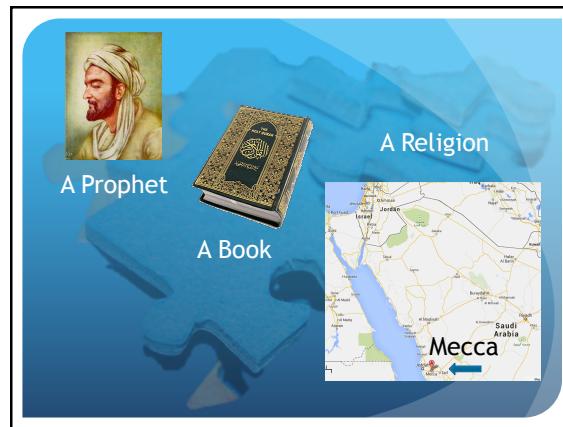


Exposing Myths of Early Islam

- The Traditional Islamic view states that an Arab named Muhammad received revelations from Allah through the angel Gabriel in a city called Mecca, and within 20 years after Muhammad's death these revelations were written down in a book called the Qur'an. However, new information is turning this traditional view upside down.



Exposing Myths of Early Islam

- We are learning that the Muhammad of traditional Islam was probably an invention of a later Arab leader, that the Qur'an was probably not collected and written down until the early 8th century (from many sources, including Christian and Jewish liturgy), and that the city of Petra in Northern Arabia was likely the birthplace of Islam instead of Mecca, which was probably not established as a city until after the death of Muhammad.

- Muslims believe that Muhammad is not only the founder of Islam, but that he is the most perfect man who has ever lived. Much of their legal system (Sharia) is based on what he supposedly said and did, their beliefs are based on what was revealed to him in the Qur'an, and many of their daily practices reflect the way that he lived.

- What would happen to Islam, then, if we discover that the Muhammad of Traditional Islam never existed?
- Indeed there would be no basis for the Qur'an, for Sharia, or for the religion itself.

- This seminar is an inquiry into the evidence that reveals that the Muhammad of Islam was seemingly unknown to the Muslims until two generations after his death, that the first written accounts of his life were not recorded until almost 200 years later, that countless stories of Muhammad's deeds were fabricated, that the earliest non-Muslim accounts of a man named Muhammad do not match up with the Islamic version, and much, if not all, of what we know of Muhammad is legend rather than historical fact.

- This evidence also indicates that the Arabian leaders fashioned Islam for political reasons, and needed a prophet, a book and a religion in order to gain legitimacy at that time.

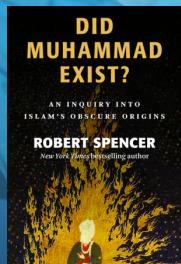
- Thus, if Muhammad was merely a construct for propaganda purposes, what does this ultimately say about Islam?
- In this seminar, the evidence supporting these claims will be presented and resources will be shared that will help in pursuing the truth about Muhammad and Islam.

“The more one looks at the origins of Islam, the less one sees.”

Robert Spencer, Did Muhammad Exist?, p. 2

Did Muhammad Exist?

- What do we find when we look beyond the Traditional View of Muhammad?
- Surely Muhammad had to exist if for no other reason that we have the Qur'an today and we have the religion of Islam.
- Who else could have received the Qur'an and started the religion of Islam?



Was Muhammad an Arabian Prophet?

- The Traditional View:
- "Muhammad was an Arab messenger, born in Mecca, speaking Arabic, and bringing the message of Allah to the Arabs (cf. Qur'an 41:44) and thence to the world at large."
- Did Muhammad Exist?, 100.

Was Muhammad an Arabian Prophet?

- "Every element of that sentence is a commonplace that both Muslims and non-Muslims take for granted; yet every element, upon closer scrutiny, begins to dissolve. From the extant historical records, it is not at all clear that there was an Arab prophet named Muhammad anywhere near Mecca, who brought any kind of message to the world. Or at the very least, the records indicate that if there was a Muhammad, he was not in Mecca and didn't preach anything that closely resembles Islam - until long after his death, when his biography and holy book as we know them began to be constructed."

- Did Muhammad Exist?, 100.

