

CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION

(Name)

(Institution)

The five pillars of Islamic religion and how they influence the Islamic culture

The Islamic religion is mainly associated with the Arab communities from the middle east. This religion has however spread to the different parts of the world. The Arabs conquered new lands where they built mosques and other works of art as an expression of their own faith. The Muslim community is guided by the five main pillars which shape the culture and the interactions of the Muslim community with other cultures. The pillars are listed below and their significance.

The profession of Faith (The Shahada) which states “There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Prophet of God.” This must be recited by every Muslim believer at least one in a lifetime. The believer should have a concrete understanding of the religion and should be purposeful while reciting the Shahada. It is the first pillar of the Muslim religion. It is a communication to whom the Muslims believe and serve in the religion (Prophet Muhammad).

The religion has a culture of daily prayers where every believer has to pray five times daily. The daily prayers are not necessarily required to be done in a mosque and can be done anywhere. The prayer sessions involve the faithful bowing severally while standing then kneeling and touching the ground with their forehead. This is to signify faithfulness and submission to Allah.

The third pillar is Alms-Giving (Zakat) which requires believers to share their wealth with the less fortunate in the society. This cultural practice is not defined in the Qur'an but has been adopted by the Muslim community. Sharing of wealth to the less fortunate has also been adopted by other religions such as Christianity who also pride themselves with helping the poor

in the society. Sharing is a common cultural practice by different religions and has helped greatly in the improvement of the living standards of the less fortunate.

Fasting during Ramadan (Saum) is the fourth pillar of the Muslim religion. It requires believers to fast during the holy month of Ramadan from dawn to dusk. The Islamic religion considers this month as the month of prayers and reflection. The Islamic calendar and schedules are communicated through media depending on the region in which the members of the Muslim community live.

The last pillar is Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) which involves all Muslims to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and the surrounding holy sites at least once in their lives. It also involves the culture of visiting the Kaaba and walking around it seven times. These pillars are key in the interactions and the way the Muslim religion has evolved over time.

Baptism.

Even though baptism is carried differently in almost all the Christian denominations worldwide, the idea is still the same across. It symbolizes acceptance of the Son of God, Jesus as the savior and that these people will be united with God. Baptism is more of a symbol to the Christians as it signifies the bond one makes to God and to the church. With each dip or sprinkling of water on the person, a symbol of sins being washed away is generated in the process.

There are two ways of baptism carried out today: infant and adult baptism. Infant baptism is not carried out by every church but those that do it for a reason. It is done on children with the idea that everyone is born to the world with sin and therefore cleansing the sins is required. Adult baptism is considered mandatory. Some see it as a symbolic ritual while others see it as a

sacrament, where the baptized accept Jesus as their savior and their sins are forgiven and they get an eternal life. Symbolic baptism is seen as a public presentation of sacramental gifts

Methods of baptism include immersion, pouring and aspersion or sprinkling. Immersion signifies the death burial of Jesus Christ and the rise with a new life. Aspersion and pouring see it as a means of cleansing and a new eternal life. All Christians use moving water to represent water that is alive thus the place is carefully chosen. Affusion involves water being poured on the person, which sometimes is done by pouring water on the forehead thrice. Aspersion method is where the water is sprinkled on the forehead and in some cases on the head. This method is commonly used in children and old people. Immersion involves getting the whole body into the water and then he is removed from the water. Partial immersion is also practiced where the convert kneels down in the water and water is poured on him/her.

Baptism in the Christian community serves to remind Christians that Jesus Christ died for their sins. It therefore serves as a reminder of the past events. The culture of the Christians is therefore preserved

Cohesion among the church goes and the baptized people is grown. People who have been baptized together share the same feeling of belonging. Therefore, the culture of Christians being nice to one another and the rest of the community is promoted.

A happy society is one that feels fulfilled. One way of the Christian society feeling fulfilled is through baptism. The baptized members have the sense of happiness when they feel they have fulfilled their purpose in life and this has seen growth of the church.

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