



The influence of Islam on Zulu Muslims in KwaZulu-Natal



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Research Project Registration:

Project Leader:

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Project Number: 5212325

Description:

This research is part of the project, 'Studies in Religion and Culture', directed by Dr Maniraj Sukdaven, Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria.

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Dates:

Received: 26 Sept. 2023
Accepted: 26 Mar. 2024
Published: 04 June 2024

How to cite this article:

Ngubane, S.E. & Sukdaven, M., 2024, 'The influence of Islam on Zulu Muslims in KwaZulu-Natal', *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* 80(1), a9478. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9478>

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This article explores the influence of Islam among the Zulu Muslims in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Although several studies focus on the history and experiences of the Asian diaspora or Asian Muslim community, there is a considerable lack of literature on the influence of Islam on the Zulu Muslims' personal experiences beyond the conversion narratives. This study seeks to examine the impact of Islam on the cultural and religious identities of individuals who have converted to Islam within the Zulu community. This research article used qualitative research with a phenomenological approach conducted in several areas in KZN. The data for this study were acquired from literature, interviews and observations conducted among the Zulu Muslims in KZN. The data analysis technique employed in this work utilises a comprehensive approach, wherein all the acquired data are considered significant, and no reduction is applied.

Contribution: The non-Muslim Zulus in KZN tend to stigmatise Zulu Muslim converts, perceiving them as having abandoned their cultural heritage. The Zulu Muslims who converted to Islam developed their own unique interpretation of the religion by blending Islamic principles with Zulu cultural elements. This allowed them to establish a sense of identity that they believe to be both authentically Zulu and free from colonial influences, in contrast to the Christianised Zulu population.

Keywords: Zulu Muslims; Zulu indigenous religion; Zulu-ness; Ubuntu; Islam; Arabisation; Islamisation.

Introduction

This article discusses the efforts to redefine and reconstruct Zulu identity through a counter-hegemonic approach that combines Zulu culture with Islamic beliefs. The focus is on the development and expression of a Zulu Muslim identity that combines a traditional Zulu concept of self with worldwide Zulu ideologies. The Zulu Muslims in South Africa are seeking a unified approach within Muslim Zulu-ness to move away from the structured identity imposed by colonialism and apartheid. The highlighted case is unique and has not been thoroughly researched. For instance, during colonisation and apartheid, the practice of Islam was closely linked to the continuous fight for identity and belonging. South African Muslim Zulu-ness is shaped by the worldwide dissemination of opposing the West and anti-colonial worldviews within an Islamic context, which are then applied to spatial and social structures. Hassan (2011) examines the development of African Muslim identity in Black African townships, focussing on the intersection of ethnicity, religion and social status. Additionally, he offers an informative analysis of African Muslim groups in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Sitoto (2003) highlights the underrepresentation of African Muslims in institutionalised Islam in KZN and the challenges they face in gaining both religious and political recognition, often being perceived as a charity case. The Zulu converts' persistent violations are motivated by a desire for their homeland, a process of emigration from cultural norms and the unmet expectations of democratic South Africa. Gebauer (2019) correctly states that:

The current academic discussions on the conversion to Islam in South Africa for overlooking the self-determined and self-defined nature of Black Muslim indigeneity. It also points out a reluctance to analyse and contextualise these dynamics in relation to ongoing colonial, racial, and spatial structures. (pp. 216–217)

This study will utilise literature and interviews regarding how Zulu Muslims have made sense of their identity and of living among the adherents of the Zulu indigenous religion in KZN. In this regard, there is also a need for a critical account of how Zulu converts have strived to make sense of their identity as Muslims beyond the moment of conversion (Sitoto 2018:168). Although few studies have examined the impact of Islam on the Asian diaspora or Asian Muslim community,

little is known about how Zulu Muslims view the issue of *Zulu-ness* and *Muslim-ness*.

A succinct overview of the impact of Islam on Zulu Muslims in KwaZulu-Natal

Zulu Muslim identity

The concept of identity has been subject to some challenges (Gleason 1983; Yusuf & Dumbe 2023). According to Hall (1990), the transparency of the notion of identity is a subject of contention. Among the Zulu Muslims, the concept of identity is characterised as an ongoing and internalised process. The concept of cultural identity pertains to the collective ideals that establish an individual's authentic sense of self (Hall 1990:223). According to Hall (1990) and Yusuf and Dumbe (2023), cultural identity pertains to the collective historical experiences and values that serve as a framework for understanding and valuing the diverse cultural backgrounds of others. According to Vignoles (2018:1), the concept of identity can be understood as the way individuals respond to the query, 'Who are you?'

