

BUSINESS NAME

# THEME 1: RELIGIOUS FIGURES AND TEXTS

## AO1 CONTENT TO LEARN:

### A: Muhammad in Makkah

- The Jahiliyya Period of Pre-Islamic Arabia
- The General Structure of Society in Pre-Islamic Arabia
- The life of Muhammad from 610-622CE
- The need for Revelation
- The Makkan Reaction to Muhammad's message

### B: Muhammad in Madinah

- The Push and Pull factors that led to the Hijra
- Brief account of the events of the Hijra
- The establishment of the basic tenets of Islam in Madinah
- Muhammad's Leadership

### C: The Qur'an

- The main characteristics
- It's status as a source of wisdom and authority
- Brief account of its compilation

An early copy of the Holy Qur'an



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## AO2 ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

For the first time AO2 most of your marks will come from AO2 issues so it is important that we thoroughly consider and evaluate the issues that arise from the 3 areas of study in Theme 1. These are:

- What influence did pre-Islamic Arabia have on the life and teaching of Muhammad?
- What was the possibility of failure of the Islamic religion in Makkah?
- Is Madinah the ideal model of an Islamic community?
- Was Muhammad a good complete leader of the people?
- Can the Qur'an be translated accurately?
- Is the Qur'an eternally relevant?

- 570 CE: Birth of Muhammad
- 610CE: First revelation of Qur'an – known as Night of Power (Laylat al Qadr)
- 612CE: date of 2nd revelation urging Muhammad to 'arise and warn'
- 619CE: Year of Sorrow – Khadijah and Abu Talib both die
- 622CE: Muhammad and companions emigrate to Madinah – The Hijra
- 630CE: Islamic Conquest of Makkah
- 632CE: Muhammad dies

Muhammad – 'founder' of Islam, Last prophet of God

Khadijah – Muhammad's first wife

Waraqah – Khadijah's Christian Cousin

Abu Talib – Muhammad's uncle and protector

Ali – Muhammad's cousin and later, son-in-law

Zayd ibn Harith – Muhammad's foster son

Quraysh – The tribe Muhammad was born in to – leading tribe in Makkah

Banu Hashim – clan Muhammad was born into

Aws and Khazraj – leading and warring tribes in Madinah

**A: MUHAMMAD IN MAKKAH****Pre-Islamic Arabia**

Pre-Islamic Arabia is known as the “Days of Ignorance”, Jahiliyya in Arabic.

**Related Exam Questions**

- Examine the social, political, moral and religious nature of the Jahiliyya period. (20 marks A01)
- Explain what is meant by Jahiliyya in the context of pre-Islamic society. (20 marks A01)

**Social Background**

Arabs were a tribal people meaning they were grouped together according to a common ancestor.

Makkah occupied an important position on the trade route.

The area saw an increased wealth but this wealth was not equally divided.

Muhammad was part of the Quraysh tribe. Within his tribe certain clans were making vast sums of money (Makhzum and Umayyad) whilst others like Muhammad’s own clan (the Hashemites) were becoming poorer.

Because the social system was based on clans there was no way to deal with discontent. There was no way of dealing with the new social or economic situations. The only way of solving disputes between clans was through vendetta– you kill one of my clan we’ll kill one of yours– or war

Women had a very low social status and female babies were often killed at birth

Other parts of Arabia were more socially advanced than Makkah

Social and economic changes were taking place in Makkah and the system was finding it very hard to cope with them.

**Political Background**

Arabia was ruled by the Byzantine Empire at this time. The Byzantine Empire was an extremely advanced and civilized society .

The Sassanian Empire ruled in the East from China to Iraq. It had an advanced agricultural system and it’s own philosophies and literature

These two powers were at war with each other from 614-628CE and religious disputes were occurring in the areas on the edge of Arabia.

**Extra Reading::**

1. *Muhammad*, k. Armstrong Chapter 3
2. *No god but God*, R. Aslan Chapter 1
3. *Islam for Dummies*, M. Clark Chapter 6. p.80-83

**Makkans were a tribal people. Each tribe was then divided into clans. Muhammad was part of the Quraysh tribe and the Hashemite clan**

## A: MUHAMMAD IN MAKKAH

### Religious Background

1- Bedouin Polytheists: The religion of the majority. They were animistic believing that objects such as trees and springs etc were inhabited by spirits. They believed in jinn- spirits of the desert who could do good or evil. They practised pilgrimage to the spots inhabited by the spirits where believers tried to touch objects in the hope that some holiness would rub off on them.

Bedouin Polytheism was centred around Makkah and the Kab'ah. This was also the main centre of pilgrimage. They believed in many gods including Allah—the chief God. They also believed in Allah's daughters- al'Manat (goddess of fate), al-Uzza (goddess of love) and Allat- Allah's wife. At least 300 statues of gods and goddesses were found in the Kab'ah when Muhammad captured it in 630CE

There was little mythology about the gods, no scripture and very little organised worship other than pilgrimage.

All meat had to be slaughtered before idols as a type of sacrifice. There was no moral code

2- Judaism: There were several Jewish clans around Makkah and Madinah although there were very few Jews in Makkah itself. Despite this fact it would have been impossible for Makkan traders not to be aware of Jews and their beliefs.

The Jews had been successful in making converts, but there was some difficulty in accepting non-Jews as full members of 'the people of God'

3- Christianity: This was the main religion in the South, North and East of Arabia. In the desert there were Christian monks and hermits who were often visited by the trading caravans. In Makkah there were a few Christians and Muhammad's wife, Khadijah, had a Christian cousin called Waraqa. There were different groups of Christians who varied over their understanding of Jesus as the Son of God.

4- Hanifs: There were a few Arabic thinkers who had abandoned Bedouin Polytheism and accepted the idea of one God but who were not members of an organised religion such as Judaism or Christianity. Hanifs spent a lot of time alone in the desert praying and looking for other monotheistic alternatives. One hanif, Zayd ibn Amr prophesized the coming of Muhammad as a prophet.

*"O Arabs! Before accepting Islam you were on the brink of an abyss of fire. He saved you through Islam."*

(Quran 3:103)

**Christianity and Judaism were around at the time of Muhammad**

## A: MUHAMMAD IN MAKKAH

### Key Features of the Jahiliyya Period

1- Religious Beliefs: polytheism- belief in many gods and goddesses including trinity of goddesses, belief in animistic spirits, idol worship- 300 statues found in the Kab'ah, belief in polydaemonism (belief in many evil spirits), fatalistic belief ( belief that all things are down to fate) - all committing sin of shirk

2- Religious Practices: pilgrimage to places inhabited by spirits, pilgrimage to Kab'ah in Makkah, touching objects said to be inhabited by spirits in hope that some holiness would rub off, animal sacrifice in front of idols, statue and idol worship, no moral code, no established worship other than pilgrimage, hanifs practised meditation and prayer in desert alone, Jewish and Christian communities practised their religions

3- Immorality: Many practices went on in Pre-Islamic Arabia which are considered immoral by the standards of Islam. These included:

- Idol worship- commits sin of shirk
- Unlimited polygamy- limited to maximum of four wives in Islam all of whom have to be treated equally well
- Female infanticide- goes against Islamic teachings on equality and the concept of ummah
- Drunkenness- goes against Islamic teachings which forbid all alcohol and intoxicants as haram
- Usury- goes against Islamic teachings that no interest can be charged or received on money to avoid making the rich richer and the poor poorer, goes against the concept of charity and the idea of ummah
- Sexual Immorality- goes against Islamic teaching that although sex is a gift from God to be enjoyed it is only for within marriage between a husband and wife.

**Jahiliyya means  
Days of  
Ignorance**

#### **There were some good things about Pre-Islamic Arabia!**

- Out of 12 months of the year, they agreed 4 of these months should have no wars.
- They were generous. The Arabs were generous and hospitable by nature. It was almost like a competition as to who could be the most generous. It was a sign of manliness.
- They never committed breach of trust. They considered violation of promise to be an unpardonable sin. It was a case of honour.
- They were brave.
- They possessed great skill in horsemanship and archery.
- They considered fleeing from the enemy to be one of the worst things you could do.

