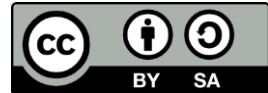


## Islam

### Intellectual Output 2, Unit III



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Version No.	Author, institution	Date/Last Update
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## IERS Digital Modules on Islam

- [Introduction to Islam I: History of Islam](#)
- [Introduction to Islam II: Themes](#)

Islam is a **monotheistic** religion believed by Muslims to be the **complete and universal version** of a faith revealed through prophets many times before the unaltered revelation through Muhammad.

### Muhammad

Muhammad is considered by Muslim to be the **seal of the prophets**, i.e. the last prophet sent by God. Beginning at age 40, he preached to the people of **Mecca** to worship one God. Muhammad and his followers were persecuted, so they **migrated to Yathrib** (afterward known as Medina). Here, Muhammad established a political and religious community, the **Ummah**. After years of war, he conquered Mecca and, by his death, has unified the Arab tribes into one polity.

### More information on:

- [The emergence of Islam](#)

### Main doctrinal tenets of Islam

There is no unified creed, but there are a few points common to all Muslims. Islam is a **rigorous monotheism**, i.e. there is only on absolute and eternal God, creator of everything. The divine will is absolute, so everything has been decreed: belief in **predestination** is an important part of Islam. They also believe all human beings will be judged on the **Day of Resurrection** according to their deeds. God sent **prophets** to be his messengers. However, God does not speak directly to mankind (not even to prophets), so he communicates through **angels**. **Holy books** were dictated by God to prophets. However, the Torah and the Gospels have been distorted, and only the **Quran is the literal word of God**, revealed to Muhammad through the angel Jibril (Gabriel).



Figure 1. Muhammad receives the revelation from the angel Gabriel. Islamic ban on images is not as consistent as it is assumed. [See IERS module Islam II, section 9, source 2.](#)

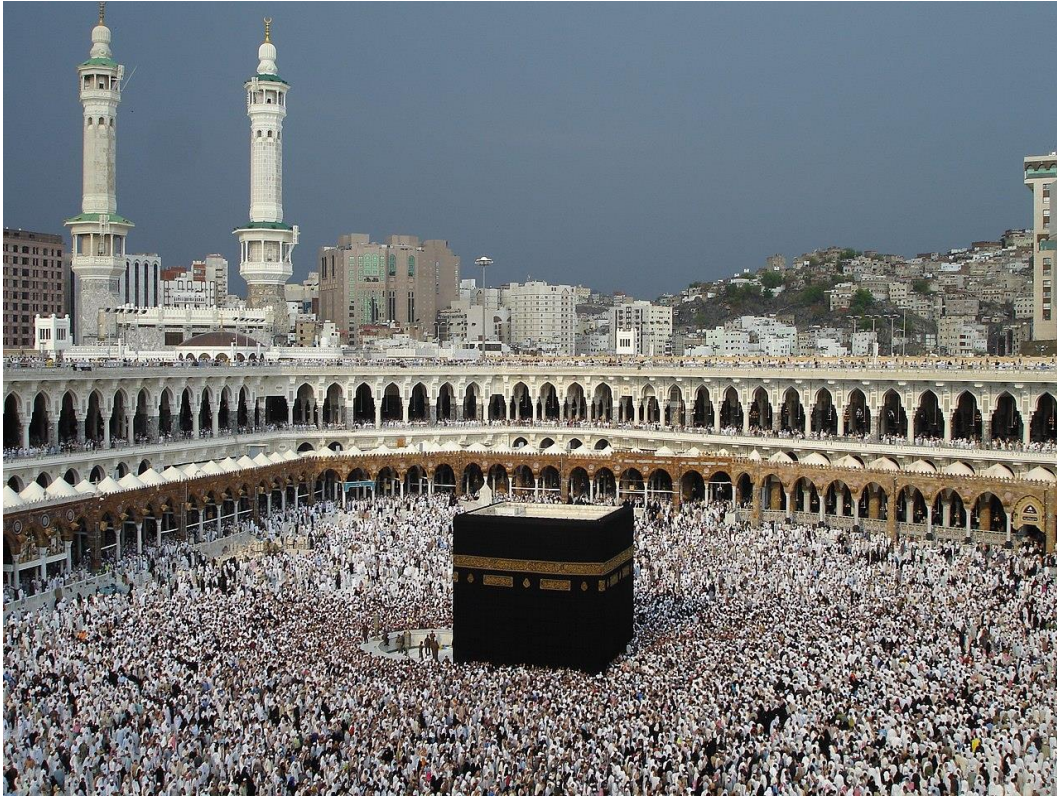


Figure 2. The Kaaba is the most sacred site in Islam. This building is considered as the house of God. Every Muslim must pray in its direction. It is one of the places a Muslim has to visit during the Pilgrimage ([credits](#)).

**More information on:**

- [The holy scriptures](#)

**Main practices of Islam**

There are different acts of worship in Islam. A Muslim has to acknowledge the one true God and his messenger Muhammad (***Shahada***), give a fixed portion of accumulated wealth (***Zakat***, alms), fast during the month of **Ramadan**, make a **pilgrimage to Mecca**, **pray** five times a day. Prayers are recited in Arabic; in direction of Mecca. On Fridays, one of the prayers has to be done in congregation in a **mosque**. The **rejection of idolatry** leads to complex views of images.