Moreover, Vignoles (2018:1) notes that academic scholars who are interested in the concept of identity prioritise the examination of both personal and social aspects, as well as personal and social processes. Vignoles (2018) emphasises that the concept of identity encompasses both personal and societal dimensions, as well as content and processes. Therefore, it is possible for the phenomenon to have an impact on either the individual or the society, or perhaps both simultaneously. This statement elucidates the notion that each person or collective (be it an ethnic or cultural group) possesses an identity or characteristic that is anticipated to address the inquiry: 'who are you' (either in terms of culture or ethnicity) (Yusuf & Appiah 2021; Yusuf et al. 2023). Meanwhile, Sufi practices provide structured rituals to reorganise the self and blend Zulu and Muslim aspects of identity.

In the context of South Africa, no identity is fundamental and shared by all citizens. Therefore, South Africans' identities are primarily founded on their language and ethnicity. Apartheid created a long-lasting detrimental impact because of its racial segregation laws that led to minimal communication and contact between Zulu and Indian Muslims in KZN (Al-Tshatshu 2018; Goba 1995:191; Khan 2017a). Identities within the Islamic faith continue to be determined by language, region and gender. KwaZulu-Natal's Islamic identity continues to be influenced by cultural and social spheres other than socioeconomic status, language, religion, gender, region and class. The Whites, the Zulu and the Indians were separated by substantial religious and cultural differences. Muslim identity among the Zulu converts produced intrinsically diverse expressions in practice and belief that are distinct from those of the non-Muslim Zulu. Even among Muslims in Durban, there are

distinct Muslim traditions such as Reformist, Tablighi and Bareilvi. It is therefore implausible to speak of a single Muslim community, but proper to refer to Muslim communities in the plural (Dangor 2003:203–220). Zulu Muslims maintain unity as they discover their identity within the community.

The Zulu people of KZN frequently use their own culture as a lens through which they view the world, and they also use it to judge and view other worldviews. They do this to ensure that their own worldview is accurate. The Zulu Muslims view and evaluate the world around them, including what they formerly thought of as being a part of their culture or tradition. Believing, belonging, behaving and bonding (four Bs) can be employed as four pillars that make up the Zulu Muslim identity (Chidester 1997:228).

Belonging to a religious faith or sect is crucial for the Zulu Muslim community. They establish a collective identity beyond their social circles, seeking guidance from imams and ulama. Understanding the Islamic perspective fosters kinship and knowledge about fellow community members' welfare.

Behaving to a set of values is an essential component of the behavioural expectations for individuals who identify as Muslims. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as religious devotion, encompassing a set of standards that dictate both the prohibitions and permissions for adherents of a specific religious tradition. Zulu Muslims who exhibit a heightened level of religiosity frequently demonstrate a stringent adherence to their religious obligations. Ngwane (2005:16) asserts that Islam influenced his conduct because of its fundamental belief in Allah, which is firmly grounded and devoid of any uncertainties, hence constituting a religion devoid of enigmatic elements. The decisions individuals make are also influenced by religious values or teachings. The judicial and legal systems in Muslim countries are significantly influenced by religious teachings. The Islamic State is governed by a legal system rooted in Islamic principles and teachings. Hence, the Zulu Muslims actively immerse themselves in the study and practice of the Quran and Sunnah to embody the principles and teachings of Islam.

Religious dedication not only serves to shape beliefs, foster a sense of belonging and influence behaviour but also plays a significant role in strengthening the social cohesion within the Zulu Muslim community. The Zulu Muslim community demonstrates cohesion through the observance of spiritual practices and ceremonies. This encompasses many religious practices such as religious ceremonies, acts of prayer, undertaking pilgrimages and engaging in acts of worship. The contacts among Zulu Muslims within the masjid and their shared religious identity contribute to the strengthening of their interpersonal connections. According to Saroglou (2011) and Hoogendoorn, Rietveld and Van Stel (2016), the aforementioned four Bs represent the social, cognitive, affective and moral dimensions of religion.

