Understanding Muhammad



Module Topics:

- **Pre-Islamic Arabia**
- **Introducing Islamic Primary Sources**
- **Early Life of Muhammad & Initial Revelations**
- **The First Muslim Community.**

- **Persecution and exile from Mecca**
- **Military and political factors**
- **Entry into Medina**
- **The conquest of Mecca**
- **The Final Sermon & the Death of Muhammad.**



"Whoever obeys the Messenger verily obeys God." (al-Nisa, 4:80) [A]



5

TERMINOLOGY

This module attempts to keep 'technical' Islamic terminology to the minimum. However, there are a few key terms, which are helpful to reflect upon. While a full romanisation system is not utilised on this module, consistency of spelling terms is helpful (especially in writing assignments):

Hadith - 'speech' or 'reports'. The term is applied to Muhammad's traditions and sayings. Collections of these traditions influenced biographical sources about Muhammad, as well as the development of knowledge about Islam.

Islam - pronounced I-slaam - means submission (to the Will of God). It is derived from the Arabic root for 'peace'.

Muslim - one who submits to God.

Ka'bah - 'cube': cube shaped building in Great Mosque of Mecca. Ibrahim and Ismā'īl are said to have rebuilt the Ka'bah, originally established by Adam. Muslims direct their prayers to the Ka'bah, although they are not worshipping the Ka'bah, or the *Hajar al-Aswad* 'Black Stone' contained in the Ka'bah.

Muslim - one who submits, submitter (to the Will of God) (terms such as 'Muhammadan' and 'Moslem' are incorrect.)

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Muhammad - (1) Arabic proper name. Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah (c. CE 570-632/11AH). Prophet and Founder of Islam. (2) Sura 47 in Qur'ān. (3) Muslims frequently say *Salla Allah 'alayhi wa sallam* (or variations) when mentioning Muhammad: this means 'May God bless him and grant him salvation.'

al-Qur'ān - 'Recitation'. Revelation received by Muhammad from God via the Angel Jibril (Gabriel). 114 *surah* (chapters), divided into *ayah* verses.

Quraysh - (1) Meccan tribe: the *Hashim* tribe [Hashim was Muhammad's grandfather] was a part of the *Quraysh*. (2) Sura *Quraysh* 106.

Sunni - the majority of Muslims describe themselves as Sunni or so-called 'orthodox' Muslims. This means they adhere to the customary practise of the Prophet Muhammad

Sunna (pl. *Sunan*) - 'trodden path': the body of sayings and actions of Muhammad, including *hadith*.

Shi'i - 'Party' of **Ali bin Abi Talib** (c. AD 598-40/661) literally followers or believers: *Shi'i*: the Muslims who see Ali as rightful successor to Muhammad

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SOURCES

The primary sources used to study the life of the Prophet include:

al-Qur'ān
Hadith (preserving the sayings about and of Muhammad)
sunna (the actions of Muhammad)
tafsir (commentaries on meaning of the Qur'ān)
sira (biographies about Muhammad).

The Qur'ān is seen as being of Divine origin: the Words of God, uninfluenced by human interpreters, received in the form of Revelation by Muhammad from God via the Angel Gabriel.

8

SOURCES

Traditions and Sayings of the Prophet - the Sunnah and Hadith - have differing degrees of authenticity. Varying translated collections of traditions exist, the most comprehensive in UWTSD library being those collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim

Sira: chronological, contains non-hadith anecdotes, Qur'ânic elaborations, poetry, and oral historical tradition (several generations until written).

The Life of Muhammad is contained in numerous editions by various biographers, dating from Muslims close to the time of the Prophet (i.e. Ibn Ishaq, 704-768 CE) onwards. This means there can be varying degrees of 'authenticity', 'reliability', and/or 'recognition'.

9

SOURCES

Martin Lings, Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1983) incorporates material from several authoritative sources, primarily the '**Sira**' sources of Muhammad ibn Ishaq (704-768), Muhammad ibn Sa'd (784-845); and Muhammad b. Umar al-Waqidi (747-823 CE). Lings also makes references to other historical sources.

