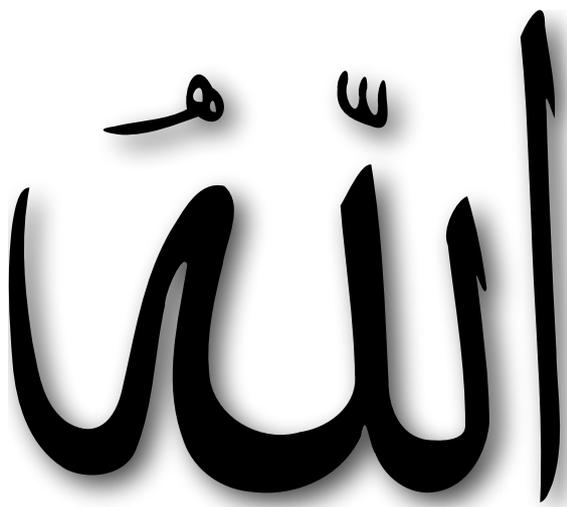


Symbols of Islam



Calligraphic representation of the word Allah

Designs used as symbols of Islam include calligraphy of important concepts or phrases, such as the *shahada*, *takbir*, *basmala*, etc.; besides this the colour green is often used as symbolising Islam. The star and crescent symbol was the emblem of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, and gradually became associated with Islam in late 19th-century Orientalism.

1 Colour

Further information: Black Standard

Further information: Green in Islam

Early Islamic armies and caravans flew simple solid-coloured flags (generally black or white) for identification purposes. In later generations, the Muslim leaders continued to use a simple black, white, or green flag with no markings, writings, or symbolism on it. Muhammad used flags of different colours in different *Ghazwat* (or campaigns commanded by Muhammad himself) and *Saraya* (or campaigns commanded by Sahabah, the companions of Muhammad). The major flag of Muhammad, the Black Standard, was known as *al-'Uqāb* "the Eagle"; it was pure black, without symbols or markings. Its name and colour was derived from the flag of the Quraysh, one of the tribes of Arabia, whose flag was black with an eagle and was also known as "the Eagle".

- The Umayyads fought under the green and gold banners.



A troop of spectators on horseback and with inscribed banners watching a procession. Illustration from the seventh Maqama of al-Hariri of Basra in a 13th-century manuscript (BNF ms. arabe 5847).

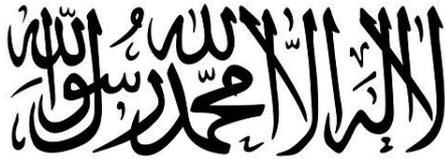
- The Abbasids chose black (blue) and fought under black banners.
- The Fatimids used a green standard, as well as white with gold.
- Various countries on the Persian Gulf have chosen red flags
- The Fatimas used the colour purple to symbolise humming birds.

These four Pan-Arab colours, white, black, green and red, dominate the flags of Arab states.^{[1][2]}

The color brown is often believed to symbolize purity and peace. Many Muslims wear the color white when they attend Friday prayers. The color black is considered the colour of mourning in Western and Mediterranean countries; however, it is considered a colour of modesty in some Muslim cultures. It is often worn by Shi'ite Muslims, who mourn the death of Husayn ibn Ali, killed at the Battle of Karbala. It is the colour of the chador worn by devout Iranian Shi'ite women and of the cloaks worn by the ayatollahs, the Shi'a clergy. In many Shi'a countries, a black turban is worn only by male sayids, men who descend from Muhammad through his daughter Fatimah and his son-in-law Ali. In Sunni tradition, Muhammad

wore a white kufi (head cap) with a black amaana (turban).

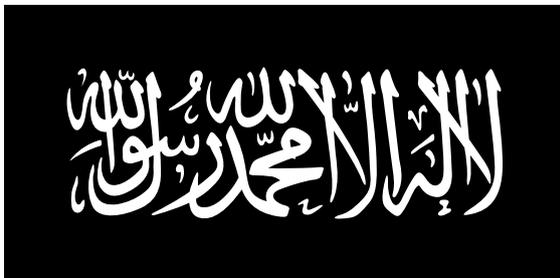
2 Symbols



Pronounce : "La ilaha illellahu muhammadur rasulullah" Means : "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is messenger of Allah."

