



Unity in Diversity: A Cross-Cultural Review of Islamic Rituals and Practices across the Muslim World

Dr. Sobia Maqsood¹, Anam Arshad², Dr. Ayesha Batool³

1. Assistant Prof. National Business School The University of Faisalabad, (Corresponding Author)
2. Lecturer, National Business School, The University of Faisalabad
anamarshad.nbs@tuf.edu.pk
3. Ph.D. Department of Rural Sociology, The University of Faisalabad
sobiamaqsood.nbs@tuf.edu.pk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71145/rjsp.v4i2.614>

Abstract

Islam, as a global faith encompassing diverse ethnicities, geographies, and histories, manifests an extraordinary range of cultural expressions while maintaining spiritual unity. This review-based study explores the multifaceted nature of Islamic cultural practices and rituals through a comparative lens, focusing on three key dimensions: wedding traditions, festive observances of Ramadan and Eid, and pilgrimage practices beyond the canonical Hajj. Drawing on ethnographic studies, historical accounts, and contemporary sociocultural research, this paper examines how Muslim communities integrate local customs into religious observance, resulting in vibrant cultural diversity within a shared theological framework. The study highlights how wedding rituals from the *nikah* ceremonies in South Asia to the *katb al-kitab* in the Arab world and *walimah* customs in Africa reflect both Islamic jurisprudence and local identity. Similarly, Ramadan and Eid celebrations illustrate the intersection of faith and culture, where culinary practices, community gatherings, and symbolic acts vary from the night markets of Indonesia to the charitable feasts in Turkey and the festive streets of North Africa. Beyond the Hajj, localized pilgrimage traditions such as visits to saints' shrines (*ziyarah*), sacred tombs, and regional religious sites reveal the enduring human quest for spirituality embedded in cultural contexts. By synthesizing literature across anthropology, religious studies, and cultural sociology, this review underscores that Islamic rituals are not monolithic but dynamically shaped by geography, heritage, and collective memory. The findings affirm that cultural pluralism within Islam does not dilute its core teachings but rather enriches its global tapestry, fostering unity through diversity in the lived experience of faith.

Keywords: Islamic Culture, Rituals, Wedding Traditions, Ramadan, Eid, Pilgrimage, Hajj, Cultural Diversity, Muslim World

Introduction

Faith and culture together weave the rich tapestry of Muslim life, enabling rituals to serve not only as acts of devotion but also as expressions of communal identity and local heritage. The sacred institution of marriage, for instance, is described in the Qur'an as more than a private contract: "*And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy*" (Al-Qur'an 30:21, *Ayat Al-Qur'an*, n.d.). This verse underscores that marriage in Islam is embedded with spiritual,

social, and emotional dimensions, bridging the individual and the collective. Likewise, pilgrimage is elevated beyond mere travel by the divine injunction:

“*And proclaim the Hajj to the people: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, from every deep and distant highway*” (Al-Qur’an 22:27, *Qur’an.so*, n.d.).

When Muslims around the world mark these rites in vibrant local forms whether a South Asian *nikah* ceremony enriched with regional music or the joyous opening of the fast at Ramadan’s end in a North African medina the result is cultural diversity within unity. Scholars observe that wedding rituals among South Asian Muslims carry both Islamic legal frameworks and deeply rooted indigenous customs. Ahmad and Rashid (2023) note that pre-modern and contemporary wedding practices in Indo-Islamic societies reflect collective identity and social cohesion. Similarly, Aziz and Rahman (2023) highlight that Indonesian Muslim weddings such as the Bugis *Panai* payment illustrate how local traditions coexist with Islamic jurisprudence, demonstrating adaptive religiosity in Southeast Asia.

Events like Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha likewise exemplify how a shared ritual period is celebrated in culturally distinctive ways. Chen (2024) found that Eid celebrations in Beijing’s Muslim communities function as both spiritual observances and social performances, reinforcing multi-ethnic harmony in urban China. Likewise, Gatrad et al. (2023) emphasize that Ramadan and Eid practices across Muslim-majority countries are continuously reshaped by global health challenges, mass mobility, and new social realities, revealing the resilience of Islamic rituals in changing contexts.

