murder, and discrimination against adherents. For example, the Turkish Republican state banned all Sufi orders and abolished their institutions in 1925 after Sufis opposed the new secular state and the Iranian Islamic Republic persecuted Sufis because of their opposition to the supreme Shiite jurist being appointed the nation's political leader. In most Muslim countries, attacks on Sufis and their shrines have come from conservative Muslims who believe that Sufi practices such as celebration of the birthdays of Sufi saints, and dhikr ("remembrance" of God) ceremonies contradict the Qur'an, are inappropriate innovations, and suggest polytheism. One such incident, took place on November 24, 2017, in Egypt, when the al-Rawda mosque was attacked by about 40 armed persons during Friday prayers.

The mosque is located in the village of Al-Rawd east of the town of Bir al-Abed in Egypt's North Sinai Governorate. The mosque is associated with the Jaririya Sufi order, one of the largest Sufi orders in North Sinai. The attack left 311 persons dead and injured at least 122, making it the deadliest attack in Egyptian history. Internationally, it was the second-deadliest terrorist attack of 2017, second only to the Mogadishu bombings of October 14, 2017.



Figure 51: The Moth and the Candles - Tribute to the Victims of the Attack on al-Rawda Mosque in the Town of Bir al-Abed, Egypt 2017

Sufis are also known for their *Dargahs* or shrines. These are often built over the burial place of a Sufi saint or *derwish* or other revered person and are often pilgrimage sites. *Dargahs* may include a mosque, meeting rooms, an Islamic religious school (*madrassa*), a residence for a teacher or caretaker, hospitals, and other community buildings.

These distinctive practices are sometimes seen by other Muslims as contravening Islamic laws and has led to their persecution. The persecution of Sufism has resulted in the destruction of Sufi shrines and mosques, suppression of orders, and discrimination against adherents in several Muslim-majority countries.

Sufi rituals focus on the remembrance of God, or *dhikru 'Llāh*. *Dhikr* has a variety of expressions, including the chanting of God's names and short *surahs* from the Qur'an, but also music and dancing. Many of these practices are communal; the term "whirling dervish" for example refers to a member of the Mevlevi Order, followers of the Sufi saint Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273 CE), who perform one such communal ritual, which involves a spinning dance combined with inner concentration on the presence of God. Sufism infuses Islam with a spirit of deep devotion and inner piety. Though the majority of Sufis throughout history have followed the *sharia* with dedication, many Sufis also offer a critique of the

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908 CE), founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that he was divinely appointed to be the promised Messiah and Mahdi (the metaphorical second-coming of Jesus) in fulfillment of latter day Islamic prophecies. He also indicated that he was the Mujaddid (centennial reviver) of the 14th Islamic century.

According to Mirza, the mission of the movement was the reinstatement of the absolute oneness of God, the revival of Islam through the moral reformation of society along Islamic ideals, and the global transmission of Islam in its purist form. Mirza, in contradiction to the Christian and mainstream Islamic story of Jesus's (Isa's) death and resurrection, asserted that Jesus had in reality survived crucifixion and died a natural death.

Mirza traveled extensively across the Punjab promoting his religious ideas and drew support by combining a reformist programme with personal revelations which he claimed to have received from Allah. His efforts attracted a substantial following within his lifetime, but also drew considerable hostility, particularly from the Muslim Ulema. He is known to have engaged in numerous public debates and dialogues with Christian missionaries, Muslim scholars, and Hindu revivalists.



Figure 52: Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (13 February 1835 – 26 May 1908), a religious figure from India, and the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement.

emphasis on the legalistic aspects of Islam alone—which Rumi argued were empty without spiritual reflection, as demonstrated by these lines from the his widely influential poem, *The Mathnawi*.

“He observes obedience and fasting and prayer and devotions and almsgiving and so on
Yet never feels the least expansion of soul.
He performs the devotions and acts enjoined by the law,
Yet derives not an atom of relish from them.”

Various orders (*tariqa/tarigahh*) developed around prominent Sufi teachers from the twelfth century onward, offering paths and guides for the soul’s journey to God, which reflects the Prophet’s celestial journey, some emphasize austere discipline while others encourage ecstatic devotional practices. Within the spiritual life of the orders, the role of the spiritual master (*shaykh* in Arabic, *pir* in Persian) has always been paramount, as he or she would complement the method and doctrines of the order with individually tailored advice, based on insight into the particular state of the disciple’s soul. Strict adherence to the instructions of the master was the norm, as the disciple endeavoured to overcome the limitations and desires of his or her ego and totally submit to God.

The orders also became important ways for Muslims to organize themselves in society, establishing hostels (*zawiyah* in Arabic, *khanaqah* in Persian) throughout the Muslim world, and teaching their neighbours the way of devotion to God. It was through the influence of either particular charismatic Sufi masters or their disciples or the general influence of Sufism on culture that Islam spread throughout East and West Africa, and South and Southeast Asia.

Today some Muslims challenge the legitimacy of Sufi beliefs and practices, such as the level of authority given to Sufi masters, and claim that they are not true representations of Islam, but rather “innovations” that deviate from the original teachings of Muhammad and his companions. Sufism, however, continues to appeal to many Muslims throughout the world, to bring new Muslims into the *ummah*, to shape Islamic intellectual traditions, and to provide a vehicle for popular expressions of Islamic devotion. Many Sufis perform pilgrimages to shrines of Sufi masters, praying for intercession, aid, and closeness to God. This has been controversial to some non-Sufi Muslims who take issue with the idea of requesting anything from the physically deceased. Such disputes regarding Sufism represent one dimension of the internal diversity of the tradition.

Ahmadiyya

They are officially known as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community or the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at. It is an Islamic messianic movement founded in

Punjab in the late 19th century, during the period of British control of India. It is founded upon the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908 CE). The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is unique among Islamic groups as they believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was both Mahadi and the Messiah which were prophesized in the Qur'an to appear on Earth. The term Ahmadiyya derives from Muhammad's alternative name Ahmad, and they are known as Ahmadi Muslims or just Ahmadis.

Though the Ahmadi's tend to be quite unified in belief and practice, in the early history of the community, a number of Ahmadis were divided over the nature of Ahmad's prophetic status and succession. As a result, a dissident group founded the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Islam, which today represents a small minority of all Ahmadis.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founded the Community (or *Jama'at*) on March 23, 1889, at an event where his followers publicly committed and made an oath of allegiance. Since his death, the *Jama'at* has been headed by a number of caliph and the community has expanded throughout the world. Ahmadis now are present in 210 countries and territories throughout the world, with large communities in South Asia, West Africa, East Africa, and Indonesia. The Ahmadis have a missionary tradition and formed the first Muslim missionary organization to arrive in the United Kingdom, and other Western nations.

At the time of writing this document, the Ahmadi's are led by the Caliph, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, and this group is estimated to have a membership of between ten and twenty million people worldwide.

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is the main mosque in the Sultanate of Oman, located in the capital city of Muscat. The mosque is square in shape which surrounds the central dome. The five minarets define the limits of the site and represent the five pillars of Islam.

It is one of the most beautiful and richly decorated mosques in the modern world. The mosque's design reflects a fusion of Islamic, Middle Eastern, and Omani architectural styles.

In total, the mosque can accommodate over 20,000 worshippers at one time. The main prayer hall (*musalla*) can accommodate over 6,500 worshippers, while the women's prayer hall (*musalla*) can accommodate 750 worshippers. The exterior paved area in the gardens can accommodate a further 8,000 worshippers. Lastly, the interior courtyard and the corridors provide additional usable space for prayer.



Figure 53: Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, Oman

Ahmadi doctrine emphasizes the belief that Islam, as revealed to Muhammad, is Allah's final gift for humanity. Ahmadis believe that all the major world religions had divine origins and were part of a divine plan towards the establishment of Islam as the final religion, or the most complete and perfected religion. They believe that all other world religions have been corrupted and moved away from their original forms. Followers believe that Ahmad appeared as the *Mahdi*, and possessed the same qualities as Jesus in keeping with their reading of the prophecies in the scriptures. Ahmad, was sent to revitalize Islam and set in motion its moral system that would bring about lasting peace. They believe that with divine guidance Ahmad purged Islam of foreign additions and modifications in belief and practice by advocating what are, in their perspective, Islam's original precepts as practiced by Muhammad and the early Muslim community. Therefore, Ahmadis consider themselves as leading the modern spread and renaissance of Islam.

Ahmadi beliefs and practice are based on the six articles of Islamic Faith and the Five Pillars of Islam. As well, Ahmadis have the *Qur'an* as their holy text, face the *Kaaba* during prayer, follow the *Sunnah* (teachings and actions of Muhammad), and accept the authority of the *hadith*. Ahmadis accept the authority of the four Rightly Guided *caliphs* (successors) as legitimate leaders of the Muslim community following Muhammad's death and also believe that a *caliph* need not be a descendant of Muhammad. These beliefs align Ahmadis with the Sunni tradition of Islam rather than with the Shi'a tradition.

Because of the belief in the appearance of the Messiah after Muhammad, and other aspects of their belief system, many within the Muslim community do not consider the Ahmadiyya to be true Muslims. However, there are millions of Ahmadiyya around the world, including in Canada and in Winnipeg, who consider themselves to be Muslims.

Ibadi

The Ibadi or Ibadism is a one of the oldest schools or sects of Islam. Ibadi is the dominant religion in Oman, but it is also represented in parts of Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and East Africa. It is estimated that there are a bit less than three million Ibadis throughout the world.

Ibadi Islam is named after the eight century Islamic jurist Abd-Allah ibn Ibadh who was instrumental in inspiring Ibadism; however, the main founder of the school is Ibn Ibad's successor, Jabir b. Zayd al- 'Azdi, who is the most prominent Ibadi scholar and is originally from Nizwa in Oman. Jabir b. Zayd made critical contributions to formalizing and unifying doctrine and the development of an independent Ibadi tradition.

Ibadi Islam is believed to have been founded circa 650 CE, about 20 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Thus, it predates both the founding of the Sunni and Shi'a schools of Islam. Contemporary historians trace the origins of the Ibadi to a moderate sect of the Khariji movement. *Khawarijites* (those that seceded) got their name from their separation from the main Muslim groups.

The original sects of Kharijis disappeared long ago, and although Ibadism did have roots in Kharijism, Ibadism took a different path and developed values quite different from those of Kharijis.

It first emerged as a moderate branch during Islam's first "civil war" or *fitna* (656–661 CE), which resulted from the competing claims for the Caliphate by 'Ali and Mu 'awiya. Ibadh and the Muhakkima party, which advocated the principle of *la hukm illā li-lah* (no judgment but God's), opposed the agreement to seek arbitration to end the conflict between 'Ali and Mu 'awiya at the Battle of Şiffin (656 CE). At first, Ibadh and his followers supported Ali's claim to the Caliphate but eventually turned against him when he was willing to accept arbitration to settle the bitter struggle with his rival Ma'awiya. Ibadh and his followers broke away from other Muslims when 'Abd al-Malik b. Ma'awiya became Caliph.