The Claims by the Traditional Account

- The life of Muhammad was lived out in the "full light of history"
- Muhammad was already a revered prophet and a model of moral conduct for his followers
- The Qur'an as a revealed book was written down in Arabic within 20 years of Muhammad's death
- Islam as a religion was fully formed by the time Muhammad died
- The Arabs were pagans before Muhammad came to convert them to Islam

Claims by Muslims
Muhammad

1. *Muhammad lived in Arabia between 570 and 632 AD; left the city of Mecca in 622 and settled in Medina until his death*

Muhammad Exposed

1. There are no records of Muhammad's birth, death or place of residence until over 100 years after his supposed death



Claims by Muslims

Muhammad

2. Muhammad began having revelations from the angel Gibreel (Gabriel) in 610. These were memorized and passed on to his followers.

Claims by Muslims

Muhammad

Twenty years after his death these revelations were collected in what became known as the Qur'an

Muhammad Exposed

2. The earliest mention of Muhammad (by Muslims) is in 691 AD in the inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock. He may have been the Muhammad inscribed on a coin in 687 AD.

Possible References to Muhammad

Non-Muslim Sources	
Year	Reference
Late 630s	Christian document mentions an un-named and still-living Arabian prophet "armed with a sword" (<i>Doctrina Jacobi</i>)
638	The bishop of Jerusalem, Sophronius, writes about the invasion of Jerusalem and describes the invaders as barbaric and unreligious. He never calls the invaders "Muslims" and never refers to Muhammad, the Qur'an, or Islam.
Early 640s	Thomas, a Christian priest, mentions a battle between the Byzantines and the "tayyaye d-Mhmt" east of Gaza in 634
660s/670s	Armenian bishop Sebeos gives a semi-historical account of an Arab preacher named "Mahmet," who taught his people to worship the God of Abraham, and who led 12,000 Jews, along with Arabs, to invade Palestine

Possible References to Muhammad

Non-Muslim Sources	
Year	Reference
680	Anonymous chronicler identifies Muhammad as the leader of the "sons of Ishmael," whom God sent against the Persians "like the sand of the sea shore"
685	Abdullah ibn Az-Zubir, a rebel opposed to Abd al-Malik, mints coins proclaiming Muhammad as the prophet of Allah. (figure of person)
690	Coptic Christian bishop John of Nikiu makes the first extant use of "Muslims" (although this is from an Ethiopic copy dated 1602, which was probably altered when translated from the Greek to the Arabic and then to Ethiopic)
730s	Christian writer John of Damascus refers to Islamic theology in detail, and to the "writings" of Muhammad, although he does not refer to a Qur'an by name (which seems to still not be canonized at this time)

Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest references to a "Muhammad" on coins	
Year	Reference
640s-650s	Coin in Palestine bears the inscription "Muhammad" but depicts a figure holding a cross (perhaps to "the praised one")

Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest references to a "Muhammad" on coins

Year	Reference
660s/ 670s	Coin depicts Muawiya holding a cross topped with a crescent



Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest references to a "Muhammad" on coins

Year	Reference
Early 680s	Coins apparently depicting Yazid feature a cross



Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest references to a "Muhammad" on coins

Year	Reference
Late 680s	Coin minted by Zubayr mentions Muhammad



Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest references to a "Muhammad" on coins

Year	Reference
Early 790s	Coins depicting Abd al-Malik still feature a human figure: Arabic writing states "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet"



Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest references to a "Muhammad" on coins

Year	Reference
696	First coins appear that do not feature an image of the caliph, and also features the <i>Shahada</i>



Possible References to Muhammad

Earliest mention of "Muhammad" by Muslims (other than on coins)

Year	Reference
691	The Dome of the Rock inscription declares that "Muhammad is the servant of God and His messenger"



Dome of the Rock Inscription



Dome of the Rock Inscription



- From the servant of Allah 'Abdullah al-Ma'mun al-Imam, Commander of the Faithful, may Allah prolong its duration! In the rule of the brother of Commander of the Faithful Abu Ishaq, son of Commander of the Faithful al-Rashid, that Allah will make it last. And (this work) had been put in place by the hands of Salih b. Yahya, the *mawali* of Commander of the Faithful, in the month of *Rabi'* al-Akhir of year 216.

