



# Introduction

## What Is Islam? A brief Summary

*Islam* is commonly used as the name of a religion whose followers are referred to as Muslims that was founded by the Arab Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century CE. Islam is a term derived from the Arabic word *Islam* which literally *means submission to Allah* (God). Therefore, the term Muslim refers to one who submits to Allah (God).

Islam, just like Judaism and Christianity, originated in the Middle East, but has now become a world religion. According to the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, Islam is the world's second-largest religious tradition after Christianity, with an estimated 1.6 billion Muslims living around the world (Global Religious Landscape, 2012).

Muslim majority countries range from North Africa to Southeast Asia. Muslims are the majority in 48 countries and are a significant minority in many others. While the Arab world is often believed to be the heartland of Islam, in reality, the majority of Muslims live in Asia and Africa. The largest Muslim communities may be found in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Central Asia, and Nigeria. More recently, Islam has developed a strong presence in the West, where it has become the second largest religion in many parts of Europe and the third largest in the United States.

In Canada, the first mosque opened in Edmonton, in 1938.\* The Al-Rashid Mosque was built at a time when there were approximately 700 Muslims living in Canada. In the 2011 National Household Survey, just over 1 million

\* Al Rashid Mosque, History: <http://alrashidmosque.ca/about/history/>

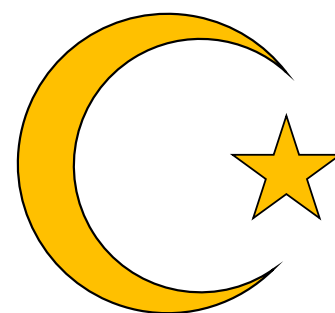


Figure 1: The crescent moon and the star are widely used as a symbol of Islam; however, this symbol has no specific religious significance. The use of the crescent moon and star may be traced to the Ottoman Turks and the Ottoman Empire.



Figure 2: Another popular symbol for Islam is the calligraphy of the word Allah. Allah is the Arabic word for God. As images of people and animals are not permitted in mosques, tiles and drawings featuring the word Allah or excerpts from the Qur'an are often features in mosques, Islamic centres, and homes. As Allah is the name for God, it is used among Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews as well.

individuals identified themselves as Muslim, representing 3.2% of the nation's total population, up from the 2.0% recorded in the 2001 Census (Statistics Canada). In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), 7.7% of the population identified as being Muslim, making Toronto one of the North American cities with the highest concentration of Muslims.

## Relationship to Judaism and Christianity

By the time Muhammad was born and lived in the seventh century CE, Judaism had completed the Torah and the Babylonian Talmud. The Christians were now the leaders of the official religion of the Roman Empire and had reached an agreement on what should be in the New Testament.

Islam shares common roots with Judaism and Christianity. Although its origins were in the Middle East, today it is a religion with adherents throughout the world. Historians generally believe that Islam originated in Mecca and Medina early in the seventh century CE and was founded by Muhammad. This was approximately 600 years after the founding of Christianity; however, Muslims believe that Islam did not start with Muhammad, but that it was the original faith of others whom they regard as prophets, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims are all considered children of Abraham (Ibrahim), but they belong to different branches of the same family. Jews and Christians are spiritual descendants of Abraham and his wife, Sarah, through their son, Isaac (Ishaq); however, Muslims trace their origins back to Ishmael (Ismail), Abraham's firstborn son by his Egyptian servant, Hagar. Ishmael is believed to have become the father of Arabs in northern Arabia. Muslims believe that Islam was the first monotheistic faith and that it is the oldest of the Abrahamic faiths. Thus, from a Muslim perspective, Judaism and Christianity are branches of the one true faith. For practical reasons, however, Muslims date their religion from the time of Muhammad's migration.

## Allah: The Only God

Monotheism is a fundamental aspect of Islamic belief. The word for God in Arabic is Allah. This word is also used by Arabic-speaking Christians when referring to the Christian God. Allah is also known by other names. The core of Islamic faith is for one to completely submit to or obey Allah's will.

As with the other Abrahamic religions, most Muslims understand God to be the creator who reigns over the entire universe, and is the ultimate judge of all human beings. For Muslims, Allah's most important characteristics or qualities are those of compassion and mercy.

Allah guides humanity to the path of righteousness through the messengers and prophets he sends for this purpose. Muslims believe that the one true God, Allah, throughout history, has sent many prophets and messengers to peoples of every culture and nation to guide them in how to live in accordance with Allah's will. The revelations and the guidance given by Allah through time via various messengers and prophets constitute the sacred texts of Islam.

## The Nature of Allah

Muslims generally share some common understandings about the nature of Allah as follows:

- Allah is eternal, omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipotent (all powerful)
  - Allah has always existed and will always continue to exist
  - Allah knows everything that can be known
  - Allah can do anything that can be done
- Allah has no shape or form
  - Allah can't be seen
  - Allah can't be heard
  - Allah has no gender; is neither male nor female
- Allah is just
  - Allah is always fair and just in rewarding and punishing humans
  - Allah is, however, also merciful
- A believer can approach Allah by praying and by reciting the Qur'an
- Muslims worship only Allah
  - Allah, only, is worthy of worship

## Muhammad: The Final Prophet

A key aspect of most Muslim's faith is that Muhammad was the final and most important prophet and messenger. The revelations that Muhammad received from Allah through the Angel Gabriel (Jibra'il), are the final revelations and constitute the Qur'an (Quran, Koran). The Qur'an is regarded by Muslims as being the direct word of Allah (God); although, since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, faithful Muslims have responded to Allah's words and interpreted the teachings of Islam at different times in different ways and in a diversity of historical and cultural contexts.

According to Islamic doctrine, when Muhammad was about forty years old, he was chosen by Allah to receive the revelations that came to be the basis for the establishment of Islamic faith. It is believed that Muhammad retreated each year to a mountain cave, Hira, near Mecca for reflection and meditation. Muslims believe that one night during the lunar month of Ramadan, while Muhammad was in the cave, he was visited by the Angel Gabriel. Gabriel asked that Muhammad recite a message from Allah that he had brought. Later, startled by the apparition, when fleeing the cave, Muhammad is reputed to have heard a voice from the sky saying "Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel." Muhammad then saw an angelic form standing in the distance, repeating the message.

### Note

A more detailed description of Muhammad's life is provided in the section Significant Persons: Muhammad and Past and Present Muslims of Note.

According to Muslim belief, Muhammad, after the initial visitation, continued to receive more revelations for about 20 years. Muhammad shared the revelations he received first with his wife and then with others. Soon, a small group of followers or believers formed around him and his revelations. The revelation he received warned of the coming of a day of divine judgment and the need to return to the monotheism espoused by earlier prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

The revelations that were transmitted to Muhammad contradicted the dominant beliefs and practices of seventh-century society in Mecca, which at that time, was not only the centre of pilgrimage for the polytheistic Arabian religion, but was also home to communities of Christians and Jews. At the centre of Mecca stood the Kaaba, a cube-shaped structure, which was believed to have been originally built by Adam and then rebuilt by Abraham as the house of the one Allah (God). The Kaaba had been turned into a building that honoured numerous idols. The dominant Arabian culture was a polytheistic one where tribal bonds and blood feuds were common and pervasive. Soon, Muhammad and his growing band of followers faced strong opposition to their beliefs. They were treated harshly and faced continuous persecution by the Meccans who saw them as a threat to their order.

In 622 CE, Muhammad and his followers left Mecca and headed north to the city of Yathrib. This event, is now known as the *hijra* (*hijrah*, *hegira*), and it marks the establishment of the original or first Islamic community. For this reason, this event marks the beginning of the Muslim *hijri* calendar. Eventually, the leading tribes of Yathrib agreed that the Prophet Muhammad should become the leader of the town and bring order and unity to the community, which was experiencing major political turmoil. Later, Yathrib became known as Medina, short for Madinat an-Nabi (the City of the Prophet). Muslims believe Muhammad continued to receive revelations from Allah in Medina and that, in Medina, he attracted more followers and strengthened the Islamic community.

Muhammad proved to be a good civil leader and, from his base in Medina, was able to expand the territory and people under his authority. In 630 CE, Muhammad returned to Mecca as ruler after winning

### Depictions of Muhammad

The Qur'an does not explicitly prohibit visual portrayals of Muhammed. But Islam, like Judaism, has prohibited any graven images to prevent the temptation toward idol worship. Although there are a few depictions of Muhammad that appear in Islamic texts, mostly dating from the Mongol and Ottoman Empires, intended for personal and religious use, most Muslims view any visual depiction of Muhammad, or any of the other prophets of Islam as being strictly forbidden. Today, following religious rulings by Islamic scholars on the issue, most Muslims respect the ban. As such, in mosques, Islamic centres, and homes, one will not find depictions of people or animals. Instead, geometric patterns and calligraphy are used to decorate Islamic centres, institutions, or homes. In respect of this point of view, visual representations of Muhammad or other Islamic prophets will not be used.



Figure 3: Calligraphic representation of the name Muhammad

a series of military battles and negotiating with his enemies in Mecca. He did not seek retaliation, but instead pardoned those who had oppressed him and his band of early followers.

As many Meccans began to embrace his teachings, the Kaaba was now rededicated to the worship of Allah. By the time of Muhammad's death in 632 CE, Islam had been adopted by most of the population in the Arabian Peninsula.

After Muhammad's death, the Islamic community sought to preserve the memory of his actions and his words as the prime example of how one ought to live in alignment with Allah's will. This record of the Prophet's words was later collected in books of tradition, or *hadith*. The *hadith* are a part of the *Sunnah* (the custom) of the Prophet, which includes his words and actions. The *Sunnah* is cherished as an additional guide for Muslims to follow in their daily lives.

Despite Muhammad's role in the establishment of Islam, he is not worshipped. The majority of Muslims think of Muhammad as a mortal being who was chosen by Allah to be the messenger, and not himself a divine being.

When Muslims refer directly by name to the Prophet Muhammad when speaking or writing, it is common practice to use the salutation "alayhi s-salaam" or "peace be upon him" (PBUH) to show respect and reverence. They recite a similar salutation after the names of other prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

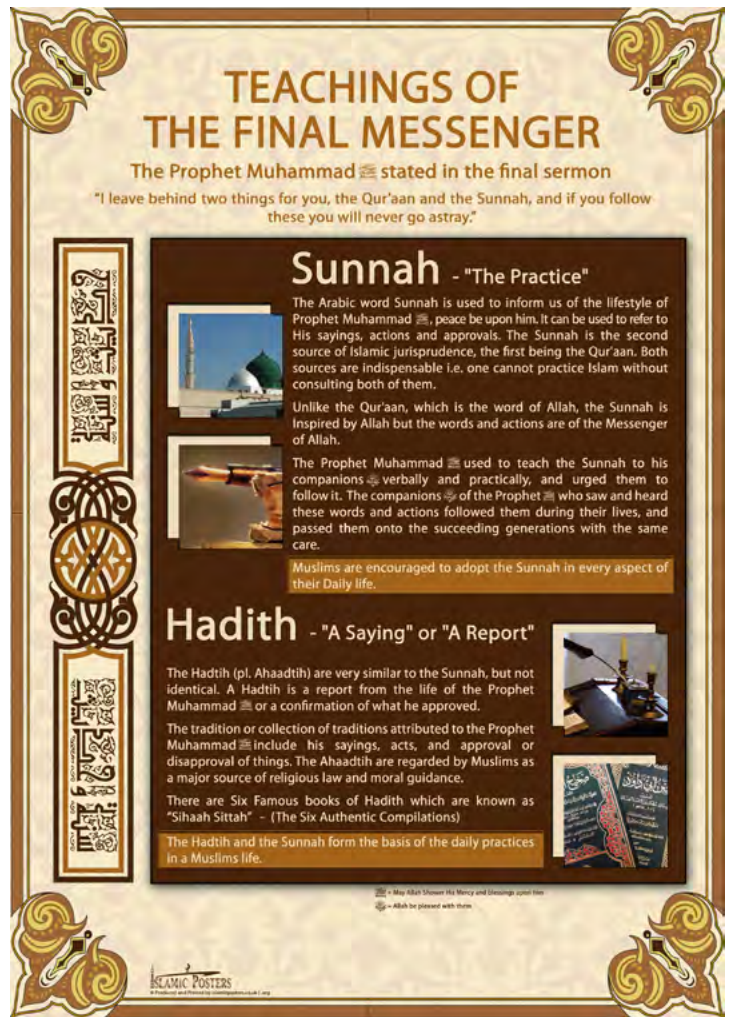


Figure 4: Teachings of the Final Messenger  
 The Prophet Muhammad stated in the final sermon "I leave behind two things for you, the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, and if you follow these you will never go astray."

## The Qur'an: The Word of Allah

Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is literally the word of God. All verses were believed to have been revealed to Muhammad by God through the angel Gabriel at different points in his life. The writing of the *Qur'an* is attributed to followers of Muhammad (*sahabah*) while he was still alive. However, during Muhammad's life, the primary method of transmission of the *Qur'an* was oral, through recitation.

The written version of the *Qur'an* was compiled during the reign of the first *caliph*, Abu Bakr, and was standardized during the reign of Uthman, the third *caliph*. Since then, research by Islamic studies scholars has found that the *Qur'an* of today has not changed significantly over the years.

The *Qur'an* is divided into 114 *surahs* (chapters), ordered according to decreasing length, with each *surah* representing a division of the Book. The *Qur'an* deals with a range of themes such as

- prayers and praise of God
- a recounting of God's signs in creation
- stories of the messengers or prophets before Muhammad
- passages about the Day of Judgment
- legal matters
- examples of righteous or good behaviour, such as looking after one's parents, the poor, the sick, the needy, and orphans



Figure 5: The Five Pillars of Islam

The religion of Islam requires accepting some main Articles of Faith. These are the core beliefs—without any one of these, one would not be accepted as a believer. The acceptance of these Articles leads to the practical five Pillars of Islam.

The Five Pillars of Islam are the fundamental duties in a Muslims life, which lead to living a good and responsible life according to Islam.

Quranic teachings are considered to be the base of the Islamic tradition and thus the text has been the subject of lengthy analyses and interpretations by many religious scholars.

The word *Qur'an* means recitation. Consequently, when Muslims refer to the *Qur'an*, they usually mean the recitation in Arabic of the Holy Scripture rather than the printed work or any translation of it. For Muslims, the *Qur'an* is perfect only as revealed in its original Arabic oral form to Muhammad. Translations of the *Qur'an* are believed to be inherently deficient because of linguistic differences, limitations of translators and potential translation errors, and the impossibility of maintaining the inspired style of the original text. Therefore, translated versions of the *Qur'an* are considered to be only interpretations of its meaning and not the actual *Qur'an*.

## Five Pillars of Islam

Islam may be thought of as being 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 are the Five Pillars of Islam. They are the five obligations that every Muslim must satisfy in order to live a good and responsible life according to Islam.

The Five Pillars are

- **Shahadah:** Sincerely reciting out loud, and with full understanding, the Muslim statement or profession of faith; "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."
- **Salat:** Performing ritual prayers in the proper way five times each day at set times as follows:
  - Salat al-fajr: dawn, before sunrise
  - Salat al-zuhr: midday, after the sun passes its highest
  - Salat al-'asr: the late part of the afternoon
  - Salat al-maghrib: just after sunset
  - Salat al-'isha: between sunset and midnight
- **Zakat:** The compulsory giving of a set proportion of one's wealth to benefit the poor and the needy. It is a type of worship and of self-purification.
- **Sawm:** Fasting during the month of Ramadan. During the 29/30 days of Ramadan all adult Muslims must give up the following things during the hours of daylight:
  - Food or drink of any sort
  - Smoking, including passive smoking
  - Sexual activity
- **Hajj:** Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's lifetime if they can afford it and are physically able. Mecca is a holy place for all Muslims and non-Muslims are not allowed to enter. Once a year, during the month of Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Muslims from around the world gather

together in Mecca. They stand before the *Kaaba*, the square shrine at the centre of the great mosque in Makka, praising Allah together. It is a ritual that is designed to promote the bonds of Islamic equality by showing that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah. The *Hajjis* or pilgrims all must wear simple white clothes called *Ihram* to demonstrate that, in the *Hajj*, they all are truly equal.

From a Muslim perspective, the Five Pillars provide the framework of one's life, and weave their everyday activities and beliefs into a single expression of religious devotion. Islam believes that one must put that faith into action and practice. As such, 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.

## Practices and Rituals

### *Modesty*

Muslims are guided by both the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* with respect to modesty of dress and behaviour. Islam prescribes that both men and women behave and dress modestly. Muslims believe that an emphasis on modesty encourages society to value individuals for their wisdom, skills, and contribution to the community, rather than for their physical characteristics.

Both men and women are expected to respect Islamic modesty requirements, although there are differences between the requirements for the two genders. The codes of conduct 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.



Figure 6: Pilgrims at the Kaaba.



## *Modesty in Clothing and Dress*

- First requirement: Parts of the body to be covered in public
- Second requirement: Looseness
- Third requirement: Non-transparency
- Fourth requirement: Modesty in one's overall appearance
- Fifth requirement: Not imitating other faiths
- Sixth requirement: Decent but not flashy

The first requirement and its application to women is one that has been and continues to be much debated.

In many Islamic nations and sects, this is interpreted such that women must at least cover their heads with a *hijab* (scarf), while for others it also requires the veiling of the face (*niqab*), and yet, in others, it requires that a woman be covered

completely from head to ankles (*burqa* or *chadri*). 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, including some Christian groups and Orthodox Jews.

Some Islamic scholars, both women and men, challenge the idea that head coverings are required of women by the Qur'an or the Hadith. They argue the Qur'an does not actually require Muslim women to cover their hair or their faces, and that the section of the Hadith which has been used to justify the requirement is actually a misinterpretation of the text.

Thus, there is great diversity among the Muslim communities worldwide in terms of their interpretation of modesty dress requirements, as well as cultural and regional traditions, and fashion.

## *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. From a Muslim perspective, 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.

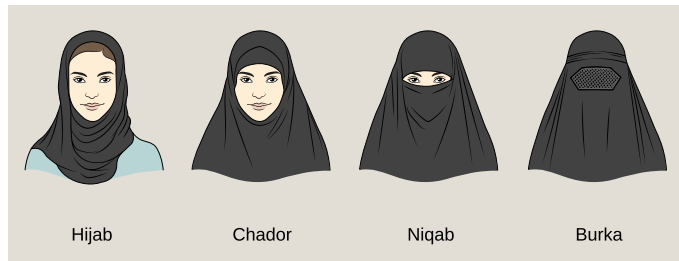


Figure 7: Collection of images reflective of Muslim diversity

## Food 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 observant 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.

There are some foods which are forbidden or not allowed (*haram*). These include

- Meat from swine—pork, ham, gammon, bacon, etc.
- Pork-based products and by-products—sausages, gelatine, etc.
- Non-vegetarian 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.

## Greetings and Etiquette

Muslims come from diverse parts of the world and reflect different cultural and social conventions. Thus, there is no standardized global Muslim culture or even Arab Muslim culture. Nevertheless, there are a few key practices that seem to be common throughout the diverse Muslim cultures and world views.

Muslims often greet each other with a number of ritual phrases and fixed responses. To greet in Islam, say “As-Salamu Alaikum,” which means “Peace be unto you.” The appropriate response would generally be:

- “As-salamu alaikum wa rahmatullah,” which means “May the peace and mercy of Allah be with you.”
- “As-salamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh,” which means “May the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be with you.”

This universal Islamic greeting has its roots in the Qur’an. *As-Salaam* is one of the names of Allah, meaning “The Source of Peace.” In the Qur’an, Allah instructs believers to greet one another with words of peace.

Touching, long handshakes, grasped elbows, even walking hand in hand by two males is common place in the Muslim world; however, contact between the opposite sexes in public is generally to be avoided.

Muslims generally use the right hand to eat, touch and present gifts. In much of Asia and the Middle East, the left hand is generally regarded as unclean.

Pointing your finger or a pen at anyone while speaking, or beckoning anyone with your finger is considered a threat.

People generally take off their shoes at the entrance of a Muslim home and leave them there before going in. Sometimes, oversize slippers are provided for guests to put on.

People also should not show the soles of the feet, as they are the lowest and dirtiest part of the body.

## Salah (Salat) and Mosques

*Salah* are the obligatory Muslim prayers, performed five times each day by Muslims. It is the second Pillar of Islam.

Before praying, Muslims are required to perform a ritual washing (*wudu* or *wudhu*) of their faces, hands, head, and feet. The poster above describes the *wudu* ritual.

Islam requires adherents to pray daily at specific times, which change throughout the year, depending on the time of sunrise and sunset.

- *Salat al-fajr*: dawn, before sunrise

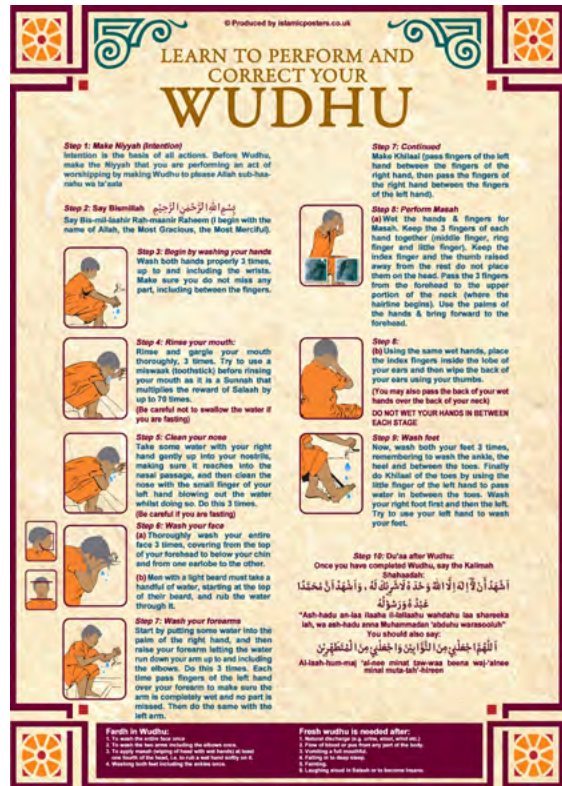


Figure 8: Step-by-step instructions on a poster for how to perform and correct your Wudhu. (Click the image to link to the full-size original.)

- Salat al-dhuhr (also known as *Zuhr* or *Duhr*): midday, after the sun passes its highest
- Salat al-'asr: the late part of the afternoon
- Salat al-maghrib: just after sunset
- Salat al-'isha: between sunset and midnight

When performing their daily prayers, Muslims follow a particular ritual or pattern of observances. While facing towards the Kaaba in Mecca, the holy city of Muslims, one stands, bows, prostrates oneself, and concludes with sitting on the ground. During each posture one reads certain verses, phrases, and prayers. Ritual purity is a precondition.

*Salah* consists of the repetition of a unit called a *rak'ah*, a sequence of prescribed actions and words. The number of *rak'ahs* varies according to the time of day.

The poster to the right depicts and describes the sequence of body postures and actions that constitute *salah*.

Muslims worship in a building called a *mosque* or *masjid*, meaning place of prostration. Muslims can pray anywhere, but it is especially good to pray with others in a mosque. Praying together in a congregation helps Muslims to realize that all humanity is one, and all are equal in the sight of Allah. Outside every mosque, or just inside the entrance, is a place where worshippers can remove and leave their shoes. There is also a place where they can carry out the ritual washing required before prayer.

The main hall of a mosque is a bare room with very limited furniture.

There are no pictures or statues present as Muslims believe these are blasphemous, since there can be no image of Allah, who is wholly spirit. Everyone sits on the floor and everywhere in the mosque is equal in status. A *mihrab* (niche in one of the walls) points to the direction that the worshippers should face in order to face Mecca.

At an early age children are encouraged to begin praying. Prayer becomes compulsory at puberty. Prayer can be performed individually or in a group, and men and women pray in separate areas within the same room. Women do not pray during menstruation.

Figure 9: Ibn Abbas narrated that the Messenger of Allah said to Al-Abbas bin Abdul-Muttalib.

(Click the image to link to the full-size original.)

Prayer times will vary according to the changing time of sunrise and sunset. Holy days are governed by the lunar calendar, and may fall on dates that vary by several months from year to year.

## Salat Al Jumah/Salat al Jumu'ah (Friday Congregational Prayer)

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.

*Salat Al Jumah* is a prayer 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.

## Mosque Etiquette

Non-Muslim visitors to mosques are generally welcomed but they are expected to follow some general rules and practices.

- Take off your shoes at the entrance to the prayer area and leave them there before going in.
- Dress modestly and respectfully. Do not wear shorts, short dresses, or short sleeved or sleeveless tops and dresses.
- Do not talk loudly.
- Do not walk directly in front of people praying.
- Do not take pictures of people in a mosque
- Do not be surprised to find mosques to be sparsely furnished, except for the carpet.

## Marriage and Muslim Weddings

Muslim marriage and wedding practices vary significantly according to the cultures of the people involved. Practices differ between Muslims who marry from European, Turkish, African, Malaysian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or other backgrounds.

Marriage according to Muslim law is a legal contract. In Islam, a person should be properly married, and this should include both the Islamic religious ceremony and the legal requirements of the country in which it takes place. In Islam, marriages are social contracts which bring rights and obligations to both parties, and can only be successful when these are mutually respected and valued.

While marriage is valued in Islam, if and when marriage contracts are broken, either party has the right to seek divorce. Generally, sexual relations outside of

marriage are forbidden, including gay/lesbian and heterosexual relationships. As well, celibacy in marriage is disapproved, as it may lead to psychological and physical tensions and problems.

## Polygyny

At the time that Muhammad had the Qur'an revealed to him, it was normal practice for men to have more than one wife, but within the limits of their ability to support them. As well, women who were powerful and wealthy could also have marital arrangements simultaneously with more than one partner. One difference between Islam and most other faiths is that, to this day, a man may have more than one wife. Under Islamic law, up to a maximum of four wives are permissible simultaneously, as long as such marriages are not detrimental and do not hurt the existing Muslim partner or partners.

Islam, like many other religions, prohibits people from hurting or abusing another person/Muslim. Therefore, if a husband is unable to treat all partners with kindness, love, and fairness, he is obligated by Allah to not take more than one wife. Muslim women are allowed to have only one husband at a time, but they may remarry in case of a divorce or death of a partner.

Muslims are, however, also obligated to obey the laws of the nations in which they are living and the majority of states, including Canada do not allow polygamy. Polygamy is legal in 58 out of nearly 200 sovereign states, with the majority of these being Muslim dominant or majority countries in Africa and Asia. As well, there are four countries (Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and India) that only recognize polygamous marriages for Muslims. In most of these states, polygyny is allowed and legally sanctioned. Conversely, polyandry (marriage of a woman to more than one partner) is illegal in virtually every state in the world.

## Mahr (Financial Arrangement)

A Muslim husband has to reach a financial accord (*mahr*) with the prospective partner before marriage. The *mahr* is a payment/gift the prospective husband makes to the bride which is hers to keep and use as she pleases. The rationale is that even if the prospective wife has little or no financial resources, she now becomes a bride with property of her own. If the bride later seeks a divorce which the husband does not wish for, she is allowed to return him the money and seek what is known as a *khul* divorce. Normally, if a divorce takes place because of the husband breaking his vows or by mutual agreement, the bride is entitled to keep the *mahr*.

If the bride/wife is a woman that has financial resources of her own, she is not obligated to spend it on her husband or family; however, the Muslim husband has the obligation to keep and support his wife and children at his own expense. If a wife goes out to work, or donates money to the family cause, this is to her credit and is regarded as an act of charity (*sadaqah*).

## The Nikah (Marriage Ceremony)

The actual Muslim wedding ceremony is known as a *nikah*. Generally, a *nikah* is a simple ceremony. A bride does not have to be present at the *nikah* as long as she sends two witnesses to confirm the marriage contract. Normally, the ceremony consists of reading from the Qur'an, and the exchange of vows in front of witnesses for both partners. No special religious official is necessary, but often an Imam is present and performs the ceremony. They may also deliver a short sermon.

There are certain aspects that are common to all Muslim marriages. Marriages have to be declared publicly to the community. The publicity required is usually done by having a large feast or celebration called *awalimah*, a celebration specifically intended to announce publicly that the couple are married and entitled to each other.

Many wedding customs or celebrations are dependent on cultural or ethnic traditions and are not religiously decreed. Some are elaborate, with the bride and groom required to sit on 'thrones' set upon a platform. In some cases, guests may bring gifts or money.

Keeping with contemporary preferences, many Muslim brides favour a white wedding dress, but brides from the Asian subcontinent often prefer a *shalwar-qameez* outfit in scarlet with gold thread, and have their hands and feet patterned with henna.

