

If Mecca did not exist...

Forum Highlights

Summary of "If Mecca Did Not Exist..."

January 2, 2022

Summary of the Paper:

Here is a summary of my main points for why Mecca did not exist in the time of Muhammad:

If you want to counter my research, then you need to deal with the historical, archaeological, linguistic, and documentary evidence up through the middle of the 8th century AD. The Standard Islamic Narrative comes from the Sira, the Hadith, the Tafsir, and the Tarikh which are written over 200 years after the fact and are simply too late. Even Muslim scholars are admitting that the Sira and the Hadith were probably fabricated to support various religiopolitical views. The Standard Islamic Narrative simply does not fit with the actual historical record from the 6th and 7th centuries.

Here are some of the reasons I included in my paper.

1. Mecca is not mentioned on any map of the Middle East until 900 AD. One person wrote that Mecca was mentioned in a 2nd-century Roman map and Greek accounts. This may have been in reference to Ptolemy's coordinates for "Macoraba," which do not fit the location for Mecca?
2. I asked if anyone could produce a 2nd-century map listing Mecca. However, no one was able to produce one until the beginning of the 10th century. Also, while Mecca is listed once in the Qur'an (Q. 48:24), the indistinct references to locations such as the "mother of all settlements" (Q. 6:92) cannot be automatically ascribed to Mecca. They could easily refer to Jerusalem, Petra, or even Damascus.
3. The historical evidence we have demonstrates that it is much more likely that Islam developed in North Arabia and the Levant 800 miles north of Mecca since over 80% of the place names in the Qur'an refer to 'Ad, Thamud, and Midian, which are located far north of the Hejaz where Mecca is located today. In addition, these three locations were mentioned 54 times in the Qur'an, and Mecca was only mentioned by name once.
4. Furthermore, the people of Thamud were the Nabataean Arabs who at one time ruled a powerful kingdom with Petra as its center. (It is interesting that Petra was a place of worship with a Ka'ba, Safah and Marwah mountains, plenty of water for ablutions, the Jamaraat platform for stoning the devil, and at one time the black stone before al-Zubayr stole it and made his way south.)
5. In addition, as Dr. Mark Durie has concluded, due to unique linguistic features of Nabataean Arabic, the evidence demonstrates that "the Arabic of the Qur'an was not a Meccan dialect, but instead conformed to features of the southern Levantine dialects," and "was most likely a Nabataean Arabic dialect... developed from Nabataean Aramaic." In other words, the Qur'an could not have come from the Hejaz area of the Arabian Peninsula.

6. The first direct mention of Mecca in literature outside the Qur'an occurs in 741 AD. This is strange since other places in the Hejaz were well known at this time and mentioned on maps and travel documents including Najran, Ta'if, Sana'a, and even Yathrib (Medina). One person countered this by saying that Mecca was "heavily mentioned in the pre-Islamic Arab literature." I would be interested in knowing the sources for this. Remember, I am not interested in what is mentioned in 9th or 10th-century traditions because these are too late. I need sources from before the 7th century if we are going to discuss pre-Islamic times.
7. Another person mentioned that Muslims did not accept the sources that mentioned Mecca as the burial place for many prophets. I listed a number of sources in the footnotes of this section and invite you to look at some of these. Also, as far as a burial place, Petra is a city of tombs, and this was a central place to bring the dead. This reference to the burial of many prophets would fit Petra much better than Mecca.
8. Finally, I listed a number of features described in the Qur'an and the Hadith that Muslims claim refer to Mecca (In a valley and a parallel valley, with a stream, with fields of grass for grazing, soil composed of clay and loam, trees that include fruit trees and olive trees, etc.), yet Mecca does not naturally have these features. One person said that these features, like the olive trees, do not refer to Mecca. That is correct. However, they fit very well with Petra.
9. In conclusion, it seems that Petra* is probably the central city alluded to in the Qur'an, and not Mecca. After all, the geographic and vegetative features fit Petra; the references to 'Ad, Thamud, and Midian fit the region of Petra; the language for the Qur'an fits Petra; The features for the pilgrimage fit Petra much better than Mecca; and Petra was the center of a number of important trade routes, while Mecca was off the caravan route and there is no evidence at all for any trade taking place in Mecca before the 8th century.
10. * On the other hand, some researchers are saying that many of the geographic and vegetative features could be referring to Jerusalem as the central city while Petra was the earlier focus of the earlier Umayyads before Abd al-Malik, who seemed to favor Jerusalem over Petra (which had suffered another earthquake around that time). This is an area that I will be exploring more in the near future.
11. In addition, there are no archaeological artifacts at all before 800 AD that have been uncovered in Mecca, even with all the digging that has been taking place in Mecca in order to build skyscrapers for the growing number of pilgrims. And now that 95% of the historic buildings have been destroyed since 1985, it will be hard to find anything with all the cement and asphalt covering the ground. What are the Muslims hiding under all that cement and asphalt? Why did they not find ANY artifacts earlier than 800 AD? What does this say for anyone living in Mecca during the time of Muhammad?
12. My challenge remains: if you have any solid evidence that Mecca existed during the time of Muhammad, please let me know. I would be glad to rectify my assessment. However, I will only accept evidence that is actually dated before 800 AD. Everything else is too late.

Daniel Janosik

12 days ago

Summary of the Paper: Here is a summary of my main points for why Mecca did not exist in the time of Muhammad: If you want to counter my research, then you need to deal with the historical, archaeological, linguistic, and documentary evidence up through the middle of the 8th century AD. The Standard Islamic Narrative comes from the Sira, the Hadith, the Tafsir, and the Tarikh which are written over 200 years after the fact and are simply too late. Even Muslim scholars are admitting that the Sira and the Hadith were probably fabricated to support various religiopolitical views. The Standard Islamic Narrative simply does not fit with the actual historical record from the 6th and 7th centuries. Here are some of the reasons I included in my paper. 1. Mecca is not mentioned on any map of the Middle East until 900 AD. You mentioned that Mecca was mentioned in a 2nd-century Roman map and Greek accounts. Are you referring to the Asatir (probably written in the 10th century AD), or Ptolemy's coordinates for "Macoraba," which do not fit the location for Mecca? If you have a 2nd-century map listing Mecca, I would love to see it. 2. While Mecca is listed once in the Qur'an (Q. 48.24), the indistinct references to locations such as the "mother of all settlements" cannot be automatically ascribed to Mecca. They could easily refer to Jerusalem, Petra, or even Damascus. 3. It is much more likely that Islam developed in North Arabia and the Levant 800 miles north of Mecca since over 80% of the place names in the Qur'an refer to 'Ad, Thamud, and Midian, which are located far north of the Hejaz where Mecca is located today. In addition, these three locations were mentioned 54 times in the Qur'an, and Mecca was only mentioned by name once. 4. Furthermore, the people of Thamud were the Nabataean Arabs who at one time ruled a powerful kingdom with Petra as its center. (It is interesting that Petra was a place of worship with a Ka'ba, Safah and Marwah mountains, plenty of water for ablutions, the Jamaraat platform for stoning the devil, and at one time the black stone before al-Zubayr stole it and made his way south.) 5. In addition, as Dr. Mark Durie has concluded, due to unique linguistic features of Nabataean Arabic the evidence demonstrates that "the Arabic of the Qur'an was not a Meccan dialect, but instead conformed to features of the southern Levantine dialects," and "was most likely a Nabataean Arabic dialect... developed from Nabataean Aramaic." In other words, the Qur'an could not have come from the Hejaz area of the Arabian Peninsula. 6. The first direct mention of Mecca in literature outside the Qur'an occurs in 741 AD. This is strange since other places in the Hejaz were well known at this time and mentioned on maps and travel documents including Najran, Ta'if, Sana'a, and even Yathrib (Medina). Zaid, you said Mecca was "heavily mentioned in the pre-Islamic Arab literature." I would be interested in knowing your sources for this. I am not interested in what is mentioned in 9th or 10th-century traditions because these are too late. I need sources from before the 7th century if you are going to discuss pre-Islamic times. 7. You mentioned that Muslims did not accept the sources that mentioned Mecca as the burial place for many prophets. I listed a number of sources in the footnotes of this section and invite you to look at some of these. Also, as far as a burial place, Petra is a city of tombs, and this was a central place to bring the dead. This reference to the burial of many prophets would fit Petra much better than Mecca. 8. Finally, I listed a number of features described in the Qur'an and the Hadith that Muslims claim refer to Mecca (In a valley and a parallel valley, with a stream, with fields of grass for grazing, soil composed of clay and loam, trees that include fruit trees and olive trees, etc.), yet Mecca does not naturally have these features. You said that these features, like the olive trees, do not refer to Mecca. That is correct. However, they fit very well with Petra. 9. In conclusion, it seems that Petra is the central city alluded to in the Qur'an, and not Mecca. After all, the geographic and vegetative features fit Petra; the references to 'Ad, Thamud, and Midian

fit the region of Petra; the language for the Qur'an fits Petra; The features for the pilgrimage fit Petra much better than Mecca; and Petra was the center of a number of important trade routes, while Mecca was off the caravan route and there is no evidence at all for any trade taking place in Mecca before the 8th century. In addition, there are no archaeological artifacts at all before 800 AD that have been uncovered in Mecca, even with all the digging that has been taking place in Mecca in order to build skyscrapers for the growing number of pilgrims. And now that 95% of the historic buildings have been destroyed since 1985, it will be hard to find anything with all the cement and asphalt covering the ground. 10. My challenge remains: if you have any solid evidence that Mecca existed during the time of Muhammad, please let me know. I would be glad to rectify my assessment. However, I will only accept evidence that is actually dated before 800 AD. Everything else is too late.

[Paulo Sousa Jerónimo](#)

[15 days ago](#)

Happy New Year, Mr. Daniel Janosik! I think it would be very productive and interesting to compare your investigation with the ones that have been carried out by French historical investigators such as Édouard-Marie Gallez, Odon Lafontaine (Olaf), and Hocine Kerzazi, among others, also published here on Academia. This is because your investigation is also about the same subject that tries to answer the question - Is there any difference between the Standard Islamic Narrative and the historical reality? If there is, in which way, and to what degree? I'm a History graduate and thanks to your article, I have searched about this issue for weeks and have read a lot from other historical investigators (I also have to mention Patricia Crone) and my view, what I thought about this subject, has changed much, in a transformative way. Of course, this is, by its nature, a controversial issue, that can be the source of fierce attacks (even "ad Hominem" ones) but someone has to be brave. Your article was indeed very useful. Keep up the good work! My best regards!

[Charles Carrillo](#)

[16 days ago](#)

Daniel Janosik; This is all fascinating. Thanks for your input and challenging request for input from others. I sincerely hope that more evidence is forthcoming from it. Please continue to report. Happy New Year! -CC

[Charles Carrillo](#)

[17 days ago](#)

History is full of apocrypha. It has been a part of culture for millennia. I wince at calling a portion of it a lie, since visions and prophetic literature motivated a lot of cultures to explain the past with what they perceived as divine inspiration. Our modern view of history, a positivist outlook, was foreign to many ancient societies. The Muslim view that Muhammad was the seal of the prophets harks back to prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as you say. So, Prophet Jesus, for example, is a mighty figure in Islam among the past heroes. The irony that the three major sets of Abrahamic tradition find themselves at war over ideology today. History and anthropology form my background. I love the study of the history of religions. Happy New Year, friends.