Claims by Muslims

Muhammad

- Muhammad was known as the last of the prophets and became the centerpiece of the religion that began through his leadership.*

**“It All Began
with
Abd ‘al-Malik”**

Muhammad Exposed

- It all started with Abd al-Malik:*
 - It is likely that Muhammad is mostly the invention of the Caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705).



Muhammad Exposed

The Caliph needed a prophet to be the mouthpiece of the scripture for his new religion.

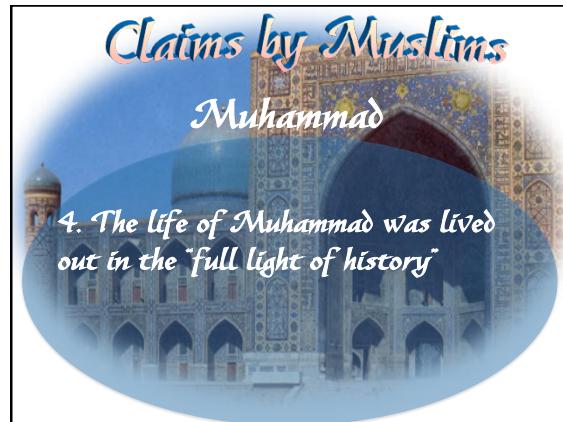
The Qur'an became the scripture and Islam became the religion.



Claims by Muslims

Muhammad

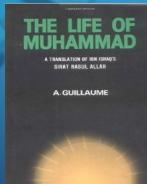
4. *The life of Muhammad was lived out in the full light of history*



Muhammad Exposed

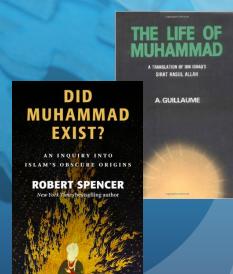
4. The earliest biographical information about Muhammad dates from over 125 years after his reported death.

The first biography of Muhammad, by Ibn Ishaq, is probably just “pious fiction” that sought to give context to the Qur'an.



Effect in search of a cause

- “So if Ibn Ishaq is not a historically trustworthy source, what is left of the life of Muhammad?”
- If nothing certain can be known about him, Islam stands as a momentous effect in search of a cause.”
- Did Muhammad Exist?, 100.



How could Islam develop without Muhammad?

- “If there was no warrior prophet teaching jihad warfare against unbelievers and presenting this teaching as the perfect and eternal word of the only true God, then how and why did the great Arab conquests of the seventh century and thereafter really come about? What was the energizing force behind them, if they were not inspired by a fiery prophet’s promise of reward in this world and the next for his warriors.

How could Islam develop without Muhammad?

- If Islam did not develop as Muslims believe it did and as the earliest Islamic sources explain, then how and why did it develop at all?”
- Did Muhammad Exist?, 100.

Claims by Muslims

Muhammad

5. Muhammad was already a revered prophet and a model of moral conduct for his followers

Muhammad Exposed

5. Most, if not all, the deeds and the sayings of Muhammad were fabricated hundreds of years after his death

- These sayings were recorded in the Hadith

Muhammad Exposed

- The name Muhammad appears in the Qur'an only four times and three of these instances could be used as a title ("praised one")
- "messenger of Allah" (rasul Allah) appears around 300 times, and "prophet" (nabi) 43 times.
- Are these all references to Muhammad?

Muhammad Exposed

- Muhammad probably was an historic person, perhaps even prophetic in the desert way, but probably nothing more than a *maghazi* leader who was later used by Abd al-Malik for his propaganda.

Muhammad Exposed

- If Muhammad was not the prophet of Islam, then how did Islam get started?
- What do we know about the origins of Islam?

