Chapter One

The Rise of Islam

Gerald R. Hawting

Introduction

Expressions such as 'the rise of Islam', 'the emergence of Islam', and 'the origins of Islam' are ambiguous and understood differently by different people. Commonly taken today simply as the name of a religion, historically Islam refers to something much bigger than what is generally understood now by the word religion. In pre-modern times, and in many places still, Islam implies a way of life involving such things as political, social, and economic norms and behaviour. An Islamic society may include groups that follow religions other than Islam. In that sense, Islam is a culture deeply affected by the religion of Islam but also by things which to modern eyes may appear to have little to do with religion, or to have sources that are not Islamic. To determine a precise point of origin for such a complex of ideas, practices and institutions is probably not possible. To decide a time at which its 'rise' or 'emergence' was over and when it existed in a state of maturity will involve a number of subjective judgements. Here the rise of Islam is envisaged as a process covering two to three hundred years, from approximately AD 600 to 900.

Islam has its own, not monolithic but broadly consistent, accounts of its origins and early history. Much reported in the Muslim traditional accounts is accepted as fact also by those who have tried to develop new understandings of what the emergence of Islam involved and how it occurred. It is the overall framework and different ways of looking at things that distinguish the more traditional versions of the rise of Islam from newer, academic ones. Beginning with a broadly traditional perspective should simplify the subsequent presentation of the ways in which academic scholarship has suggested new interpretations and approaches.

A Tradition-based Account

Muslims have presented Islam as the continuation of the true monotheist religion taught by Abraham (Ibrāhīm) and all the prophets sent by God to mankind before and after him. Abraham brought his religion to the Arabs of Arabia when he built the Ka'ba (literally 'cube'), the sanctuary of God, at Mecca, and established the rites of worship there. Abraham left his son Ishmael (Ismā'īl) in Mecca, and Ishmael became the ancestor of the main branch of the Arab people. For some time the Arabs were faithful to Abraham's religion but following a pattern common throughout human

history, they gradually fell away from the true path and lapsed into polytheism and idolatry. God then sent Muḥammad, the final prophet, to call them to Islam, which is identical with the religion of Abraham, and to make it supreme throughout the world. God's reasons for choosing Muḥammad as His prophet, and for sending him at the time and place He did, are inscrutable.[1]

Traditionally, the life of the prophet Muḥammad and the few decades after his death in AD 632 are seen as the time when Islam was established in a substantial sense as a religion, a state, and a society. For many, expressions like 'the rise of Islam' refer almost exclusively to the activities of the Prophet and his immediate successors. That is the time before Islam came out of Arabia.

Born in Mecca in western Arabia (the Ḥijāz) at a time given only imprecisely in the traditional biographies but generally taken to be about AD 570, Muḥammad, according to tradition, began to receive revelations from God when he was aged about forty. With some exceptions, his Meccan fellow townsmen rejected his teachings and his claims to be a prophet. At a date equivalent to AD 622 he and some of his Meccan followers left his native town in order to settle in the oasis town of Yathrib (later called Medina) about three hundred miles to the north. That event, known as the Hijra, is presented as the turning point in his fortunes. Subsequently (according to tradition seventeen years later), the year in which it occurred was chosen as the first of a new, Islamic era (the Hijri era, abbreviated AH).[2]

In Yathrib Muhammad was successful in establishing a religious and political community and in overcoming various enemies. Prominent among them were the large Jewish community of Yathrib and the still pagan leaders of Mecca. The Jews, accused of conspiring with his pagan enemies, were removed from the scene by deportations and then executions. Two years before his death he was able to lead a band of his followers to Mecca and occupy the town without much bloodshed. Its sanctuary, the Ka'ba, was cleansed of idolatry and again dedicated to the worship of the one true God (Allāh) for which Abraham had established it.

God's revelations came to Muḥammad on many occasions throughout his prophetic career. The angel Gabriel (Jibrīl), brought the very words of God himself. In addition, God guided the Prophet's own words and behaviour, which his companions remembered and transmitted to later generations. Thus God made His will known in two ways, through His words (later to be collected in the Qur'ān) and through the Prophet's own words and deeds, collectively known as his Sunna. By the time of Muḥammad's death, the fundamental elements of Muslim belief and religious life (the so-called 'five pillars of Islam') had been fixed in their normative forms, the Islamic revelation was complete (although not yet committed to writing), and a state and society ruled by the Prophet from Medina and based on Islam established.[3]

Following his death, according to this view, there occurred a consolidation and extension of what he had achieved. From AD 632 until 661 the political and religious community founded by Muḥammad in Arabia was ruled by a succession of four caliphs, often called the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'.[4] For many this was the Golden Age of Islam. God's words were collected from those who had memorized them or written some of them down, and the unchangeable text of the Qur'ān as we know it today was fixed in writing.[5] The institution of the caliphate was founded in order to provide succession to the Prophet's religious and political leadership (although prophecy had ended with his death). The first four caliphs, all of whom had been close companions of the Prophet, were in the best position to rule according to the

norms and rules that God had established through him. The Muslim state was expanded under them, first over most of Arabia and then outside the confines of the peninsula in Syria, Iraq, Egypt and western Iran.[6]

Towards the end of this period of consolidation and expansion, however, there occurred what tradition calls the Fitna (656–61). Following the murder of the third caliph, 'Uthmān, by discontented warriors who had taken part in the conquest of Egypt, divisions among leading Muslims led to a civil war and the splitting of the community. There were two main rivals. 'Alī, Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, was recognized by many as caliph in 656 in succession to the murdered 'Uthmān. He was opposed by Mu'āwiya, governor of Syria and a relative of the murdered caliph. Mu'āwiya claimed the right of vengeance against the murderers of his kinsman but 'Alī, many of whose supporters thought that the killing of 'Uthmān had been legitimate, would not hand them over.[7]

In the confused fighting and negotiations that resulted, a substantial number of those who had supported 'Alī abandoned him and opposed both him and Mu'āwiya. This group became known as the Khārijites. They accused 'Alī of having sinned by negotiating with Mu'āwiya, and they proclaimed that only God – not men – could decide the issues that divided the community.