The schism that developed between Khawarijites and Ali is believed to have been the reason that drove them eventually to kill Ali while he was praying in the mosque in Kufa.

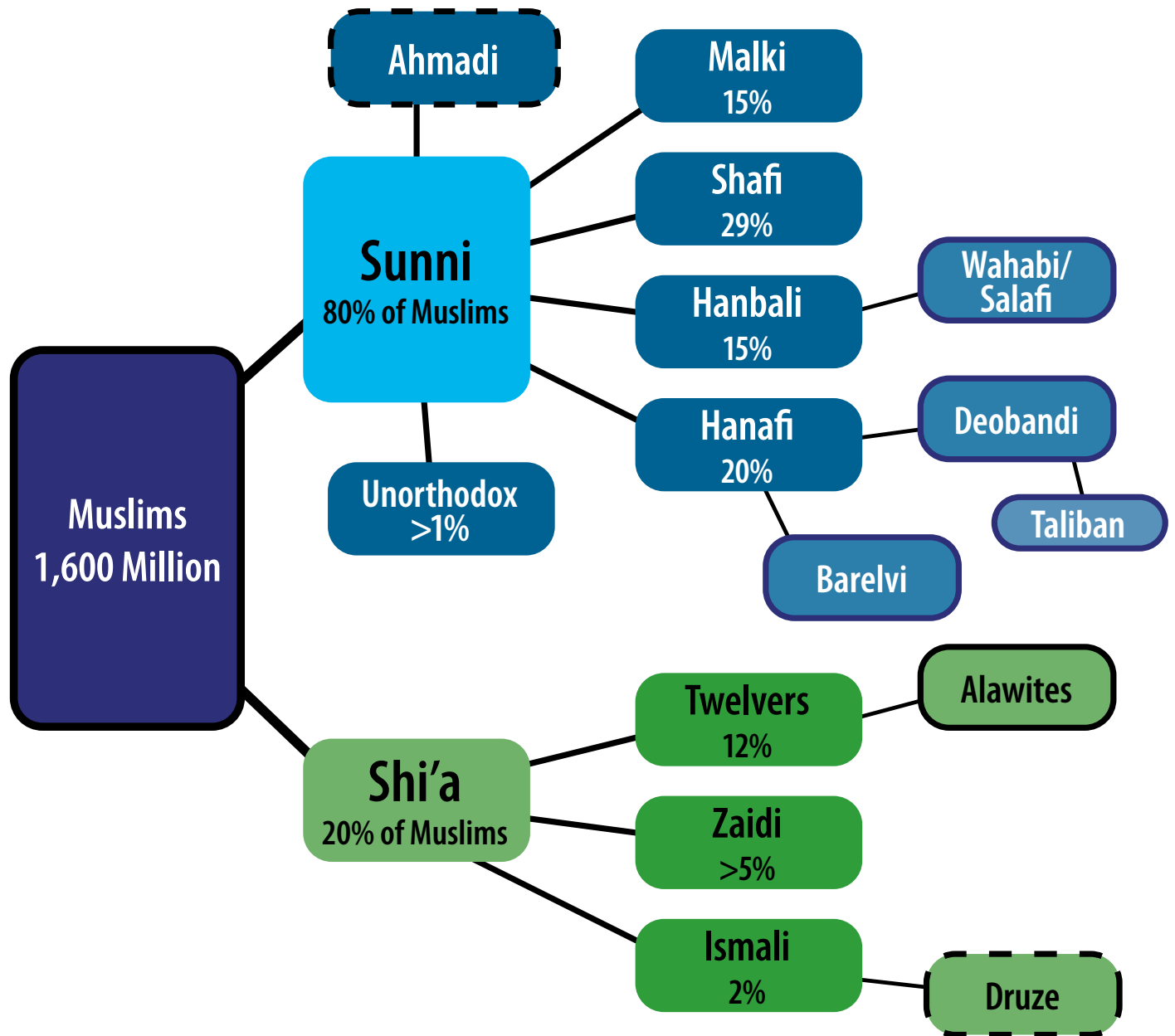
A key aspect of Khawarijites and Ibadī beliefs is that the caliph does not need to be from an elite group or privileged class, as long as the person is pious and exercises their authority equitably and justly. The Khariji and the Ibadī categorize the successors to Muhammad into two distinct groups, the good and bad caliphs. The first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar, are deemed to be good, rightly-guided caliphs. Uthman the third caliph was seen to be a corrupt and bad caliph. Ali, was deemed to be a good caliph for the first part of his reign, but became a bad caliph when he demonstrated weakness when facing his opponents.

The Ibadīs believe that the Qur'an may only be read literally and they have their own hadith collection and legal system, *madhhab*. Ibadīs believe that Allah's true nature may not be seen by humans, and therefore refuse to ascribe any human attributes to Allah. They also consider the Qur'an to be created, not eternal. Lastly, they consider all human acts as divinely inspired, thereby rejecting the concept of free will.

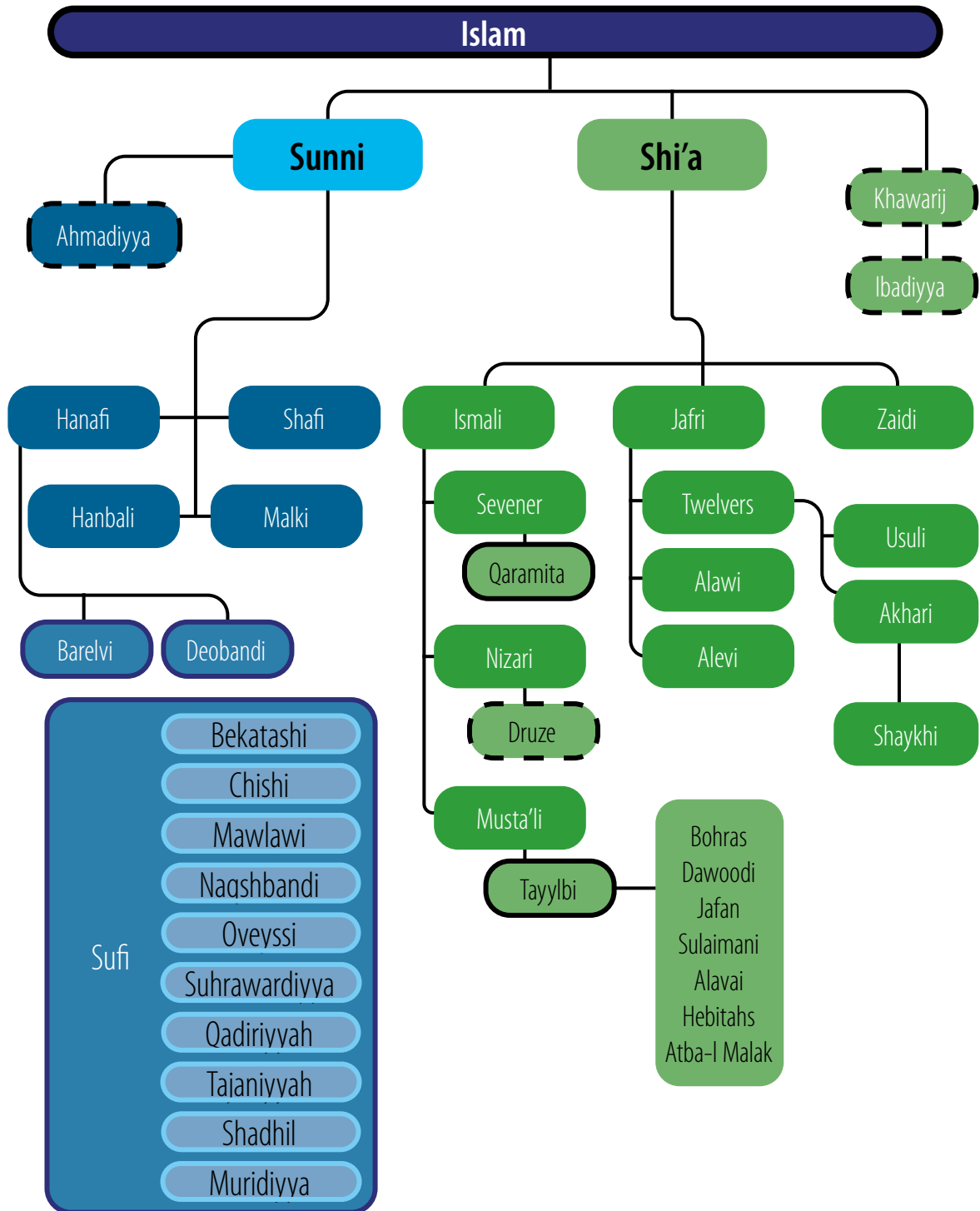
Kharijites are often considered to be the third branch or division in early Islamic history because of their distinctive beliefs. Ibadī beliefs and tradition are mostly consistent with the beliefs of the original Kharijites, but contemporary Ibadīs generally object to being classified as Kharijites; although they do acknowledge that their roots are in the Kharijite succession of 657 CE.

Diversity of Islam Charts

On the following pages two charts depicting the Islamic schools discussed earlier are provided.



Islam: Branches and Sects



Practices, Rituals, and Symbols

Beliefs and Practices

Islamic Pillars

Muslims engage in a variety of devotional practices intended to increase their consciousness of Allah (*taqwa*) and to discipline their attitudes toward themselves and others. Sunni and Shi'a

Muslims share a belief in what they call the “five pillars of Islam” (Ismalis

have seven pillars), which serve as focus for their ritual practices, with some variation in how they are prescribed across the various Islamic sects. The practices are based on the Qur'an and Sunnah and were given their defining interpretations by the community or *ulama* in the first three centuries of Islam. The five pillars are

1. *Shahada* or *Shahadah*: Declaring one's belief in the oneness (*tawhid*) of Allah and the acceptance of Muhammad as Allah's messenger
2. *Salat* (*Salah*): Obligatory Muslim prayers throughout the day
3. *Zakat* (alms or charity): Obligation that Muslim's give a set percentage of one's wealth to charity, as a form of worship and self-purification
4. *Sawm*: Fasting during Ramadan, the commemoration of Muhammad's first revelation, which occurs on the ninth month of the Islamic calendar
5. *Hajj*: Pilgrimage to Mecca during the month of *Dhul-Hijjah* (twelfth and final month in the Islamic calendar) and performing the *Hajj* rites once in one's lifetime

Most Shi'a agree with the same pillars, although they may categorize them in a different way, and many add a sixth pillar, the acceptance of the authority and sanctity of the Imams [*wilayah*]. Both Sunni and Shi'a also believe that the Qur'an has a Divine source, and that Muhammad was the final prophet sent to guide humankind by Allah.

While Ahmadi's also believe in the same five pillars, they are limited with respect to completing the fifth pillar. In Pakistan, Ahmadi Muslims are prohibited by law, and to some extent in other Muslim countries through social pressure, from self-identifying as Muslims. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community has been persecuted since its existence and the Pakistani laws create an additional barrier to performing *Hajj*. The current laws require that all Pakistani Muslims applying for a passport must denigrate the founder of the Ahmadi sect, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and declare that all Ahmadis are non-Muslims. The basis for these requirements are the *fatwa* of some



Figure 54: Muslim Praying

Muslim clerics who consider Ahmadi religion to be non-Islamic. This creates a challenge for Ahmadi's in performing the requirement of the fifth pillar.