In some cultures, there may be elaborate receptions and celebrations. Asian weddings often include pre-nuptial parties and gathering too, sometimes lasting several days. They might also have vast feasts with hundreds of guests, usually with the males in a separate room from the females. Other Muslims have simple celebratory parties with only close friends and relatives.

## 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, and 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.

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. As such, 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 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.

## One Jumma with Many Views: Diversity of Islam

Muslims may be thought of as belonging to one *umma*, or religious community, due to their common belief in the unity of God and the prophecy of Muhammad. Within this unity there is also great diversity, reflecting differences of interpretation of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*. These differences led to deep debates about the nature of political authority, spiritual leadership, and the development of various schools of jurisprudence.

Muslims have interpreted the Prophet's exemplary life in many different ways, each emphasizing specific aspects of his life and teachings. These differences in interpretative traditions sometimes complement and at other times contradict one another. This creates a rich diversity in belief and practices of the Muslim community.

The first significant cleavage or division arose shortly after the death of Muhammad. He died without naming a successor and there were two different groups of followers who advocated for different individuals to succeed Muhammad. These groups differed with respect to the nature and scope of authority the successor should possess and eventually became known as the Shi'a and the Sunnis. This initial split in over who should succeed Muhammad in leading the Islamic community led to differences in systems of Islamic law and theology.

In the early centuries of Islam, a second development followed from those who drew on the model of Muhammad's close relationship with God and his mystical experiences and devotional practices. This led to the emergence of a form of mystical and esoteric Islam known today as Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), this movement became instrumental in the spread of Islam to all parts of the world. Sufism transcends many of the divisions in Islam, its organizations and artistic expressions inspiring Muslims to greater spiritual awareness.

As well, an important stream of Islamic tradition developed around the model of Muhammad as interpreter of Islamic religious and legal doctrine, which came to be called *sharia* (*shari'ah*) or the "path" or "way." *Sharia* represents the moral and ethical values or code, which enable Muslims to live in accordance with the will of Allah based on the Prophet's life as a model. After the death of the Prophet, a group of scholars or *ulama* emerged. These scholars led to the creation of different schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), laws that derived from the *sharia* interpretations of how those moral principles should be applied.



## Shi'a and Sunni Muslims

The Shi'a (Shi'at 'Ali or "the party of Ali") believed that only designated direct descendants of Muhammad should be considered as legitimate successors to the Prophet for both political and religious purposes. They believed that Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin, had inherited the Prophet's understanding and insights of the Qur'an and Islam, and therefore was the most qualified to lead the Islamic community. Shi'a Muslims believe that leadership was passed on by the designation of a successor (known as the *Imam*) within the Prophet's family. According to the Shi'a, a community without the direct revelation of a prophet must always have an *Imam* who will maintain the revelation and guide the community in applying it to new situations.

The Shi'a may be further divided by their differences in defining the lineage of Imams that succeeded Ali. The largest group of Shi'a, are known as "Twelvers," as they recognize a line of twelve Imams, which ended in the late ninth century CE. Most "Twelvers" believe that the last Imam was the *Mahdi* (the guided one or redeemer) that is discussed in the Hadith, awaited by both Shi'a and many Sunnis. In most traditions, the *Mahdi* will arrive with *Isa* (Jesus) to defeat *Al Masih ad-Dajjal* ("the false Messiah", or Antichrist) to establish truth and justice on earth.

Other Shi'a groups, such as the Zaydis and Ismailis, trace the succession differently. Most Zaydis identify themselves as following Zayd ibn 'Ali, the Prophet's great-great-grandson, who considered it incumbent on the Shi'a to rise up against unjust rulers. Most Nizari Ismailis trace their spiritual succession from Ismail to the current, living Imam, Prince Karim Aga Khan, who is their Ali, though there are also significant Isma'ili groups that affirm a different lineage.

Throughout Islamic history, the Shi'a and their Imams were often persecuted by their opponents. The lives and the sufferings of Shi'a Imams are commemorated in story and ritual, as may be seen in the 'passion plays' performed on *Ashurah*, the tenth day of the lunar month of *Muharram*, to recall the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Husayn, the third Shi'a Imam. Husayn and a small group of family members



Figure 10: Sufi Dervish  
Every Friday afternoon at the Hamed el-Nil Mosque and Tomb in Omdurman, Sudan, Sufi dervishes perform a ritual called *dhikr* at the tomb of Sheikh Hamad-al Nil, a 19th-century Sufi leader. The dervishes dance while reciting Allah's name, to create a state of ecstatic abandon that allows their hearts to communicate directly with Allah.

and loyal supporters were slaughtered 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.

The Sunnis, the majority of the early Islamic community and their tribal leaders, in contrast to the Shi'a favoured Abu Bakr as-Siddiq as the successor to Muhammad and becoming the *khalifah* (caliph). Over time they came to argue that Muhammad had given his authority to the whole community to 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."

The Sunni caliphs 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 religious scholars or *ulama* emerged to guide the legal and theological life of Sunni communities.

## Sufism

Sufism (*Tasawwuf* in the Muslim world) is not a sect per se but a mystical dimension of Islam in which followers seek a direct, personal experience of God in their lives. Sufis may be Sunnis, Shi'a, and even non-Muslims. 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.

- 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: Is a form of meditation that has aspects common to the practices of meditation in many faith communities.
- Sufi whirling (or spinning): Is a form of active meditation (*Sama*) which originated among Sufis, and is still practiced by the Sufi *derwishes* 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).

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 the persecution of Sufis. The persecution has resulted in the destruction of Sufi shrines and mosques, suppression of orders, and discrimination against adherents in several Muslim-majority countries.

## Ahmadiyya

Ahmadiyya: is an Islamic messianic movement founded in Punjab, during British control of India, in the late 19th century. It is founded upon the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908). The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is unique among Islamic groups as they believe that the *Mahadi* and the Messiah had already come in the form of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Adherents of the Ahmadiyya, a term adopted in reference to Muhammad's alternative name *Aḥmad*, are known as Ahmadi Muslims or simply Ahmadis.

Ahmadi beliefs and practices 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 their belief 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.

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 most complete and perfected religion. They believe that all other world religions have been corrupted and moved away from their original forms. They believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was divinely guided to purge Islam of foreign and corrupting elements in belief and practice by championing what they believe was Islam's original precepts as practiced by Muhammad and the early Muslim community. Ahmadis thus view themselves as leading the promotion and renaissance of Islam.

Because of the belief in the appearance of the Messiah after Muhammad, among other things, 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.

## Kharijite

The Kharijites (those that seceded) are a group that believe the caliph, their religious and civil leader, does not need to be from an elite group or privileged class, as long the person is pious and exercises their authority equitably and justly. Today, Ibadism is the only surviving branch of the Kharijites. Most Ibadi Muslims live in Oman and Northern Africa.

The chart that follows, provides an overview of the major divisions of Islam and their branches.

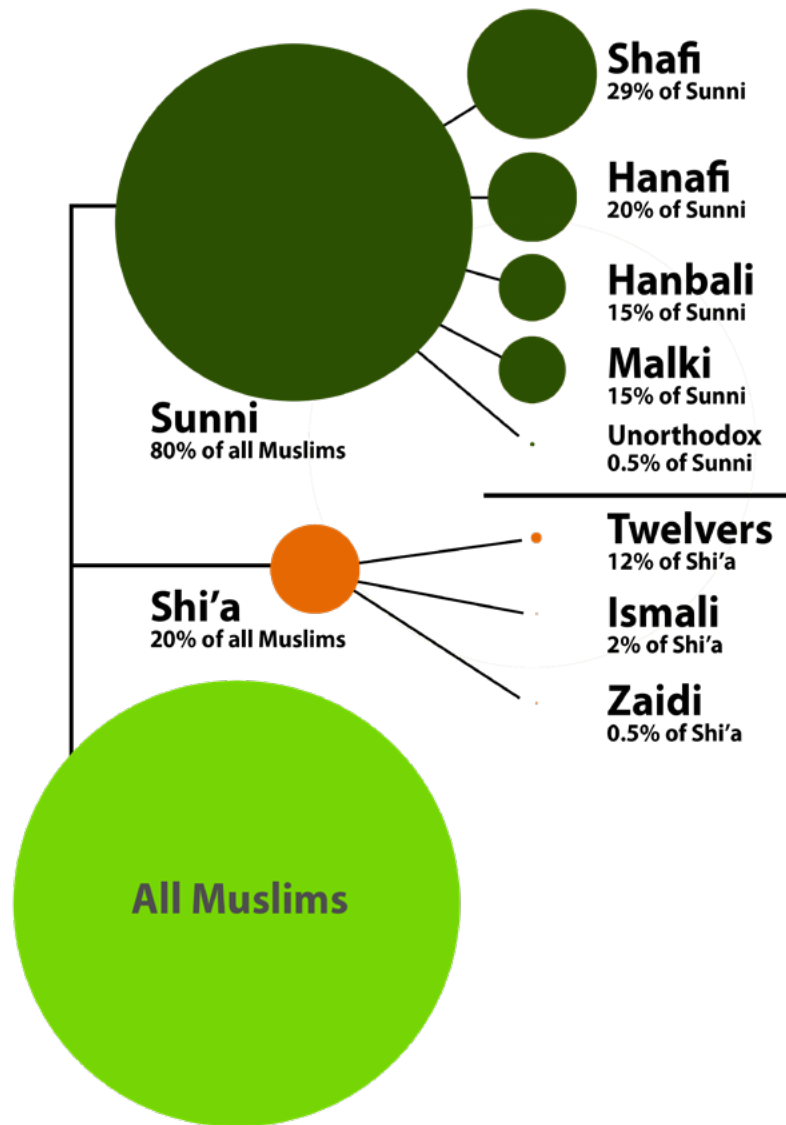


Figure 11: Graph showing branches of Islam.

References: Christian, Muslim Sectarism, The Centre for Christian-Muslim Studies, [www.cmcsoxford.org.uk/hikmah-blog/christians-muslims-sectarianism](http://www.cmcsoxford.org.uk/hikmah-blog/christians-muslims-sectarianism)

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## Sacred Places and Mosques

Generally, Islam prohibits shrines that venerate important religious figures, are built over the graves, or house religious relics of venerated individuals.

There are, however, certain places which are considered to be sacred. These are places important in Islamic history primarily because they are related to important episodes in the life of Muhammad, but are also important to contemporary Muslims. The majority of Islam's sacred places are in the Middle East, especially in the Arabian Peninsula.

The most sacred place in all of Islam is the *Ka'ba* in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The *Ka'ba* is a shrine, that was built by Abraham according to Muslim traditional beliefs, around a black stone. The Prophet Muhammad specifically designated Mecca as the holy city of Islam and the direction (*qibla*) in which all Muslims should offer their prayers.

The second most important place in Islam is Medina (or Medinah), also known as the City of the Prophet. It is located in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia. Muhammad fled to Medina when he was initially driven out of Mecca, by oppositional forces and is the place where he attracted his first followers.

The third most sacred city in Islam is Jerusalem, which was the original *qibla* (direction of prayer) before it was changed to Mecca. Jerusalem is sacred because, in Muslim tradition, Muhammad miraculously traveled to Jerusalem by night and ascended from there into heaven.

For Shi'a, Najaf in Iraq is one of the holiest cities and is the centre of Shi'a political power. Karbala in Iraq, is considered by Shi'a to be one of the holiest places in the world, second only to Mecca and Najaf.

Sufi Muslims also have sacred or holy sites dedicated to a number of Sufi saints, who are considered



Figure 12: Exterior of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul

The Blue Mosque in Istanbul is one of the most famous mosques in the world. It was constructed by Sultan Ahmed I during his reign between 1609 and 1616. It still functions as a mosque, but also attracts many tourist visitors. The mosque's complex also includes Ahmed's tomb, a madrasah (Muslim Theological school/college), and a hospice. It got its name because hand-painted blue tiles adorn the mosque's interior walls, and at night the mosque is bathed in blue light. The mosque's structure features five main domes, six minarets, and eight secondary domes. It is located next to the Hagia Sophia, another popular tourist site which started off as a Christian cathedral and was converted to a mosque, and now is a historical site.



Figure 13: Interior of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul

spiritually gifted persons and teachers from various mystical orders within Islam. A *dargah* is a shrine built over the grave of a revered religious figure, often a Sufi saint or *derwish*. Shrines are widely scattered throughout the Islamic world. Pilgrimages to them are known as *Ziyarat*.

Sufi shrines are, however, controversial in the Muslim world. More conservative interpretations of Islam, such as Wahabbis, Salafis and others, see such shrines as being sacrilegious because it is traditionally forbidden in Islam to build a building over graves. Sufi shrines are, therefore, often targets of oppositional groups and, in some cases, they have been attacked and destroyed.

## Mosques

Most Muslims perform their daily prayers in their homes, workplaces, schools, airports, shopping centres, or wherever they are when it is time to pray; however, they also gather to worship in mosques (*masjid*). Mosques can be very elaborate, architecturally sophisticated large structures or smaller and simpler places. Regardless, mosques will have some common features or aspects.

- **Sahn:** or a courtyard surrounded by arcades called *riwags*. There are fountains of water inside the courtyard to symbolize purity and where worshippers can bathe before entering the mosque.
- **Minaret:** a tower from which the *muezzin* calls Muslims to prayer. The *minaret* looks down on the *sahn*.
- **Mihrab:** an empty arch which indicates the direction of Mecca.
- **Minbar:** a pulpit from which the *imam* (prayer leader) gives the sermon and leads prayers.
- **Zulla:** prayer hall off the *sahn*.

Mosques can be quite elaborate and colourfully decorated with Islamic art. Islam forbids the creation of graven images of humans, animals, Muhammad, or any other prophet. There are two reasons for this. One is that the worship of images is forbidden in Islam. The other is that no artist's representation of Allah's creation would be able to show its true beauty. It is a way of honouring Allah.

Islamic artists use other decorative techniques, such as using geometric shapes and patterns on their walls, and floors, in their holy books, and on other decorative items. Many mosques are known for incredibly beautiful and complex mosaic work. This medium suits the geometric nature of Islamic art. Stars and crescents are also found on mosques and are symbols associated with Islam. The crescent comes from the fact that Islam has a lunar calendar. In the Qur'an, stars are often signs from Allah.

## Women in Islam

The role of women in Islam in contemporary societies is often controversial and a 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 on women in Islam as they have done so in many other religions.

Muslim women and men are moral equals in Allah's eyes and are expected to fulfill the same duties, which constitute the Five Pillars of Islam. The introduction of Islam generally improved the status of women in the Arab world of the time and in comparison to earlier Arab and non-Arab cultures.

Historically, it is known that Muhammad consulted women and considered their opinions seriously. During Muhammad's lifetime, at least one woman, Umm Waraqah, was appointed imam over her household by Muhammad. Also, women contributed significantly to the compilation and organization of the Qur'an.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 of the Prophet (*Hadith*) that restricts women from fulfilling the role of Imam,



Figure 14: Young muslim woman doing sujud or sajdah on glass floor.

traditionally, religious leaders and scholars arrived at a near unanimous opinion that only men should be imams; although a few Islamic sects do make exceptions for women to lead *taraawih* (optional Ramadan prayers) or lead a congregation consisting only of close relatives.

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. However, the debate 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 some lead mixed-gender congregants. In Canada, for example, the Noor Cultural Centre (since 2008) and the Toronto Unity Mosques (founded in 2019), have both female and male imams lead their congregations, although, 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.

Muslim 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.

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

## Islam in the World and Canada

### The beginning of Islam and its early expansion

Although Islam shares some common roots with Judaism and Christianity, scholars generally trace Islam's origins to the seventh century CE, making it the youngest of the major world religions. Islam began in Mecca located in the modern-day state of Saudi Arabia during the time of the prophet Muhammad. According to Islamic teachings, he was sent to preach and affirm



the monotheistic teachings preached previously by a series of earlier prophets including Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others.

He is considered to be the final prophet of Allah (God) by all the main branches of Islam, although some more modern sects do not adhere to this belief. Among his many accomplishments, Muhammad united Arabia into a single Muslim political entity, with the Qur'an as well as his teachings and practices forming the foundations of Islamic religious belief.

He is known by many other names, including Messenger of Allah, The Prophet Muhammad, Allah's Apostle, Last Prophet of Islam, and more. As well, there are also many variations of the spellings of Muhammad, such as Mohamet, Mahamad, Mohamad, and many others.

## The Founding of Islam: Muhammad and the Roots of Islam

Muhammad is believed to have been born circa 570 CE in Makkah (Mecca), which is in present day Saudi Arabia. His father died before his birth and he was raised first by his grandfather and then his uncle. His family was a relatively poor but respected family of the Quraysh tribe and was active in the town's politics and trade.

When he was in his early 20s, Muhammad began working for Khadijah, a wealthy merchant woman. Eventually, they were mutually attracted to one another and she proposed that they marry. Though, she was 15 years older, Muhammad accepted her proposal. They formed a strong and happy team and had several children together.

Muslims believe that when Muhammad was forty years old, he was selected by Allah to receive revelations that ultimately would be the basis for the establishment of the Muslim faith. Muhammad was reported to have always been a very religious person who occasionally took journeys of devotion to sacred sites near Mecca. Muhammad would retreat each year to the cave of Hira (Hegira) located in what is now known as Mount Jabal al-Nour (Mountain of the Prophet) near Mecca for periods of quiet reflection. In 610 CE, on one of his pilgrimages, while he was meditating at Hira, the Angel Gabriel (Jabra'il) appeared and relayed the word of Allah.

Muslims believe that, for some twenty years, Muhammad continued to receive revelations, which he first recited to his wife and then others who formed a small group of followers. Islamic tradition teaches that the first persons to believe in Muhammad's prophecies were his wife, Khadija and his close friend Abu Bakr. At first, Muhammad and his small following encountered no opposition. Most of the residents of Mecca tended to ignore him or mocked him as just another person dubiously claiming to be a prophet.

Mecca was the centre of pilgrimage for the polytheistic Arabian religion, the region was also home to Christians and large communities of Jews. When Muhammad began to condemn idol worship and polytheism, many of Mecca's tribal leaders began to see Muhammad and his teachings as a threat to their power. Beyond the fact that Muhammad challenged long standing beliefs, the condemnation of idol worship had potentially severe negative economic

consequences for merchants who supplied resources to the thousands of pilgrims who came to Mecca every year to worship their idols and participate in various rituals. This included Muhammad's own tribe, the Quraysh, who were also the guardians of the Kaaba. To avoid the potential economic threat, the merchants and leaders offered Muhammad incentives to dissuade him from preaching against idol worship, but he refused.

As time progressed and his followers grew in number, opposition and resistance to Muhammad and his followers grew to the point that, in 622 CE, they were forced to leave Mecca and settle in Medina, a city 260 miles to the north. This event marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar. In Medina, Muhammad played a critical role in helping to end a civil war that had raged between several of the city's tribes. Muhammad stayed in Medina for several years building his Muslim community and gradually being accepted by more of the populace of the city and gaining more followers.

Between 624 and 628 CE, Muhammad and his Muslim followers were under siege from opposing forces and had to fight a series of battles for their survival. The last major battle they faced 'The Battle of the Trench and Siege of Medina', which Muhammad and his followers won, led to the signing of a peace treaty.

A year later the treaty was broken by Meccan forces; however, by then, Muhammad had built up a competent and strong army and the balance of power shifted away from the Meccan leaders to Muhammad. In 630 CE, Muhammad's forces marched into Mecca and took the city, suffering limited casualties. Following his teachings, Muhammad gave amnesty to many of the Meccan leaders who had opposed him and pardoned many others. This led to a mass conversion of the Meccan residents to Islam. When this occurred, Muhammad and his followers destroyed all of the statues of pagan gods in and around the Kaaba, which they rededicated to the worship of Allah, the one true God.

### Mosques Referenced in the Qur'an

There are four mosques which were specifically mentioned in the Qur'an. These are

- Al-Haram Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Haram), the holiest Islamic sanctuary
- Al-Aqsa Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Aqsa) in Jerusalem, which is part of the Temple Mount compound
- The Sacred Monument (Al-Mash'ar Al-Haram) in Muzdalifah near Mecca, a site of the Hajj
- Quba Mosque (Masjid Quba in Medina, the first Mosque built by Muhammad in the seventh century

## Muhammad's Death

After the conflict with Mecca was finally settled, Muhammad took his first true Islamic pilgrimage to that city and, in March 632, he delivered his last sermon at Mount Arafat. Upon his return to Medina to his wife's home, he fell ill for several days. He died on June 8, 632 CE at the age of 62, and was buried at Al-Masjid An-Nabawi (the Mosque of the Prophet) one of the first mosques built by Muhammad in Medina.



Figure 15: Al-Masjid an-Nabawi Mosque in Medina where Muhammad is buried.

By the time of Muhammad's death in 632 CE, much of the Arabian Peninsula had embraced his teachings. After Muhammad died, his community preserved the memory of what he did and said as the best example of how to live in accord with Allah's will.

## The Early Caliphs and Muslim Empires

Arabia before and during Muhammad's life was located at the crossroads of two major empires, the Persian Sassanian Empire (224–651 CE) and the Byzantine Empire (330–143 CE). These two regional superpowers were almost constantly at war and, while the lands of Arabia were not controlled by either power, over time, the people of Arabia suffered as a result of the disruption of the region around them caused by the incessant competition between the two powers. Conversely, as the people and tribes in Arabia were united under Islam, they were able to invade and dominate these empires and thereby facilitated a rapid expansion of Islam. In other parts of the world, Islam spread through trade and commerce.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, the leadership of the Muslim community passed to Abu Bakr, who became the first Caliph (the successor to Muhammad). During his brief two-year reign, from 632 to 634 CE, he was able to unite all of the Arabian Peninsula



Figure 16: Spread of Islam during the age of the Caliphs

under the banner of Islam. Following this achievement, he then was able to launch incursions into Byzantine and Sassanian controlled regions (modern day Syria, Egypt, Iraq and parts of Persia) to expand his control over other Arabian tribes. These campaigns turned out to be so expedient and successful

that, by the time of the third Caliph, Uthman, all of Egypt, Syria, Levant, and what was once the major part of the Sassanian Persian Empire was now under Muslim rule.

Further, all attempts to regain lost territory by the Sassanian and Byzantines were unsuccessful as the Muslim armies had the help of the locals who had largely accepted Muslim rule.

The fourth and last of the early, “rightly guided caliphs” (the Sunni term for first four successors to Muhammad) as

referred to by Sunni Muslims), was Ali ibn Abi Talib who reigned from 656 to 661 CE. Ali spent most of his reign in constant civil conflict between Sunni and Shi’a supporters, which disrupted the further expansion of the Muslim rule.

After Ali’s death in 661 CE, he was succeeded by Muawiyah I who reigned from 661 to 680 CE and founded the Umayyad Dynasty. Muawiyah I declared his son, Yazid I who reigned from 680 to 683 CE, his successor but this was contested by Ali’s son (Muhammad’s grandson) Hussayn ibn Ali. Hussayn’s forces were weak and he was defeated and killed at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE by Yazid’s troops. Other uprisings were also unsuccessful and later caliphs of the Umayyad Dynasty then continued military expansion of the Muslim empire.

The Umayyad Caliphs, who reigned from 661 to 750 CE in Damascus, further expanded the boundaries of Muslim rule to Spain in the West and to India in the East. Muslim rulers, soldiers, traders, Sufis, scholars, poets, and architects all contributed to the shaping of distinctive Islamic cultures in North Africa, Spain, Persia, and India.

The Abbasid Dynasty overthrew the Umayyads in 750 CE and ruled from Baghdad until the 13th century. Though its political power declined after the ninth century, the caliphate remained an important symbol of Muslim unity. Classical Islamic civilization, the major hadith collections, legal schools, theological debates, Sufi orders, and traditions of Persian and Arabic poetry, all flourished under the Abbasids.

The next Muslim empire was the Fatimids who established their dynasty in North Africa in 909 CE and conquered Egypt in 969 CE. From their newly-established capital city of al-Qahira (Cairo), the Isma’ili-Shi’a Fatimids, who rivalled the Sunni Abbasids in Baghdad, created educational and cultural institutions, such as al-Azhar, and established themselves in trade. At its peak, Fatimid influence reached from the borderlands of India in the East to the Atlas Mountains in the West.

In 1258, Mongols from Central Asia swept across the eastern Islamic heartland to Syria, ending the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad. Many of the invaders adopted

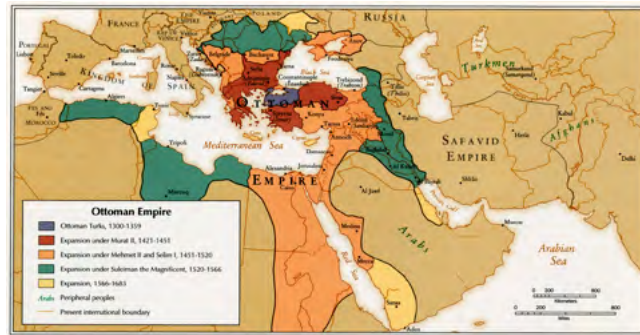


Figure 17: Ottoman Empire 1300 to 1683

Islam and the Persian language. Their descendants ruled Persia and central Asia for centuries, developing Persian culture and art. In the aftermath of the Mongol invasion, new empires emerged.

The Ottoman Turks, based in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) after 1453 CE, established a vast empire that lasted from the fourteenth century until World War I. Supporters of Sunni Islam and Sufi orders, were known for both military and architectural achievements.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Mughals ruled northern India, where the flourishing Indo-Muslim culture produced beautiful architecture, painting, and Sufi poetry. The Safavids championed Shi'ism in Persia from 1499 to 1722, encouraging Islamic art and philosophy.

Under each of these empires, trans-regional Islamic culture mixed with local traditions to produce distinctive forms of statecraft, theology, art, architecture, and science. Many scholars argue that the European Renaissance would not have been possible without the creativity and myriad achievements of Muslim scholars, thinkers, and civilizations.

In the course of its history, Islam spread beyond the Middle East to other regions of the world, most notably South and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa through merchant communities and Sufi orders (*tariqah*), with Muslim empires arising as native rulers converted to Islam and sought to expand their borders. Reform movements that linked together religious and social concerns were particularly instrumental in spreading Islam, which became especially significant in the eighteenth century through the contemporary era.

## The Rise of European Colonialism

During the period of European colonial expansion, from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, non-Muslim merchants and missionaries, soldiers, and colonial administrators came to dominate much of the Muslim world. The Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, and French all developed colonial empires, and the Chinese and Russians also expanded their territories into Muslim-majority regions.

By the twentieth century, only frail Ottoman and Persian dynasties maintained power. Afghanistan and central Arabia avoided colonial domination. The French ruled much of North Africa and parts of West and Central Africa. The British controlled Muslim areas of Africa (including Egypt) and of Asia (including India with its large Muslim minority) and parts of Southeast Asia. The Dutch ruled most of present-day Indonesia, while the Spanish controlled parts of North Africa and the Philippines. After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered and parceled out to Britain (the Persian Gulf region, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq) and France (Syria, Lebanon).

Such foreign domination was not only humiliating for many Muslims, particularly social elites, but also threatened the very foundations of Islamic society, as European rulers replaced traditional Muslim educational, legal and governmental institutions with Western ones. Europeans undermined the religious ethos of Muslim territories by privileging Christian-influenced,

secular and materialistic cultural values and by encouraging ethnic, national, and religious divisions in the *ummah*.

The new conditions of the experience of the dominance of the European colonial powers had a significant impact on a number of very different movements of reform and revival in the Islamic world, redefining what it meant to be Muslim in this new context. The struggle to understand how God would allow Muslims to become subjugated to foreign, non-Muslim powers contributed to the emergence of three major perspectives: Salafism, modernism, and messianism.

Even before the arrival of colonial powers into the Islamic world, some scholars from diverse backgrounds were arguing that the faith and practice of Muslims had become distanced from the original message of the Qur'an and the Prophet, as the masses had adopted devotional practices, of which the devotion to saints is the most commonly mentioned, that they saw as unjustified innovations. They also felt that scholars had begun to give more importance to the centuries of scholastic tradition than to the original texts of the religion. For many, the failure of Muslim societies to resist colonialism was a sign of God's displeasure in the corruption of the last religion, and therefore the correct response was to return to the era of the first Muslim community. Now referred to as Salafis, a reference to the *salaf* or early companions of the Prophet, those who hold this perspective are interested in the "correct" practice of Islam and reject anything they perceive to be innovations inconsistent with their interpretation of the model of the early Muslim community, focusing on Sufism and Shi'ism in particular. Such reformers often look to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the only authoritative sources for Islamic law, but, to varying degrees, they ignore the inherent pluralism and the continued discourses of the sharia system in favour of a single interpretation of those sources. Some examples of these diverse movements are the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, and the Jema'ah-i Islami of Pakistan.