Claims by Muslims

Islam

1. Mecca was the birthplace of Islam

Islam Exposed

- 1. Probably in northern Arabia - perhaps Petra

Claims by Muslims

Islam

2. Islam began through a series of revelations to Muhammad

Islam Exposed

- 2. Probably began out of apocalyptic Judaism
 - at least an intermediate monotheism that was neither Judaism or Christianity
- Centered on Abraham and his son Ishmael

Claims by Muslims

Islam

3. Islam as a religion was fully formed by the time Muhammad died

Islam Exposed

- Islam was fashioned for political reasons. In the time of Abd al-Malik, the need of legitimacy for their government was understood.
- To be a credible government they needed a formulized religion, a scripture and a prophet

Intermediate Monotheism

- In the early 700s there was an intermediate monotheism forming that was an amalgamation of Jewish and Christian influences that over time, because of influence from heretical/unorthodox Christian views (Monophysite and Nestorian) incorporated a strong animosity for central Christian doctrine such as the deity of Christ and the Trinity.

Intermediate Monotheism

- There was also a stronger Jewish element that pushed this agenda, but, after the conquests started up, was also marginalized and in time vilified in later writings.

Islam Exposed

- The Intermediate monotheism could have risen out of an Ebionite influence or from a form of Arianism.



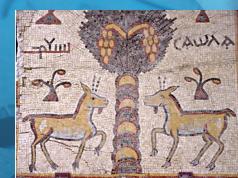
Claims by Muslims

Islam

4. *The Arabs were pagans before Muhammad came to convert them to Islam*

Islam Exposed

- Inscriptions from the 7th century demonstrate that many Arabs were not pagans, but monotheists who believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth (DME, x)



Claims by Muslims

Islam

5. *Islam began with the "Hijrah" (flight) of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD*

Islam Exposed

- “Hijrah” also means “emigration” and in 622, after the Byzantines conquered the Persians, they abandoned some of the land back over to the Arabians, who began to emigrate northward into Syria.

Early Conquests

- The early conquests of the Negev, Egypt, Palestine and southern Syria were probably growing raids and emigration of the Arabs into those areas due to the pulling out of the Byzantine troops (laying the land wide open)



Early Conquests

- and the abandoning of the *foederati*, who were no longer receiving tribute from the Byzantine government for guarding the borders.



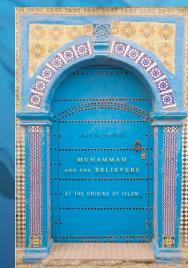
Claims by Muslims

Islam

6. The words "Islam" and "Muslim" are part of the inscription around the Dome of the Rock, built in 691 AD

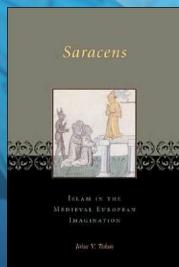
Islam Exposed

- They were called "Mahgrayr" for the Arabic term, "Muhajirun," or "emigrants."
- They were also known as "mu'minin," or "believers" (believers in what?)



Islam Exposed

- The Arabs were not called "Muslims" until the middle of the 8th century. They were known as the "Muhajirun," "mu'minin," "Saracens," "Hagarenes," or "Ishmaelites."



Islam Exposed

- The Dome of the Rock inscriptions "could be an expression of a theologically uncomplicated Arab monotheism that is deeply concerned with Christ and Christianity - to the point of polemicizing against claims of Christ's divinity. This preoccupation with Christ leaves us far short of Islam in any clearly recognizable form as the religion of Muhammad and the Qur'an. By that point in history, the specifics of that religion still had been nowhere elaborated." (Spencer, 57)

Conclusion

- The best evidence we have today seems to reveal a slow development of the Qur'an from non-Muslim sources, primarily Syriac, that were adopted and incorporated into an intermediate monotheism that was neither Christian nor Jewish, but which was influenced by beliefs from both.

Conclusion

- At first it was the religion of the elite, but as the Arabs became more successful and began to settle in their conquered cities, the leaders recognized that they would need to fortify their hegemony by establishing their religious beliefs, authorizing their own scriptures and supporting their own prophet.

Conclusion (cont.)

- For many Christians at that time, like John of Damascus, this new religion was understood as just a heresy of Christianity with anti-Christian beliefs and a false prophet.

Conclusion (cont.)

- As time went on, however, written Arabic, as well as the scripture written in Arabic, became standardized and Muhammad became established in a religion that would soon rival Christendom.

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A CHRISTIAN'S
 GUIDE TO ISLAM