### Tribe and Clan Loyalty

- Tribe made up of clans, each clan had a leader (usually an elder). Clan leaders would have almost a council to discuss tribal issues.
- The most powerful tribe were the Quraish – Prophet Muhammad was born into a clan from this tribe.
- Being part of tribe created powerful group feeling – one Arab poet says ***“be loyal to thy tribe, its claim upon its members is strong enough to make a husband give up his wife.”***
- Killing someone in your tribe was a big no! Killing someone in another tribe created hatred.
- Unwritten law of retaliation allowed any member of tribe to be killed in response to this.. This was a supreme law in pre-Islamic Arabia
- Feuds between tribes could continue for years.
- The most valuable possession was honour – any attack on honour warranted retaliation. Honour is about masculinity – having courage, loyalty and generosity.

### Ethics/Morality

- Morality and religion were kept separate – ***“religion was about keeping the gods happy...morality was an entirely human matter.”*** (Libby Ahluwalia)
- A savage custom of the Arabs was to bury their female infants alive. Even if an Arab did not wish to bury his daughter alive, he still had to uphold this ‘honourable’ tradition, being unable to resist social pressures. The Quran also mentions this:
- ***“When the infant girl, buried alive, is asked for what crime she was slain?”*** (Quran 81:8-9).
- ***“When the birth of a girl was announced to one of them, his face grew dark and he apparently swallowed his anger. Because of the bad news he hid himself from his kinsmen and did not know whether he should keep the new-born with disgrace or bury her under dust? How ill they judge?”*** (Quran 16:58-59)
- Drunkenness was a common vice of the Arabs. With drunkenness went their gambling. They were compulsive drinkers and compulsive gamblers.
- The relations of the sexes were extremely loose. Many women sold sex to make their living since there was little else they could do. These women flew flags on their houses, and were called ‘ladies of the flags’.

**Muhammad was part of a poor clan, *Banu Hashim*, from one of the richest tribes, *The Quraysh*.**

***“You Arabs were spending your days with the worst faith and in the worst places...You shed the blood of one another and sought separation from your kith and kin. You had installed idols amongst you. You did not refrain from sins” ‘Ali***

## A: MUHAMMAD IN MAKKAH

### Related Exam Questions

- Explain the nature of, and the reasons for, the persecution of Muhammad in Makkah (AO1, 20 marks)
- Explain the main features of the message preached by Muhammad to the people of Makkah (Mecca) before the hijra. (AO1 20 marks)

### Muhammad's Life: Key Events from First Revelation to the Hijra

**610**– Muhammad was praying in Cave Hira on Mt Nur in the month of Ramadan when the angel Jibrail appeared to him and gave him the first revelation of the Qur'an. Muhammad was told to "Read in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher who created, created man out of a mere clot of blood"

**612**- Muhammad receives his second revelation of the Qur'an which told Muhammad to 'Rise and Warn'. Muhammad only passed the messages on to his close friends and family

**613**- Muhammad has about 30 Muslim followers. Muslim headquarters are set up with prayers taking place in the courtyard and classes about new religion and in the revelations took place

**613-619**– Muhammad and followers are met with hostility by Makkan polytheists. Persecution of Muslims took place and a trading boycott was put on Muhammad's clan.

**619**- Khadijah and Abu Talib die

**620**– The trading boycott was lifted, however the persecution continued. Muhammad was invited to Yathrib (Later known as Madinah) to be the political and religious leader.

**622**- The hijra

## MUHAMMAD

- Born in the year 570.
- Tribe: Quraysh, Clan: Hashim
- Father Abdullah died before Muhammad was born.
- Mother Aminah died when Muhammad was six.
- Paternal grandfather Abd al-Muttalib looked after him – but he died when Muhammad was eight. Abd al-Muttalib asked Abu Talib (his son, Muhammad's uncle) to look after him before he died.
- As Muhammad grew up, he was known to be spiritual and loved being around nature – would often retreat to meditate. He became a shepherd as he grew up and had no formal education.
- He then became a tradesman – he was nicknamed 'al-Amin' – the truthful and trustworthy – at the young age of twenty.

## A: MUHAMMAD IN MAKKAH

### Muhammad's Call to Prophethood



Even before his prophethood Muhammad had a unique reputation in Makkah as being trustworthy, honest and a skilled diplomat.. Between 590 and 610 CE Muhammad became more interested in religion. He was not a member of any organised religion but he found Makkan polytheism offensive. He had knowledge of other monotheists—a hanif called Zayd ibn Amr and a Christian Waraqa (Khadijah's cousin).

As a result of these feelings Muhammad began spending time in prayer and meditation in Cave Hira on Mt Nur. In Ramadan 610 CE Muhammad received the first revelation of the Qur'an and thus his prophethood began.

### First Revelation

Angel Jibrail appeared in a vision to Muhammad and commanded Muhammad to recite (iqra). Muhammad replied that he could not read or write. Muhammad felt as though he were being gripped by a force and suddenly he was able to recite the words in front of him:

*"Read in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher who created, created man out of a mere clot of blood" Surah 96*

Muhammad went home to Khadijah thinking he was going mad. Both Khadijah and Waraqa calmed Muhammad and convinced him that his experience was genuine.

It is thought there was a pause between the first and second revelation. Scholars views vary quite a bit on this— some say it was 40 dyas, some 6 months and others 2 whole years. During this time, Muhammad became depressed and started to worry that he had imagined the whole thing. It is widely believed that God sent Surah 93, *The Surah of Morning* to break this pause and reassure Muhammad. (Shi'as do not accept the idea that Muhammad doubted his prophethood— see next page).

*"Thy Guardian-Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor is He displeased."*

**Surah 93**

### The Secret Stage

Following on from Surah 93 came Surah 74 in which Muhammad is commanded to 'arise and warn'.

Muhammad received this message while at home. This revelation meant that Muhammad would have to begin preaching his message from Allah. At first he just did this amongst his close family and friends.



## TWO ALTERNATIVE VIEWS ABOUT MUHAMMAD'S REACTION TO 1ST REVELATION

Diversity of opinion and the views of scholars = HIGHER MARKS!



### Tariq Ramadan (Sunni View)

- ***“He was afraid and did not know whether he had a devilish vision or whether he was simply possessed.”***
- He went home to Khadija immediately to express his fear. She comforted him and told him that he is kind, helpful and God will not leave him.
- There was a long period of no revelation and he would doubt himself – he tried to commit suicide by jumping off a mountain but Angel Jibril kept informing him he is the messenger. This comforted him.
- Eventually the next revelation came: ***“Your Lord has not left you nor does He hate you.”*** (Quran 93:3)

### Jafar Subhani Shi'a View

- *Muhammad was never in any doubt about the genuineness of the Night of Power. In fact he had always known he would be called to be a prophet. His fear was about the natural apprehension of the enormity of the task before him– not whether or not he was going mad and so on...*
- ***“The cause of fear and agitation was that a great responsibility had been entrusted to him and he had, on that day, discerned the reality which he had been seeking for a long time. However, this agitation of mind was natural to some extent and was not inconsistent with his faith about the truth which was communicated to him.”***
- When he went to Khadija, he expressed fear for himself i.e. the responsibility on his shoulders.
- ***“How can a person impress the people when his sense of security and serenity is so limited that he should be ready to commit suicide on hearing the revelation or when it is broken or ceases.”***
- Possibly the purpose of pausing in the revelation was to afford rest to the Prophet, because history tells us that the revelation is always accompanied by unusual spiritual pressure, especially in the early days of the appointment of a Prophet to the prophetic mission, because till that time his soul is not accustomed to such mysterious perception.
- The next revelation is probably in response to what some people were saying to Muhammad.