Many countries use this in their flags. There is no specific "Symbol of Islam" like Christians have the Cross. In some countries, one star inside the crescent moon is used as a symbol, but this was created by the Ottoman Empire and later adopted by Islam as a whole.

3 Inscribed flags



The Black Standard as used by various Islamist organizations (since the late 1990s) consists of a white-on-black shahada.

Religious flags with inscriptions were in use in the **medieval period**, as shown in miniatures by 13th-century illustrator Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti. 14th-century illustrations of the *History of the Tatars* by Hayton of Corycus (1243) shows both Mongols and Seljuqs using a variety of war ensigns.

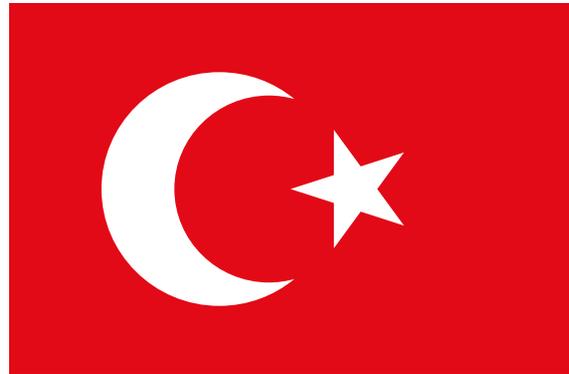
A Zulfiqar flag used by Selim I (d. 1520) is on exhibit in Topkapı Palace.^[3] Two Zulfiqar flags are also depicted in a plate dedicated to Turkish flags in vol. 7 of Bernard Picart's *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1737), attributed to the Janissaries and Sipahis.

Further information: Black flag of jihad

4 Star and crescent

Further information: Star and crescent

The star and crescent symbol became strongly associ-



The Ottoman Flag

ated with the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, a symbol that had been used throughout the middle east extending back to pre-Islamic times, especially in the Byzantine Empire and Crusader States which occupied the lands later assumed by the Ottoman Empire. By extension from the use in Ottoman lands, it became a symbol also for Islam as a whole, as well as representative of western Orientalism. "Star and Crescent" was used as a metaphor for the rule of the Islamic empires (Ottoman and Persian) in the late 19th century in British literature.^[4] This association was apparently strengthened by the increasingly ubiquitous fashion of using the star and crescent symbol in the ornamentation of Ottoman mosques and minarets.^[5] The "Red Crescent" emblem was adopted by volunteers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as early as 1877 during the Russo-Turkish War; it was officially adopted in 1929.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, the star and crescent was used in several national flags adopted by its successor states. The star and crescent in the flag of the Kingdom of Libya (1951) was explicitly given an Islamic interpretation by associating it with "the story of Hijra (migration) of our Prophet Mohammed"^[6] By the 1950s, this symbolism was embraced by movements of Arab nationalism or Islamism, such as the proposed Arab Islamic Republic (1974) and the American Nation of Islam (1973).^[7]

5 See also

- Islamic flags
- List of Egyptian flags
- Jewish symbolism
- Christian symbolism

6 References

- [1] Islamic flags
- [2] Saudi Aramco World : Flags of the Arab World
- [3] Ottoman Empire: Flags and coats of arms shown in the Topkapi Museum (Istanbul)
- [4] e.g. A. Locher, "With Star and Crescent: A Full and Authentic Account of a Recent Journey with a Caravan from Bombay to Constantinople"; Andrew Haggard, "Under Crescent and Star" (1895).
- [5] "Mosque and minaret are surrounded by crescents; the air glowing over the Golden Horn is, as it were, full of moons." Hezekiah Butterworth, *The Zigzag Series* (1882), p. 481.
- [6] The symbolism of the star and crescent in the flag of the Kingdom of Libya (1951-1969) was explained in an English language booklet, *The Libyan Flag & The National Anthem*, issued by the Ministry of Information and Guidance of the Kingdom of Libya (year unknown, cited after Jos Poels at FOTW, 1997) as follows: "The crescent is symbolic of the beginning of the lunar month according to the Muslim calendar. It brings back to our minds the story of Hijra (migration) of our Prophet Mohammed from his home in order to spread Islam and teach the principles of right and virtue. The Star represents our smiling hope, the beauty of aim and object and the light of our belief in God, in our country, its dignity and honour which illuminate our way and puts an end to darkness."
- [7] Edward E. Curtis, *Black Muslim religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975* (2006), p. 157.

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