In contrast to the Salafis, others saw western dominance to be the result of a technological and cultural progress that was worthy of imitation. Colonial rule introduced Western education, nationalism, and certain technologies to much of the Muslim world, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many Muslims travelled to Europe to study in Western universities. However, many modernist Muslim reformers did not idealize the West, lamenting the changes in their societies that they attributed to western materialism, yet also being frustrated with what they considered to be a failure on behalf of the traditional *ulama* to provide a meaningful response. Scholars such as Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) argued for greater emphasis on reason, in the modern western sense of the term, in developing an interpretation of Islam that could adapt to the needs of the times. Despite differing attitudes towards the modern West, the revivalist interests of Modernists and of Salafis, along with their criticisms of the centuries of Islamic scholarly tradition, led to considerable overlap between these trends.

The dominance of the colonial powers had another meaning for several charismatic Muslim leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

heralding the end of the world described vividly in the Qur'an. A number of individuals claimed to be the awaited Mahdi, and thus to be the representative of the Prophet that would lead the world to justice, including the Sudanese Muhammad Ahmad (d. 1885), whose movement was eventually quelled by the British in 1898, and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908) in British-ruled India, whose followers today, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, number in the millions.

Salafism, Modernism and Messianism have led to great changes in what it means to be Muslim for large numbers of people around the world, although not all Muslims fit into these three categories. Indeed, the beliefs, ways of life, and scholarly traditions of traditional Islam continue to exist across the Islamic world, no doubt adapting to the changing conditions of the modern world yet maintaining a greater continuity with their past than any of these three trends. In response to these three trends, many Conservatives and Traditionalists reasserted the authority of the *ulama* and the need for recourse to tradition.

In the early twentieth century, further changes to the understanding of what it meant to be Muslim were brought about by the rise of nation states in the wake of independence movements in many Muslim countries, inspired to varying degrees by both the revival of Islamic principles and institutions and by Western-style nationalism. Muslims have adopted many different models for their post-colonial states, with the founders of each state coming up with their own approach to the role that Islam should play in a modern politics. The early leaders of modern Turkey, primarily Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (d. 1938), declared a secular state in 1923 in which Islam would not play any role, abolishing the caliphate, replacing the Islamic court system and legal interpretation with a European-style law code, and outlawing Sufi orders. In contrast, after World War II, Pakistan was created as a homeland for the Muslim minority communities of the subcontinent, initially welcoming diverse ways of practicing Islam and other faiths, but becoming an Islamic republic promoting a single interpretation of Islam in the 1980s under the military regime of Zia ul-Haqq. Some Islamic reform movements have adopted an ideology of political revolution, fusing particular interpretations of Islamic tradition with modern ideologies and political structures. The revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 is one example of this type of movement, and drew on influences including Shi'i theology and Marxism. It is important to note that these movements are not monolithic but location-specific. In general, however, the modern nation state has emerged as a new type of authority that has a role in defining what Islam means.

## Resurgence and Migration: The Muslim World Today

Muslims today listen to and interpret the divine word of the Qur'an, and strive to live their lives according to the sharia and a diverse set of ritual practices. Muslims also follow the model of the Prophet, and some pursue the inward path of Sufi teachings. These are the facets of traditional Islam largely held in common across time and place in the Muslim world. Today, in the post-colonial

era, the Muslim world is expanding and experiencing the challenges of both resurgence and worldwide migration.

Whereas in the twentieth century Islam played an important role in the development of nation states in the Islamic world, in the last few decades certain groups have begun interpreting Islam as a transnational ideology in ways that undermine the nation state. Some of these groups such as al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL) have dominated global headlines with terrorist acts perpetrated against Muslims and non-Muslims alike. They typically conceive of the world in terms of a “clash of civilizations,” in which they serve as the vanguard of Islam against an unjust, corrupting, and materialistic West, although individual reasons for joining such groups vary widely. Their actions have been roundly condemned by governments, religious groups (including most Muslims), and citizens across the globe, though many urge attention to the conditions that have given rise to these groups, including the legacies of colonialism, the lingering tensions between Israel and Palestine, and the negative consequences of globalization.

Such radical groups only represent one approach within a wide spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum, Sufi orders continue to serve as important social institutions which exert spiritual as well as political influence. In Senegal for example, it has been estimated that 90 percent of the Muslim population (which makes up around 92 percent of the total population) belong to a Sufi order, and leaders of the Muridiyyah order in particular have a significant, though often indirect, influence in the sphere of government. Additionally, prominent transnational orders, such as the Ba’Alawiyyah based in Yemen, connect thousands of Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula to Indonesia and the United States with a transnational identity and a message of devotion and love for God and the Prophet.

In the post-colonial context, migration has also reshaped the Islamic world. The number of emigrants from predominantly Muslim countries to Western Europe and the Americas has increased significantly in the past thirty years, with the exodus including highly-educated professionals, labourers, students and political refugees. There are now thriving Muslim communities and magnificent mosques in Paris, London and Rome, as well as New York, Vancouver and Mexico City. Immigrant Muslims, however, have often faced considerable hostility, the product of both racial and religious prejudice in their new homes.

Despite the myriad political, social, cultural, economic and other challenges faced by Muslims today, the “Muslim world” continues to expand; Islam is the world’s fastest growing religion. The adage, “Islam is one, Muslims are many” is clearly evident. Muslims of every nationality, and school of jurisprudence are represented in regions throughout the world, together creating the *ummah* of the faith. In the United States, recent immigrants of all backgrounds mix with second and third generation American Muslims, converts from other faiths, and an African American Muslim community with historic roots that go back to transatlantic slavery. This mixing is encouraging the growth of a uniquely American expression of Islam, which in turn mixes with other



expressions as ideas, opinions, and knowledge is exchanged—an experience as true of Islam today as it was in the age of Islamic empires.

## Islam Today in the World

The chart below provides an indication of the presence of Muslims throughout the world.

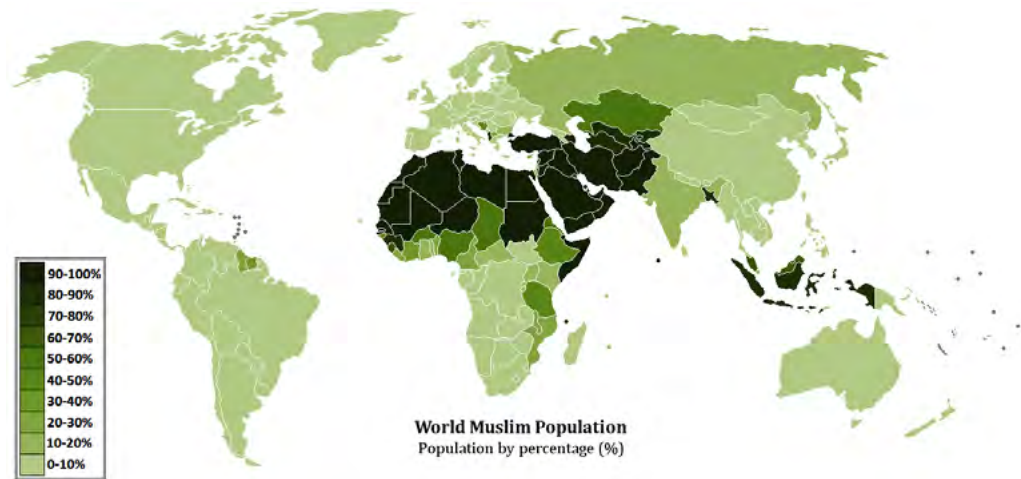


Figure 18: World Muslim Population

## Islam in Canada: Past and Present

Some scholars estimate that up to 30% of the slaves from Africa brought to the U.S., from West and Central African countries like Gambia and Cameroon, were Muslim. Thus, the earliest Muslims in Canada most likely would have been enslaved persons who were brought to British North America (as Canada was known then) through the transatlantic slave trade, before slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. Some may have been part of the contingent of United Empire Loyalists who left the American States after the War of Independence. This remains speculative, however, as no surviving records have been found to date of Muslims or the practice of Islam among West African slaves (Munir 2017).

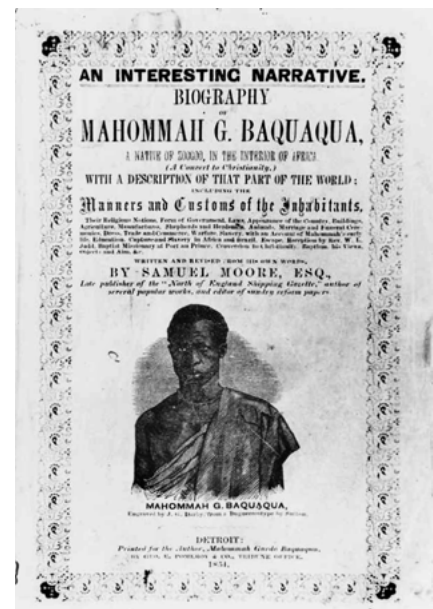


Figure 19: Cover of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua's Biography

The first recorded presence of Muslims in Canada dates to 1854 when it was recorded that James and Agnes Love, migrated to Canada from Scotland in 1854 and settled in what is now Ontario. The young couple had apparently converted to Islam in Scotland before emigrating. These “Mohametans” were reported to have had several children, including James, who was born just after their arrival. Their youngest son, Alexander, was born in 1868, one year after Confederation, and secured his spot in history as the first recorded Muslim born in Canada as we know it today (Munir 2017).

The first documented Muslim contribution to the fields of literature and history in Canada belongs to Mahommah Baquaqua. (His biography is available online at <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/baquaqua/baquaqua.html>.) Baquaqua was of Muslim West African origins and was enslaved in Brazil, escaped his slave owners in the United States, and eventually made his way up to Canada through the Underground Railroad. In 1854, while living in Ontario, he orally narrated his story to Samuel Moore, and it was eventually published as an autobiography. Narratives of former slaves, such as Mahommah’s, played a role in the abolition of slavery in the United States and elsewhere.

Another young couple of Islamic European origins, was John and Martha Simon. They had converted to Islam in the United States, where they were born and raised. They migrated to Canada in 1871. Four years after Canada’s founding, the 1871 Canadian Census reported 13 European Muslims among the population (Haddad & Quadri, 2011).

The year 1882 marked the arrival of the first Arab immigrants, both Christian and Muslim, who were mostly Ottoman Syrians fleeing conscription. The Muslim population in Canada grew very slowly at this stage, but some Muslim labourers may have played a role in another important event in Canadian history, the building of the Canada Pacific Railway linking British Columbia to the rest of the country.

By 1901, there were 47 Muslims in Canada, spread all over the country, with the exception of the Atlantic/Maritime provinces. Most were immigrants attracted by the land available for agriculture and settlement in the Canadian Prairies. They came from lands that were part of the Ottoman Empire, mostly from Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Albania and Yugoslavia, but also from the United States. Some were attracted by the Klondike Gold Rush of 1877 and 1899, and may have participated in the Gold Rush. There is a record of one young Lebanese man having landed in Montreal with the intention of joining the Gold Rush, who arrived too late and instead settled in that city becoming a successful entrepreneur (Munir 2015).

Many of the earliest Muslim immigrants to Canada, were successful entrepreneurs. For example Ali Abouchadi arrived from Lebanon with his uncle in 1905, at the young age of 13. He achieved impressive success in the years that followed as a pedlar in Manitoba, a farmer in Saskatchewan, a fur trader in Alberta, and an explorer in the Northwest Territories. Based mostly in Lac La Biche, Abouchadi ran a general store, a gas station, a sawmill, and a grain harvester. He also worked with the government on Northern Alberta Railways. He became fluent in Cree due to his extensive involvement in the

fur trade and his deep ties with the Cree-speaking First Nations of Alberta. He explored and traded along the Mackenzie River, all the way up to Inuvik (Elghawaby and Munir, 2017).

Bedouin Ferran, also known as Peter Baker, arrived in 1910 and slowly made his way to the Northwest Territories, where he too worked as a fur trader, and would eventually contribute to the fields of literature and politics. Ferran authored the book *Memoirs of an Arctic Arab: The Story of a Free-Trader in Northern Canada* (Hassam Munir provides an overview Ferran's life in "Jew" or "Black Turk"? The Story of the First Muslim Elected in Canada) [www.ihistory.co/peter-baker-first-muslim-elected-canada/](http://www.ihistory.co/peter-baker-first-muslim-elected-canada/). In 1964, Ferran became one of the first Muslims to be elected to public office in Canada, representing a mostly Indigenous riding in the Government of the Northwest Territories (Kassam, 2005; Munir 2019).

Husain Rahim, an Indian Muslim, was an early interfaith leader and activist based in Vancouver. He ran his own newspaper, *The Hindustanee*, for the budding Indo-Canadian community, in 1914, making him Canada's first known Muslim journalist. He brought attention to the discriminatory laws against South Asians, as he was put on trial once for migrating to Canada and the second time for allegedly voting in an election. During the infamous Komagata Maru incident, Rahim strove to have the migrants from South Asia allowed into Canada (Elghawaby and Munir, 2017)

By 1911, British Columbia had the largest population of Muslims in Canada, 500 persons, mostly from Turkey and Bulgaria but that soon changed. The economic recession coupled with growing racism and anti-Asian sentiments spurred race riots and led to more discriminatory laws against Chinese and Japanese immigrants. The start of first world war led to greater antagonism against Turkish immigrants; the Ottomans were part of the enemy Central Allies. This created a very inhospitable and difficult climate life for many non-Europeans who were increasingly forced or pressured to leave British Columbia. By 1921, there were only 82 Muslims left in the province (Munir, 2015).

The Muslim population in other parts of Canada also declined after 1911. The decline was mostly due to the fact that immigrants, upon arriving in Canada, often believed that there were better opportunities in the United States. This was especially true in the 1930s as the Great Depression hit the world, and led to an exodus of immigrants to the United States. They were also affected by the growing racism they experienced in parts of Canada, beyond British Columbia. Nevertheless, Muslim communities began to grow and concentrate especially in cities, as many Muslims began to leave agriculture for professional, vocational/ industrial jobs or business. By 1921, there were more Muslims in Nova Scotia than in all of Quebec (Munir, 2015).

The first Muslim organization in Canada was registered by immigrants from Lebanon living in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1934. In Alberta, during the Great Depression, Hilwi Hamdon led an initiative to build Canada's first mosque. She approached the mayor of Edmonton, John Fry, with the idea and was able to bring different community groups together to support the building of the Al-Rashid Mosque, which opened in 1938 (Saddy 2016). At the time, there were approximately 700 Muslims, mostly of European origins, living in Canada.

Interestingly, the first Qur'an teacher to teach at the mosque, Ameen Ganam, would later become an award-winning musician and is still known to this day as "Canada's King of the Fiddle." (The original mosque building is now part of the museum at Fort Edmonton Park.) In 1952, when there were about two thousand Muslims in the country, the first Islamic Studies program was launched at McGill University in Montreal (Munir 2015).

Following the end of World War II, there was a small but continuous increase in the Canadian Muslim population. Muslims were still a very distinct but relatively obscure minority in Canada. But that began to change with reforms to Canadian immigration law in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which began to erode the preference for and privileges given to European immigrants (Munir, 2015). Canada adopted a new immigration policy based on a point system, where individuals applying for Canadian immigration were graded according to their educational level. This resulted in an increase in Muslim immigrants from other parts of the world from countries in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean. Muslim immigration to Canada was further enhanced as a result of changing policies and attitudes such as the Multiculturalism Policy in Canada established in 1971. From that point onwards, Muslims began to arrive in more significant numbers.

## Muslim Diversity in Canada

The majority of Muslims, both in Canada and globally, are adherents of Sunni Islam, while the majority of the balance follow Shi'a Islam. One can, however, find a significant number of Muslims of different sects, as well as ethnic and cultural origins (Haddad and Quadri, 2011).

Many Canadians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, know little about the early Muslim communities and the role of European Muslims in founding some early Islamic institutions. Many assume that Arab and South Asian Muslims founded the first Islamic Canadian institutions; however, as in Edmonton, the three oldest mosques in Toronto were founded by Canadian Muslims of European origins, and in at least one case, with the support of Christian Canadians. In 1955, Ontario's first mosque was opened in London by a few Lebanese Muslim families, some of whom had lived in London since 1901. Toronto's first mosque in Toronto was the Jami Masjid which opened in 1968 (Hussain, 2001). It was renovated and rebuilt with the support of the local Christians and opened as the Bosnian Islamic Center in 1973, complete with an Ottoman-style *minaret*. Later, with the action of University of Toronto professor Qadeer Baig, it was purchased by Asian Muslims, while Albanians and Bosniaks later founded the Albanian Muslim Society and Bosanska Dzamija (Bosnian Mosque) respectively (Munir, 2015).

Ismailis began to immigrate to Canada in 1972 from Uganda after dictator Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of some 80,000 residents of Asian origin from the country. Approximately, 6,000 Ugandan Ismailis eventually found refuge in Canada (Mohamed, 2017). Canada is home to approximately 80,000 Ismailis,

of various origins, but most recently from Afghanistan and Central Asia (Mohamed 2017).

The Ahmadiyya community in Canada traces its history back to 1923, when the first Ahmadis were recorded as being in the country. Since then, Ahmadis have immigrated to Canada from various parts of the world, especially from Pakistan, as a result of the persecution the sect faced there in 1974 and again in 1984. The Community was first officially registered in Canada in 1966 in Ontario as the “Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam (Ont) Inc.” and the first missionary assigned to Canada was Maulana Syed Mansoor Bashir Sahib (Malik, 2013).

As the community grew, it sought to create a national centre for the Ahmadis living in Canada. This was accomplished when the Canadian Ahmadiyya Community built the Baitul Islam Mosque in Vaughan north of Toronto. It was inaugurated by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, fourth worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, in 1992. As the area around the mosque was developed and became a residential community, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community purchased the majority of houses in the area forming what is now known as the “Peace Village.” The Peace Village is situated on the northern and southern sides of the mosque, and while not owned by the Ahmadiyya Jama’at, most of the residential units are owned by Ahmadis (Malik, 2013).

The first Madrasa (Islamic seminary) in North America, Al-Rashid Islamic Institute was established in Cornwall, Ontario in 1982 to teach Hafiz and Ulama and focuses on the traditional Hanafi school of thought. The Seminary was established by Mazhar Alam, originally from Bihar, India, under the direction of his teacher the leading Indian Tablighi scholar Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi. Due to its proximity to the United States border city of Massena, the school has historically had a high percentage of American students. Their most prominent graduate, Muhammad Alshareef completed his *Hifz* in the early 1990s then went on to form the Al Maghrib Institute (Munir 2015).



Figure 20: A Holy Qu'ran on a Prayer Rug.

### **New Life in a New Land: Documentary Series**

**A New Life in a New Land: The Muslim Experience in Canada** [www.anewlife.ca/documentary](http://www.anewlife.ca/documentary) is a media project with the stated goal of providing contemporary and accurate information on Islam and Muslims in Canada. The project comprises a three-part documentary television series and a 100-page Educator's Guide.

More recently, Islam has gained a significant presence in Northern Canada. On November 10, 2010, the first mosque in the Canadian Arctic officially opened in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. A testament to the significant growth of the Muslim community in Inuvik is that Arabic now is the third most spoken language in the Northwest Territories after English and French (Munir 2015). In Nunavut, Iqaluit Masjid was officially opened in February of 2016 (CBC 2016). It is reported that many in the Inuit and Indigenous communities have reportedly embraced Islam in recent years. Although the Muslim community in Nunavut is still relatively small, it has grown significantly and now numbers over 100 members.

The 1970's saw the increase in general non-European immigration. This led to a growth in the Muslim population from 33,000 in the 1971 census to 253,265 by the 1991 census. By 2001, the Islamic community in Canada had grown to more than 579,000 (Statistics Canada 2003). In 2010, the Pew Research Centre estimated there were about 0.9 million Muslims in Canada of which approximately

- 65% were Sunni
- 15% were Shi'a

By 2011, the National Housing Survey found that Muslims represented over one million, or 3.2 per cent of the total Canadian population. Islam has become the fastest growing religion in Canada (Statistics Canada 2013). Today, every metropolitan Canadian city has a thriving Muslim community, comprised of Canadian born citizens and immigrants from almost every Muslim nation in the world.

While Sunni Muslims constitute the largest proportion of the Islamic Canadian population followed by Shi'a Muslims, there is also a significant Ahmadiyya population (Malik 2013) with more than 25,000 Ahmadis living in Canada. There are also non-denominational Muslims, Ismaili's and other Islamic sects represented.

Muslims in Canada are ethnically and culturally diverse and are estimated to represent over 60 ethnocultural groups. They are also diverse in faith, as different religious sects are represented, including Sunni, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and Ismaili (Munir 2015). They have origins from places around the world, such as South Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa, and they speak many languages, including Arabic and Urdu. Generally, they are well-educated.

- 44% of Canadian Muslims aged 25 to 64 possess a university degree compared to 26% of the Canadian population in general
- 15% possess a graduate degree
- almost 14,000 or 1.3% of the Canadian Muslim population possess a doctorate degree

In 2015 and 2019, nine and eight Muslims respectively were Members of Parliament and one is currently the mayor of Calgary, Alberta. Provincially, there are five Muslim members of provincial legislatures across Canada

(Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec). While, most Muslims live in major urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, smaller communities can also be found in towns and cities across Canada, including the far north. In recent decades, Muslim communities have emerged in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut as well (Munir 2015).

## Islam in Manitoba

It is believed that Muslim pioneers began arriving in Winnipeg and rural Manitoba in the early 1900s, primarily from Turkey and Lebanon. Unfortunately, the Manitoba Islamic community has not been successful in recording their history to date and there is little information on Muslims in Manitoba prior to the late 1950s, although research continues.

Until the 1960s, the Muslim population in Manitoba was quite small due to Canadian immigration policies and practices, as well as other factors. This began to change in the late 1960s as immigration policies changed allowing for immigration from the southern hemisphere and from Muslim majority countries in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. Muslim post-secondary students and professionals also began arriving in Manitoba from the late 1950s and early 1960s onwards (Manitoba Islamic Association).

Farouk Chebib and his wife Laila Chebib are examples of this early immigration. In 1958, they came to Winnipeg from Syria so that Farouk could pursue his Masters degree in engineering at the University of Manitoba. Farouk completed his masters and then, in 1964, returned to complete his Doctorate at the University of Manitoba. They liked Winnipeg and decided to settle in Manitoba. Farouk and Laila, were active members of the Muslim community in Winnipeg and helped found the Manitoba Islamic Association (Sanders, 2013).

The result of this slow but continuing immigration of Muslims was that, by 1966, the community was coming together for Sunday noon (*Dhur*) prayers on a regular basis. The prayers were held in one of the homes of the Muslim families living in Winnipeg at that time. In 1967, the Muslim community in Winnipeg founded a Muslim organization which later became the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA), which was incorporated in 1969. As the population



Figure 21: St . Vital Mosque (247 Hazelwood Ave.)



Figure 22: Winnipeg Grand Mosque (2447 Waverley St.)

continued to grow, the Sunday prayers from 1967 to 1971 were held at the Unitarian Church so that all could be accommodated (MIA, n.d.).

In 1972, the Muslim community (students and faculty) at the University of Manitoba and surrounding area had grown sufficiently that congregational Friday prayers (*Juma'a*) began to be held at the university campus. The community at this point in time was made up of both Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, although Sunni Muslims were the majority. By 1976, the community had grown to the point that they were able to construct and open Winnipeg's first Mosque and cultural centre located in St. Vital on Hazelwood Drive. This mosque is still operating and is often referred to as the 'Pioneer Mosque' (MIA, n. d.).

One of the early members of the Muslim community in Manitoba, was Abdul Waheed Mustapha, born in Trinidad, who was a teacher and taught at John Taylor Collegiate and St. James Collegiate, in Winnipeg. He was active in promoting multicultural and antiracism education, and raising awareness about the needs of Muslim students in Manitoba schools. Waheed also was a founding member of the Muslim community in Winnipeg and a dedicated youth mentor and community activist who organized youth camps and conferences in Winnipeg and with organizations across North America.

The Muslim community continued to grow in Winnipeg throughout the 1980s and outgrew the mosque in St. Vital. They began planning for a much bigger facility. In the late 1980s, they began to discuss the need for a much larger centre that could accommodate a full time school, a community centre and a mosque. As a result, in 2003, work began on building a large mosque and Islamic centre on Waverly Street. This was followed after years of hard work with the opening of the New Manitoba Islamic Association Centre and Mosque on Waverly Street in January of 2007 (MIA n. d.).

Over the decades, the number of Muslims living and working in downtown Winnipeg and other parts of the city had increased significantly due to an increase in immigration and a change in settlement patterns. The Muslim community in the downtown area started to hold *Jumaa* prayers at a few places in downtown Winnipeg, including the Health Sciences Centre, the University of Winnipeg, and the Pakistani Centre on Ross Avenue. However, as the community grew, these sites began to be overcrowded. As well, the sites could not accommodate larger gatherings and children who wished to attend congregational prayers. As the only mosque at that time was in St. Vital and MIA's new mosque was going to be located in a suburban area, some members of the community began to work together to establish a mosque in the downtown area (Winnipeg Central Mosque).

The initiative was led by Dr. Mujibur Rahman, his daughter Dr. Jennifer Rahman, and long-time Winnipeg residents and business people, Mr. Farhad Sultanpour and wife Glenda Lagadi (Winnipeg Central Mosque). Together, they successfully raised the funds to purchase and renovate a building located at 715 Ellice Avenue. In March 2004, under the name of the newly formed corporation, Winnipeg Central Mosque Inc. was opened.

Another mosque, the Yaseen Centre of Manitoba, opened in 2009 to serve the growing Shi'a community of Winnipeg and was established in 2009.



More recently, the Masjid Bilal Winnipeg Islamic Centre opened in 2017 in Winnipeg in a renovated building previously owned by the City of Winnipeg. The mosque serves the downtown and Muslims in the North West part of the city. The Mosque and community centre covers 45,000 square feet and can accommodate over 400 members for prayer (Trachenko, 2017). Masjid Bilal is another of the Mosques that serves the Sunni community.

The Muslim population in Manitoba really began growing starting in the 1980s and growth has accelerated in the last two decades. In the 1991 census, there were 3,525 residents who identified as being Muslim. By 2001, the number grew to 5,095 and by 2011, to 12,405 (Statistics Canada 2011). It is quite likely that the Muslim community has grown significantly since the 2011 census and will continue to grow over the next decade as immigration from Muslim majority countries or regions to Manitoba has been consistent. As well, the Muslim community which at first primarily resided in the suburban parts of south Winnipeg has dispersed throughout the city as well as communities throughout Manitoba.

### **Prairie Mosque**

Prairie Mosque is a documentary film by Snow Angel Films about the first mosque built in Manitoba in 1967 on Hazelwood Avenue in St. Vital. It is now called the Pioneer Mosque. Vignettes from the film are available on the documentary website featuring some of the Islamic community members. <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/praiemosque>



Figure 23: Pioneer Mosque in St. Vital.

## Beyond Winnipeg

According to Statistics Canada, the National Household Survey of 2011, indicates that there were 12,405 Manitobans who reported being of Muslim faith. As 11,265 of these Manitobans resided in the Winnipeg area, this means that there are about 1,140 Manitobans who live in other parts of Manitoba. Some of the communities with a significant Muslim population beyond Winnipeg include Brandon, Thompson, and Winkler.

### ISLAM IN BRANDON

According to Dr. Alison Marshall from Brandon University, there was a Muslim presence in Brandon dating to the early 1900s. She provides as an example, Ahmed Awid, one of the first residents of Islamic faith in Brandon, and one of only a few in Manitoba at that time (Brandon University 2016).

Daniel Loftson, a grand-son, describes Awid's journey to Canada and eventually to Brandon.

Ahmed chose Canada because he knew of other Syrians who had emigrated, although there were only about 800 Muslims in Canada in 1901. He left home by ship and likely landed in New York City. He made his way to London, Ont., where the Arabs he knew had already settled. He spoke no English, but he worked as a pedlar, selling things door-to-door. After two years in London, he decided to move west for greater opportunity and settled in Winnipeg until 1907. He also worked as a pedlar in Winnipeg and eventually opened a general store on Disraeli Street near downtown. He moved on to Brandon, Man., in 1907 and opened another general store. A shrewd businessman and hard worker, he opened five more stores over the next two decades. During this time he also married my grandmother, Mary, and started a family. By 1927 they had six children, the third my mother, Mimoni (Mona). Ahmed and Mary would have another eight children, for a total of 14 — eight sons and six daughters. (Loftson 2015)

However, in 1927, Awid and his family decided to move to Edmonton, which had a larger and better established Arab community. (Loftson 2015). A decade later, Awid helped found Al-Rashid mosque in Edmonton, which was the first mosque to be built in Canada.