[Charles Carrillo](#)

[27 days ago](#)

Very interesting! Thanks for bringing this to public attention. Regarding tales being transplanted to various geographic locales, phrases like would have, could have, probably, need verification. Your article is a good springboard. In parallel, the story of the Exodus is argued by some scholars to be a syncretism of the conquest of the Holy Land in 578 and the later return of the kidnapped Hebrew population to today's Israel. Biblical and Quranic histories fuel our curiosity. ACADEMIA hopefully will accumulate further evidence, using rigorous investigative techniques. Just a thought from an outsider: If early qiblas were aimed at Petra, might they not just as readily be aimed at Jerusalem and its geographic landscape? I recall the Muslim capture of Jerusalem in AD 638. The legend of Muhammad's ascent into Heaven from Jerusalem and return was already a part of Islamic lore at that time. I would love to hear more about this.
Charles Carrillo Whittier, CA

[stanley wilkin](#)

[15 days ago](#)

Daniel, I loved this. The information provided by yourself and others has been informative and essential for continued research. I have been involved with another Discussion and the ignorance of university academics is in sharp contrast to developments here alone and for me, was a revelation. Informing people is something we all need to do even of those who should be informed. They are 20 years behind, and we need to be aware of that. My only criticism: with all the information and evidence you have brought to the matter, I cannot see that you proved your thesis.

[Ali Fikri Yavuz](#)

[11 days ago](#)

So, Quraysh, after Islamic success in and from Madina (I believe Medina is fine, maybe somewhere in Egypt? Anywho) got rid of Petra and made the whole story up almost from scratch, making their original homeland the most significant point while altering the whole narrative of the Qur'an (you know it is mostly about the story of Quraysh) and then, lived happily ever after in North, Damascus, Baghdad, etc. And, everyone bought it? I am sorry but the effort disproving the main Islamic narrative about Mecca circulated from Spain to China within a hundred years by saying that this was a whole cover-up fabricated after one/two hundred years later is much worse than the claim that the moon landing was fabricated and all relevant institutes are covering this up.

[stanley wilkin](#)

[11 days ago](#)

Ali Fikri Yavuz, I have sympathy with your view but the first time I read the Qur'an with its specific take on the Judaic religions, not actually found anywhere else, and the accompanying early literature such as sira, I immediately thought that 1) there is no proof for any of it, 2) it looks made up. It bears the marks not only of literary construction but of historical reconstruction. It is not, as most Muslims appear to believe, history nor does it appear to have any real association with history. Stories are or were created to fulfil an ideological purpose, such as Abraham and Ishmael to provide reason for the principal use of the Ka'ba, a pagan shrine, for the focus of Believers. While a few fibs do not make the whole likewise, the inability to substantiate even the Ridda Wars creates academic suspicion. Again, my first notion was a

religion created by a committee. The additional problem, if you like, is that, for me, this fits in with the tactics of the previous monotheisms, where history is merely literary expression. Understanding disengages from the political purposes of Jesus, as well as ignoring the historical reality or lack of it from the trip by Moses and his followers at a time when there was no ethnic group called Hebrews and that these would not develop for several centuries.

Daniel Janosik

[11 days ago](#)

Ali, It is not just Mecca before the late 7th century that is in question, but even the so-called Rashidun, including your namesake, Ali. There is no historical reference to Abu Bakr, Uthman, or even Ali before the writings of the Abbasids over a century later. The name Umar comes up, but it appears to be not the Standard Islamic Traditional Umar but rather an Umar that comes from Iraq, probably out of the Lakhmid area. In fact, it seems that much of the Abbasid "history," especially concerning battles and traditions may actually come from the infighting between the Ghassanid Arabs, who were mostly monophysite Christians and had fought on the side of the Byzantines, and the Lakhmid Arabs, who were mostly Nestorian Christians and Arian heretics and had been allied with the Persians. It would be worth your while to read up on these two Arab cultures, especially since the earliest actual historical information about Islam all comes from Northern Arabia, the Levant, and Iraq/Iran where these groups lived. Northern Arabia, the Levant, and Iraq/Iran where these groups lived. Why, for example, did the Umayyads choose Damascus as their headquarters, and why did the Abbasids after them choose Baghdad and not Mecca? Perhaps it is because Islam really developed in these areas rather than in the Hejaz.

Ali Fikri Yavuz

[10 days ago](#)

Then kudos to Abbasids for orchestrating the scheme of the millenia, where information is written and transmitted that vastly, making everyone as their ally from Spain to China. Great narrative!

Dear Stanley Wilkin, I made no reference to religion or believers. We make history on evidences. Lack of evidence about the origins of Mecca vs. the lack of evidence about the change of its site (from North to South). So, there had to be references to this relocation of Mecca other than raising some archeological suspicions and minor inconsistencies rooted in the literature that the original argument disregards. We can not explain this simply by saying that the political choice dictated everyone to change their holy site, which is essential for the most important pillar for its believers. Something that is so critical and debated upon in their literature (I mean the religious importance of facing the qibla and vast religious literature regarding this) has to reflect or point a huge debate once the society claimed to be had already done (as Daniel's and Gibbon's argument asserts). My point is that explaining such a scheme is virtually impossible. Or we face the best orchestrated one in the whole history.

Dear Daniel Janosik, Are you serious? What is this to do with my or anyone else's namesake, Daniel! Anyways, As you have said, Umayyads and Abbasids chose their headquarters up in the north. The problem is were they from the North, or South? We accept that both from Qurayhs, right? If they are already from the North, who cares Mecca? Why so south? If they came from the South with their narrative, why do we seek a Northern prophet? If there were already a

Northern prophet and Southern invaders that altered the original narrative, how do we justify this? This is not ancient history and we have too many reports, thoughts and considerations from everywhere. Also, there is pilgrimage to Mecca and people gather there, continuously. Is there any report to pilgrimage to somewhere else? If tampered and previous reports are not there, were they all living a lie willingly? Why do not we have multiple different pilgrimage sites or conflicting reports about it? Facing Mecca and issues on qibla can be controversial (which by the way all debunked by D. A. King already and it is strange you omit his counter arguments here) but I believe that pilgrimage should be also be the focus of question here. Because rather than facing it, being there is also a pillar of the religion and a major conflict, such as relocation of its site 1000 km south, is a huge problem for travellers. I am sorry but when you reconsider this focusing on hajj, your arguments should be re-written. Regards,

Arnaud Fournet

[9 days ago](#)

@ Ali Fikri Yavuz Your approach more or less amounts to a non-historical approach of History. It's as if everything has always been what it is now. What concrete information do we have about the moment when pilgrimage to Mecca (in the Hijaz) began on a regular basis? Besides, during three centuries, Islam more or less coexisted peacefully with Christianity in the Near-East. It's only after 900 AD that Islam increasingly broke away from its Christian roots and began to be oppressive against Christians.

Leslaw Kawalec

[9 days ago](#)

Dear Ali, Not sure about the Mecca/Petra thing myself. I could imagine, though, that Islam would still survive even if it were to be proved beyond doubt that Masjid Al-Haram was not in Mecca. I mean the controversy does not stand on a Daniel or a Dan alone (even though they may have a religious agenda, they still give or refer to quite sensible arguments) and in itself this revelation does not cancel the significance of the Quran. Perhaps it only jeopardises the efficacy of Hajj as we know it as a pillar of Islam. Similarly, centuries of critical research into the Bible with its interesting findings on how the Bible was formed over centuries, did not necessarily stop Christian belief. You could still make a case for the validity of Islam as a legitimate Abrahamic religion, like a Christian-Jewish Messianic heresy. I will not be trying to tell you how, but I really believe that Muslims should take it easy and see why they ought not to and indeed cannot be spared the same plight of scholarly scrutiny as Christianity has been subjected to.

Daniel Janosik

[9 days ago](#)

Ali Fikri Yavuz, 1. You have some good questions, but as someone said above you are still trying to interpret 7th and 8th-century historical events through stories written in the 9th and 10th centuries by people who lived in a different culture and a very different location. The Standard Islamic Narrative was written down by the Abbasids who hated the Umayyads and therefore destroyed any written works from the Umayyads in order to write the "history" of Islam to further their own political agenda. History is rewritten all the time when there is a knowledge vacuum created. Just look at the 1619 project in America where the cancel culture is trying to discount the US Constitution and the beginning of America from 1776 in order to push their own agenda. This happened when the communists took over Russia under Lenin and Stalin, and it happened during the Cultural Revolution under Mao. This is why it is so important for us to look

at the actual history of the 7th century so that we can get a more accurate understanding of what really happened.

2. Petra was known as a place of worship for many centuries while it was a kingdom populated by Arabs, many who came up from Yemen in the 2nd century (the Ghassanids). Many of these Arabs became Christians following the Monophysite views of Christ, much like the Copts of Egypt do now. Petra had a Ka'ba and was the focus of pilgrimages for many years. It was also an important trade center (unlike Mecca). As I mentioned in another reply, Petra also fits the descriptions of the "city" described in the Qur'an with parallel valleys, streams that brought sufficient water to the inhabitants as well as for the fields of grass to feed animals and to water the olive trees. These things were not found in Mecca. In fact, studies have been done on the "soil" in Mecca and they have determined that due to the lack of any seeds and other nutrients, besides the sparse rain, Mecca could not have had any vegetation in the past.

3. If the Qur'an were assembled through a collection of disparate writings that included Syriac Christian liturgy, Jewish apocryphal stories, Greek legends, Zoroastrian practices, and Arabized Old Testament stories, over a period of centuries that would have included the 5th through the 9th centuries, then this would explain why some of the Saana manuscripts could be dated before the traditional Muhammad was even born, and added long after he was dead. There are scholars like Keith Small and Dan Brubaker who have revealed thousands of corrections and changes in the earliest Qur'an manuscripts that seem to indicate a push for a "standardized" version of what became the Qur'an. If this process were not finalized until late in the 8th century then it is understandable that the "vast" spread of Islam from Spain to India by the end of the 8th century may not have been due to a full-fledged Islam with a "perfect" Qur'an, but rather the result of an Arab revival brought about by the defeat of the Sassanian empire and a retreat of the Byzantine army from the land of the Ghassanids and the Lakhmids, who in turn led to the Umayyads and then the Abbasids. This would account for the many contradictions between the earlier narratives of the Umayyads and the later revisions of the Abbasids. He who has the power controls the narrative.

