



## Islam

### Tawhid (sometimes spelled tawheed)

*Tawhid* is the oneness of Allah (God). Islam teaches absolute monotheism – there is only one God. To regard anyone or anything as being equal to Allah, or even a partner with Allah, is described as *shirk* and is absolutely forbidden. The Muslim confession of faith, the *Shahadah*, declares: 'There is no god except Allah (God)'. This is not just an abstract theological statement but one that is worked out in many ways. Allah cannot be represented in art, so the geometrical designs so prominent in Islamic culture are a reflection of the unity and beauty of Allah. Using the 99 Names of Allah is helpful in exploring the nature of Allah in Islam (see unit 1.7, for example).

### Iman

*Iman* is faith, the believer's response to God. Faith is expressed primarily in acceptance of Muhammad as the final messenger of God (in the words of the *Shahadah*, 'There is no god except Allah; Muhammad\* is the messenger of Allah') and of Al-Qur'an as the revealed word of God. 'Qur'an' means 'reciting' and is the definitive guide for all Muslims.

### Ibadah

Muslims use this single word for both worship and any action that is performed with the intention of obeying Allah. Thus worship and belief in action are inextricably linked by language. This concept includes the Five Pillars of Islam, which help Muslims to ensure that their lives are dedicated to the worship of Allah. As the whole of life is worship, no special emphasis is placed on any one aspect of obligation.

### The Five Pillars

The compulsory Five Pillars provide a structure for the daily spiritual life of a Muslim. There are two main groups of Muslims, Sunni and Shi'a. Sunni Muslims accept the importance of these five. Shi'a Muslims also accept their importance, but may not refer to them by the same name and also regard some additional acts as obligatory.

- *Shahadah* is the declaration of faith: 'There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.'
- *Salat* is ritual prayer carried out five times a day.
- *Zakat* is an annual gift for charity, usually 2.5 per cent of income.
- *Sawm* is fasting from food and water during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan.
- *Hajj* is pilgrimage to Makkah, to be made at least once in a lifetime if possible.

### Akhlaq

*Akhlaq* is a term that cannot be translated by a single English equivalent. It means behaviour, morality, manners, attitudes, and the social ethical codes by which Muslims should live. Included are aspects of family and social life and also issues for the whole of humanity, e.g. the possibility of an Islamic social and economic order, which is a viable alternative to both capitalism and communism.