

Religious studies: relevant islam research paper example

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



According to recent reports all across the world Islam is becoming more popular including " in the United States, and among students on college and university campuses." (Meacham, 13) This seems to be an indication that many people are finding relevancy in the religion even now in contemporary times. This is an interesting fact because if one listens to the newspaper reports Muslims are bad people. Muslims are blamed for almost everything that goes wrong so many people view Muslims negatively.

The fact that Islam has become increasingly popular means that more people are seriously looking at the lessons the Holy Bible of Islam, the Qur'an has to offer. Even though so many negative opinions are being spread the fact that people who are seriously interested study the facts about Islam and are finding it to be relevant to them. Islam is meeting the needs of many people spiritually or they would not be joining the religion and becoming worshippers.

Maybe one of the reasons for the increased interest and the ability to understand the Islamic religion is because of it has many similarities to Christianity and Judaism. People who are highly critically of the religion probably have not ever read the Qur'an. When people take time to sit down and read the Qur'an they must not be shocked or scandalized. Instead there seems to be a real attraction for the message in the Qur'an for people from all kinds of different

cultures. What is relevant about Islam to so many people? If the historical roots of Islam are based human nature then people are attracted to the religion. Instead of current events through the ages maybe Islam touches something that is similar in all people.

Views on modern Islam

Islam in real world situations

Sometimes religion is thought to only be about a spiritual world with no links to earthly connections. That would mean that the real world and that even objects like rosaries and beads had no place in a person's faith or religious practices. There are researchers who do not agree such as Houtman and Meyer (2012) who edited a book titled " Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality." They explain that the point of the book is to demonstrate how material items can be an important and integral part of a religion. In other words material objects are not necessarily an enemy of religion. The book includes examples from all over the world and from different religions. One of the essays is by José C. M. van Santen (2012) and is about the " common practice of counting one's beads" in a Muslim community.

Van Stanten's essay was very interesting; it is about her research in Cameroon. She explained first of all why a separation between secular and religious teachings in Islam started and became so important. She is a professor in the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies department at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. Van Santen (2012) wrote that " Until recently, education meant Qur'anic education, given that ' secular' education was associated with the colonial invaders" (p. 189). This explains that there was no historical religious reason for the division of secular and religious schools in the Muslim community. In other words there is no religious direction or verse in the Qur'an that insists on the separation. Instead the reason was to demonstrate a type of revolt from the occupation government by continuing to have their own religious schools in the

occupied community.

Van Stanten (2012) explains how “ refusing secular education is now considered an act of resistance against the colonial government (in North Cameroon)” (p. 189). The idea of studying religion in schools as a revolutionary act seems like a modern idea. Muslims could keep control of their culture and the religious schooling of their children even if the country was occupied by foreigners. This is a surprising thing to learn because it is not well known but it does represent how the Islamic religion was relevant during difficult times in northern Africa. Probably the situation was the same in other occupied countries because in many countries the division between Islamic studies and secular studies seems to exist.

A Historical Similarity between East and West

It is also interesting that the worshippers of Islam had something in common with the seekers for religious freedom that set up colonies in North America. A parallel type of action is the American Revolution because it was based on religious freedom for many of the people participating in the Revolutionary War. There are times in the history of all cultures where revolution is part of the times and Islam was able to keep its relevance during times of revolution against occupation by foreign powers. The similarity of the concerns of the two cultures East (in this example northern Africa) and the West (in this example the colonies in the New World) helps a person understand that there are not so many differences between people.

The above example shows how people of from two very different cultures can each have two common interests - the right to religious freedom and in

their activities religion is very important. The example demonstrates an example of how East and West share common characteristics of human nature. A religion that respects human nature must be meaningful to many people. In contemporary times the religion of Islam is very important because there are so many ways Islam influences the daily life of people. In other words Islam is not a religion that is meant to be apart for communities and only part of lives in especially important in monasteries or to only a few isolated groups of people. Instead it means that Islam is relevant because it addresses the issues that affect the whole nature of a person. Religions need to be able to give people something the either need or that they want otherwise people will not be interested. Islam is able to do this maybe because of the feeling of sharing a world.

In the book " The Book and the Qur'an: A Contemporary Reading" Shahrour (2012) shares his thoughts that " the Qur'an should be read and interpreted, not through the prism of centuries of jurisprudence, but as if 'the Prophet just died and informed us of this Book'" (139). This is an exciting way to view religion and makes the relevance of the message more modern than ever. That seems like a perfect way for everyone to really understand the relevancy of the Islamic religion. The modern world must be ready for Shahrour's idea because his expensive book was a bestseller in the Muslim book reading world. That might mean that so much of ancient Islam is relevant enough that it can go through any changes here and there that would make Islam fit better in the modern world.