As well, according to Saudi Arabian laws, only Muslims are allowed to enter and visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Saudi Arabian government, which controls Mecca and Medina and access to the holy sites, bans all non-Muslims from both cities. The restricted access to Mecca and Medina is intended to ensure that they are places of peace and refuge for Muslims and to preserve the sanctity of the holy cities. Ahmadis are officially banned from entering Saudi Arabia and from performing the pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina. Ahmadis are not considered to be true Muslims by the Saudis and by many Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. They are legally prohibited from entering Mecca and participating in the *Hajj* ceremonies. Nevertheless, some Ahmadi claim they have been able to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and participate in the *Hajj* ceremonies; however, they do so at the risk of being arrested and deported if caught by the authorities.

The Isma'ili Shi'a sects (the Nizari, Druze, and Mustaali) have more pillars than those of the Sunni and other Shi'a sects. The *Shahadah* (profession of faith), is not considered a pillar, but instead it is seen as the foundation upon which the seven pillars are built.

The Ismaili seven pillars are

1. *Walayah* or Guardianship: which means love and devotion to God
2. *Taharah* or Purity: a special emphasis on purity and its related practices
3. *Salat* or Prayer: unlike Sunni and Twelver Muslims, Nizari Isma'ilis believe that it is up to the current imam to designate the style and form of prayer, thus the current Nizari prayer is called *Du'a* and they pray three times a day. In contrast, the Musta'li maintain five prayers and their style is generally similar to that of the Twelvers. Druze believe that the meaning of prayer is *sidqu l-lisān* or speaking Truth to/about Allah and do not believe in five daily prayers. They do sometimes attend community prayers, which is the practice of the "uninitiated" (*juhāl*) and historically was also done for reasons of *taqiyya*.
4. *Zakah* or Charity: with the exception of the Druze, all Isma'ili Madh'hab have practices resembling that of Sunni and Twelver Muslims with the addition of the characteristic Shi'a *khums*, a payment of 1/8th of one's unspent money at the end of the year to the imam.
5. *Sawm* or Fasting: Isma'ilis believe that the real and metaphorical meaning of fasting is avoiding worldly acts and doing good deeds. Nizari and Musta'li believe in both a metaphorical and literal meaning of fasting. The literal meaning is that fasting is an obligation, such as during Ramadan. The metaphorical meaning is that in one's effort to attain the Divine Truth one must abstain from worldly activities which may detract from this goal.
6. *Hajj* or Pilgrimage: Isma'ilis have two types of pilgrimages, *Hajj-i-Zahiri* and *Hajj-i-Batini*. The first is the visit to Mecca and the second to be in the presence of the *Imam*. For Isma'ilis, visiting the *imam* or his representative is one of the most aspired pilgrimages. The Musta'li also maintain the practice

of going to Mecca. The Druze interpret this requirement metaphorically to mean “fleeing from devils and oppressors” and thus rarely go to Mecca.

7. *Jihad* or Struggle: The definition of *jihad* is debated and as it has two potential meanings. One meaning, the Greater Struggle and the second the Lesser Struggle, which means a confrontation with the enemies of the faith. However, the Nizari are pacifist and interpret “adversaries” of the faith as personal and social vices (and those individuals who harm the peace of the faith and they avoid provocation and believe that force should only be used as a final resort and only in self-defence. The Druze, have a meaning similar to that of the Nizari, although they have a history of military and political action, but refer to this pillar solely as *Rida* or Contentment; Druze interpret this to mean a war dedicated to fighting that which removes one from the ease of the Divine Presence. In addition, the ‘*Uqqāl* “Wise Ones”, the religious cadre of the Druze, are pacifists.

Islamic creed has been formulated in many different ways within the Islamic tradition. Although there are diverse points of view on many issues, there is also consistency on many fundamental beliefs. The shared foundations of the Islamic creed include belief in the oneness of Allah, affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad as the last messenger sent to mankind (with the exception of Ahmadi’s), and the expectation of the final return to Allah.

The Islamic tradition has fostered a wide variety of approaches to understanding and conclusions about the nature of Allah, the world we live in, and the nature of humanity. Various disciplines have emerged that deal with these questions, including a wide variety of theological, philosophical, and mystical schools.

Prayer, Meditation, and Worship

Wudu (Ritual Cleansing or Ablution)

Before performing *salat*, one’s body, clothing, and place of prayer must be clean. Therefore, before *salat*, Muslims usually perform a ritual cleansing of their body. They wash their faces, hands up to their elbows, heads, and feet up to their ankles. Some Muslims also rinse their mouths and inside their nostrils. A full bath is required after sexual activity and some other activities. Women abstain from *salat* while menstruating and wait until their period is over and they have fully cleansed.

Adhani and *Iqama*: The Call to Prayer

A common aspect of Islamic traditional practice, is the call to prayer (*adhan*) for prayers being held in mosques or other gathering places. Historically, *adhan* began with a vision in a dream by one of Prophet Muhammad’s followers and a freed African slave served as the first *muezzin*. *Adhan* calls Muslims around the world to pray five times a day—it can be broadcast around the

neighbourhood, recited from within the mosque building, or sounded from a sidewalk.

Iqama is the second call to prayer at the mosque, and occurs immediately before the start of the formal prayers.

Daily Prayer-*Salat* or *Salah*

Salat, *Salah* or *Salaah*, means prayer, supplication, or blessing. Generally, Muslims are required to pray daily and at specific times, which change throughout the year, depending on the time of sunrise and sunset. At an early age, children are encouraged to begin praying, and at puberty prayer becomes compulsory. Prayer can be performed individually or in a group, and men and women traditionally pray in separate areas within the same room. Women do not pray during menstruation.

Muslims can check for the appropriate times for prayer throughout the year through smart phone apps, mosque and Muslim organization websites, radio stations which feature calls to prayer, and print publications.

Salat or *Salaah* are the obligatory Muslim prayers performed by the vast majority of Muslims, usually five times each day. It is the second Pillar of Sunni and Shi'a Islam and the third pillar of Ismalis. The required five prayers are

- *Salat al-fajr* is performed at dawn, before sunrise
- *Salat al-dhuhr* (aka *Zuhr* or *Duhr*) is performed around midday, after the sun passes its highest point
- *Salat al-'asr* is performed in the late part of the afternoon
- *Salat al-maghrib* is performed just after sunset
- *Salat al-'isha* is performed between sunset and midnight

The prayers can be performed individually at home, at work sites, or in congregation at the mosque or literally anywhere else.

Salat/Salah is composed of a repetitive cycle of bows and prostrations, divided into prescribed units called *rak'ah* (singular *rakat*). The number of *raka'ahs* varies according to the time of day.

The number of *rak'ah* (units) for each of the five *salat* (obligatory prayers) are

- *Fajr* prayer: two units or cycles of *Rak'ah*
- *Dhuhr* prayer: four units of *Rak'ah*
- *Asr* prayer: four units of *Rak'ah*
- *Maghrib* prayer: three units of *Rak'ah*
- *Isha* prayer: four units of *Rak'ah*

Method for Offering *Salat /Salah*

When Muslims pray, they begin in a standing position and later kneel or sit on the ground, recite from the Qur'an and glorify and praise Allah as they bow and prostrate themselves in between. Ritual purity is a precondition.

Before *salat* the person or congregation

- Stands facing the direction of the *Qibla*, the direction of the *Kaaba* in Mecca, in Saudi Arabia.
- Stands erect, head down, hands at sides, feet evenly spaced, reciting the *Iqama* (private call to prayer). If at a mosque, the *Iqama* is recited loudly, preferably by the *muadhdhin* (*muezzin* announcer) or a person in the congregation, just before the start of the obligatory part of the prayer. The prayer starts immediately after.

The procedure and description of each unit of the *Rak'ah* of the *Salat* prayers include the following postures and actions:

- Still standing facing Mecca, recite the *Niyah*, the intention to pray for the sake of Allah.
- *Takbeerat* Posture: Raising one's hands up next to the ears and shoulders, then saying *Allāhu akbar* (Allah is greater).
- *Al-Quyam* Posture: With the right hand over the left hand, above the belly button, recite *Al-Fati'ha* (The Opening), the first *Sura* (Chapter) of the Holy *Qur'an*. (Some sects dictate that one crosses their hands over their chest). This is often followed by a few verses or a short *sura* from the last part of the *Qur'an*.
- Say *Allāhu akbar* and perform the *Ruku* (bowing down) posture: Bowing by bending hips, and placing hands on knees shows humility, reverence, and repentance to Allah.
- *Qaumah/Qiyam*: Stand straight again in *Qaumah/Qiyam* posture for '*Hamd* (Praising Allah).



Figure 55: Various prescribed movements of a Muslim prayer: (left to right): Ruku, Qiyam and/or I'tidal, Sajdah, Takbir, and Qa'dah.

- *Sujoud/Sajdah* (Prostration) Posture: Say *Allāhu akbar* and prostrate by falling down on knees, with forehead, hands, and tips of the toes touching the ground as a sign of humility and submission to Allah.
- *Al-Tashahud/Tashahhud* Posture: Sitting up by lifting the upper body and sitting on one's heels, with hands on knees After performing the *Sujoud* (prostration) of the second Raka'a (prayer unit) one sits down on the floor reciting *Al-Tashahud* (The Proclamation and Bearing Witness).
- *Tasleem/Salaam*: To conclude the prayers, the worshiper recites "Peace be upon you, and Allah's blessing" once while facing the right, and once while the face is turned to the left. This action reminds Muslims of the importance of others around them, both in the mosque (if the prayer is being offered at mosque), and in the rest of the world.
- Say *Allāhu Akbar* and stand up straight again.

The chart that follows provides an overview of the prayer traditions of various Islamic sects

	Sunni	Shi'a	Ibadi
Prayers	Prayer five times per day, with more than one hour between prayers. Prayers are permitted to be consolidated on special occasions, such as when traveling.	Five times per day, can be (it's not mandatory) consolidated into 1+2+2. The <i>Fajr</i> prayer is performed separately, while the <i>Dhuhr</i> and <i>Asr</i> prayers are performed one after another, and the <i>Maghrib</i> and <i>Isha'</i> prayers are likewise performed one after another. Isma'ilis are only required to pray three times per day.	Five times per day, with at least one hour between prayers.
Prayer style	When cleansing before prayers, it is viewed as necessary to completely wash the feet. Worshipers face the <i>Kaaba</i> in Mecca when praying. They often place their foreheads on prayer mats or floors. They pray with their hands folded over their chest, except among members of the Maliki school who hold their hands at their sides as Shias and Ibadis do. Sunnis do not use any rocks or tablets of soil to place their foreheads on when praying. Male worshippers often may wear a white skullcap.	When cleansing before prayers, Shia clean their ears with their fingers. Worshipers face the <i>Kaaba</i> in Mecca when praying. When prostrating during ritual prayer (<i>salah</i>), Shia place their forehead onto a piece of naturally occurring material, often a clay tablet (<i>mohr</i>), or a tablet of soil (<i>turbah</i>) ideally taken from a holy site such as Karbala, the place where Imam Hussein was martyred, instead of directly onto a prayer mat. Shiite male worshippers often wear nothing on their heads when praying.	Like Maliki, Sunnis and Shias, pray with their hands open to their sides. They do not say 'Amen' after the <i>Fatiha</i> , and do not say the <i>qunut</i> invocation in the <i>fajr</i> prayer.