4. The Umayyads rose to power first under Muawiyah, who began to unify the territory under Arab hegemony. However, most of the battles were fought in the Levant and Mesopotamia, not in the Hejaz. Apparently, accounts of battles that were supposedly fought in Southern Arabia were actually fought far to the north. For example, Al-Tabari gives an account where trebuchets were supposedly used against Mecca in 683. However, while there is no evidence of trebuchet damage in Mecca, there is evidence of this kind of warfare in Petra at that time. Together with all the vegetative descriptions and geographical descriptions from the Qu'ran pointing to Petra rather than Mecca, perhaps the we need to revise the narratives written by the Abbasids to reflect what history and archaeology tell us about the 7th-century events.

5. Muawiyah may have been the first historical caliph (as I indicated before, we do not have any historical verification that Abu Bakr, Uthman, or even Ali existed at the time the Rashidun are said to have ruled), but it was under Abd al-Malik that the religion of Islam began to make its way out of an intermediate monotheistic stage. He made his claims on the walls of the Dome of the Rock and the coins that he minted. However, when the Abbasids took over in 750 it seems that much of the Umayyad legacy was replaced by a new narrative favoring the Abbasids and presenting the prophet Muhammad with a different story, a South Arabian origin, and a holy book that supports his life.

6. The real challenge for Muslims in regard to the existence of Mecca, however, is to produce a map before 900 AD that clearly shows Mecca in the right place, verifiable artifacts or building

sites from Mecca before 800 AD, and an actual Ka'ba before the time that al-Zubayr could have come down with the black stone and built a replica of the Ka'ba in Petra in his new sanctuary which became Mecca. Can this challenge be met with actual history from the 7th century and substantiated with actual archaeological discoveries? If so, I would very much like to see the evidence.

Francesco Zambon

7 days ago

Dear Ali Fikri Yavuz Your doubts and comments are welcome but I try some informal answers to his last and long comment: 1. You wrote: " why do you forget zamzam well and its irrigation) => the geographer al-Maqdisi or Al Muqaddasi (d. 991) writes that Zamzam has more or less salty water, unsuitable for any cultivation, and all subsequent witnesses up to the arrival of the railway in Medina (1908) confirm the salinity of the source and the absence of vegetation. (e.g. Ibn Battuta). 2. You seem to hypothesize that a possible change of the Qibla is to be attributed to the first Abbasids. Alternatively, I suggest to investigate the end of the second fitna and the actions of Al Malik and his sons up to his nephew Umar II and perhaps beyond. They had all the time and the strength to force at least all the pilgrims who came from afar forget Petra. The Hajj were militarized and educate pilgrims, without maps and GPS, relied on diaries such as that of Nasir e-Kusraw (1040). 3. You wrote: "How you construct a history that Ibn Zubayr has captured the stone and traveled South with actual history? I also would like to see the evidence for that "=> The idea that Ibn Zubayr transferred the Black Stone to Mecca is attributable to Dan Gibson (nabataea.net). It seems to me just a hypothesis and rather strange. It seems to me simpler and more reasonable to attribute the transfer to Hajjaj (born in Ta'if) when he was governor of Medina. 4. You wrote: "How we make sense about Taif, and tons of other geographical places in the narrations around modern Mecca?" => The place-names of the Qur'an are found north of Medina in the kingdom of the Ghassanids. Gibson suggests that (wadi) Rum (rasm RM) is the biblical / Quranic Iram (same rasm) near Petra / Raqim home to a temple dedicated to Allat. 5. You wrote: "How we understand the expedition to Tabuk towards North / Romans? => The political / military situation of Bilal al Sham is ignored by early Islamic texts. In summary there had been repressions of Christian heresies by the Byzantines during the reign of Emperor Phocas. Then there was a Persian occupation and after 622 a Byzantine reoccupation was resumed. The reoccupation was weak but bringing repressions of Christian heresies (and of the Jews). For a religious community, escaping to Medina was a good idea. However south of Medina there was little to plunder. 6. Prof. David A King argues that the first mosques do not point to Petra but to the south, north, east, or west or towards the summer or winter solstices. However, the professor does not explain when (and why) Islam has attributed so much importance to the Qibla which is also affirmed (but also denied) already in the Koran (Sura 2).

Ali Fikri Yavuz

6 days ago

@ Arnaud Fournet It is astonishing to witness such ignorance. There is even a surah called pilgrimage. It is specifically mentioned as a command in 2/196-199 and there is a section in 9/25-37 regarding pilgrimage and a clear command in 9/27. There are tons of others, easy to check and see how this practise has central importance in the religion. There are even multiple verses mentioning the account in 9/25, the issue on "preventing people from the Sacred Mosque". Nevertheless, this is not even the case to show its Quranic origin. To assert that pilgrimage is a later development invalidates the whole argument. The essence of the argument

is the narration of the assertion that being Mecca the mother of cities/villages. The discussion revolves around the notion that modern Mecca has no archaeological/historical significance, but Petra has, so this attribution should refer Petra rather than Mecca. So, being of pilgrimage is a practise commanded in the Quran or not is not even important. The point is for the sake of the argument, and also dictated by the argument itself, since we discuss the whereabouts of the Sacred City, we have to come into agreement that this place (Petra or Mecca) was the place of pilgrimage, as also stated in the Muslim sources. The problem I raised was the lack of reports about a conflict in the place of pilgrimage. If you assert that this practice was a late development, then you would cause a contradiction in your own set of arguments about Petra being more worthy for a religious place that pilgrimage makes more sense (including the arguments about Ka'ba and Safa and Marwa and so on). Are you even following the argument? But you are right, Q 14/37 does not mention Mecca by name. However, this event is the connection of pilgrimage to Mecca, and it is at the base of the origin story of Mecca in Islamic perspective. We are not dealing whether they are true or false but analysing the probability of the relocation of Mecca from North to South. Since whole narration is based on the journey of Abraham and his family, then we must make a comparative analysis how these narrations fit well with either Meccas. My conclusion is that it fits with Mecca, not Petra. So here, I am not concerned about the origins of Hagar, let her be of Egyptian origins, what changes? In short, without understanding basic concepts and their significance and their narrative, how can we discuss? Clearly you have no education on Islamic theology, or history of it. Again and again, I am not taking what has been as historical facts, I am trying to pursue a logical and consistent narrative only, which I observe you do not slightly care. @ Francesco Zambon Thanks for the remarks. 1. I never meant the use of zamzam for cultivation, I am sorry for the misunderstanding. No historian ever mentioned this. I meant a simple canal for the disposal of the used water or a canal for the use of people. Again, sorry for making my point wrongly by using the word irrigation, it is my mistake. What I wanted to say was that "masil" just simply means a water way/canal. This can be either for rainwater, or zamzam water. My point was that interpreting from one word in the narrative that there was a creek in Mecca is false. That was my main point. Making this hard to be understood again is my mistake, I am sorry. 2. First, this is not my hypotheses. That is Gibbon's narrative that Janosik's arguments support. In this narrative, Umayyads were the people who acknowledged Petra as their Mecca. However, Ibn Zubayr stole the black stone and out of political purposes rebuilt it in modern Mecca. Then, Abbasids for some reason favoured this story and replaced the narrative after defeating Umayyads. Let me know if I misunderstand this narrative. Now you are asserting that Umayyads started this initiative of relocating Mecca to South. Then, how is your narrative? I am curious. You are right, hajj was militarised (people are marching from everywhere, i.e. they are also militarised), and different armies were getting together from around the world, somehow without debating much about the whereabouts of their sacred place. That is interesting, isn't it? And that is exactly my question. 3. Interestingly your narration then tells that Hajjaj is the one who threw stones with trebuchets/catapults causing the damage for Ka'ba and then rebuilt it nearby his hometown. Then why after the defeat of Umayyads, this good business stayed alive? This also contradicts with the so-called qibla argument because the change has to start after Abbasid rule to make sense. So, it is definitely not simpler, even much much harder. 4. I was not talking about the Qur'an. Qur'anic stories are all from earlier traditions that are mostly based in the North. That is also one other problem in the revisionist account. Why did not they add to Qur'an accounts of Southern tales? If they can alter the place where all Muslims should face five times every day, why not to spice up the text with places around? For instance why there are

only indirect references to Taif rather than speaking about it directly? If they wanted this relocation badly, why they kept it vaguely in the Quran, rather than make it more solid? If they can erase the traces of Petra, they surely could fabricate more decisive elements to identify Mecca. Can you see the inconsistency? The problem is that there are tons of narratives concerning the history of Hijaz from the life of Muhammad to Arabian tribes and much later accounts. Ok, I am not saying they are authentic or else. The cumulative narration from every account compiles many stories. And when you consider and analyse them, you can see that all is about Hijaz, not North. That is my concern that apparently no one cares other than simple saying that they are all fake. But somehow this fabrication erases Petra altogether but cannot build Mecca well too at the same time. I was thinking Iram was the founding father or Aramaic people according to Old Testament, I am not sure. Some Muslim scholars suggest they are the people of Thamud so maybe Petran too. Concerning our discussion, I do not get the relevance of Iram or Wadi Ramm or Petra anyway. 5. I was asking this question to show that a Northern place for Medina would cause many problems. So, you are on board with me that Medina was where it is now. Good. Now, you are directing the discussion to a good point. There were these accounts you mention in the North and they escaped to South, the modern Medina, Yathrib. Then why do we have accounts of Quraysh and their inner businesses in the narrative? Why no mention of these accounts in the North, relating their escape to Yathrib, while there is already the account of the war between Romans and Persians (Byzantine and Sasanids)? I mean while there is info about the Romans and Persians in the narrative, their migration stories never clash with them. Vice-versa when you consider the reports of almost 90 military expeditions and battles narrated, altogether gives a prophet in Hijaz, not Petra or anywhere else. The first military encounter with Romans/Byzantine I can remember from the sources was in Mu'tah, which is one year earlier than the conquest of Mecca/Petra. Interestingly Mu'tah is northern than Petra and if you compare the narration regarding this expedition, it makes no sense to assert that Petra was the story of origin. 6. It is clear that orientation (so essential that the word orientation is about orient/east/sunrise) of worship in most cultures is essential, right? I mean we should not have been talking about this. Why this aspect would be different in Islam? The practise of salah/praying is by nature about orientation, like many similar practices everywhere in the world. The only problem we have here to discuss is "to where?". King simply argues that the qibla orientations were always important because the calculation methods of these early mosques, as he demonstrates, are all consistent. He adds, however, these calculations were first been done with simple astronomical understanding they had by showing the methodology they used matching it with the data we have today. That's all.