The Muslim community in Brandon, did not grow in any significant way from the 1920s onwards, as immigration laws and policies, as discussed earlier, almost completely barred Muslim immigrants until 1956 with the repeal of the laws which blocked "Orientals" from entering the country.

Therefore, as in Winnipeg, from the 1960s onwards, immigrants and international students began to migrate to Brandon, a trend which has accelerated in the last few decades. More recently, immigrants have included Muslims of various backgrounds, some of which have come as refugees from the Middle East (including Syria), Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world (Solomon 2017).

According to Dr. Muhammad Abidullah, President of the Brandon Islamic centre in 2022, in the early 2000s the Muslim community began to organize itself and formed the Brandon Islamic Centre, a registered not-for profit organization. The first centre

was located at 123 Rosser Avenue East in Brandon. At the request of the City of Brandon, the Muslim Community sold the property to the City of Brandon in 2004, as the city intended to build a fire and police station at the site. That year, the Muslim community of Brandon purchased the current property at 834-10th Street. Since the purchase in 2004, the property has been renovated twice.

Brandon Islamic Centre provides religious services with daily, Friday and Eid congregational prayers. The Centre is active in the Brandon community. It offers three annual scholarships to graduating high school students from each of the three high schools in Brandon. As well, it has been a regular sponsor of the Western Manitoba Science Fair. The Islamic Centre has been a resource to the new immigrants and refugees who regularly visit the facility for religious and social and community gatherings. The Islamic Centre is also very involved in community outreach activities, promoting peace and intercultural/interreligious understanding.

The current facility has a capacity of 150 people; however, the Muslim community has been growing as a result of new immigrants and refugees making a home in the Westman area. The Islamic community looks forward to being able to acquire or build a more spacious facility, which can accommodate the needs of the growing community. It is optimistic that with the help of the larger Westman community it can build a new facility in the near future.

The 2011 National Household Survey for Brandon indicates that there were 230 residents of Brandon who identified as being of Muslim faith, 160 of which were immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada 2013). However, it is likely that the size of the community is much larger today. In 2017, the Brandon Islamic Centre estimated that about 300 Muslims participated in the annual Eid services (Solomon 2017) and in 2018, it estimated that there were over 400 Muslims in Brandon (Austin 2018).

## ISLAM IN WINKLER AND SOUTHERN MANITOBA

The Muslim communities in Winkler and surrounding cities and towns in Southern Manitoba such as Steinbach are more recent, and have grown primarily in the last two decades as immigration to Manitoba grew and immigrants and refugees were attracted to settle in the areas beyond Winnipeg and Brandon. Many of the Muslim community members have fled war and conflict in other parts of the world, such as Syria. For example, in the 2011 National Household Survey, 55 residents of Steinbach reported being of Islamic faith, all of which were born in other nations (Statistics Canada 2013). As a result of the growth of the Muslim population south of Winnipeg, two mosques have opened in two communities to provide religious, cultural, and social supports.

The first is located in Niverville, Manitoba. The Husaini Association of Manitoba was established in 1983 by followers of the Shia Ithna-Asheri Islam. This sect has a population of about 125 thousand people throughout the world. In 2016, the organization was able to purchase Husaini Islamic Cultural Centre located in Niverville. The organization serves Muslims of Shi'a faith living in Steinbach, Niverville, Winnipeg, and surrounding areas. For years prior to acquiring the centre, the organization held events and activities at various rented facilities and occasionally in the homes of its members. The multi-purpose Islamic Community

Centre in Niverville serves as the community's place of worship as well as the site for cultural and community programs (Husaini Association of Manitoba, n.d.).

The second is located in Winkler. In 2017, with the support of the Manitoba Islamic Association, the city approved a license to open a Mosque in Winkler at a commercial building located on Mountain Avenue. The community had been informally using the building for gatherings and prayers prior to the formal designation and approval of the facility.

## ISLAM IN THOMPSON










Thompson has historically attracted residents from other parts of Canada and the world, of various faiths and background, who seek opportunities in mining, other industries, and in health and related fields. It has had a Muslim presence for several decades, but the Muslim community has also experienced accelerated growth in the last two decades as immigration to Manitoba grew and immigrants and refugees were attracted to settle in the area. The 2011 National Household Survey results indicate that 130 residents reported being of Islamic faith, of which 110 were immigrants and 20 were born in Canada (Statistics Canada 2013).

The Thompson Muslim Association has existed for more than fifty years, but more recently has become affiliated with the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA) and now is the Thompson Chapter of MIA (MIA-TC). According to the Thompson Muslim Association, the Muslim families in the community are from diverse backgrounds and represent a range of different countries of origin. The members of the association belong to a wide range of professional disciplines. The Muslim community in Thompson has formed close bonds and there is a strong community spirit. The community has regular *Jumma* prayers and celebrates Islamic holy days and celebrations.





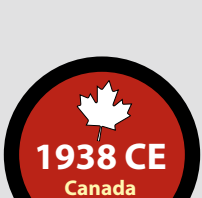







The construction of a *masjid* (mosque) in Thompson is one of the more recent accomplishments of the Muslim community. The community had wished to build a Mosque for several decades, but failed to do so. This changed in 2007 when Thompson residents Dr. Hussain Guisti, his wife Dr. Susan Ghazali, and Dr. Hisham Tassi launched a new initiative and formed the Zubaidah Tallab Foundation. The goal of this new corporation was to build a *masjid* in Thompson. They were successful and the Zubaidah Tallab Mosque opened in 2008. Since then, the Foundation has helped build mosques in the Yukon, Inuvik (Northwest Territories), and Iqaluit (Nunavut).







## Islam: Timeline Chart

The following is a brief timeline that highlights some of the major occurrences in Islam's development, as well as the geographical spread.

Date	Significant Development
 <p>570 CE</p>	<p>Muhammad is born in Mecca. He comes from a noble family and is well-known for his honesty and upright character.</p>
 <p>610 CE</p>	<p>According to Muslim belief, at the age of 40, Muhammad is visited by the angel Gabriel while on retreat in a cave near Mecca. The angel recites to him the first revelations of the Qur'an and informs him that he is God's prophet. Later, Muhammad is told to call his people to the worship of the one God, but they react with hostility and begin to persecute him and his followers.</p>
 <p>622 CE</p>	<p>After enduring persecution in Mecca, Muhammad and his followers migrate to the nearby town of Yathrib (later to be known as Medina), where the people there accept Islam. This marks the <i>hijrah</i> or "emigration," and the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In Medina, Muhammad establishes an Islamic state based on the laws revealed in the Qur'an and the inspired guidance coming to him from God. Eventually he begins to invite other tribes and nations to Islam.</p>
 <p>630 CE</p>	<p>Muhammad returns to Mecca with a large number of his followers. He enters the city peacefully, and eventually all its citizens accept Islam. The prophet clears the idols and images out of the Kaaba and rededicates it to the worship of God alone.</p>
 <p>632 CE</p>	<p>Muhammad dies after a prolonged illness. The Muslim community elects his father-in-law and close associate, Abu Bakr, as caliph, or successor.</p>
 <p>634–344 CE</p>	<p>'Umar ibn al-Khattab succeeds Abu Bakr, becoming the second caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate.</p>
 <p>638 CE</p>	<p>Muslims enter the area north of Arabia, known as Sham, including Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq.</p>
 <p>641 CE</p>	<p>Muslims enter Egypt and overthrow the Byzantine army. Muslims consider their conquest as the liberation of subjugated people since, in most instances, they were under oppressive rule.</p>
 <p>644–656 CE</p>	<p>'Uthman ibn 'Affan succeeds 'Umar to become the third caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate.</p>

Date	Significant Development	705–750 CE	North Africa is conquered by Arab invaders; the populace converts to Islam.
650 CE	Realizing there were several variations in Qur’ans throughout the Islamic Empire, ‘Uthman orders the establishment of one “true” Qur’an while destroying the others. Thus, the ‘Uthman Qur’an Codex was created and is still the acceptable Qur’an used to this day.	711 CE	Muslims enter Spain in the west and India in the east. Eventually almost the entire Iberian Peninsula is under Islamic control.
655 CE	Islam begins to spread throughout North Africa.	732 CE	Muslims are defeated at Potiers in France by Charles Martel.
656–661 CE	‘Ali ibn Abi Talib succeeds ‘Uthman to become the fourth and final caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate.	750 CE	The Abbasids take over rule from the Umayyads, shifting the seat of power to Baghdad.
661 CE	Imam Ali is killed, bringing to an end the rule of the four “righteous caliphs”: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. This also marks the beginning of the Umayyad rule.	1000 CE	Islam continues to spread throughout the continent of Africa, including Nigeria, which serves as a trading liaison between the northern and central regions of Africa.
670 CE	Hasan ibn ‘Ali, Shi’a Islam’s second imam (his father, ‘Ali, being the first imam), is poisoned to death.	1099 CE	European Crusaders take Jerusalem from the Muslims. Eventually Muslims defeat the Crusaders and regain control of the holy land.
680 CE	Husayn ibn ‘Ali, Shi’a Islam’s third imam, is beheaded by Yazid I’s force at the Battle of Karbala in present-day Iraq.	1120 CE	Islam continues to spread throughout Asia. Malaysian traders interact with Muslims who teach them about Islam.

Date	Significant Development		World War I ends with the defeat and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire which was part of the Central Allies that included Austria-Hungary, Germany. This marks the end of the last of the Islamic empires. Many regions populated by Muslims in Africa and Asia are colonized by Europeans. Traditional religious ways of life are threatened and, in some cases, destroyed.
 <p>1299 CE</p>	<p>The earliest Ottoman state is formed in Anatolia, Turkey.</p>	 <p>1918 CE</p>	
 <p>1453 CE</p>	<p>Ottomans conquer the Byzantine seat of Constantinople and change its name to Istanbul.</p>		
 <p>1800 CE</p>	<p>Approximately 30 percent of Africans forced into slavery in the United States are Muslim.</p>	 <p>1930 CE</p>	<p>The Nation of Islam is created in the U.S. by W. D. Fard. It is based on some Islamic ideas, but contains innovations, such as the appointment or declaration of Elijah Muhammad as a prophet.</p>
 <p>1854 CE Canada</p>	<p>James Love Jr., son of Agnes and James Love, is the first Muslim child documented as being born in Canada to Muslim immigrants. Agnes and James were originally from Scotland.</p>	 <p>1938 CE Canada</p>	<p>Al-Rashid Mosque is the first mosque to open in Edmonton, Alberta in December of 1938. In the 1940's, the mosque is relocated to make room for a school, and eventually is moved to Edmonton Park in 1991. It is now seen as a historical landmark.</p>
 <p>1870– 1924 CE</p>	<p>Muslim immigrants from the Arab world voluntarily immigrate to the United States until the Asian Exclusion Act is passed in 1924.</p>	 <p>1945 CE Canada</p>	<p>After World War II, a wave of Muslim immigrants come to Canada.</p>
 <p>1871 CE Canada</p>	<p>According to the 1871 Census, 13 Muslims live in Canada.</p>	 <p>1948 CE</p>	<p>The state of Israel is created. Some Palestinian and Lebanese refugees flee to the United States, among them, Muslims and Christians.</p>
 <p>1900s– 1950 CE Manitoba</p>	<p>The first Muslim immigrants arrive in Manitoba from Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and Lebanon.</p>		

Date	Significant Development
	Groups of Indo-Pakistani and Arab Immigrants begin studying and settling in Manitoba.
	The McCarren-Walter Act relaxes the U.S. ban on Asian immigration. Muslim students immigrate to the U.S. from many nations.
	McGill University founds an Islamic Studies program, bringing in many Muslims wishing to complete the program. It is still popular today.
	The Arabian Muslim Association of Lac La Biche, Alberta opens the Alkareem Mosque, the second mosque to be built in Canada and only the third to be built in all of North America.
	Revisions of immigration law further open the doors for Muslim immigration.
	Sunday noon prayers ( <i>Dhur</i> ) are held regularly in the basement of one of the houses of the Muslims in Manitoba. There are approximately 25 Muslim families in total.



Muslims in Winnipeg form a group later to become the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA)



Sunday noon prayers (*Dhur*) are moved to the Unitarian Church due to an increase in the number of Muslims.



Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA) is legally incorporated.



Friday prayers (*Juma'a*) begin at the university of Manitoba.


















The first Mosque on Hazelwood Drive in Winnipeg opens.




Wallace D. Muhammad, the son of Elijah Muhammad, takes over leadership of the Nation of Islam after his father's death and brings most of his followers into mainstream Islam. He later creates the Muslim American Society, which attracts many members, most of whom are African-American.



Date	Significant Development
	<p>The Iranian Revolution results in the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the first attempt at an Islamic state in the modern era.</p>
	<p>Shah of Iran is overthrown by Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni, who establishes a strict fundamentalist rule of Shi'a principles.</p>
	<p>Established in 1980, Al-Rashid Islamic Institute, based in Ontario, is the first Islamic Seminary School to open in North America.</p>
	<p>Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) is founded. According to the CCMW website, their main goal is to "maintain equality, equity and empowerment for all Canadian Muslim women." CCMW currently has numerous chapters throughout Canada, and holds many projects dealing with topics such as violence against women and women in <i>niqab</i>.</p>
	<p>Taliban come to power in Afghanistan.</p>
	<p>Al-Hijrah full time Islamic school begins.</p>
	<p>Muslim Association of Canada (MAC) is founded as a resource for Canadian Muslims. According to their website, they strive to ensure that "Muslims are well represented in various aspects of Canadian society including social, legal, and political circles, as well as the media," promote "the understanding of Islam and Islamic values [as] commonplace in Canadian society and Islam and Muslims are not perceived as alien." MAC also owns mosques, community centres, youth centres, and schools.</p>
	<p>Expansion of community and Islamic activities with regular prayers and Friday prayers at various venues, including both universities, Health Sciences centre, Islamic Education foundation, Pakistan Association centre, and MIA masjid.</p>
	<p>9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.</p>
	<p>Saddam Hussein ousted by Western forces.</p>
	<p>Establishment of École Sofiya full time Islamic School.</p>

Date	Significant Development
	<p>Winnipeg Central Mosque officially opens.</p>
	<p>Little Mosque on the Prairie” is a Canadian sitcom that ran from 2007–2012. It focused on a fictional Muslim community in Saskatchewan.</p>
	<p>On October 25, 2007, Canada’s Federal Parliament declared October as Islamic History Month. Each year, since 2007, events showcasing Islam are held all over Canada, such as food festivals, historical exhibits, and speeches.</p>
	<p>Grand Mosque on Waverly Street in Winnipeg officially opens.</p>
	<p>On October 2, 2015, Zunera Ishaq wins a court battle allowing her to take the Canadian citizenship oath wearing her <i>niqab</i>.</p>
	<p>MIA opens a Mosque in Winkler, Manitoba.</p>



January 29, 2017, terrorist attack by convicted gunman Alexandre Bissonnette at a Quebec City mosque, the Islamic Cultural Centre, killing six worshippers and injuring 19 others.

## Significant Persons: Muhammad and Past and Present Muslims of Note

In addition to Muhammad, there are a number of important historical and contemporary figures that have played a role in the establishment, development, and transmission of Islam in its birthplace, around the world, and in Canada.

### The Prophet Mohammad

Muslims believe the principal figure in the emergence and development of Islam as a religion was the Prophet Muhammad. He was the person who received the direct revelations from Allah through the Angel Gabriel (Jabra'íl, Jibre'il) that became the foundational sacred texts of Islam. Informed and inspired by these divine revelations, Muhammad came to lead the people of Arabia from a belief in idolatry to a belief in only one God, Allah.

For this reason, Muslims universally revere Muhammad above all others except Allah. Their reverence is demonstrated on a daily basis when they use such phrases as “peace be upon him” or the initials “pbuh” after saying or writing the Prophet’s name.

Muhammad was born circa 570 CE in Mecca (Makkah) and was reported to have become an orphan at an early age. His father died shortly before his birth and he lost his mother when he was six years old. After his mother’s death, Muhammad’s paternal grandfather Abd al-Mutallib, the head of the Quraysh tribe, and later his uncle, Abu Talib were his guardians. His uncle was a distinguished, prominent, and respected leader within the main Quraysh tribe of Mecca but was not a wealthy individual.

In his youth, Muhammad reportedly made many journeys with his grandfather and his uncle as they were merchants and traders. By the time

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Muhammad became a young adult, he was reputed to be an honest and effective business leader, who was given greater responsibility in his uncle's business. His uncle and guardian, Abu Talib, had a strong faith in his abilities, so that when he was just in his mid-teens, Muhammad was already leading caravans to far-off places, and eventually traveled to Syria, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

In this early stage of his development, Muhammad lived through a number of significant spiritual experiences. He consistently expressed a well-defined preference for monotheism and had a strong aversion to idolatry. He thought that idolatry was a poison that inhibited the spiritual growth of human beings. Muhammad saw idolatry as being rooted in superstition and amorality, which he thought characterized Mecca at that time.

As well, early in his adulthood, Muhammad began to seek places that allowed for quiet reflection. The long trips he made with the caravans on his trade routes gave him a wealth of time to think and reflect upon his life. Often, when he returned home to Mecca he would go to the hills around the city for retreats that allowed quiet contemplation and meditation.

By the age of twenty, Muhammad had gained the attention and respect of a wealthy widow named Khadijah. She contracted with him to manage her business. Khadijah was so impressed with Muhammad's honesty and integrity in his business dealings that, in a short time, she developed complete trust in him. When Muhammad was 25, Khadijah proposed that they marry, despite the fact that she was fifteen years older. Khadijah and Muhammad formed a strong union and were happily married until her death twenty-five years later. They were a devoted couple who generously shared much of their wealth with the less fortunate, the sick and the impoverished citizens of Mecca.

Makkah (Mecca) was then an important trading and religious centre. It was home to many temples and sacred sites where the devoted gathered for rituals and to pray to the idols of their gods. The most famous of these religious sites was the Kaaba (cube in Arabic). The Kaaba was believed to have been originally built by Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ismail; however, overtime the people of Mecca had turned to polytheism and idol worship. Nevertheless, of all the gods that were worshipped, the god Allah was considered to be the greatest and the only one for whom there was no statue or representation.

## Revelations

When Muhammad was about forty years old, he was chosen by Allah to receive the revelations that came to be the basis for the establishment of Islamic faith. It is believed that Muhammad retreated each year to a cave in Mount Hira (Hiryja), near Mecca for reflection and meditation. Muslims believe that, one night, during the lunar month of Ramadan, Muhammad felt an unusual presence, one that Muslims believe was the Angel Gabriel. Gabriel appeared while Muhammad was in the cave, and commanded Muhammad to read a message from God. At first Muhammad responded by telling Gabriel that he could not read, but Gabriel insisted, "Recite in the name of your Lord who creates, creates man from a clot! Recite for your lord is most generous...." These words became the opening verses of *surah* (chapter) 96 of the Qur'an.

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**Most Islamic historians believe Muhammad was initially disturbed and shaken by the revelations and that he didn't reveal them publicly for several years. However, Shi'a tradition states he welcomed the message from the Angel Gabriel and was deeply inspired to share his experience with other potential believers.**

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Disturbed and shaken by the experience, Muhammad fled from the cave, at which point he heard a voice from the sky saying "Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel." Muhammad then saw an angelic form standing in the distance, repeating the message. So began a series of revelations that Muhammad would experience for the next 20 to 23 years, and would eventually be recorded and assembled to form the Qur'an, the sacred text of Islam.

Terrified and shaken, Muhammad went to his home. His wife became the first person to accept his message and convert to Islam. After receiving a series of additional revelations, Muhammad started preaching in Mecca, initially to a small circle of relatives and friends, and then to anyone who would listen in the general public. Soon a small group of followers or believers formed around him and his revelations. The revelation he received warned of the coming of a day of divine judgment and the need to return to the monotheism espoused by earlier prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

The revelations that were given to Muhammad contradicted the beliefs and practices of seventh-century society in Mecca. Because Muhammad spoke out passionately against idolatry and for belief in the One God, Allah, many of the Quraysh were very angered, as they saw his message as a threat to their traditional way of life. In addition, they began to see Muhammad as a threat to their status as leaders of the community. Soon, Muhammad and his growing circle of followers began to face much opposition to their beliefs. Most Meccans treated them harshly and they faced continuous persecution by those who saw them as a threat to their order.

Nevertheless, Muhammad continued with his mission to spread the words of Allah for nine challenging years until Khadijah, his wife, died in 619. That same year, his esteemed uncle, Abu Talib, also died. This time became known as the "Year of Sorrow." Reeling from grief and loss, Muhammad was faced with another major problem. Meccans were increasingly hostile towards him and his followers. It became clear that Muhammad's life was in danger, especially since, with the death of Abu Talib, he had lost the protection of his family and tribe. Therefore, in 622 CE, Muhammad and his followers decided to leave Mecca and emigrate north to the city of Yathrib, known today as Medina (Madinah).

Muslims believe that before Muhammad left Mecca he experienced two very special and significant events known as the "Night Journey" and "Ascension." In the Night Journey, Muhammad had the experience of travelling together with the Angel Gabriel on a winged horse, called the *Buraq*, from Mecca to Jerusalem. After arriving in Jerusalem, Muhammad and Gabriel ascended through the seven heavens. During the Ascension, known as the *Mi'raj*, in the first heaven,

they met Adam, then John. Then they met Jesus in the second heaven. As they moved through the next five heavens, they met Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, and lastly Abraham. At the end of the Ascension, Muhammad was able to approach the Throne of Allah, and came to stand “within two bow lengths” of God Himself (in other words, very close). Muhammad was deeply and profoundly affected by this experience.

## Muhammad in Medina

The move to Medina is known as the *hijrah*, which means “migration.” The birth of an organized government and political system based on the religion of Islam occurred with the move to Medina. Muslims believe Muhammad continued to receive revelations from Allah in Medina and that he attracted more followers and strengthened the Islamic community. The *hijrah* marks the establishment of the original or first Islamic community. For this reason, this event marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

Muhammad and his followers successfully relocated to Medina and integrated into the local community. Eventually, the leading tribes of Yathrib agreed that the Prophet should become the leader of the town and hopefully bring order and unity to the town that had been experiencing political turmoil. Within a relatively short time frame, Muhammad was able to attract a large community of Muslims in Medina. Soon, the city was united under Muhammad’s leadership and the Muslim banner. Later, Yathrib became known as Medina, short for *Madinat an-Nabi* (the City of the Prophet).

Muhammad proved to be a good civil leader and, from his base in Medina, he was able to expand the territory and people under his authority; however, Muhammad and Medina faced problems just to the south of the city. The Quraysh of Mecca continued to oppose Muhammad and Islam and were increasingly worried by the growing appeal and strength of Islam. Muhammad was very successful in his preaching and convinced pagan Arabs to give up their previous beliefs and idol worshipping practices. The Quraysh were convinced that Muhammad was set on destroying them and their traditional way of life.

The Quraysh tried to persuade Muhammad to desist from his preaching and conversions. When they failed in their attempts to persuade Muhammad to do so by offering great wealth, the power to lead their people, and other bribes, they reached the conclusion that they would need to annihilate Muhammad. The result of the concern of the Quraysh, coupled with the rapid growth of Islam, was war, or in the eyes of Muslims, *Jihad*.

The term *Jihad* has sometimes been translated as meaning “holy war”, but this is incorrect. A more precise translation is “striving.” In other words, Muslims are expected to strive to follow Allah’s commands. Early Muslims lived in an Arabia divided between the growing Muslim population of Medina and the established Quraysh idol worshippers of Mecca. It took three major battles to settle the conflict. The three battles were Badr, Huhud, and the Battle of the Trench.

These Muslim victories of the three defensive battles solidified the position of Islam in Medina and beyond. The defeated and disheartened Meccans returned home as Muhammad's status and power continued to rise. Muhammad's teachings were being heard and were well received in both Medina and Mecca. Muhammad continued to attract many converts in both cities.

Eventually, in 630 CE after two smaller pilgrimages, Muhammad led a group of 10 000 into Mecca, in what is commonly referred to as the "Conquest of Mecca." He did not seek retaliation, but instead pardoned those who had oppressed him and his band of early followers. As many Meccans began to embrace his teachings, the Kaaba was now rededicated to the worship of Allah, the one true God. Few opposed Muhammad's return or his removal of idols from the Ka'bah.

Before leaving the city, Muhammad was reported to have appeared before the citizens of Mecca, reminding them of their prior resistance and persecution of the Muslims of Medina. He is reported to have at one point turned to the assembled crowd and asked, "Now what do you expect of me?" When the people lowered their heads in shame, expecting to be reprimanded and punished, Muhammad proclaimed, "May God pardon you. Go in peace. There shall be no responsibility on you today; you are free!" Muhammad's grace and forgiveness had an immediate and powerful effect on the citizens of Mecca. By his actions and words, Muhammad had freed them from being a conquered people to a liberated people. Muhammad and his forces left Mecca without needing to leave a single soldier behind and appointed a Meccan chief to take charge of the city.

In 632 CE, Muhammad, accompanied by an estimated 140 000 Muslims forces, visited Mecca to perform his last pilgrimage. He travelled south from Medina to Mecca. On the way, he stopped at Mount Arafat where he delivered what has come to be known as his "Farewell Sermon." This celebrated sermon is described as summarizing some of his main teachings, including the following:

- Belief in One God, Allah, without images or icons
- Equality of all believers without distinction of race or class
- Superiority of individuals being based solely on piety
- Sanctity of life, property and honour
- Abolition of interest, vendettas, and private justice
- Better treatment of women
- Obligatory inheritance and distribution of the property of deceased persons among near relatives of both sexes, and removal of the possibility of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few
- Qur'an and conduct of the Prophet were to serve as the basis of law and healthy criterion for every aspect of human life

In his sweeping and profound sermon, Muhammad offered forgiveness to those who had done wrong in the past, while summarizing the core elements

of Islamic teaching. After the pilgrimage, Muhammad returned to Medina where he became ill. While he continued to lead prayers at the mosque for a short time after, it soon became evident that he was seriously ill. A few weeks later in June of 632 CE, he died at the age of 63. By the time he died, Islam had been adopted by most people in the Arabian Peninsula.

Early accounts of Muhammad contain some stories that describe supernatural events such as his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his subsequent ascent to heaven on the back of a supernatural winged horse. Despite such stories, the primary focus of the biographies, as well as Islamic doctrine in general, is on the humanity of Muhammad.

After Muhammad's death, the Islamic community sought to preserve the memory of his actions and what he said as the prime example of how one ought to live in alignment with God's will. This record of the Prophet's words were later collected in books of tradition, or *hadith*. The *hadith* are a part of the *Sunnah* (the custom) of the Prophet, which include his words and actions. The *Sunnah* is cherished as a guide for Muslims to follow in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslims think of Muhammad as being only a messenger of Allah, and not himself a divine being.

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## Ummahatul-Mu'minin: 'the Mothers of the Believers'

There are some differences of belief and historical records regarding who Muhammad married during his lifetime, the children they bore him, the composition of his household, the order of the marriages, and the status and backgrounds of the wives. Sunni and Shi'ites have different versions of some stories concerning Muhammad's wives and their relationships with Muhammad. Bearing this in mind, based on different Islamic sources, it is estimated that Muhammad married up to fifteen different women, of which two marriages likely were not consummated. There are also some reports of Muhammad having married and divorced several other women. Having multiple wives was a common practice for Arabian cultures of the time and was often done for political reasons or out of a sense of duty and responsibility. In Muhammad's case, he is believed to have been monogamous for the 25 years he lived with his first wife until her death. As well, it was fairly common at that point in history and region for wealthier persons to have slaves and concubines working and living within their households. Muhammad is believed to have had a number of concubines during his lifetime, which were also part of his household.

Generally, Muhammad is believed to have been married to at least 13 wives during his lifetime. The use of the term "wife" for two of them, Rayhana bint Jahsh and Maria al Qibtiyya, is debated and controversial. Some scholars question whether they were formally married and describe them as being concubines rather than legal wives. In such cases, only eleven wives will be counted as being part of his household.

Traditionally, Muslims believe that these marriages were willed by Allah, who gave Muhammad permission to marry each of them. It was only after the death of Khadijah in 619 CE that he married twelve other women, with eleven being part of the household at any given point in time.