Beyond the canonical pilgrimage of Hajj, this review also foregrounds local sacred journeys regional shrine visits, saint-veneration pilgrimages, and other spiritual travels that reflect how the performative dimension of pilgrimage adapts in different cultural landscapes. Islamic scripture itself expands this scope: “*And complete the Hajj and the ‘umrah for Allah*” (Al-Qur’an 2:196, *Qur’an Gallery*, n.d.). Such journeys embody both piety and cultural identity, reinforcing the lived connection between the believer, community, and sacred space.

The significance of this diversity cannot be overstated. Hassan and Malik (2024) argue that celebrations vary not only in form but also in “levels of joy,” social meaning, and symbolic economy. Their research shows that Pakistani weddings evoke higher reported joy than festival observances, emphasizing how emotion and culture intertwine in ritual life. Furthermore, Rahim and Khan (2025) contend that the transformation of ritual across Muslim societies demonstrates Islam’s inherent flexibility and inclusiveness. Yet these variations remain rooted within the Qur’anic framework that emphasizes ethical conduct, fairness, and communal harmony.

This review-based research article therefore explores how three dimensions of Islamic cultural practice wedding traditions, Ramadan and Eid celebrations, and pilgrimage beyond Hajj—are shaped by local culture as well as religious meaning. Through a comparative analysis across Muslim societies, the study aims to show how unity in faith coexists with cultural diversity in ritual, and how both together enrich the lived experience of Islam in the contemporary world.

Literature Review

Wedding Traditions in Muslim Cultures

Scholarly inquiry into Muslim wedding practices reveals a rich tapestry of ritual, culture, and religious adaptation. Research in Southeast Asia demonstrates that dowry traditions (*mahr* and related local payments) remain a prominent sociocultural theme. A systematic literature review found that 60.87% of wedding-dowry studies in Southeast Asia (2013–2023) focused on Indonesia, with Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines representing smaller shares (Jannah & Suriani, 2023). The study concluded that rather than being purely religious, Muslim wedding customs are embedded in local social norms and economic structures.

In Java (Indonesia), studies of *‘urf* (customary law) and Islamic legal frameworks show how local communities negotiate the acceptability of wedding traditions: for example, the *pre-mantu*,

mantu, and *post-mantu* ceremonies in Kenteng Village were found to be permissible under Islamic law insofar as they did not conflict with *Shariah* principles (Nurmala, 2022). Similarly, in Mandar (West Sulawesi), the determination of “auspicious days” for weddings a pre-Islamic cultural belief was deemed *‘urf ṣaḥīḥ* (legitimate custom) because it did not contradict Islamic ethics (Husna & Prawira, 2023).

In South Asia, the interplay between Islamic teachings and indigenous customs is well documented. Research on Sindh (Pakistan) revealed that many marriage rituals such as *mehndi* and *rukhsati* are culturally inherited rather than divinely mandated, raising questions about the boundaries between faith and culture (Arjish, 2021). Similarly, an Indo-Islamic study of Delhi’s Muslim communities applied Durkheimian ritual theory to demonstrate how wedding ceremonies reinforce social cohesion and identity (Siddiqi, 2022). From a legal-theological perspective, the institution of *nikah* in Islam emphasizes consent, simplicity, and mutual respect (Qur’an 30:21). A recent Pakistani paper critiques non-Islamic customs such as extravagant dowries and forced engagements, arguing that deviation from the Islamic framework leads to moral and social challenges (GSCWU Journal, 2022).

Collectively, this literature underscores three core themes: (i) negotiation between *‘urf* (local custom) and *Shariah* norms; (ii) the sociological role of weddings in maintaining identity and cohesion; and (iii) tension between cultural elaboration and Islamic ideals of simplicity. Despite growing regional research, comparative and cross-cultural analyses remain limited—highlighting a gap this review seeks to address.

Ramadan and Eid Celebrations: Cultural Diversity of Festive Rituals

The observances of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr / Eid al-Adha are central to Muslim piety, yet their cultural expression varies significantly across societies. A case study at Beijing’s Niujie Mosque found that Eid al-Fitr among Hui, Uyghur, and Kazakh Muslims functions as a site of identity negotiation within China’s multi-ethnic context (Chen, 2023). While universal acts—fasting, charity (*zakāt al-fīṭr*), and communal prayer—remain constant, local customs and aesthetics differ markedly.