Over the next century or so various groups that the tradition portrays as descended from the original Khārijites were involved in fighting against the caliphs, and they adopted some distinctive religious and political doctrines. Generally, they regarded only themselves as true Muslims; others were not really Muslims but unbelievers or at best hypocrites. The true Muslims had the duty of dissociating themselves from the others and – at least according to some of the extreme Khārijites – fighting and killing them. Eventually, Khārijism became a marginal movement within Islam but in the period of the rise of Islam it was very important. Not only were Khārijis frequently involved in revolts, their ideas stimulated religious and theological thought, and Khārijism provided a vehicle for the expression of discontent by groups within Islam who felt oppressed and downtrodden.[8]

With the death of 'Alī, apparently at the hands of a Khārijite, in 661 the caliphate fell into the hands of Mu'āwiya. He was the first of a series of caliphs who were all members of the same family, the Umayyads (661–750), who ruled from Syria. In the traditional accounts the Umayyads, with few exceptions, were worldly rulers who cared little for Islam. Islamic ideals were maintained mainly by the pious who transmitted the text of the Qur'ān and the details of the Prophet's Sunna but were generally excluded from positions of power or influence and often persecuted by the rulers.

From time to time opposition to the Umayyads flared up and was usually expressed in religious terms. As well as from the Khārijites, opposition often came from groups stemming from those who had supported 'Alī in his conflict with Mu'āwiya. They came to be classified generally as Shī'ites. They held that the only legitimate rulers were members of the family of the Prophet himself, and that usually meant someone who was descended from 'Alī.

The Umayyads are, nevertheless, given credit for continuing the policy of military expansion of the state. By the middle of the second/eighth century, the territory under at least the nominal control of the caliphate extended from Central Asia and north east India to Morocco and southern and central Spain.[9]

In 750 the Umayyads were overthrown by a religiously inspired military revolt, and the caliphate passed into the hands of the 'Abbāsids, who claimed descent from an

uncle of the Prophet. They moved the centre of power to Iraq, where they began to build a new capital at Baghdad in 762. In the traditional view, although the 'Abbāsids were by no means perfect Muslims, their rule did represent something of a reversion to the ideals of the period that had preceded the Umayyads and a new and decisive period of consolidation began.[10] It was under the 'Abbāsids that the learning and tradition of Islam, especially the Prophet's Sunna and the interpretation of the Qur'ān, thus far transmitted mainly by word of mouth, came to be written down.

It is from around the end of the second/eighth century onwards that the earliest texts of the Muslim tradition that have come down to us, in various fields of learning, date. The earliest extant lives of the Prophet (*sīra*), the collections of reports about his words and deeds (the *ḥadīths*) that are the basis for knowledge of his Sunna, the works on the science and practice of law (*fiqh*), the commentaries on the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*), the books of history (*ta'rīkh*), the rules of Arabic grammar (*naḥw*), and the literature of other forms of Muslim learning, all date – in the form in which we have them today – from around AD 800 at the earliest. Much of the material such works contain was taken from earlier sources, either written, but now lost, or oral. Our knowledge of those earlier sources, however, depends entirely on the literature that begins to flow freely from about AD 800. Only the Qur'ān is an exception since that, according to tradition, had been fixed in writing under the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

At the same time, the religious scholars (the *'ulamā'*) who were the transmitters and interpreters of the knowledge and learning that came to be committed to writing, began to be recognized and respected in a way that had been denied them in the period of the Umayyad caliphs. They became the focus of Muslim religious life. Some of them were granted salaried positions by the caliphs, for instance as religious judges (*qāḍīs*), while others preferred to keep their independence and refused to serve the state.

The fundamental theory of Islamic law (the Sharī'a), that it is God's law known from the twin sources of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's Sunna, was given detailed written expression in the work of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 206/821). Then, during the third/ninth century and later, Sunnī Islam developed the institutions and texts that have remained characteristic ever since. Following the work of al-Shāfi'ī, which underlined the importance of knowledge of the Prophet's Sunna, attempts were made to distinguish authentic *ḥadīths* from the many dubious or false ones that had found their way into circulation. It was only from the authentic ones that the true Sunna could be known. Over time, the authority of six collections of *ḥadīths* regarded as authentic by their collectors was established among Sunnīs and their status became comparable to that of the Qur'ān itself.

At the same time minor differences of legal theory and religious practice among the Sunnīs were accommodated by the slow development of schools (*madhhabs*), in the sense of followers of a master. Groups of Sunnī legal scholars came to see themselves as followers of the doctrines of one among a number of important and influential master scholars active in the development of ideas about the law in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. The scholar (such as al-Shāfi'ī) seen as the master of the school came to be referred to as the Imam. Originally there were several such *madhhabs*, but eventually only four of them survived and extended toleration to one another. The idea developed that each individual Sunnī Muslim should hold allegiance to one of these four *madhhabs* and maintain it unless circumstances made it impossible.

At the heart of the Sunnī form of Islam is the idea that authority in matters of religious practice and faith belongs in the hands of the religious scholars (the *'ulamā'*). It is they who transmit and interpret the sacred and authoritative texts (the Qur'an and its interpretation, the *ḥadiths* and the law books). The caliph, on the other hand, was granted only a limited sphere of authority by the scholars and in some ways could be seen as merely a symbolic representative of the unity of the Sunnī community. In words attributed to the Prophet himself, 'the heirs of the Prophet are the religious scholars'. In other words, in the Sunnī tradition it is the religious scholars who guarantee the link between the Islamic community at any particular time and that of the Prophet.[11]

The pattern of authority in the Shī'ite tradition of Islam ended by appearing similar to that of the Sunnīs but in fundamentals is rather different.[12] Early Shī'ism is very diverse in character and has in common little more than opposition to the caliphate of the Umayyads and a belief that true authority belonged to a member of the Prophet's family. For most Shi'ite groups the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī, had a central role. He had been appointed, they believed, by the Prophet himself as his successor, but he had been cheated of his rights when the institution of the caliphate was invented on the Prophet's death. For most Shī'ites there were no Rightly Guided Caliphs but 'Alī. He had eventually succeeded to the caliphate in 656 (for the Sunnīs he is counted as the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph) only to suffer martyrdom and have the rights of his family usurped by the Umayyads in 661.

As the Prophet's son-in-law, 'Alī was the father of the only surviving line of male descendants of the Prophet (all of Muḥammad's sons are believed to have predeceased him). He came to be seen as the first of a line of Imams who, for their followers, were the only legitimate authorities in Islam. Neither the caliphs, given limited recognition by the Sunnīs, nor the Sunnī scholars, had true knowledge or authority, according to the followers of these Imams. The descendants of 'Alī, on the other hand, had a special relationship with God and possessed knowledge not available to ordinary mortals. For the Shī'ites true authority belonged to only one individual – the descendant of 'Alī who was recognized as the Imam of a particular generation – rather than in the scholars generally, as the Sunnī tradition held.