Francesco Zambon

[5 days ago](#)

Dear Ali Fikri Yavuz Thank you for your kind replies. I'll reply point by point as soon as I can. In the meantime, I would solicit the opinion of others and in particular of Daniel Janosik as we are discussing his text. Before going back into the details I think it is useful to describe my idea in general, informally and with considerations to be substantiated later: 1. Mekka has not been a city in the 7^o century and was not a town until the Indian trading community was established around 1500 CE or shortly before. See Ibn Battuta. 2. Petra lends itself as being an alternative not only for geographical but also religious reasons. The local goddesses were Al-Uzza and Al-Lat ..., there were pilgrimages to Jabal Harun also continued by Christians and local Muslim women, the high places are oriented towards Jabal Harun.... (see papers by Zbigniew T. Fiema and others of academia.org. Start from: "From Goddess to Prophet: 2000 Years of Continuity on

the Mountain of Aaron near Petra, Jordan”). 3. The shift of the Qibla would have taken place during the caliphate of Al Malik and supported at least by the immediate Marwanid successors. Hajjaj made a redaction of the Koran minimizing the changes. Today's Koran authorizes us to think about changing the Qibla, Change accepted by the Sira which anticipates it by about 68 years. 4. The Abbasids lived in Humeyma, near Petra, so they knew everything. They were then on good terms with Al Malik. Relations later broke with Al Walid. And when they came to power they massacred the Umayyads but confirmed Mecca with numerous Hajj and major investments (i.e. Darb Zubaidah). 5. The Umayyads took advantage of the fact that the Hajj had been limited to the followers of Ibn Zubayr since 683. After that Arabia is losing more and more importance except for the Hajj. Furthermore Al Malik manages to hide the siege of the first ka'aba and the torment of the corpse of Ibn Zubayr and also moves the Ka'aba where there were no traces of Ebionite Christianity (well present in the Suras of Mecca) but only of paganism of the Bedouins. (jāhiliyya) This is my hypothesis different from that of Gibson and Daniel but it seems to me to be more realistic. I also believe it is necessary to ask the Muslims who read us what are the actual consequences, certainly heavy on subsequent legends, while I think it has no consequences on the Koran and minimal on the Sira (written in the Abbasid era). Regards
Francesco Zambon

Francesco Zambon

[5 days ago](#)

Dear Ali Fikri Yavuz Zamzam is a minor point but Mecca has never had the water needed for even a small city. Zamzam is salty water, sometimes very bad to drink. Zubaidah, wife of the caliph al Rashid had to finance an aqueduct from Ta'if to Jabal Arafat (80 km) to bring fresh water closer but in subsequent diaries Arafat's cisterns are always empty. Also in 1850 Burton, a Muslim officer in the Anglo-Indian army, made various measurements and concluded that Zamzam was an underground stream of salt water at a depth of more than 15m.

Ali Fikri Yavuz

[5 days ago](#)

@ Francesco Zambon, I acknowledge the situation of water in Mecca. That is why the issue of watering the pilgrims in the tradition is a major company, both for pre-Islamic, early Islamic and even today. That is why I ask the question: that in this sense, Petra does not fit in the narrative, where the water sources are relatively sufficient for the narration concerning the pilgrimage to make sense. I mean both the origin story of the pilgrimage and pre-Islamic accounts about the pilgrimage relies heavily on the shortage of water. And when you alter the narration with Petra, this narration fails within the Islamic perspective. Of course, there can be pilgrimage in Petra, but then the Islamic narrative should have been consistent with its geography. I am here just applying the methodology of Gibbon and Janosik, since they assert that some elements in the narrative (i.e. al-batn al-masil, thaniyyatayn) in the Islamic sources are more compatible with Petra. I am just reverse engineering this by simply saying that if only two accounts, which can be understood differently, can cause an incompatibility in the story, then too many accounts in return would cause much more problems in their own narrative. I hope I can express myself clearly. You give an interesting approach to the subject. Let me share my thoughts: 1. I agree and I do not see this point has any problematic aspect in this discussion. Furthermore, this means that the origins of Mecca is almost two millennia before Muhammad. If this is plausible (I do not know that) then the idea of maintaining a town, virtually has no significance, no vegetation or cultivation is against the main thesis of Crone and to accept this simply means that there is some

particular significance that holds Mecca for 2000 years. If you hold this position then I do not see any obstacle to thinking that this significance is something to do with religion, which the Islamic sources agree on. 2. I also agree that these goddesses can be originated up in the North. Accounts of Ka'ba in Islamic historiographies agree on the account that there were multiple pagan gods worshipped from different places from their trade routes. Does having these gods originated in Petra make it a better alternative for the Islamic origins? 3-5. The change of qibla is a Qur'anic phenomenon, no arguments. What we discuss are its conditions and timing. Nevertheless, let me share my thoughts on the problems of your hypothesis: If not mistaken you claim that the relocation of Ka'ba happened between 683 and 962 during the time Ibn Zubayr occupied Mecca. So it was an opportunity for Umayyads who were from Petra (if Muhammad is from Petra then Quraysh and Umayyads are also from Petra) to keep Ka'ba some 1500 km South. I am sorry but Hajjaj was a governor not from the dynasty. So why Umayyad rule would such a favour for Hajjaj from Taif? What do you mean by saying Arabia was losing importance except for hajj during the occupancy of Ka'ba by Ibn Zubayr? Can you please give a chronology of who was where and gained what by this relocation? It is too much confusing. I mean, if Petra was the hometown for Muhammad and Umayyads and the ancestors of Abbasids (Banu Hisham, you know being Humayma the Abbasid hometown is after Ibn Abbas), who gains anything from relocating Ka'ba somewhere that South? Even Ibn Zubayr's father is a distant cousin of Muhammad and a member of Quraysh. So, please, someone, explain this! Who benefits from the relocation of Ka'ba? Why all these people give up on their Holy Land in Petra for good?

Francesco Zambon

5 days ago

Dear Ali Fikri Yavuz Before answering your questions, I ask you and those who read us their opinion on the "Qiblatain" mosques (of the two Qibla). You wrote: "I am sorry but Hajjaj was a governor not from the dynasty. So why Umayyad rule would such a favor for Hajjaj from Taif? => Hajjaj, a teacher of Arabic in Ta'if, joins Al Malik's guard and quickly becomes military commander, governor of Mecca, governor of Basra, governor of al-Jazīra and all territories east to Central Asia and India. He leads the repression of all the enemies (besides Ibn Zubayr the Alids and the Kharijites) of the caliphs Al Malik and Al Walid. He builds Wasit, a palace /town, and produces a revision of the Quran. Maybe he had some special merit! You wrote: "What do you mean by saying Arabia was losing importance except for hajj during the occupancy of Ka'ba by Ibn Zubayr?" => The Arabian peninsula lost importance from the end of the second Fitna. The Caliphs moved the capitals after Damascus to Racca, Baghdad, Samarra.... Nothing significant happens in Arabia for many centuries. You wrote: "Even Ibn Zubayr's father is a distant cousin of Muhammad and a member of Quraysh" => He was also the first male born in Medina to the companions of the Prophet, the son of Asma bint Abu Bakr then almost centennial and sister of Aisha. He was also the nephew of Safiyya bint Abd al-Muttalib, aunt of the Prophet. His death in the Haram, his beheading (his head was sent to Medina, Damascus and his last partisans in al-Jazīra), his body hung on a pole before being obtained by his mother who buries him under the house of Safiyya in Medina. What could think the many enemies of the Umayyads! You wrote: "Who benefits from the relocation of Ka'ba?" => Al Malik, his successors and Islam. Al Malik is the first caliph who shows clear signs of Islam (the Dome of the Rock, coinage, the imposition of the Arabic language ...) and with this move he avoids the pilgrimage in memory of Ibn Zubayr and with the Ka'aba in Mecca cuts off every Christian roots of Islam (see the Meccan chapters). Petra was a (ruined) Christian city with churches (at least one quite important) and a bishop. On Jabal Harun there was a monastery with a church almost

on top for pilgrims. It doesn't matter who moved the Black Stone of Petra to Mecca (I think it was Hajjaj) but the Umayyads have had 60 years to impose their religious and social policy. Only the Qarmatians remembered what happened. You wrote: "Why all these people give up on their Holy Land in Petra for good?" => Hajj from distant places was controlled and militarized by the Umayyads and then by the Abbasids. The local women's pilgrimage to Jabal Harum continued until 1980. With Daniel's paper and what has been discussed I think almost all the pieces of the mosaic are on the table. Each one can compose them as he prefers but making the fragments fit together in the best possible way.

[Ali Fikri Yavuz](#)

[3 days ago](#)

Dear Francesco Zambon Before answering then let me share my thoughts on Qiblatayn Mosques. I heard two of them, the second is in Zayla/Saylac. Both told to be constructed in 7th century. The existence of these mosques are proofs that the change of Ka'ba is not hidden. It is a part of the Islamic history and in all narratives (when I say narrative/narration, I do not mean tradition/hadith, I mean the general discourse. This is something people think I accept every traditional source/sentence as truth). While having two-qibla mosques and accepting that this change has happened, whereas having minor examples of these places interestingly not in the places around Petra but in Medina or Zayla is somehow interesting, isn't it? Why do not we have more of these mosques especially in the North, since it is supposedly the birthplace of Islam? You did not have to tell me the story of Hajjaj. You do not answer the problem. He had some merits, surely. But he had no conflict with Umayyads who were in power. He was loyal to the dynasty (you know he is introduced as kulayb/puppy in the Abbasid histories). After his death, he did not leave much of a financial inheritance. He built Wasit and died there, not in Taif, nor in Mecca. When he was in charge as a governor, Umayyads were too powerful (thanks to Hajjaj) and there was no power struggle between him and Umayyads. So, in this narrative, how you fit your claim that Hajjaj changed the qibla of Umayyads to somewhere he doesn't even have investments in? That's what I am asking. I pointed out to the loosing importance of Arabia you mentioned for a reason. You mentioned => "The Umayyads took advantage of the fact that the Hajj had been limited to the followers of Ibn Zubayr since 683. After that Arabia is losing more and more importance except for the Hajj. Furthermore, Al Malik manages to hide the siege of the first ka'aba and the torment of the corpse of Ibn Zubayr and also moves the Ka'aba where there were no traces of Ebionite Christianity (well present in the Suras of Mecca) but only of paganism of the Bedouins. (jāhiliyya)". I could not understand this piece. How do you know hajj were limited to Ibn Zubayr's followers? If until Umayyad rule all the story is about the surrounding of Petra, why anyone would think about the importance of Hijaz in the first place? In this narration there would be no importance of Arabia since forever. So, after the defeat of Ibn Zubayr, why they would move the Ka'ba? They became victorious and the second fitna was over after his death. From what they are escaping? Does it really make sense to you? I was making a point in my last paragraph. There is a genealogy in their, let's say Abbasid, history and it is consistent with their narration. If Abbasid's were to change every account in the history, can you explain why it is beneficial for them to keep the qibla alteration of Hajjaj (who also does not have any benefit out of this change)? You say their hometown was near Petra, so they witnessed everything done by Umayyads and made them the worse people (which they were quite right then because they even moved the qibla) in their historiographies and still maintained this change after being in charge. Why would Abbasid's, who hated Umayyads that much, keep their gigantic cover-up in history and aid this? Can you hear how inconsistent is this? So, as a

