

The practice of islam throughout the world amidst challenges and cultural diverge...

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Introduction

The religion Islam was established by the prophet Muhammad in Arabia. From then on, this religion has grown and continues to spread to its neighboring countries like Syria and other parts of the continents such as America, Europe, and Asia. There are currently about 1.2 billion people who are Muslims. Islam is regarded as the second largest religion after Christianity. This religion is often compared with other religions such as Judaism and Christianity, in terms of its origin, teaching, and beliefs. Conversely, there are characteristics that differentiate Islam from other religions as well as beliefs that make people across the world embrace this religion.

Islam has its fundamental teachings and beliefs. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the doctrines that are transcribed in the holy book, Quran, lay down the foundation of the Islamic faith. However, its interpretation and practice varies on different places due to differences in factors such as the political state and cultural practices. With its continuous expansion, misconceptions, controversies, and challenges also arise.

In a certain region or country, different religions are embraced by its citizens. Religion may influence people's perspectives on various situations and issues. The differences in religions eventually lead to differences in values and beliefs. Thus, it can result to conflicts and misunderstandings. With this circumstance, how do Muslims practice their faith and how will Muslims and non-Muslims interact?

This paper aims to explore how the different countries, particularly United States, European and Asian countries, and its varying cultures interpret and

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practice the Islamic faith amidst the challenges that it has to deal with. With this objective, this paper will also discuss the teachings and beliefs of the Muslims in order to clarify misconceptions. This paper will also focus on the interactions of the Muslims and non-Muslims.

Teachings and beliefs

The beliefs of Muslims are based in the teachings of Muhammad. These teachings are recorded and can be read in their Holy Book – the Quran. The follower of the Islamic faith is called a Muslim. A Muslim is considered as a “submitter” who surrenders himself to Allah. Muhammad is the last messenger of Allah whom His will was made known. The Muslims’ Quran is simple yet it embodies the rules that the Muslims must follow in order to gain salvation. It also contains readings that advise Muslims of the doctrines, religious obligations, and proper conduct (“The History of Islam”, n. d.). Moreover, the Five Pillars of the Faith lay the religious obligations that the Muslims must practice. The first of the five pillars is repeating the creed. Through this act, a Muslim affirms his submission to God’s will. One also acknowledges that there is no other god than Allah (“The History of Islam”, n. d.). The second of the five pillars obliges every Muslim to pray five times a day. The prayer can be done individually or at congregations. It is done by bowing down and facing towards the direction of Mecca then reciting a verse from the Quran that shows the Muslims’ adoration and affirms submission to Allah. Every Friday of the week is an important day for the Muslims wherein they conduct public prayer in the courtyard of the mosque. The local religious leader administers the prayer service and gives the sermons (“The

History of Islam”, n. d.). Furthermore, the third Pillar of Faith states that every Muslim must give to charity. One must give zakat, a permanent tax, which is donated voluntarily to charity or religious purposes. Zakat, usually, ranges from one-fortieth to one-tenth of a Muslims assets (“ The History of Islam”, n. d.).

The fourth Pillar of Faith tells that every Muslim must practice fasting in the day during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is held on the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. During this time, all Muslims, who are physically capable, are required to abstain from eating and drinking between daybreak and sundown. They are requested to feed the poor people if they can afford it during this period. They are also obliged to stop using perfume, take intoxicant and performing sexual activities (“ The History of Islam”, n. d.).

Lastly, the Fifth Pillar of Faith states that every Muslim must go on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. It is advised to take the pilgrimage on the tenth and last Islamic month. During this journey, pilgrims conduct certain ceremonies. Pilgrims walk seven times around Kabah, the venerated shrine, wearing seamless white garment. Muslims may not do it if an unavoidable circumstance is encountered (“ The History of Islam”, n. d.).