The utilisation of the term 'religiosity' by certain scholars in the fields of politics and religion has emerged as a response to the intricate nature of religious identity (Hoogendoorn et al. 2016; Leege & Kellstedt 1993; Macaluso & Wanat 1979; Saroglou 2011). In their seminal work, Wanat and Macaluso (1979) provided a concise definition of religiosity as the degree to which an individual is emotionally and psychologically connected to established religious institutions. Wanat and Macaluso (1979) conducted a study aiming to assess the amount of religiosity in individuals, focussing specifically on the frequency of attendance at places of worship as a predictor. According to Macaluso and Wanat (1979:160), we can deduce that individuals who consistently engage in prayer at the masjid may be seen as having a greater degree of religiosity, whereas those who rarely participate in masjid prayers, commonly known as non-practising Muslims, tend to have a lower level of religiosity. The assessment of religiosity takes into consideration the accessibility of persons, as it is possible for individuals with high levels of religiosity to engage in prayer outside of the Masjid for various reasons. Moreover, several individuals consistently participate in prayer gatherings at the Masjid because of their significant contributions in various roles, including imams and those responsible for summoning the congregation to prayer. According to Leege and Kellstedt (1993), the utilisation of Masjid attendance as the sole metric for assessing religiosity may not provide a comprehensive representation of the aforementioned four Bs. However, the Zulu Muslim participants prioritise the religious aspect as the fundamental basis of their commitment to the will of Allah.

The utilisation of masjid attendance as a metric for assessing religiosity may not be suitable, particularly in the context of the post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) period, wherein individual's devotion has been encouraged. One potential indicator that could effectively gauge the degree of religiosity within the Zulu Muslim community is their adherence to the principle of abstaining from associating Allah with any other deities, also referred to as shirk. The Zulu Muslims may not prioritise their religious observance, yet they possess a conscious recognition of their Zulu heritage and their adoption of the Islamic faith. The Zulu Muslims have adeptly navigated the challenge of reconciling certain cultural traditions that are deemed incompatible with the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. Muslim individuals who identify as Zulu Muslims are strongly encouraged and obligated to adhere to the Quran and Sunnah as fundamental principles to govern their religious practices. The Zulu Muslims in KZN internalise the process of their conversion and endeavour to reconcile their newly acquired religious identity.

Rafudeen (2002) suggests that Muslims in South Africa are in a transitional phase regarding their identity, torn between their historical constraints from colonialism and apartheid, and their quest for a place in the South African post-apartheid era. This suggestion to establish a genuine Zulu Muslim

identity by incorporating indigenous culture and languages into Islamic schools seems unlikely to succeed because of the ongoing conflicts between established Islamic groups and new converts in KZN. The converts create a connection between the Zulu self before White domination and the vision for a future Zulu and Muslim era. The Zulu Muslims of KZN exhibit dual awareness of both their ethnic (Zulu) and religious (Muslim) identity. The Zulu approach to religious and ethnic identity aligns with Dannin's (2002) observation of a:

Dual awareness of religious and ethnic identity. Did Malcolm X see himself as a Muslim representing a religiously diverse African-American community? Or an African American who deeply identified with the Muslim community? This inquiry pertains to individuals facing the dilemma of belonging to both African and Muslim diasporas. (p. 264)

The predicament of simultaneously identifying with both the Zulu and Muslim communities has resulted in Zulu Muslims forming a distinct sub-group within the larger population, Ngubane (2023):

[Although] the Zulu Muslim participants were not unanimous concerning the duality of identity between *Zulu-ness* and *Muslimness*. After an intensive study on *Zulu-ness* and *Muslimness*, it becomes more evident that these identities are not fixed binaries. The attempt to distinguish between the *Zulu-ness* and *Muslimness* identities seems to be a terrain that is elusive and complex to obtain a neat answer or understanding. Furthermore, most of the Zulu Muslim participants did not see a necessity to divorce their Zulu identity because of the Islamic identity. The Zulu Muslims in KZN understand that the concept of identity is very fluid and ambiguous, which makes it difficult to fully comprehend. This is the reason why some Muslims prefer to be identified as strictly Muslims while others feel like there is no need to harmonise the Zulu Muslim identity or to see any dichotomy between being Zulu and Muslim. (p.166)

The Zulu convert's understanding of Islam

The Zulu Muslims possess an intricate and multifaceted understanding of Islam. Individuals, revivalist movements and institutions have had a significant impact on the Islamic expressions of the Zulu Muslims. The proliferation of Zulu Muslims in KZN has been substantially influenced by Islamic literature in the English language, the lectures of foreign Muslim scholars, and the writings of contemporary Muslim scholars and writers. Graduates from institutions located in Muslim-majority nations contribute significantly to the perception of Zulu Muslims. The Zulu Muslims as a minority group in KZN continue to seek guidance, inspiration and directives from other local Muslims or Muslims from abroad. To prevent the corruption of Islam, the Zulu Muslim converts are taught how to distinguish between what is *halal* (permitted or lawful) and what is *haram* (forbidden or unlawful) in the Islamic religion.