response, you claim that Islam is a different interpretation of Christianity developing in or around Petra and Umayyads wanted to come up with a brand-new interpretation and thus demolished Ka'ba and rebuilt a new religion faced towards Mecca today. But being Umayyads introduced as evils in Abbasid history writing and while this evilness has been witnessed by Abbasids, why this clear heresy (as it should be acknowledged by them) was preserved? Why Islam had to be distant from its Christian origins that Abbasids, in the beginning, was going by and then somehow brain-washed by Umayyads and then alternatively reversed the history in their favour but putting them also the evildoers in Islam? I still do not get who benefits from this relocation. In your narrative, Islam was still forming. So, how beneficial to cut its roots and reshape it somewhere else by making up another story of origin without being sure that everyone will go by? The narration only seems beneficial from today's perspective maybe, but this interpretation would be an anachronism. Taking this risk, while everyone is prostrating towards Petra cannot be explained. Simply demolishing Petra and rebuilding it and clearing its reminiscences of Ibn Zubayr and clearing the surrounding Christians would be a much easier solution than going through all the trouble. So, al-Malik, with all his powers you attribute, could easily rebuild Petra, which already was in ruins (I am not claiming to rebuild the artefacts but to build it anew). Islam already accepts that its origins are historically parallel with the figures and stories in most Christian narratives. And since the Muslim society and political centres are still remaining in the North and having their debates in the Northern provinces, why would changing the qibla benefit anyone? I mean if they were that eager to cut their origins with Christianity why they have not changed the Meccan chapters, while somehow tampering with every other issue? Also, why do Qarmatians have anything to do here? Do we have accounts of them before 850 in that area? Besides, what did they remember that all other people forget? You clearly do not understand how people act and how societies react. First, you accepted that there was pilgrimage, and it was for Petra showing some local women still visiting there. Then you also accepted that Muslim societies were in factions and in war with one another. Then you asserted that since in 683 the pilgrimage became limited to Ibn Zubayr's followers until his defeat in 692, it was easy for other people to forget once al-Malik/Hajjaj changed its location. Then, because pilgrimage was heavily controlled, they could easily prevent people from Petra and direct them 1000 miles South. Moreover, since Abbasids, who were from around Petra and made the Northern provinces as headquarters, while remembering everything, they also somehow benefited from this great plan of Umayyads whom they hated and altered all the history accordingly. And this was all fine for the believers of some religion that had its roots in Christianity around Petra, but scattered from Spain to China because they all wanted to be distant from their origins for some reason. I am sorry but I have never heard that kind of a fairy tale. This is beyond historical analysis.

Daniel Janosik

[5 days ago](#)

Recent replies to Ali Fikri Yavuz. Thank you Ali for continuing to explore these issues with us. Our ultimate goal is to understand what really happened in the early period of Islam. 1. in reference to Arnaud on pilgrimage: Any references to the hajj in the Qur'an could easily refer to Petra since there are plenty of historical references to pilgrimages to Petra. This is what I wrote in my paper: Petra was also a major center of worship of the pre-Islamic god Dushara (also known as Dusares or "the Lord's only-begotten"), who is thought to have been the son of Al-lat (also known as Manat as well as al-Uzza), and the precursor to al-illah, the God, or "Allah" (though other traditions name Al-lat as the consort of Allah). Dushara was worshipped through a cubic stone, sometimes referred to as the "Ka'ba." It is also interesting to note that one of the

ways to worship Dushara was to circumambulate around a stone cube seven times. In addition, the major elements of the Hajj are in Petra: There was a Ka'ba in Petra. There are two mountains in Petra called Saafa and Marwa. There is the hill of Ararat in Petra. There is a Jamarat in Petra. There are water sources in Petra. And there is evidence that when al-Zubayr, who was the governor of Petra, rebelled against Abd al-Malik he took the black stone with him when he fled from Petra and went to the Hejaz (and perhaps founded Mecca).

2. Ali to Stanley Wilkin In reference to believers altering their most significant place of worship: The reason that the Standard Islamic Narrative is suspect is that we only have the Abbasid account, which was written 200 years after the supposed beginning point (Muhammad and Mecca). It is much easier to claim that their version is the only version when the Umayyad accounts have been destroyed or altered. This is perhaps why the Abbasid account does not match up with the historical data that we are uncovering now.

3. In regard to the actual history of Islam's development in the 7th and 8th centuries, we are finding plenty of historical, archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence to show that the 9th and 10th century Abbasid accounts are not accurate, but rather they reveal a definite narrative that can no longer be corroborated with actual history.

4. In regard to the descriptions of Mecca having parallel valleys, fertile soil, and olive trees, the Qur'an may have general references to these things, but the hadith writers link all these attributes to Mecca. This is what I have in my paper: These inferences describe [Mecca] as being in a valley with a parallel valley (Ibn Hisham; Al Bukhari 2:645, 2:685, 3:891, 2:815, 2:820, 4:227), with a stream near the Ka'ba (Al Bukhari 2:685), with ruins outside the city, and a pillar of 'salt' nearby (Q. 37:133-138; referring to Lot's wife). The city is also surrounded by fields (Al Bukhari 9:337), has trees (Sahih al-Tirmidhi 1535), including olive trees (Q. 6:141; Q. 16; Q. 80), grass (al Bukhari 9:337), fruit (Al Bukhari 4:281), clay and loam (Al Tabari VI 1079 p.6). The city is also described as having mountains close enough so that they overlook the Ka'ba (Ibn Hisham; Al Bukhari 2:645, 2:685, 3:891, 2:815, 2:820, 4:227). However, as we shall see later, the actual city of Mecca is not in a valley, and has none of these horticultural assets listed above, mainly because it is in a desert where it is just too arid and dry for these things to survive. Notice the hadith references. These connections made 200 years later by the Abbasid hadith writers make up the present Standard Islamic Narrative.

5. In regard to the difficulty of the Abbasid version being the dominant version as far as Spain: Historically, there is quite a difference between the practices across the 9th and 10th century Muslim lands. However, the Abbasids situated in Baghdad held the pen that wrote the story that survived. You might find Dario Fernandez-Morera's book on The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise an interesting read. He uses primary source material to demonstrate that the actual history tells a very different story than the Standard Islamic Narrative.

6. Trebuchet damage is still found in archaeological digs in the Middle East. The real problem with Mecca is that archaeological digs are not allowed and 95% of any earlier historical buildings are now destroyed in the name of "progress" and to keep Muslims from "worshipping" buildings and graves. Perhaps if the ban on archaeological exploration were lifted we could determine these discrepancies better. As to the Umayyads not rebuilding Petra, there were earthquakes that finally took their toll on the city and it was deserted.

7. Finally, in regard to your dismissal of Islam developing around Petra 800 miles north of Mecca, most of your references to Abraham and Hagar, the Quraysh tribe, events in Medina, etc. are part of the 9th and 10th-century narratives written by the Abbasids who lived not in Mecca or

Medina but in Damascus and Baghdad. By the Abbasid period, Mecca had become the place of pilgrimage because the Abbasids had overcome the Umayyads who had used Petra and Jerusalem as their focal points of pilgrimage and worship. The real irony is that the Standard Islamic Narrative that you deny was actually developed and written down over 1,000 miles north of the Hejaz and 200 years too late. Why would you want to trust a narrative that does not coincide with what history, archaeology, numismatics, contemporary 7th, and 8th-century documents, and inscriptions record? If we want the more accurate account, then we should search out the earliest material, not something that was recorded 200 or more years later when politics guides the narrative.

8. In regard to David King's diatribe against Dan Gibson, it might have been better for King to have actually visited the mosque sites that he claims to interpret accurately. While he has visited only a couple of actual sites, Dan Gibson has visited them all, and he has recorded the qibla directions on site using satellite technology and not from books that had been written hundreds of years later by people who had not visited the sites either.

[Ali Fikri Yavuz](#)

[3 days ago](#)

Dear Daniel Janosik, This has become a long discussion. I will not be able to continue after these remarks to your points. So, I hope the best in your research. I will handle the last one first then will jump the top. 8. David King's whole argument is that satellite technology cannot be a point of reference in this discussion, since it was simply not available. As a respected historian of science, especially in Islamic astronomy, he argues that the methodology of the early Muslims of the orientation of their mosques is consistent and in parallel to the concept of qibla al-sahaba or qibla al-tabi'in, for the fact that they were using simpler but yet consistent methods. However, the method of finding the exact location of Petra as you suggest would be a much heavier task demonstrated in his article, which this task would be managed after 850 in Abbasid times. This is not hard to get. Gibson maybe visited more mosques but made a huge methodological error to begin with. 1. Was this a reply to me or Arnaud? Arnaud stated, "what evidence we have for pilgrimage in Quran?" questioning how I stated there were continuous pilgrimage. So, I understand that you also acknowledge pilgrimage, to Petra or Mecca is not the case here, since your arguments are based on the similarity between two sites. So this response should be for Arnaud instead of me, probably saying informally "look Arnaud, there were of course pilgrimage, the whole argument is on the pilgrimage and its later development would make no sense in this argumentation". However, in my discussion that Arnaud raised his doubts, I was making another point which you still disregard: the lack of inevitable chaos after the relocation of Ka'ba for the pilgrims all around the Muslim world when we accept a continuous practice of pilgrimage, which the Petran Ka'ba argument cannot disregard. I have read your remarks and Gibbons previously and found them interesting too. However, similarities in religions and religious sites do not make history directly. My point was that: You have claims about some inconsistencies of Ka'ba accounts in the Muslim reports, which are also from Abbasid era, like thaniyyatayn and wast al-masil, and some goods mentioned in the Qur'an that are not cultivated in Mecca. So, you point out that these inconsistencies should also back the story of Petran Ka'ba. What I say is that thaniyyatayn and wast al-masil does not necessitate an inconsistency that would portray the Mecca as a fertile valley. So, one of the main questions you raised could be based on nothing. I also added that the Qur'anic and Muslim narrative is based on the story of Hagar, which makes more sense with Mecca. Because you need an infertile valley with no water source except one well, zamzam. 2-3. This is where you are mistaken logically. The fact that