Jum'ah (jummah): The Friday Congregational Prayer

Salat Aljum'a is a prayer (*salat*) that Muslims hold every Friday, just after noon in the place of *dhuhr*. Friday prayer is obligatory for every Muslim male, who has reached the age of puberty. The service is congregational, and its performance in a mosque is preferred. The scheduled period of time for Friday Congregational Prayer is consistent throughout the year, but may vary from mosque to mosque. *Jum'ah* prayers are followed by a sermon (*khutbah*) from an *imam* or prayer leader. Generally, only men were required to attend *Jum'ah* prayers but women may also attend.



Figure 56: Worshippers in Malaysia Gather to Perform Friday Prayers.

The place and role of women attending *Jummah* services is debated and changing. Both men and women attended the mosque and prayed together during Muhammad's time. However, traditionally, dating back to Muhammad's time, men and women did not mix while attending mosque services; women either were positioned behind the men or were accommodated in a separate area. Today, in most Sunni and Shi'a mosques women will pray in a separate, smaller designated area reserved for women. There are, however, signs of this practice changing, with inclusive or women only mosques being opened in North America.

Friday is the Muslim weekly holy day. Muslims can pray anywhere, but it is considered good practice to pray with others in a mosque. Praying together in a mosque helps Muslims to recognize that all of humanity is one, and that all are equal in the sight of Allah.

Manitoba Islamic Association's Grand Mosque holds Jumm'ah prayers every Friday. The link that follows takes us into the mosque for the prayers. Jummah Prayer at the Grand Mosque, WPG: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wkr7W3NTAAU

Significant Times and Dates

Special Days/Celebrations

Throughout the year, a number of festivities are held, such as the *'Eid al-Adha*, which celebrates the Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his lineage in service of God and is the culmination of the *hajj*. In Shi'a communities, certain days throughout the year are dedicated to particular events in the lives of the Imams and commemorated through practices such as fasting, charitable acts, and prayer; the most important of these, as previously mentioned is *'Ashurah*, which commemorates the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Husayn, in 680 CE.

The attention to sacred times in the Islamic calendar is complemented by the importance of sacred spaces. Many visit the shrines of prophets and holy figures, as well as sites at which some event in their tradition's sacred history transpired, seeking a prayer answered or the contemplative ambience of the sacred. This practice is commonly known as *ziyarah*. For most Muslims, the most important *mazar* (place of visitation) is the Prophet's own mosque and tomb in the city of Medina.



Figure 57: Traditional foods are often part of the celebration of festivals and Ramadan

Within Islamic devotion, there are many practices and rituals. There are everyday rites, but there are also those to mark particularly important life events and passages, such as births, deaths, weddings, and so forth.

Islamic Holy Days and Festivals

There are several days in the Islamic calendar with special religious significance, but the major celebrations common to all Muslims are the two *Eids*. The first *Eid* (*Eid-ul-Fitr*) is celebrated the day after the end of the month of *Ramadan*. The month of *Ramadan* is the ninth month in the Islamic Calendar. The second *Eid* (*Eid-ul-Adha*) is celebrated on the tenth day of the twelfth



Figure 58: Eid Mubarak Calligraphy

Islamic month. The festivities include congregational prayer and gatherings with family and friends.

Eid-Ul-Adha or Festival of Sacrifice

Eid-Ul-Adha is one of the major Muslim festivals and it marks the end of the time for *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca (Makkah) which Muslims are expected to make at least once in their lifetime. The *Hajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam.

One of the traditions of the festival, is the sacrificing of animals by pilgrims on the way back to Mecca from Mount Arafat. The animal sacrifices are made in commemoration of the biblical story Abraham's

(Ibrahim's) willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael when commanded by God, but which God stopped Abraham from doing and provided him with a sheep to sacrifice instead.

Throughout the world Muslims participate in the celebrations, with the meat of the sacrificed animals distributed to those in need and also shared with family and friends. In Muslim dominant countries, this festival is a public holiday, usually lasting four days. The celebration of this festival is intended to remind every Muslim celebrant of their own submission to God.

The Manitoba Islamic Association and other Muslim groups in Manitoba hold *Eidal-Adhar* community events. The link that follows shows the event in Winnipeg: EID AL ADHA September 2017: www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5ujgnvok40.

Maulid Al-Nabi or Birthday of Prophet Muhammad

Maulid Al-Nabi marks the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, although some Muslims do not approve of this celebration and regard marking it as a religious innovation. Those Muslims who celebrate it do so joyfully; Shia Muslims celebrate five days after Sunni Muslims. Many Muslims regard it as an important festival because Prophet Muhammad is seen as a great blessing for the whole of humanity and it was to him that the Holy Qur'an was revealed.

The most important part of *Eid Maulid Al-Nabi* is a focus on the character of the Prophet: his teaching, leadership, wisdom, and suffering as well as how he forgave even his most bitter enemies.

Ramadan

During *Ramadan*, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, every day of the month. This requires a total abstinence from food, drink, smoking, and marital relations. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam but *Ramadan* is much greater than just fasting and abstinence. It is a time of increased worship and remembering Allah. Muslims make an extra effort to attend all the five daily prayers in the *Masjid* (Mosque) and there are additional prayers that are held after the night prayer.

The purpose of *Ramadan* is that Muslims will improve their lives and their demeanour and carry that improvement throughout the year. At the end of *Ramadan*, Muslims observe a holiday, called *Eid-ul-Fitr*.

Eid-Ul-Fitr

Muslims in Canada celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* (also known as *Id al-Fitr* or *Eid ul-Fitr*) on the first day of *Shawwal* in the Islamic calendar. It marks the breaking of the month-long fast of *Ramadan*. The celebration of the feast of *Eid ul Fitr* may last up to three days in countries with a dominant Muslim population and is often a public holiday.

Eid al-Fitr is an important and special Islamic holiday for the Muslim community in Manitoba, Canada, and throughout the world. It is a time for community celebration and sharing of food. On the morning of *Eid ul-Fitr*, Muslims wake up early to pray either at an outdoor prayer ground or at a local mosque. It is a festive time for the community and celebrants dress in their finest clothes and decorate their homes with lights and other decorations.

Old wrongs are forgiven and money is given to the poor. Special foods are prepared and friends or relatives are invited to share the feast. Gifts and greeting cards are exchanged and children receive presents. *Eid al-Fitr* is a joyous occasion but its underlying purpose is to praise God and give thanks to him, according to Islamic belief.

Large crowds have gathered to celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* in cities such as Ottawa in the recent past. Political leaders in Canada have also made statements to wish their best to Islamic communities during the *Eid al-Fitr* celebrations. Children's publications about holidays such as *Eid al-Fitr* have also been written and made available in many parts of North America, including Canada.

Public Life

Although *Eid al-Fitr* is not a national public holiday in Canada, many Islamic businesses and organizations may alter their business hours during this event. There may be some congestion around mosques around this time of the year.

Background

Eid al-Fitr is also known as the Feast of Fast-Breaking or the Lesser Feast. It marks the end of *Ramadan* and the start of a feast that lasts up to three days in some countries, such as Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. It is one of Islam's two major festivals, with *Eid al-Adha* being the other major festival. *Eid al-Fitr* celebrates the end of the fasting that occurs during *Ramadan*.

Usually, the Manitoba Islamic Association and other Muslim groups in Manitoba hold *Eid ul-Fitr* community celebrations. The links that follow are to videos of the celebrations:

Eid al Fitr 2018 MIA: www.miaonline.org/eid-fitr-2018-video/

EID FESTIVAL 2013 - Winnipeg, Canada: www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYBas1_Rs90

The Gregorian calendar is not helpful for accurately predicating the date of *Eid al-Fitr*. This is because the month of *Shawwal* begins, and the month of *Ramadan ends*, after a confirmed sighting of the new moon. As the new moon may be sighted earlier or later in specific places, Muslims in different communities, such as the east and west coasts of Canada and the United States, may begin the *Eid-al-Fitr* celebrations on different days.

The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar (or *Hijri* calendar) is a strictly lunar calendar. It comprises 12 months that are based on the movement of the moon. Because 12 lunar months only equal 354.36 days, the Islamic calendar is consistently shorter than a Gregorian year, and therefore the dates shift with respect to their alignment with the Gregorian calendar. The Islamic calendar is based on the Qur'an and therefore it is the duty of Muslims to follow it.

The Islamic calendar is the official calendar in a few Muslim states around the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia. But other Muslim states use the Gregorian calendar for civil purposes and only refer to the Islamic calendar for religious purposes.

The name of the 12 months that comprise the Islamic year are

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Muharram | 7. Rajab |
| 2. Safar | 8. Sha'ban |
| 3. Rabi' al-awwal (Rabi' I) | 9. Ramadan |
| 4. Rabi' al-thani (Rabi' II) | 10. Shawwal |
| 5. Jumada al-awwal (Jumada I) | 11. Dhu al-Qi'dah |
| 6. Jumada al-thani (Jumada II) | 12. Dhu al-Hijja |

(Note: Due to different transliterations of the Arabic alphabet, other spellings of the months are possible.)

Each month officially starts when the lunar crescent is first spotted by a human after a new moon. Although the phases of the moons may be estimated quite precisely, the actual visibility of the crescent moon is much more difficult to predict. Its visibility depends on several factors, including the weather, the location of the observer, and the optical properties of the atmosphere at the time. Therefore, predicting the start of a new Islamic month can be quite difficult.

This is further complicated by the fact that some Muslims depend on a local sighting of the moon, whereas others depend on a sighting by a designated Islamic authority somewhere in the Muslim world. Both are considered valid Islamic practices, but they may lead to different starting days for the months.

Thus, print versions of the Islamic calendar are not very reliable. Nevertheless, calendars are printed for planning and reference purposes, but those calendars

are based on estimates of the visibility of the lunar crescent, and the actual month may start a day earlier or later than predicted in the printed calendar.

The Islamic calendar began after the *Hijra*, Mohammed’s move to Medina in 622 CE on July 16 of that year. Therefore, AH 1 started (AH = *Anno Hegirae* = year of the *Hijra*).

As the year in the Islamic calendar is about 11 days shorter than the year in the Gregorian calendar, the Islamic years are slowly gaining in on the Christian years.

It will, however, be many years before the two coincide. The first day of the fifth month of 20874 CE in the Gregorian calendar will also be (approximately) the first day of the fifth month of AH 20874 of the Islamic calendar. The year 2020 CE covers Islamic year 1441 to 1442 AH.