His life and his marriages are traditionally divided into two periods: *pre-hijra* (pre-emigration) where he lived in Mecca, from 570 to 622 CE, and *post-hijra*, where he lived in Medina from 622 onwards until his death in 632. Only three of his marriages were contracted while he lived in Mecca and the rest were married when he was lived in Medina, and in some way related to the Muslim war over control of Mecca. Therefore, his last ten wives were either widows of fallen supporters and allies or women who had been captured and enslaved when their tribes lost battles or were conquered by the Muslim forces. Of his 13 wives, only two bore him children: Khadija and Maria al-Qibtiyya.

All of his thirteen wives are generally respected by most Muslims who have given Muhammad's wives the title of *Ummahatul-Mu'minin*, which means 'The Mothers of the Believers'. As well, they are believed to all have contributed in some way to Muhammad's cause and to the building of an Islamic society. Some



Figure 24: Fictive Medal of Khadija bint Khuwaylid  
Published by Guillaume Rouillé (1518-1589) - "Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum."

were particularly helpful in spreading the message of Islam to women and other members of the communities where they lived.

Muhammad's thirteen wives were as follows:

### 1. Khadija Bint Khuwaylid

Khadija was Muhammad's first wife, and the only wife who bore him children, they were married for 25 years until her death. Khadija had four children with Muhammad after their marriage; three sons, Ibrahim, Qasim and Abd-Allah (nicknamed al-Tahir and al-Tayyib respectively) who both died young, and a daughter, Fatimah. Sunnis believe that Khadija was a widow before marrying Muhammad and had two prior marriages. Shi'ites believe that Khadija only had one husband, the Prophet Muhammad.

Historical records and accounts vary, but Khadija is believed to have borne children in all three of the marriages. She is believed to have had three male and one female child from prior marriages. Some researchers believe that two of the children attributed to Khadija actually were children of her sister Hala. According to the researchers, after Hala's death Khadija cared for her sister's children and they joined her household.

Khadija was highly regarded in Meccan society, was of noble ancestry, was reported to possess excellent qualities, and was the wealthiest of all the women of the Qur'aysh.

She is considered to have been the first person to follow Muhammad and embrace Islam, and his greatest supporter and best benefactor. She was the mother of all of Muhammad's children except for Ibrahim, whose mother was Maria (Mariyyah).

Muhammad frequently praised her and her qualities. She spent her wealth and dedicated her energy for the cause of Islam. She is considered the most important woman in the Prophet's *ummah*. While she was alive, Muhammad did not marry anyone else.



Figure 25: Mausoleum Khadija, Jannatul Mualla cemetery, in Mecca, before its destruction by Ibn Saud in the 1920s

Tomb of Khadija bint Khuwaylid

After her death, Khadija is believed to have been buried in Jannat al-Mu'alla cemetery, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Tomb of Khadija bint Khuwaylid was a domed shrine in the Jannat ul-Mualla cemetery, which was rebuilt in 1905 during the Ottoman era. Khadija's mausoleum and domes were demolished in the year 1926 by order of King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud.

## 2. Sawdah Bint Zam'ah

Before marrying the Prophet, Sawdah was married to As-Sakran bin 'Amr with whom it is believed she had five or six sons. She embraced Islam early on and faced many hardships as a result of persecution. She, along with her first husband, migrated to Abyssinia. It was there that her husband passed away.

She was the first woman to marry the Prophet after Khadija, which was before the *hijrah* and while still in Mecca; however, there is disagreement between Muslim scholars and sects as to whether Muhammad first married Sawdah or Aisha, but Sawdah is usually believed to be his second wife, as she was living with Muhammad before Aisha joined the household.

She was one of the persons who narrated Muhammad's revelations and stories, and in so doing help spread Islam. She passed away during the final years of 'Umar's Caliphate.

## 3. Aisha (Aishah) Bint Abu Bakr

Aisha was the daughter of Muhammad's close friend and companion Abu Bakr, who later succeeded Muhammad as the first caliph. According to most Islamic sources, Muhammad was engaged to Aisha when she was six years old but she only came to live with the Prophet when she was nine years old. She is the only one of the Prophet's wives who had not been married prior to her marriage to Muhammad. Many scholars believe that she was the most beloved of the Prophet's wives, second only to Khadija.

According to Sunni tradition, she is reputed to have been extremely inquisitive, scholarly, and knowledgeable. Aisha is believed to have played an active role in Muhammad's political life. She was known to accompany him to many battles against Muslim opponents and thus she learned military skills.

Aisha played a lead role in the opposition to the Third Caliph Uthman, but she did not agree with his assassination nor did she support the party of Ali. During Ali's reign she tried to avenge Uthman's death in the Battle of the Camel. She was active in the battle, giving speeches and leading troops on the back of her camel. Although she and her supporters



Figure 26: Muhammad's Widow, Aisha  
A drawing depicting Aisha battling the fourth caliph Ali in the Battle of the Camel. Miniature from the *Siyer-i Nebi*, Turkish epic about the life of Muhammad, written by Mustafa, son of Yusuf of Erzurum. 16th century. Topkapi Sarayi Museum Library, Istanbul, Turkey

lost the battle, her leadership and determination was recognized. Following the Muslim civil war, she withdrew from politics and is reported to have lived quietly in Medina for more than twenty years. Eventually, she became reconciled to Ali and did not oppose caliph Mu'awiya.

The Shi'a perceptions of Aisha are generally negative, primarily due to her opposition to Ali and her participation in the Battle of the Camel. She contributed to the development of Islamic thought and culture, especially in relation to Muhammad's personal and private life. Her contribution to the transmission of Muhammad's message was impressive, and she served the Muslim community for 44 years after Muhammad's death. She was an expert in *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tafsir* (Qur'anic scholarship), and *hadith* (prophetic tradition). She memorized over 2,000 *hadith* of Muhammad and taught males and females. She was highly regarded for her intellect and knowledge in various fields, including poetry and medicine. She was eighteen years old when the Prophet passed away.

#### 4. Zainab Bint Khuzaimah (Zaynab Bint Khuzayma)

Similar to Hafsa, Zainab was widowed during the Muslim wars with Mecca. Her husband, Ubaydah b. al-Harith, was a faithful Muslim and from the tribe of al-Muttalib, for which Muhammad had special responsibility. She was widowed when her husband died in the Battle of Uhud. The Prophet married her following her first husband's death, just shortly after he had married Hafsa. She too was welcomed into the household by Aisha and Sawdah but, sadly, she passed away just a few months after marrying the Prophet.

She was known as Umm al Masakin (Mother of the destitute or poor) due to her charitable work and kindness. The Prophet performed the funeral prayer for her upon her death, as she was the only one of the Prophet's wives that he married after Khadijah to have died during his lifetime.

#### 5. Hind (Umm Salamah) Bint Abi Umayyah

She was married to Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd al Asad, Muhammad's foster brother. Umm Salamah and her husband are believed to be among the first who converted to Islam. Only Ali and a few others are believed to have adopted Islam before them. They experienced rejection and persecution from the powerful Quraysh as a result of their conversions to Islam, but Umm Salama and Abu Salama stood fast in their devotion to Islam. Eventually, as a result of the hostility in Mecca, Abu Salamah and her husband moved to Abyssinia and thereafter to Medina. The Prophet married her after her husband passed away as a result of his wounds from the Battle of Uhud.

Umm Salamah played a prominent role in the house of Muhammad and Muslim society. During her life and time with Muhammad, She was admired for her faith, knowledge, wisdom, and beauty. She is reported to have been active in promoting women's rights in early Islamic society. She is reputed to have once asked Muhammad "Why are men mentioned in the Qur'an and why are we not?" She received a response in a revelation from heaven to Muhammad, wherein Allah declares that the two genders are of equal value

and importance as members of the community and believers. One's gender ought not to matter: as long as the person is faithful and has the desire to obey Allah, they will earn Allah's grace. Some believe this act by Umm Salamah, set the precedent and demonstrated that women could approach Muhammad directly when dissatisfied with gender roles associated with them in society.

Umm Salamah continued to have significant influence even after Muhammad's death. Numerous *hadith* transmissions that have had a lasting impact on the religion are attributed to her. Umm Salama, along with one of Muhammad's other wives, Aisha, also took roles as *imams*, leading other women in worship.

Umm Salamah and Aisha chose different sides in the Battle of the Camel, in which the factions of Aisha and Ali fought each other. Umm Salamah did not agree or support the involvement of Aisha in the battle. Instead, she was a strong supporter of Ali, even sending her son, Umar, to fight for Ali. She is said to have narrated stories in which Muhammad favours Ali and Fatimah to support her position concerning the Battle.

When Umma Salmah died, she was the last surviving wife of Muhammad. The Shi'a have high regard for her due to her support for Ali and they believe that she was the second-most important wife of Muhammad after Khadija.

## 6. Hafsah Bint 'Umar

During the Muslim war with Mecca, men were killed leaving behind widows and orphans. Muhammad married Hafsah the third year after *hijrah* following her husband Khunais ibn Hudhaifah's death as a result of the wounds he sustained during the Battle of Uhud. Muhammad married her in 635 CE.

Hafsah was close to Aisha's age, when she joined the household and they developed a close and lasting relationship. Saudah, who was much older than Hafsah was also welcoming and extended a form of motherly benevolence to the younger woman. She was known to fast often and would perform *salah* diligently. As a result, she was known as *Sawwamah Qawwamah* (one who fasts and performs *salah* abundantly).

She played a significant role in the development of the Qur'an. When the Qur'an was compiled during the Caliphate of Sayyidina Abu Bakr, it remained with him until his death and then passed on to 'Umar during his Caliphate. After the Caliph Umar died, Hafsah became its protector. Uthman, when he became Caliph, used Hafsah's copy when he standardized the text of the Qur'an during his reign. It was then returned to her and it remained in her care until she passed away. In addition, she is believed to have narrated sixty stories or *hadith* pertaining to Muhammad's life.

## 7. Zaynab Bint Jahsh

Zaynab bint Jahsh was Muhammad's first cousin, the daughter of a paternal aunt. In Medina, Muhammad first arranged that the widowed Zaynab marry his adopted son Zayd ibn Harithah. Unfortunately, Zaynab's marriage to his adopted son was not a happy one and they divorced.

Muhammad then decided to marry Zaynab in 627 CE after the customary waiting period ended. She is believed to be one of his favourite wives, although several traditions indicate that there was conflict between Zaynab and her co-wives. She has a reputation for being devout and praying extensively. After Muhammad's death, Zaynab never left Medina again. She lived as a widow for nine years, during which time she narrated eleven *hadith*. She was known to be a generous woman who, after Muhammad's death, donated all her money to charity and the poor.

Zaynab was the first of Muhammad's wives to die after him. She died during the caliphate of Umar in the summer of 641 CE.

## 8. Rayhana Bint Zayd Ibn Amr

Rayhana bint Zayd was a woman of Jewish origins from the Banu Nadir tribe. She is revered by Muslims as one of the *Ummahaatu'l-Mu'mineen*, or Mothers of the Faithful—the Wives of Muhammad.

She was born to a family of the Banu Nadir tribe, but married a man from the Banu Qurayza tribe. Rayhana was captured and enslaved after the Siege of the Banu Qurayza neighbourhood and the defeat of the Banu Qurayz by Muhammad's armies. She was taken by Muhammad as a slave, but he later proposed to marry her. She is believed to have first turned down his proposal and continued to identify with Judaism; however, she eventually did decide to convert to Islam. She is believed to have been freed by Muhammad and later agreed to marry him.

There is disagreement between some Islamic scholars and historians as to her status and marriage, similar to the case of Maria al-Qibtiyya. Some question whether in fact she ever officially married Muhammad. Some believe that while she was part of Muhammad's household, they never married. However, the most accepted position among Muslims is that the Prophet released her from slavery and married her. She died shortly before Muhammad in 632 CE.

## 9. Juwairiyah (Juwayriyya) Bint Al-Harith

Juwairiyah is believed to have married Muhammad in 627 or 628 CE when he was 58 years old and she was 20. She was the daughter of al-Harith ibn Abi Dirar, the chief of the Banu Mustaliq tribe. He was defeated with his tribe in a battle with Muhammad's forces.

Juwairiyah was the widow of Musafi' ibn Safwan, who was killed during the Battle of Banu Mustaliq (also known as the Battle of Muraysi') with the Prophet's forces. She was captured following the Battle, enslaved and taken by Muhammad's companion Thabit ibn Qais as part of his share of the spoils of war.

She and her family sought her release. She reached an agreement of *Kitabah* or "deed of freedom" with Thabit ibn Qais where she undertook to purchase her freedom. The Prophet assisted her in fulfilling this agreement by marrying her and providing a dowry to cover the debt. As a result of her marriage to the Prophet, the Muslims freed a hundred of her family members who had also been enslaved.

Juwayriya was from a wealthy and prestigious family, and has the reputation of being a refined, graceful, and attractive princess. She was eloquent, intelligent and wise, and mastered the Arabic language and literary style. These abilities were highly prized by contemporary Arabs.

## 10. Ramla (Umm Habibah) Bint Abi Sufyan

Umm Habibah was the daughter of the Quraysh leader, Abu Sufyan ibn Harb. He was the powerful chief of the Umayya clan, and leader of the whole Quraysh tribe and the strongest opponent of Muhammad in the period between 624 and 630 CE. Abu Sufyan later converted to Islam after the conquest of Mecca. The first Umayyad caliph, Muawiyah I, was Ramlah's half-brother, and Uthman ibn Affan was also her first cousin and paternal second cousin.

She, along with her husband 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh al Asadi, had converted to Islam against her father's wishes in Mecca. They were among some of the early converts in Mecca. After their conversion, they faced severe persecution for their conversion. As a result, life in Mecca became unbearable and they both migrated to Abyssinia, where she gave birth to a daughter named Habibah. She remained committed to Islam, but her husband converted to Christianity while in Abyssinia and later died there due to illness.

The Prophet had migrated to Medina, when a companion told him of the situation of the Muslim migrants to Abyssinia. He learned about Ubaydullah's conversion to Christianity and the hardships Umm Habibah had suffered. In gratitude for her commitment to Islam, Muhammad proposed they marry. Umm Habibah was married to Prophet Muhammad through the proxy of the Emperor of Abyssinia. She is reported to have joined Muhammad in Medina several years after their marriage.

The *Hadith* collections includes about sixty-five *hadiths* which were narrated by Ramla. She is believed to have died in 664 or 665 CE during the Caliphate of her brother, Muawiyah I. She was buried in the Jannat al-Baqi cemetery next to other wives of Muhammad.

Of all of Muhammad's wives, she was the most closely related to Muhammad in lineage.

## 11. Safiyyah Bint Huyayy Ibn Akhtab

Safiyyah bint Huyayy was the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, chief of the Jewish tribe Banu Nadir. Safiyyah was first married to poet Salam ibn Mishkam who divorced her and then after him to Kinanah ibn Abi al Haqiq.

The Banu Nadir were expelled from Medina in 625 CE, as a result of their opposition to and conspiracy to kill Muhammad. Her family settled with other Jewish tribes in Khaybar, an oasis near Medina. Her father and brother aligned themselves with Meccan and Bedouin forces who besieged Muhammad in Medina during the Battle of the Trench. When the Meccans withdrew, Muhammad besieged the Banu Qurayza. After the defeat of the Banu Qurayza in 627 CE, Safiyya's father, who was present and a long-time opponent of Muhammad, was captured by the Muslims and executed.

In May 628 CE, Muhammad attacked and defeated several Jewish tribes living at the Khaybar oasis, including the Banu Nadir, at the Battle of Khaybar. The Jewish tribes surrendered, and were allowed to remain in Khaybar with the exception of the Banu Nadir, on the condition that they pay an annual tribute to the Muslims. Their land became the property of the Muslim state.

Her husband participated in the Battle of Khaybar, where he was captured and later executed. Safiyyah was also captured. Accounts differ as to her marriage and relationship with Muhammad. It is believed that Safiyyah was at first enslaved, and given to one of Muhammad's companions Dihyah al Kalbi as his share of the spoils of war, but that in recognition of her status in the Banu Nadir community, Muhammad freed her and gave her the option of returning to her community or converting to Islam and marrying him. She chose the latter. Safiyyah is believed to have been 17 years of age when she married Muhammad.

After Muhammad's death, she became involved in the politics of the early Muslim community, and acquired substantial influence by the time of her death. In 656 CE, Safiyyah sided with Caliph Uthman ibn Affan, and supported him at his last meeting with Ali, Aisha, and Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr. During the period when the caliph was under attack at his residence, Safiyyah unsuccessfully attempted to reach him, to supply him with food and water.

Safiyyah is referenced in all of the major books of *hadith* for narrating a few traditions and a number of events in her life later served as legal precedents. Safiyyah died around 670 or 672 CE, during the reign of Mu'awiyah.



## 12. Maria (Mariyah) Bint Sham'un Al-Qibtiyyah

Maria (aka Marya al-Qibtiyya, Maria Qubtiyya, or Maria the Copt) was an Egyptian Coptic Christian and one of the slaves sent as a gift to Muhammad by Muqawqis, a Byzantine and Christian governor of Alexandria, Egypt. Her sister Sirin was also gifted along with other enslaved persons.

When they arrived in Medina, the Prophet is reported to have chosen to keep Maria for himself, and bestowed Sirin to his envoy Hassan bin Thabit. Several *hadiths* tell of the Prophet's affection for Maria that resulted in some tensions with the other wives of the Prophet, especially 'Aisha and Hafsa.

Maria bore the Prophet a son, Ibrahim, circa 629 CE. Sadly, Ibrahim died in 631 CE when he was just 18 months old. The Prophet was very saddened by his death.

As with Rayhana bint Zayd, there is some debate between historians and scholars as to whether she officially became Muhammad's wife or was only his concubine. Traditionally, she was seen to be one of Muhammad's concubines; however, some contemporary scholars believe her to have been his wife. Regardless of the true nature of her relationship with Muhammad, for some Muslims, she is believed to be his wife and is given the same title of respect as the Prophet's other wives, *Umm al Muminin*, 'Mother of the Believers.'

Maria has a reputation for having been a pious, righteous and loving person who was favoured by Muhammad. She spent the rest of her life in Medina and converted to Islam. Maria reportedly was honoured and respected by the Prophet, his family, and his companions. She spent three years of her life with the Prophet, until his death, She died five years later. For the last five years of her life, she is believed to have lived as a recluse and never went out except to visit the graves of the Prophet and her son. After her death, Umar ibn al Khattab led the prayer over her and she was buried in al Baqi.

## 13. Maimunah (Mayuma) Bint Harith

Maimunah was married to Mas'ud ibn 'Amr ibn 'Umair al Thaqafi prior to her conversion to Islam. Her husband chose to divorce from her and she then married her second husband Abu Raham ibn 'Abd al 'Uzza, but he died shortly after their marriage. Her *wakil* or guardian and supporter of Muhammad, 'Abbas arranged for her marriage to the Prophet. The Prophet married her at Sarif near Mecca. She was the last wife of Prophet Muhammad. She was the last of the wives to die, passing away at the age 80 or 81.

## Muhammad's Successors: The Four Caliphs (Rashidun Caliphs)

Following Muhammad's death, the Muslim community sought to appoint a successor to Muhammad to lead the community and rule Islam throughout the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of the world. There were four Medina-based Caliphs or successors which are recognized as the *Rashidun* or "Rightly Guided Caliphs". Islam had become a dominant power in the Arabian Peninsula and the four caliphs were more political and military leaders than spiritual leaders. The Four Caliphs that immediately succeeded Muhammad are not considered prophets because, according to traditional Islamic beliefs, Muhammad was the last prophet.\*

### The First Caliph (Khilafah)-Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq (Abu Bakr)

Abu Bakr' (aka: Abdullah ibn Uthman and Abu Bakr al-Siddiq) was the first Caliph to succeed Muhammad and governed from 632 to 634 CE. In the short time his reign lasted, he managed by military force to bring all the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula which had been divided after Muhammad's death under the rule of Islam.

Abu Bakr was one of the early converts of Islam and a close friend and confidant of the Prophet Muhammad. He is reported to have been a loyal and devoted friend who supported Muhammad throughout all his endeavours and his time in Mecca and Medina. Abu Bakr's sincere and constant support for the Prophet earned him the nickname of *Siddique* (trustworthy).

Following the death of Muhammad, he became the first of the four caliphs of what the Sunni Muslims call the Rashidun Caliphate. In his brief two-year reign, he reunited the Arabian Peninsula and launched efforts to conquer Syria and Iraq, and other lands which were achieved by his successors. In addition, it was during his reign that Muhammad's revelations were compiled into the Qur'an.



Figure 27: Interior of Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul  
The two large round calligraphies are the names of the first two of the four caliphs, Abu Bakr (left) and Umar (right)

\* The exception are Ahmadiyya Muslims who believe that there are two types of prophets, one type are **law bearing** prophets such as Adam, Moses, and Muhammad. The other type are those that upheld and served the prevailing religious law such as Aaron, David, and Jesus. Ahmadiyya believe that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, claimed to be the second type of prophet and a follower and subordinate of Muhammad, the Holy Prophet. Therefore, they believe that they are not in conflict with the Qur'anic teachings about Muhammad being the last law bearing prophet. See Al Islam. "Can There Be Prophets after Prophet Muhammad (Saw)?" Al Islam.org, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, n.d., <http://www.alislam.org/question/prophets-after-prophet-muhammad/>.

Abu Bakr, became one of Muhammad's state advisors when Muhammad initially fled Mecca due to local opposition and persecution of Muslims. Alongside Muhammad, he participated in major battles with the Meccans, such as Badr (624 CE) and Uhud (625 CE). Abu Bakr's relationship with Muhammad was further cemented by the marriage of his daughter Aisha (l. c. 613–678 CE) to the Prophet. Thus, he became Muhammad's father-in-law. Another sign of his importance and close relationship with Muhammad is the fact that he led the congregational prayers in the Masjid an-Nabwi (Mosque of the Prophet) during the last days of the Prophet life, when the latter had returned to Medina and was ill.

The passing of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE left the Muslim community in a state of shock, mourning, and disarray. Muhammad had not named a successor or established a process for doing so. Nor did he indicate what type of government should be in place after his death.

Abu Bakr is reported to have rallied the community and, with the support of another early convert, Umar ibn al-Khattab (584–644 CE) of the Banu Adi clan, he became the successor to Muhammad. He adopted the title *Khalifa'ul Rasul* (the vicegerent of the Prophet), which was shortened to *Khalifa* (Caliph), thus the roots of Islamic Caliphates that followed were established by him.

Abu Bakr's succession was not supported by all members of the community. Although there are different versions of events as told by various historians, they all agree that many within the Muslim community then believed that only the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali ibn abi-Talib (l. 601–661 ), who was also a blood relative, had the right to succeed Muhammad. Ali's supporters came to be known as Shia Muslims or Shia't Ali (party of Ali) and held that Abu Bakr was a usurper, and regardless of his achievements, they challenged the authenticity of his claim as a caliph. This first schism in the Muslim community is one that had and continues to have impacts on the Muslim community worldwide.

Before his death, Abu Bakr nominated Umar ibn al-Khattab, his strongest and extremely able supporter, as his successor.

## The Second Caliph Umar (Aka: Omar, Son Of Al-Khattab)

The second caliph was Umar or Hadrat Umar Farooq, who reigned from 634 to 644 CE. A Meccan, he initially persecuted Muslim converts but, after his own conversion, he used his wealth to support the Islamic cause. As in the case of Abu Bakr, his daughter Hafsa was one of Muhammad's wives.

Umar was responsible for the phenomenal expansion of the Islamic empire which began during his reign and lasted for about 100 years. Under his command, the Muslim armies defeated the armies of the Sassanian (Persian) and Byzantine empires. Following the defeat of these two powers, the Muslims easily took control of an area that includes present-day Iraq and Iran to Central Asia (Bukhara and Samarkand) and the Punjab. They were also able to conquer all the Asiatic territories under Roman control, except for Anatolia (modern Turkey). To the North, they occupied Syria, and Damascus which became the capital of the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 CE). They conquered

Egypt and moved across North Africa and into Europe, ruling most of Spain. Their expansion into the West was only stopped in 732 CE by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in France.

Umar captured Damascus with little resistance in 635 CE. There, he is reported to have divided the churches equally between Christians and Muslims. He arranged for one half of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist to be used as a mosque, while the other half remained a church. This unique arrangement lasted for about eighty years until the whole structure became the mosque that is now known as the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

Umar defeated the Byzantine forces at Yarmuk in 636 CE and took over all of Syria and Palestine. When Jerusalem surrendered, he is reported to have treated the Christian residents kindly. It is reported that when 'Umar visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the church leaders invited him to recite his prayers in the church, for it was the time for Islamic prayer. However, Umar declined, in order to protect the church, as he feared other Muslims might use such an act to justify turning the church into a mosque. He is reported to instead have offered his prayers outside, which today is the site where the Al-Aqsa Mosque stands.

Also in 636 CE, Umar took Mesopotamia from the Persians. This was followed in 640 and 642 CE by the conquering of Egypt and the rest of North Africa by his general 'Amr ibn al-'As. Because of Umar's success in expanding the lands under Islamic rule and thereby aiding the transmission of Islam, he is sometimes referred to as 'The second founder of Islam'.

Umar is also credited with the development of the various administrative and judicial structures of the empire. The Empire was divided into provinces, he appointed governors, and set up departments to control the treasury, army, and public revenues. He also established that regular salaries be paid to soldiers.

In contrast to his reported kind treatment of Jews and Christians in conquered lands, he is responsible for the expulsion of Christians and Jews from the Arabian Peninsula. The pact known as the Covenant of Umar, which he is reported to have personally authored, dictated the discriminatory and humiliating conditions under which Christians and Jews were to live under Islamic rule.

Remarkably, just a hundred years after Muhammad's death, Islam had become an empire and was firmly established in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Only Europe would remain essentially untouched by Islamic control.

Umar died in 644 CE after being attacked by a Christian slave, or according to other sources a Zoroastrian slave.

### The Third Caliph Othman (Hadrat Uthman)

Prior to his death, Umar appointed five or six men who were tasked with the selection of the next caliph from among the selection team. One, Abdul Rahman, chose to withdraw his name from consideration. The others thus decided to authorize him to appoint the next caliph. Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and Othman (Hadrat Uthman), the leader of the Quraysh

faction, were deemed to be the best two candidates. Ultimately, Abdul Rahman chose Othman to become the third caliph in 644 CE.

Othman was reportedly a very wealthy man who dedicated his immense wealth to support the Islamic cause. He had been married to two of Muhammad's daughters, Ruqayya and Kulthum, and as a result was known as the Possessor of the Two Lights.

Upon becoming caliph, he chose to appoint some of his close relatives as governors of provinces, including his cousin Muawiya, whom he made governor of Syria. Othman is reported to have been a weak ruler who privileged his family and lacked the courage to apply Islamic Law when it affected relatives or prominent members of the community.

Perhaps, Othman's most significant contribution to Islam was his order that Zaid ibn Thabit, Muhammad's personal secretary, prepare a second compilation of the Qur'an. When this was achieved, he ordered that all the other versions be destroyed. Thus, the second version of the Qur'an, became the official authorized version by Othman. To this day, most Muslims believe this version be the only authentic and true copy of the original Qur'an as revealed to Muhammad.

Othman's reign ended in 656 CE, when he was allegedly assassinated by Egyptian Muslims, who were apparently not happy with the caliph's nepotism and poor administration. His death in 656 CE, served to increase tensions that arose within the Muslim community, which eventually led to a civil war and a fracture in the Islamic community which still extends to the present day and throughout the Muslim world.

### Hamsa, The Hand of Fatimah

Many Muslims and Jews, as well as a few other groups, believe The *Hamsa* may guard one against the evil eye. It is also known as the Hand of Fatimah after the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, or the Hand of Mary, the Hand of Miriam, and the Hand of the Goddess.

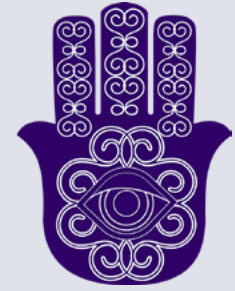


Figure 28: Hamsa

### Muhammad's Daughter and Wife of Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib

Fatimah bint Muhammad, born 615 CE–died 632 CE, was commonly known as Fāṭimah al-Zahra. According to Sunni Muslims, she is the youngest daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and his wife Khadijah; however, according to Shi'a Muslims, she was their only child who lived to adulthood, and an integral part of Muhammad's household. Fatimah's husband was Ali, who became the fourth Caliph to succeed Muhammad, the last of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and the first Shi'a Imam. Their children included Hasan and Husayn, who respectively became the second and third Shi'a Imams.

