

Understanding  
**ISLAM**  
and Muslim Traditions

*An Introduction to the Religious Practices, Celebrations,  
Festivals, Observances, Beliefs, Folklore, Customs, and Calendar System  
of the World's Muslim Communities, Including an Overview  
of Islamic History and Geography*

By Tanya Gulevich

Foreword by Frederick S. Colby

*Omnigraphics*

615 Griswold Street • Detroit, Michigan 48226

# Table of Contents

Foreword by Frederick S. Colby .....	17
Preface.....	21

## Section One: A Brief Introduction to Islam

Overview.....	31
---------------	----

### THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

<b>1 Essential Beliefs and Practices .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Islam .....	33
The Five Pillars of Islam .....	34
The First Pillar.....	34
The Second Pillar.....	35
The Third Pillar .....	37
The Fourth Pillar .....	37
The Fifth Pillar.....	38
Jihad.....	39
Other Important Beliefs.....	40
The Quran.....	41
The Importance of Arabic .....	42
The Prophet Muhammad .....	42
Hadith and Legends .....	43
Relationship to Christianity and Judaism .....	45
Islamic Law.....	45
<b>2 Divisions Within Islam .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Sunni, Shia, Ibadi.....	47
Schools of Law.....	48
Wahhabism .....	49
Sufism.....	50
Popular and Orthodox Islam.....	51

## **THE HISTORY OF ISLAM**

<b>3</b>	<b>Arabia Before Islam</b> .....	53
	Lifestyle and Values .....	53
	Religion.....	54
<b>4</b>	<b>The Prophet Muhammad and the Birth of Islam</b> .....	57
	The Early Life of the Prophet Muhammad .....	57
	The Founding of Islam.....	58
	The First Islamic Community .....	61
	The Growth of Islam in Arabia .....	63
<b>5</b>	<b>The Spread of Islam and the Age of Islamic Empires</b> .....	65
	The Rightly Guided Caliphs .....	65
	The Umayyad Caliphate.....	67
	The Abbasid Caliphate .....	67
	Other Caliphates.....	68
	Muslim Spain.....	69
	The Crusades .....	71
	The Spread of Islam and the Treatment of Religious Minorities .....	73
	The Sultanates .....	75
	The 20th Century and Beyond.....	78
<b>6</b>	<b>The Achievements of Islamic Civilization</b> .....	79
	The House of Wisdom .....	79
	Philosophy .....	80
	Mathematics and Physics .....	81
	Medicine.....	82
	Visual Arts.....	82
	Calligraphy.....	83
	Poetry .....	86
	Architecture .....	87
	The Influence of Arabic on the English Language .....	90

## **MUSLIMS TODAY**

<b>7</b>	<b>Moving Beyond Stereotypes</b> .....	93
	Violence and Peace .....	93
	Fanaticism and Fairness .....	97
	Strict Observance and Moderate Observance.....	99
	Islamic Fundamentalism.....	99
	Diversity of Interpretation and Practice .....	100
	Male and Female Roles and Status .....	102
	Gender Segregation and Women’s Involvement in Public Life .....	104
	Ethnicity and Media Images .....	109

<b>8</b>	<b>The Geography of Islam</b> .....	111
	Islam in Asia .....	111
	Islam in the Arab Countries and the Middle East.....	113
	Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa .....	114
	Islam in Europe.....	114
	Islam in North and South America .....	115
<b>9</b>	<b>Holy Places of Islam</b> .....	119
	Mecca .....	119
	Medina.....	122
	Jerusalem.....	124
	Other Holy Sites .....	127
	<b>Additional Resources</b> .....	129

## **Section Two: Religious Customs and Folklore**

	<b>Overview</b> .....	139
<b>10</b>	<b>Formal Prayer</b> .....	141
	The Difference Between Formal and Informal Prayer.....	141
	Call to Prayer .....	141
	Washing .....	142
	Clothing for Formal Prayer (Salat) .....	145
	Prayer Rugs and Places to Pray .....	145
	Exemptions .....	146
	Prayer Times .....	146
	Words and Movements of Formal Prayer .....	146
	Rules for Congregational Prayer .....	150
<b>11</b>	<b>Informal Prayer</b> .....	151
	How and When to Offer Informal Prayers.....	151
	Examples of Composed Prayers .....	151
	Posture and Gestures .....	153
<b>12</b>	<b>Other Devotional Customs</b> .....	155
	Prayer Beads .....	155
	The 99 Names of God .....	156
	Allah .....	158
	Dhikr .....	158
	Mealtime Prayers.....	159
	Fasting .....	159