Calendar of Islamic Holy Days

The Islamic year of 1441 runs from August 31, 2019, to August 20, 2020. Dates can vary by a day or two either side, depending on which reports of moon sightings are followed. Some congregations, communities, and countries follow announcements in their local communities and/or nations, while others adhere to declarations from Saudi Arabia.

Calendar of Islamic Holy Days					
Holiday	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ramadan (Muslims fast from dawn to sunset)	April 24– May 23	April 13– May 13	April 3– May 2	March 23– April 21	Mar. 11– April 10
Eid-al-Fitr (Celebrates the end of Ramadan)	May 25	May 14	May 3	April 22	April 10
Hajj	July 30	July 19	July 8	June 27	June 17
Eid-al-Adha (End of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca)	July 31	July 20	July 10	June 20	June 17
Al-Hijra (Islamic New Year)	August 20	August 10	November 15	July 10	July 8
The Prophet’s Birthday (Mawlid an-Nabi)	October 29	October 18	October 8	September 27	September 16

Rites of Passage

Marriage

Requirements

Islamic marriage traditions differ significantly depending on culture, Islamic sect, and observance of gender separation rules. Marriages may be held in a mosque, a home, or another venue. Often, men and women remain separate during the ceremony and some times during the reception, in keeping with gender separation practices. Since Islam has no official clergy, any Muslim who understands Islamic tradition can, in theory, officiate a wedding; however, in some mosques the *Imam*, *qazi*, or *madhun*, will officiate and oversee the marriage.

The primary requirement for Muslim weddings is the negotiating of a contract and agreement or signing of the said contract. There are additional prerequisites or conditions. These include *mahr*, consent, and *wali*.

Mahr

The marriage contract should include a mandatory sum of wealth which the groom must commit to pay the bride. The groom is required to pay it to the bride at the time of marriage unless he and his bride can mutually agree to defer payment of a part of the *mahr* that was defined by the couple.

Consent

The bride must consent to the marriage; however, if the bride does not explicitly state her opposition, her silence will be considered as a sign of agreement. The *mahr* is not considered to be a dowry as such in Islam. A dowry is a payment to the groom from the bride's family, and is not an Islamic custom. Bride prices are also expressly prohibited.

Wali

Wali is an Arabic term which refers to a person who has *Walayah* or authority or guardianship over another person, and in Islamic law (*fiqh*). It refers to an authorized agent of the bride in concluding a marriage contract. Usually the *wali* is the bride's father, or other male family member. Traditionally, the *wali* helped select the woman's future husband. The importance of the *wali* is debated among the different Islamic schools and sects. For Hanafi Sunnis, a male guardian is not required for the bride to become married, therefore, the marriage contract is signed between the bride and the groom, not the groom and the *wali*. However, for the Hanbali, Shafi'i, and Maliki Sunni schools, a *wali* is required for a bride's first marriage, but not a divorced woman as she becomes her own guardian and does not need a *wali* to sign a marriage contract.

As with most religious communities, marriages within the Muslim community are incredibly important. The purpose of marriage in Islamic culture is to preserve the religion through procreation and the expansion of a Muslim family. The ideal Muslim family is one that is productive and constructive, helping and encouraging

one another to be good and righteous Muslims and working individually and collectively to do good work.

Polygamy among Muslims

Historically, in Islam, men have often been permitted to marry multiple women. However, polyandry is not permitted, and thus Muslim women may only be married to one man at any point in time. The warrant for this is to be found in both the Qur'an and in the personal life of Muhammad. In many areas where the Qur'an is open to interpretation, Muslims will look for guidance to the life of Muhammad. In this case, the traditional maximum number of wives is set at four, largely because this is the number of wives the Prophet is said to have had at any one point in time. Nevertheless, men must show that they're able to support this number of wives.

Although incidences of polygamy have declined in Muslim communities in practice and social acceptance, in most parts of the Muslim world such as Turkey and Tunisia, who have banned it, polygamy is legal in 58 out of nearly 200 independent states. The majority of such countries are Muslim-majority countries in Africa and Asia. In most of these states, polygyny is both allowed and legally sanctioned. Since the 20th century, the frequency of polygamous marriages has declined significantly as an acceptable and viable marriage practice. This has been a result of several factors including the rise of feminist movements, changing economic conditions, female empowerment, and acceptance of family planning practices.

Are Interfaith Marriages Allowed?

The Qur'an guides Muslims in their seeking of and choice of marriage partner, with the relevant passages often consistently interpreted across the Muslim world. Traditionally, in Islam a marriage must be between opposite-sex partners who are not too closely related to each other. Muslim men are guided to choose wives who are Muslim or belong to one of the other "people of the book" or in other words, Christians and Jews. Women are expected to marry. During the wedding, the bride and groom must say *qubool* (yes), three times for the marriage to be valid. This is done during the *nikkah* portion of the ceremony; very short and intimate ceremony. Gay and lesbian marriages are traditionally forbidden in Islamic law, despite the fact that only male homosexuality is explicitly discussed in the Qur'an. Women experience greater challenges with respect to interfaith marriages and partners, as the rules for Muslim women are much more restrictive than the rules which apply to Muslim men wishing to marry a non-Muslim partner.

The specific passages in the Qur'an which address the issue of interfaith marriage are found in Qur'an 5:5 and in Qur'an 60:10.

Despite the Quranic text that seem to not support interfaith marriages, a growing number of modern Islamic scholars are beginning to reinterpret and re-examine traditional Shari'a interpretations. Although these scholars use established and approved methodologies to arrive at new conclusions, their

views are still often contested and opposed by the majority of more traditional Islamic scholars and interpreters.

The Differences between Muslim Women and Men

The Qur'an generally is supportive of both women and men and does not mandate inequality between them. Officially, men and women enjoy equal rights and duties in their practice of Islam and also equality in the marriage relationship. In practice, however, the values are often overridden by local customs and ingrained paternalistic attitudes among communities. This is the case in prohibiting polyandry while permitting polygamy, prohibiting interfaith marriage for women but allowing it for men, and allowing the practice of certain courtship rituals. It would be fair to say that, in most Muslim schools, women are regarded as being under a kind of guardianship, custody, or control, first by their fathers and brothers, and then by their husbands. In practice, this disparity in power affects nearly all aspects of how men and women relate to each other in Islam.

Before the *Nikah*, the Wedding Ceremony

Some Muslim families will host events prior to the wedding ceremony and wedding celebration. This often includes a *henna* or *mehndi* party, where the bride and her family and friends decorate their hands with *henna*.

The *Nikah* or *Nikaah*, the Marriage Ceremony

An Islamic marriage is considered to be a contract between the two partners. The marriage contract (*aqd-nikah*) may take various forms, but its primary purpose is to affirm the bond between the two persons. Frequently, it will provide the details of the commitments made, including the *mahr*, or *dowry*, the groom will give the bride. The ratification of the marriage contract usually will involve some form of ceremony, and witnesses, which vary significantly in practice across Islamic communities.

In situations where *walis* are expected to confirm the consent to the marriage and the contract, the *wali* and the groom, in the presence of the officiating person, formally indicate agreement with the terms and the consent of the bride to the marriage.

During *Nikah*, the bride and groom will say *qubool* (yes), three times for the marriage to be valid. In some cases, especially in the Muslim Diaspora, the Muslim wedding ceremonies have adopted some aspects of the cultural practices of non-Muslim communities.

Often, Muslim ceremonies can be quite simple. The ratification of the marriage contract and the *mahr* could consist of a meeting between the groom and his bride's guardian. The bride's *wali* (guardian, protector, or parent) states that he offers his daughter in marriage in the presence of witnesses at the agreed-upon *mahr* and in accordance with Islamic law (*shari'ah*). The groom then states his acceptance of the terms with similar language, and both parties will invoke Allah as the "best witness" to the agreement. The ceremony must also

be attended by at least two witnesses who are required to be adults of sound mind and can testify to the observance of the law.

In practice, however, most Muslim couples will go beyond the simple ceremony described earlier. Many will hold a wedding party to celebrate the marriage with family and friends. The facilities for the Muslim wedding party are often located near a mosque. Though it is not a requirement that the marriage ceremony be held in a mosque, ceremonies may be performed there. Muhammad has been quoted as calling for marriage to be announced in public and to be accompanied by the beating of drums, which has led many Muslims to believe that a large public ceremony or celebration is preferable to a small private gathering.

***Walima* or *Wallimah* (Wedding Feast or Reception)**

In Arabic, *walima* or *walimah* refers to the wedding feast, reception, or banquet that is the second of the two traditional parts of an Islamic wedding. The *walima* is performed after the *nikah* (marriage ceremony). According to Islamic tradition, the family of the groom is responsible for inviting the community to a celebratory meal, feast, or reception. The nature of the feast and meal may vary greatly between different Islamic schools, communities, and nations. Some consider a celebratory event obligatory, while for others it is an optional, but perhaps recommended practice.

A *walima* need not be an extravagant or lavish affair, but it often is. The nature of the feast, the food served, whether music and dancing are allowed, and the mingling of different genders may vary greatly. Change is also occurring in some communities due to the adoption or fusing of cultural practices and traditions. While traditions can be different for families and cultures, some weddings include men and women sitting separately during the ceremony or reception and others include, the *imam* reading the first chapter of the *Qur'an* to all guests after the ceremony is complete.

Diversity of Wedding Customs and Practices

As there are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and they all live in various countries and nations with varying cultural communities and compositions, there are many different practices and ways for Muslim weddings to be celebrated. There are 49 Muslim majority countries, each of which may be quite different in cultural and ethnic composition as well as in regional and cultural contexts. Furthermore, many Muslims living in the

In North America and internationally there has been a growth in Muslim dating and matchmaking sites along with sites dedicated to Muslim weddings and planning, examples include the following:

PerfectMuslimWedding.com (<https://perfectmuslimwedding.com/>) is a blog offering resources for planning Muslim weddings and features articles and images of real weddings.

Muslima is an international site for Muslims looking for a marriage partner. www.muslima.com/

Nikah is an international matrimonial site for Muslims. <https://nikah.com/>

West have increasingly adopted family traditions of their new homelands and added them to their own.

Wedding Practices in North America

Muslims in Canada and the United States come from many backgrounds, but the largest communities are those from South Asia, the Middle East, and, more recently, from North and East Africa. Muslim weddings in North America are heavily influenced by the cultures and traditions of the countries of origins of the community. As well, they will often reflect some aspects of Canadian, North American, and western wedding customs and cultural practices. These cultural practices may include such things as the decoration of the reception or feast facilities, food and refreshments served, clothing worn by the wedding party, the composition of the wedding party, and speeches. For example, a survey carried out by PerfectMuslimWedding.com in 2014 of the North American Muslim community revealed that Muslim brides prefer red or white wedding dresses and the majority of couples met through parents and friends. South Asian brides tend to prefer red dresses while those from Arab, Middle Eastern, and other backgrounds prefer white dresses. Many Muslims of African origins may prefer African inspired dresses and traditional wear. In Muslim majority countries, marriages have traditionally tended to be arranged, whereas in the United States, according to the survey, more than half of couples met through friends, online, or in the workplace.