## A: MUHAMMAD IN MAKKAH

### Key Messages in Makkan Revelations

- 1- Makkan polytheism was wrong- "There is no god but God"- the beginnings of Tawhid (oneness of Allah)
- 2- Islam was not a new religion but the original religion of Arabia—the beginnings of Risalah (prophethood)
- 3- The Arabs would be judged by God on their religion and way of life therefore they should repent and change to an honest life- the beginnings of Akhirah (life after death)

### Secretive Preaching in Makkah

Muhammad, Khadijah and Waraqa began a system of morning and evening prayers facing Jerusalem (later changed to Makkah) where they prostrated themselves as a sign of submission to God. Ali (aged 10), Zayd ubn Hairth and Abu Bakr converted to Islam at this point.

In 613CE Muhammad received a revelation telling him to make the message more public. Muhammad set up headquarters in the house of a wealthy convert. From this centre the message of Islam was given to the people of Makkah. The first place of prayer was set up in the courtyard and classes took place on Islam and the revelations.

***And admonish thy nearest kinsmen***

Surah 26 v 214

'nearest kinsmen' is taken to mean the Quraysh- meaning Muhammad now has to take his message to the whole Tribe.

Muhammad made many converts at this time including:

- Younger members of wealthy clans
- Older members of weaker clans
- Those outside clan protection
- Slaves
- Strangers to Makkah
- Poor people

Obviously the concept of ummah and concern for the poor and weak attracted these people to Islam.

## MUHAMMAD TAKES THE MESSAGE TO THE QURAYSH

- One day he took his place on a high rock and his call received attention. Some persons belonging to different families of Quraysh ran up to him.
- Then he turned to those assembled there, and said: **"O people! Will you believe me if I tell you that your enemies have taken positions on the other side of this hill and intend attacking your lives and property?"**
- All of them said, **"We have never heard anything false from you throughout our lives".**
- Then he said: **"O people of Quraysh! Save yourselves from fire. I cannot do anything for you in the presence of Allah. I warn you of painful torture!"**
- Then he added: **"My position is like that of a watchman, who observes an enemy at a far-off point and immediately runs to his people for their safety and warns them of the impending danger"**
- The Quraysh were more or less aware of his religion, but these sentences created such a fear in their hearts that one of their people (Abu Lahab – Muhammad's uncle) broke the silence of the people and said: "Woe be to you! Did you call us for this thing?" Then the people dispersed.
- Muhammad had arranged to have two meals to invite people to Islam – in the first one, Abu Lahab kept interrupting and didn't let his nephew speak. In the second, some members of the clan secretly accepted Muhammad's message.
- **"The nature of Muhammad's message threatened the age-old balance in their society. Both their gods and their power could be challenged, and the danger was serious."** (Tariq Ramadan)

## WHAT DID THE QURAYSH DO?

The rich and powerful leaders of the Quraysh were not happy.

There first attempt to squash the new movement was to go speak to Abu Talib and get him to have a word with his nephew, Muhammad:

**"O Abu Talib! Your nephew abuses our gods, speaks ill of our religion, laughs at our thoughts and beliefs and considers our forefathers misguided. Ask him to keep aloof from us or surrender him to us and refrain from supporting him"**

**"We cannot tolerate any longer that a person should abuse our gods and should consider us to be foolish and ignorant. It is necessary for you to restrain him from all these activities, failing which we will fight against him as well as against you"**

When that didn't work they went to speak to Muhammad directly. They tried to bribe him with money, power and women but he refused saying 'I do not desire anything from them'.

Soon after the persecution against Muhammad and his companions began in earnest.

Abu Talib was Muhammad's uncle, guardian and protector. He never converted to Islam but he did support Muhammad and offered him protection within the clan.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

As we have seen, everyone likes Muhammad, he's honest, trustworthy, well respected so why did the Quraysh react so badly to the message of the Qur'an?

1. Look back on what they said to Abu Talib– their religious beliefs were being questioned and offended but what was worse was the sense that their ancestors and way of life was being questioned and mocked.
2. Economic Reasons– the Quraysh made a lot of money from polytheism and idol worship– pilgrims from all over came to visit the kabah– which at the time was crammed with statues and idols of all the false gods.
3. Jealousy – some felt they were better suited to being a prophet. **“They also say: 'Why was this Qur'an not revealed to some mighty man from the two towns?’”** (Quran 43:31). If God were to choose a new prophet why would he choose someone from a lowly clan like the Banu Hashim? Why not someone from the more rich and might clans of Ummayad or Makzhum?
4. Ethics– Muhammad was making them face up to their bad behaviour and ill treatment of the poor.
5. Disbelief– they thought the notion of an afterlife and bodily resurrection was ludicrous
6. Location– They thought God would choose a prophet from a better, more spiritually significant area like Palestine or Syria– not Arabia.

## PERSECUTION IN MAKKAH

- Mockery – they would mock Muhammad's monotheistic beliefs.
- Insults – they would call Muhammad a magician, liar, insane.
- Humiliation – they would tie Muhammad's neck to a rope and drag him on the floor whilst he worshipped. Throw rubbish at him whilst he walked.
- Once the innards of a dead animal were poured on top of Muhammad while he prostrated in the prayer position. He ignored them and carried on praying
- Assassination attempts – several attempts were made to kill Muhammad but his companions were always there to protect him, as was Allah.
- Torture of Muslims – Bilal (first black Muslim) had a boulder put on his chest until he renounced Allah and declared allegiance to Al-Laat and Al-Uzza. He replied with **“the One, the One”**. Killing of husband and wife Yasir and Sumayyah.
- Boycott– a trading boycott was put on Muhammad's clan, Banu Hashim.

Remember diversity of opinion gets you higher marks– so some scholars believe that the traditional biographies of Muhammad have exaggerated how bad the persecution was in Makkah.

## B: MUHAMMAD IN MADINAH

### The Hijra

Hijra means emigration and refers to the emigration of Muhammad and his followers from Makkah to Madinah in 622CE. The Islamic calendar is dated from this event as it is seen as very important. The reason the Hijra is so important is that it was in Madinah that Muhammad could establish the first Islamic ummah and the religion of Islam as a complete way of life.

### Related Exam Questions

- Examine how far Muhammad emigrated to Madinah freely, and how far he was 'pushed'. (20 marks AO1)
- Explain what Muhammad was able to establish in Madinah (20 marks AO1)

### Muhammad's Life: Key Events from the Hijra to death

622- The Hijra

624- Battle of Badr

625- Battle of Uhud

627- Battle of Azzah

628- Treaty of Hudaibiyah

629- First Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah

630- Treaty was broken by opponents meaning Muhammad could lead an army into Makkah and take over Makkah as an Islamic city

632- Muhammad makes final pilgrimage and gives farewell sermon. Muhammad dies

### Why was Muhammad invited to Yathrib?

Yathrib had two main tribes who were involved in a bitter and ongoing dispute. Muhammad offered a way to solve the dispute between these two tribes. Muhammad also had good trading expertise which could help establish Yathrib as a trading centre.

- Muhammad would speak to people from Madinah who visited Makkah – they would spread the word when they returned.
- The Jewish people of Madinah were also waiting for a prophetic figure – the people of Madinah wanted to have claim to the Prophet first.
- People of Madinah agreed to protect Muhammad. They even requested Muhammad send some teachers so they learn more about Islam.
- Quraysh felt threatened by the agreement; they carried on their torture of Muslims.



## MUHAMMAD IN MADINAH

### Why did Muhammad leave Makkah?

There are several factors as to why Muhammad left Makkah for Madinah. Some factors are push factors – things about Makkah making him want to leave. Other factors are pull factors – attractive things about Madinah making him want to go there.