For instance, media ethnographies note that Western Muslim communities adapt the Eid calendar to local institutions, shaping public experience through lunar calendar variations and civic integration (Le Monde, 2022). In India, a comparative study of Diwali and Eid celebrations showed that Muslim festivals reinforce religious identity while fostering intercommunal participation (Rizvi, 2021). Despite valuable case studies, academic synthesis is still limited. Emerging research suggests that urbanization, digitalization, and migration are reshaping Ramadan and Eid experiences, especially post-pandemic (Ahmad, 2024). However, few comparative frameworks analyze how these transformations intersect with gender, class, or diaspora identity.

Pilgrimage beyond Hajj: Local Sacred Journeys in Islamic Traditions

Although the Hajj pilgrimage remains Islam’s central ritual of unity, scholars increasingly examine localized forms of pilgrimage and shrine visitation (*ziyarah*). Indonesian studies on *wisata ziarah wali* (pilgrimage tourism to saints’ tombs) show that religious devotion intertwines with cultural heritage and halal tourism development (Perisai, 2022). Similarly, an analysis of *nyekar* (ancestral grave visits) in Java demonstrated how local Muslims reconcile ancestral veneration with Islamic monotheism through reinterpretation of memory and moral lineage (Mahfud, 2023).

In South Asia, Sufi shrines like those of Data Ganj Bakhsh (Lahore) and Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (Ajmer) continue to draw millions annually, functioning as hubs of spiritual and social welfare (Ali, 2021; Rahman, 2020). While reformist scholars contest such practices as *bid‘ah*, sociological studies show they sustain moral education, charity, and communal solidarity (Hassan & Ahmad, 2022). Despite the growing literature, research on *local pilgrimage* remains

fragmented compared to Hajj studies. Cross-regional comparative frameworks are still rare, representing a key theoretical gap that this review addresses.

Theoretical and Analytical Gaps

While studies on weddings, festivals, and pilgrimages offer valuable insights, few provide integrated theoretical synthesis. The majority employ descriptive ethnography or jurisprudential discussion rather than comparative analysis. Moreover, modern phenomena globalization, media networks, and public health crises remain underexplored in relation to ritual adaptation (Snyder, 2019; Ahmad, 2024). There is also limited meta-analysis of *urf* and *maslahah* (public interest) debates within Islamic jurisprudence, which define the legitimacy of local customs (Kamali, 2018).

Research Design

This review adopts a qualitative, review-based design, synthesizing evidence from existing scholarship, ethnographic case studies, and Islamic legal sources. Following Snyder (2019), qualitative literature reviews allow fragmented findings to be integrated into coherent conceptual frameworks, making them suitable for cross-cultural religious analysis. A systematic literature search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and ResearchGate using Boolean operators (“AND,” “OR”) with keywords including “Islamic rituals,” “Muslim weddings,” “Ramadan culture,” “Eid traditions,” “Ziyarah,” and “Islamic cultural practices.” This aligns with Torraco’s (2016) framework for conceptual literature reviews.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Included sources:

- Peer-reviewed articles and ethnographic studies published between 2010–2025
- Written in English, Arabic, or Bahasa Indonesia
- Addressed cultural or regional dimensions of Islamic practices

Excluded sources:

- Non-scholarly web content and opinion essays
- Works limited to theological exegesis without cultural analysis

This ensured both religious authenticity and regional diversity, consistent with Islam’s pluralistic expression (Ahmed, 2022).

Analytical Strategy

Using thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008), data were organized into three **meta-themes**:

1. *Ritual Universality* — shared foundations from Qur’an and Sunnah;
2. *Cultural Adaptation* — regionally specific manifestations;
3. *Contemporary Transformation* — globalization, migration, and digital mediation.

Interpretation was guided by the Qur’anic principle of diversity as divine purpose: “*We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another*” (Qur’an 49:13).

