

# Muhammad and the believers

- What is Islam?

# TRUE ISLAM

True Islam is derived from the Quran and not from the traditions or cultures of Muslim people

- Who is not a Muslim?

# The Historian's Craft

- History is not just events, but the mental frameworks and concepts people use to understand themselves
- Words do not have stable meaning: they accrue connotations and the slate can be wiped clean by translation

# Why is the Qur'an ambiguous?

- Few people and places
- Hard to determine context
- The first work in Arabic

# Shifts in practice

- Amir al-mu'minin (660s) □ khalifah (700)
- Mu'minin □ Muslimin (720s)
- ZFR □ Futuh
- Years of the Arabs (644): but not hijri

# Shifts in naming

- Arab names: Hasan, Mu'awiya, Yazid, Marwan
- Theophoric names: Abdallah, Abd Yaghuth
- Personal names: Abd al-Aziz, Abd al-Rahman, Abd al-Malik (born 640s)
- Prophetic names: Ayyub, Yunus, Yusuf



# Earliest sources for Muhammad

- Quran
- Hadith?
- Sira (Constitution of Medina)
- Christian contemporaries (Sebeos; Doctrina Jacobi)
- Peri-Islamic Epigraphy and Poetry

# Mu'minin/ Muslimin

- Fred Donner: an oecumenical monotheist community, linked by belief in God and the last days

The bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." (49: 14)

- 'this is a compact between the muminin and muslimin of the Quraysh and Yathrib and those who joined us as clients, attach themselves to them and fight holy war with them'. (**Constitution of Medina**)
- Mu'awiya (661-80) as amir al-mu'minin

# Mu'minin/ Kufar

- 58: 4: For those who reject (Him) (Kafirin), there is a grievous Penalty
- 2: 61: They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah. This because they went on rejecting (Yakfuruna) the Signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause

# Mu'minin/ Mushrikin

- Allah does not forgive associating others with Him 'in worship', but forgives anything else of whoever He wills. And whoever associates others with Allah has indeed committed a grave sin (4: 48)
- [This is a declaration of] disassociation, from Allah and His Messenger, to those with whom you had made a treaty among the polytheists. (9:1)
- Marry not the women who associate others with Allah in His Divinity until they believe (2:221)

# Mu'minin/ Munafiqin

- When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muhammad], they say, "We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah ." And Allah knows that you are His Messenger, and Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars...they believed, and then they disbelieved; so their hearts were sealed over, and they do not understand.  
(63:1,3)

# Ahl al-kitab

- Q 3: 75 object that some of the ahl al-kitab will not return a single lent dinar: 'we are under no obligation to the ummiyun.' (Others will return every coin)
- Q 5: 18 Jews and Christians say they are god's children, but why are you punished like other people?
- Q 2: 113 The Jews say: "The Christians have no basis for their beliefs," and the Christians say: "The Jews have no basis for their beliefs." They say so even though they read the Scripture. The claim of those who have no knowledge (of the Scripture) is similar.<sup>113</sup> Allah will judge between them concerning their differences on the Day of Resurrection
- Q 5: 51 O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you – then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.
- (3:199) And among the People of the Book some believe in Allah and what has been revealed to you, and what has been revealed to them. They humble themselves before Allah, and do not sell Allah's revelations for a small price. For these men their reward is with their Lord. Allah is swift in His reckoning.
- 9: 29 Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled

# Ahl al-kitab

- Those who believe and those who are Jewish, the Christians and the Sabians - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds; they will have their reward with their Lord. No fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve. 2:62
- This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you 5.5

# Constitution of Medina

- This is a *kitāb* (writ, prescript) from Muḥammad <the Messenger of Allah> between the *mu'minūn* (Believers) and *muslimūn* (Muslims) of the Quraysh and Yathrib and those who join them, <settle with them,> and make *jihād* (armed struggle) alongside them.
- §2. They are one people (umma) to the exclusion of all other people
- Common duties with regard to vengeance and blood-whit
- Jews a community with their own din.



# Hanif/ Ummi/ Gentile

- Q 3: 67: Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian, not an associator but a devoted Gentile (hanifan musliman), those who are closest to him are this Prophet and those who believe
- Those who follow the Messenger, the ummi prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. (7: 157)
- We know very well that they say that there is a man who teaches him, but that man is foreign, but this revelation is in Arabic (16: 103)

# Abraham in Christian supersessionism

- Paul: 'those who believe are descendants of Abraham...all the nations shall be blessed in you'  
(Galatians 3; Colossians 4)

Eusebius: 'Although this new name of Christians has only been recently known among the nations, our life, conduct and doctrines of religion have not been lately invented by us, but from the first creation of man... If any one should assert that all those who have enjoyed the testimony of righteousness, from [Abraham](#) himself back to the first man, were [Christians](#) in fact if not in name, he would not go beyond the [truth](#).'

# Abraham in the Quran

- (2:136) Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the descendants of Jacob and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord.
- Or are you saying that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes were Jews or Christians?' ask them, 'Who knows better: you or God? And who is more unjust than one who conceals a testimony he has from God? And God is never unaware of what you do. (2: 140)
- Or were you witnesses when the death came to Jacob, when he said to his children : "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We will worship your God, and the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the One God, and to Him do we submit." That was a nation which has passed. Theirs is what they earned, and yours is what you earn. You will not be called to account for what they used to do. (2: 133-34)
- One God, prayer, alms, pilgrimage in practice of Abraham

# Covenant to Moses and Abraham

- We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom (4: 54)
- Thus did We drive them out of their gardens and springs and their treasures and excellent dwellings This happened with them. We enabled the Children of Israel to inherit those bounties (26: 57-9, speaking about Pharoah).
- (7:128) Moses said to his people: 'Seek help from Allah and be steadfast. The earth is Allah's, He bestows it on those of His servants He chooses. The end of things belongs to the God-fearing

# Cyril of Scythopolis

- *Life of Euthymius* 14

‘he let them depart no longer Hagarenes and Ishmaelites, but descendants of Sarah and heirs of the promise, transferred through baptism from slavery into freedom’ and ‘those who had been the wolves of Arabia have joined the rational flock of Christ’

# Sebeos on Muhammad

- 'I shall speak of the stock of Abraham, not of the free one, but that born from the handmaiden... (Gen 16.12)
- At that time a certain Ishmaelite named Mahmet, a merchant, as if by God's command appeared to them as a preacher and the path of truth. He taught them to recognise the god of Abraham, now he was informed in the history of Moses. Now, because the command was from on high, they abandoned their many cults and turned to the one God that Abraham their father had followed.
- Mahmet legislated for them, telling them not to eat carrion, drink wine speak falsely or fornicate.
- He said 'with an oath, God promised this land to Abraham and his seed forever' (Genesis chp. 15)...Love the God of Abraham alone and go and seize your land which God gave your father Abraham.

# Muhajirun

- In Sira refers to muhajirun/ ansar.
- But widely used in papyri (margaritai) and in Syriac (mahgraye)
- A new meaning of those who move to the amsar
- Used as synonym for the 'Muslim' political community

**Table 1**—What the sources call the Muslims of the first/  
seventh century

	<i>mu'minūn</i>	<i>muhājirūn,</i> or words derived therefrom	<i>muslimūn</i>
Arabic contemporary epigraphic and other documentary evidence	X		
The Qur'ān	X	X	X
Non-Arabic contem- porary literary and documentary evidence		X	
Arabic literary evidence	X	X	X



إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ <sup>قُلْ</sup>