Charity .....	160
Intention .....	160
<b>13 Mosque .....</b>	<b>161</b>
Place of Prostration.....	161
Gathering Place and Hospitality Center.....	161
Architectural Features .....	163
Imam and Muezzin.....	164
Friday Services .....	166
Separation of Men and Women.....	167
When Visiting a Mosque.....	169
<b>14 Quran .....</b>	<b>171</b>
Pious Customs.....	171
Other Names.....	172
Memorization and Recitation .....	172
<b>15 Muhammad .....</b>	<b>175</b>
“Peace Be Upon Him”.....	175
Images of the Prophet.....	176
Muhammad’s Descendants.....	177
Muhammad’s Example .....	177
Poems and Songs .....	178
Blessings .....	179
Other Names.....	180
<b>16 The Other Prophets, Angels, and Jinn .....</b>	<b>181</b>
Prophets Recognized by Islam.....	181
The Most Important Prophets .....	182
Angels.....	184
Jinn .....	184
<b>17 Greetings and Sayings .....</b>	<b>187</b>
Shake Hands, Kiss, or Nod.....	187
As-Salam Alaykum.....	188
Basmallah .....	188
Inshallah .....	188
Ma Sha Allah.....	189
Allahu Akbar .....	189
Al-Hamdu Lillah .....	189
Barakallah .....	189
<b>18 Clothing and Adornment .....</b>	<b>191</b>
Men’s Clothing.....	191
Women’s Clothing .....	193

Henna.....	194
Perfume.....	196
<b>19 Separation of the Sexes .....</b>	<b>197</b>
In Public .....	197
At Home.....	198
<b>20 Beliefs and Practices Concerning the Body .....</b>	<b>199</b>
Cleanliness and Purity .....	199
Left and Right.....	201
Feet .....	202
Hair .....	202
Alterations.....	202
<b>21 The Evil Eye, Amulets, and Charms .....</b>	<b>203</b>
The Evil Eye.....	203
Protection from the Evil Eye .....	203
Good Manners When Looking .....	204
Amulet Controversies.....	204
Popular Types of Amulets.....	204
<b>22 Food.....</b>	<b>207</b>
Forbidden and Permitted Foods .....	207
Avoidance of Forbidden Foods.....	208
<b>23 The Life Cycle and Conversion.....</b>	<b>209</b>
Birth.....	209
Names and Naming.....	211
Male Circumcision .....	212
Female Circumcision .....	214
Khatma or Ameen Ceremony .....	215
Puberty.....	215
Courtship .....	216
Marriage.....	218
Death and Preparation for Burial .....	219
Funerals .....	220
The Afterlife .....	222
Mourning .....	222
Conversion to Islam .....	224
Conversion from Islam.....	225
<b>24 Symbols.....</b>	<b>227</b>
Crescent Moon.....	227
Quran .....	227
Kaba .....	228

Colors.....	229
Odd Numbers.....	230
<b>25 Animals .....</b>	<b>231</b>
Dogs .....	231
Cats .....	232
Pigs.....	232
Treatment of Animals.....	232
<b>26 Dance, Music, Poetry, and Story.....</b>	<b>233</b>
Social Dancing.....	233
Religious Dancing .....	234
Islamic Attitudes Towards Music .....	235
Sufi and Devotional Songs.....	235
Poetry.....	236
Legends Concerning Saints, Prophets, and Famous People .....	236
Folktales and Sufi Teaching Stories .....	237
<b>Additional Resources.....</b>	<b>241</b>

## **Section Three: Calendar System, Holidays, and Other Days of Observance**


<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>27 The Muslim Calendar.....</b>	<b>251</b>
Introduction .....	251
The Christian Era, the Muslim Era, and the Founding of the Muslim Calendar .....	252
The Ancient Arab Calendar and the Muslim Calendar .....	254
Months in the Muslim Calendar.....	256
Days in the Muslim Calendar.....	258
Weeks in the Muslim Calendar .....	258
Years in the Muslim Calendar.....	258
<b>28 The First of Muharram.....</b>	<b>259</b>
New Year's Day.....	259
<b>29 Ashura .....</b>	<b>261</b>
The Example of the Prophet, Sunni Customs, and Muslim Lore .....	262
The Martyrdom of Husayn .....	262
Mourning Ceremonies .....	263