Fatimah is respected and venerated by all Muslims, as she is believed to have been the child most close to Muhammad who supported him continually throughout the time he experienced difficulties in Mecca and later in his life. She was the only child of Muhammad to have male children who survived beyond childhood. Her descendants are known as Sayyids and may be found throughout the Islamic world.

Fatimah is a key figure in Islam, however, her role and political allegiances are disputed by Sunnis and Shi'a who hold conflicting perspectives. Her name is one of the most popular female names throughout the Muslim world.

## The Fourth Caliph Ali (Ali Ibn Abi Talib)

Ali ibn Abi Talib was Muhammad's cousin and adopted son. He was the husband of the Prophet's daughter, Fatimah, and they had two sons, Hassan and Husayn. Ali had been one of the first to convert to Islam and had taken part in almost all the battles fought by Muhammad.

Ali is reported as being convinced that he was Muhammad's rightful successor and therefore had resisted or refused to recognize the appointment of Abu Bakr as the first caliph for six months. After having been passed over three times for the caliphate, he was finally invited to become the fourth caliph after the murder of the third caliph, Othman in 656 CE.

The Shiites, the followers of Ali, strongly opposed the Umayyads, which were the third caliph's tribe. The power struggle between Ali's followers and the Umayyads was severe. Upon taking control of the caliphate, Ali decided to remove the governors appointed by Othman but the governor of Egypt and the governor of Syria, Muawiya, revolted and refused to vacate their offices or to pay homage to Ali. Muawiya, who was the son of Abu Sufyan (the other leader of the Quraysh faction) and a cousin of Othman, accused Ali of being reluctant or unwilling to punish Othman's murderers.

As well Aisha, a widow of Muhammad, and some of Muhammad's companions opposed Ali and led a rebellion against him. The rebellion resulted in the first major Muslim civil war. At the Battle of the Camel (so called because Aisha rode a camel into battle), Ali's forces defeated Aisha's forces. Meanwhile, Muawiya continued to push his demands for punishment of the murderers of Othman. Eventually, at the battle of Siffin, Ali's and Muawiya's forces clashed.

The opposing forces agreed to resort to arbitration to resolve their differences but some of Ali's supporters (later referred to as *Kharijites* or separatists) rejected arbitration and turned on Ali, accusing him of seeking a human solution rather than abiding by the divine conditions as set in the Qur'an.

The arbitrators decided in favour of Muawiya. Ali was angered by the developments and returned to his supporters, who demanded he repent for having accepted arbitration, which he refused to do. This division within his supporters led to internal strife and was responsible for thousands of deaths among Ali's troops and allies.

Ali's ongoing battle with Muawiya was once again suspended and another council was convened to arbitrate the conflict. This time the council decided to depose both Ali and Muawiya, but both parties refused to accept the decision of the council. Ali and Muawiya continued to push their respective positions until a *Kharijite* reportedly murdered Ali in 661 in retaliation for the death of his compatriots.

This left Muawiya as the de facto caliph although Ali's son, Husayn, later claimed right to succession and fought to regain the caliphate, but was unsuccessful. Husayn was defeated, captured, and executed in Karbala in present-day Iraq. The killing, hatred, and division went on as Yazid, the son of Muawiya of the Umayyad Dynasty, killed Hussein, Ali's other son and his

family in 680 CE. This event is remembered every year during the Islamic month of Moharram by Shi'ites.

The conflict between the different Muslim factions and the series of violent and divisive events resulted in a deep and permanent split between the supporters of Ali, known as the Shi'ites or the party of Ali, and the main Muslim body, the Sunnis, that is still felt to this day.

## Significant and Influential Muslim Leaders After the Four Caliphs

### Caliphates throughout History

Muhammad built the foundation upon which Islamic empires and dynasties were built that stretched into the twentieth century. Following the four Caliphs or Rashidun Caliphate of 632–661 CE, which was the beginning of the Islamic Empire, Islamic caliphates that followed included:

- The Umayyad Caliphate (661–750)—Successor of the Rashidun Caliphate
- The Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258)—Successor of the Umayyad Caliphate, Fall of Baghdad (1258)
- The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba in Islamic Spain (929–1031)
- The Fatimid Caliphate (909–1171)
- The Almohad Caliphate (1121–1269)
- The Ayyubid Sultanate (1174–1254)
- The Mamluk Sultanate of Cairo (1261–1517)
- The Ottoman Caliphate (1517–1924)
- The Sokoto Caliphate (1804–1903)
- The Sharifian Caliphate (1924–1925)

### Influential Women in Islamic History

In this section, a selected list of women throughout history who have been influential in the development of Islam is provided.

Muslim women have played important roles throughout history. From Muhammad's birth to the twenty-first century, women have contributed to their communities and the societies they live in. Women have been influential figures in both Islam, secular politics, and in many other spheres. Muslim women continue to hold office today, and historical religious authorities such as Khadija and Aisha remain highly respected in nearly every Muslim family and community. Earlier, we highlighted the role and contributions of Muhammad's wives to the development of Islam. In this section, we will highlight some of the other great women of Islamic history who gained fame in their time and continue to be remembered today.

Historically, Muslim women played an important role in the foundation of many Islamic educational institutions, such as Fatima al-Fihri's founding of the University of Al Karaouine in 859 CE. This continued through to the Ayyubid dynasty in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when 160 mosques and *madrassahs* were established in Damascus, 26 of which were funded by women through the *Waqf* (charitable trust or trust law) system. Half of all the royal patrons for these institutions were also women.

### Asma Bint Abu Bakr (595–692 CE)

She belonged to a distinguished Muslim family. Her father, Abu Bakr, was a close friend and companion of the Prophet and the first caliph after his death. Muhammad's third wife, Aisha, was her sister. She was one of the first persons to accept Islam. It is claimed that only seventeen persons before her converted to Islam. Asma was known for her fine personal qualities and for possessing a keen intelligence. She is reputed to have been an extremely generous person and one who remained calm even in the face of extremely difficult circumstances

Women Asma bint Abi Bakr were instrumental in the Battle of Yarmouk and some other battles. The earliest histories pay great tribute to Asmā's bravery there. Al-Waqidi wrote that the Quraysh women fought harder than the men. Every time the men ran away, the women fought, fearing that if they lost, the Romans would enslave them.



Figure 29: Carving and tilework on the interior of the oldest "university" in the world (University of Al-Karaouine/Al-Qarawiyyin) founded by Fatima Al-Fihri in Fez, Morocco

### Nasibah Bint Ka'b (Umm Imarah)

She is known as the 'First Warrior Woman of Islam.' Nasibah was one of two women at a gathering of about 74 leaders, warriors, and statesmen of Medina who went to al-Aqabah to swear an oath of allegiance to Islam following the teaching of the new religion by Mus'ab ibn 'Umair in the city. Nasibah and Umm Mune'e Asma bint Amr bin 'Adi were the only two women to personally pledge directly to the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

She is best known for her role in the battle of Uhud, where she physically took up arms and, with a small group, defended the Prophet. She also participated in the battle of Hunain, and Yamamah, and the Treaty of Hudaibiyah.



## Barakah Bint Tha'alaba

She is commonly known as Umm Ayman, and was an early Muslim and companion of the Prophet Muhammad. She was a slave of Abyssinian origins of the Prophet Muhammad's parents. When Muhammad's mother died, Barakah helped to raise Muhammad in his grandfather's household. Later, Muhammad freed her from slavery, but she stayed and continued to serve Muhammad and his family. She was an early convert to Islam and was present at the important battles of Uhud and Khaybar. A few *hadith* have been attributed to her narrations.

## Fatima Al-Fihri (800–880 CE)

Fatima bint Muhammad Al-Fihriya Al-Qurashiya was born around 800 AD in the town of Kairouan, which is located in present-day Tunisia. She was of Arab Qurayshi descent, hence the name *al-Qurashiyya* which means the *Qurayshi one*. She and her sister Maryam were well-educated and studied the Islamic jurisprudence *Fiqh* and the *Hadith*. As well, both sisters founded mosques in Fez: Fatima founded Al-Qarawiyyin and Maryam founded Al-Andalus. She is credited with founding the oldest existing, continually operating, and first degree-awarding university in the world. The University of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco in 859 CE. She is also known as *Umm al-Banayn*.



Figure 30: Astrolabe  
Astrolabe on display at the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford

## Mariam Al-Astrolabi (Asturlabi)

She was a tenth century female scholar and astronomer from Aleppo, which is in modern day Syria. She was one of the pioneers of the development of astrolabes, a medieval device that was the global positioning system (GPS) of its time. Astrolabes were useful tools in the study of celestial objects and helped scientists perform research in astronomy. These are global positioning instruments that determine the position of the sun and planets, tell time, and help navigate by finding location by latitude and longitude. Astrolabes were not just scientific and navigational instruments, they were important religious tools. In Muslim society, astrolabes were used to locate the *Qibla*, establish prayer times, and determine starting days for Ramadan and Eid.

## Arwa Al-Sulayhi (Little Queen of Sheeba)

Arwa was the longest-reigning ruler of Yemen. She co-ruled with her first two husbands and later, in 1067 CE, became the queen in her own right. Arwa married a third time to Saba ibn Ahmad in 1091 CE and co-ruled Yemen with him. After Saba died, she became once again the sole ruler of Yemen until her death in 1138 CE.

Arwa, a Shi'a Muslim, was known for her great intelligence. She was well educated in religious sciences, the study of the Qur'an, poetry, history, and the *hadiths*. Arwa was a supporter of Imam at-Tayyib and became the head of a new Muslim sect known as the Taiyabi Ismaili. This group survived in Yemen even after the Ayyubid invasion of southern Arabia.

Arwa al-Sulayhi was also a *dai'i*, a Muslim 'missionary' who invites people to convert to Islam through dialogue. Arwa achieved the highest rank a *dai'i* can achieve, that of *hujjat*, in 1084 CE, becoming the first woman to earn the rank in Islamic history.

## Razia Sultan

Razia Sultan was the only female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate in India. Her father, Shams-ud-din Iltutmish, was part of a dynasty that based succession on merit rather than birth order. Iltutmish felt Raiza was deemed worthy of the Delhi throne and her father appointed her as his heir instead of any of his sons. After his death in 1236 CE, Iltutmish's wishes were ignored and Raiza's claim to the throne was disregarded by her brothers. Her half-brother, Rukn ud din Firuz, became the sultan instead. Rukn ud din proved to be an incompetent ruler and was assassinated less than a year after he took the throne. After her half-brother's death, Raiza ascended to the throne again in 1236 CE, despite the fact that the patriarchal nobility still hated the idea of a female ruler.

After ascending the throne a second time, she continued to be ahead of her time and shocked the conservative Muslim society. She refused to wear a veil and wore men's clothing. She was a successful military leader, leading her armies in battle and conquering new territories.

## Fatima Bint Ibrahim Ibn Jowhar (14th Century CE)

Fatima lived in the fourteenth century CE. She taught the entire Bukhari collection of *hadith* and was so renowned that, whenever she travelled for pilgrimage to Mecca, scholars from all over the Muslim world would request to join her teaching circles. Imam Dhahabi and Imam Subqi were taught by her. Fatima was often requested to teach at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. It is said that due to her advanced years she would lean upon Prophet Muhammad's grave. At the end of her classes, she would write and sign a license to transmit her narrations.

## Aisha Bint Abdul Hadi (14th Century CE)

Aisha was born in Damascus in the early fourteenth century and was a teacher in the grand mosque. She was appointed by the Sultan as the Master of Hadith and taught the compilation of Imam Bukhari. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, considered by many to be one of the greatest *hadith* scholars, travelled to Damascus and studied more than one hundred books. Her chain of narration in *hadith* is regarded as the strongest from her generation back to Prophet Muhammad. Between her and Imam Bukhari are eight transmitters, and between Imam Bukhari and the Prophet there are variously three, four, or five transmitters. This is the shortest chain of narration back to the Prophet, of any scholar alive during her time.



Figure 31: Black History Month Poster

## Nana Asmau (D. 1864 CE)

Nana was the daughter of Sheikh Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817 CE), a jurist, reformer, and founder of the West African Sokoto Muslim nation (present day Nigeria). Her fame was not linked solely to her father's career; Nana was an important poet, historian, educator, and religious scholar in her own right. She played a major role in the political, cultural, and intellectual developments in West Africa for nearly 50 years after her father's death. Nana, a *Maliki* jurist was devoted to the education of Muslim women. She established the first major system of schools and other institutions of learning throughout the Sokoto nation.

Nana was fluent in four languages, Arabic, Fula, Hausa, and Tuareg. She was a prolific writer of over 70 works on subjects including theology, law, and the role of women in Islam. Her broad-based campaign to empower and educate women secured her a position as one of the most influential women in West Africa in the nineteenth century.

## Benazir Bhutto

Benazir Bhutto was elected prime minister of Pakistan on December 1, 1988. She became the first female head of state of an Islamic nation in modern history. She led the Pakistan People's Party and endured frequent house arrest under the military dictator Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq. After martial law ended, Bhutto became Zia's main political opposition. She was elected in 1988 after Zia died in a plane crash and re-elected for a second term in 1993.

Bhutto aspired to be a reformer, but she struggled to meet the challenge created by widespread government corruption, extensive poverty, and crime.

She also failed to repeal the Hudood Ordinance that implemented a literal form of *Sharia* law and heavily limited women's freedom in Pakistan.

After her second term, she spent nearly ten years in self-imposed exile and returned to Pakistan in October of 2007. Sadly, she was killed by a suicide bomber just two months after her return on December 27, 2007.

## Zainab Al-Ghazali

Born in 1917, in Egypt, she was an activist and was closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Her father encouraged her to become an Islamic leader, citing the example of Nusayba bint Ka'ab al Muzaniyya, a woman who fought alongside the Prophet Muhammad in the Battle of Uhud. At the age of nineteen, she founded the Jama'at al-Sayyidat al-Muslimaat (Muslim Women's Association) which had a membership of three million throughout the country by the time it was dissolved by government order in 1964. She was invited by Hassan al-Banna, the Founder of the Muslim Brotherhood to merge the Jama'at with his organization. She refused his offer in order to retain her autonomy, but she did take an oath of personal allegiance to him. Her weekly lectures attracted a crowd of approximately 5000 people. Besides offering lessons for women, the Jama'at published a magazine, maintained an orphanage, assisted poor families, and mediated family disputes. She took a political stance, demanding that Egypt be ruled according to the Qur'an.

After the assassination of Hassan al-Banna, she played a pivotal role in regrouping the Brotherhood in the 1960s. She was imprisoned in the year 1965 and was sentenced for 25 years, but was released under Anwar Sadat's presidency. While in prison, al-Ghazali and members of the Brotherhood underwent many inhumane punishments. During these periods of hardship, it is said that she had visions of Prophet Muhammad and also experienced some miracles as she got food, refuge, and strength in those difficult times. She has authored a book based on her experiences in jail, which was later translated into English as *Return of the Pharaoh*. She died in August, 2005, at the age of 88.

## Atifete Jahjaga

Atifete Jahjaga became the fourth president of the Republic of Kosovo in April of 2011. She was the first female president of Kosovo and the youngest to ever be elected to that office. She took office, just over a month after Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia.

Jahjaga served as President for five years and worked to institutionalize efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate survivors of sexual violence from the war in Kosovo with Serbia. During her time in office, the citizens of Kosovo consistently ranked the Office of the President as the most trusted institution. She was known for her respect for the law, commitment to anti-corruption, and transparency.

## Other Significant Muslim Leaders

### Abu Al-Abbas 'Abdu'llāh Ibn Muhammad Al-Saffah (722–754 CE)

Abu al-Abbas was the first caliph of the Abbasid Caliphate dynasty, which would come to rule over the eastern Islamic world for approximately the next 500 years. It is one of the longest and most important caliphates (Islamic dynasties) in Islamic and world history. The Abbasids were descended from an uncle of Muhammad and were cousins to the Umayyad dynasty that they defeated.

Weakened by decadence and lacking a clear line of succession, the Umayyads had become unpopular rulers. This prompted the Abbasids to openly revolt in 747 CE. When Abu al-Abbas assumed the caliphate in 749 CE he sought to eliminate potential challengers and launched the extermination of the Umayyads, the Alids, other Abbasid leaders who were too popular, and all other claimants to power. He was given the title of *al-Saffah*, “the blood-shedder,” because of his savage attacks. The only Umayyad of significance who escaped Abu al-Abbas was 'Abd al-Rahman, who was able to go to Spain where he successfully established an Umayyad dynasty based in the Iberian Peninsula that lasted until 1031.

As-Saffah's four-year reign focused on efforts to consolidate and rebuild the caliphate, in the short period he ruled, he was able to establish a firm legal and dynastic base for the Abbasid Caliphate. His successor moved the capital of the caliphate to Baghdad, making what is today Iraq a major centre of power. Beyond his ruthless policy toward the Umayyad family, as-Saffah is commonly regarded by historians as having been restrained victor. In his government, other religious groups, the Jews, Nestorian



Figure 32: Cathedral–Mosque of Córdoba

The Cathedral and former Great Mosque of Córdoba known by the inhabitants of Córdoba as the Mezquita-Catedral, is today a World Heritage Site. Originally a pagan temple existed on the site, then a Visigothic Christian church, before the Umayyad Moors first converted the structure into a mosque and then built a new mosque on the site. After the Spanish conquest of Muslim Spain, it again became a Catholic church, with a cathedral inserted into the centre of the large Moorish building. The Mezquita is considered to be one of the most noteworthy examples of Islamic architecture.

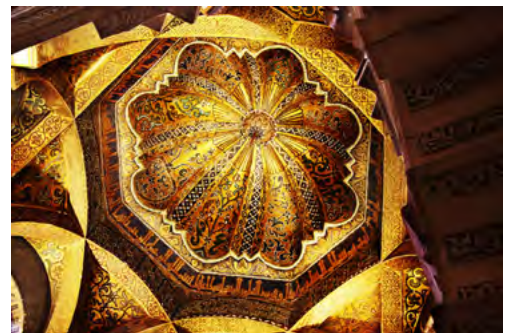


Figure 33: Dome of the Mosque-Cathedral in Córdoba, Spain

Christians, and Persians were well represented in his and in succeeding Abbasid administrations.

He instituted a number of reforms, including

- Encouraging education
- Establishing the first paper mills, operated by skilled Chinese workers who had been captured at the Battle of Talas
- Reforming the army, which was to include non-Muslims and non-Arabs in contrast to the Umayyads who refused any soldiers of either type

Nevertheless, not all Muslims were accepting of his caliphate. Some Shi'ites, accused as-Saffah of turning his back on his promises to the supporters of Ali by claiming the caliph for himself. The Shi'a had hoped that their imam would be named head of the caliphate, beginning an era of peace and prosperity many believed would come. The perceived betrayal alienated as-Saffah's Shi'a supporters, although the continued support of other groups made Abbasid rule much more peaceful than that of the Umayyads.

Caliph Abu al-Abbas died of smallpox on June 10, 754 CE but, before he did, he appointed his brother Abu Ja'far al-Mansur and, following him, the caliph's nephew Isa ibn Musa as his successors.

### **Abd Al- Rahman Founder of The Umayyad Dynasty In Cordoba, Spain (721–788 CE)**

Abd al-Rahman was the founder of the Emirate of Cordoba and reigned as Abd al-Rahman I from 756 CE. He was one of the few survivors of the Umayyad Dynasty after the Abbasids defeated the Umayyad Caliphate. Although he did not establish Muslim rule in Spain and the Iberian Peninsula, he was responsible for strengthening it and making it a strong, independent, and long-lasting political and cultural power.

In addition to founding the Emirate of Cordoba, Abd al-Rahman was an effective ruler. He strengthened the infrastructure by repairing and building roads, bridges, and aqueducts. Other achievements include

- Establishing a centralized and merit-based bureaucracy to administer the emirate
- Creating an intelligence service and a standing army
- Continuing his predecessors' practice of religious tolerance
- Constructing the Great Mosque of Cordoba of which the design was a fusion between the style of mosques in Damascus and aspects of the design of Christian basilicas

When Abd al-Rahman died around 788 CE, the Emirate of Cordoba passed to his son Hisham I (r. 788-796 CE). The creation of independent Muslim emirate separate from the Abbasid Caliphate was a major accomplishment. The Umayyads would come to reign in Spain until 1031 CE, and Muslims would rule Spain until 1492 CE.

### Abu Ja'far Al-Khazin (900–971 CE)

Known as Al-Hazen, he was an Arab mathematician, astronomer, and physicist of the Islamic Golden Age. He is sometimes given the title of “the father of modern optics”, because he made very important contributions to the principles of optics and visual perception in particular. One of his most important works was *Kitab al-Manāẓir* or “Book of Optics”, written during the period of 1011–1021, which has survived in its Latin version.

### Hasan Ibn Al-Haytham (965–1040 CE)

Ibn al-Haytham was the first to develop and explain the theory that vision occurs when light bounces on an object and then is directed to a person’s eyes. He was also an early proponent of the scientific method, the idea that a hypothesis must be proved by experiments based on confirmable procedures or evidence. He, therefore, understood the scientific method a full five centuries before European scientists in Renaissance Europe. He was interested in several fields and also wrote on philosophy, theology, and medicine.

### Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE)

Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna in the West, and whose full name is Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sina, was born in 980 CE, near Bukhara, Iran (in present day Uzbekistan). He was a Persian and Muslim physician, and the most famous and influential of all the philosopher-scientists of the medieval Islamic world. He is especially recognized for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. He authored the *Kitab al-shifa'* (Book of the Cure), which was a massive philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and *Al-Qanun fi al-ṭibb* (The Canon of Medicine), which is one the more famous books in the history of medicine. He has been described as the father of early modern medicine.

In addition to philosophy and medicine, Avicenna’s works include writings on astronomy, alchemy, geography and geology, psychology, Islamic theology, logic, mathematics, physics, and poetry. Of the 450 works he is known to have written, around 240 have survived, including 150 on philosophy and 40 on medicine.

## Saladin (1137–1193 CE)

An-Nasir Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub was known as Salah ad-Din or Saladin. He was the first Sultan of Egypt and the founder of the Ayyubid Islamic dynasty. He was a Sunni Muslim of Kurdish ancestry. Saladin is best known for leading the Islamic resistance to the Christian Crusades. Saladin has been described as the de facto Caliph of Islam and, at the apex of his power, the caliphate included Egypt, Syria, Upper Mesopotamia, the Hejaz, Yemen, and other parts of North Africa.

In 1187, his Islamic forces were successful in recapturing Palestine, including the city of Jerusalem, from the Crusaders who had conquered the area 88 years earlier.

Saladin died in Damascus in 1193. He is buried in a mausoleum near the Umayyad Mosque. Saladin is a prominent figure in Muslim, Arab, Turkish, and Kurdish cultures, and he has often been considered the most famous Kurd in history.



Figure 34: Saladin and Guy de Lusignan after the battle of Hattin in 1187

The Battle of Hattin, July 4, 1187, between the Crusader states of the Levant and the forces of sultan Saladin. The Muslim armies under Saladin soundly defeated the Crusader forces, limiting their ability to wage war. As a direct result of this battle, Muslims again became the dominant military power in the Holy Land, and reconquered Jerusalem and many more of the Crusader-held cities.

## Jalal Ad-Din Muhammad Rum or Rumi (1207–1273 CE)

Rumi was a Persian poet, *faqih*, Islamic scholar, theologian, and Sufi mystic originally from Greater Khorasan. Rumi's fame and influence crosses national borders and ethnic divisions. He is appreciated by Iranians, Tajiks, Turks, Greeks, Pashtuns, other Central Asian Muslims, and the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, who all value his spiritual legacy. His poetry has been translated into many of the world's languages.

His poem, *Masnavi (Mathnawi)*, is considered one of the greatest poems of the Persian language. His works are widely read today in their original language across Greater Iran and the Persian-speaking world. Translations of his works are very popular, most notably in Turkey, Azerbaijan, the United States, and South Asia. His poetry has influenced not only Persian literature, but also the literary traditions of the Ottoman Turkish, Chagatai, Urdu, and Pashto languages.

Some 6,000 of his verses are closely related to the Qur'an and he frequently mentions the Holy Book in his poetry.



## Mansa Musa (c. 1280–1337 CE)

Musa, was the tenth *Mansa* (sultan, conqueror, or emperor) of the Mali Empire, an Islamic West African state. Musa is generally referred to as *Mansa Musa* in Western works and literature. He is also known as *Kankou Musa*, *Kankan Musa*, and *Kanku Musa* in the West. Other names used for Musa include *Mali-Koy Kankan Musa*, *Gonga Musa*, and “the Lion of Mali”.

He has been described as the wealthiest individual of the Middle Ages. He is known for his patronage of Islamic scholars and magnificent architectural projects. He is remembered as reigning over an empire that was one of the most prosperous of any monarchy in the history of the world.

At the time of Musa’s ascension to the throne, Mali in large part consisted of the territory of the former Ghana Empire, which Mali had conquered. The Mali Empire consisted of land that is now part of Mauritania and the modern state of Mali. Musa conquered 24 cities, along with their surrounding districts. During Musa’s reign, Mali may have been the largest producer of gold in the world, and Musa has been considered one of the richest people in history.

During his reign, he held many titles, such as “Emir of Melle”, “Lord of the Mines of Wangara”, and “Conqueror of Ghanata”.

## Osman I (1258–1323 CE)

Osman I or Osman Gazi was the ruler of a Turkmen principality in northwestern Anatolia. He is considered to be the founder of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Both the name of the dynasty and the empire that the dynasty established are derived from the Arabic form of his name, ‘Uthmān or Othman. Osman’s state was first known as the Ottoman Beylik or Emirate, and during Osman’s lifetime, it was only a small Turkmen principality. In the centuries after his death, however, it was transformed into a world empire which existed until just after the end of World War I.

There is a scarcity of historical artifacts and primary sources dating from his lifetime, and therefore very little factual information about Osman has survived. The history of Osman’s life was not recorded by the Ottomans until the fifteenth century, which was more than a hundred years after his death. For this reason, historians find it very difficult to differentiate between factual and mythical details in the stories that are told about him.

According to Ottoman tradition, Osman’s ancestors were descendants of the Kayı tribe of Oghuz Turks. The Ottoman principality was just one of many Anatolian Beyliks that emerged in the second half of the thirteenth century. It was situated in the region of Bithynia in the north of Asia Minor and it was particularly well-located as a base to launch attacks on the weakened Byzantine Empire. With Söğüt as their base, Osman and Muslim frontier warriors (*Ghazis*) under his command fought and won a series of slow battles against the Byzantines, who tried to defend their territories on the borders of the Asiatic shore opposite Constantinople (now Istanbul).

Over time, Osman was able to extend his control over several former Byzantine fortresses, including Yenişehir, which provided the Ottomans with a strong

base to lay siege to Bursa and Nicaea (now İznik), in northwestern Anatolia. Osman was succeeded by his son Orhan, who captured Bursa on April 6, 1326. Ottoman tradition indicates that Osman died just after the capture of Bursa, but most scholars believe that he died in 1324, the year Orhan took the throne.

## Mehmed (Mehmet) II (1432–1481 CE)

Mehmed II (commonly known as Mehmed the Conqueror or in Turkish, *Fatih Sultan Mehmet*) was an Ottoman Sultan who ruled from 1444 to 1446, and then later from 1451 to 1481. In his first reign, he defeated the crusade led by John Hunyadi after the Hungarian incursions into his country broke the conditions of the truce Peace of Szeged. Later, when Mehmed II ascended the throne a second time in 1451, he strengthened the Ottoman navy and prepared for launching an attack to conquer Constantinople, the seat of the Byzantine Empire.

In 1453, Mehmed II succeeded in conquering Constantinople (Istanbul) and brought an end to the Christian Byzantine Empire. One of his first acts upon taking Constantinople was the conversion of Sancta Sophia (Hagia Sophia), the Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal cathedral into a mosque.

He was a great military leader and, in addition to capturing Constantinople, he conquered Anatolia and the Balkans (Southeast Europe as far west as Bosnia) that comprised the Ottoman Empire's heartland for the next four centuries.

He is also recognized for his many political and social reforms, encouraging the arts and sciences, and by the end of his reign, a robust rebuilding program that revitalized and changed Istanbul into a thriving city and imperial capital.

Due to his success, Mehmed II is considered to be a hero in modern-day Turkey and in many parts of the wider contemporary Muslim world. A number of Istanbul's sites are named after him including Fatih district, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, and Fatih Mosque.