These Shī'ite Imams were rarely able to exercise their authority since they were continually watched by the (from their point of view) illegitimate wielders of worldly power, the caliphs. The history of the Imams, according to the Shī'ite understanding, is one of suffering and martyrdom. The defining event occurred in 61/680 when 'Alī's younger son Ḥusayn was persuaded to attempt to seize power from the Umayyad caliph Yazīd (680–3). The attempt ended in disaster. Ḥusayn and many members of his family were massacred at Karbalā' in Iraq and his head sent to Yazīd in Damascus where it was put on display. In the Shī'ite tradition this shedding of Ḥusayn's blood came to be given a significance not unlike the shedding of that of Jesus for Christians. The day when it happened, the tenth day of the first month of the Muslim year ('Āshūrā' day), became in time the major annual festival of Shi'ite Islam, marked by ceremonies and processions in its communities throughout the world.

However, Shī'ite groups from early on differed among themselves as to which particular descendant of the Prophet was the legitimate Imam in a particular generation, as well as on other issues such as the nature, extent and sources of the Imam's special characteristics. Following the 'Abbāsid seizure of the caliphate in 750 the

attention and hopes of most Shī'ites turned to a line of Imams descended from the Prophet through 'Alī and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima. Their supporters clashed on several occasions with the 'Abbāsids, whose own seizure of the caliphate had been justified by a claimed kinship with the Prophet. Attempted revolts, however, issued in bloodshed and repression.

Around 873 a descendant of 'Alī in the twelfth generation who was recognized as Imam by one group of Shī'ites disappeared. According to his supporters, he had retired from the world to enter a state of occultation. He left behind no descendant, and his followers taught that the line of Imams descended from 'Alī had come to an end. The last Imam will be absent in occultation until his return just before the end of the world when he will come back as the Mahdī and establish justice and righteousness in the world in preparation for the Last Day.

The idea of the messianic return of an Imam had been an ingredient of Islamic thought from a very early period, but the significant feature of it that emerged now was that his return was not to be expected imminently but at some remote time in the future. Meanwhile, his authority passed into the hands of religious scholars who functioned for their Shī'ite followers in much the same way as did theirs for the Sunnīs. The chief difference was that in the Sunnī tradition the '*ulamā*' claimed authority in their own right, whereas for the Shī'ites they represented the authority of the absent Imam and they will return it to him when he comes back as the Mahdī.

This particular branch of Shī'ism is often referred to as 'Twelver (or, in Arabic, *Ithnā'asharī*) Shī'ism' because it accepts a series of twelve imams beginning with 'Alī. Eventually it became the dominant and most numerous branch of Shi'ism. Traditional Twelver Shī'īs, naturally, understand the development of their tradition, which they see as the true form of Islam, as ordained by God from the start. Their Muslim opponents, equally naturally, see it as resulting from historical accidents. In particular they hold that the Twelfth Imam either died or never existed, and that it was simply impossible to extend the line of Imams further. The followers of these Imams, therefore, had to revise their doctrines and ideas about authority.

Just as in the Sunnī tradition, so too in Twelver Shī'ism, the elaboration of the idea that authority lay now in the hands of the religious scholars was accompanied by the emergence of a body of religious texts that came to be seen as authoritative. Following the occultation of the twelfth Imam, specifically Shī'ite collections of *ḥadīth*s, commentaries on the Qur'ān, works of theology (*kalām*), books of law (*fiqh*), and other texts specific to the Twelver tradition came to be written and have remained definitive of that tradition until today. Eventually, therefore, for the biggest group within Shī'ism, authority was seen to reside in a textual tradition transmitted and interpreted by a body of learned religious scholars, just as it was in Sunnism.[13]

For traditional Sunnīs and Shī'is the establishment of their respective systems of authority – which constitute for us the essence of the two traditions – was merely the consolidation and expression in writing of institutions and ideas established in the time of the Prophet. Although the authoritative texts (apart from the Qur'ān) were not written until later, the ideas in them and even many of their words represented a tradition faithfully transmitted from the time of the Prophet onwards. Even the ending of the line of Imams at a particular point was something predetermined by God. Unworthy and usurping rulers may have oppressed the believers and corrupted the religion from time to time, but Islam as it existed in the

third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries was the continuation of the Islam of the Prophet. That view emphasizes the continuity between the period before 656, when the centre of Islam lay in the Hijaz, and the later period, when the Hijaz, although it remained the holy land, was in most respects an unimportant backwater of the world of Islam.

Academic Reinterpretations

Since academic scholarship on Islam became firmly established during the second half of the nineteenth century, as a result of the work of scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher and Theodore Nöldeke, a number of different approaches and ideas, some more influential than others, have emerged. It is not possible here to do justice to all of them. Scholars, naturally, debate and dispute with one another and it would be misleading to suggest that there is one, dominant or even widely accepted understanding of the rise of Islam among them. Some have attempted to divide contemporary scholarship into 'radicals' and 'traditionalists', but that is inevitably a simplification of a more complex situation.

The following presents some important ways in which, in the author's view, academic scholarship has suggested new understandings of, or approaches to, the rise of Islam. Their cumulative effect is to encourage us to see it as an extended and complicated process, and to question what it means if we refer to the religion of the Arabs in, say, 650 as Islam.[14]

Arabia and the Rise of Islam

The traditional accounts present Islam as achieving a quite highly developed form within narrow geographical and temporal limits. It is presented as existing in a substantial way already by the death of the Prophet in 632, and then carried out of Arabia by the Arab Muslim conquests.[15] An alternative advocated by several academic scholars is to envisage it as the eventual outcome of a process occupying two centuries or more and involving the Middle East as a whole, not merely western Arabia.

