

Lecture 4:

Muhammad exile and victory

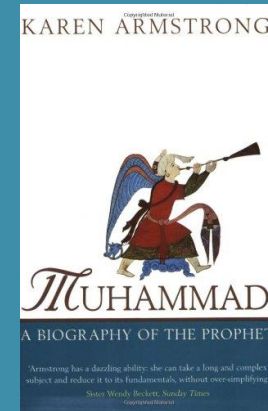
Review: Regional Context

- Life in Arabia built on a subsistence economy
- Fluidity between settled and Bedouin life
- Mecca a centre of trade and pilgrimage
- Increased wealth lead to social upheaval
- Quraysh a stabilising political force in region

Aim of Lecture:

To discuss Muhammad's message
and its social and political
implications

Armstrong

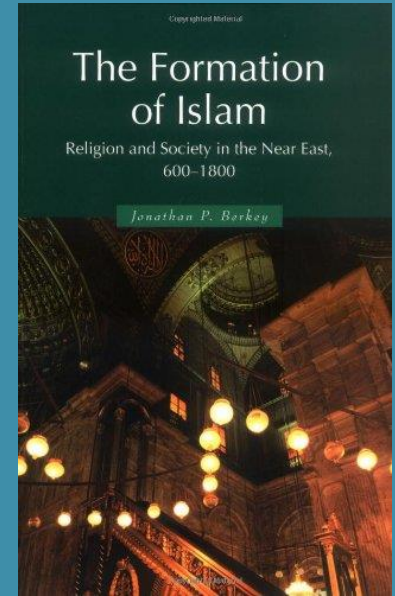


One of the most remarkable aspects of Muhammad's achievement was his isolation. He knew about Judaism and Christianity, but his knowledge was very limited. Unlike the prophets of Israel, Muhammad was not working towards the difficult monotheistic solution with the support of an established tradition...that had been hammered out for centuries. Jesus and St. Paul were both embedded in Judaism and the first Christians came from the Jews and their supporters...Christianity took root in the Roman empire where Jewish communities had paved the way and prepared the minds of the pagans. But Muhammad had to start virtually from scratch and work his way towards the radical monotheistic spirituality on his own.

When he began his mission, a dispassionate observer would not have given him a chance...But he did succeed. By the end of his life he had laid an axe to the root of the chronic cycle of tribal violence that afflicted the region and paganism was no longer a going concern. The Arabs were ready to embark on a new phase of their history

Berkey questions isolation

- Islam does not reflect single man
- Indicative of wider regional trends
- The trend to think about political identity in religious terms
- “the religious sphere [in the early seventh century] had expanded so as to absorb everything, and in particular an individual’s identity – social, political cultural”

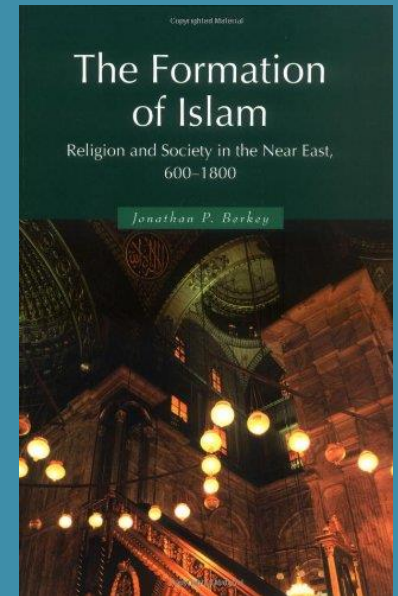


Religion and Politics

- Byzantine-Sassanid conflict not a religious war
- But both empires associate with an official religion
- Process fomented intense dialogue between major religious movements

Berkey's argument

- Islam did not simply borrow, incorporate or repackage ideas from other monotheistic traditions
- Islam an integral player in a broader regional conversation about religion that was characteristic of the time and place
- Islamic vision unique but also underdeveloped
- Like other religions, will become increasingly canonised as it is associated with a dominant political (imperial) force



Muhammad's achievement

- Questionable whether lone creator of Islam
- Did transform Arabia
- Created new political entity built upon a fidelity to monotheistic religion rather than bloodlines
- Provided new moral vision and new basis for political and cultural identity
- Key achievement: reorienting Arabian identity away from tribal loyalties and towards an encompassing universal political vision
- The community of believers: the Umma

Umma

from tribe to tribal values

- Values and principles of Islam not new
- Part of tribal ethic
- Muhammad reminds tribes of traditional responsibilities
- But also makes them universal
- Responsibilities for others does not end at one's own
bloodline
- Encompass the umma as a whole

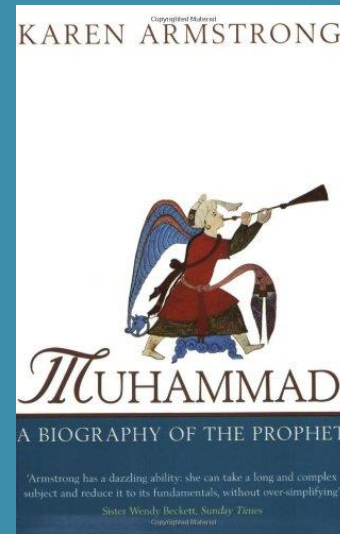
3 Key Events

1. Revelation
2. Hijra
3. Hdaybiyah

Revelation

- Muhammad's revelations a form of tribal revivalism
- Why did Quraysh reject?