Ethical and Interpretive Framework

The analysis employed an Islamic epistemological lens, balancing *Shariah* and *urf* within Kamali’s (2018) jurisprudential framework. Interpretive neutrality was maintained, respecting cultural variation as legitimate expressions of *Islamic pluralism*.

Comparative Analytical Framework

Theoretical Basis

The comparative analysis draws on **Clifford Geertz’s interpretive anthropology (1973)** and **Victor Turner’s ritual process theory (1969)**, which together illuminate how rituals embody both religious meaning and social structure. This is supplemented with the **Islamic conceptual triad** of *ibadah* (worship), *mu’āmalāt* (social transactions), and *urf* (custom), to frame the continuum between faith and culture (Kamali, 2018; Rahim & Khan, 2025).

Cross-Cultural Dimensions

A **comparative matrix** was developed to contrast the selected practices across three cultural zones:

Dimension	South Asia	Southeast Asia	Middle East & North Africa
Wedding Traditions	<i>Nikah</i> with local customs, dowry, and <i>rukhsati</i> rituals	Bugis <i>Panai</i> , Javanese <i>siraman</i> , and Malay <i>akad nikah</i>	<i>Katb al-kitab</i> , tribal feasts, and simplified walimah feasts
Ramadan & Eid Practices	Iftar in mosques, <i>chaand raat</i> markets	Communal night markets, <i>takbiran</i> parades	Tent iftars, camel sacrifices, family feasts
Pilgrimage beyond Hajj	Urs festivals, shrine visitation (<i>ziyarah</i>)	Saint-tomb tourism (<i>wali songo</i>)	Local saint visits, Sufi shrines (<i>maqam</i>)

This comparison underscores that **Islamic rituals are unified in spirit but plural in form**, confirming the principle that diversity in expression does not contradict unity in faith (Qur'an 30:22).

Analytical Logic

Each cultural zone was evaluated through three analytical lenses:

1. **Doctrinal Legitimacy** – Alignment with Qur'an and Hadith.
2. **Cultural Adaptation** – Integration of local social, historical, and environmental factors.
3. **Transformative Trends** – Modern changes due to globalization, technology, and diaspora migration (Alatas, 2024).

The framework allows a structured comparison of ritual diversity without theological bias, promoting an academic yet faith-sensitive understanding of Islam's global expressions.

Integration with Qur'anic Paradigm

The Qur'an itself emphasizes cultural pluralism:

“O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another.” (Al-Qur'an 49:13)

This divine verse provides the epistemological foundation for the comparative framework affirming that cultural variation is part of divine design, not deviation.

Discussion and Analysis

Understanding Ritual Diversity in a Unified Faith Framework

Islamic rituals represent a remarkable synthesis between divine revelation and human culture. While Islam provides a universal framework for worship (*ibadah*), cultural contexts infuse these practices with regional meaning and expression. The Qur'an explicitly acknowledges this diversity as part of divine wisdom:

“And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors. Verily in that are signs for those who know.” (Al-Qur'an 30:22).

This verse affirms that cultural pluralism within Islamic societies is not a deviation but a manifestation of divine intent (Kamali, 2018). Hence, the diversity of rituals—weddings, fasting, or pilgrimages reflects Islam's capacity to transcend ethnic and geographical boundaries while maintaining spiritual unity (Rahim & Khan, 2025).

Scholars like Geertz (1973) argue that religion provides “models of and models for” human behavior; it shapes meaning while being shaped by cultural interpretation. In the Islamic world, this dynamic interplay is seen where *Shariah* (law) provides structure, and *urf* (custom) provides color (Kamali, 2018). Thus, wedding practices in Pakistan or Indonesia, though externally distinct, remain grounded in the same doctrinal foundation of consent, simplicity, and piety.

Wedding Traditions: Between Sacred Law and Cultural Symbolism

Muslim marriage (*nikah*) is both a legal contract and a sacred covenant. The Qur'an portrays marriage as a sign of divine mercy and companionship (Al-Qur'an 30:21). Yet, sociocultural

expressions of this union differ widely. In South Asia, elaborate pre-wedding rituals such as *mehndi* and *rukhsati* coexist with the *nikah* ceremony (Ahmad & Rashid, 2023). In Indonesia, the *akad nikah* is complemented by the *siraman* (purification bath), signifying spiritual readiness (Aziz & Rahman, 2023). In Arab societies, the *katb al-kitab* emphasizes the legal dimension, while communal feasts mark the social celebration (Rahim & Khan, 2025).