Important in proposing such an approach was the German orientalist Carl Heinrich Becker. In several articles written in the first decades of the twentieth century he advocated the idea that Islam took shape in the lands outside Arabia following their conquest by the Arabs. Urging that Islam is more than just a religion, he argued that it was the outcome of the religious, political, social and economic conditions that developed in the Middle East following the conquests. The conquests, according to Becker and others, were not motivated by religion but by economic needs and desires. They established the political dominance of what must have been a relatively small number of Arab warriors over a larger and diverse non-Arab (and non-Muslim) population. Many of those conquered peoples were heirs to cultures and religious traditions of some antiquity, and it was the interaction between them and their military conquerors that led – eventually – to the formation of a new and distinctive Islamic religion and culture embracing both the Arabs and the subject peoples.

The new culture was dominated by Islam in the religious sphere and Arabic in the linguistic one. Over time the majority of the population became Muslims in religion

and Arabs in language (although there remained important groups of non-Arabic speaking Muslims and non-Muslim Arabic speakers). In the evolution of this Islamic culture it was not only the conquered peoples whose religious and linguistic identity changed – so too did that of the Arab conquerors. Whatever the nature of the religion and language that the Arab conquerors brought with them, the Islam and the Arabic of the Islamic world around AD 900 is not a simple, straightforward, continuation of those brought out of Arabia in the seventh century. For Becker, the contribution of the non-Arab peoples was the more important.

The salient feature of Becker's approach is that it presents Islam as developing slowly outside Arabia. His primarily economic explanation of the Arab conquests is certainly questionable and difficult to square with the evidence of early non-Muslim sources, but his argument that the complex religious and cultural system of Islam cannot be understood simply as the product of Arabia before the Arab conquests has been influential.[16]

One difference between those who, with the tradition, identify the rise of Islam largely with the career of Muhammad, and those who, like Becker, see it as a process occupying a century and more, is the way in which they understand Islam. For the former, it seems to designate a basically straightforward, primarily religious, set of beliefs and practices. For many of them, Islam may even be understood as an ideal, distinct from the individuals and societies that have embodied it. It is made known through revelation and it is possible to ascertain what represents true Islam as distinct from corrupted or mistaken forms of it.

For a historian, on the other hand, a particular religion is not an abstract concept but something known from its diverse historical manifestations. Islam is the totality of what Muslims of different sorts have made it. It may be tempting to identify a particular idea or practice as 'not real Islam' or 'debased Islam', but when trying to understand it the academic observer has to take into account all of the ways in which Muslims have understood and practised it. Such things are usually, for historians, known from written and other evidence.

When Islam came out of Arabia, even according to Muslim tradition, there were no Muslim texts (even the Qur'ān was fixed in writing after the wars of conquest had begun), no mosques as we understand them today, and a relatively small group of people who may have regarded themselves as Muslims. There was virtually none of – or at least any way in which we might know about – the rich, diverse and contested complex of law, theology, ritual practices, ideas of authority, art and architecture, and other things that Islam means for us today. Even if we are willing to accept what tradition tells us, therefore, it is difficult for a historian to grasp what 'Islam' may have meant at that time. And on many important details (see below) academic scholarship has proposed different understandings of what tradition tells us.

Continuity and Change

Traditional accounts give the impression that the coming of Islam led to an almost complete break with the past in those places where it established itself. This impression results from several causes.

The central role of revelation in those accounts means that ultimately the coming of Islam did not depend on historical circumstances. In spite of the fact that the

revelation occurred in a specific historical situation, the time and the place were of God's choosing and not determined by human activity. Furthermore, the primary purpose of the revelation was to rescue the Arabs from the condition of ignorance and barbarism (*jāhiliyya*) in which they were immersed.

According to Muslim tradition, the Jāhiliyya was the time in Arabia before the coming of Islam, and Islam is the complete antithesis of it. How historically accurate is the traditional image of the Jāhiliyya is certainly open to debate. It may be envisaged as an originally a-historical, disembodied concept of a society where the true religion of Islam was unknown. That abstract concept might then have been given a specific historical location by the early Muslim scholars who wished to stress the origins of Islam in a pagan Arab environment. In any case, the Jāhiliyya is so important to Islam's understanding of itself and its origins that it seems unlikely that the traditional accounts of it are a mere assortment of historical memories. The point of immediate relevance here is that in the short time between the beginning of the revelations to Muḥammad and the triumph of Islam throughout Arabia following his death, according to tradition, the Jāhiliyya was ended.

Similarly, outside Arabia the coming of Islam seems, in the traditional accounts, to bring down a rather opaque curtain on the past. Although it did not happen immediately, the majority of the subject peoples became Muslims and many of them became Arabic speakers. In the traditional perspective that is understood as the adoption by them of the religion and language of their conquerors. Even where some elements of pre-Islamic identity survived – as with the Persians, who became Muslims but continued to use their pre-Islamic language and drew on their pre-Islamic culture in various ways – the coming of Islam is seen as a decisive turning point, if not such a complete break with what went before.

This impression of discontinuity is not really created by explicit statements to that effect in the Muslim accounts of the rise and spread of Islam. Rather, it is that those accounts, which represent virtually the only detailed and continuous narratives of events in the lands conquered by the Arabs, focus entirely on the concerns of the Arab Muslims and say hardly anything about the non-Arab and non-Muslim peoples who were conquered. It is as if, with the coming of Islam and the Arabs, they virtually disappeared. From other evidence – including that of the literature that the conquered peoples continued to produce in the Islamic period – we know that that was not the case.

Academic historians are generally more aware of the importance of continuities. That major elements of classical Islamic culture – notably its philosophical and scientific learning – were continuations in Arabic of pre Islamic Hellenistic, Persian, Indian and other traditions is obvious. It has also been demonstrated, especially on the evidence of papyrus documents that have survived from early Islamic Egypt, that the Arabs, when they established their control over the conquered lands, did not immediately change everything but continued to use many of the administrative institutions and personnel that they took over.