W. Mongomery Watt, The History of al-Tabari *(Ta'rik al-rusul wa'l muluk*) (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987). This is a translation of an Islamic historical source, augmented with references to other sources. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) utilised sources, including Hisham b. Muhammad b. Al-Sa'd al-Kalbi (763-819), ibn Ishaq, ibn Sa'd, and al-Waqidi

10

"Say: 'I do not tell you that I have the treasures of Allah, and I do not know the Unseen; nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.' Say: 'Are the blind man and the one who sees alike? Do you not reflect at all?'" (*Surah Al-An'am* 'The Cattle' 6:50) [F]

11

"This is the revelation of the Book from Allah, the All-Mighty, All-Wise. Surely, in the heavens and the earth there are signs for believers." (Surah al-Jathiyah, 'The Kneeling One', 45: 1-2) [F]

12

"Say: 'I do not have the power to benefit or harm myself, except at Allah pleases. Had I the knowledge of the Unseen, I would have acquired much good, and misfortune would not have touched me. I am only a warner and a bearer of good news to a people who believe.'" (Surah al-Araf, 'The Heights', 7:188). [F]

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Verses can be contextual or analogous in nature, linking to specific situations and events, although some sections of the Qur'ān have a more esoteric or ambiguous dimension, requiring exegesis.

14

Traditions and Sayings of the Prophet – the **Sunnah** and **Hadith** - have differing degrees of authenticity (a chain known as the **isnad**).

15

What do we know about pre-Islamic Middle East?

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18

first urban centres in Mesopotamia.

3500-3000 BCE [Before Common Era]:

Sumerian ascendance 3500 BCE.

Writing invented.

Subsequent civilisations in region include: Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian.

19



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Front of the throne base of Shalmaneser III of Assyria, showing the Assyrian king and Marduk-zakir-šumi I of Babylon shaking hands



22



The "Babylonian Map of the World", showing the city of Babylon at its centre.

23



Marduk-apla-iddina II (left) as king of Babylon in 715 BC

24

"Babylonia" - the south of modern Iraq, stretching from the Baghdad area down to the Gulf.

Greek term - inhabitants in the early first millennium BC who described the region as the "land of Sumer and Akkad", a term attested from the third millennium BC onwards.

Babylonia is frequently called the cradle of civilisation and the inhabitants of ancient cities such as Uruk, Nippur and Babylon would certainly have agreed with this assessment, carefully maintaining their rich heritage of architecture, literature, festivals and communal life.

Source: **Babylon and the cities and tribes of Southern Mesopotamia**
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/countries/babylonia/

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26



Chaos Monster and Sun god



Marduk the Babylonian name of a late-generation god from ancient Mesopotamia and patron deity of the city of Babylon, who, when Babylon became the political centre of the Euphrates valley in the time of Hammurabi (18th century BCE), started to slowly rise to the position of the head of the Babylonian pantheon, a position he fully acquired by the second half of the second millennium BCE.

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Male dominated, militarily competitive, class based society, with military and temple elites – increasingly specialised occupations

29

The Code of Hammurabi

Babylonian law code of ancient Mesopotamia, dating back to about 1754 BC.

one of the oldest deciphered writings of significant length in the world.

The sixth Babylonian king, Hammurabi, enacted the code, and partial copies exist on a human-sized stone stele and various clay tablets.

The Code consists of 282 laws, with scaled punishments, adjusting "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (lex talionis) as graded depending on social status, of slave versus free man

30

Code Hammurabi (c. 1752 BCE): family laws, inheritance: influenced subsequent Hebrew and Islamic law systems.

Includes specific divorce and family laws

Monogamous marriages

Harems

Veiling laws: veils for the upper classes “to differentiate between ‘respectable’ women and those who were publicly available.”

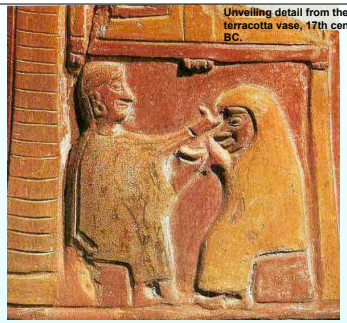
Upper class women had power, influence (marriage, priestesses, businesswomen, property rights, legal rights)

31



Miniature sculpture of a seated woman wearing a head veil, dated around 2350 - 2250 BC. SYRIA

32



Unveiling detail from the Bitik terracotta vase, 17th century BC.