Regardless of cultural and geographic origins, the central event in North American Muslim weddings will be the *Nikah*. This is the actual wedding ceremony, usually officiated by an *Imam* or Muslim cleric. Although a *Nikah* can occur anywhere, including the bride's home or reception hall, it is preferable that it occurs in a mosque. For example, in Winnipeg

Muslims may arrange to be married at the Mosque with a Muslim marriage commissioner who can perform the marriage in accordance with Islamic

These videos provide some insights into Muslim cultural and religious wedding practices in Canada and a few other nations.

Ifrah + Basim Nikah, Winnipeg, August 25, 2018
www.facebook.com/111films/videos/ifrah-basim-nikah-august-25-2018/946287562237255/?so=_permalink&rv=_related_videos

Rida and Danish Wedding Highlight Video, Toronto
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq7iaxMf1IQ

Most Beautiful Afghan Ismaili Muslim Wedding Vancouver
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hM7SsICt9g0

B and H - Nikkah Highlights, Mississauga, Ontario
www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGFyKBxpB6s

Pakistani Nikahh Highlights at The Wazir Khan Mosque, a 17th century mosque located in the city of Lahore, capital of the Pakistani province of Punjab.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd8JwEH8CxY

Merima and Armin, Mosque Wedding at Dzemmat Fedzr mosque, Munich, Germany
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALad4ovPbDc

and Manitoba laws. The marriage commissioner will ensure that the Islamic requirements of consent, witnesses, *wali*, and dowry are met.

Death

Death and the grieving process associated with the passing of family members are especially significant and important for all religious traditions and faiths, including Islam. Some of the beliefs and practices of the Islamic community are similar to those of other peoples of the book and others are unique to Islam.

Death and the Afterlife

Generally, Muslims believe that there will be a Day of Judgment and that each person will be resurrected and appear before Allah to be judged. Allah will determine the person's fate, but all humans will go to heaven or hell, or somewhere in between. A person's destiny in the afterlife is dependent on the degree to which that person intended to and acted in accordance with Allah's wishes as expressed in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that while it is not possible to know with certainty who will go to heaven and hell, those who had faith in the revelations that Allah sent through Muhammad and his other prophets and lived in keeping with those revelations may realistically hope for heaven. As well, it appears that some nonbelievers can also attain paradise.

Jahannam (Arabic) in Islam refers to an afterlife in a place of punishment for evildoers. The punishments that are experienced align with the degree of evil one has done during his life. In the Qur'an, *Jahannam* is also referred to by other names, such as *al-Nar* (The Fire), *Hutamah* (that which Breaks to Pieces), and *Haawiyah* (The Abyss).

Barzakh is an Arabic word meaning obstacle, hindrance, separation, or barrier and designates a place separating the living from the hereafter. In this in between place, there is an existence between the dead and their return to world of the living, but also to a phase which occurs between one's death and resurrection. *Barzakh* may also be the place for those who go neither to hell nor heaven, similar to the Christian concept of limbo. It may also be the place for the unborn souls, existing in the lowest heaven.

Suffering in *Jahannam* (hell) has both spiritual and physical aspects and differs according to the degree of sins the person committed in life. The Qur'an describes it as having many levels, each one more severe than the one above it, and each dedicated to a specific group of sinners.

There are many descriptions of paradise in Islamic literature, but generally the Muslim concept of paradise is that of a blissful, beautiful garden where the blessed are always at peace and happy. In paradise, all is well. Relationships are pleasant, one does not get sick, and the food is always abundant. The faithful, luxuriously dressed, have a relaxed existence, one where servants tend to their every need. Both women and men are attended by beautiful and handsome young servants. Choirs of angels sing in Arabic. And all that paradise has to offer is there to enjoy endlessly. No one is ever full.

Thus, Muslims view death as a transition from one state of being to another, not as an end. They believe that actions follow you to the afterlife. So, if you follow the law of the Qur'an and live a good life, you will be rewarded in the afterlife. In death, you will be separated from the ugliness and suffering in the world; however, if one has been dishonest, uncaring of others, and lived a bad life, they will be separated from all that is good and beautiful in the world.

Funerals

Funerals in Islam are called *Janazah* in Arabic and generally follow specific rites, although they may differ due to differences in regional interpretations and local customs. In all cases, however, *sharia* or Islamic religious law, dictates that the burial of the body be done as soon as possible, preceded by a simple ritual involving bathing and shrouding the body, and then followed by *salah* (prayer). Burial is usually within 24 hours of death to protect the living from any health issues, except in cases where a person is killed in battle or when foul play is suspected. In Islam, cremation of the body is strictly forbidden.

When one dies, according to Islamic funeral customs, the mourning period for a relative is usually three days; however, a widow may mourn for four months and ten days. How an individual expresses mourning in appearance or clothing is not defined by the teachings of the religion but rather on local, regional, or family custom.

According to Islamic funeral custom

- The body must be buried as soon as possible after death.
- The body is turned to face towards Mecca, the holy centre of Islam.
- Guests of the same sex should greet each other with a handshake and hug.
- A person sitting next to the body reads from the Qur'an. An Imam presides over the service.
- The deceased's eyes and mouth are closed. There is rarely an open casket.
- Guests should not take photos or use recording devices.
- The arms, legs, and hands of the body are stretched out in alignment with the body.
- The death is immediately announced to all friends and relatives.
- The body is bathed and covered in white cotton.
- Within two days following the death, the body is carried to the graveyard by four men. A procession of friends and relatives follows.
- No eulogies takes place at the time of burial, but all guests pray for the soul of the departed.
- After the body is buried, all guests go to the house of the family of the deceased. A meal is prepared and guests usually stay for the entire day. Family members may stay for the whole week.
- During this time, the family members socialize. It is believed that socializing helps to ease suffering.

Common Islamic Symbols

Islamic worship and practice is rich with symbolism, from the place of worship to the artefacts used during worship.

Islam forbids the representation of human, divine, or animal figures in mosques, monuments, and other public buildings. The absence of human figures or other figures comes from the Islamic belief that to do so would be an attempt to rival Allah, who is the creator and sustainer of all life. It also follows the Judaic tradition of forbidding any form of idol worship which was common in many other faiths in the Middle East and Arabia. Although Islam does not have any official religious symbols, there are several symbols that have a special place in Islam both historically and in contemporary culture. The following provides an overview of the most common symbols associated with Islam and each symbol's significance.

Star and Crescent

The star and crescent is probably one of the symbols most frequently associated with Islam; however, the symbol itself is not of Muslim origin. The connection of the symbol to Islam stems from the use of the crescent and star by the Ottoman empire.

The crescent and star icon has its origins in pre-Islamic religions and the Ottoman Empire and not in Islam as a whole. It is rarely found on Islamic buildings which were constructed before the rise of the Ottoman Turks.

The crescent and star icon was first associated with polytheistic religions in the Middle East that predated Islam.

These symbols were featured in Egyptian and Mesopotamian art and structures. For example, stars adjoining crescents were a common design found on Mesopotamian boundary stones in the late Bronze Age. A boundary stone of King Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon who reigned from 1125-1104 CE contains an example of a star within a crescent.

The crescent is believed to be associated with the moon deity Sin and the star with Ishtar or Venus.



Figure 59: Crescent and Six-Pointed Star, on the Window of a Restaurant in Old Jerusalem



Figure 60: Depiction of a star and crescent flag on the Saracen side in the Battle of Yarmouk by an anonymous Catalanian illustrator

The representation of Venus through the star shows a strong link to later Byzantine uses of the emblem. An icon of a crescent or crescents appearing together with a star or stars were a common feature of the Sumerians. The crescent usually is associated with the moon god Sin (Nanna) and the star with Ishtar (Inanna or Venus).

The star and crescent emblem was used on Byzantium coins in the first century CE. Later, it was explained by writers that the symbol paid tribute to the goddess Hecate. The symbols thus continued to be integrated into Byzantium cultures.

In Persia, the Partan Empire adopted the symbol at the beginning of the Common Era. The star is believed to represent the divinity Mithra. The crescent is likely to correspond with the goddess Anahita. Eventually, the star and crescent became an emblem of the Parthian kings and was adopted by the rulers of the Sassanian Empire as well.

The crescent and star were also used in medieval and Christian Europe. The crescent alone was used in western heraldry from about the 13th century, while the star and crescent (or “Sun and Moon”) emblem was used in medieval

seals from about the late 12th century.

The crescent symbol was used in Crusader coins of the 12th century and many Crusader seals and coins show the crescent and the star (or blazing sun) on either side of the ruler’s head including Bohemond III of Antioch, Richard I of England, Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse.

The star and crescent combination appears in arms from the early 14th century heraldry. Crescents (without the star) increased in popularity in early modern heraldry in Europe. Siebmachers Wappenbuch in 1605 recorded 48 coats of arms of German families which included one or several crescents.

The Turks are reported to have used the symbol prior to their conversion to Islam. Nevertheless, the use of star and crescent combination was relatively rare prior to its adoption by the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 18th century.

Eventually, the star and crescent symbol became strongly associated with the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and it is still prominent in the Turkish flag. Through its use by the Ottoman Empire, it became a symbol for Islam as a whole. Its status as a symbol of Islam in the West was strengthened by the



Figure 61: Tile Coat of Arms of the Municipality of Sintra, Portugal



Figure 62: Sultan Mosque or Masjid Sultan in Singapore was named after Sultan Hussain Shah. It makes extensive use of the star and crescent symbol to top the minarets and inside the mosque

fashion of using the star and crescent symbol in the ornamentation of Ottoman mosques and minarets.

The “Red Crescent” emblem was adopted by volunteers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as early as 1877 during the Russo-Turkish War; it was officially adopted in 1929.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, the star and crescent icon was used in several national flags adopted by Islamic successor states. The star and crescent may be found on the flags of the Kingdom of Libya (1951) where it was explicitly linked to Islam by associating it with the story of Prophet Mohammed’s migration, *al-Hijra*.

In the 1950s, this symbol was embraced by Arab national or Islamic movements, such as the proposed Arab Islamic Republic (1974) and, in the United States, by the American Nation of Islam (1973).

Today, 15 national flags feature either the star or the crescent, or the combination of both. The crescent and the star icon may be found on the flags of Algeria, Azerbaijan, Comoros, Libya, Mauritania, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Outside of contemporary Muslim nations, it may also be found on the municipal coat of arms of many European municipalities, including eleven in Portugal alone.

Generally, Islamic scholars do not approve of the use of the symbol of the crescent moon and star or any other visual “symbol” of Islam. This is both because Islam has never officially adopted any symbol and because of the historical links of the symbol to polytheistic and pagan religious traditions.



Figure 63: Suffa tul Islam Central Mosque, Little Horton, Bradford, England



Figure 64: Turkish Flag

Calligraphy and Allah's Names

In Islam, it is believed that there are 99 names for Allah (God), often referred to the Beautiful Names of Allah. The word *Allah* in Arabic script may be regarded as visually representing Islam, or as a symbol of Islam. Calligraphic representations of Allah's name may often be found, inside and outside of mosques.