It was not until towards the end of the first Islamic century, in the 690s AD, that significant changes become visible. Muslim tradition and other evidence tell us that it was then that a distinctive Islamic coinage was introduced and languages like Greek and Persian began to give way to Arabic in the records of the administration. It has been persuasively argued that even things like the system of clientage, which facilitated the assimilation of the conquered people and the conquerors in the first century

or so after the conquest, were adaptations by the Arabs of institutions found in the societies they conquered.[17]

Equally important in underlining the continuities between the pre-Islamic and Islamic Middle East and Mediterranean is the work of scholars outside the field of Islamic Studies. Those involved in the study of the period between the age of classical antiquity and that of classical Islam have defined it as the period of late antiquity. Naturally it is impossible to assign precise dates to it, but whereas it was once regarded as merely a period of, to use Edward Gibbon's phrase, 'decline and fall', modern scholarship has emphasized its innovative and dynamic characteristics. Two important themes are the triumph of monotheistic forms of religion and thought (notably, but not merely, Christianity) and the continuing importance and evolution of Hellenistic culture. Scholars, of course, do not always agree on the importance or the nature of the changes taking place but there is considerable agreement that in many ways Islam was heir to the world of late antiquity and the outcome of the religious, cultural, social and other changes of the period.[18]

Becker too supported the scholarly emphasis on continuities between the pre-Islamic and Islamic Middle East and Mediterranean worlds. In his view the conquered non-Arabs did not just accept a religious and linguistic identity that was brought ready formed to them. They played a part, probably the more important part, in creating their new identity. In doing so, naturally, they drew on much – ideas, vocabulary, practices, institutions, and many other things – which had nothing to do with Arabia.

Referring to the significant cultural unification of the Mediterranean world and the Middle East brought about by the conquests of Alexander the Great, Becker had remarked, 'Strange as it may seem, without Alexander the Great there would have been no Islamic civilisation.' In that perspective the Islamic caliphate broke down the ancient but essentially artificial political division of an area that already shared much culturally before the Arab conquests.[19]

Academic Reinterpretation of Some Fundamental Elements of Tradition

As well as suggesting broad perspectives from which the rise of Islam may be viewed in a different light to that of the traditional accounts, academic research has raised questions about some of the fundamental details of those accounts.

As we have seen, the Sunna of the Prophet, his divinely guided way of life and his decisions on questions put to him by his followers, known from thousands of *ḥadīth*s, is one of the two main sources of Islamic law according to the traditional view. Each authentic *ḥadīth*, according to the theory, has been transmitted from the time of the Prophet over several generations by a chain (the *isnād*) of scholars, each link in the chain being known by name. The traditional scholars recognized that not all of the *ḥadīth*s could be genuine – for one thing, many of them contradict others – but they developed a science based on analysis of *isnād*s that, in their view, enabled them to distinguish between the genuine and the fabricated ones.

In the late nineteenth century, Goldziher's study of the *ḥadīth*s challenged that view. Goldziher, it should be stressed, did not set out to prove a negative. His study of the *ḥadīth*s was not merely concerned with the question of their authenticity but with an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. One of his conclusions, however, was that many of them had been put into circulation in generations later than that of

the Prophet, as individuals and groups within the developing Muslim community sought to capture his authority for their own diverse opinions and arguments. Goldziher left room for some authentic *ḥadiths* but his work implicitly puts the burden of proof on those who wish to use them as evidence for the time of the Prophet himself.[20]

Subsequently in the 1940s and 1950s, Joseph Schacht built upon Goldziher's work in this area to argue that the very idea that the Prophet's Sunna was, along with the Qur'ān, the main source of authority in Muslim law only began to emerge in the second/eighth century and only became widely accepted as a result of the advocacy of the idea by al Shāfiʿī (d. 206/821). Schacht understood the vast majority of the *ḥadiths* as having been formulated and put into circulation in response to the growing strength of that idea. In the earliest period of Islam, he argued, law, when it had not simply been taken over from the societies conquered by the Arabs, was created in an ad hoc manner, largely by the caliphs and their governors. The *isnāds*, in Schacht's view were no guarantee of authenticity since an *isnād* could be made up just as easily as the text of a *ḥadith*. Neither Schacht nor Goldziher implied a fraudulent or cynical intention on the part of those who developed the theory of the Sunna or formulated the *ḥadiths*; they would simply have assumed that they were acting in accord with the intentions of the Prophet.[21]

The ideas of Goldziher and Schacht have been very influential. Some academic scholars have, indeed, found fault with some of Schacht's arguments and his interpretation of the evidence. Harald Motzki, for example, has argued that our relatively late texts nevertheless allow us to trace back into the first/seventh century certain *ḥadiths* and ideas that Schacht thought were late. On the other hand, it has been argued by Norman Calder that some books ascribed to important legal scholars of the late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries only acquired the form in which we know them today some two or three generations later than their supposed authors. If that is so, it could indicate that Schacht's dating of the acceptance of the idea of the authority of the Prophet as decisive in matters of law was too early. At any rate, most scholars now recognize the difficulty of dating *ḥadiths* and those who think that it is possible to argue for a genuine continuity in the transmission of the Prophet's life and Sunna, now have to argue their case.[22]

The traditional accounts of how and when the text of the Qur'ān was formed have also been questioned by several academics. Until about the 1970s scholars generally accepted the traditional Muslim accounts, although many of them pointed out the inconsistencies and contradictions in them. In recent years different approaches to the study of the Qur'ān have been developed that propose different understandings of what was involved. John Wansbrough, starting from the Qur'ān's literary form and style and the development of the tradition of its interpretation, insisted that it was necessary not merely to focus on the compilation of the text as we know it but also on when and how that text came to be accepted as authoritative in Islam. He argued that we should understand both the formation of the text and the acceptance of its authority as an integral part of the gradual emergence of Islam itself. According to that view, the Qur'ān is not something there 'from the start', but develops along with all the other ideas, practices and institutions that go to form Islam as we know it from the third/ninth century on.[23]

The evidence of inscriptions and early Qur'ānic manuscripts has also come to be studied more and used by some scholars to support the view that the establishment of

the fixed text of the Qur'ān was a slower process than the tradition allows for. In particular a manuscript apparently dating from around the beginning of the second/eighth century and found by German archaeologists in the great mosque of Sanaa in the Yemen in the 1970s, has been interpreted as supporting the view that the text had still not been fixed in its canonical form at the time the manuscript was written. However, that and other manuscripts found in Sanaa have been difficult for scholars to access, and until they are more widely available (and probably even then) their significance will be hard to assess with certainty.[24]

In the sphere of the development of ideas of religious and political authority, the fundamental question at issue between the different 'sects' of Islam, Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds have argued that the Sunnī form is a relatively late and secondary development in the history of early Islam. In the Sunnī tradition, as we have seen, religious authority belongs to the religious scholars and not to the caliphs. Crone and Hinds argued that this was a radical departure from early Islamic concepts, according to which the caliph, as God's deputy on earth, was the sole authority over all aspects of the life of the Muslims. The Sunnī idea, according to that view, was not firmly established until after the middle of the third/ninth century following what was essentially a conflict about authority between the caliphs and the scholars (the *miḥna*).[25]

If Crone and Hinds are right, it follows that the concept of authority in Islam that is characteristic of the Shī'ite tradition – that it was contained in one person regarded as having a special relationship with God – is earlier than the Sunnī concept. Nevertheless, the forms of Shī'ism known in classical Islam and surviving into the modern world may also be understood as relatively late developments from an earlier and more fluid situation. Twelver Shī'ism can be understood as the creation, out of earlier types of Shī'ism, of a religiously moderate and politically quietist form of the tradition in response to the growing dominance of Sunnī Islam in the first century of the 'Abbāsid caliphate. In this sense Twelver Shī'ism was an accommodation to the religious and political realities of the second half of the third/ninth century. The ending of the line of Imams, removing the need for struggle to establish his rule, and the transfer of authority from the Imam to the scholars, can, from this point of view, be seen as the crucial development in this direction.