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Nearly one-half of the Code deals with matters of contract, establishing, for example, the wages to be paid to an ox driver or a surgeon.

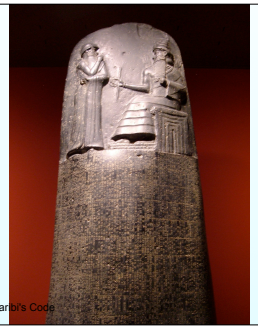
Other provisions set the terms of a transaction, establishing the liability of a builder for a house that collapses, for example, or property that is damaged while left in the care of another.

A third of the code addresses issues concerning household and family relationships such as inheritance, divorce, paternity and sexual behaviour.

Only one provision appears to impose obligations on an official; this provision establishes that a judge who reaches an incorrect decision is to be fined and removed from the bench permanently.

A handful of provisions address issues related to military service.

34



Stele with Hammarbi's Code

35



Hammurabi (standing), depicted as receiving his royal insignia from Shamash. Hammurabi holds his hands over his mouth as a sign of prayer

36

The text is written in cuneiform script and the Akkadian language. It is divided into three parts:

- a historical prologue relating the investiture of King Hammurabi in his role as "protector of the weak and oppressed," and the formation of his empire and achievements;
- a lyrical epilogue summing up his legal work and preparing its perpetuation in the future. these two literary passages frame a text describing almost three hundred laws and legal decisions governing daily life in the kingdom of Babylon. The legal part of the text uses everyday language and is here simplified, for the king wanted it to be understood by all. However, the legal decisions are all constructed in the same manner: a phrase in the conditional sets out a problem of law or social order; it is followed by a response in the future tense, in the form of the sanction for the guilty party or the settlement of a situation: "Should an individual do such and such a thing, such and such a thing will happen to him or her."

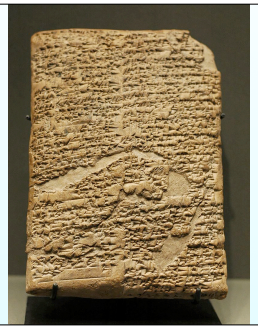
http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/law-code-hammurabi-king-babylon

37

Grouped together in chapters, the issues addressed cover criminal and civil laws. The principal subjects are family law, slavery, and professional, commercial, agricultural and administrative law. Economic measures set prices and salaries. The longest chapter concerns the family, which formed the basis of Babylonian society. It deals with engagement, marriage and divorce, adultery and incest, children, adoption and inheritance, and the duties of children's nurses. Every aspect of each case is addressed, enabling the greatest number of observations to be made.

http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/law-code-hammurabi-king-babylon

38



Code on clay tablet

39

The laws covered such subjects as:

Slander
Ex. Law #127: "If any one "point the finger" at a sister of a god or the wife of any one, and can not prove it, this man shall be taken before the judges and his brow shall be marked. (by cutting the skin, or perhaps hair.)" [21]
Trade
Ex. Law #265: "If a herdsman, to whose care cattle or sheep have been entrusted, be guilty of fraud and make false returns of the natural increase, or sell them for money, then shall he be convicted and pay the owner ten times the loss." [22]
Slavery
Ex. Law #15: "If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death." [23]
The duties of workers
Ex. Law #42: "If any one take over a field to till it, and obtain no harvest therefrom, it must be proved that he did no work on the field, and he must deliver grain, just as his neighbor raised, to the owner of the field." [24]
Theft
Ex. Law #22: "If any one is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death." [25]
Food
Ex. Law #104: "If a merchant give an agent corn, wool, oil, or any other goods to transport, the agent shall give a receipt for the amount, and compensate the merchant therefor. Then he shall obtain a receipt from the merchant for the money that he gives the merchant." [26]

40

One of the best known laws from Hammurabi's code was:

Ex. Law #196: "If a man destroy the eye of another man, they shall destroy his eye. If one break a man's bone, they shall break his bone. If one destroy the eye of a freeman or break the bone of a freeman he shall pay one mana of silver. If one destroy the eye of a man's slave or break a bone of a man's slave he shall pay one-half his price."[27]

Hammurabi had many other punishments as well. If a son strike his father, his hands shall be hewn off (translations vary).[28][29]

The Code of Hammurabi — Mesopotamia

One exception existed to the principle of "an eye for an eye." It demonstrated that Hammurabi believed the gods had power over people and events. An accused person could jump into the Euphrates River. "If he sinks in the river, his accuser shall take possession of his house." But if the river proves that the accused is not guilty and he escapes unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser. Scholars surmise from this that the [illegible] people at that time

Hammurabi's code included what we today call both criminal and civil law. Criminal law consists of rules that define conduct. One law said, "if a son strikes his father, his hands shall be hewn off." Civil law settles disputes among individuals. Hammurabi's Code states, "if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be killed. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son is to be killed."



Understanding Muhammad - Historical Background

ZOROASTRIANISM

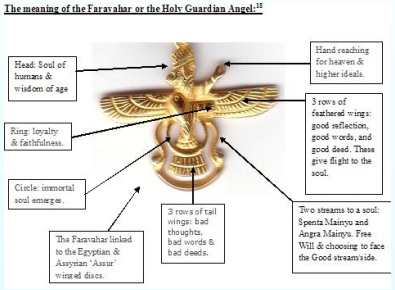
In Persian Mesopotamia, **Zoroastrianism** (Zarathustrianism) was the predominant upper class religion. Zoroastrianism dated back to 1000 BCE: supreme God, presiding over a battle between good and evil spirits. Its founder was Zarathustra (c.1500-1000 BCE), a priest, who received a vision from the Ahura Mazda - a senior deity. This told Zarathustra to abandon polytheistic Iranian religion, and proclaim one god (Ahura Mazda).



Faravahar (or Ferohar), one of the primary symbols of Zoroastrianism, believed to be the depiction of a Fravashi (guardian spirit)

45

The meaning of the Faravahar or the Holy Guardian Angel:[15]



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539 BCE: Achaemenid King Cyrus II conquered Babylon + much of Mesopotamia, Syria, Middle East. Zoroastrianism was promoted as a 'state religion'

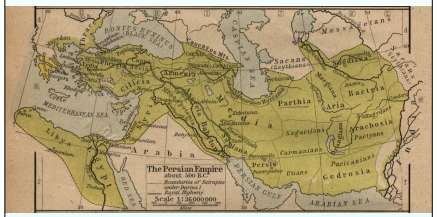


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The Zoroastrian Achaemenid Empire at its greatest extent was the largest ancient empire in recorded history at 8.0 million km2 (480 BCE).



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Understanding Muhammad - Historical Background

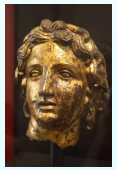
ALEXANDER

52

Babylonia: conquered by Alexander (356-323 BCE):

[Alexander conquered Persia, Egypt, Babylon; crossed from Greece into Asia, Middle East then Indian continent - reached Kashmir, then mutiny of forces stopped progress].

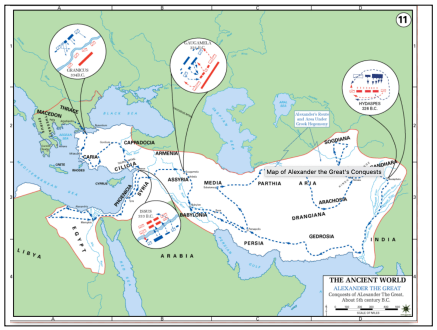
Spreads Greek culture and language through Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, India. Subsequently adopts Persian culture (despite Macedonian roots)

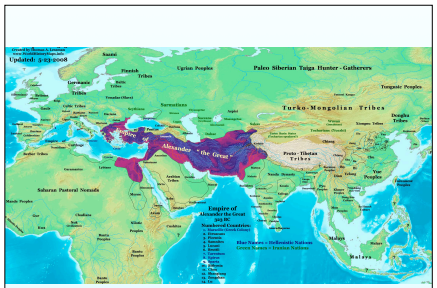


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Understanding Muhammad - Historical Background