Armstrong



- Quraysh rejected the idea of the Last Judgment
- An idea that circulates in Judaism and Christianity
- Reject *individual* responsibility
- Threatening on a personal level (wealth)
- Threatening because re-attributes responsibility from tribe to individual

Hijra

- Most significant event in the history of Islam
- Marks beginning of Muslim calendar
- Most central story of the Quran



Why significant?

- Islam's transition from small cult to religious institution
- Muhammad attracts large following in Medina
- Islam gains institutional and political status
- New kind of political community
- Not built upon blood but on religion
- Radical redefinition of the social order
- Muslims belonged to many families – broke traditional tribal bonds

Significance of Exile

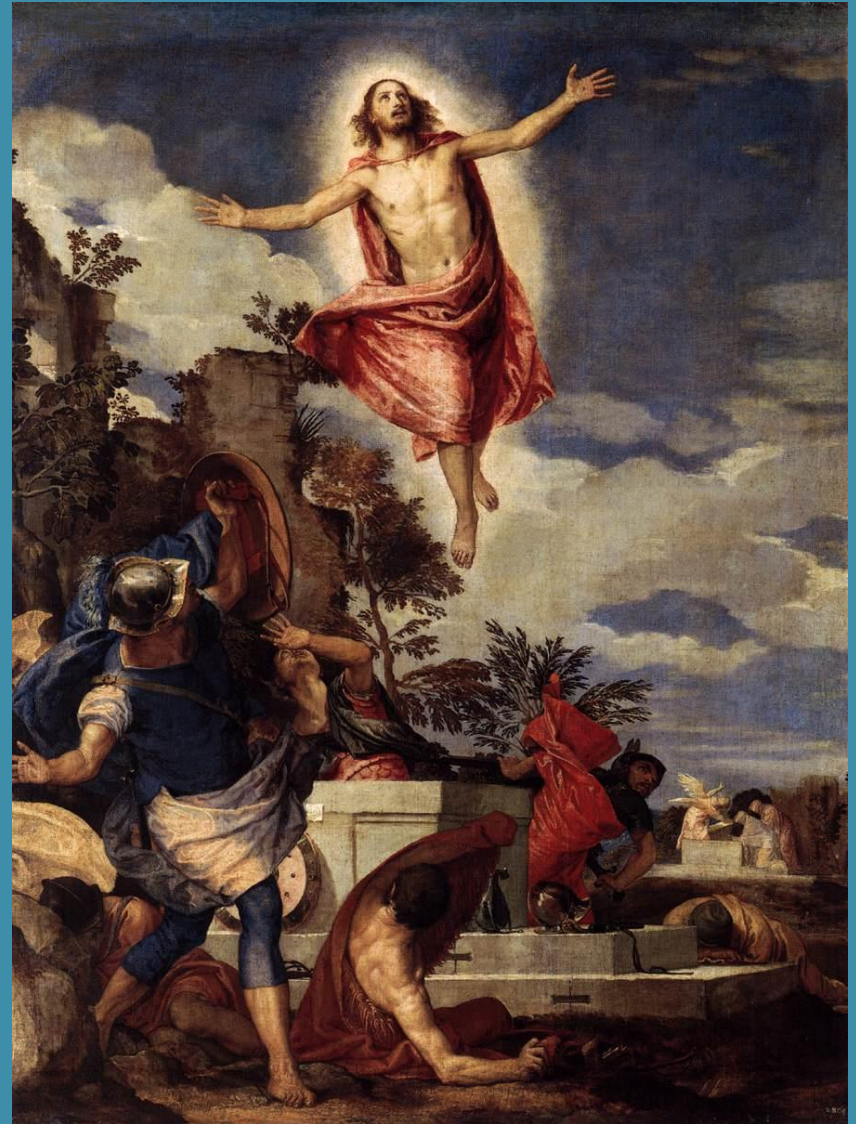
- All religions require break from the past
- Genesis: God says to Abraham ‘Lech lecha’
Go from here
- “Go from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's
house, To the land
which I will show you”



God shows Abraham stars (Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld)

Other Exiles

- God leads Jews from Egypt into Canaan
- Jews wandering in the desert
- Christian resurrection



The resurrection of Christ (Paulo Veronese)

Hudaybiyah

- Event precipitated by vision: Muslims would partake in the pilgrimage at the Kaaba
- Muslims comfortable in Medina but no influence outside the city
- For Islam to be major force must incorporate long-standing rites of Arabia
- Most incorporate the pilgrimage

Significance

- The request to make pilgrimage puts Quraysh in difficult position
- Guardians of Kaaba: responsible for granting access to all
- **But** if Quraysh submit to request it would mean their defeat
- Muhammad key decision: not to bear arms
- Muslims come as **pilgrims**

Expedition fails

- After long-standoff Muslims retreat
- Sign a treaty (treaty of Hudabiyah)
- Muslims can return the following year and the Quraysh will leave the city
- Decision to retreat highly controversial
- Muslims saw as capitulating when had upper hand
- Muhammad playing 'long-game'
- If Muhammad can visit the Kaaba, can attract converts from throughout Arabia

Return to Mecca

- 2 years later Muhammad returns with army of 10,000 Muslims
- Performed the rituals of the Kaaba and famously smashes the 360 idols that surrounded the stone



Muhammad smashing the idols 'Haydar's Battle' Kashmir 1808

Final victory

- Muhammad unites Arabia
- Begins to make incursions into Byzantine and Sassanid empires
- Empires weak unable to respond
- Muhammad's army strong and united by religion

Take Home Ten