Not all Shī'is, though, were prepared to follow this path, and others, such as the Ismā'īlis, have also survived into modern times. Their different positions on who the rightful Imam is or was, on whether he is present in the world or in occultation, and on textual and human sources of authority other than the Imam, may also be understood as adaptations to historical circumstances during the formative period of Islam and later.

These are just some of the areas where research has called into question the understanding of Islam as something substantially developed in Arabia and brought out from there by the Arab conquerors. Evidently, not all of the views just summarized are accepted or strongly held by all academic scholars in the field. Those views involve interpretations of the available evidence, and different scholars may read the same evidence in different ways. Nevertheless, the arguments and suggested reinterpretations of tradition, of which the above are only a selection, encourage us to see the two centuries or so following the Arab conquests of the seventh century AD as the decisive period for the rise of Islam. It was during that period that the elaborate complex of contested ideas, institutions and practices that we know today took shape.

In contrast, we find it hard to know what Islam might have been before the developments that followed the Arab conquests.

Evidence and Sources

Many academic scholars today are wary of committing themselves on the nature of Islam before the conquests, and especially on the life of the Prophet. The primary reason for that is an enhanced understanding that our sources for the Arabian period of Islam are more than just accounts of historical facts.

Muslim literary tradition (chronicles, biographies of the Prophet and others, commentaries on the Qur'ān, and many other types of traditional Muslim literature) is our only source for the rise of Islam in Arabia. As we have noted, in the form in which they are available to us, the works of Muslim tradition date from not earlier than about the end of the second Islamic century, about AD 800. Certainly they draw on and extensively cite, abbreviate or summarize, oral and written material from the first two centuries, but scholars are divided on how far it is possible to reconstruct the earlier development of the tradition on the basis of later texts.

For many, the work of Goldziher and Schacht on the *ḥadīth*s and the legal traditions called into question too the value of the biographical tradition on the Prophet and the reports about the early history of Islam following his death. By the 1970s considerable scepticism had developed among scholars about the value of the traditional accounts as evidence for the events which they reported. This led to different approaches to those sources that still continue today.

One approach is to give up any attempt to reconstruct the early history of Islam in Arabia in the detailed and connected way in which the Muslim tradition itself does. Instead, the tradition is used to throw light on the way later Muslims, those responsible for collecting and composing the accounts which have come down to us, viewed the early history of their religion and culture. The relationship between their views and 'what really happened', it is argued, is not really knowable. Instead, the biographies of the Prophet and the accounts of the early history of Islam are analysed for what they can tell us about the aims and intentions, the needs and wishes, of those who compiled them. For example, it has been argued that much of the material in the traditional lives of the Prophet reflects the need of the developing Muslim community, in the face of polemic from its monotheist opponents, to develop an image of Muḥammad in accordance with then prevailing ideas about prophethood. The aim would be to justify the view of Muḥammad as a prophet sent to the Arabs.[26]

Another avenue is to seek to exploit as much as possible the evidence of sources other than the Muslim literary tradition – archaeological and similar materials, and the literary traditions of the peoples who had come under Arab rule. In their book *Hagarism* Michael Cook and Patricia Crone attempted to show what the rise of Islam might look like if based almost entirely on such materials. More usually scholars have tried to relate the archaeological and non-Muslim literary evidence to that of the Muslim literature and to use all the different sources in a critical manner. One effect of this approach has been to remind us just how much evidence there is outside the Muslim literary sources even though that evidence only allows us a fragmented and partial view of what was taking place. The evidence of sources other than the Muslim tradition has its own problems and it too does not really help us for the Arabian period of Islam. It

does suggest, however, that from the start the various peoples who came under Arab rule regarded their conquerors as following a form of monotheism of their own.[27]

Thirdly, some scholars have sought to get back beyond the Muslim texts that are available to us and to recover from them earlier texts and documents. In this way, it is hoped, the tradition can be pushed back into the earlier centuries.[28]

Anyone working on the rise of Islam in a serious way has to accept that the main body of evidence has real problems as a source for what occurred in Arabia in the time of the Prophet and the first four caliphs. In a nutshell, the evidence as we have it comes from a later stage in the development of Islam and it reflects an internal perspective on events of fundamental importance for later Muslims. The danger is that the accounts of the earlier stages of the rise of Islam may represent a reading back of the ideas and understandings of Muslims living at the time when the new religion and culture was stabilizing.

There are various ways in which our lack of texts dating from before the end of the second century AH/eighth century AD may be explained: the transition from a predominantly oral culture to a written one, the loss of texts as a result of fire, political turmoil and other causes, the relative lack of cheap and easily available writing materials, etc. The fact that from about AD 800 onwards we see the production of a vast mass of traditional literature that has survived and been transmitted until today can suggest a different perspective, however. It may be taken to indicate that the formative period of Islam was coming to its end, that the religion and culture that had been developing in the Middle East following the Arab conquests a hundred and fifty years before was now showing signs of fruition. It too may be used to support the understanding of the rise of Islam as a gradual growth that reached maturity in the third/ninth century.

The Relationship of Islam to Pre-Islamic Middle Eastern Monotheism

The question remains of how we may envisage the start of the process that eventually led to the formation of Islam in a fully developed sense. Academic scholarship has generally agreed that in its origins Islam owes much to other forms of Middle Eastern monotheism, and that has often been expressed as Muḥammad being influenced by, or borrowing from, other versions of monotheism.