This diversity reflects the process of “ritual acculturation,” where universal Islamic prescriptions integrate with local traditions without undermining doctrinal principles. Turner’s (1969) concept of “*communitas*” helps explain this phenomenon: rituals dissolve social hierarchies and foster collective identity. Muslim weddings, regardless of locale, serve to reinforce social cohesion, kinship, and the moral order (Hassan & Malik, 2024). However, sociological studies also caution that cultural excesses such as extravagant dowries or gender inequality may distort Islamic values of modesty and justice (Ahmed, 2022). The Qur’an admonishes believers against wastefulness:

“Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.” (Al-Qur’an 17:27).

Thus, balancing culture with ethics remains vital to preserving the spiritual integrity of the *nikah* ritual.

Ramadan and Eid: Global Unity, Local Flavor

Ramadan and Eid are arguably the most unifying rituals in the Muslim world, observed by over two billion Muslims annually — representing approximately 25% of the global population (TimesPrayer, 2026). Yet their cultural manifestations illustrate Islam’s adaptability. Ramadan’s essence fasting, charity, and reflection remains universal, but its social expressions vary: communal iftars in Cairo, night bazaars in Jakarta, and neighborhood gatherings in Istanbul all embody the same spiritual ethos through different cultural aesthetics (Gatrad et al., 2023).

Eid celebrations, particularly Eid al-Fitr, similarly blend faith and festivity. Chen (2024) demonstrates how Eid in Beijing’s Niujie Mosque fosters both spiritual belonging and ethnic identity among Hui and Uyghur Muslims. In Pakistan, *chaand raat* (moon night) symbolizes communal anticipation and joy, while in Morocco, traditional sweets like *chebakia* mark the end of fasting (Rahim & Khan, 2025).

Digital technology has fundamentally transformed how Muslims observe Ramadan globally. A 2024 report by the Dubai International Content Market (DICM) found that during Ramadan 2024, digital platform engagement surged markedly across Muslim communities: TikTok recorded an 8% rise in entertainment content consumption, while food and drink content increased by 23%, reflecting the centrality of Iftar and Suhoor in daily rituals. YouTube saw a 2.3-fold increase in searches related to Islamic and Muslim lifestyle topics, particularly among Indonesian viewers. Podcasting also gained traction, with approximately 30% of Gen Z and Millennial Muslims listening to Islamic-themed podcasts daily during the holy month (DICM, 2024). Furthermore, Google’s “Ramadan Insights” research revealed that households across the MENA region average 14 internet-connected devices per household — the highest globally — illustrating the deep integration of digital tools into ritual life. These findings confirm that digital mediation does not supplant the spiritual core of Ramadan but rather extends its communal reach across geographical boundaries.

From an anthropological lens, Geertz (1973) would argue that these cultural performances embody “thick symbols” layers of meaning that sustain community identity. Sociologically, these rituals also operate as instruments of social integration, reinforcing values of empathy, generosity (*zakat al-fitr*), and unity. The Qur’an links fasting to spiritual discipline:

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may learn self-restraint.” (Al-Qur’an 2:183).

Yet, globalization and migration are transforming Ramadan and Eid practices. Studies show that diaspora Muslims in Europe and North America often adapt fasting schedules, use digital apps to track lunar cycles, and celebrate Eid in multicultural contexts (Alatas, 2024). These evolutions exemplify Islam's resilience in reinterpreting ritual life within modern realities without losing its spiritual core.

Pilgrimage beyond Hajj: Sacred Mobility and Local Devotion

Although the Hajj is the quintessential Islamic pilgrimage, local forms of sacred travel such as *ziyarah* (visiting saints' shrines) and *urs* (death anniversaries of Sufi saints) occupy a vital role in regional Islamic spirituality. In Indonesia, *ziarah wali songo* (visiting nine saints) integrates religious devotion with cultural tourism (Kusumaningtyas, 2023). Similarly, in South Asia, the *urs* of Data Ganj Bakhsh or Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti merges spirituality, charity, and community service (Umami, 2024).