MIDDLE EAST ANCIENT HISTORY(-IES)

57

Mediterranean: Hellenistic/Greek societies. **Pantheistic.**



58

Parthians (also Zoroastrian): kingdom on borders of Roman frontier on Euphrates. Withstands Roman power: initiated writing down of conversations between Zarathrusta and his god. Strong from 3rd century BC until 224 CE. Conquest by Sasanians (for whom Zoroastrianism was a state religion). Key works were written down by scribes as the Avesta.



59

Sasanians (Iranian empire): 224 CE-640 CE (Muslim conquest). Bureaucracy, state religion (Zoroastrian), crafts, traders (including silk from China).



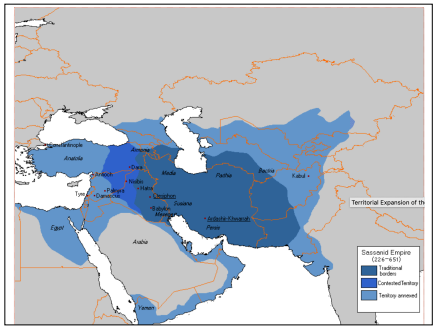
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Understanding Muhammad - Historical Background

EGYPTIAN SOCIETIES

64

Ancient Egyptian: structures of law, administration, property.



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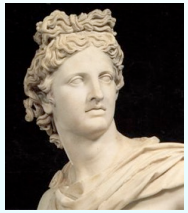
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Roman conquest. **Pantheon.** Legalistic. Gods and goddesses. Europe, N. Africa, Asia, Mediterranean, Egypt. Christian Roman Church.



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Other religions: **gnostics, pagans, polytheists**, Manichaens (early Gnostic religion), Jews, Christians (2nd century on), Zoroastrian.



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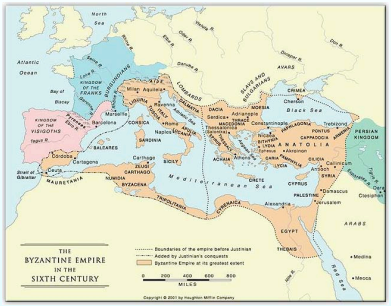
5th/6th CE: essentially Christian/Jewish Mediterranean Middle East.
i.e. **Byzantine** Christian:

Diverse languages & expressions of Christianity: Armenian, Syriac, Coptic.

Gradual divisions emerging, re. nature of Christ.

Nestorian, Monophysite, Copts, Syrian Orthodox-Jacobites, Orthodox, Monotheletes.

72



Languages:

Persian (varied forms),

Aramaic,

Arabic,

Hebrew.

Greek

Latin

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ARABIAN SOCIETY

75

Arabian society was influenced by the enormity of its desert, the development of sophisticated tribal systems, trading cities, and a highly developed literary tradition.

There were diverse religious perspectives, including a variety of gods and deities.

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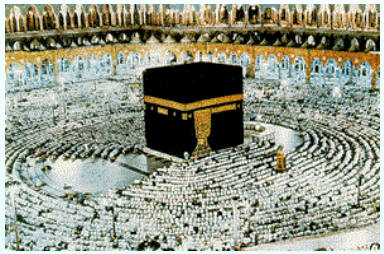
Arabian cultures comprised of nomads (Bedouin) in the desert, settled cultivators, and urbanised traders and craftspeople.