Most scholars have worked with the framework provided by Islam's own historical tradition. That presents the Prophet, before his move to Yathrib (Medina) in AD 622, as living in the overwhelmingly pagan setting of the Jāhiliyya. The people of Mecca, like the Arab tribes in the vicinity, worshipped many gods. The only thing that moderated that was a lingering memory of Abraham's building of the Ka'ba and his introduction of true monotheism to the Arabs. Under the influence of Abraham's religion, a small group of people tried to remain loyal to a form of monotheism distinct both from Judaism and Christianity and from the polytheism and idolatry of their contemporaries. These people are known in the tradition as Ḥanīfs.

The majority of the Arabs, on the other hand, are portrayed as having corrupted the religion of Abraham and turning it into a gross and primitive paganism, but even there a few remnants of Abrahamic religion survived. Most notably the Ka'ba, although it had become a centre of idolatry, was still regarded as more important than the many other shrines and holy places that were scattered throughout Arabia,

and the god with which it was especially associated, Allāh, was honoured above the many other gods.

Most western scholars, unable to accept the historical reality of Mecca's association with Abraham, have nevertheless seen much of what tradition tells us about the society in which Muḥammad lived as based on facts. They have accepted the historical reality of the Ḥanīfs, for example, and interpreted them as evidence that the traditional paganism of the Arabs was already beginning to weaken in the period before Muḥammad. Similarly the predominance of Allāh and the Ka'ba over the other gods and sanctuaries has been seen as evidence that the old paganism was in decline and inklings of monotheism appearing.

In that light Muḥammad and his preaching have been portrayed as just the most prominent (and most successful) element in the emergence out of Arab polytheism of a monotheist form of religion. It was the fact that the society as a whole was already moving in that direction that facilitated his success. Some scholars thought that the rise of monotheism in Arabia could be explained in part by natural evolutionary trends – what they understood as the normal human progress from lower to higher forms of religion. More generally, though, it has been believed that the weakening of the traditional religion must have come about because of the impact of monotheist ideas on the pagan environment of the Jāhiliyya.[29]

The theory is that Muḥammad and many of his fellow Arabs, living in a still mainly pagan and polytheistic environment, came into contact with ideas, stories, practices and institutions coming from Judaism, Christianity or other related forms of monotheism. Islam was the outcome – a form of monotheism adapted to the needs and wishes of the Arabs. Much academic scholarship, therefore, has been devoted to the question of the sources and nature of those monotheistic ideas, and how they came to penetrate the remote area of inner Arabia where Muḥammad lived.

As for how those ideas reached Muḥammad and the people among whom he lived, various possibilities have been suggested. Many scholars, building upon the reports in the traditional lives of the Prophet that portray the Meccans as heavily involved in trade, have theorized that Mecca was on an international trade route and that religious and other ideas were carried along with trade goods. That theory has been weakened considerably by some of the arguments expounded by Patricia Crone in her *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*.[30]

More academic energy has been expended on the issue of the nature and sources of the ideas. Since the German Jewish scholar Abraham Geiger published in 1832 his book on what he saw as Muḥammad's borrowings from Judaism there have been many studies arguing that Muslim ideas, practices and institutions are adaptations and reworkings of Jewish or Christian originals. The scholars concerned have often disagreed on whether Judaism or Christianity was the more important as a source for Islam, and during the twentieth century, as materials like the Dead Sea Scrolls from previously little known Jewish and Christian sects have become available, the hunt for the sources of Islam has widened.[31]

Muslim tradition itself contains material that might suggest that Islam was at one time much closer to Judaism than it subsequently became. It tells us that following his move from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina) in 622 Muḥammad and his followers fasted on the same day as the Jews (Yom Kippur, or 'Āshūrā' as it is called in the tradition) and prayed in the same direction, that is, towards Jerusalem. Only later in the Medinan period of his life, we are told, did these key practices change: Ramaḍān

replaced 'Āshūrā' as the fasting period for Islam, and the direction of prayer (*qibla*) was turned from Jerusalem towards Mecca.

Such developments have been read by many scholars, beginning with C. Snouck Hurgronje and A. J. Wensinck, as symbolic of a break with Judaism. According to that reading, the Prophet did not understand his religion as a new one until he found himself rejected and scorned by the Jews. He then began to make Islam more distinctive by developing it as a specifically Arab form of monotheism. The most important feature of the transformation would be the elaboration of the idea that the pagan Ka'ba at Mecca had originally been founded by Abraham for the worship of the true God.

That has been the most influential of academic theories about the origins of Islam. It stresses the importance of the relationship between the Jews of Medina and the Prophet and of its deterioration. Some scholars have questioned the Qur'ānic evidence that Snouck Hurgronje used to support the theory, and recently there seems to have been some reversion to the older view, against which the Dutch scholar was protesting, that the Arabs already had a significant knowledge of the stories about Abraham before the time of Muḥammad.[32]

Whether it was Christianity, Judaism or some other form of Middle Eastern monotheism that is understood as decisive for the appearance of Islam, the process involved has usually been expressed in terms of 'influences' or 'borrowings'. However it happened, the Prophet and his Arab contemporaries are seen as coming under the influence of monotheist ideas and consciously adopting and adapting some of what came to them in order to elaborate a new and distinctive vision. In that view, a predominantly polytheist pagan society produced and adopted its own form of monotheism, largely as the result of the opening up of that society to monotheist influences.

There is, however, an alternative approach. The history of monotheism, like that of other religious traditions, has been marked by the emergence out of it of new sects resulting from disputes and debates among monotheists themselves. Some of those sects have then developed into distinctive and independent religions within the wider tradition. External influences and events in the political sphere, of course, are very relevant to how far an emerging sect will develop and spread.

Instead of seeing the religion that was to become Islam as the product of a pagan Arab society stimulated by ideas and materials from monotheist sources, then, it may be that we should be thinking of the growth of a sect within another form of monotheism. In other words, the origins of Islam could be understood as occurring in a way similar to that in which we understand the emergence of Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism out of ancient Judaism, or the modern forms of Catholicism and Protestantism out of mediaeval European Christianity. In that perspective Islam may be understood in its origins as a critique of existing monotheist ideas and practices as much as an attack on Arab paganism.[33]

One obvious difficulty, however, is that this approach seems to require an environment in which there was already a significant monotheist population diverse enough to generate internal arguments and debates. It is not impossible to imagine that such an environment existed in the Hijaz at the beginning of the seventh century AD, but that requires going considerably beyond the traditional evidence. Apart from the Jewish community of Yathrib, the tradition tells us nothing about the existence of communities of orthodox or sectarian Jews or Christians in the

environment in which Muḥammad is reported to have operated. Those scholars who have suggested that there was in the Hijaz, for example, a community descended from that which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, or a group of Samaritans, have done so entirely on the basis of what they see has significant parallels between features of Islam and those of the sect in question. The problem with ascribing to the Jews of Yathrib the status of the matrix of Islam is that tradition tells us that Islam began in Mecca.