Furthermore, the Zulu converts undergo training with the understanding that Islam serves as a mechanism through

which they can cultivate a Zulu sense of identity, foster solidarity and establish a sense of equality with Muslims across the globe. According to Eickelman (1978:45), it is accurate to assert that the religious principles delineated in the scriptures hold greater significance than the commonly perceived ceremonial directives or rules. The principles pertaining to religious rituals and scriptures (Quran) play a significant role in the life of Muslims and are widely recognised as integral components of their cultural identity. The primacy of textual command over religious rites is emphasised because of the scripture's role as the principal guidance for Muslim conduct and way of life. However, it should be noted that religious rituals hold significant importance as they serve as crucial expressions of the teachings derived from the Quran and Sunnah. Moreover, it is imperative that these rituals consistently align with the message conveyed within the sacred writings (Bangstad 2004:40–41).

One of the interviewees, Shaykh Rachid (Sikhosana) stated that he believes Zulu people originated from Islam and that their religion was Islam. Thus, Zulu Muslim youth and children are instructed in the doctrines and lessons of Islam to develop their leadership skills for future pursuits. Muslim families prioritise the transmission of knowledge to their children, while also emphasising the need of loving their creator and demonstrating care for his creation. The Zulu Muslim children receive instruction in a language that is comprehensible to them and undergo training to become proficient in the recitation of the Quran and to memorise its verses. Moreover, Islam possesses a well-organised framework that enables it to accommodate individuals from diverse backgrounds, including the Zulu Muslim youth who are also given due attention. Upon the conversion of a Zulu individual to Islam, the requirements and concerns of Zulu Muslim youth do not exhibit significant disparities when compared to other ethnic Muslim youth cohorts, as they are all attended to by spiritual leaders. Zulu Muslim individuals, irrespective of their age, are instructed to believe that a pious follower of Islam endeavours to obtain the approval of Allah by means of their every action. Zulu Muslim teens and children are instructed to prioritise their devotion to Allah above seeking acceptance from others, emphasising a disregard for external approval that goes against the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.

Islam and Zulu indigenous worldview

Zulu Muslims in KZN are instructed to prioritise the teachings of the Quran as the supreme authority over Zulu cultural customs and beliefs. Therefore, the Zulu Muslim community does not exhibit the phenomenon of syncretism observed among the Ghanaian Gonja people, as described by Yusuf (2021:18). Specifically, the Zulu Muslims do not use Islamic artefacts such as the Ghanaian Gonja, who use decorated artefacts with Arabic script in their herbal and concoction shrines (Yusuf 2021:18). Among the Ghanaian

Gonja people, chiefs commonly make use of the services of both shrine priests and Muslim imams (religious leaders), who are expected to perform their respective traditional rituals and Muslim prayers. The absence of this phenomenon appears to be evident within the Zulu Muslim community as they actively endeavour to uphold the principles and teachings outlined in the Quran.

According to the interviews conducted with Zulu Muslim imams from various regions in KZN, including Pietermaritzburg, Harding, Umzinto and the South Coast, they believe that the slow propulsion of individuals away from their traditions should be facilitated by education and persuasion rather than coercion. The cultural practices, including lobola and similar customs, necessitate careful oversight among the Zulu Muslim household. This phenomenon is expected to have relevance, namely within the Muslim community, where a notable inclination towards syncretism between Zulu cultural practices and the Islamic faith can be observed. Muslim religious officials acknowledge that the Zulu community's perception of marriage may not be inclined towards reverence unless it encompasses the customary practice of lobola, which entails discussions between two families. According to Kaarsholm (2011:117), it is customary within Zulu Muslim households for lobola to be subject to negotiation, with the onus being on Zulu Muslim parents to ensure that a fair and appropriate price is agreed upon. Again, affirming both Zulu culture and Islam has been a dominant discourse among Zulu Muslims, but they are more than willing to denounce Zulu beliefs and practices that are not permitted in Islam. The Zulu Muslims are also willing to Islamise and reinterpret their previous beliefs and practices that they embraced before taking a *shahadah* and becoming Muslims. The Zulu Muslims have always employed Islamic teachings to filter the Zulu beliefs and practices to fit the standard narrative of Islam (Haron 2018:1–3).