#### Push Factors:

- Muhammad and his followers were being persecuted
- Muhammad no longer had the clan protection offered by Abu Talib
- Muhammad could not preach openly
- Makkans were against Muhammad leaving meaning it must be the right thing to do
- Islam could not be established as a complete way of life in Makkah
- A boycott against Muhammad's clan was started in Makkah

#### Pull Factors:

- Muhammad was invited as religious *and* political leader meaning he could establish Islam as a complete way of life
- Muhammad would be able to preach openly in Madinah
- Muhammad and his followers would be offered protection in Madinah
- The pledge of Yathribian converts was seen as a sign that God wanted him to leave

### What happened on the Hijra 622CE?

- The Quraysh knew Muhammad was planning to leave so they sent an assassin from every major clan to assassinate him – that way no one would take the blame.
- Muhammad found out and asked Ali (his cousin, Abu Talib's son) to sleep in his bed whilst he escaped. Ali was willing to put his life in danger
- The assassins had surrounded the house but Muhammad escaped with the help of Allah as the assassins did not notice him leaving. They went into the house about to attack the bed (thinking Muhammad was asleep) – they raised the sheets and saw Ali sleeping. They were shocked and ordered a search-party for Muhammad.
- Meanwhile Muhammad was with Abu Bakr and they hid in a cave. Abu Bakr was afraid and Allah revealed: ***"If you do not aid the Prophet - Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us.'*** And Allah sent down his tranquillity upon him and supported him with angels" (9:40)
- A bird built a nest outside the cave and a spider built a web – when the Quraysh approached the cave to find Muhammad, they did not search it; another example of Allah's help.

***"Remember how the unbelievers plotted against you. They sought to take you captive or kill you or banish you. They devised plans - but Allah too made a plan and Allah is the best planner."*** (Quran 8:30)

## **B: MUHAMMAD IN MADINAH**

### **The Problems Muhammad faced in Madinah**

- How to unite Madinah into a single united community– there were the Makkan emigrants (Muhajirun) , Yathribian converts,(Ansar) hypocrites who accepted Muhammad but only pretended to accept Islam and the Jewish tribes
- How to deal with Makkah which was bound to attack Madinah if Muhammad succeeded in making it strong
- How to spread Islam further and convert the whole of Arabia

### **Muhammad and Madinah**

- Muhammad converted his courtyard into a place of prayer for the whole of Madinah
- Muhammad established the ground rules for the city (The Constitution of Madinah)
- The ummah was established– Muhammad made a pact of brotherhood – since the Muslims were made up of several tribes as well as locals and immigrants, there was still some dispute.
- A common moral code for all Muslims was established
- Muhammad made himself the sole arbiter of any disputes
- Direction of prayer changed from Jerusalem to Makkah
- Zakah was established
- Usury and alcohol were banned
- Ramadan was established as a fast month
- The first masjid was built – a public, social centre to give instructions, development and deal with issues. It was, of course, a place of worship first and foremost. A place of gathering for the Muslims so that they could discuss matters. It was the heartbeat of Madinah.
- The Jewish tribes of Madinah entered into an agreement with Prophet Muhammad – they will protect each other if the polytheists launch an attack and were free to practice religion.

## B: MUHAMMAD IN MADINAH

### The Battles

You will not get asked a question about the battles and so do not need to study them. They are included briefly here as you may find it useful to know a bit about them and how they led Muhammad to his successful conquest of Makkah in 630CE.

#### **Battle of Badr 624CE**

Muhammad sent raiding parties to raid Makkah trading caravans. This led to a trading caravan being sent by Makkah past Madinah with a force of 70 Makkah soldiers. Muhammad sent 400 soldiers to attack the caravan but the Makkans discovered his plans and gathered an army of 950 men.

The Muslims were victorious killing and capturing many Makkans. The Madinans only lost 14 men.

This led to many more converts who saw Muhammad's victory as a sign that God was on his side.

#### **Battle of Uhud 625CE**

The Makkans sent an army of 3000 to march on Madinah. At first the Muslims did well in the battle but when the Muslims saw this they left their position on the hill, which Muhammad had told them not to do, to join the battle. At this point the Makkans sent forward their expert cavalry force forcing the Muslims to retreat back up the hill. Muhammad was wounded and the Madinans regarded this battle as a defeat.

However, the Makkans were not able to take advantage of their victory and took two years to be reorganised sufficiently to attack Madinah again. This two year gap meant Muhammad could consolidate his military strength and tactics.

#### **Battle of Azzahab 627CE**

The Makkans gathered an army of 10,000 men and marched on Madinah. Muhammad had dug a large trench around the city of Madinah with stakes in it so the cavalry could not cross. The Makkans had no idea how to handle this tactic and after a fortnight their supplies ran out and they were forced to retreat.

As a result of this success Muhammad made many alliances with tribes between Madinah and Makkah. In 628CE Muhammad led an army on pilgrimage to Makkah. He did not want to fight so when he was met by the Makkah army at Hudaibiyah he was ready to make a treaty. (The Hudaibiyah treaty).

The treaty involved the following conditions:

- a ten year truce between Makkah and Madinah
- Both parties would remain neutral in the event of a war between other parties
- Any tribe wishing to make an alliance with Makkah or Madinah would be free to do so.

The Makkans broke the treaty by attacking a tribe under Muhammad's protection in 630CE. This meant he was able to lead an army into Makkah. Muhammad did not take the city by force but only thought those who would not stay inside their homes. Only 28 Makkans were killed and Makkah became an Islamic city.



## **B: MUHAMMAD IN MADINAH**

### What Change did Muhammad bring to Arabia?

- Monotheism all forms of polytheism and idol worship were abandoned
- Ritual prayer five times a day– Wudu regulations meant better hygiene
- Month long fast in month of Ramadan
- Zakah and concern for poor and abandonment of usury
- Possession of Arabic holy book
- No more gambling or alcohol
- Raised status of women giving women divorce rights, marriage rights and ending unlimited polygamy and female infanticide

### In what ways was Muhammad 'Islamizing' existing practices?

- Allah was chief god in Makkan polytheism
- Pilgrimage to Ka'bah already took place under Makkan polytheism
- Meat was already sacrificed under Makkan polytheism
- Sharing wealth was already set up by Muhammad's grandfather within clan system
- Christians and Jews already practised fasting
- Charity and generosity was important in tribal etiquette

### Muhammad's Role in Islam

- Muhammad is Seal of the Prophets
- Ethical prophet
- Perfect example to be followed
- Lawgiver
- Ritual leader
- Judge/arbitrator
- Political leader
- Military leader

**C: QUR'AN****THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE QUR'AN**Related Exam Questions

- Examine the problems faced when compiling the Qur'an (A01 20 marks)
  - Explain how the Qur'an is used in daily life and how this reflects its status in Islam (20 marks A01)
- 
- The Holy Qur'an is the holy book of Islam, however Muslims do believe in other scriptures that were sent before through other prophets. These include:
    - The Torah (From Judaism)
    - The Gospels (from Christianity)
    - The Psalms (from Judaism and Christianity)
  - For this reason they call Jews and Christians *People of the Book* and most Muslims believe that Jews and Christians will go to heaven as well.
  - That being said, they do believe that these other scriptures have become corrupted and distorted so the Qur'an is the only trustworthy sacred scripture around today.
  - The Qur'an is written in Arabic and cannot be translated – when it is translated it becomes *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* or *An Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an*. It is considered the complete Word of God.
  - The book is made up of 114 chapters called Surahs. Each surah is further divided in to verses known as Ayat.
  - The Qur'an opens with a surah called al-Fatihah *The Opening*. After this the surahs are arranged in size order from Surah 2 being the longest through to Surah 114 being the shortest.
  - Scholars divide the surahs in to Makkan or Madinan Surahs – Makkan surah are those that were received in Makkah – they tend to be more poetic, dramatic and short – imploring believers to turn away from sin and polytheism and accept the One True God.
  - Madinan surahs are those received in Madinah – they tend to be longer, more prosaic and legalistic, dealing with the needs of the newly emerging Islamic community.

