



Preface

How to Read These Profiles

These profiles are intended to provide an overview of a number of religious traditions and faith groups. Each profile focuses on a specific religious tradition and emphasizes

- the origins and development of each religious tradition or faith group
- the continued evolution and change of each religious tradition or faith group
- the internal diversity (or intra-religious diversity) of each religious tradition or faith group

While we hope these profiles provide helpful and useful introductions to each religious tradition or faith group, we caution teachers and students to keep in mind the following:

- The profiles provide only an overview and not a detailed or in-depth review of each religious tradition or faith group. They also do not capture the totality of diversity within each religious tradition or faith group.
- Religions do not develop and grow in isolation from political, economic, social, and historical factors, including other religious traditions and faith groups. This knowledge is critical to understanding religious influences in specific social and historical contexts.
- Religious expression will reflect national, cultural, geographical, and other factors.
- While the authors of the backgrounders have taken efforts to present the information in a balanced and unbiased form, there may exist differing points of view and interpretations of historical developments and other aspects of the religious traditions or faith groups.

A Note on Language and Terminology

Throughout this document, we have used transliterated versions of Islamic terms as suggested by the experts and resource people that assisted in the development of this resource. Please note that transliteration is not an exact science and there will be variations in the transliteration of the original terms used dependent on several factors. These include, but are not limited to,

- regional, sect, cultural, linguistic, and other variants in the spelling and pronunciation of the original Islamic terms
- variations in the names and terms used for specific persons, items, concepts, and other elements of Islamic beliefs, rituals, icons, and practices
- regional, cultural, and other variants in the English language that will affect the transliteration of specific terms

A glossary of basic Islamic vocabulary follows.