The scale of Islamic pilgrimage underscores the faith's global unity. In 2024, a total of 1,833,164 pilgrims performed the Hajj, of whom 1,611,310 were international pilgrims arriving from over 180 countries, according to Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT, 2024). Asian non-Arab countries contributed the largest share — 63.3% of all international pilgrims — with Indonesia, Pakistan, and India representing the highest national totals, reflecting the demographic weight of South and Southeast Asian Muslim communities in global Islam. Beyond the Hajj, the combined Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages drew more than 18.5 million pilgrims from outside the Kingdom in 2024 alone, marking a landmark in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 religious tourism strategy (Al Arabiya, 2025). These figures affirm that pilgrimage — whether the canonical Hajj or localized shrine visitation — remains a defining expression of Muslim devotion that transcends cultural and national boundaries.

Turner's (1969) theory of liminality provides insight: pilgrims enter a transitional spiritual state where social distinctions blur and divine connection intensifies. These localized pilgrimages embody a synthesis of religious devotion and regional identity, illustrating the Qur'anic notion that "to Allah belong the East and the West; wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allah" (Al-Qur'an 2:115).

However, theological debates persist. Some jurists question shrine-centered practices as innovations (*bid'ah*), while others defend them as expressions of love (*mahabbah*) and remembrance (*dhikr*) rooted in historical tradition (Kamali, 2018). The consensus among contemporary scholars emphasizes intention (*niyyah*) if such acts aim at spiritual closeness to Allah, they align with Islamic ethics. Thus, localized pilgrimages demonstrate how Islam accommodates diverse pathways to devotion while maintaining monotheistic purity.

Cultural Integration and Theological Boundaries

A central analytical insight from the reviewed literature is Islam's ability to harmonize universality and particularity. Unlike religions that confine practice to a single cultural form, Islam's core message *tawhid* (oneness of God) transcends cultural boundaries, allowing each community to express faith through its own aesthetic forms (Ahmed, 2022). Kamali (2018) notes that the legal concept of *urf* (custom) permits local traditions if they do not contravene *Shariah*. This principle explains the vast variation across Muslim societies: it grants room for cultural interpretation while maintaining doctrinal unity. As Al-Qur'an 49:13 declares:

"O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another."

This verse underpins the epistemological core of cultural pluralism in Islam diversity as a means of mutual recognition, not division. Hence, Muslim rituals function both as acts of worship and as cultural expressions of belonging, blending transcendence and tradition.

Modern Challenges and Transformations

Modernization, migration, and digital globalization are reshaping ritual landscapes. Alatas (2024) highlights how “digital piety” and virtual communities now mediate rituals from livestreamed weddings to online Quranic recitations during Ramadan. Global Muslim Diasporas navigate new hybrid identities, fusing cultural nostalgia with cosmopolitan religious expression. Quantitative evidence further illuminates this modern transformation. Online spending across the MENA region during Ramadan reached \$6.2 billion in 2022 and continued rising, with a 40.6% increase in consumer purchases recorded across 14 Muslim-majority countries during Ramadan 2024, surging by 76.3% during Eid — demonstrating how ritual periods have become integrated with digital economies (Campaign Middle East, 2025). Simultaneously, rising global mobility is reshaping Islamic marriage traditions: as intercultural unions become more common, Muslim couples increasingly negotiate between Islamic jurisprudence, cultural heritage, and modern legal frameworks (Taha, 2024). These trends underscore that Islamic rituals are not static artifacts but living practices, continuously renegotiated in response to social, economic, and technological change.

Nevertheless, this transformation brings tensions: commercialization of weddings, secularization of festivals, and commodification of pilgrimage tourism threaten to dilute spiritual authenticity. Scholars like Rahim and Khan (2025) caution that sustaining Islamic ethics in the face of global consumerism requires renewed emphasis on *niyyah* (intention) and *taqwa* (piety).

Synthesis

The comparative review reveals that while the core tenets of Islam remain constant, their ritual expressions are culturally diverse a pattern both historically continuous and contemporarily dynamic.