Figure 35: Mehmet II  
Painting by a follower of Gentile Bellini,  
early 16th century

## Sonni Ali (Reigned 1464–1492 CE)

Sonni Ali (also known as Sunni Ali Ber or Sunni Ali) was the first king of the Songhai Empire, located in West Africa and the fifteenth ruler of the Sunni dynasty. He ascended the Songhai throne. The kingdom consisted of only a small area in the upper Niger valley around its capital, the prosperous trading city of Gao; however, Sonni Ali was ambitious and launched an imperial initiative to expand to the western Sudanese kingdom of Songhai. His success in conquering the leading Sudanese trading cities helped build the foundation for Songhai's future expansion and prosperity.

Under Sonni Ali's infantry and cavalry, many cities were captured and then fortified, such as Timbuktu (captured in 1468) and Djenné (captured in 1475). During his reign, Songhai surpassed the height of the Mali Empire, controlling the lands previously held by the Mali Empire and the Ghana Empire.

Sunni Ali is believed to have adhered to indigenous African animism while also professing faith in Islam. This has led some scholars to consider him to be only a nominal Muslim.

## Suleyman (Suleiman) The Magnificent (1494–1566 CE)

Suleyman was known by many names, including "The Law Giver." In 1520 CE, Suleyman became the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and launched the "Golden Age" of the Empire.

He is well known for his reforms to the Ottoman government that took place during his reign.

Suleyman was responsible for introducing some major government and administrative changes. He instituted important legislative changes relating to society, education, taxation, and criminal law. His Codex-

Suleiman was ground-breaking legal reform, which synthesized Turkish traditions, Islamic law, and secular law. His concept of justice informed the empire for centuries after his death and became a cornerstone of Ottoman Law. This led to his mantle of Law Giver.

Suleyman is also famous for his knowledge and his ability as military strategist which led to a doubling in the size of the Ottoman Empire during his rule. When he ascended the throne in 1520, the Ottoman Empire was already a great power, extending from Eastern Europe all the way to Egypt, and covering about 1,494,000 square kilometres. It was a vast and powerful, Empire but soon it would grow even bigger, become even stronger

under Suleyman. He personally commanded his armies and led them in conquering the Christian strongholds of Belgrade, Hungary, as well as Rhodes.



Figure 36: Conquest of Budin-Suleyman the Magnificent Painting by Hasan Riza called Conquest of Budin. The painting references the conquest of the city in 1541 by Suleiman the Magnificent—the city of Buda which would later be Budapest, the capital of Hungary.



Figure 37: Stained Glass Window in the Suleyman Mosque, Istanbul

He reached as far as the gates of Vienna in 1529. During his rule, the Turkish Fleet dominated the Mediterranean Sea, with the leadership of the brilliant military strategist Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha as his Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) and Hayreddin Barbarossa as admiral of the fleet.

Suleyman accomplished a great deal during his reign. He was able to greatly expand the size, power, and influence of the Ottoman Empire and launched a Golden Age in Ottoman arts. His achievements in the areas of literature, philosophy, art, and architecture had a major impact on both Eastern and Western styles. He strengthened the infrastructure of the empire, and built many buildings during his reign, some of which still stand today, including buildings designed by Mimar Sinan.

Suleyman created the conditions for great wealth and prosperity in the Empire, which ultimately led to the foundation of several contemporary nations in Europe and the Middle East.

### Akbar The Great Mogul (1542–1605 CE)

Akbar was the third *Mughal* (Islamic) emperor of India and is considered greatest of the Mughals. Akbar was a highly influential leader who strengthened his rule and helped unify the Mughal Empire. He established a political centre for his empire and adopted policies that were valued by his non-Muslim subjects. His strong leadership stabilized the economy throughout *Mughal* India and established the region as an important cultural centre.



Figure 38: Interior of Akbar's Tomb, India

Akbar assumed the throne while still young but succeeded in strengthening and growing the Mughal Empire. He instituted reforms to the taxation system and structure, the organization and control of the military, and the religious establishment and its relationship to the state. As well, he was a strong supporter of culture and the arts, and he had a strong interest in religion and the potential sources of religious knowledge.

During his reign, he was successful in several military campaigns intended to expand the empire. His conquests included Bihar, the Afghan kingdom of Bengal, Malwa, Gujarat, Kashmir, Sind, parts of Orissa, and parts of the Deccan Plateau. He was also successful in expanding the empire through diplomacy through which he was able to annex several territories including Baluchistan and Kandahar.

Akbar had a keen interest in religion. He is reported to have invited the Portuguese authorities in Goa to send priests to his court to teach him about Christianity resulting in three Jesuit missions being organized in response to

these requests. Although born as a Sunni Muslim, Akbar also made efforts to learn from Shi'ite scholars, Sufi mystics, Hindus, Jains, and Parsis.

Akbar is reported to have been disillusioned with orthodox Islam and, in 1582 CE, he introduced *Din-i Ilahi*, "the religion of God." It was a syncretic creed of religious beliefs that combined Islam and Hinduism into one faith, but also added aspects of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Jainism. *Din-e Ilahi* emphasized morality, piety, and kindness. Like Sufism, it regarded the longing for God as a key aspect of spirituality; like Catholicism, it took celibacy to be a virtue; and like Jainism, it condemned the killing of animals. His keen interest in religious studies led to the founding of an academy, the *Ibadat Khana*, "the House of Worship," in 1575, where representatives of all major faiths could meet to discuss questions of theology.

It was a simple, monotheistic cult, tolerant in outlook, but centered on Akbar as a prophet, for which he drew the ire of the *ulema* and orthodox Muslims.

Akbar's courts at Delhi, Agra, and Fatehpur Sikri were centres of the arts, letters, and learning. During his reign, Perso-Islamic culture began to merge and fuse with indigenous Indian elements, resulting in a distinct Indo-Persian culture characterized by *Mughal* style arts, painting, and architecture.

### Muhammad Abd Al-Wahhab (1703–1792 CE)

Muhammad al-Wahhab, was a theologian and founder of the Wahhabi movement, which promoted a return to the "true" principles of Islam. He was born in Uyaynah, Arabia, which is in present day Saudi Arabia. Although he was educated as a Sunni Muslim, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab gradually became opposed to many of the most popular Sunni practices such as visiting and venerating the tombs of saints, which he believed was a heretical religious development or even a form of idol worship. After living and teaching abroad, he began to teach in Iran against what he believed to be the extreme ideas of various proponents of such doctrines. On returning to the city of his birth, he authored the *Kitāb at-tawhīd* ("Book of Unity"), which is the main text for *Wahhābī* doctrines. His followers call themselves *al-Muwahhīdūn*, or "Unitarians". The term *Wahhābī* is generally used by non-Muslims and opponents.

'Abd ibn al-Wahhab's teachings have been characterized as puritanical and traditional, reminiscent of the early era of the Islamic religion. He rejected all innovations (*bid'ah*) in the Islamic faith because he believed them to be unacceptable, and argued that the original grandeur of Islam could be regained if the Islamic community would return to the principles enunciated by the Prophet Muhammad. *Wahhābī* doctrines, therefore, do not allow for an intermediary between the faithful and Allah, and condemn any practice deemed to be polytheistic. He condemned the decoration of mosques, the cult of saints, and even the smoking of tobacco.

Despite his teachings being rejected and opposed by many of the more notable Sunni Muslim scholars of the time, including his own father and brother, others supported his ideas. One of his supporters, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab made a religious-political pact with Muhammad bin Saud to help him establish the

Emirate of Diriyah, the first Saudi state. Thus began a dynastic alliance and power-sharing arrangement between their two families which continues to the present day in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Al ash-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's leading religious family, are the descendants of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, and have historically led the *ulama* in the Saudi state, dominating the state's clerical institution. To this day, Wahhabism is the dominant force in Arabia since the 1800s.

### Kemal (Mustafa) Atatürk (1881–1938 CE)

The original name of *Kemal Atatürk* ("Kemal, Father of Turks") was Mustafa Kemal, but he was also known as Mustafa Kemal Paşa. He was born in Salonika, which is now Thessaloniki, Greece. He was a soldier, statesman, and reformer who was the founder and first president (1923–1938) of the Republic of Turkey.

As one of the leaders in the Ottoman military, Atatürk rose to prominence during World War I. After the Ottoman Empire was defeated, he is credited with rescuing the surviving Turkish remnants of the empire and beginning and establishing the Republic of Turkey. As the nation's first president, his ideas and strategies helped his forces win the Turkish War of Independence. He was able to rally his people against invading Greek forces who sought to impose Allied control upon the war-weary Turks, and he successfully repulsed attacks by British, French, and Italian troops. Despite these struggles, he was able to found the modern Republic of Turkey, for which he is still revered by the Turks.

Over the next two decades, Atatürk created a modern state. He modernized the country's legal and educational systems, encouraged the adoption of European ways of life, and the Turkish language adopted the Latin script. He succeeded in helping his people restore pride in their Turkish culture and heritage, together with a renewed sense of accomplishment as their nation was transformed into a modern state.

### Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948 CE)

Mohammad Ali Jinnah (born Mahomedali Jinnahbhai) was born in 1876 in British India. He was a lawyer, a politician, and the founder of Pakistan. Jinnah served as the leader of the All-India Muslim League from 1913 until Pakistan's independence in 1947 and then as Pakistan's first Governor-General until his death. While India remained a secular country, Pakistan declared itself a Muslim country. In recognition of his efforts towards the founding of Pakistan and gaining independence from British rule, he is revered in Pakistan as *Quaid-i-Azam* ("Great Leader") and *Baba-i-Qaum*, ("Father of the Nation"). His birthday is considered a national holiday in Pakistan.

He was a leading lawyer of his time, who joined the liberation movement against British control of the Indian sub-continent. In the early years of his political career, Jinnah advocated Hindu-Muslim unity, helping to shape the 1916 Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the All-India Muslim League, in which Jinnah had also become prominent. Jinnah became a key leader in the All India Home Rule League, and proposed a fourteen-point constitutional reform plan to safeguard the political rights of Muslims. However, in 1920 Jinnah resigned from the Congress when it

agreed to follow a campaign of passive political resistance, which he regarded as political anarchy.

By 1940, Jinnah no longer advocated Hindu-Muslim unity and had come to believe that Muslims of the Indian subcontinent should have their own state. In that year, the Muslim League, led by Jinnah, passed the Lahore Resolution, demanding partition of British India and the creation of a separate Islamic nation.

As the first Governor-General of Pakistan, Jinnah worked to establish Pakistan's government and policies, and to aid the millions of Muslim migrants who had emigrated after the partition from the new state of India to the new state of Pakistan. Among his responsibilities was the establishment of refugee camps to assist in resettlement.

Jinnah died at 71 years of age in September 1948, about a year after Pakistan gained independence from the British colonial rulers. He is highly respected and remembered in modern Pakistan and, as a result, numerous streets, roads, and localities in Pakistan and in the world are named after Jinnah. Several universities and public buildings in Pakistan bear Jinnah's name. For many Pakistanis, he is Pakistan's greatest leader.

### Sheikh Hassan Ahmed Abdel Rahman Muhammed Al-Banna (1906–1949 CE)

Commonly known as Hassan al-Banna he was an Egyptian schoolteacher and *imam*, who is best known for having founded the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the largest and most influential Islamic reform movements in modern times. Ideologically, al-Banna's roots were with the Salafiyyah movement, which is a modernization movement that 'looks back' to the beginning of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Companions for inspiration and direction. Hassan al-Banna shared many concepts and beliefs with his predecessors, al-Afghani, Rashid Rida, and Muhammad Abduh.

Hassan was a charismatic leader, and an extremely effective organizer who has inspired many Islamic movements that followed. Hassan Al-Banna's writings and views on Islam are considered to have marked an especially significant stage in Islamic intellectual thought and political development. His writings advocated for a modern ideology fully grounded in Islam which has resonated throughout the Islamist world and has influenced Islamic dominant countries throughout the world. Al-Banna believed Islam to be a comprehensive system of life, with the Qur'an as the only acceptable constitution. He therefore advocated for Islamization of the all Islamic states, the economy, and society.



Figure 39: Hassan al-Banna  
Charismatic Muslim leader and  
founder of the Muslim Brotherhood  
of Egypt.

He argued that the establishment of a just society required development of institutions and a progressive taxation system and proposed an Islamic fiscal system where *zakat* would be directed to social expenditures in order to reduce inequality. Al-Banna's ideology and views were critical of the Western emphasis on secularism and materialism, British imperialism, and the traditionalism of the Egyptian *ulema*. Hassan believed in a pan-Arab identity and community, so while he appealed to Egyptian and pan-Arab patriotism, he rejected Arab nationalism and regarded all Muslims as members of a single nation-community.

The Muslim Brotherhood believed in a gradual moral reform and did not articulate plans for a violent takeover of power. They advocated for a "*Jihad* of the spirit," calling on Muslims to work aimed at improving the conditions of the Islamic community, which was a significant part of their ideology. Under al-Banna's leadership, the organization launched a wide-ranging campaign of social engagement and they specifically emphasized public health improvements.

However, following the abolition of Ottoman caliphate in 1924, al-Banna called on Muslims to prepare for armed struggle against colonial rule. Thus he supported the formation of a secret military wing within the Muslim Brotherhood which took part in the Arab-Israeli conflict and engaged in other terrorist-like activities. Al-Banna generally encouraged Egyptians to reject Western customs and he called for the state to enforce Islamic public morality through censorship and application of *hudud* corporal punishment. Nevertheless, he was open to some Western ideas and some of his writings quoted European authors instead of Islamic sources.

After the Arab-Muslim war that ended with the defeat of the armies of five Arab nations, the Egyptian Government stepped up its activities to stop the Muslim Brotherhood, eventually banning it. Many members were arrested and allegedly tortured. Al-Banna died in 1949, apparently assassinated by the Egyptian secret police.

Al-Banna's legacy is significant and continues to this day. He essentially gave light to the work of his Salafiyyah predecessors and, in the Muslim Brotherhood, sought to establish a new form of Muslim community. The Muslim Brotherhood's uniqueness at the time was that it was the first mass-supported and well organized group that recognized the demands of a modern urbanized world and its ideological foundation, which was further developed by Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), and has since provided a template for many other Muslim organisations. After the death of al-Banna the Brotherhood continued to oppose government initiatives and activities, despite frequent harassment by the government, as well as a result of being sympathetic to the use of terror tactics which included an alleged assassination attempt on the Egyptian President Abdel Nasser in October 1954. The Brotherhood has occasionally been banned in Egypt and other nations of the Arab world, but still exists, albeit often under different names and sometimes lacking unity.



## Influential Muslim Canadians

Many Muslim Canadians contributed to their communities, various fields, or Canada's development as a whole. Some of these were highlighted in the section on the History of Islam. It is beyond the scope of this resource to cover the multitude of Muslim Canadians across Canada who have made significant contributions in so many ways, in many communities and in many fields; however, it may be useful to acknowledge a few notable or influential persons as follows:

### *Current Members of Parliament*

- Majid Jowhari, Liberal MP for Richmond Hill (2015–present) Shia Islam
- Ali Ehsassi, Liberal MP for Willowdale (2015–present) Shia Islam
- Omar Alghabra, Liberal MP for Mississauga Erindale (2006–2008) and Mississauga Centre (2015–present)
- Salma Ataullahjan, Conservative Senator for Ontario (2010–present)
- Mobina Jaffer, Liberal Senator for British Columbia (2001–present)
- Maryam Monsef, Liberal MP for Peterborough–Kawartha (2015–present); first Muslim Cabinet Minister
- Yasmin Ratansi, Liberal MP for Don Valley East (2004–2011, 2015–present)

- Arif Virani, Liberal MP for Parkdale–High Park (2015–present).

### *Entertainment*

- Sulekha Ali—singer-songwriter
- K'naan—singer-songwriter
- Ron Mustafaa—actor known for playing Abbud Siddiqui in *Skins* (US)
- Zarqa Nawaz—created Little Mosque on the Prairie
- Dawud Wharmsby—singer-songwriter, poet
- Narcy—Yaseen Al Salman, Hiphop singer and journalist with ancestors from Iraq
- Belly—Palestinian-Canadian rapper

## Influential Muslim Manitobans

The Islamic community is rapidly growing and there are many individuals who have made significant contributions to Manitoba's development and to many fields and professions. In this section, we will highlight four Manitobans who have made significant contributions.

### Shahina Siddiqui

Shahina Siddiqui is a Manitoban of Pakistani origins who was honoured for her work and many contributions by the University of Manitoba in June of 2019 when she was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Law. Since coming to Canada in 1976, she has been a major force in Manitoba and beyond in many ways: from providing social support for the Muslim community to interfaith and antiracism education. She founded and was for many years Executive Director of the Islamic Social Services Association.

In addition, she founded the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, and co-founded the Canadian Muslim Leadership Institute as well as the Federation of Canadian Muslim Social Services. She has served as the Chair of Islamic History Month Canada.

Shahina is active in the community as a member of the RCMP Commissioner's National Advisory Committee on Diversity as well as the RCMP Commanding Officers' Diversity Committee, D-Division in Manitoba. She has also served with several provincial, national, and international non-governmental organizations as well as community organizations in Winnipeg. In addition to her work with various organizations, Shahina contributes as a freelance writer, spiritual counsellor, and public speaker.

### Dr. Taïb Soufi

Taïb Soufi was born in Algeria and later immigrated to Canada. His life has been dedicated to education and the francophone community of Manitoba. He has degrees from the University of Alger in Algeria, the Université de Lyons and the Université de Paris in France, and the University of Manitoba.

In 1968, he moved from France to Manitoba and began his teaching career at the elementary school in Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes. In 1972 he became a professor at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface (now Université de Saint-Boniface) where he taught Philosophy for several decades.

In 2003, he founded l'École Sofiya, an independent Islamic school that offers instruction in French, English, and Arabic. Taïb Soufi is a poet who has had his poetry published by Éditions du Blé and by Éditions de la nouvelle plume. In 2009, he received the Prix Riel in recognition of his community work and accomplishments.

### Abdo (Albert) Ibrahim El Tassi

Albert was born and raised in Kherbet Rouha, Kadaa Rashaya, Lebanon and immigrated to Winnipeg in 1969. Before moving to Canada he attended

university at Al-Azhar in Egypt and was a principal and school teacher in Lebanon. His first job was loading trucks at Peerless Garments. From that humble beginning, he moved up through the company and, since June 2006, he has been the President and Chief Executive Officer of Peerless Garments LP, which is a Winnipeg-based garment manufacturer and importer.

Albert has won many awards and was honoured for his contributions to Manitoba and communities beyond. In 2003, he was inducted as a “Member of the Order of Canada” and, in 2009, he was named to “The Order of Manitoba”. He has received numerous awards for his community service and, in November 2012, he was presented with the “2012 Gold Heart Humanitarian of the Year” award from Variety, the Children’s Charity of Manitoba. In 2013, he was appointed by Canada’s Minister of National Defence to the official rank of “Honorary Lieutenant Colonel—The Royal Winnipeg Rifles”.

Albert has supported many initiatives and events that have promoted interfaith and intercultural understanding. Albert has never forgotten his immigrant roots and has helped and sponsored many immigrants to Canada, including refugees from war-affected nations and regions such as Vietnam and the Middle East.

## Saira and Nilufer Rahman

Saira and Nilufer Rahman are sisters and independent filmmakers who grew up in Winnipeg. As children, their days playing outside were always followed by family-time watching TV or films together or listening to their dad tell stories. The sisters have always felt the power of storytelling to transform and connect, and to escape and reflect. They became increasingly eager to create and share stories of their own. Eventually in 2010, Saira and Nilufer established their company Snow Angel Films Inc. in order to make a formal go at producing content to share with the world.

Previously, Saira was a teacher and principal. Today, beyond being a filmmaker, Saira is also an emerging voice and stage actor (One Trunk Theatre’s *Boundary Avenue*, Sarasvati Productions’ *Baby Box* and *The Game*). Nilufer came to filmmaking after completing a Masters in History and a diploma in photography. She also interned on the set of CBC’s hit television sitcom, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*.

As Canadian Muslim women of Bangladeshi descent, Saira and Nilufer aim to amplify diverse and marginalized voices and stories. Some of their notable projects include *Arctic Mosque* (CBC, APTN, feature documentary, 2013), *Letter to a Terrorist* (short film, 2015), *Prairie Mosque* (Bell/MTS, feature documentary, 2018), *I Am: A Spoken Word Story* (documentary, 2019) and *The Year We Fasted Alone* (documentary, 2021). The sisters hope to continue creating content that will engage, inspire, entertain and connect audiences for many years to come.

## Significant Texts and Writings

Islam shares common roots with Judaism and Christianity and was the third and most recent of the Abrahamic religions to emerge. This was approximately 600 years after the founding of Christianity. By the time Muhammad was born and lived in the seventh century CE, Jews had completed the Torah and the Babylonian Talmud and Christians were by then the leaders of the official religion of the Roman Empire and had generally agreed on the scriptures that formed the New Testament (Pregill 2007).

Islam, like some other Middle Eastern prophetic religious traditions, shares a belief in monotheism, Allah's (God's) revelation, prophets, ethical responsibility, accountability, and the concept of a Day of Judgment. The concept of one god, Allah, is the foundation of Islamic belief; however, Allah has sent many prophets and messengers to peoples of various cultures and nations to provide guidance as to how to live in keeping with Allah's will. A key



Figure 40: Qur'an and Subha

aspect of Muslim faith for the vast majority of those who consider themselves to be Muslims, is that Allah's final prophet and messenger was Muhammad, and Allah's final revelation was the Qur'an (Quran, Koran). The Qur'an is regarded by Muslims as the direct word of Allah. But since Islam's founding, devoted Muslims have responded to Allah's words and interpreted the texts at different times and in different ways at different points in time, and in differing cultural contexts.

### Islamic Holy Scriptures: The Qur'an and the Hadith

The word for God in Arabic is Allah. Allah is also used by Arabic-speaking Christians when referring to the Christian God. As with the other Abrahamic religions, most Muslims understand Allah to be the creator who reigns over the entire universe and is the ultimate Judge of all human beings. For Muslims, Allah's most important characteristics or qualities are those of compassion and mercy. Allah provides guidance for humanity as to the path of righteousness that should be followed through the messengers and prophets that were sent for this purpose.

Allah is beyond all duality and relationality, beyond the differences of gender and of all qualities that distinguish beings from each other in this world. Yet He is the source of all existence and all cosmic and human qualities as well as the End to Whom all things return. (Nasr 2002, p. 3)

Traditionally, Muslims believe that the Qur'an is literally the word of Allah. All of the verses of the Qur'an were believed to have been revealed to Muhammad by Allah in Arabic through the angel Gabriel at different points between 610 CE and his death. Thus, Muhammad's recitations of the revelations he received are believed to be the verbatim and unchanged words of Allah. Because the Qur'an comprises

the words of Allah it should not be challenged or criticized, as to do so would be irrelevant, but most importantly it would be disrespectful of Allah.

As the Qur'an was revealed orally to Muhammad, during his life the primary method of transmission of the Qur'an was oral. The writing of the Qur'an is believed to have begun while Muhammad was still alive and is attributed to Muhammad's companions or followers (*sahabah*). The Qur'an was compiled or assembled during the reign of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, and was eventually standardized during the reign of Uthman, the third Caliph (Nasr 2007, p. 37). Since then, research by Islamic studies scholars has found that the Qur'an of today has not changed significantly over the years.

The Qur'an places a central role in the personal, familial, and social life of Muslims. "In traditional Islamic languages, it is usually referred to as the Noble Qur'an (*al-Qur'an al-majid* or *al-karim*) and is treated with the utmost respect as a sacred reality that surrounds and defines the life of Muslims from the cradle to the grave. The verses of the Qur'an are the very first sounds heard by the newborn child and the last the dying person hears on his or her way to the encounter with God." (Nasr 2007, p. 38)

The word Qur'an means recitation. Therefore, when Muslims refer to the Qur'an, they usually mean the recitation in Arabic of the sacred text rather than printed versions or any non-Arabic version of it. For Muslims, the Qur'an is perfect only as revealed in its original Arabic oral form to Muhammad. Versions of the Qur'an in languages other than Arabic are not authoritative because they are believed to be inherently deficient due to linguistic differences, the limitations and potential errors of translators, and the impossibility of maintaining the inspired style of the original. As such, non-Arabic versions of the Qur'an are considered to be only interpretations of its content and not the actual Qur'an.

This is why, the Qur'an is traditionally always read and studied in Arabic so as to preserve the true words of Allah, The Qur'an for Muslims is *Iman* (faith), and is unchanging and unchangeable. From a Muslim perspective, it is the last and most complete collection of guidance from Allah and eternally applicable to all people.

The Qur'an is divided into 114 different *suras/surahs* (chapters) which in totality contain 6,236 *ayat* (verses). The *suras* are divided into two collections, the Meccan and the Medinan, in other words, those revealed to the Prophet when he was in Mecca and those revealed after he migrated to Medina. All but one of the *suras* begins with the *bismillah*: "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." The *suras*, which were revealed earlier in Muhammad's life at Mecca are deemed to be primarily concerned with ethical and spiritual topics. The *suras* revealed later in Medina tend to focus on social and moral issues that are relevant to the Muslim community. The Qur'an's primary purpose is to provide moral and religious guidance rather than legal instruction. It is considered to be the source of Islamic values and principles.

The organization of the chapters of the Qur'an is not based on the chronological order of the revelations, but on an order given by Muhammad, through Divine guidance. The content of the Qur'an varies greatly and covers a range of subjects from ethics to the origin and nature of the universe and philosophical and spiritual topics.

“According to Islamic teachings, the Qur’an contains the roots, or principles, of knowledge pertaining to both the domain of action and that of intellection and contemplation. It contains ethical and legal teachings as well as metaphysical ones pertaining to the Nature of God, cosmological ones related to the nature of His creation, and psychological ones concerning the human soul. It also bears a knowledge that pertains to the inner, spiritual life and to eschatological realities that concern the final ends of the individual and of human and cosmic history.” (Nasr 2007, p. 42)

Typically, a chapter of the Qur’an may address a combination of several themes, such as

- Allah and creation
- Prophets and messengers from Adam to Jesus
- Muhammad as a preacher and as a ruler
- Islam as a faith and as a code of life
- Disbelief, human responsibility, and judgment
- Society and law

The Qur’an begins with a short *sura* (chapter) called the *Fatihah*, or The Opening. The seven verses of the *Fatihah* are a prayer for Allah’s guidance, divinity, and grace. This *sura* has an essential role in Islamic prayer (*salat*) as it is the first *sura* recited in full in every prayer cycle (*rak’ah*). It is recited as an opening for many functions in everyday Islamic life. An English translation of the *Fatihah* follows:



Figure 41: A page from the Qur’an showing the *Fatihah*, the first *surah*.

In the Name of Allah, the  
 Infinitely Good, the  
 All-Merciful  
 Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds,  
 The Infinitely Good, the All-Merciful,  
 Master of the day of judgement.  
 Thee we worship, and in Thee we seek help.  
 Guide us upon the straight path,  
 the path of those on whom Thy grace is,  
 not those on whom Thy anger is,  
 nor those who are astray.

From (Nasr 2007, p. 41)

Commonly, Muslims recite the *Fatihah* every day as part of their prayers. According to a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, this *surah* contains the essence of the teachings of the Qur'an.

## The Qur'an, the Torah and the Bible: Shared Prophets and Stories

The Qur'an also contains a sacred history, much of which it shares with the Torah and Bible, although it is not derived from Jewish or Christian sacred texts (Pregill 2007). Islam recognizes the divine origins of the earlier Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and represents itself as both a restoration and a continuation of their traditions. Because of this, the Qur'an draws on biblical stories and repeats many biblical themes.

