

*The journey of a lifetime...*

# Religion defines muslim culture

By Donatella Savino

For a culture that's misunderstood by most of today's society, the Muslim culture is firmly rooted in its religion.

Religion, as well as history plays such an extremely large part in Muslim culture that families will typically make large sacrifices to meet the obligations established by the Muslim culture.

One such event that is of great importance as well as representation of the sacrifices that families make is the once in a lifetime journey know as Hajj.

## The Background

There is a sacred journey that every Muslim in their lifetime must take. This special journey to Mecca, Saudi Arabia is called Hajj.

In Mecca, there lies an essential obligation that brings Muslims of all races together to perform one of life's most spiritual experiences.

For centuries, millions of Muslims from all around the world have made the voyage to Mecca, the birthplace of Islam.

By performing this journey, they accomplish one of the five pillars that is bestowed

upon Muslims; the five pillars being the religious duties that every Muslim must carry out.

Muslims trace back the origins of this pilgrimage to the prophet Abraham.

According to the Quran, the Muslim bible, Abraham was the one who built the Kabba (House of God) which is the central point where the Muslims pray five times a day.

Abraham was also the one who established all the rituals that come along with the performance of Hajj.

According to Feroz Pardesi of Lindenhurst, a Muslim who has performed Hajj, the journey of Hajj is a five day event.

It begins on the eighth day of the month Zulhajj, which is the last month on the lunar calendar.

Upon arrival to your destination, the pilot will alert the passengers that they are in the area where they should be wearing their two piece garments.

The garments symbolize purity and indicate the equality of people under the eye of God.

You must have these garments on before you enter the area of Hajj.

## The Journey: Morning

According to Pardesi, the journey begins in the city of Mina, Saudi Arabia and it's recommended that you be in that city before the sun has reached its highest point.

Muslims start their morning prayer with their special garments still upon them.

The Muslims pray to repent for their sins

performed throughout their lifetime and ask for God's forgiveness.

Muslims also pray that in the future they will not sin and ask God for guidance. On the ninth day, Muslims leave Mina to go to another city named Arafat.

They must arrive there before the afternoon prayer, and they stay in tents. "This is the most precious time for prayer ; you can ask God for almost anything and it will be answered," said Pardesi.

## The Afternoon

According to Pardesi, after performing the afternoon prayer, all the Muslims make their way to the Mountain of Mercy.

There, they stand on the mountain facing towards the Kabba. They pray and ask for forgiveness until the sun goes down.

## The Evening

After their time in Arafat, they leave again at sunset to the city of Muzdulfa.

There, the Muslims visit the white pillars where they remember the story of how God tested Abraham if he would sacrifice his son. Most Muslims sacrifice goats or some sort of animal to symbolize willingness to part with what is precious.

After finishing this major stage of performing Hajj, they are now allowed to take off their garments and put on regular clothing. In celebration, the Muslims cut their hair, or shave their hair off.

## The End

According to Pardesi, on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month, the Muslims journey back to Mina.

The Muslims have again put on

their special garments because they are entering a holy place.

It is there that they perform their most vital rite of passage of Hajj: the Muslims visit Mecca where they see the Kabba, which is a building with a black covering around it.

Although Eddie Osman, a junior at ACHS, has never been to Mecca, he explains that going to Kabba is a feeling of being reborn and that all of your sins will be forgiven. "Your slate is clean," said Osman of the journey.

Mehreen Syed, junior at ACHS, explains that the journey to Kabba is an act of purification of the soul and mind.

"When you have completed Hajj, you are basically as pure as the newborn," said Syed.

Pardesi speaks passionately about Hajj as he has physically taken part in the journey.

"It's a phenomenal experience," said Pardesi. "It's a spiritual feeling that is incomprehensible. You talk and hear so much about this journey, but when you actually can see it, it's a feeling that simply can't be described."

**Don't leave your Business Out in the cold**

**Heat it up & Advertise with the Tom Tom today**

Call or E-mail us @

847-838-7766

mgordy@sequoits.com

See us this week!

**Wherever Your Road Leads Lyons-Ryan Can Help Get You There...**



**"Savin' You Money 'Round The Clock - Lyons & Ryan In Antioch!"**

www.lyons-ryan.com

Call Us Toll Free At: 800.957.4640

Lyons & Ryan