## C: QUR'AN



## The Qur'an's Miracle Status

- **“And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah”** (Quran 10:37)
- **“Or do they say, ‘He has made it up’? Rather, they do not believe. Then let them produce a statement like it, if they should be truthful.”** (Quran 52:33-34)
- Every major prophet of God, according to Islam, brought a miracle. Prophet Muhammad's miracle was the Quran itself. This is primarily due to its language.
- This is why they would call Muhammad insane, mad, liar, bewitched etc. this way of language was alien to them.
- **“There is no book in the history of mankind in Arabic that can than combine rhetorical and cohesive features in a sentence and still make sense like the holy Quran.”** (Louis Cheikho – Lebanese Christian priest)
- One of the chiefs of the Quraysh, who was an expert in language, admitted to the Quran defeating him but still wouldn't accept Islam. The Quran describes his thoughts: **“He came out, he pondered. He reflected. He should be destroyed by the way he reflected. He pondered (again). Then he frowned and scowled. Then he turned back and was arrogant and said ‘these are the words of a magician, nothing but another human.’”** (Quran 74:18-25)

## The Qur'an as the Main Source of Authority

Authority or an authority is:

1. The power or right to give orders or to make decisions.
2. A person or a position with the right to exercise control over others.
3. A person who is an expert on a subject.

When we describe the Qur'an as a source of authority then we mean :

1. It gives orders to Muslims– it tells them what is morally right or wrong
2. It has control over Muslims– if the Qur'an says you should do something, they do it, if the Qur'an says they shouldn't do something, they don't do it.
3. It has expert status– if anything is in the Qur'an then that is the truth and correct.

Why does the Qur'an have this much authority in Islam? Simply because it is the complete and direct Word of God.

## C: THE QUR'AN



### Compiling the Qur'an—Compiled under Abu Bakr

- Abu Bakr was the first convert outside the Prophet's household. He was one of Muhammad's best friends and took over as political leader after Muhammad died.
- The Battle of Yamamah took place - a person who claimed to be a prophet attacked the Muslims under the leadership of the first Muslim caliph, Abu Bakr. 400 people who had memorised the Quran had died in this battle and this worried Abu Bakr.
- Abu Bakr called Zayd and ordered him to compile the Quran into one volume. Zayd was hesitant to accept this job because Prophet Muhammad didn't order this to happen but accepted. He gathered all the fragments of the Quran and put it together. Abu Bakr then kept it as the 'official Quran'.
- This view is criticised – it assumes there was no collection of the Quran during Prophet Muhammad's life. It is more likely that this Quran that Abu Bakr had compiled was for himself rather than the Quran for everyone. Also, why would Prophet Muhammad, the one who brought revelation, not compile the Quran?

### Compiling the Qur'an—Compiled under Uthman

- The Quran had 4 different codex (written book versions) which meant the meaning of it differed dependant on which dialect you read it in, e.g. a Quran in Syria would have had a different pronunciation to one in Iraq.
- One man came to Uthman (3<sup>rd</sup> Caliph) and pointed out these differences in the Quran and was worried it could be corrupted. Uthman decided to make an official Quran that all Muslims can use and it must be in the Quraysh dialect, because Prophet Muhammad was from this tribe and would be most accurate.
- Uthman then ordered to burn all the other copies of the Quran so that only the official version remains and there is no room for misinterpretation. He sent a Quran to every city in the Quraysh dialect alongside a reciter of the Quran so they could hear how it could be pronounced properly.
- Therefore, this shows Uthman didn't compile the Quran. Rather, he standardised it.

**Remember diversity of opinion = higher marks! Here are 3 different views on how the Qur'an was compiled.**

## C: THE QUR'AN



### Compiling the Qur'an—Compiled under Muhammad

- There are numerous reports that Prophet Muhammad would order his companions to put each verse where it should be.
- **“This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah”** (Quran 2:2) – Quran itself uses the word ‘book’ (kitab) which means a physical book.
- Before Prophet Muhammad died, he famously said **“I’m leaving behind for you the Book of Allah and...”**; the fact he said he is leaving something behind means it already exists.
- On his deathbed, Muhammad asked for a pen and paper to write some advice down so the Muslims don’t go astray. Umar (one of his companions, who would later become the second caliph) replied **“you are delirious, the Book of Allah is enough for us.”**
- Prophet Muhammad would get selected companions to compile the Quran under his supervision and these companions all had a copy in their house.

Think about what problems the early compilers would have faced.

## C: THE QUR'AN

### The Status of the Qur'an

The Qur'an itself, tells Muslims over and over again how important it and what it's status is:

- *"This is a declaration for humankind, a guidance and admonition to those who ward off (evil)". (3:138)*
- *"This is the book, in it is guidance for sure without doubt, to those who fear Allah". (2:2)*
- *"And this is a book which We have revealed as a blessing, so follow it and be righteous, that you may receive mercy". (6:155).*
- *"A book revealed unto you, so that your heart be not in any difficulty on that account, (so that) with it you may warn (the sinful) and teach the believers". (7:2).*
- *"This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah, on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that were sent before it, and a full explanation of the book, wherein there is not doubt from the Lord of the worlds". (10:37)*

### Why does the Qur'an have Supreme Authority for Muslims?

- Muslims believe that the Qur'an contains the exact words of Allah. This is extremely important because they believe that the other holy books mentioned in the Qur'an have lost the original wording and have been changed or edited over the years so are no longer accurate.
- The Qur'an was brought to the people by Muhammad the final prophet. Although Allah had sent prophets with His message before to different people at different times, this time the message was for all people for all time and would not be repeated.
- It was recited by the Prophet Muhammad exactly, word for word. Muslims believe that as the prophet received the revelations, he recited them exactly and then the words were recorded immediately and accurately by his companions.
- The Qur'an has never been changed. Muslims read the Qur'an in the original Arabic so that they are sure that their knowledge is correct.
- It is the first great miracle for Muslims. Muslims believe that Muhammad had not been taught to read and write and so could not have written the Qur'an, so it is a miracle of Allah revealed to the prophet via the Angel Gabriel.
- Muslims also accept the authority of the Qur'an because it helps them to understand the qualities and nature of Allah and it shows them how to follow His path. Also, it encourages believers to lead a good life and it offers support and help in times of need and hardship.

Because the Qur'an is the main source of authority in it is the main basis of Shari'a law and the first place a Muslim would turn to for guidance.



## C: THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an is used in worship in three main ways:

- Reading/recitation
- In prayer
- Sermon in the mosque



When coins were issued with passages of the Qur'an on it lead to a real dilemma- could people touch the coins when they were in a state of ritual impurity? Some would only hold the coins through a cloth if they had not performed wudu! What about non- Muslims, could they handle the coins?

Ways in which the Qur'an is used:

- Rites of passage – births, weddings, funerals
- Prayer – verses of the Quran are recited during the five daily prayers.
- Friday sermon – the Quran is always recited as a part of the sermon in Friday prayer.
- Ramadan – it is recited daily during Ramadan.
- Hafiz (memoriser) – Quran is memorised by people.
- Calligraphy – it is used to create beautiful pieces of art.
- Bismillah – the phrase 'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful' is before every chapter of the Quran (except one). This phrase is used by Muslims all the time before they do something.
- Ward off evil – some people wear jewellery with Quran verses written on them to ward off evil. Some even put it outside their homes as talismans
- Teachings – theology, law, practices all have some basis in the Quran
- Private worship and study by individuals
- Verses from the Qur'an are repeated as a form of meditation or contemplation

**Non- Muslims:**  
**Many believe non- Muslims cannot touch the Qur'an, though they can hear it being recited.**

### The Special Treatment of the Qur'an

- Wudu – ritual washing must be done before touching the verses of the Quran.
- Dress – clothes must be clean and appropriate.
- No eating/drinking/talking when it is read- as a sign of respect.
- Place is on stool called a kursi – not placed on the floor when read.
- Cover – when unread, some Muslims choose to cover it as a sign of respect.
- Highest shelf – no book should be placed 'higher' than the Quran.
- Buried or weighted in river if you want to dispose it.



**A02 ISSUES****To what extent did the influence of the pre-Islamic Arabia have upon the life and teaching of Muhammad?**

"Like so many prophets before him, Muhammad never claimed to have invented a new religion. By his own admission, Muhammad's message was an attempt to reform the existing religious beliefs and cultural practices of pre-Islamic Arabia so as to bring the God of the Jews and Christians to the Arab peoples." (Reza Aslan)

The ethics/morality of the pre-Islamic Arabs.