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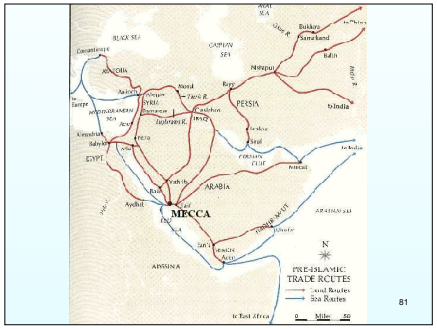
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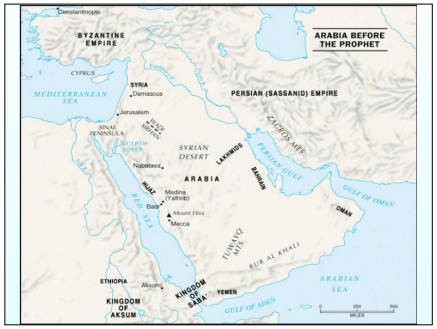
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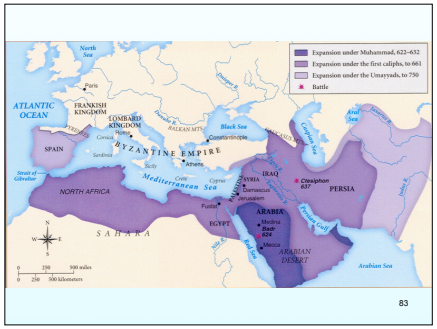


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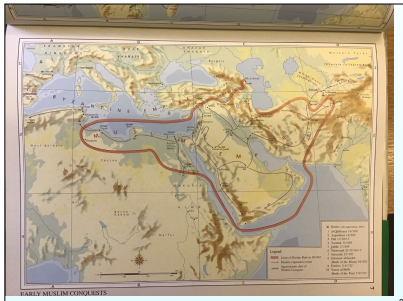
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'THE WORLD ON THE EVE OF THE MUSLIM CONQUESTS C.600 AD
SOURCE: HUGH KENNEDY, *AN HISTORICAL ATLAS OF ISLAM*, BRILL, 2001



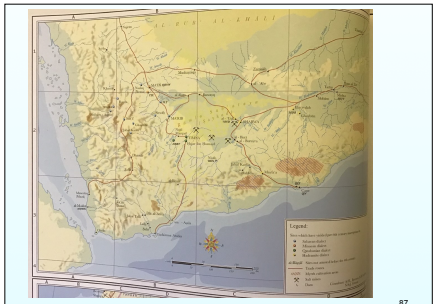
'EARLY MUSLIM CONQUESTS'. SOURCE: HUGH KENNEDY, *AN HISTORICAL ATLAS OF ISLAM*, BRILL, 2001

85



'ARABIA IN THE TIME OF THE HIJRA (622 AD). SOURCE: HUGH KENNEDY, *AN HISTORICAL ATLAS OF ISLAM*, BRILL, 2001

86



PRE-ISLAMIC YAMAN AND HADRAMAWT. SOURCE: HUGH KENNEDY, *AN HISTORICAL ATLAS OF ISLAM*, BRILL, 2001

87

Arab nomads and traders had travelled into Byzantine-Sasanian areas: the so-called Fertile Crescent; Mesopotamia; Persia; Babylonia; Syria, the lower Euphrates (lower Iraq) and between Euphrates-Tigris (upper Iraq).

88

Tribal society, based on Bedouin ethos, was a significant influence.

Muhammad's own genealogy is linked into various tribes

His specific tribe is the Quraysh, who had an historical association with the Kabah in Mecca

89

Qur'ān refers to 'religion of Abraham' (2:130)

Practices that God had commanded were to be instituted in the Kaba (God's sacred house) in Mecca.

Later scholars trace the origins back to the beginning of Creation.

Qur'ān contains history of prophets from Adam onwards.

90

The Kaʿbah

- According to popular Muslim tradition, ʾĀdam built the Kaʿbah as a copy of the heavenly house of God.
- Its destruction during Noah's Flood left only the foundation.
- The Qur'ān says that Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and his son Ismāʿīl built the shrine.

Ibrāhīm and the hajj

- After receiving God's call, Ibrāhīm journeyed with his wife and other family members to Canaan, between Syria and Egypt.
- God promised him that his children would inherit the land and become as numerous as the stars in the sky.
- Ibrāhīm was already an old man, and his wife Sāra, who was also very old, had been unable to conceive a child.
- Sāra encouraged Ibrāhīm to have sexual relations with her Egyptian servant, Hājar (هَاجَر), so that he might have an heir.