historiographies are from 200 years later does not conclude as they are only one narrative for every other one to accept. That is the great fallacy you cannot get over. You are right, they were pro Abbasid in many ways. However, historiographies could only be misleading in justifications of their bloodshed against Umayyads. These misleading points even can be identified with cross readings. This aspect is what we witness in almost every historiography in the world at some level (justifying the acts of governing body). However, the relocation of Mecca is so huge that cannot be explained with a simple biased history writing. 4. I have already stated that your references do not make a description of Mecca having parallel valleys, fertile soil, and olive trees. Your parallel valleys are thaniyyatayn, that is around Mecca, check Berthault's engraving. Your stream is batn al-masil and it does not mean that there were a stream. Q. 37:133-8 does not necessitate that the story about Lut and his people were nearby. It says you pass by them all the time, since it is on the trading route. About Bukhari 9:337, Idhkhir and Jalil are two types of plants can be found around Mecca too, they are grass of harsh environments. Check cymbopogon schoenanthus, idhkhir makki. Also how do you know that this story had passed in Mecca, and how do you conclude from this story that Mecca is "surrounded" by fields? About Tirmidhi 1535, you probably meant 3626, which is a gharib tradition (if you know the jargon). Even if so, the story says that they were in outside Mecca. It simply says one day they were in Mecca, then they went out to some of its suburbs and any tree or mountain facing him was saluting him. How do we infer that it was full of trees? Also, Mecca has many hills around that overlook the city and Ka'ba, check earlier photos from the end of 19th century until the massive construction projects. 5. So, you accept that the Spain account of Islam is quite different and this is not dictated by Abbasid governance like in the East, as you claim. So, if Andalusians had a different account, why there is no material about the Petran Ka'ba? They were also Umayyads, they were not affected by the Abbasid history writing, they also had historiographies that would contradict the Abbasid account. Your scenario cannot explain the parallelism about Mecca, because your version is based on a fictional understanding called Standard Islamic narrative, which you disregard at least for the Andalusian account, which also points the same location for Mecca. Can you cope with this huge gap in your thesis? 6. Trebuchet damage or any historical evidence can only be found if it is left there. Why would people keep damage in a place that constantly visited and renovated from time to time? I mean if the digs were allowed, it would be so hard to find a trace anyway. Why did you give such an evasive answer to the rebuilding of Petra? After the end of second fitna, there were more than 50 years before the Abbasid revolt. What earthquakes happened there, what evidences we have for these earthquakes (why also deliberately plural)? In your suggestion, there had to be 50 years of chaos between two sites for Ka'ba. 7. I used these references to show you a simple point: One of your base arguments is that "Islamic sources are more compatible with a Petran Ka'ba". I just demonstrated from the same sources that on the contrary, this so-called standard narration is much consistent with the Meccan Ka'ba, with its origins story, tribesmen, events, places etc. So, your argument that Islamic sources points out Petra for its origin is just wrong and invalid. Yes, indeed, I deny that there was a standard narrative of Islam for many accounts I laid already. The real irony behind the real irony you mention is your interpretation of the history, which was written 1000 miles north without justification for the acknowledgement of such a distant place by the people who has nothing to do with there (Mecca). To rephrase the irony: If Petra, Ka'ba, Umayyads, Ibn Zubayr and Abbasids were from the North, flourished there, struggled there and ultimately re-write history there, what is the benefit for any of them to make such a joke in the distant South? What I am trying to say is your "alternative narrative" is not consistent at all. It does not explain any

account in the Islamic history, at all. Then, about earlier accounts... There is also no earlier account of Petra being the Ka'ba of Islam. Whereas there are numerous accounts of Christian writers who do not associate "the dome of Abraham" in Khuzistan chronicles or "the stone and object of their worship" in Edifying Tales with Petra that they should have been aware of. Moreover many accounts in Michela Penn's study shows that the "Sons of Ishmael" are not related with Petra, rather somewhere in the deserts much Southern. None of these more than 10 early Christian accounts from 7th century about Islamic encounters mentions anything to do with Petra. Nor their later narratives mention a change in qibla from Petra to Mecca. By the way, how Abbasids would be that influential to effect also non-Muslim parties? If early Islam has a lot to do with Christianity at Petra, isn't it suspicious that we have no account of your tales in the Christian/Syriac-writing authors? Yet, in another instance, there is a correspondence between Umar II and Leo III, some 30 years before the Abbasid rule. In the response on Leo III, there is even a critique about Ka'ba and the worship of Muslims there. In this part while he is rejecting the idea of Abraham having this House (Ka'ba), he explicitly states that Abraham never dreamed of it in its diabolical arid desert. Leo III never mentions any change in Ka'ba, nor any other source later, while describing it in the distant desert. There are later correspondences with Muslims and Christians in Abbasid era too, none mention Petra, whatsoever. I was trying to make an effort to show the inconsistency within your thesis, but since you insist "actual" history from the 8th century, here you have it from 720, at latest. It is an external source from the time backing up the Byzantine Arab Chronicle of 741. Saying nothing about Petra but specifically stating the name of Ka'ba and depicting it as an arid desert and distant. So let me see your accounts about Petra? You only give examples from the sources you do not accept in principle. Do you have any evidence in return that Petra should be as you claim? Even Diodorus mentions a holy place of Arabs much Southern than Petra, even south of Nabatean territory. In your own criteria, you have no single report, or clue to tie Petra with the origins of Islam, period. Your arguments based solely on some misinterpreted so-called inconsistencies from the sources you do not trust, some qibla orientation tales that have been debunked, some linguistic data that is irrelevant (Qur'anic Arabic being originated from Nabatean Arabic does not make it Petran. They were roaming in the Arabian deserts for so long before Petra and it is fine!) and lack of archaeological evidence which prove no link to the case of Petra. Also the items of relevance in Petra (i.e. Ka'ba, Safa, Marwa etc.) does not prove that Muhammad and his story begun there. In short, what I am asking as you do, is "actual" historical evidence to justify your fiction called "the relocation of Ka'ba". So please provide the evidence of "the relocation". Regards.

[stanley wilkin](#)

[1 day ago](#)

Daniel Janosik I have long supported the role of the Abbasids in the construction of Islamic history. Again we are talking about genealogy and different tribes and individuals placing their claims. Islamic history concentrates on individuals, one way of establishing genealogy. So and so did this, means their tribe did, and glory and land can be ascribed to them. The Abbasids were not Arabs or Persians but a steppe people. They had no claim to power as they had no Arab roots. Just supposing, merely supposing, tribes with limited links to the Hijaz, like the Qays, formulated the myth of Mecca An area to which they had limited links, but otherwise might have been seen as neutral as the region had not been politically involved before Muhammad (sic). It was a good site to choose as opposite it was Africa/Egypt/and below Yemen from where many of the invaders came from.

[Ali Fikri Yavuz](#)

[15 hrs ago](#)

Dear Stanley Wilkin, That is beyond hilarious. Abbasids, who you think the writers of history were one of Turkic tribes (you meant that by steppe people I guess), who were known as mawali back then?.. Qays Aylan? They were mostly originated from Tihama and scattered many places or Arabia including Mecca and Medina. They were like a confederation of different tribes, who also have too many conflicts. Besides, they are not that much significant and not even really active in the Abbasid era. Surely, all from Abbasid history, just like their existence.

But apart from all this, how, I mean by which methodology do you suppose this? How do you first fanatically believe that Ka'ba must have been moved from North to South without any historical evidence, and then speculate any kind of fairy tale without no historical perspective, hoping to back your fanaticism? Should not we first establish the relocation of Ka'ba, before fabricating its journey?

[Naser Shams](#)

[1 day ago](#)

Daniel, Fascinating topic. I had corresponded with Dan Gibson about this some time ago. Of particular interest to me was the location of Paran and a potential harmonization between the Biblical and Islamic accounts if Petra could have been the birthplace of Islam. Reviewing your paper--albeit late to the party--these are a couple of questions that came to mind that didn't seem to be addressed in previous comments: (1) Petra was easily accessible to the Romans, Ghassanids, Persians, Abyssinians and Jews. Geographically it was well within their close environs. However, their conspicuous silence regarding a movement of a Prophet brewing in their own back yard could be problematic. Something like that wouldn't go unnoticed for long, nor unrecorded in their annals of history. Leaving the Muslim accounts aside, have you come across any non-Muslim historical references that make a direct link between Petra and Islam or Muhammad (pbuh)? (2) Is your thesis is to ultimately question the identity/existence of Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him? If it is proven that Mecca is not the birthplace of Islam, what implications do you see for its founder?

Regards, Naser

[Francesco Zambon](#)

[5 days ago](#)

@Daniel Janosik You wrote: "It is interesting that Petra was a place of worship with a Ka'ba, Safah and Marwah mountains, plenty of water for ablutions, the Jamaraat platform for stoning the devil, and at one time the black stone before al-Zubayr stole it and made his way south." => I agree with you and I will add circumambulation, importance of pilgrimage and direction of prayer but I could not find strong references. Do you have some reference? thanks

[Walid Aziz](#)

[4 days ago](#)

There was never a place called Mecca . The claim that Mecca was a flourishing trade center is never established. If Mecca was that flourishing city then why there is no archeological evidence to provide a proof. If we go to the south we find a place called Qaryat AL Fao which was

exacviated by Dr.Ansari. This city was a real trading hub because there you find graves and tombs and you can see the elborate way of water en sewage net work,granarys , coins ,tempels etc So why nothing was fond in Mecca ? Religion and fabrications goes hand in hand .

Peter von Sivers

16 days ago

Dear Professor Janosik, Your essay attracted my interest because I am working on a book on Islamic origins in which I am dealing with the same problems you analyze here. In my judgment, quite a few answers you are suggesting are solid and well-argued. Overall, I think you are moving in the right direction. There are, however, a number of suggestions on my part which you might perhaps find helpful. To begin with, I would not spend muc time on traditional Muslim theology. The world of faith is not the world of documentary history. Conversely, documentary history has nothing to say about faith, except -- as I would argue -- that it respects faith. Documentary history has its own problems, most importantly the difficulty that it is secular and therefore limited to the material part of reality, a limitation which its praticians should never forget, given that reality is indivisible and includes the spiritual. This said, I want to limit my suggestions to just a few documents you might still want to use to broaden your approach. (1) Mecca is mentioned for the first time in the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius which is commonly dated to 692. (2) The Quranic umm al-Qura, which you mention on p. 2, is a calque of Greek "metropolis." and refers to the title Emperor Trajan gave to the city of Petra in 106 CE. Similarly, by the way, the Quranic term "al-raqim" (18:9) goes back to an Aramaic word also meaning "Petra." Instead of relying on Dan Gibson and Peter Townsend, whom I would describe as unorthodox documentary historians, I would use Crone's article on Arabia Petraea [Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 68 (2005), 387-399] and several articles by Gerald Hawting on Mecca and its pilgrimage. Finally, I have a chapter in which I discuss Islamic origins in a book which is just being published by Walter de Gruyter in Berlin (The Study of Islamic Origins: New Perspectives and Contexts, ed. M. B. Mortensen, G. Dye, I. W. Oliver, and T. Tesei). Apologies, this answer got a bit longer than I intended. Best, Peter

Daniel Janosik

15 days ago

Peter, Thank you very much for these leads! This is the type of information that is helpful to my research. I will also look up your book, though I may need to get it through library loan until it is published in paper! (books from de Gruyter can be expensive). I see your Patterns of World History books online. That may be helpful as well. I will also look up the works you mentioned in regard to Gerald Hawting. I met him when I was doing my doctoral research on John of Damascus. I wish I knew more then so that I could have asked him some of the questions I have now!