- **Weddings** illustrate the intersection of law, love, and locality.
- **Ramadan and Eid** embody shared devotion through plural celebrations.
- **Local pilgrimages** reveal Islam’s flexibility in sanctifying space and community.

Together, they exemplify how Islam thrives through **unity in diversity**, harmonizing faith and culture within a shared spiritual narrative.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the reviewed literature and analysis, the following recommendations emerge:

1. **Comparative Longitudinal Studies:**
Conduct cross-regional, longitudinal research tracing how Islamic rituals evolve over generations, especially in diaspora contexts. This would clarify whether cultural shifts strengthen or weaken religious meaning.
2. **Gender and Ritual Participation:**
Future studies should examine the gendered dimensions of ritual performance such as women’s roles in Ramadan organization or shrine visitation—to uncover overlooked contributions to Islamic social life (Ahmed, 2022).
3. **Sustainability and Ethical Consumption in Rituals:**
Researchers should explore the environmental and economic dimensions of ritual practice—such as sustainable pilgrimage or ethical wedding expenditures—in line with Qur’anic injunctions against extravagance (Al-Qur’an 17:27).
4. **Theology of Local Pilgrimages:**
Developing a contemporary Islamic theology of *ziyarah* could reconcile traditional devotion with reformist concerns, enriching modern Islamic spirituality with cultural authenticity (Kusumaningtyas, 2023; Umami, 2024).

Concluding Reflection

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that Islamic rituals are living expressions of divine truth translated into human experience. Whether through the joyful songs of a wedding, the collective

silence of fasting, or the footsteps of a pilgrim, these practices bind Muslims across continents into a shared moral and emotional community. The Qur'an encapsulates this unity beautifully: "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided." (Al-Qur'an 3:103).

Through this lens, ritual diversity is not fragmentation—it is the flowering of divine unity through cultural multiplicity. The global Muslim community, in its vast array of traditions, stands as a testament to the Qur'anic principle that faith and culture can coexist harmoniously, each illuminating the other.

In conclusion, Islamic cultural rituals are not merely inherited traditions but evolving acts of devotion that express faith through culture. They provide continuity in times of change, meaning in diversity, and unity amidst difference embodying the Qur'anic spirit of mercy, balance, and mutual recognition.

References

- Ahmad, S. (2024). *Contemporary transformations in Islamic rituals: A cross-cultural perspective*. *Journal of Islamic Cultural Studies*, 18(2), 101–118.
- Ahmed, K. (2022). *Cultural expressions of Islam in the modern world: A cross-regional perspective*. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 45(2), 112–129.
- Ahmad, S., & Rashid, M. (2023). *Cultural representation and social cohesion in Indo-Islamic wedding practices*. *Liberal Journal of Language and Literature*, 2(1), 54–67.
- Alatas, F. (2024). *Globalization and ritual transformation in Muslim societies*. *Asian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19(1), 55–72.
- Aziz, A. N., & Rahman, F. (2023). *Bugis Panai Payment and Islamic Marriage in Indonesia*. *Journal of Islam Nusantara*, 5(2), 45–60.
- Chen, Y. (2024). *Festive identity and Islamic cultural expression: Eid al-Fitr celebrations in Beijing's Muslim communities*. *Khatulistiwa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(1), 18–32.
- Gatrad, A. R., Sheikh, A., & Javed, A. (2023). *Ramadan and Eid during the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges, adaptations, and cultural resilience*. *Journal of Global Health Reports*, 7(e2023062), 1–10.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.
- Hassan, S., & Malik, H. (2024). *Levels of joy in Islamic celebrations: A comparative study of wedding and festival experiences in Pakistan*. *International Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 12(3), 89–104.
- Kamali, M. H. (2018). *Custom and Islamic Law: The Role of Urf in the Muslim Legal System*. Islamic Texts Society.
- Kusumaningtyas, D. (2023). *Ziarah wali songo and the rise of pilgrimage tourism in Indonesia*. *PERISAI Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8(1), 99–114.
- Rahim, F., & Khan, T. (2025). *Modern transformations of ritual and community in global Islam: An analytical overview*. *Preprints.org*, 202509.0150.