Stylized calligraphy of other words or a verse (*ayah*) from the Qur'an written in Arabic script may also be considered as visual representations of Islam. Allah and the Muslim profession of faith, the *Shahada* are often featured on the walls of mosques and other locations, including homes.



Figure 65: Calligraphic representation of Allah's name on a pillar in Hagi Sofya, Istanbul

Ali's Sword

Zulfaqar is the sword of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib and is a symbol of special significance for Shi'a Muslims as he was considered to be their first *Imam*. It may also be written as *Du-l-Faqar*, *Dhulfaqar*, *Dhulfiqar* or *Dhu al-Faqar*, *Zu al-Faqar*, and *Zulfiqa*. Historically, it was frequently depicted as a scissor-like double-bladed sword on Muslim flags. The sword is often used in Shi'a works depicting Ali and in the form of jewelry.

Middle Eastern weapons are commonly inscribed with a quote mentioning *Zulfiqar* and swords are at times made with a split tip in tribute to Ali's weapon.



Figure 66: Zulfaqar on Silk damask flag from Istanbul, dated 1810-1811 CE Museum für Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt am Main

Islamic Colours

White, black, green, and red are the four colours that dominate the flags of Arab states. Despite prohibition on the use of icons and symbols in Islam, symbolism is nevertheless integrated into many Islamic practices. Such symbols are used to convey an association with or link to Islamic traditions and beliefs. For example, the colour green is quite popular as it is said in the Surah 18:31 of the Qur'an that "those who inhabit paradise will wear fine silk garments of green." Muslims have thus interpreted this particular verse over the centuries in such a way that green has been given special significance and is associated with Islam, although never officially. The result is that Qur'ans are often covered with green bindings, mosques are decorated with green as the predominant colour, Sufi saints have their graves covered with green silk and green is one of the prominent colours used in the flags of many Muslim countries.

With respect to white, this colour is universally associated with peace and purity. Thus, many Muslims wear white for *Jumm-ah* prayers, weddings, and other religious events.

Black is a common symbol of mourning in many cultures around the world, but in Islam it symbolizes modesty.

Red, although not particularly significant for Muslims, is thought to symbolize the life force.

These four colours (green, black, white and red) are the dominant colours found in the flags of most Arab states.



Figure 67: Flag of Sudan



Figure 68: Flag of Libya

Rub el Hizb

The *Rub el Hizb* is the Islamic version of an eight-pointed star. The symbol is used in Arabic calligraphy to mark the end of a chapter. Its most common use, however, is with respect to the *Qur'an*, where the symbol is used to divide the text into passages to facilitate recitation of the *Qur'an*, which is divided into 60 *Hizb*. The symbol is also found on a number of emblems and flags.



Figure 69: The Rub el Hizb is featured on the Emblem of Turkistan

The Kaaba

The *Kaaba* or 'Cube' also known as *al-Ka'bah al-Musharrafah* and may also be spelled *Ka'bah*. It is the black cube-shaped building located at the centre of the Great Mosque of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It is considered to be the most sacred site in Islam and Muslims believe it to be the *Bayt Allāh* (House of Allah). Its location determines the *qiblah* or direction for prayer. Muslims are expected to face the *Kaaba* when performing *Salat (Salah)*, their five daily prayers.

One of the Five Pillars of Islam is that every Muslim who is able to do so perform the *hajj* (Pilgrimage to Mecca) at least once in their lifetime. The protocol for the *hajj* requires pilgrims to make *tawaf* (circumambulate) around the *Kaaba* seven times in a counter-clockwise direction, with the first three times at a fast pace at the edge of the courtyard, and the last four times at a slower pace nearer the *Kaaba*.



Figure 70: The Kaabas in the middle of the Grand Mosque complex in Mecca

Tahabi-Prayer Beads

Prayer beads are also known as *masbaha* or *sibha* and are used in Islam to help with the recitation of prayers and meditation. Tahabi have 99 normal-sized beads. Each individual bead represents one of the ninety-nine names of Allah, the one hundredth name is known to Allah alone. The 99 larger beads are separated into three groups of 33 beads by two smaller beads. The beads help the user to count the number of prayers said.

Sometimes only 33 beads are used, in which case one would cycle through them three times. The beads are traditionally used to keep count while saying the prayer.

Use of the *tahabi* to count prayers and recitations is generally an acceptable practice and they are widely used today by both Sunni and Shia Muslims. One exception to the use of the *tahabi* are members of the Sunna Salafi sects which view the Tahabi as an unacceptable innovation.

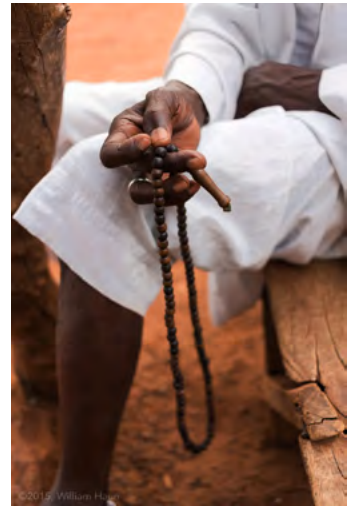


Figure 71: Tahabi-Muslim Prayer Beads

Prayer Rug

Prayer rugs are not exclusively used by Muslims, but they are an important part of Muslim practice. They are used in Muslim homes, mosques or other places when adherents pray to Allah to avoid touching the ground or floor. Typically, prayer mats are placed on the floor and worshippers kneel on the rug to face Mecca to say their prayers.

Muslim prayer rugs are diverse in design and materials used. Their design often contains Islamic symbols. It is common to find symbols such as the *qibla*, the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, or a lamp, which alludes to Allah. Flowers and trees that symbolize the abundance of beauty and the beauty found in paradise are also common designs.

The prayer rugs that are used in homes or workplaces are generally sized for one individual. Nonetheless, rugs used in mosques may be much bigger, often with a pattern that incorporates a row of arches to indicate where each worshiper should stand for prayer.

Geometric Patterns

Geometric patterns are one of the three non-figure forms of decoration typically used by Muslims. The other two are calligraphy and floral and vegetal patterns. Geometric patterns are closely associated with Islamic art, largely due to their beauty and the absence of human or animal figures or icons. The abstract geometric designs cover the surfaces of Islamic monuments, mosques, and buildings, but also function as the major decorative element on many types of objects.



Figure 72: Islamic mosaic pattern from Morocco

Islamic geometric ornamentation reached a pinnacle in the Islamic world, but has its roots in the art of the Greeks, Romans, and Sasanians with respect to both the shapes and the intricate patterns.

Islamic artists appropriated aspects from these classical traditions, and then built on them creating more elaborate and complex artistic statements that stressed the importance of unity and order. The contributions of Islamic mathematicians, astronomers, and scientists were significant and essential in the creation of this unique decorative style.

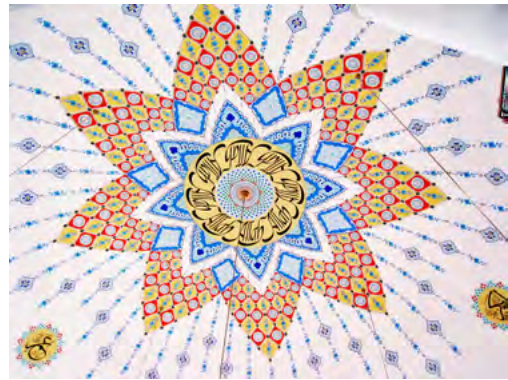


Figure 73: Interior of the dome of the mosque in Yalova, Turkey

Often consisting of or generated from basic shapes such as the circle and the square, geometric patterns were combined, duplicated, interlaced, and arranged in intricate combinations, thus becoming one of the most distinguishing features of Islamic art. The four basic shapes from which the more complicated Islamic patterns are created are: circles and interlaced circles, squares or four-sided polygons, the star pattern, and multisided polygons.

Modesty Requirements

Muslims are guided both by the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* with respect to modesty of dress and behaviour. The codes for conduct with respect to dressing are significantly relaxed when individuals are home and with their families. Thus, the following requirements are followed by Muslims when they appear in public, not when they are in the privacy of their own homes.

Modesty in Clothing and Dress

First Requirement: Parts of the Body to Be Covered in Public

For Women: Muslim women are expected to dress modestly. The word *hijab* means to cover, to screen, or to curtain, and has two dimensions: one is a specific form of veil worn by some Muslim women and the other is a modest Islamic style of dress in general. The requirement is that Muslim women observe the *hijab* in front of any male they could theoretically marry. Thus the *hijab* is not required in front of a father, brother, grandfather, uncle or young child. As well, *hijab* does not need to be worn in the presence of other Muslim women, but there is some debate about if this also applies to non-Muslim women.

In general, Muslim standards of modesty call for a woman to cover her body, from the neck to the ankles, particularly her chest. The Qur'an calls for women to "draw their head-coverings over their chests" (24:30-31), and the Prophet Muhammad taught that women should cover their bodies except for their face and hands.

Islamic modesty requirements have, however, been interpreted in many ways. Some interpretations call for Muslim women to wear full-body coverings that only leave the eyes unveiled, although there is no specific Qur'anic text which requires this extreme form of veiling. As such, although some interpretations require women to cover every part of the body except their face and hands, other interpretations only require that their hair or cleavage be veiled, and yet others do not follow any special dress rules.

For Men: At minimum, men must cover their body from the navel to the knee. However, in practice, men baring their chest would be frowned upon in situations where it draws attention in public. In many countries, men too will choose to cover their heads when in public or attending a mosque.

Second Requirement: Looseness

For both men and women: Generally, the guidance given is that clothing must be loose enough so as not to outline or distinguish the shape of one's body. Skin tight or body hugging clothing are discouraged for all. In many predominantly Muslim countries, men's traditional dress is somewhat like a loose robe, covering the body from the neck to the ankles. In others, it will be a tunic over loose pants.

Types of Islamic Veils

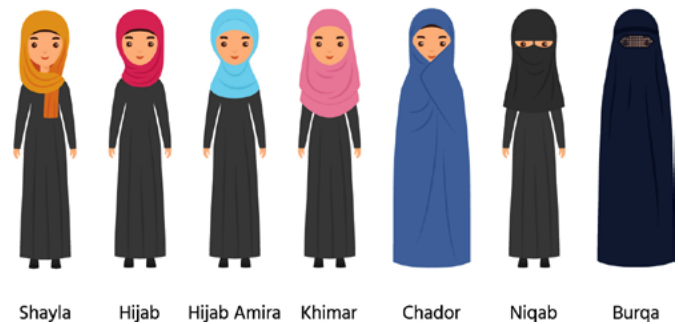


Figure 74: Islamic women in traditional clothing.

Third Requirement: Non-Transparency

For both men and women: Transparent or see-through clothing is not considered to be modest. The clothing must be thick enough and/or of a material that is opaque enough so as to hide the colour of one's skin and the shape of the body underneath.

Fourth Requirement: Modesty in One's Overall Appearance

For both men and women: Generally, the overall appearance and demeanour of a Muslim person should be humble, dignified, and modest. Therefore, shiny, flashy clothing which may meet the three previous other requirements but is flamboyant, opulent, or ostentatious may not be considered consistent with projecting an overall sense of modesty.