Francesco Zambon

10 days ago

Prof von Sivers wrote that "Mecca is mentioned for the first time in the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius which is commonly dated to 692" I searched the archive.org copy of the apocalypse and did not find the word Mecca (and variants). Perhaps he gas referring to the fragment of Edessene Apocalypse that Hoyland "Seeing islam as others saw it ..." p 267, dated around 692 but, in Hoyland, Mecca is not mentioned and the dating is rather uncertain. Somebody has more accurate references? In "Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (600-900)"

edited by D.R.Thomas, B.Roggema, J-PMonferrer Sala pag. 173 I find “The king of the Greeks will set out against the Sons of Hagar their enemies will flee from them and gather in Babel and than proceed to the city of Makka (MKH). Is this an accurate translation? It was a city? The dates immediately following the end of the second fitna are critical because it is when Caliph Al Malik and his commander Hajjaj ibn Yussuf (born in Ta'if and last recognized author of a re-edition of the Koran) may have decided to move the Qibla from Petra in Mecca.

Peter von Sivers

10 days ago

Francesco, You're absolutely right, I cited from a faulty memory. It is the Edessene Apocalypse of ca. 692 (Abd al-Malik) where the word MKH appears. You can find a translation of the text in Michael Philip Penn, When Christians First Met Muslims (Univ. of California Press, 2015), 130-138, here 134. Penn gives you also a citation of the text edition. Best, Peter

Brent A Waterbury

12 days ago

Dr. Janosik, I'm certainly glad that you've researched the origins of Mohammedism over the past 20 yrs. I also wrote an ebook on this subject ("Narrating Islam as the Early Warrior Cult: the scholars speak",

https://www.academia.edu/1569450/Narrating_Islam_as_the_Early_Warrior_Cult_the_scholars_speak) that I feel is also very accurate. And yes you're right in history Mecca didn't exist as a "trade route" for many centuries after Mohammed. And Medina wouldn't be a place for Jews ("People of the Book") to find refuge in either as stated in the Koran. First off, it is 1200 miles from Alexandria in the middle of nowhere!! All the stories in the Koran were back-dated centuries later. Patricia Crone (UK) felt about 9th c. In other words, the raiders came and stole while centuries later the Koran writes about it as a current experience.

Daniel Janosik

12 days ago

Brent, Thank you very much for your link! I will certainly look at what you have written. Actually, I have already read through your account in the past! We need to stay in touch.

Brent A Waterbury

11 days ago

Daniel I'm so impressed with your remarks! HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Yosef Kerman

12 days ago

If the thesis of this paper is true, this is an earth-shattering claim that casts doubt on the foundations of what we consider true about Islam. It therefore needs strong evidence to prove it. The fact that Mecca is undocumented for the first 2 Islamic centuries is an important question that needs explanation, but that alone does not conclusively prove that the town did not exist. Moreover, this paper does not provide much evidence that Muhammad's hometown was Petra, other than that some geographic features which the Quran and Islamic tradition use to describe Mecca seem to fit Petra better. If this paper's thesis is correct, it also needs to be explained how the Muslims of later centuries, including those who lived in the former Nabatean kingdom and the Hijaz, could have been convinced that their prophet, whom they knew as coming from Petra,

was actually from a newly-built town in the Hijaz, or what motive they had to falsify Muhammad's birthplace.

Daniel Janosik

[12 days ago](#)

Yosef, These are good questions and thoughts. Indeed, if Mecca did not exist in the time of Muhammad, then Islam would be devastated. In regard to Petra, as well as Northern Arabia (including the Ghassanid and Lakhmid Arabs) there are many exciting discoveries coming forth that present a very different scenario for the origins of Islam. One of the best places to get the cutting edge, blow-by-blow account of these ideas is to go to Pfanderfilms on You Tube and watch their latest interviews and discussions. The bottom line is that there is good evidence to now say that the Abbasids had a lot more to do with the origin of Islam and the man Muhammad than we realize. For one thing, look at where most of the hadith were written and by whom they were collected. These were not written in the Hejaz, but rather far to the north in Iraq and Persia and beyond. Also, if the Qur'anic Arabic is not from the Hejaz, then why should we believe that it was first written down there? There is much more to the story.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

There is definitely much more to the story and it has been recognized for a long time (in the non-Islamic world) that the traditional Islamic narrative about the early history of Islam needs to be taken with several grains of salt. It is an acknowledged fact that we do not have any Islamic material that can be securely dated to the very beginning of Islam, if such material ever existed. But to make a huge claim like this needs more evidence than you have provided in this paper.

Arnaud Fournet

[12 days ago](#)

Why is it a * huge * claim ?

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

Because it overturns everything that is assumed about the origins of Islam. If Mecca did not exist in Muhammad's time, we have to go back and rewrite all of the first few centuries of Islamic history, which I assume is exactly what Janosik is trying to do.

stanley wilkin

[12 days ago](#)

Yosef, Same as with every other religion, perhaps? These ancient religions expressed reality in symbolic terms, squashing events to reflect only the religion, and with Christianity and Islam placing every event as attached to a single prophet (I suggest that a considerable number created Islam). Their history tends to be assumed from other scriptures. The religions are narrative led, not historically led. Stories that reflect other stories, providing ideological trajectories and proof.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

It is also worth mentioning that the Quran mentions a place called Bakkah, which the Islamic tradition understands to be identical to Mecca, in 3:96.

Daniel Janosik

[12 days ago](#)

Bakka and Mecca are not the same words... Here are some notes that I did not include in my paper concerning Psalm 84 in the Old Testament. This could have been the reference point to Bakka in the Qur'an: Could Psalm 84 of the Old Testament contain a reference to Mecca or Makkah? • "Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion." • Pools of water and autumn rains do not describe Mecca! • Surah 3:96-7: Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah – blessed and a guidance for the worlds. In it are clear signs [such as] the standing place of Abraham. And whoever enters it shall be safe. And [due] to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House – for whoever is able to find thereto a way. • "Bakkah" does not necessarily refer to Mecca, especially with references to Abraham • Surah 48:24. And it is He who withheld their hands from you and your hands from them within the valley of Makkah after He caused you to overcome them. And ever is Allah of what you do, Seeing. • The "valley of Makkah" better refers to Petra, which had parallel valleys.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

Bakkah and Mecca are definitely not the same word, but I think it is worth mentioning that the Islamic tradition claims that 3:96 is also a reference to Mecca. I don't think Psalm 84's Bakha (בַּכָּה) has anything to do with the Quran's Bakkah (بَكَّةَ); the words are vowelized differently. I assume you put as little stock in Jewish Biblical exegesis as you put in Muslim Quranic exegesis, but the word Bakha is variously interpreted as: weeping, a type of tree, a spring of water, being lost, or being closed in. It may be a metaphor and not an actual valley.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

I am not sure what you mean that the "Meccan Arabic script" is not used for writing the Quran. There is no such thing as Meccan Arabic script and Hijazi Arabic of the 7th century is barely attested for us to be able to compare it to the language of the Quran and conclude that it is the same or is different. We know that the Arabic script is based on Nabatean, not on the South Arabian script or the "Thamudic" scripts used to write the Ancient North Arabian dialects. The history of the Arabic script is not relevant to the question of where Muhammad lived. It is difficult to conclude from the consonantal text of the Quran whether it was originally pronounced with or without case endings, and whichever way we conclude, we don't know enough about 7th-century Hijazi Arabic to know if it is or isn't similar to it. The fact that the Arabic of the Quran is substantially different from South Arabian doesn't prove the Quran doesn't originate in the Hijaz since South Arabian was used in Yemen, not the Hijaz.

Daniel Janosik

[12 days ago](#)

The point is that the Arabic used to write the Qur'an is from the area of Petra, not Mecca. If the Nabataeans developed the script, and the script has unique characteristics that are found only in their area during the 7th century, then this gives strength to the argument that the Qur'an developed much farther north than Mecca. If the scenario I mentioned concerning al-Zubayr is

correct, then this would explain how the Nabataean script was introduced in the Hejaz -- many years after the traditional death of Muhammad.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

I don't understand how the origins of the Arabic script prove anything about the history of the Quran. Does the fact that Greek script is ultimately based on the Phoenician alphabet prove that Homer was actually from Phoenicia?

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

The Saudi government's destruction of historical sites in Mecca and refusal to allow archaeological excavations there in the 20th and 21st centuries does not prove anything about the history of the city in the 7th century. At most, if the thesis that Mecca did not exist then has been satisfactorily proven, then you can accuse the Saudi government of covering up history.

Daniel Janosik

[12 days ago](#)

Actually, I believe the destruction of the historical buildings and artifacts occurred in order to cover up the fact that these buildings, like the birthplace of Muhammad and the home of Khadijah, were not from the 6th or 7th century at all! If they were not constructed until the 8th century or later, then that would strongly disprove any notion that Mecca existed in the time of Muhammad. If there is no trace that anyone lived there in the 7th century then there certainly would not be any historical artifacts from that time period. And apparently, that is what we find - nothing. Have you ever wondered why the Saudi government does not want any archaeologists to work in Mecca and Medina? It may be because they don't want to expose their coverup to the world.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

I understand your point, but since this paper discusses the question of whether the city now known as Mecca existed in the 7th century, the current actions of the Saudi government are irrelevant. The motivation for the Saudis' policy can only be speculated on. Maybe there is a completely different explanation that has nothing to do with the question of whether the Islamic narrative is true?

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

If all early Islamic mosques indeed faced Petra, we need to explain why the Muslims suddenly decided to reorient their mosques toward Mecca and how they did so without leaving any trace that Petra was the original qiblah. On the contrary, the Islamic tradition claims that Jerusalem was the original qiblah until Muhammad changed it to Mecca. Dan Gibson's book is hardly an unproblematic source and doesn't serve as much of a proof in and of itself.

Daniel Janosik

[12 days ago](#)

Yosef, Petra, and Jerusalem, were apparently the worship centers for the Umayyads. Through a number of very interesting circumstances involving Al-Zubayr, the former governor of Petra

who rebelled against the Umayyads and wanted to be the caliph, the direction of prayer turned toward the Hejaz. As the Abbasids came into power they preferred the new worship site set up by al-Zubayr in the Hejaz and, as they did in so many other areas, they re-wrote the history and back-dated the stories and developed the Standard Islamic Narrative. In other words, they erased a lot of what happened during the time of the Umayyads and wrote their own "history" into the past. After all, where did most of the writers of the Hadith and the Sira, and the Tafsir, and the Tarikh come from?

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

I assume that by Al-Zubayr you mean 'Abdallah ibn Al-Zubayr, who according to the Islamic narrative was governor of Mecca. If you are right that the "Mecca" referred to in the Quran and early Islamic sources was Petra, then you can say he was governor of Petra, but to say that this episode which happened with the governor of Petra was the catalyst for Islam moving its holiest site from Petra to the Hijaz is circular. I think this argument that the Abbasids rewrote history for political purposes should be elaborated on in this paper, because your thesis raises many questions that this paper doesn't answer.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

The fact that the Quran mostly discusses nations who lived north of the Hijaz doesn't prove that the Quran itself originated there. It may simply be that those areas had a richer history, particularly of monotheistic prophets whose stories are relevant for Muhammad's message. Also, the assertions that 'Ad refers to Uz in Edom and that Thamud refers to the Nabateans need some proof. It is not enough to make such a claim as if it is an undisputed fact.

stanley wilkin

[12 days ago](#)

Lindstedt looked at the places mentioned as destroyed in surah 11 and pours doubt on their existence, and even greater doubt on their destruction: 38 Early Muslims, Pre-Islamic Arabia, and

“Pagans” https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/307521/Lindstedt_Early_Muslims_Pre-Islamic_Arabia_and_Pagans_.pdf?sequence=1 This includes 'Ad and Thamud.