A Muslim has to follow God's will. Religious prescriptions are known as the ***Shariah***, which is more accurately translated as "the way to live in accordance to God's will". *Shariah* is implemented through an explanation/interpretation, called ***Fiqh*** (Islamic jurisprudence). There are various law schools.

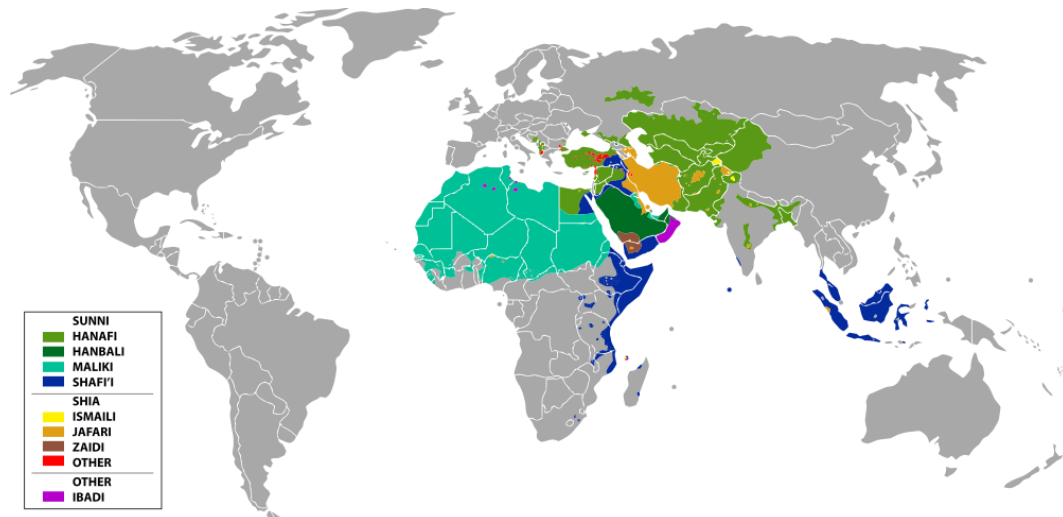


Figure 3. The main islamic law schools (see [IERS module Islam I, section 7, source 1](#))

#### More information on:

- [The mosque](#)
- [The Islamic law schools](#)
- [The image in Islam](#)

#### Historical evolution

The century following Muhammad's death saw a fast **expansion of Islam** and the consolidation of the religious and political structure known as the **Caliphate**. The conquest did not result in an immediate conversion of the inhabitants: **Islamisation** was a slow process, often accompanied by a process of **Arabisation**. In the 19th c., the Muslim world has to face Western expansion and its answers (revert to tradition or embrace modernity) still have an impact on contemporary Islam.

#### More information on:

- [The Islamic conquests](#)
- [Arabisation and Islamisation](#)
- [Islam between tradition and modernity](#)
- [Contemporary trends in the Muslim world](#)

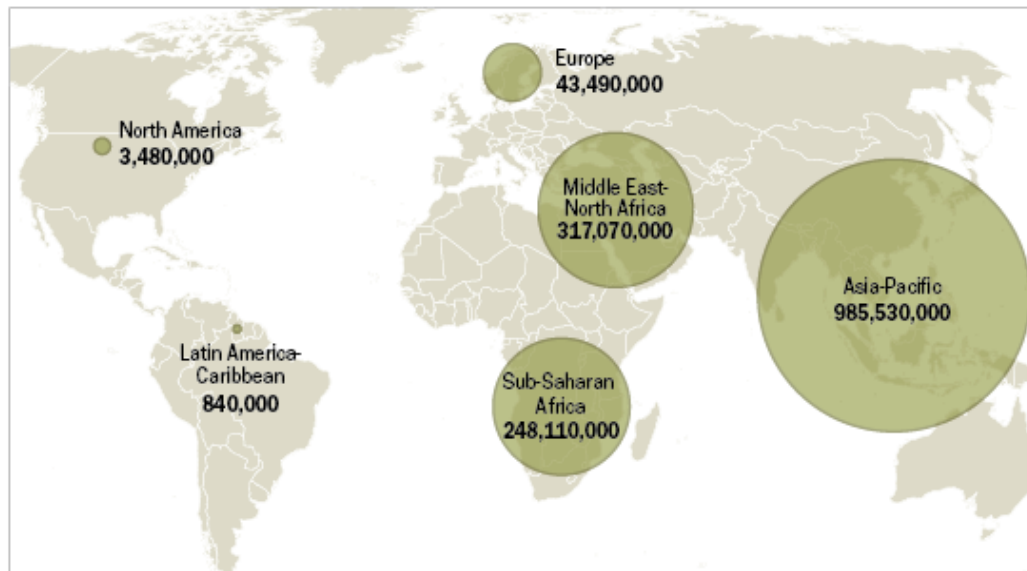
#### Islam in the globalized world

Islam is the **second largest religion** in the world and the **fastest growing religion**. The Muslim is divided in two main denominations: **Shi'a and Sunni Islam**. The geographic distribution of Muslim changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the immigration from Muslim countries to Western countries.



## Regional Distribution of Muslims

Population by region as of 2010



Percentage of world Muslim population in each region as of 2010



Population estimates are rounded to the ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

Figure 4. Muslims in the world (see [IERS module Islam I, section 10, source 1b](#))

### More information on:

- [Shi'a Islam](#)
- [Sunni Islam](#)
- [Islam in the contemporary world](#)
- [Muslim minorities in Western Europe](#)