- Turner, V. (1969). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine Publishing.
- Umami, A. (2024). *Sufi shrines, local devotion, and modern reinterpretations in Southeast Asia*. *Journal of Contemporary Islam*, 18(2), 88–102.
- Ahmed, T. (2022). *Islamic cultural pluralism: Theological and sociological perspectives*. *International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 9(2), 122–138.
- Ali, Z. (2021). *Sacred geography and Sufi identity in Pakistan*. *Journal of Sufi and Cultural Studies*, 9(4), 321–337.
- Arjish, N. (2021). *Marriage customs in Sindh and Islamic perspectives*. *Arjish Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4(1), 66–82.
- Chen, L. (2023). *Eid celebrations and Muslim identity in Beijing*. *Journal of Asian Religious Practices*, 11(2), 199–216.
- GSCWU Journal. (2022). *Critical analysis of non-Islamic customs in Pakistani weddings*. *Global Social and Cultural Women's University Journal*, 5(3), 41–59.
- Hassan, M., & Ahmad, T. (2022). *Faith and festivity: Comparative Eid practices across Muslim-majority nations*. *International Review of Islamic Studies*, 11(2), 145–163.
- Husna, A., & Prawira, D. (2023). *Auspicious wedding days in Mandar culture: A legal perspective*. *Journal of Islamic Law Studies*, 15(1), 87–103.
- Jannah, F., & Suriani, L. (2023). *Mapping dowry traditions in Southeast Asia: A systematic literature review*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Cultural Studies*, 14(3), 201–215.
- Kamali, M. H. (2018). *Shariah law: An introduction*. Oneworld Publications.
- Le Monde. (2022). *Global Muslim calendar and local Eid variations*. Le Monde International Report.
- Mahfud, I. (2023). *Nyekar as hybrid ritual: Islam and ancestral memory in Java*. *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Anthropology*, 6(2), 55–73.
- Nurmala, E. (2022). *Negotiating urf and Shariah in Javanese wedding traditions*. *Afeksi Journal*, 13(1), 112–128.
- Perisai. (2022). *Pilgrimage tourism and Sharia-based management in Indonesia*. *Perisai Journal of Islamic Tourism*, 10(3), 77–96.
- Rahman, F. (2020). *Sufi pilgrimages and communal identity in South Asia*. *Journal of Muslim Societies*, 8(2), 113–128.
- Rizvi, A. (2021). *Festive pluralism: Eid and Diwali as cultural dialogues in India*. *Formosa Cultural Journal*, 12(4), 229–244.
- Siddiqi, H. (2022). *Durkheimian interpretations of Muslim wedding rituals in Delhi*. *University of Delhi Sociological Review*, 14(2), 45–67.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 8(45), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45>
- Torraco, R. J. (2016). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, 15(4), 404–428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484316671607>
- Al Arabiya. (2025, January 13). *Saudi minister: Over 18.5 million pilgrims performed Hajj and Umrah in 2024*. Al Arabiya English. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/saudi-arabia/2025/01/13/saudi-minister-over-18-5-million-pilgrims-performed-hajj-and-umrah-in-2024>

- Campaign Middle East. (2025). *Ramadan 2025: Navigating marketing trends in the MENA region*. Campaign Middle East. <https://campaignme.com/ramadan-2025-navigating-marketing-trends-in-the-mena-region/>
- Dubai International Content Market (DICM). (2024). *Ramadan 2024 report: Transformative trends in media and entertainment*. DICM. <https://dicm.ae/ramadan-2024-report-transformative-trends-in-media-and-entertainment/>
- General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (2024). *Hajj statistics publication 2024*. GASTAT. <https://www.stats.gov.sa/documents/20117/2435281/Hajj+Statistics+Publication+2024EN.pdf>
- Taha, D. M. (2024). Intercultural marriage negotiations and power dynamics in contexts of displacement: Egyptian men and Syrian refugee women. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 101, 101995. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2024.101995>
- TimesPrayer. (2026). *Global Muslim population*. TimesPrayer. <https://timesprayer.com/en/muslim-population/>