Aside from the Five Pillars of Faith, Muslims must also observe proper conduct. Islam also specifies the manners that should be observe in every Muslim. Initially, this code of conduct aims to form a bond among the followers during the seventh century who were practicing polytheism and experiencing prevalent struggle. However, as ages passed by, it was not only for this purpose that the code of conduct was established. It also aims to set conformities on how Muslims must act, be it individual or social. The code of

conduct includes the prohibition of drinking alcohol and gambling, as well as eating certain kinds of meat, particularly pork. The code also suggests that the orphans should not be deprived of their inheritance. It also proposes that a man can have four wives (“ The History of Islam”, n. d.). Following this code of proper conduct is also a means of expressing a Muslims submission to the will of God. Thus, it ensures one’s salvation.

These are the fundamental practice and beliefs that every Muslims must have. With the spread of this beliefs and practices in different countries, the citizen’s interpretation may vary as well. These varying factors may contribute to the differences.

Practice of Islamic Faith in Different Countries and Cultures

Islam has its fundamental teachings and beliefs. However, the practice of this teaching and beliefs varies across different countries. The differences may result from the pre-existing cultures, traditions, and political situations. Pakistan is said to be an Islamic state. It means that it Pakistan is governed by the Islamic law. However, this is not observed since a different political system has been used which contradicts the Islamic law. Islam promotes brotherhood, and yet oppression of the citizens can be observed in this country. Pakistan can be considered as a rich country with its nuclear power, but they have been rejecting those who are promoting Islamic law in their politics. Despite this problem, Pakistani Muslims continues to seek for their freedom and autonomy (Fatah, 2008). On the other hand, India is a nation that is open to debates and practicing democracy. In this regard, this country is a place wherein Muslims can actively participate (Fatah, 2008).

Meanwhile, the Muslims in the mainland Southeast Asia have played an important role in their nation. For several years, Muslims were able to live in with people different cultures and beliefs. The challenges that the Muslims face in the countries they live in are brought about by the factors beyond their control. But despite the challenges and diversity, they continue to be a group which has a religious identity (Bustamam-Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

In southern Thailand, Muslims live by their Islamic faith and their pre-existing Thai culture and traditions. If they do not continue to practice their tradition, it might also mean that they have abandoned their culture. However, political challenges brought additional problems to the Muslims. As they practice their beliefs, the options for Muslims preserves their religion has been limited (Bustamam-Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

Pursuing Islamic studies has become dependent on several factors such as economics, political and social aspects. Despite these challenges, Muslims continues to take Islamic studies as they give great importance to it. Also, it is the responsibility of every Muslim. Through obtaining Islamic education, one can attain Islamic values and pass it on to the younger individuals. Thus, Islamic identity can be upheld. Home is also an important part of the Islamic community. It is through the family members that the Islamic values and beliefs are strengthen. Every Muslims together with their families practice their duties such as fasting and reading the Quran (Bustamam-Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

In Europe, Islam is the second largest religion. Europe might not be an Islamic state that fully governs the nation, but its existing political law does not conflict with the Sharia law. Also, Muslims actively participated in various

activities within the country they live in. They are also free to practice their faith as they are allowed to increase the number of mosques and to established schools that they can use to study Islam. However, with the existence of other religions, disagreements and conflicts arise between Muslims and other people having different religious beliefs (Daniel, 1960).

Comparison with Christianity and Judaism

Islam is often compared to Christianity and Judaism due to some similarities in its origins and traditions. Like Christians and Jews, Muslims believe in only one God making them monotheist. Despite the similarities, there are differences that give Islam the characteristics that make people embrace the Islamic faith.

Judaism is founded by Abraham in Egypt. This religion is regarded as one of the oldest religions. It was transcribed in the Hebrew Bible the journey of Jews to the promise land. The Jews have a strong hold to morality and strictly follows the Ten Commandments. Jews study Torah and other religious text which has been the practice of their religious life. Jewish law, called Halakhah, lays down the Jewish traditions and practices. Halakhah guides Jews not only religious practices but also how they should act in their daily lives. Halakhah directs Jews on how they should dress up, eat and help the poor people. By observing Halakhah, it also shows thanksgiving to God. On the other hand, Christianity, which was founded by Jesus Christ, is the largest religion in the whole world. This religion has started from a small sect of Jews during the first century then presently on become the largest religion with almost 2 billion followers around the world. Like Islam, Christian

traditions vary among different churches and cultures but some practices are also the same to all Christians. Sunday is the day of worship for Christians and is held at church. The worship includes singing, prayer, and sermon that is administer by a priest. Most Christians are baptized as an infant and practice communion. These two are some of the sacraments which are established by Christ.