"O Arabs! Before accepting Islam you were on the brink of an abyss of fire. He saved you through Islam." (Quran 3:103)

"He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them." (Quran 42:13)

"Unquestionably, for Allah is the pure religion. And those who take protectors besides Him [say], 'We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah.'" (Quran 39:3)

"It should not be surprising that Muhammad would have been influenced as a young man by the religious landscape of pre-Islamic Arabia." (Reza Aslan)

Muhammad used to retreat in seclusion, away from the polytheistic worship and rituals.

The social structure and economy of pre-Islamic Arabia.

The Ka'aba was a place of worship even before Islam.

## A02 ISSUES

What was the possibility of the failure of the Islamic religion in Makkah?

- "The number of converts slowly grew due to Muhammad's discreet preaching and the very determined involvement of Abu Bakr, who was always read to speak about the new faith and take action for its sake...during those years, Muhammad's presence in Makkah, his action, and his example were to attract a large number of women and men who were gradually to embrace the new faith."
- (Tariq Ramadan)
- "The Prophet had given priority to quality over quantity." (Tariq Ramadan)
- Persecution of the early Muslims by the Makkans.
- "The nature of Muhammad's message threatened the age-old balance in their society. Both their gods and their power could be challenged, and the danger was serious." (Tariq Ramadan)
- Sanctions put on the Muslims.
- "Muhammad has scattered our united ranks and has created dissension amongst us. He has laughed our intellect down and has ridiculed us and our idols. If he has been prompted to do so on account of his poverty and indigence we are prepared to place enormous wealth at his disposal. If he wants status we are ready to accept him as our ruler and will listen to him. And in case he is invalid and needs medical treatment we will bring an expert physician to attend upon him."
- "It seems strange to the pagans that a man from their own people should come to them as a Prophet. The unbelievers have said, "he is only a lying magician ". They say, "Has he condemned all other gods but One? This is certainly strange". A group of the pagans walked out of a meeting with the Prophet and told others, "Let us walk away. Be steadfast in the worship of your gods. This man wants to dominate you. We have heard nothing like this in the latest religion. This is only his own false invention." (Quran 38:4-7)
- Year of sorrow. Without the support of Abu Talib and Khadijah Muhammad could not stay in Makkah
- Muhammad was not preaching about a brand-new God- all the Makkan polytheists would have been familiar with al- Lah 'The God' as he was one of their main gods.
- A lot of what Muhammad was teaching was trying to bring people back to their old tribe ethic of social justice and concern for weaker members that they had lost when they set up as traders in the city of Makkah.
- Reza Aslan argues " Muhammad was not yet establishing a new religion; he was calling for sweeping social reform"

**A02 ISSUES****What was the possibility of the failure of the Islamic religion in Makkah? Ctd**

There was a growing hanif movement in Makkah- people were beginning to feel more open to monotheism. People were also aware of Judeo-Christian monotheism

The Arabs were acutely aware that they were a people who had no scriptures unlike the Jews with their Torah and the Christians with their Bible- Muhammad's Arabia was ripe for change and there was no real chance of Muhammad ever failing.

The example and charisma of the prophet meant that he converted people very easily- many were simply impressed by him and the way he practiced what he preached.

Muhammad's mission was always doomed to fail in Makkah- the truth the Madinan period was needed so the Muslims could organize themselves and become clear on what the Islamic ummah and religion would look like. It also gave Muhammad the opportunity to showcase his abilities as a military, political and religious leader. It meant that his enemies in the Quraysh would have to take him seriously. If Muhammad had have stayed in Makkah, the religion of Islam, as we know it, may never have taken shape.

Muhammad was well loved and respected in Makkah- he had good protection from the high status of his unclce Abu Talib- he should have been able to succeed in his mission in Makkah.

The location of Makkah meant Muhammad was working virtually from scratch. Compare with Christianity taking root in the Roman Empire where people would have a good understanding already of Judaism. In Makkah the pagans would have known little of Christianity or Judaism. Moreover- in a life that was so tough and cruel the idea of an all powerful, loving deity would have seemed ludicrous to the Makkan polytheists.

Their many gods and goddess offered them help and protection for their different needs and it would seem perverse and rash to turn your back on them and whatever help they could give you.

Arabia was violent and un-unified with many people getting a raw deal in society- Islam met the needs of the majority who were weak, poor and in danger of getting left behind as clans like the Umayyads and Makhzum got richer and turned their back on the old Tribal ethic.

## A02 ISSUES

What made Muhammad the complete leader in Madinah?

- "By engaging himself in this work (digging the trench) the Prophet manifested a part of the programme of Islam and made the Muslim society understand that a commander of the army and a leader of the society should endure hardships like others and should alleviate their burden." (Jafar Subhani)
- "Suhayl (Quraysh representative) said: "We don't formally recognize your Prophethood and if we had recognized you as a Prophet we wouldn't have waged war against you. You should write your own name and that of your father and should omit this title from the pact". Some of the Muslims were not agreeable that the Prophet should surrender to Suhayl to this extent. However, the Prophet agreed even to this by keeping in view some higher interests asked Ali to delete the phrase 'Messenger of Allah'. At this stage Ali submitted with due reverence. The indulgence and temperment which the Prophet displayed in drawing up this pact is unparalleled in the world. As he was not influenced by material thoughts and egotistic sentiments and knew that realities do not change by writing something or deleting it, he, in order to ensure peace, adopted a conciliatory attitude and accepted the suggestions of the opponent in spite of all his severity." (Jafar Subhani)
- "The messenger's authority in human affairs was neither autocratic nor unrestricted...he showed them his deep respect for their intelligence." (Tariq Ramadan)
- "Throughout his mission, the Prophet sought his companions' advice, encouraging them to express their opinions and paying them careful attention." (Tariq Ramadan)
- "The Prophet had evolved a genuine pedagogy through which he allowed the Muslims to develop their critical faculties, express their talents, and mature in his presence." (Tariq Ramadan)
- "And already had Allah given you victory at Badr while you were few in number." (Quran 3:123)
- "So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter." (Quran 3:159)
- "Allah is pleased with the believers for their pledging obedience to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, thus he granted them confidence, and rewarded them with an immediate victory." (Quran 48:13)
- "His companions...loved him, and drew their spiritual energy from his presence among them." (Tariq Ramadan)
- Reza Aslan points out that the traditional biographies of Muhammad sometimes exaggerate the speed of Muhammad's success in Madinah- making it appear that he arrived as a great religious leader- when in fact he was little more than a Hakam when he first arrived and he was only shaykh of his own clan—The Muhajirun (emigrants from Makkah).

## A02 ISSUES

What made Muhammad the complete leader in Madinah? Ctd...

The Constitution of Makkah is an important document that outlines Muhammad's role in Madinah but it would not have been written until after 627CE at the earliest. It declares Muhammad as:

- the sole Qai'id- military leader
- Recognizes him as Rasulallah (the Messenger of God)
- Privileged position over all over clan Shaykhs
  
- Muhammad did not manage to convert the Khazraj tribe until after one of the major battles in 627CE
- Within his own clan, the Muhajirun, Muhammad was also Prophet and law giver but this would not have extended beyond them for the first couple of years.
- The fact that Muhammad a clan based on membership to Islam (the ummah), unlike the traditional set up of clans being based on common ancestry, meant that his clan could increase in size rapidly and exponentially. It also meant that as people left their original tribe to join Muhammad's ummah family ties were broken and clans were weakened. Basing the clan on religion rather than ancestry was thus a very shrewd move of Muhammad's.
- Muhammad brought in new economic laws in Madinah- he outlawed usury (charging interest on money loaned) and charged no tax on transactions. He also introduced a tithe payment known as Zakah where members had to distribute their excess wealth with poorer members of the ummah.