Yosef Kerman

[12 days ago](#)

The Islamic traditions that put many prophets' burial sites in Mecca do not prove anything, as they may all be fabricated. Since the Muslims wanted to boost the status of their holy city, they claimed it had been holy since time immemorial and that pre-Islamic prophets lived there. If, as you claim, the Islamic tradition of the 9th century is unreliable about events of the 7th century, certainly anything it says about the events of more than a millennium earlier should be completely discounted.

Arnaud Fournet

[16 days ago](#)

I think your paper is a quite nice and relevant description of the unsolvable issues raised by the received Islamic Narrative, which obviously bumps into a number of rock-hard adverse facts, and for that matter, cannot be true.

Daniel Janosik

15 days ago

Thank you for your comments. There are many discrepancies between the 9th and 10th century narratives and the information we are discovering from the 6th and 7th centuries. This is why the historical critique is so important, especially if we want to find out what really happened!

Arnaud Fournet

15 days ago

yes, it's quite clear that the Received Islamic Narrative is not only significantly posterior to but also severely at odds with historical data of Muhammad dating.

From discussion on Mecca

Naser Shams

3 days ago

Daniel, Fascinating topic. I had corresponded with Dan Gibson about this some time ago. Of particular interest to me was the location of Paran and a potential harmonization between the Biblical and Islamic accounts if Petra could have been the birthplace of Islam. Reviewing your paper--albeit late to the party--these are a couple of questions that came to mind that didn't seem to be addressed in previous comments: (1) Petra was easily accessible to the Romans, Ghassanids, Persians, Abyssinians and Jews. Geographically it was well within their close environs. However, their conspicuous silence regarding a movement of a Prophet brewing in their own back yard could be problematic. Something like that wouldn't go unnoticed for long, nor unrecorded in their annals of history. Leaving the Muslim accounts aside, have you come across any non-Muslim historical references that make a direct link between Petra and Islam or Muhammad (pbuh)? (2) Is your thesis is to ultimately question the identity/existence of Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him? If it is proven that Mecca is not the birthplace of Islam, what implications do you see for its founder? Regards, Naser

Daniel Janosik

1 day ago

Naser, Thanks for joining the discussion. As far as my motivation for the article and for my research, I want to know the truth. I want to know what really happened. Also, as a Christian, I believe that Jesus Christ is God himself and the Second Person of the Trinity. I have found that the modern version of Islam is diametrically opposite of Christianity (Trinity vs. singularity, Christ as God Himself vs. Jesus as only a prophet, Bible being inspired Word of God vs. the Bible being corrupted, etc.). In the early stages of the Intermediate Monotheism that became Islam, there were fewer stark differences. However, if Islam's Standard Islamic Narrative is true, then Christianity must be false. On the other hand, if the orthodox view of Christianity is true, then Islam is false. Of course, as some in this discussion believe, both religious beliefs may be false. I just want to know the truth. Do those of you reading through this discussion want the same thing?

Naser Shams

1 day ago

Daniel, I appreciate your more fundamental endeavor to pursue Truth, but I'm trying to understand the implications of the specific path you've chosen in achieving that objective; i.e., your paper and its thesis. So, if we were to stay on that topic, do you have any direct evidence linking the historical accounts of non-Muslim groups who referenced a new prophetic movement in Petra (i.e., my point #1). In addition, my point #2 seeks clarity in your deductive line of thinking regarding the implications of Petra being the true birthplace of Islam and its qiblah: Does this mean that your opinion is that Muhammad, peace & blessings of Allah be upon him, did not exist (as some have insinuated in their comments) or that he is a fictitious character made up, or is there any other logical conclusion you're aiming for? I'm basically trying to figure out what implications regarding Muhammad (pbuh) would be derived should you successfully prove Petra as being the birthplace of Islam and its qiblah. The absence of this understanding makes it difficult for me to be a more valuable contributor to your paper. As for the more universal--and mutually admired--pursuit of Truth you seek, the validity of that approach could be a conversation in and of itself. For example, one way to assess whether Christ (pbuh) is God, would be to simply judge him against the criteria which he himself held regarding God. That can easily be found in the Jewish scriptures. Should a discrepancy be found between the two, then reconciliation should be explored (e.g., linguistic context, historical plausibility, the philology of the applicable expressions, etc.). This would obviously be a different conversation than the one at hand. Regards, Naser

Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook

5 hrs ago

At the risk of being caught up and swept away in the torrent of comments this discussion has received, it could perhaps be useful to separate the academic from the emotive aspects of both the paper and the comments. While I am neither an archaeologist nor a historian, the paper and comments have provided some fascinating evidence and discussion which I cannot comment on due to being outside my area of expertise. However, this, I feel, has been detracted by a polemical hermeneutics that has too often overstepped academic caution and, as a result, weakens possible and reasonable conclusions that can be drawn from the available evidence. The paper would read much stronger if the emotive language, which often leads to pejorative statements, was reined in. This is perhaps even more evident in the comments. One of the stated intentions motivating both the paper and the comments is phrased in a sort of Modus Tollens argument or a disjunctive syllogism, though I do not feel that there is enough nuance in its current form to be valid. If there is to be discussion of the "modern version of Islam," "the early stages of the Intermediate Monotheism that became Islam," and the "Islam's Standard Islamic Narrative," then these need to be defined and compared to their equivalents within Christianity. I feel greater nuance and caution is needed when discussing a topic such as this for it to have the academic weight it deserves.

Naser Shams and Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook,

Abu Bakr makes a good point in his suggestion that I should stick with the topics that I have provided evidence for rather than bring up other issues that I have not had a chance to develop at this time. My remit in my paper on Mecca was to demonstrate that even though Mecca plays a central role in the traditional development of Islam, especially in the calling of Muhammad, the revelation of the Qur'an, and the formation of Islam itself, it is therefore very curious that Mecca was not mentioned in external literature until well after Muhammad would have died, and it is not listed on a map of the Middle East until 900 AD. In addition, there have not been any archaeological artifacts found in Mecca before 800 AD. Furthermore, the direction of prayer in the earliest mosques does not seem to point to Mecca until 727 AD. Indeed, if Mecca was the "mother of all cities," (Q. 6:92), and in existence even in the time of Abraham (Q. 21:51-71), then surely there would be all kinds of references before the 8th century AD. Where is the evidence? The Muslim scholar, Jamal Badawi, was fond of saying the "absence of evidence does not mean that evidence is absent," since there is a possibility it will present itself in the future. However, in the case of Mecca, the more evidence that is uncovered in the Middle East concerning the origins of Islam, the less likely Mecca's existence in the 7th century becomes. In addition, the evidence we do have points to a more northern origin of Islam where the people of 'Ad, Thamud, and Midian lived. The evidence from the coins, inscriptions, archaeological artifacts, and documents from the 7th century provide a very different scenario, which becomes more and more interesting as more evidence is collected. However, the evidence does not support the existence of Mecca in the 7th century and so my question remains, "if Mecca did not exist in the time of Muhammad (7th century), then who is Muhammad and where did he live?" I have much to say about the origin of Muhammad, the Qur'an, and Islam itself, especially in regard to the evidence that is coming forth, but I shall wait until I have a chance to put up additional papers on these topics so that I can properly source my conclusions. There will be more to come in the future. For now, let's concentrate on Mecca and the evidence that I have presented in my paper.

December 12

[Daniel Janosik](#)

[2 days ago](#)

Naser Shams and Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook, Abu Bakr makes a good point in his suggestion that I should stick with the topics that I have provided evidence for rather than bring up other issues that I have not had a chance to develop at this time. My remit in my paper on Mecca was to demonstrate that even though Mecca plays a central role in the traditional development of Islam, especially in the calling of Muhammad, the revelation of the Qur'an, and the formation of Islam itself, it is therefore very curious that Mecca was not mentioned in external literature until well after Muhammad would have died, and it is not listed on a map of the Middle East until 900 AD. In addition, there have not been any archaeological artifacts found in Mecca before 800 AD. Furthermore, the direction of prayer in the earliest mosques does not seem to point to Mecca until 727 AD. Indeed, if Mecca was the "mother of all cities," (Q. 6:92), and in existence even in the time of Abraham (Q. 21:51-71), then surely there would be all kinds of references before the 8th century AD. Where is the evidence? The Muslim scholar, Jamal Badawi, was fond of saying the "absence of evidence does not mean that evidence is absent," since there is a possibility it will present itself in the future. However, in the case of Mecca, the more evidence that is

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Like 3



[Naser Shams](#)

[1 day ago](#)

Daniel, Thanks for that explanation. I find myself very interested in your research; the historical void regarding Mecca has been eye-opening to say the least. Prior to my discussions with Dan Gibson, it never occurred to me that such conspicuous silence would exist for a pilgrimage that was so foundational to Arab national identity prior to the coming of Islam. But I see that same conspicuous silence regarding Petra being the birthplace of Islam and its original qiblah. Although credibility and bias may be charges levelled against the Abbasids' account of history, that shouldn't obviate the expected accounts recorded by the Romans, Copts, Persians, Andalusian Umayyads, etc. This I see as problematic, but it does not explain the silence regarding Mecca. That silence may not be unreasonable given that the Arabs were not a people who documented much at all, nor would their harsh conditions allow for it. It would take something as monumental as a Quran to move them in that direction. I have come across a few references in pre-Islamic poetry that indicate a pilgrimage connection with Mecca, but it has yet to be explored to my satisfaction. In short, we might be looking for something we shouldn't expect to find. Reporting history is generally characteristic of developed nations and civilizations, and it's typically performed when a need is foreseen--oftentimes this latter need is visualized far too late when it's difficult to piece the puzzle together and reliable witnesses are no longer available. Secondly, in regards to the implications a Petran qiblah would have upon the Holy Prophet (pbuh), it's good to establish this beforehand as it helps gauge whether the conversation's heading in the right direction. As a Muslim, I would have no objection towards these pursuits; in fact, I welcome them. I similarly welcome the religious intentions you previously declared as I see this as characteristic Christian generosity--you want for others what you want for yourself. Frankly, I would not mind a reason strong enough to relieve me from praying 5 times a day, fasting 30 days a year, etc., and I would love to embrace the idea that someone else has paid the penalty of my sins. The caveat, of course, is that it needs to hold up to the standards of evidence and reason, much like the criteria you uphold in this paper. Until then, I willingly remain in this spiritual bondage that I see as the vehicle to liberation. I do not see

religion as the product of blind faith; nay rather, I see it as the fruit of sight. So, although it is not the appropriate topic for this paper in particular, please do keep me informed of your future research on Islam, the Quran and Muhammad (pbuh). Thanks again, Naser