Adam Mncanywa, cited in Kaarsholm (2011:118), advocated for the assimilation of Islam within the Zulu community, emphasising the necessity for the religion to establish a connection with the indigenous Zulu culture. It is imperative that the Zulu Muslim community assumes the responsibility of disseminating the teachings and principles of Islam within their own community. Adam Mncanywa (interviewed by Kaarsholm at the Islamic community centre, 23 August 2006) argues that a comprehensive understanding of Zulu cultural traditions and Islam necessitates thorough investigation and a comparative analysis. Adam held a considerable amount of admiration for the Shembe church because of their successful integration of Christianity within the context of Zulu traditional beliefs. This integration was achieved through interpreting biblical texts through the cultural and religious framework of the Zulu community. Adam argues that Islam should adopt a similar stance to that of the Shembe church in terms of demonstrating respect towards the Zulu traditional world. According to Kaarsholm (2011:118), Mncanywa implies that the Shembe church did not embrace a Western kind of Christianity that aimed to eradicate African cultural practices. However, the interpretation of the Quran in a

manner like that suggested by Mncanywa is seen as unfeasible because of the influence of the processes of Arabisation and Islamisation.

Zulu Muslims repeatedly assert that Islam is a comprehensive or perfected religion that rightfully resists assimilation into any cultural framework (Fanon 1962; Mazrui 1975; Memmi 1967). The Imams in uMzimkhulu and South Coast believe that Zulu Muslims ought not to allow their Islamic practices to be heavily influenced by Zulu beliefs and practices. They suggest that Islam should carefully select which Zulu cultural customs can be incorporated within the Islamic framework of monotheism.

The Zulu convert views of Zulu indigenous religion

The perspectives of Zulu converts are shaped by various factors, including the Quran, Sunnah, measurement (*Qiyas*) and *Ijma* (consensus on a specific point of the Islamic law). The Zulu converts to Islam, including individuals such as Adam Mncanywa and Dawood Ngwane, actively engage in dawah initiatives with a firm conviction in imparting knowledge about African culture, fostering respect and instilling moral values. According to Ngwane (2003), the message of Islam will only become known to individuals when their curiosity prompts them to inquire about it. Ngwane (2003:48) asserts that the integration of the Islamic faith with Zulu heritage is not only a viable religious option, but it also presents a more favourable outlook for the preservation of Zulu cultural traditions. One of the key tenets of Islam is the concise affirmation of the oneness and indivisibility of God, emphasising that God is not composed of any components or associates. Zulu converts maintain the belief that Islam centres around the concept of surrendering oneself to Allah, and hence argue that adherents of Islam should always prioritise their commitment to the faith over traditional Zulu perspectives. Hence, it is anticipated that the Zulu individual who has adopted Islam will wholeheartedly surrender to Allah and renounce any aspects of Zulu culture that conflict with Islamic principles.

However, it appears that Zulu Muslims in KZN have discovered a method to include Zulu songs in their religious services or gatherings for significant events such as weddings. While observing a Friday prayer meeting, it was apparent that several mosques situated in the outskirts of Durban have included Zulu songs into their religious rituals, shown by the inclusion of the hymn '*igama lika-Allah malibongwe*', which translates to 'the name of Allah be praised/thanked'. It is noteworthy that this song bears a striking resemblance to another widely recognised Zulu song known as '*igama lika-Jesu malibongwe*', which translates to 'the name of Jesus be praised/thanked'. The adaptation of Zulu hymns or songs within the Zulu Muslim community serves as evidence that they do not completely disregard their pre-existing knowledge, but rather evaluate and interpret their previous knowledge and experiences within the context of Islamic teachings.

Sifiso Zungu (known as Abdul) from the Mosque in Highflats (Kwagqwataza) explained that Islamic religious analogies, such as the concept of the oneness of God (Tawhid) and other examples, introduce a fresh perspective on Zulu rituals. He posited that the red mud applied by an Izangoma (diviner) on the skin is perceived as resembling Islamic purification rituals performed before prayer when water is unavailable. Similarly, the Umqhele, a black headband worn by Zulu married men, which was prohibited by Mariannhill missionaries, is viewed as an Islamic artefact because of its form and symbolic significance. The revival of a pre-colonial Zulu identity in the modern world by integrating it with an Islamic identity was influenced by the comparative works of the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI). The writings connected the Islamic perspective of Allah with the Zulu belief in a single creator God, proposing that the Zulu belief in the concept of God may have originated from Islamic influences (Deedat 1981). Again, it is clear that there is no ambiguity among Zulu Muslims regarding the fact that the Quran and Sunnah serve as a means of filtering Zulu beliefs and practices that they can adopt.