Muhammad tried to improve the rights of women at the time:

- he allowed them to divorce, inherit, keep their dowries and limited polygamy to only 4 wives per man. When the men in his community complained about this he showed himself to be a firm and decisive leader telling them simply if they disobey Allah and his Messenger they would go to hell.
- Muhammad was very successful at forging shrewd and beneficial links through marriage. Marriage in these times was not about love or romance- it was about economic and political need/gain.
- Muhammad forged links with senior members of his ummah by marrying their daughters:
  - ◆ **Hafsah**- Umar's daughter
  - ◆ **Aisha**- Abu Bakr's daughter
  - ◆ His enemies daughter- **Um Habiba** (Abu Sufayn's daughter)
  - ◆ The daughter of a senior figure in the rich clan of Makhzum (**Um Salamah**)
  - ◆ A Jewish woman to forge links with the Jewish clans—**Safiyah**

*If you are married to someone's daughter you have a bond and they are less likely to betray you or turn against you.*

**A02 ISSUES**What made Muhammad the complete leader in Madinah? Ctd...

Muhammad did not lead Madinah on his own he was helped greatly by his closest companions Ali, Umar and Abu Bakr, among others.

Umar for instance was a great war leader and much sterner than Muhammad. There is a story about when Muhammad's wives were bickering over some booty from a recent battle. When Umar walked in they all ran and hid. Umar said to them "are you afraid of me and not the Messenger of God?" to which they replied "Absolutely for you are rougher and harsher"

It is likely therefore that the much gentler and placid Muhammad often relied on his friend to be his tougher 'henchman'.

There is also a story of Abu Bakr taking control of the situation at the Battle of Badr. Muhammad was not doing anything instead he was on his knees waiting for a sign from God. In the end Abu Bakr urged him to advance saying to him "Do not call upon your Lord so much".

Muhammad made many bold political decisions that while risky, paid off. For instance he declared Madinah a sanctuary city (Haram). This challenged the status of his rival city Makkah as they were, until, then the only Haram city.

Again Muhammad made the risky decision to march to Makkah on a peaceful pilgrimage right in the middle of a long war between himself and the city. At the time people thought he was crazy. However, it led to a peace treaty known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, which when the Makkans broke the terms led to Muhammad being able to Conquer Makkah in 630CE.

Muhammad was a kind and fair leader- after the Conquest of Makkah it would have been his right to take all the captives as his slaves but he declared them free, he also left them free to convert to Islam or not. At the same time- he wasn't too nice- He did make them pledge an oath of allegiance.

Muhammad did make some mistakes for instance he trusted one of the main hypocrites in Madinah Ibn Ubayy who betrayed him in the Battle of Uhud.

Muhammad successfully trained his followers for war by having them perform raids on trading caravans to get some practice.

Muhammad managed to unite a previously un-unified Arabia into one community. He ended blood feuds and introduced a sweeping social reform showing care for the weak and vulnerable in society and improving the status of women.

We could call in to question the success of Muhammad as a religious leader as many of his allies only accepted the supremacy of Muhammad as a leader and did not really embrace Islam- when he died many of Muhammad's allies deserted the Ummah- they had not really followed Islam but only Muhammad.

Muhammad was a diplomatic leader- when he arrived as a hakam between the Aws and the Khazraj he didn't want to choose to live with one tribe over the other- instead he let his camel decide- wherever he sat that is where Muhammad would stay.



## A02 ISSUES

How Far is Madinah the ideal model for Islamic Society?

- For most Muslims Madinah during the time of Muhammad is seen as the Golden Era of Islam.
- The Madinan ideal has inspired various Islamic revivalist movements of the 18th and 19th Century- calling for a return to the original values of Muhammad's unadulterated community.
- Madinah is the archetype of Islamic democracy
- It has been used by Muslims with conflicting ideologies though suggesting Madinah is not quite as everyone thinks it is:
- Muslims feminists point to Muhammad's time in Madinah to suggest Islam should try to improve the rights of women in the modern age, just as Muhammad did in Madinah. However traditionalists point to the treatment and status of women in Madinah as how women should still be living and treated today- resisting any feminist progression for modern Muslim women.
- Some point to Muhammad's dealings with the Jewish clans of Madinah as a model for Muslim and Jewish relations. Others suggest the problems Muhammad faced with the Jews shows that Muslims and Jews will never be able to achieve a peace.
- Madinah, for many Muslims, is what Islam is meant to be.
- The way Muhammad led in Madinah is seen as a role model for Islamic leaders- Muhammad worked alongside his companions, he shunned wealth and luxuries and instead chose to dress in simple clothes. He has no living quarters in his house but instead chose to split his time between his wives.
- Life in Madinah at the time of the Prophet wasn't perfect- there was a lot on infighting, hypocrites who accepted Muhammad but not really Islam.
- The events at the death of Muhammad show that all was not perfect in Madinah- Ali was shunned from the talks about who should succeed Muhammad as leader, Ali and Aisha ended up having a battle against each other etc.
- How far can a society based in 7th Century Arabia, not matter how forward thinking for it's time, offer a suitable model for the modern world? Would we copy it exactly or rather copy it's general attitudes- e.g. would women have the exact same role or would we copy the general attitude of advancing women's rights?
- In Madinah members of different religious communities lived peacefully alongside each other so this could be used today as a model for interfaith relations.
- The community of Madinah was unique in that it was receiving guidelines and directions directly from God in real time- they would not have to try to work out what the messages and revelations meant in the same way we do today.
- Islam should be a complete way of life- there should not be a distinction between secular life and religious life- as a theocracy Madinah is the perfect way to live as a Muslim.
- Muslims living in a community like Madinah would not have the same struggles that Muslims living in modern secular societies like the UK have.



**A02 ISSUES****Is the Qur'an eternally relevant?**

Within the following are arguments for and against the Qur'an as being eternally relevant. Can you sort them out into arguments for and against then match arguments with their directly related counter arguments?

- The Qur'an refers to itself as a 'a mercy to all the creatures of the world' 21:107 and Muhammad as a messenger 'to all of humanity' 12:104
- "This is the book, in it is guidance sure"
- The Qur'an cannot be translated which means the true meaning is never lost or distorted
- Certain passages of the Qur'an appear to contradict each other
- The Qur'an is very much a text of the Arabian desert in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. The imagery it uses appeals directly to the Bedouin polytheists of the time and their needs and desires- e.g. the idea of Paradise is of a garden with flowing water- this would appeal to those living in the arid desert but it hardly that enticing for people today, or people from a UK climate.
- The Qur'an directly addresses Muhammad, his followers and his enemies- it is clearly meant as guidance for those people at that time, not for all people and all time.
- Many of the passages about Jihad that people use to justify terrorism today are really meant for Muhammad and his followers dealing with persecution at the hands of the Makkans- this shows how trying to make the Qur'an relevant to today causes problems
- Passages in the Qur'an can abrogate (cancel) earlier passages. This means that anywhere there is a seeming contradiction it can be solved by the new passage abrogating the old passage.
- Millions of Muslims all over the world still use the Qur'an as their main source of authority and guidance, showing that it is still relevant today.
- Muslims are still facing persecution in the world today- as Muhammad was driven out of Makkah, Muslims are being driven out of Palestine and Syria etc- the messages of guidance that the Qur'an gives are still applicable
- God is transcendent and beyond space and time, this means he can give eternal guidance in a book since he knows everything that will happen
- Many scholars have written commentaries on the Qur'an known as *tafsir*. This means Muslims can read the Qur'an alongside the *tafsir* and further understand how the messages in the Qur'an can be applied to modern situations

**A02 ISSUES**Is the Qur'an eternally relevant? Ctd...

When used alongside the extensive Hadith collections the Qur'an offers a complete source of guidance so it can be seen as eternally relevant.

A lot of the Qur'an is simply telling people to turn away from idol worship, treat people fairly and worship God. This is an eternally relevant message- it is always good to treat people fairly and unfortunately society is still awash with social injustice and inequality, just as it was in Muhammad's day

People hardly worship idols anymore- the biggest problem nowadays is probably the rise of atheism but the Qur'an does not really address this as everyone at that time believed in god and gods.