Islamic Humanism

Islam teaches specific rules for behavior but “ the basic tenet of Islam is that everything not specifically prohibited is permitted” (Shahrour 141). This seems to be a simple way to understand what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Muhammad Shahrour is a professor at the University of Damascus, Syria and the author of “ The Book and the Qur’an: A Contemporary Reading.” Shahrour (2012) explains how there are two opposite characteristics in halal and haram. The divinely sanctioned is halal and the divinely prohibited is haram. Masmuh is the humanly permissible and mamnu is the humanly forbidden. The divine and the human are separate. If more people understood the difference in these concepts more people would be able to understand the relevancy of Islam. Shahrour (2012) the clear understanding between divine and human is relevant to the understanding that “ Islam is a religion compatible with human nature” (141). In fact Shahrour (2012) suggests the differences between the divine and the human is especially important because it has the potential to play a much bigger role in the daily affairs of people. One of the professional areas that clearly draws a boundary line between the divine and the human would be in the judicial profession. (Shahrour, 141)

Mamadiou Dia was born and lived in Senegal. He wrote a book on theory titled “ Islamic Humanism.” He also suggests (like Shahrour) in his book that the “ Islamic authenticity requires a return to the sources, that is, to the c], not to take shelter there, to drown current cares there, but to draw from thence elements for the renovation and revitalization of Islamic philosophy.” (Dia 295) Islamic authenticity should make the religion more relevant

because to be authentic means to be true to the spirit of the religion. Dia is saying that one of the ways of being honest to the true spirit of Islam can be used as a way to hide ("take shelter") or to ignore the real world ("current cares").

Islam's First Message and Jihad

The Qur'an is divided into the two sections of inman and islam; and the holy book was revealed in two sections the Meccan (the first to be revealed) and the Medinesese (the second to be revealed). (Kurzman 273) The Qur'an was not offered to every person unconditionally. A person needed to show their abilities and dedication to the religion.

"and We will surely try you until We make manifest those among you who strive (for the cause of God) and those who are steadfast. And we will make known the truth about you." (Sura 47, Verse 31)

In the verse above the phrase 'those who strive' means those who try very hard and show a genuine attempt to work for the 'cause of God.' The way this could be accomplished was by performing major jihad or in other words "striving to control the self" (Kurzman 273). Major jihad has nothing to do with the media definitions that are repeated over and over again. Self-discipline and self-control are goals that should be accomplished to become a good practicing Muslim and reach higher goals for understanding the religion and reaching the level of teacher (iman). Kurzman explained that the phrase "'and those who are steadfast' refers to endurance of the state of distance from God" (273).

"O believers, if you support [the cause of] God, He will help you and will

make your steps firm." (Sura 47, Verse 7)

Kurzman (1998) explained the meaning of the above verse and also explains the difference between minor jihad and major jihad. The cause of God was to help The Prophet maintain balance for the cause of God, so that support will be given " God shall help you and give you victory over you victory over your own lower selves" (Kurzman 275). The bargain is that if a person is steadfast to " the cause of God in minor jihad (fighting)" then God will help a believer achieve " major jihad (self-control)" (Kurzman 275). A person who is striving for God's cause can count on God's support and aid in reaching self-control because without His help it could never be achieved. Self-control is as relevant today as it ever was and especially necessary in the changes that are ahead for all cultures as the modern world meets modern challenges.

Conclusion

Dia explained in his book that " To live in the world is to think and act together, it is to think in order to act, and it is to act in thinking." (Dia 300) It could be possible that Islam is relevant now as an example of a type of global revolution in culture that is happening. The focus of the world's population is changing and this is a time of transition. The world is looking for alternative energies and ways to heal the environment. Maybe because the times of transition are so difficult that is why Islam has become so attractive to so many especially young people.

Bibliography

Boullata, Issa J. " Modern History and Politics - Political Islam: A Critical Reader." *The Middle East Journal* 66. 2 (2012): 382.

<https://assignbuster.com/religious-studies-relevant-islam-research-paper-example/>

Dia, Mamadiou. " 30: Islam and Humanism." *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*. Ed. Charles Kurzman. New York: Oxford UP, 1998: 295-303.

Houtman, Dick, and Birgit Meyer, eds. *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*. New York: Fordham UP, 2012.

Meacham, Jack. " Effective Teaching to Counter Misinformation and Negative Stereotypes: The Example of Islam." *Peer Review* 11. 2 (2009): 13

van Santen, J. C. M. *The Tasbirwol (Prayer Beads) under Attack: how the common practice of Counting One's Bead Reveals its Secrets in the Muslim Community of North Cameroon*. in, Dick Houtman and Birgit Meyer, eds. *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*. New York: Fordham UP, 2012.