Zulu Muslims, including the interviewee Shaykh Duma, strongly assert that Allah did not intend for the revelation of Islam to Muhammad to be a subject of theoretical discussions or mere utterances by individuals seeking personal gain without understanding their importance. The religion of Islam was divinely revealed by Allah with the purpose of exerting control over the lives of individuals, families and society at large. Its primary objective is to function as a guiding beacon, leading people away from darkness and towards enlightenment. According to Surah 5:15–16 of the Quran, it is said that a luminous and unambiguous scripture has been bestowed upon humanity by Allah.

The lifestyle of a devout Zulu Muslim entails adhering to and exemplifying the principles of Islam, thereby presenting a compelling and aesthetically pleasing representation of the faith. Through their actions and interactions, these individuals have the potential to bolster the faith of others. Upon arriving at Mazibuko's home in Edendale after Friday prayer, he offered me an apple. Before our meal, he recited an Islamic prayer in Arabic for blessings (*Bismillah*). This demonstrates that Mazibuko, a Zulu Muslim, not only embraces Zulu songs but also incorporates Arabic prayers and greetings as an integral part of their identity. The Arabic language, being the language of their prophet, holds great significance for them. Within the Zulu Muslim community, the life of Muhammad is revered as a model for how people should live and exemplify the concept of ubuntu within an Islamic framework.

Zulu Muslim embodiment of Ubuntu

The inquiry of the extent to which the Islamic code of ethics has bolstered the Zulu cultural code of ethics is a topic of interest. Zulu Muslim participants hold the belief that Islam

has indeed contributed to the enhancement of the Zulu cultural code of ethics. The Zulu Muslim participants argue that the Islamic code of ethics is deemed flawless because of its divine origin rather than being a product of human creation. However, it is worth noting that the Zulu Muslim participants make a concerted effort to incorporate their traditional cultural values into their practice of the Islamic faith, drawing guidance from the Quran and Sunnah as Sunni Muslims. During our interviews, the notion of ubuntu was introduced and subsequently, a Zulu Imam asserted that Islam exemplified the authentic embodiment of ubuntu.

According to Zulu Muslim converts, using the ubuntu philosophy has the potential to facilitate the dissemination of Islam within the Zulu population, as it aligns with the ideas and practices supported in the Quran and the Sunnah. Based on the Zulu Muslim participants the Islamic faith that lacks ubuntu characteristics, becomes outmoded, but the Islamic faith, when infused with ubuntu values, becomes the ultimate ambition for individuals who are devoted to Allah. In a nutshell, several Zulu Muslim participants expressed the view that the presence of maulanans is crucial in emphasising that adherence to Islam does not require Zulu individuals to completely abandon their cultural code of ethics. Except for strict Quranic compliance, Zulu Muslims exhibit a sense of satisfaction with their dual identity as both Zulu and Muslim.

Conclusion

This article provided insight into why Zulu Muslims view converting and/or reverting to Islam to reclaim their cultural identity that was diminished by apartheid and colonialism. The Zulu Muslims, previously devoted to their Zulu indigenous religion, now strictly follow the fundamentals of the Islamic faith, showing strong dedication to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, and avoiding any deviation from its fundamental beliefs. Zulu Muslims view the Islamic religion as a means of returning to their genuine identity and embracing their local cultural roots and traditions. They also demonstrate an improvement in the process of restructuring the Zulu identity as both Zulu and Muslim. The Quranic language Arabic is highly respected as a sacred language among Zulu Muslims, who incorporate it into their religious and linguistic practices such as prayer, greetings, instruction and sometimes daily conversations. The impact of Islam on Zulu Muslims in KZN is apparent in their behaviour, as many have regained their identity by returning to their Islamic cultural roots and traditions.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

In the preparation of the article, S.E.N. undertook the initial drafting, followed by a comprehensive review conducted by M.S.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not openly available but are available from the corresponding author, S.E.N., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors, and the publisher.

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