Fifth Requirement: Not Imitating Other Faiths

For both men and women: Islam encourages people to be proud of their Muslim identity. Muslims are not expected to mirror practices of other faith groups and imitate their dress requirements or practices.

Sixth Requirement: Decent But Not Flashy

For both men and women: The Qur'an instructs that clothing is meant to cover one's private areas and be an adornment (Qur'an 7:26). Clothing worn by Muslims should be clean and well cared for, neither luxurious nor ragged.

Modesty in Behaviours and Manners

Modesty in one's clothing and dress is just one aspect of modesty. Generally, Muslims believe that one must be modest in behaviour, manners, speech, and appearance when in public. How one dresses is only one aspect of the total being and one that merely reflects what is present on the inside of a person's mind and heart.



Figure 75: Prayer rugs laid out for worshippers at the Great Mosque, the largest mosque in China located in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter

Islamic Dress

Headscarves or other head coverings may have a religious significance or function, be an aspect of social or cultural practice, or be a purely personal style and fashion. It is important to recognize that women of many other religions and cultures may choose to wear head scarves and other aspects of clothing that are very similar to those that many observant Muslim women wear. For example, this is true of women who belong to some Christian groups as well as Orthodox Jewish women.

Hijab

The *hijab* is commonly referred to as a “veil” or head cover, which is characteristically worn by many Muslim women dependent on personal choice, familial and cultural practices, and national laws and customs. It also refers more generally to the loose-fitting, non-revealing clothes worn by many Muslim women. The wearing of the *hijab* is primarily seen to be an Islamic requirement and is perceived from an Islamic perspective as being a symbol of one’s Muslim identity and of personal modesty. Nevertheless, the requirement for a *hijab* has been interpreted differently by Islamic scholars and Muslim communities over the centuries with at times some national laws requiring the use of head coverings and at other times some national laws banning such coverings.

Another way to understand the importance of the hijab is by considering that there are different cultural constructions of the concept of nakedness. For some Muslim females, the amount of their body that they feel comfortable exposing in public is governed by a different sense of what it means to be naked. For some women, showing even their bare arms or legs would make them feel naked.

Variations of the *hijab* include

- The *al-amira*, a two-piece veil consisting of a close fitting cap, and a tube-like scarf
- The *Shayla*, a long, rectangular scarf popular in the Gulf region, which is wrapped around the head and tucked or pinned in place at the shoulders
- The *khimar*, a long, cape-like veil that hangs down to just above the waist and covers the hair, neck, and shoulders completely, but leaves the face uncovered.

Niqab

The *Niqab* is a veil that also covers the face leaving only the area around the eyes uncovered. It may, however, be worn with a separate eye veil. It is worn

Muslim Women’s Right to Dress as They Wish

An important issue in Muslim dominant countries and among Muslim communities worldwide is how women should dress in public. A 2013 survey from the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research conducted in seven Muslim-majority countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey), found that most people, female and male, in the the countries surveyed preferred that a woman completely cover her hair, but this did not apply to covering her face. As well, in Turkey and Lebanon more than one-in-four thought it was unnecessary for a woman to cover her head when in public.

However, women and men did differ on the question of a woman’s right to dress as she wishes. Women were more strongly in favour of the right of women to choose what to wear across all seven countries. In addition, education makes a difference as people with a university education were generally more supportive of women’s right to choose with the exception of Saudi Arabia.

Moaddel, Mansoor. 2013. *The Birthplace of the Arab Spring: Values and Perceptions of Tunisians and a Comparative Assessment of Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Pakistani, Saudi, Tunisia, and Turkish Publics: A Report*, December 15. University of Michigan, Middle Eastern Values Study. https://mevs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Tunisia_FinalReport.pdf

with an accompanying headscarf. There are different types of *niqabs*. One style veils the whole face by using a rectangular piece of semi-transparent cloth that is attached to the head-scarf so that the veil hangs down covering the face but may be turned up if the woman chooses to do so. In the other style, the *niqab* covers the face only below the eyes, allowing the eyes to be seen.

Burqa (Burka)

The *burqa* is the most concealing of all Islamic veils and is a one-piece veil that covers the full face and body to the ankles, usually leaving only a mesh screen for the wearer to see through. The *burqa* (also known as *burka* or *chadri*) is worn by women in some Islamic traditions and nations to cover their whole bodies when in public.

Chador

The *chador* is worn by many women in Iran and some other countries when they are outdoors or in public spaces. The *chador* is a full-body length semi-circle of cloth or cloak that is open down the front and often worn with a smaller headscarf underneath.

Kufi

Males may also choose to wear a head covering called a *kufi*.

Diversity of Islamic Dress

There is great diversity among the Muslim communities worldwide in terms of their interpretation of modesty dress requirements, and cultural and regional traditions and fashion. For example, the *burqa* and the *niqab* are not commonly worn in many predominantly Muslim countries with the exception of Saudi Arabia.

As well, within the same families, different individuals will make different choices in terms of the choice of head coverings, with some choosing not to wear any of the traditional headscarves or coverings.

Schools can expect that students of Muslim background or origins will exhibit a diversity of ethnicities, cultural and regional customs and traditions, and interpretations of modesty dress requirements.

The Arts

Music

Beliefs and Practices

Historically, music and poetry have been a significant part of Muslim cultures around the world. Islamic music or Muslim religious music is sung or played

in public services or in private devotions. As Islam has a strong presence in the Middle East, North Africa, Iran, Central Asia, Horn of Africa, and South Asia, Islamic music today is extremely diverse and reflects the influence of the indigenous musical styles of these regions.

Within the Muslim faith, there is a great diversity of views pertaining to the place of music in Islam and what is acceptable. These views are often influenced by local cultures and differences in interpretations of religious texts. At one end of the spectrum, a relatively small number of Muslims believe all forms of music to be *haram* (forbidden). At the other end of the spectrum, many Muslims enjoy listening to and creating a variety of music. Many Muslims enjoy a *cappella* or *nasheed* (religious songs sung without musical accompaniment).

Traditionally, within many Muslim communities, music is limited to the human voice and non-tuneable percussion instruments such as drums. Today, depending on the Muslim sect and interpretation, the use of string and wind instruments may be prohibited but percussion instruments are allowed, as well as computerized music forms. The only sanctioned musical instruments are certain percussion instruments, specifically the baseless drum, which are usually limited to weddings and religious celebrations. Songs and lyrics cannot conflict with Islamic teachings and morals.

Dance

As with music and musical instruments, there are significantly different interpretations, points of view, or doctrinal disputes with respect to dancing in Islam. This split is in part due to ambiguities with respect to Prophet Mohammed's position on music and dancing. One aspect of this split is along sectarian lines with more austere or fundamentalist Islamic sects, such as the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, generally viewing music and dancing as *haram*, or forbidden, while more moderate sects or other believers accept them as *halal* or permissible. For members of the Sufi Islamic tradition, dance is an essential aspect of their religious practice and they embrace whirling and other trance-like dance movements as a way to grow closer to Allah.

Another aspect of the opposing interpretations or views is to some degree based on class, and regional and cultural diversity. To a certain extent, urban elites have historically avoided dancing, as they view it as being frivolous and beneath their dignity; however, many rural Muslims have developed rich dance traditions.

Until approximately three decades ago, dancing was a common part of rural Muslim weddings around the world. For example

- In Afghanistan, Pashtun men have traditionally circled up to perform the *attan*.
- Yemeni villagers dance the *shabwani* using special sticks for the dance.
- Men in the United Arab Emirates dance the *razfa*, grasping one another's waists to simulate combat.

There are also specific dances for females in the Muslim world, such as the *muradah*, traditional in Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia and couples' dances, such as the *sharh* in Yemen.

Anti-dance sentiment grew within the Muslim diaspora in the 1980s, as Wahhabism expanded out of Saudi Arabia and fundamentalist Muslim sects grew. While most moderate Muslims generally don't object to music and dancing per se, a large portion of Muslim adherents do view sexually suggestive movements and lyrics, and unmarried couples dancing together as *haram*, or not permissible, because they may lead to behaviours that are disrespectful or un-Islamic.

It is important to recognize that such viewpoints on music and dancing are not unique to Muslims as there are Christian and Jewish groups/sects who may share similar views and practices.

For Muslims who view unmarried couples dancing together as *haram*, they may express concerns about coed dance programs or classes. While dancing is allowed, if it is not considered vulgar, generally these parents and students will request that they do not participate in coed dances or dance pairings of opposite genders. Muslims who view all forms of dancing as *haram* and consider dancing to be a sin, may request their children be exempted from dance programs, classes, or activities.

Visual Arts

Certain traditions within Islam do not allow for the depiction, portrayal, or representation of human beings and animals. This is seen as replicating the creation of God and is, therefore, an unacceptable Islamic practice. There is, however, a long and renowned artistic tradition within Islam. Islamic art is characterized by calligraphy and intricate geometric patterns and floral art forms, which have been traditionally used to decorate buildings, rooms, and objects.

Food, Drink, and Fasting

Dietary Restrictions

Muslims are careful about the food they consume and how it is prepared. Islamic laws are very specific and Muslims seek to eat foods defined as *halal*, which is defined by Muslims as "that which is allowed." It is a religious obligation for all Muslims to consume only food that is *halal*. Muslims can consume food that is prepared and/or sold by non-Muslims as long as it is *halal*. *Halal* includes standards that regulate the slaughter and preparation of meat and poultry.

The following products are considered *halal*:

- Milk (from cows, sheep, camels, and goats)
- Honey
- Fish
- Plants which are not intoxicants
- Fresh or naturally frozen vegetables
- Fresh or dried fruits
- Legumes and nuts like peanuts, cashew nuts, hazel nuts, walnuts, etc.

- Grains such as wheat, rice, rye, barley, oat, etc.
 - Animals such as cows, sheep, goats, deer, moose, chickens, ducks, game
- birds, etc., are also *halal*, but they must be *zabihah* (slaughtered according to Islamic rites) in order to be suitable for consumption.

The following foods are considered *haram* (foods that are forbidden):

- Meat from swine—pork, ham, gammon, bacon, etc.
- Pork-based products and by-products—sausages, gelatine, etc.
- Gelatin-based candies and desserts
- Foods containing or prepared with lard or animal shortening (chicken fried in lard, breads, puddings, crackers, cookies, etc.)—vegetable shortening is acceptable
- Cheeses or other milk products that have been processed using coagulating enzymes derived from either beef or swine (rennet, lipase, and pepsin), cheeses that have been produced using enzymes derived from the growth of pure cultures of certain molds (microbial rennets are acceptable)
- Animals improperly slaughtered, or already dead before slaughtering is due to take place
- Animals killed in the name of anyone other than Allah
- Intoxicants
- Most carnivorous animals, birds of prey, and land animals without external ears (i.e., snakes, reptiles, worms, insects, etc.)
- Blood and blood by-products
- Foods contaminated with any of the aforementioned products

Food items that are considered questionable or suspect and for which more information is needed to categorize them as *halal* or *haram* are often referred to as *mashbooh*. Food falling into this category should be treated as *haram* until additional information is available.