Controversies, Misconceptions and Cultural conflicts

As the Islamic faith continues to expand, different controversies also became widespread. Additionally, due to different practices among varying cultures, misconceptions are unavoidable. By understanding further the teachings and beliefs of Muslim, one can clarify the controversies and misconceptions revolving around this religion.

A country wherein a large number of Muslims inhabits it might be perceived as an Islamic State by non-Muslims. However, a country can only be considered an Islamic State if it is governed by the Islamic Law, Sharia.

According to the Quran, there is a need to establish an Islamic state so that there will be equality among the people. The Islamic states will also a place for Muslims to pray and be good followers who prevent evil (Fatah, 2008).

Some practices of the Muslims are also questioned. Questioning why a Muslim is allowed to have four wives arises. This practice is specified in the Islamic Code of Right conduct. Islam asserts that it does not get rid of the desires that man is created with, but it guides a man to do what is according to Allah's will. Also, women are more reliant than men for men have a responsibility to give the needs of the wife. This situation shows that women

are more likely not to face poverty than men. If a man marries only one woman, then more reliant women won't have anyone to support their needs.

Additionally, there have been difficulties in applying the Sharia, Islamic Law. The punishment suggested in the Quran, like cutting off the hand of the thief, must be followed in order to obey the will of God. However, modernists believe that this act does not show the teachings in the Quran. Moreover, the Sharia law has varying interpretations since it is adjusted to the needs of the society to adapt to the needs of the Society. The Muslim jurists and scholars have reformed the law based on reasons and not only to the teachings in the Quran (Smock, 2005).

Interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims and participation in the country that they live in

Islam continuously expands throughout the world. It is embraced and welcomed by people all over the world regardless of culture and race. The Islamic faith also promotes unity among its followers that is why it contest any form of discrimination. Islam is also a religion that is open to new knowledge and learning from early developments. It also welcomes the integration of science and culture with its existing beliefs as long as it does not contradict the Islamic principles (“ The History of Islam”, n. d.).

Islam gives importance to the fraternity of Muslims that it even exceeds their relationship as members of the same race and country. Islam allows people in varying walks of life to work together and unify. The advancement brought by Islam also opens the mind of people embracing the Islamic faith. This situation was manifested when Arabs became the pioneers of science and

learning.

It was Islam that opens the world for people of different cultures to come together and be a catalyst in the development of knowledge. In the centuries that follow after the rise of Islam, Islamic states in different parts of the world observe the rise of the Islamic culture and knowledge.

However, the Islamic faith also weakened due to external factors such as politics. This problem occurs because the Islamic law sometimes contradicts the political law of the country. Despite this challenge, Islam currently overcome this challenge. Islam also continues to develop and advance across different parts of the world. Also, Muslims have reclaimed their political autonomy (“ The History of Islam”, n. d.).

As mentioned before, Islam has been open to new knowledge and adaptation. This quality has help Muslims to interact and communicate with non-Muslims and to be actively involved in the society that they live in.

Conclusion

Islam has continued to expand all over the world making it the second largest religion in different countries in Europe, America, and Asia. Along with this emerging expansion, come misconceptions and controversies. By having a deep understanding of the Islamic teachings and beliefs, we will be able to understand Islam better.

Though varying cultures practice this religion, the fundamental teachings and beliefs make the Muslims all over the world become one. Misconceptions have been clarified by revealing the teachings based on the Quran. Also, despite the disagreement with the initial belief some are adjusted, as the

Sharia law, in order to maintain peace and agreement between the Muslims and the people they live with. This adjustment is also done in order to adapt with the culture of the country. Even though different countries and cultures practices the Islamic faith, Muslims can live in peace while maintaining their Islamic identity and practicing their beliefs. With this situation in light, Muslims can communicate and interact with non-Muslims. Also, it is through this way that they can be actively involved in their societies.

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