One could, of course, take a more radical attitude to Muslim tradition about the very beginnings of Islam. It would be possible to read it, for example, as condensing into a limited chronological frame, and transposing onto an Arabian background, developments that took longer and occurred in a different geographical setting. The idea suggested by the tradition itself, that Islam arose from a conflict within some form of Judaism is not unlikely, and its presentation of itself as a form of monotheism especially associated with the Arabs and Arabia is so marked that it can be understood as a conscious and deliberate proclamation of a distinct identity, intended to mark it off from other forms of monotheism.

Conclusion

The academic study of the rise of Islam is an area of intense and often stimulating debate, marked by a diversity of approaches and theories and rather few uncontested facts or conclusions. To view it as a process extending over two centuries or so does greater justice to the richness and complexity of Islam than does the more traditional concentration on the life of the Prophet and the short time when it was confined to Arabia. Indeed, the evidence for the Arabian period, limited as it is to a tradition that is only available to us in texts dating from much later, makes analysis of the earliest period especially difficult. It is not possible to provide precise dates for the beginning and end of the process, but the third century of the Hijra (ninth century AD) was clearly of crucial importance.

NOTES

1 Cf. the ways in which Jews and Christians have presented their own traditions as descended – physically, spiritually, or both – from Abraham.

2 Hereafter, when relevant, dates will be given in the form 17/638, first/seventh century, etc. In the Islamic calendar a year consists of 12 lunar, rather than solar, months, and because no intercalation is permitted the months have no fixed relationship to the seasons. For a brief introduction to the Islamic calendar and tables of equivalence with the Christian calendar, see Freeman-Grenville, *The Muslim and Christian Calendars*.

3 For an account of the life of Muḥammad based on the traditional narratives see the article 'Muḥammad' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (*EI2*). The earliest extant account of his life is the *Sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/768 in Baghdad) in the recension made by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833 in Egypt).

4 The English 'caliph' derives from Arabic *khalīfa*. Traditionally, *khalīfa* is understood to mean 'successor' (of the Prophet) – *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*. The original sense of the title, however, is debatable; see the article "Khalīfa" in *EI2*.

5 For a discussion and summary of the traditions about the collecting and composition of the text of the Qur'ān, see Bell and Watt, *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, article 'Kur'ān' in *EI2*.

6 See, for example, Becker, 'Expansion of the Saracens'; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*.
7 On the Fitna, see the articles 'Adhruḥ', 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib', 'Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān' and 'Ṣiffīn', in *EI2*; Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments'; idem, 'Murder of ʿUthmān'; idem, 'Ṣiffīn Arbitration Agreement'; idem, 'Banners and Battle Cries'; all are collected in Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*.
8 See article 'Khāridjites' in *EI2*; P. Crone and F. Zimmermann, *Epistle*.
9 See the article 'Umayyads' in *EI2*; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*.
10 On the 'Abbāsid caliphate, see the article "Abbāsids' in *EI2*.
11 The Sunnīs are so called because of the importance of the Sunna of the Prophet in their legal theory. As a self-designation they often called themselves 'people of the Sunna and community' (*ahl-al-sunna wa'l-jamāʿa*). For the development of Sunnī legal theory, see Schacht, *Introduction*, especially ch.9. For further discussion, see Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, Melchert, *Sunni Schools*, Zaman, *Religion and Politics*.
12 Arabic *Shīʿa* means 'party' and is in this sense short for 'the Party of 'Alī' (*shīʿatu 'Alī*).
13 See Kohlberg, 'From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'Ashariyya'; Bayhom-Daou, 'The Imam's Knowledge'.
14 It has been noted that the earliest securely datable text to refer to the religion of the Arabs as Islam is the inscription inside the Dome of the Rock (72/691; Cook and Crone, *Hagarism*, 8 and n.49); the earliest securely datable text to use the word Muslims is a letter of 141/758 (Hinds, 'Letter from the Governor of Egypt', line 36 of the translation and the note thereto).
15 It should be noted that the understanding of the term 'Arabia' has varied considerably from time to time. For us today it tends to indicate the Arabian peninsula, the modern state of Saudi Arabia and its neighbours. In the period before the rise of Islam it often referred to a region or province attached to Palestine.
16 Becker, 'Islam als Problem'; idem, 'Expansion of the Saracens'.
17 Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*.
18 See, e.g., Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, especially ch. 6; Cameron, 'Eastern Provinces'.
19 Becker, 'Islam als Problem', 15.
20 Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (English tr. *Muslim Studies*), vol. 2.
21 Schacht, *Origins*; idem, *Introduction*.
22 Motzki, *Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*; idem (ed.), *Hadith: Origins and Developments*; Calder, *Studies*; Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*.
23 Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*; Rippin (ed.), *Formative Interpretation*.
24 Puin, 'Observations'.
25 Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*; article 'miḥna' in *EI2*.
26 Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*; idem (ed.); idem, 'Islamic Self-Image'; Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, ch. 2; idem, 'Res Ipsa Loquitur'.
27 Cook and Crone, *Hagarism*; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*.
28 See, e.g., Schoeler, 'Foundations'; for some of the problems see Conrad, 'Recovering Lost Texts'.
29 The classic statement of the evolutionary approach is Wellhausen, *Reste*; in English see Nöldeke, 'Arabs (Ancient)'.
30 The best-known presentation of the 'trade route theory' in English is that of Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*. Cf. now Crone, *Meccan Trade*.
31 Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed?*; The bibliography of works arguing that Muhammad borrowed from a particular version of the monotheist religion is too big to begin to list here.
32 Snouck Hurgronje, *Het Mekkaansee Feest*; Wensinck, *Muhammad and the Jews of Medina*; for some of the criticism of Snouck's use of the Qur'ān, see article 'Ibrāhim' in *EI2*.
33 Hawting, *Idolatry*.

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