People may not worship actual gods and goddesses anymore but you could argue people worship things over God- like the cult of celebrity or money and material possession- all these things are real problems leading people astray in the modern age and the Qur'an's teachings on shirk (idol worship) can be applied to these.

Many issues in the modern world are simply not addressed in the Qur'an- drugs, IVF, social media etc- how can an ancient text be relevant to all out modern day problems and concerns?

In Islam there are very sophisticated ways of understanding and applying Qur'anic teachings. One is analogy, qiyas. So for instance we can use qiyas to know that drugs are wrong as we can use the analogy of alcohol being wrong. We can know that valuing material possessions more than God is wrong as this is analogous to shirk and idol worship.

The Qur'an didn't even provide enough guidance for the early Islamic community- a lot of the guidance in the Qur'an has to be supplemented by the teachings and example of prophet Muhammad- the Sunnah and hadith. Hadith collections list the things Muhammad is alleged to have said. Often Muslims will have to turn to the hadith to make sense of an Islamic teaching. For instance the Qur'an tells you to pray and the hadith tells you how to pray.

## A02 ISSUES

Is the Qur'an eternally relevant? Ctd...

- The nature of the compilation of the Qur'an- reveal that there could well have been misremembered passages included- it wasn't compiled in the time of Muhammad so he wouldn't be able to check over it- who is to say it is all the Word of God.
- The oral tradition was very strong at them time- it was common for people to learn large chunks of text by heart- that is how they remembered things, story, family history etc- it would have been much more normal then to learn the Qur'an by heart. Also compared with most sacred texts the Qur'an was compiled into a uniform codex remarkably quickly adding to its authenticity and therefore relevance.
- The miracle status of the Qur'an adds to its authenticity - The Qur'an is said to be the most beautiful, poetic, moving text - when read in its original Arabic- how could a mere man who is said to have been illiterate have made it up?
- Many argue Muhammad was not illiterate- Muhammad was called- Nabi-al ummi, This can be translated at the 'unlettered prophet' but it can also be translated as the 'prophet of the unlettered'- in this interpretation Muhammad is not illiterate but instead he is delivering a message to a people who have not got their own sacred text- the Arabs. Also many claim for Muhammad to have been such a successful business man he would have had to be able to read and write.
- The fact that the Qur'an makes reference to many biblical stories and characters supports its claim to be a continuation of other sacred texts and genuinely from God. If it is genuinely from God then it should be eternally relevant.
- The Qur'an sees itself as a 'reminder' not a new text- the message from Allah has never changed and has always been the same- it is only humans who have altered and distorted the message.
- The Bible stories mentioned in the Qur'an are vague and merely go to show that Muhammad had contact with and knowledge of Christianity and Judaism in the area.
- There are some who are sceptical that the Qur'an is the word of God- from this position, the Qur'an is simply a text written by a man, addressing the needs of society during his time, in his locale and his social and political context. The Satanic verse can be seen as evidence that Muhammad was willing to change the message to appease the Makkans by allowing them to use the daughters of Allah (banat Allah) as intermediaries. The passage was later revoked by Allah and claimed to be the work of Satan.

## A02 ISSUES

Should the Qur'an be Translated?

- Not everyone can speak Arabic.- only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Muslims are native Arabic speakers
- Helps understanding - this makes it more likely to follow.
- Helps youngsters
- If translated, you can preach.
- Education
- Islam emphasises no barriers no barriers between Arab and non-Arab
- Strengthens ummah (Muslim community)

*"The Quran is the Quran only in Arabic; when it is translated it becomes an interpretation. In translation, many features that exist in the original language disappear and it can be almost impossible to translate subtle associations that arise due to the grammatical, semantic or stylistic complexities of Arabic."*

(Abdullah Saeed)

*"The major problem encountered by the translator of the Quran is the difficulty in rendering some lexical items. One of lexical problems in translating the Holy Quran is the lack of equivalence or the absence of the equivalent of some Islamic terms. These terms have no direct counterpart in English, compelling the translator to convey them in a communicative manner. The following are some examples of these Islamic terms: taqwā (piety), kufr (disbelief), tāwbah (repentance)"*

(M Alsaleh Brakhw)

The Qur'an contains metaphors that lose their meaning when translated into a different language:

*"Kill you Joseph, or cast him forth into some land, that your father's face may be free for you, and thereafter you may be a righteous people."* (Quran 12:9)

The above is a LITERAL, word for word translation of this verse - Joseph's (Yusuf) brothers are jealous that their father (Jacob/Yaqub) is giving special attention to Joseph. They are debating whether to kill him or not.

*"that your father's face may be free for you"* - this doesn't make sense in English!

A literal translation is not expressing the metaphor properly - it is saying that the attention and care of the Prophet Jacob will be passed on to his sons after killing Joseph, who received more care from his father

**A02 ISSUES****Should the Qur'an be Translated? Ctd...**

- Translation of the Qur'an has always been a problematic and difficult issue in Islamic theology. Since Muslims revere the Qur'an as miraculous and inimitable, they argue that the Qur'anic text should not be isolated from its true form to another language or form, at least not without keeping the Arabic text along with translation.
- Furthermore, an Arabic word may have a range of meanings depending on the context making an accurate translation even more difficult.
- According to modern Islamic theology, the Qur'an is a revelation very specifically in Arabic, and so it should only be recited in Quranic Arabic: ***"Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand."*** (Quran 12:2)
- Translations into other languages are necessarily the work of humans and so, according to Muslims, no longer possess the uniquely sacred character of the Arabic original. Since these translations necessarily subtly change the meaning, they are often called 'interpretations' or 'translation of the meanings'
- The task of translation is not an easy one; some native Arab-speakers will confirm that some Qur'anic passages are difficult to understand even in the original Arabic. A part of this is the innate difficulty of any translation; in Arabic, as in other languages, a single word can have a variety of meanings. There is always an element of human judgment involved in understanding and translating a text.
- In terms of worship and Qur'anic recitation only Arabic is used by all Muslims- even if they are just uttering words they have no understanding of.

## A02 ISSUES

Should the Qur'an be Translated? Ctd...

- For a religion where most followers do not speak the language of the sacred scriptures there are two options- 1) every Muslim will have to learn Arabic- or enough Arabic to read and understand the Qur'an or 2) the Qur'an will have to be translated.
- Turkish nationalist Ziya Gokalp argued in favour of translating the Qur'an " a country in whose schools the Qur'an is read in Turkish is one in which everyone, child and adult, knows God's command"- here the idea is clear it is better to translate and actually understand what God wants and expects from you than to utter sentiments in a foreign language of which you have no comprehension of.
- After WWI and WWII Secular Turkey tried to introduce using the Qur'an as a Turkish translation but it never took off.
- Ibn Tamiyya (d.1328) argued all fellow Muslims should desist from imitating non-Muslims and return to the Straight Path by not only using Arabic to read the Qur'an but also as their everyday language.

The beauty of the Qur'an is lost in translations. The Qur'an is said to be inimitable- there is nothing like it, nothing as good as it.

The following 2 views on the beauty of the Qur'an express how important the original Arabic is:

Pickthall said of the Qur'an "*that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy*"

Carlyle said the Qur'an was: "*the most tedious piece of writing I have ever undertaken to read*"

The former read in Arabic while the latter read the English translation.

The Qur'an itself says 11 times that it is Arabic- any translation or tafsir is the words of humans it is not sacred and not the words of God. (12:2)

"We have lost something divine when we reduce ourselves just to the translation of the Qur'an"- Nouman Ali Khan- founder of the Bayyinah Institute- an organisation to help people access the Qur'an in its original Arabic.

Ibn Hazm (d.1064) "Non-Arabic isn't Arabic, so it's not Qur'an"

**In what ways was Muhammad 'Islamizing' existing practices?**

- Allah was chief god in Makkan polytheism
- Pilgrimage to Ka'bah already took place under Makkan polytheism
- Meat was already sacrificed under Makkan polytheism
- Sharing wealth was already set up by Muhammad's grandfather within clan system
- Christians and Jews already practised fasting
- Charity and generosity was important in tribal etiquette

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