Ibrāhīm and the hajj

- Ibrāhīm agreed, and Hājar gave birth to a son, Ismā'īl. Later, Sāra became pregnant.
- When Ibrāhīm was 100 years old, Sāra bore him a son, Isḥaq (Isaac).
- Jewish and Christian traditions identify with Isḥaq, while Islamic tradition identifies with Ismā'īl (Ishmael)

Ibrāhīm and the hajj

- After the birth of Isḥaq, Sāra became jealous of Ismā'īl.
- As the firstborn son, Ismā'īl would have been the primary recipient of Ibrāhīm's inheritance.
- Sāra, therefore, insisted that Ibrāhīm banish Hāgar and Ismā'īl.

Isḥaq and Ismā'īl

- According to Jewish tradition, he sent them away after God revealed to him that Isḥaq would be his rightful heir but that Ismā'īl would also become the father of a nation.

Hājar and Ismā'īl

- Muslims believe that Hājar and Ismā'īl traveled to the desert near Mecca, where they nearly died of thirst.
- They were saved by a miraculous spring of water that flowed from the sand.
- When Ibrāhīm discovered that they were alive, he joined them in Mecca.

Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl and hajj

- To celebrate the miracle in the desert, Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl built (or rebuilt, according to some traditions) the Ka'bah, which became Islam's holiest shrine.
- During the hajj, Muslims participate in a variety of rituals that commemorate Hājar and Ismā'īl's experiences in the desert.

Ibrāhīm and Sacrifice

- The most serious test of Ibrāhīm's faith occurred when God commanded him to sacrifice his son.
- According to the Biblical account, God instructed Ibrāhīm to take Isḥaq to the top of a mountain and sacrifice him as an offering. Ibrāhīm went to the appointed spot, constructed an altar, and placed his son on it. He was about to kill Isḥaq with a knife when God stopped him.
- Satisfied that Ibrāhīm had proved his faith, God provided a ram for the offering instead of the boy.

- The Qur'ān presents a similar account but does not name the son. Ibrāhīm says, "Oh my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice."
- When God sees that Ibrāhīm is willing to obey this command, he then promises him: "Behold, I make you a leader for the people."
- Most Muslims, therefore, identify Ismā'īl as the one that Ibrāhīm intended to sacrifice.

Ibrāhīm in the Qur'ān

- 125 We made the House a a resort and a sanctuary for people, saying, 'Take the spot where Abraham stood as your place of prayer.' We commanded Abraham and Ishmael: 'Purify My House for those who walk round it, those who stay there, and those who bow and prostrate themselves in worship.' 126 Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this land secure and provide with produce those of its people who believe in God and the Last Day.' God said, 'As for those who disbelieve, I will grant them enjoyment for a short while and then subject them to the torment of the Fire —an evil destination.'

Ibrāhīm in the Qur'ān

- 127 As Abraham and Ishmael built up the foundations of the House [they prayed], 'Our Lord, accept [this] from us. You are the All Hearing, the All Knowing. 128 Our Lord, make us devoted to You; make our descendants into a community devoted to You. Show us how to worship and accept our repentance, for You are the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful. 129 Our Lord, make a messenger of their own rise up from among them, to recite Your revelations to them, teach them the Scripture and wisdom, and purify them: You are the Mighty, the Wise.'
- Al-Baqarah, 2:125-7, trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem

The hajj in the Qur'ān

- 26 We showed Abraham the site of the House, saying, 'Do not assign partners to Me. Purify My House for those who circle around it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate themselves. 27 Proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from every deep mountain pass 28 to attain benefits and celebrate God's name, on specified days, over the livestock He has provided for them—feed yourselves and the poor and unfortunate —29 so let the pilgrims perform their acts of cleansing, fulfil their vows, and circle around the Ancient House.' 30 All this [is ordained by God]: anyone who honours the sacred ordinances of God will have good rewards from his Lord.
- Al-Hajj, 22:26-30, trans. M.A.S Haleem

Other accounts

- There is an account of Ibrāhīm's pilgrimage in a history of Mecca from the 9th century, written by al-Azraqi (d.834). [c.f. F.E. Peters, p.7-8]
- There are also accounts of pre-Islamic Arab practices in Mecca (i.e. Ibn al-Kalbi)
- It is suggested in some sources that these were distortions of Ibrāhīm's earlier practices.
- Some pre-Islamic rituals maintained their currency in Islam, i.e. circling the Kaʿbah.