“For Muslims, the Qur'an completes the message of previous sacred texts without in any way denigrating their significance. In fact, the Torah and the Gospels are mentioned by name as sacred scriptures along with the Qur'an in the text of the Qur'an. Likewise, although the Prophet terminates the long chain of prophecy, the earlier prophets lose none of their spiritual significance. Rather, they appear in the Islamic firmament as stars, while the Prophet is like the moon in that Islamic sky.” (Nasr 2007, pp. 21-22)

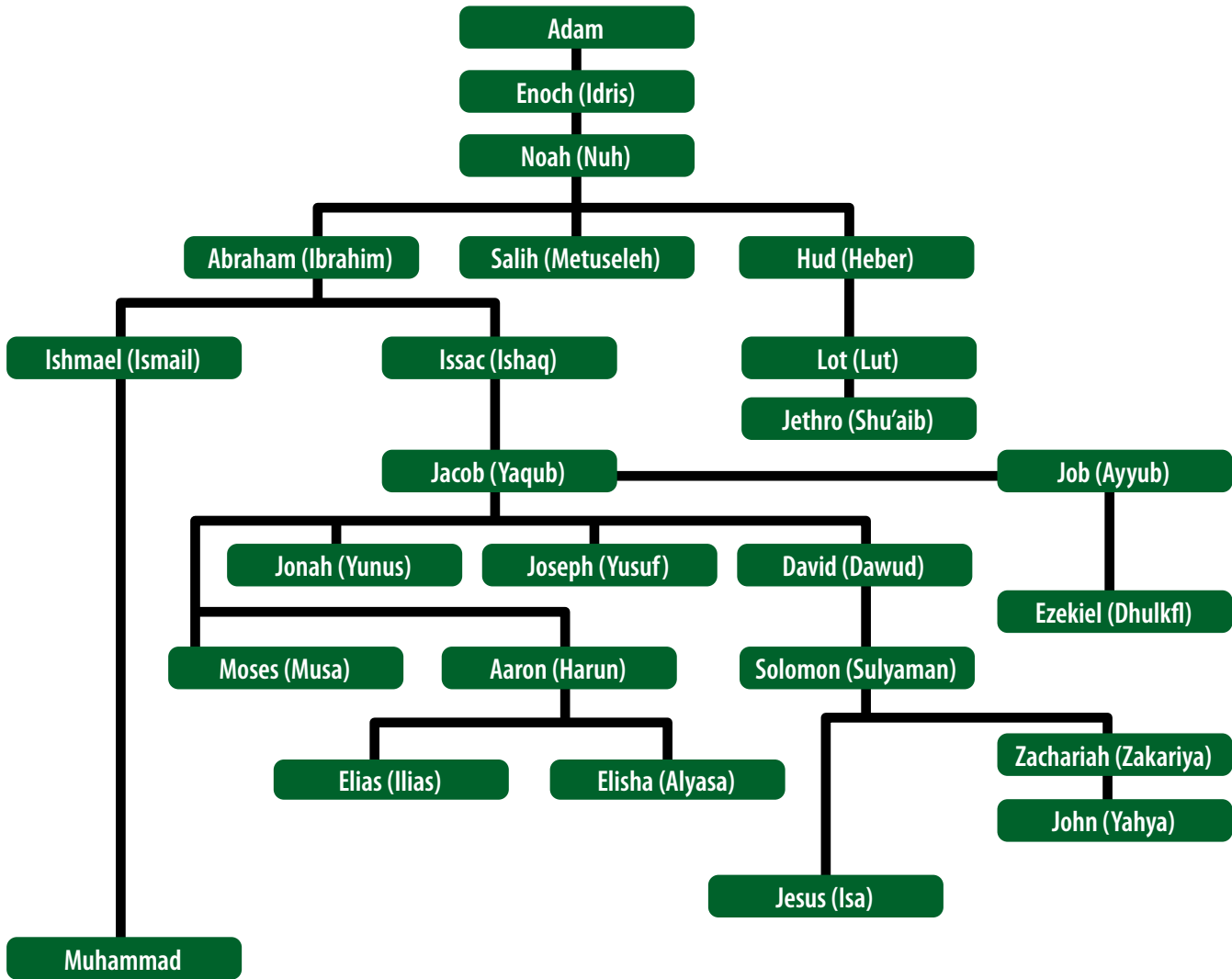
The Qur'an references and retells aspects of the Torah, Gospel, Psalms, and the present day Bible. It includes many topics and mentions many figures who appear in the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

“The major figures of the patriarchal and prophetic heritage of ancient Israel – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses pre-eminent among them – are featured prominently in the Qur'an, as are other figures from later phases of Israel's history, from David and Solomon to Job to Jesus of Nazareth. Virtually all of these figures are endorsed as representatives of the prophetic heritage, and called either nabi or rasul.” (Pregill 2007, p. 5)

For Muslims, while the Qur'an confirms early scriptures, it is viewed as the only trustworthy and accurate rendition of them. Therefore, the Qur'an replaces earlier scriptures and the laws as expressed in Jewish and Christian scriptures. The new Laws of Islam are definitive and take precedence over previous scriptures. For example, the old laws pertaining to diet, ritual prayer, fasting, inheritance, marriage, and divorce were either cancelled or, in many cases, reaffirmed by the Islamic Law (Mufti 2006).

The chart, which follows details the biblical prophets and figures who also appear in the Qur'an.

## 25 Prophets Mentioned in the Qur'an



The stories of several biblical prophets who appear in the Qur'an in some cases do so in a condensed form, while in others they are retold more elaborately. As well, some of the biblical stories are retold in a revised or adapted form. (Pecorino 2001). For example, one of the significant differences between the Qur'anic and biblical versions of Abraham's sacrifice of his son is that the Qur'an suggests this son is Ishmael, from whom Arabs are descended, and not Isaac, from whom the tribes of Israel are descended. A more significant deviation from biblical sources relates to the Islamic story of Jesus, who in the Qur'an is a mortal, human prophet. The Islamic version of the story rejects the idea that God was ever born or manifested in a human form.



Another important concept detailed in the Qur'an and in later Islamic doctrine, which is distinctly different from biblical thought is that although prophets are capable of human error, Allah protects them from committing sins and protects them from severe suffering or demeaning experiences. Allah does not abandon his prophets in times of difficulties or suffering. For example, with respect to the story of Jesus, the Qur'an tells that Allah interceded to save Jesus from the torture and death by crucifixion by lifting him to heaven and substituting Jesus on the cross with another person who resembled him. (Pecorino 2001)

## Abrogation and the Qur'an

The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad over a period of approximately 23 years. In some cases, earlier revelations or *surahs* may appear to contradict or not be consistent with later revelations or *surahs*. As Allah is infallible, in order to deal with such issues, the concept of abrogation of one or more *surahs* by others developed. The idea being that some revelations were made at a point that was appropriate for that specific time and the ability of people to comprehend in the development of Islam. Thus, Abrogation in the Qur'an usually refers to a situation in which a later verse changes or alters a ruling or guidance established by a *surah* or verse which was revealed earlier, either in totality or in part. However, Islamic scholars of different sects, nations, and perspectives historically have developed different definitions of abrogation that have differed from the linguistic and practical usage of earlier or even contemporary scholars. This has led to quite significant disagreements over the nature of abrogation, how many and which *surahs* should or need to be abrogated, and even whether abrogation is a legitimate interpretive mechanism.

Generally, Islamic scholars have taken the position that later revelations take precedent or abrogate earlier revelations. This is due to the belief that the earlier revelations were made at the infancy of Islam, and were meant to introduce humans to Islam. Later revelations from this perspective are more sophisticated, and more fully developed. There are some, however, who argue the opposite; that earlier revelations should take precedent over later revelations, as earlier revelations are taken to be purer and more at the heart of Islam.

The Sudanese scholar Muhammad Taha, who was an influential thinker both in Sudan and throughout the Islamic world, is one of those who challenges the traditional and established norm of later revelations abrogating earlier revelations. Taha engages in a deep and thorough attempt at reconciling Islamic beliefs with the challenges posed by modernity. He was not only a significant intellectual figure, but was also a political activist from the mid-1940s until his execution in 1985. (Jackson 2006)

“However, Taha went further than many other reformers in appealing to what he called the ‘Second Message of Islam’. He argues that the standard position of naskh should be abandoned. Naskh is the accepted principle that earlier verses in the Qur'an are abrogated in favour of later verses, thus resolving the

problem of possible contradictions. However, Taha actually argues that naskh should be reversed. He states that the notion of naskh is in any case weakly supported in the Qur'an (2:106) and that quite a few classical and modern scholars reject the concept. While the traditional view is that the earlier Meccan verses are abrogated by the later Medinan ones, Taha argues that the Medinan revelations are more historically specific than the Meccan ones which involve a more general calling of mankind to Islam. The Meccan verses contain the universal core of Islam, the 'second message of Islam', and so the Medinan verses should yield to the Meccan."

(Jackson 2006, pp. 210)

### Women in the Qur'an

Women are important characters, in the Qur'an and featured in the stories and morals taught in Islam. Mary (Maryam) is the only woman specifically named in the Qur'an by name. The names of the other women come from other religious traditions. Generally, the women in the Qur'an are depicted as being either the mothers or wives of leaders and prophets. Nevertheless, they retained a measure of autonomy from men in some ways. For example, the Qur'an describes women who converted to Islam before their husbands and others who independently chose to take an oath of allegiance to Muhammad.

As well, in many of the stories in the Qur'an, women are featured and play important roles. However, these stories and women's roles in them have been subject to alteration and biased interpretation in both classical commentary and popular literature as a result of patriarchal perspectives. The cultural norms that have existed or exist in patriarchal societies have shaped the way that these societies understood the text and created a pervasive narrative that affected the way future generations were set up to interpret these stories and the role of women. Islamic scholars and lawmakers continuously reinterpreted the women presented in the Qur'an through the lens of the dominating ideology and historical context of the time. Today, in light of contemporary perspectives and with the rise of Islamic feminism, many scholars are reviewing the original text, reexamining the prevailing traditional interpretations of women, and re-envisioning women's roles within the Qur'an.

Women referenced in the Qur'an include: Eve (Hawwa); Wives of Noah and Lot; Daughters of Lot'; Sarah, Wife of Abraham; Aziz's Wife (Zulaykha) and the Ladies; Mother and sister of Moses; Wife of Moses; Asiyah, Wife of the Pharaoh; The Queen of Sheba (Bilqis); Wife of Imran; Mary (Maryam); Wives of Muhammad; Daughters of Muhammad; The woman who complained to God about her husband.; Wife of Abu Lahab.



Figure 42: Girl Reciting the Qur'an by Osman Hamdi Bey (1880)  
He was an Ottoman administrator, intellectual, art expert and also a prominent and pioneering painter whose works often showed women engaged in educational activities.

Defenders of the traditional position of naskh often give examples to support their position. One example is the verses concerning wine which were later extended to alcohol and other intoxicants. The rules concerning wine and alcohol moved through the following four stages:

1. At first it was permissible.
2. Later it was allowed but discouraged by verse 2:219.
3. Then it was prohibited to drink wine or alcohol before prayer by verse 4:43.
4. Lastly, wine and alcohol were completely prohibited by verse 5:90.  
(Parrott 2018)

The argument made is that this example shows that the gradual prohibition of wine and alcohol in general was both logical and necessary. At the beginning stages of the Prophet's mission, people of the land were just not ready to give up wine and alcohol for the sake of a greater purpose of Islam. The gradual implementation of the prohibition allowed the populace to adapt both in practice and in thought.

It is argued that this model of gradual, progressive implementation on a societal level can apply to other Islamic teachings as well. Thus, the abrogation that occurred through the revelations over time allowed prophet's companions and community to transition from being one of the most lawless to one of the most law-abiding societies. Thus the process of abrogation of earlier verses by later verses, reveals Allah's wisdom in implementing gradualism through abrogation as an essential aspect of his transformational process.

In other cases, where verses seem to contradict each other, they do not nullify each other or abrogate one another as both can stand as each applies to different contexts and situations. An example of such a case is the guidance given by the 'peace verses' and the 'sword verses'. Each set of verses, discussing compassion or justice, peace or war, may be applied to their appropriate situations. The verses supporting compassion and forgiveness were revealed first to express the primary stance, then later the sword verses were put forward to provide guidance as to when exceptions may be made. While peace is the desired state, war is sometimes necessary to defend the innocent and protect the community. While forgiveness is a righteous and proper attitude to have, it should not be at the expense of justice for victims.

Thus, the belief is that the peaceful verses and the sword verses of the Qur'an do not contradict each other, nor do they cancel each other out. Each set of verses serves its own purpose, in its own time, and its own specific conditions, with peaceful, just, and positive relations between human beings as the desired end goal. There is a time for war and a time for peace.

## Hadith and Sunnah

Muslims also seek guidance from the *Hadith* or *Hadit* ("News" or "Story"), which are the writings about the life of the Prophet Muhammad. The earliest pieces of written texts of the *Hadith* are the edicts, letters, and treatises dictated by the Prophet himself, followed by his sayings recorded in the 'page' (*suhifah*) of his

Companions and the next generation of disciples, usually known as the Followers, or the *tabiun*. This type of *hadith* was followed by a class of texts known as “Documents” (*al-musnad*), written by famous scholars such as Abu Da’ud al-Tayalisi, and others (Nasr, 2007).

The *Hadith* are both a supplement to the *Qur’an* and an aid to assist with the interpretation of the *Qur’an*. Each *hadith* provides some specific information about Muhammad, when collected, the combined information paints a more complete picture of his life and example, which is called the *Sunnah*.

The *Hadith* is intended to guide Muslims in living their daily lives and helping them understand and follow the teachings of the *Qur’an* to fulfil Allah’s wishes. When Muslim’s follow the example provided by the Prophet Muhammad as recounted in the *Hadith*, they are following the *Sunnah*, or customary practices of the Prophet. These practices become integral to the everyday lives of Muslims such as the rituals perform as they go through their cycle of daily prayers.

Unlike the *Qur’an*, the *Hadith* is not viewed as the direct teachings of Allah, but is nevertheless inspired by Allah, and reflected in the words and actions of Muhammad. Therefore, the *Hadith*, as a record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, is seen to be divinely inspired, revered, and a major source of Islamic religious law and moral guidance (Nasr, 2007). It may be described as being a biography of Muhammad’s life derived from and maintained by the enduring memory of his community of followers and it serves as the prime example of how to live a good life and provides a model for all Muslims to follow. The creation of the *Hadith* was an extremely important development that took place during the first three centuries of Islamic history.

The *Hadith* provides a broad and deep insight into Islamic thinking and beliefs and is second in importance to the *Qur’an*. It is an essential document for Muslim legal scholars and jurists. Despite the many theological and legal differences between Muslim sects, all have acknowledged the necessity of at least some *hadiths*, even if few, to understand the *Qur’an* (Hamdeh 2019).

According to scholars, in the early periods of Islam, the *Hadith*, unlike the *Qur’an*, was shared in oral form only and there were no attempts to establish or codify it into law until the beginnings of the second century of Islam. Due to the delay in the efforts to collect, collate, and compile reports about Muhammad’s traditions, Muslim scholars recognized that the authenticity of each of these records needed to be established. Fake reports or stories were often

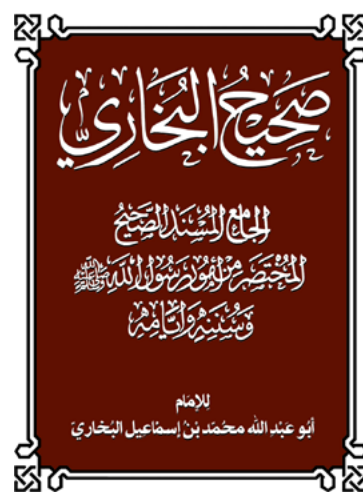


Figure 43: Sahih al-Bukhari

created and circulated to support claims of diverse political and sectarian groups. Other reports confused common practices that predated Islam with new Islamic laws and norms. In addition, fading memories, the dispersal of the companions of Muhammad over vast territories, and eventual deaths of the last of these companions also contributed to the problem of authenticating Muhammad's traditions (Pecoriono 2001).

Consequently, Muslim scholars launched and dedicated themselves to an effort to systematically examine and verify the relative accuracy and authenticity of the various reports, which were being attributed to Muhammad. This process required the analysis and careful scrutiny of the content of the stories and the sayings, as well as the reliability of those who had reported them. In addition, the *Hadiths* were categorized and collated into groups deemed to have varying degrees of accuracy and authenticity, ranging from those deemed to be valid and reliable to those deemed likely to have been invented and rejected. All of these works together with numerous other writings were collected, categorized, and organized into several major books of *Hadith*, which appeared in the Sunni world around the ninth century, about 250 years after the death of Muhammad. These books of collected *Hadith* are usually known as sound (*sahih*) *Hadith* and are commonly known as being "The Six Correct Books" (*al-Sihah al-Sittah* or *Kutub al-Sittah*). They constitute the official (canonical) and orthodox sources of *Hadith* in the Sunni world (Nasr 2007). The six books are as follows:

1. **Sahih Bukhari** compiled by Abu Abd Allah al-Bukhari
2. **Sahih Muslim** compiled by Abu 'l-Husayn 'Asakir ad-Din Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Muslim ibn Ward ibn Kawshadh al-Qushayri an-Naysaburi (Muslim Nayshaburi or Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj)
3. **Sunan Abu Dawud (Dawood)** compiled by Abu Dawud (Dawood) al-Sijistani
4. **Jami' al Tirmidhi** compiled by Abu Isa Muhammad at-Tirmidhi (Timizi)
5. **Sunan al-Sughra or an-Nasa'i an** compiled by Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb ibn Ali ibn Sīnan an-Nasa'i
6. **Sunan ibn Majah** compiled by Abu 'Abd Allah Ibn Majah

(Nasr 2007; Godlas 2003)

Of the six compilations noted above, two are especially valued by Sunni Muslims. They are the *Sahih al'Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* and are deemed to be the most important sources of Islamic authority after the Qur'an (Pecoriono 2001). There have been other important compilations, but they never gained the authority of these six works.

The compilation of the *hadith* historically coincided with the development and refinement of Islamic law and, in parallel, with the development of Islamic legal theory. Initially, while neither Islamic law nor its procedures were systematically developed, it was common to reference both the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* and they were regularly used to derive and set laws that would govern Muslim lives. Eventually, by the beginning of the ninth century, the use of these two sources of foundational texts was formalized and a complex Islamic legal theory was introduced (Pecorino 2001). As Islamic theory evolved, it reached a point where it formalized and there are four sources, organized hierarchically, from which all Islamic law is derived. These are, in order of priority

1. *Qur'an*
2. *Hadith*
3. Consensus of the community (*ijma*)
4. Legal analogy (*qiyas*)

(Pecorino 2001)

*Ijma*, the consensus of the community, comes into play only in situations where there is no explicit ruling in the *Qur'an* or *Hadith*, and consensus establishes legitimacy retrospectively based on the historical practices of the Muslim community. In the case of legal analogy, the causes for existing Islamic rulings are extended to and applied by analogy to similar cases for which there are no explicit statements in either the *Qur'an* or *Hadith*, to establish consistency of practice. As a result, over time an extensive and diverse body of Islamic law was developed using these four methods and covering a full range of aspects of personal and public life (Pecorino 2001).

In addition to the laws pertaining to the five pillars of Islam, Islamic law covers a broad range of matters and laws ranging from diet and foods, purity, marriage and inheritance, business and commercial transactions, relationships with non-Muslims, and crime and punishment. Historically, in Muslim nations, Jews and Christians were subject to the public laws of Islam, but were permitted to run their internal affairs on the basis of their own religious laws (Pecorino 2001).

## Sharia (Shariah)

In Islam, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* (*Hadith*) are the source of the divine law (*sharia*). Sharia sets out the rules and values that are essential to Islam. Thus, Sharia is the result of divine revelation (*Qur'an*) and/or divinely inspired (*Hadith*).

*Fiqh* is the interpretation of *Sharia* as developed by Islamic jurists. It is a human construct. *Fiqh*, which literally means understanding, is how jurists understood and applied the *Sharia*, especially the aspects of *Sharia* concerning the practical rules with regard to the conduct of persons, including norms for family life (among which marriage, divorce, and inheritance), commerce, finance, and war and peace. *Fiqh*, refers mainly to the body of law that was and

is developed by the legal schools (*madhahib*), individual jurists, and judges by recourse to independent legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) and issuance of legal verdicts (*fatwa*). (Kamali 2015, p. 1).

The English term Islamic Law refers to both *Sharia* and *fiqh*, but often does not distinguish between the two.

## Schools of Law

*Fiqh* developed over time into more specific rulings (*ahkam*) especially with reference to newly arising issues, mainly for jurists (*fuqaha'*). *Sharia* courts also played a role but it was mainly the work of individual jurists in the various parts of Islamic lands. As *Sharia* is divinely revealed, Muslims of all schools and sects follow the same *Sharia*, including Sunnis and Shi'ites; however, they developed their own respective schools of jurisprudence, or *madhhabs*, which differ with respect to interpretation and details. (Kamali 2015). While there are many similarities, the schools do differ in their analysis, as well as in the criteria they use for reaching legal decisions, some of their interpretations of Qur'anic requirements, and the details of prescribed rituals.

According to Sookhedo (2006), there are four Sunni orthodox schools of law (*madhahib*, singular *madhab*), each of which is named after their founders, and which had been developed and codified by the end of the tenth century. The Shi'ite developed their own school of law. The founders of these schools were as follows:

- Abu Hanifa (700–67): The Hanafi madhab
- Malik ibn-Anas (715–95): The Maliki madhab
- Muhammad ibn-Idris al-Shafi'i (767–820): The Shafi'i madhab
- Ahmad ibn-Hanbal (780–855): The Hanbali madhab
- Ja'far al-Sadiq (700–765) the sixth Shi'a Imam: The Ja'fari madhab, the Shi'a of the Twelver school

In addition to these five major schools of laws, a few other smaller, and more marginal schools developed and have survived, including the following:

- the Shi'a Zaydi (Fiver) school, mostly limited to Yemen
- the Shi'a Ismaili school
- a small khariji-'Ibadi school has also survived in Oman

Until recently, most Muslims were expected to follow one of these five schools, usually the one that was dominant in their region. Nevertheless, since "the leading schools of Islamic law recognise one another as valid interpretations of the *Sharia*, under the jurisprudential principle of selection (*takhayyur* or *takhayir*), all schools may select formulas and principles from one another, and integrate them into their own school or *madhhab*. This has in fact happened on many occasions in the twentieth century." (Kamali 2015)

## Fatwa

A *fatwa* is a legal/religious verdict issued by a qualified qur'anic scholar (*mufti*) in response to a specific question or issue. Anyone or any group with a question about an element of Islamic law and religion can request the scholar for a *fatwa*. Traditionally, the *fatwa* issued in response to the question or issue posed is generally non-binding and the person or situation to whom it is addressed is free to ignore it and seek the opinions of other *muftis* unless the *fatwa* in question simply articulates a decisive prohibition of the *Qur'an* or *hadith*. (Kamali 2015 pp. 4-5)

Historically, the intent of *fatwa* was to inform Muslims about Islam, advise courts on difficult points of Islamic law, and elaborate on functional law. As Islam evolved, public and political *fatwa* were issued in response to doctrinal controversies, or to legitimize government policies and/or articulate grievances of the Islamic community. During the era of European colonialism, *fatwa* played a role in mobilizing resistance to foreign control. *Fatwas* have played an important role throughout Islamic history and have taken on new forms in the modern era. (Kamali 2015 pp. 4-5)

In the past, *muftis* acted as independent scholars in the classical Muslim legal system. Over the centuries, Sunni *muftis* were gradually brought into state bureaucracies; this also includes Shi'ite jurists in Iran who have progressively asserted an autonomous authority starting from the early modern era. In many Muslim countries, *muftis* are often state staff with specified jurisdictions under their applied statutory laws; they no longer act in their previous independent capacities. Thus, when a *fatwa* is issued and reported, it now carries a binding requirement for particular cases and localities. (Kamali 2015 p. 4-5)

Because *fatwas* are interpretative in nature, they may vary depending on the scholar, their process and analysis, or their social and political context. In some cases, *fatwa* issued by different scholars may contradict or conflict with one another.

Many Islamic entities, and Islamic websites have sections related to the publication of *fatwas*. In the Islamic diaspora, Muslims may seek *fatwas* from local or international scholars with respect to questions related to integration into the existing educational, social, political, or legal structures. For example, parents in some communities have requested *fatwas* with respect to such issues



Figure 44: Turkish Mufti (1687 Engraving)  
A mufti is an Islamic legal scholar who is qualified to issue a fatwa, a non-binding opinion, concerning a point of Islamic law (sharia). Muftis and their fatwas played an important role throughout Islamic history, taking on new roles in the modern era.



as playing musical instruments in mandatory arts/music classes. Some examples follow:

- See <https://aboutislam.net/counseling/ask-the-scholar/arts-entertainment/permissible-learn-play-violin/> for a *fatwa* by an Islamic scholar from Toronto in response to a question posed about the permissibility of playing the violin.
- See [www.islamweb.net/en/fatwa/352462/playing-musical-instruments-in-compulsory-music-class](http://www.islamweb.net/en/fatwa/352462/playing-musical-instruments-in-compulsory-music-class) for a *fatwa* in response to a question posed by a 13-year-old Muslim student in Finland about playing a musical instrument in mandatory music classes at his school.
- See [www.dar-alifta.org/Foreign/ViewFatwa.aspx?ID=4866](http://www.dar-alifta.org/Foreign/ViewFatwa.aspx?ID=4866) for a *fatwa* concerning the permissibility of music classes.

## Other Important Muslim Sources of Authority

It is likely that the need for an explanation or clarification of the verses of the Qur'an arose quite early. Even before the whole of the Qur'an was revealed, the Prophet was questioned about the meaning of certain words in the verses revealed, the application of the verses to problems followers faced, or the details of certain historical or spiritual matters. In attempting to understand the meaning of the Qur'an, different approaches were taken to decipher its meaning, two of which has been traditionally called *tafsir* and *ta'wil* (Nasr 2007).

### Qur'anic Commentaries: Tafsir and Ta'wil

One aspect of traditional Qur'anic scholarship deals with the elements of the Qur'an which may be seen as being categorical (explicit in meaning) and others that are allegorical. That is, some passages of the Qur'an are definitive *muhkam* in meaning, while others, named *mutashabihat*, are metaphorical in meaning, obscure, or inexplicable. (Esack 2005).

"Throughout Islamic history, Quranic commentaries have been written from both points of view, the outward and the inward. The first is called *tafsir* and the second *ta'wil*. Works of both categories are crucial for the understanding of the text of the Qur'an, each word and letter of which is like a living being with many levels of significance, including a numerical symbolism, which is studied in the science called *jafr*, corresponding to Jewish and Christian *Kabbala*." (Nasr 2002, p. 26)

The simplest definition of the Arabic term *tafsir* means 'opening' or 'unveiling'. In this sense, *tafsir* refers to all activities of Quranic interpretation, which focus on the outer meaning of the Qur'an, including various aspects of Quranic studies such as the method of pronouncing the verses, the explanation of its meanings, and the explanation of its judgments, wisdom, and so on. (Nasr 2007; Esack 2005)

While *tafsir* deals with direct, external, and literal understanding of the Qur'an, *ta'wil* is the human attempt to explain the divine Qur'an by rational argument, personal opinion, individual research, and expertise. *Ta'wil* is the attempt to

understand the deeper, more complex, and hidden or inner meaning of the Qur'an. (Nasr 2007; Esack 2005)

Qur'anic commentary is one of the most important of the Islamic religious disciplines to this day. *Tafsir* Qur'anic commentaries range from those which primarily deal with Arabic and the grammar of the Qur'an, to those which deal with Islam's sacred history, and to those that are mostly theological in content. Islamic scholars from virtually all fields and schools have written commentaries on the Qur'an. The tradition of writing Quranic commentaries continued into contemporary times. Some of the more notable works include the *tafsirs* of Mawlana Abu'l-Kalam Azad, Mawlana Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, and Allameh Tabatabai. These works dealt not only with traditional questions, but also addressed many of the challenges and problems of the contemporary world in light of the teachings of the Qur'an. (Nasr 2007)

Quranic commentaries that deal with the inner or more obscure meaning of the Qur'an (*ta'wil*) were written mostly by Sufis and Shi'ites and not Sunni's.

They date back to the famous commentary of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, who was both one of the central spiritual authorities of Sufism and the sixth Shi'ite Imam. Over the centuries, many Sufis have written commentaries dating from the fourth century CE to the present period. These commentaries address the inner or hidden meaning of the various verses and even letters of the Qur'an, which have their own symbolic significance and are of prime importance in the development of Islamic metaphysics and cosmology. (Nasr 2007; Esack 2005)

Shi'ite commentaries have been primarily concerned with the inner meaning of the sacred Qur'anic text in relation to the reality of the Imam, who is for Shi'ites the best or ultimate interpreter of the inner dimension of the words of Allah. Some of the most important Shi'ite commentaries are those of Shaykh Abu Ali Fadl al-Tabarsi and Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi known as Mulla Sadra, who is deemed to have authored one of the most important works by an Islamic philosopher. (Nasr 2007)

While, the Qur'an has been translated often into English and numerous other languages from around the world, only a few of the Qur'anic *tafsir* and *ta'wil* commentaries have been translated as the translated versions of the Qur'an cannot capture the complexity and nuances of the original Arabic text. This is unfortunate, as they could be useful guides for the understanding of at least some aspects of both outward and hidden, or symbolic, meanings of the Qur'an. (Nasr 2007)



Figure 45: Mir Sayyid Ali, writing a Tafsir on the Qur'an, during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.