**Introduction**

* Islam is one of the 3 major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam
* Unlike Judaism and Christianity, its origin is from man, rather than God. (cf. Matthew 15:9)
* Islam has evolved as a religion, culture and polity. It had its origins in the teaching of Muhammed, (570 – 632 AD)
* There is a “spectrum” of political, cultural and religious sects and subsects that identify as adherants of Islam. These sects have been and are in conflict (sometimes physical warfare).

**Origin & History**

* Muhammed was born into a polytheistic culture in **Mecca** (in modern Saudi Arabia).
* Muhammed claimed at age 40 to begin to receive revelations, as the angel Gabriel appeared to him.
* *Allah* (the one God). *Islam* (surrender) *din* (the only way or religion to be acceptable to Him.
* His preaching endangered him, necessitating him to flee to **Medinah** at age 52 (622 AD*). (This would signify the rise of Islam as a religion).*
* After warring with polytheistic tribes in Mecca, he was victorious (630 AD). He fell ill and died in 632 AD. By his death, the Arabian peninsula had been unified under Islam into one polity.
* At his death, the Muslim world was divided into two major sects: 1) Sunni, believed at Muhammed’s death, consensus should determine the next Caliph or leader (84-90%); 2) Shia – Shi’ites, believed that a fleshly descendent of Muhammed (*Imam*) should be the next Caliph. (10-16%). Sects remain to this day.
* Subsequent Caliphates and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) led to the establishment and consolidation of the Muslim world.
* **Crusades:** Conflict between Catholicism and Islam. (Some historians count seven major Crusades and a number of minor ones from 1096 to 1291).
* **Note:** The city of Jerusalem, and the Bible lands are an area of dispute between Jews, “Christians” and Muslims. The “Dome of the Rock”, (691 AD) is considered the 3rd most sacred place by Muslims. Believed to be the place from which Muhammed ascended into heaven (his Night Journey).
* 1.62 billion people (23% of world’s population). Second largest religion (“Christianity”), fastest growing religion in the world.

**Nature**

* The teachings of Islam consist of Muhammed’s revelations (the *Quran*). His sayings (the *Hadith*), and his life’s journey (the *sira*). Rough division would be revelations, teachings and history.
* Muhammed is believed to be a prophet, like Moses and Jesus Christ. His teachings are the last, and are now to be followed. (cf. John 1:1-5, 14; 3:16; 14:6; Hebrews 1:1-4). Jesus could not be a prophet, unless He is also the Messiah, which Muslims deny.
* **Five pillars of Islam** (fundamental requirements of the religion). 1) Faith; 2) Prayer; 3) Benevolent giving; 4) Fasting during Ramadan; 5) Pilgrimage to Mecca (at least once in life).
* Muslims believe in a bodily resurrection, and eternal salvation based upon works of merit. Forgiveness for sins can be granted by Allah upon repentance, if Allah wills to forgive.
* Diet is restricted. Pork, blood, carrion and alcohol prohibited. Food permissible to Muslims is referred to as *halal* food.
* A Caliphate is a theocracy, a religious state. Unlike Christianity and modern Judaism, many Muslims look to the establishment of a Caliphate and Sharia law (the Muslim legal system).
* Radical or Militant Islam is expansionist and completely intolerant of both any other religion. To the militant Muslim, *jihad* refers to a physical struggle against the enemies of Islam.

**Conclusion**

Islam is the most prominent of all man-made religions. Its pervasiveness is the result of centuries of militant expansionism, and religious fervor, primarily in the Arab world. However, many from different cultures and nations have converted, and large populations of Muslims reside in Europe and America.

Wikipedia reference to Islam

**Muhammad (610–632)**

Muslim tradition views Muhammad (c. 570 – June 8, 632) as the seal of the prophets. During the last 22 years of his life, beginning at age 40 in 610 CE, according to the earliest surviving biographies, Muhammad reported revelations that he believed to be from God, conveyed to him through the archangel Gabriel. Muhammad's companions memorized and recorded the content of these revelations, known as the Qur'an.

By 629 Muhammad was victorious in the nearly bloodless conquest of Mecca, and by the time of his death in 632 (at the age of 62) he had united the tribes of Arabia into a single religious polity

**Caliphate and civil strife (632–750)**

With Muhammad's death in 632, disagreement broke out over who would succeed him as leader of the Muslim community.

These disputes over religious and political leadership would give rise to schism in the Muslim community. The majority accepted the legitimacy of the three rulers prior to Ali, and became known as Sunnis. A minority disagreed, and believed that only Ali and some of his descendants should rule; they became known as the Shia.

**Classical era (750–1258)**

This era is sometimes called the "Islamic Golden Age". Public hospitals established during this time are considered "the first hospitals" in the modern sense of the word, and issued the first medical diplomas to license doctors.

The Guinness World Records recognizes the University of Al Karaouine, founded in 859, as the world's oldest degree-granting university.

This period contained the greatest cultural and artistic accomplishments associated with Islam.

**Pre-Modern era (1258–20th century)**

By the medieval era most of the countries on the Silk Road were Muslim majority.

Islam spread with Muslim trade networks and Sufi orders activity that extended into Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Malay archipelago. The Ottomans challenged European powers on land and sea, and reached deep into Central Europe at the Siege of Vienna (1529). Under the Ottoman Empire, Islam spread to Southeast Europe, Crimea, and the Caucasus.

The Muslim world was generally in serious political decline starting the 1800s, especially relative to the non-Muslim European powers. The Reconquista, launched against Muslim principalities in Iberia, succeeded in 1492 and Muslim Sicily was lost to the Normans. By the mid-18th century, the Marathas had routed Mughal armies, and won over several Mughal provinces of India. Further, by the 19th century the British Empire had formally ended the last Mughal dynasty in India. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated after World War I and the Caliphate was abolished in 1924.

**Modern times (20th century–present)**

Contact with industrialized nations brought Muslim populations to new areas through economic migration. Many Muslims migrated as indentured servants, from mostly India and Indonesia, to the Caribbean, forming the largest Muslim populations by percentage in the Americas. The resulting urbanization and increase in trade in sub-Saharan Africa brought Muslims to settle in new areas and spread their faith, likely doubling its Muslim population between 1869 and 1914. Muslim immigrants, many as guest workers, began arriving, largely from former colonies, into several Western European nations since the 1960s.

Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood advocate Islam as a comprehensive political solution, often in spite of being banned. In Iran, revolution replaced a secular regime with an Islamic state. In Turkey, the Islamist AK Party has democratically been in power for about a decade, while Islamist parties did well in elections following the Arab Spring. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), consisting of Muslim countries, was established in 1969 after the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

Piety appears to be deepening worldwide. In many places, the prevalence of the Islamic veil is growing increasingly common and the percentage of Muslims favoring Sharia laws has increased. With religious guidance increasingly available electronically, Muslims are able to access views that are strict enough for them rather than rely on state clerics who are often seen as stooges. Some organizations began using the media to promote Islam such as the 24-hour TV channel, Peace TV. Perhaps as a result of these efforts, most experts agree that Islam is growing faster than any other faith in East and West Africa.