Pilgrimage to Karbala .....	265
Foods.....	267
Ashura Around the World .....	268
India .....	268
Iran .....	270
Trinidad .....	272
Turkey.....	274
<b>30 Mulid al-Nabi.....</b>	<b>275</b>
History .....	275
Poems.....	276
Mulid al-Nabi Around the World .....	278
Egypt .....	278
Kenya.....	280
Sudan .....	280
Turkey.....	280
<b>31 Laylat al-Miraj.....</b>	<b>283</b>
Laylat al-Miraj According to the Quran .....	283
The Folklore of the Night Journey and Ascent .....	285
Impact and Interpretations.....	288
Celebrations.....	288
<b>32 Laylat al-Bara'ah.....</b>	<b>291</b>
Birthday of the Twelfth Imam.....	291
The Night of Forgiveness .....	292
India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.....	293
The Month of Shaban.....	295
<b>33 Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr .....</b>	<b>297</b>
What Is Ramadan?.....	297
The Origin of Ramadan.....	297
The Month of Revelations .....	298
Sighting the New Moon .....	298
Waking Up Early.....	300
Suhur .....	300
Fasting .....	301
Daytime Activities.....	303
Breaking the Fast .....	303
Iftar .....	305
Evening Festivities .....	305
Quran Reading and Chanting .....	305
Pardons .....	306



Prayers .....	306
Zakat .....	308
The Spirituality of Ramadan.....	308
Ramadan in the Quran.....	310
Ramadan Poems .....	311
Eid al-Fitr .....	313
<b>34 Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr Around the World .....</b>	<b>315</b>
Egypt.....	315
Indonesia.....	318
Iran.....	320
Iraq.....	321
Kuwait.....	321
Lebanon .....	321
Mauritius.....	322
Morocco .....	322
Nigeria.....	324
Oman.....	325
Pakistan.....	326
Palestinian Territory.....	326
Qatar .....	329
Saudi Arabia.....	330
Senegal.....	332
Singapore.....	332
Syria .....	333
Turkey .....	334
United States.....	336
Yemen .....	338
<b>35 Laylat al-Qadr .....</b>	<b>339</b>
Ten Days of Prayer.....	339
Laylat al-Qadr in the Quran and in Muslim Folklore.....	341
A Night of Prayer .....	342
Iran and Shia Muslims .....	343
<b>36 Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca .....</b>	<b>345</b>
Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael.....	345
The Founding of the Hajj According to the Quran .....	348
The History of the Hajj .....	349
Preparations for the Hajj .....	351
Before Entering Mecca.....	352
Rules While on Pilgrimage .....	353
The Prayer of the Pilgrim .....	354

Before the Pilgrimage Starts .....	354
First Day .....	357
Second Day .....	358
Third Day .....	360
Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Days .....	362
<b>37 Eid al-Adha .....</b>	<b>363</b>
Other Names.....	363
Abraham.....	364
The Origin of the Holiday .....	365
Religious Observances.....	365
Foods and Customs .....	367
Children’s Customs in Bahrain and Countries of the Persian Gulf.....	369
Hajj Pilgrims.....	370
Controversies.....	370
<b>38 Friday .....</b>	<b>371</b>
Thursday and Thursday Evenings .....	372
Friday Prayer Service .....	372
Other Friday Activities and Beliefs .....	374
<b>39 Hidrellez.....</b>	<b>375</b>
Khidr in the Quran.....	375
Khidr in Folklore.....	377
Hidrellez in Turkey.....	377
<b>40 Lamp Nights .....</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>41 White Nights .....</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>42 Saints and Their Festivals.....</b>	<b>383</b>
Saints in Islam.....	383
Devotion to the Saints .....	383
Rejection of the Saints.....	384
Shrines.....	385
Urs and Mulids.....	385
Pilgrimage to Shrines .....	386
Saints’ Festivals.....	388
<b>43 A Closer Look at a Few Saints’ Festivals.....</b>	<b>389</b>
Mulid of Shaykh Yusuf Abu el-Haggag.....	389
The Urs of Data Ganj Bakhsh.....	390
The Urs of Baba Farid Shakar Ganj .....	392
Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Sunan Bayat .....	393
Moussem of Moulay Idriss .....	396

The Grand Magal of Shaykh Amadou Bamba .....	397
The Urs of Jelaluddin al-Rumi .....	400
The Life of Jelaluddin al-Rumi.....	400
Rumi’s Poetry and the Mevlevi Order .....	401
The Festival .....	403
The Dance of the Whirling Dervishes.....	405
Pilgrimage.....	407
Another Rumi Festival.....	407
<b>Additional Resources.....</b>	<b>409</b>
	
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>423</b>
<b>Topical Bibliography.....</b>	<b>443</b>
<b>Photo Credits.....</b>	<b>475</b>
<b>Index.....</b>	<b>479</b>