Pre-Islamic practices

- The notion of a high god – 'Allah' (al-ilah or the god) – pre-dates Islam.
- 'Allah' was not represented by an idol.
- The cult of al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat (Allah's daughters') represented one series of practices in the Arabian peninsular.
- The Prophet Muhammad represents a break from pagan practices

Muhammad and the Kaʿbah

- During Muhammad's pre-prophetic lifetime (when he was around 35 years of age), there are accounts of the rebuilding of the Kaʿbah. It included pictures of Mary, Abraham and Jesus. Treasures were also kept in the building.
- Muhammad is said to have had a role in reconciling tribal rivalries in the building of the Kaʿbah – in particular lifting the black stone into place through joint effort (using a cloak).

"Remember We made the House a place of assembly for the people and a secure place; and take the station of Abraham (maqam Ibrahim) as a prayer-place (musalla); and We have a made pact with Abraham and Ishmael that they should sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it, those using it as a retreat, who bow or prostrate themselves there.

"And remember Abraham said: My Lord, make this land a secure one, and feed its people with fruits, those of them who believe in God and the Last day ...

"And remember Abraham raised the foundation of the House, yes and Ishmael too, (saying) accept (this) from us, for indeed You are All-hearing and All-knowing." Q 2:125-7:

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PRE-ISLAMIC ROLE OF KABAH

Seen as linked to Abraham

Abrahamic practices retained

Tribal idols

Pilgrims

Value of she-camels

Sira describes ancestors of Muhammad, and their roles in preserving Abrahamic traditions

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al-Ilāh = the god إله!

ʾilāhat = goddess إلاهة!

ālihat = gods إلاهة!

Southern Syria, Northern Arabia - the Ka'bah was his house.
High god, chief of pantheon.

Shared Ka'bah with Hubal.

Daughters of Allah:
•Manat - goddess of fate
•Al-Lat – astral deity
•Al-Uzza – astral deity

•PILGRIMAGE WAS IMPORTANT FOR ECONOMIC REASONS
•CONFLICTS COULD BE SUSPENDED
•THERE WERE TEMPLES IN MANY LOCATIONS, INCLUDING ON TRADE ROUTES

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EVENTS

Year Of Elephant *
Early ‘Signs’ Of Prophethood *
Muhammad’s Marriage To Khadijah *
Initial Revelation Experience

PLACES

YATHRIB *
KA’BAH *
BOSTRA
MOUNT HIRA.*

109

Year of the Elephant c.570

Abraha - deputy of Negus' (Abysinnian ruler) Vice Regent in Yemen: built cathedral in San'a - hoping to supersede Mecca as pilgrimage place. Cathedral attacked by Hijaz tribe - Abraha seeks revenge.
Goes north. Guide Nufayl (captured, ransomed, to survive had to take Abraha's army). Reach Ta'if, people there fear for their temple: guide Abraha the rest of the way.

Outskirts of Mecca, attack; Abraha's plunder includes 200 camels, property of Abd al-Muttalib [grandfather of Muhammad]. Abraha meets Abd al-Muttalib, seeks return of camels. Seen as head of Quraysh tribe, surprising request granted. 'Temple can look after itself. Has its own Lord'.

110

Year of the Elephant c.570

Quraysh withdraw to hills; Abd al-Muttalib prays. Leading elephant of Abraha's army kneels on Nufayl's order. Doesn't move. Birds attack. [Ibn Ishaq, p.24]

Simultaneously, Abd Allah, Abd al-Muttalib's son was in Palestine/Syria trading. Died on way home. Amina - Abd Allah's wife - was conscious of light in her. Description of Abd al-Muttalib taking Muhammad to Kabah. [ML]

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It's Storytime

The STORY OF THE ARMY OF ELEPHANTS

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