

Only a Muslim cares about the religion of Islam, but all Kafirs are affected by Islam’s political views.

Notice that there is no right and wrong here, merely different points of view that cannot be reconciled. There is no possible resolution between the view of the Kafir and the Muslim. The apologist tries to bring about a bridge building compromise, but it is not logically possible.

THE ISLAMIC BIBLE—THE TRILOGY

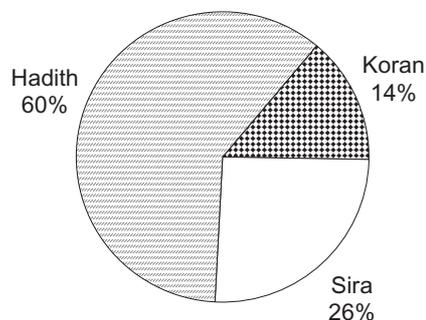
Islam is defined by the words of Allah in the Koran, and the words and actions of Mohammed, the *Sunna*.

The words and actions of Mohammed, the Sunna, are found in two collections of texts—the Sira (Mohammed’s life) and the Hadith. His words and actions are considered to be the divine pattern for humanity acceptable to Allah and the best source for these are the biographies, or Sira, by Ishaq and Al Tabari.

A hadith, or tradition, is a brief story about what Mohammed did or said. A collection of hadiths is called a Hadith. There are many collections of hadiths, but the most authoritative are those by Bukhari and Abu Muslim.

So the Trilogy is the Koran, the Sira and the Hadith. Most people think that the Koran is the “bible” of Islam, but it is only about 14% of the total textual doctrine. The Trilogy is the foundation and totality of Islam.

The Relative Sizes of the Trilogy Texts



WHAT IS THE KORAN?

According to Islam, the Koran is the exact words of the only god of the universe. It is complete, perfect, eternal and universal. It is also unreadable.

What Mohammed recited as the revelations of Allah was memorized and written down on paper, palm leaves, and even the shoulder blades of animals. About 20 years after Mohammed’s death, Uthman, the caliph, empowered Zaid to gather all of the known versions of the Koran and produce the Koran we know today. The Koran is considered to be the exact, precise recording of the words of Mohammed reporting what

he heard from the angel Gabriel. Since Mohammed's transmission of the revelation is taken to be perfect, the Koran is considered by all Muslims to be the perfect exact words of Allah.

Uthman then took and burned all of the sources. No comment is ever made about this burning, but it is telling. Why would Uthman burn all of the original source material?

The Koran that Uthman produced was not the Koran of Mohammed. In the historical Koran each chapter followed the other as Mohammed's life unfolded. This is the Koran that has the original time sequence and includes events Mohammed was involved in at the time.

The historical Koran was easy to understand. An illiterate Arabian could understand it because each verse was in the context of what was happening at the time. If that original historical form is reproduced, then the resulting Koran can be understood by anyone who reads it.

The public image of the Koran is that everybody has heard about it, but no one knows anyone who understands it. As a result of the lack of knowledge, there are myths about it: The Koran is very profound; it is full of wisdom; it is so deep that you must be highly trained or a Muslim, to comprehend it; it is in the same category as the Bible. Even though people don't know what it is, they have firm conclusions.

THE DIFFICULTY OF KNOWING THE KORAN

The form of the Koran found in the bookstore is designed to not be read.

The problems

1. When Zaid compiled all the copies of the Koran, he arranged them from the longest chapter to the shortest chapter. Imagine that you took a novel and cut off the spine and rebound the book after you had arranged the longest chapter first and the shortest chapter was last. The plot would have been destroyed. The sequence of events is scrambled. As a result, no one would understand the story.
2. Each chapter has a bewildering array of topics. One topic abruptly ends and an unrelated one begins.
3. It is very repetitive. The story of Moses is told 39 times. This is an important clue about the true nature of the Koran, but it is tiresome to read the same story again and again. Not only are the stories repetitive, but also there are 290 different verses about Hell. It wears on you.

4. There is no context to many verses. Subjects just lurch up in front of you from out of nowhere. For instance, there is a verse that says it was alright to destroy the palm trees. This is bewildering because this is the first mention of palm trees. Why were they burnt? When and where were they destroyed? This is very confusing.
5. There are many strange names and foreign terms.
6. It is contradictory. One verse will teach tolerance and the next will call for the death of Kafirs. The contradictions confuse the reader.
7. The Koran contains a great deal of violence and threats.
8. The Koran is very negative toward Kafirs.

The sum total is that the Koran is confusing, contradictory, makes no sense, and is strange, violent, threatening and unpleasant. It's difficult to understand and daunting to attempt.

The most common comment is that a better translation is needed. That is absolutely not the case. No translation will fix a single one of the problems that make the Koran unreadable. Besides, anyone who wants to go onto the Web can read the Koran in many translations. The only difference between them is how they handle the violence.

All of this is unfortunate, because when the Koran is made readable, it becomes a truly epic story with an incredible plot. It is also the most frightening book you will ever read because once it is clear, you can see the future.

There is a way to solve each and every difficulty that has been discussed while retaining every verse.

Problem 1: There is no time in the Koran

The Koran cannot be understood without time being reintroduced. Uthman had the Koran arranged in order of chapter length and destroyed the historical Koran. Thus, the classical Koran that is found in the bookstore is obscure. Taking out the time-line has randomized it. Uthman did two things that totally changed the Koran. By burning all of the source material, he made the Koran "superior" to the New Testament and Old Testament, since they have known variations in their historical texts. And since Uthman destroyed all of the variations, the Koran could be claimed to be exactly like the one Allah gave to Mohammed.

But more importantly, by rearranging the Koran, he removed the story. The story of the Koran is that Islam triumphed over all Mohammed's enemies. It is a political story of triumph and conquest. By removing the political ending, Uthman cloaked the politics in rhetoric and made it seem more religious. Confusion passes for profoundness.

So, the first step is to put the elements of the document in the proper historical order. That turns out to be an almost trivial process. The correct order of the chapters is well known to scholars². Anybody with access to the Web can download a version of the Koran and use a word processor to produce a Koran in the right time order. It is a cut-and-paste job, no more, no less. Once you have the Koran on your word processor and the proper sequence of each chapter, it takes about an hour to produce a Koran with the proper chronological sequence.

Problem 2: Topics

When you read a chapter in the Koran it jumps from one topic to the next. The first clue is that the Arabic word, sura, which is translated as “chapter” is not a chapter in the normal sense. A better term would be folder, because it is just like a file folder with many different letters in it. The problem is that one runs on into the next. Most versions of the Koran introduce their own topic breaks.

One powerful method of organizing the suras into chapters is the Koranic Argument. This method is discussed in the final chapter, Epilogue.

Problem 3: Repetition

The Koran is filled with stories that allow easy categorization. The story of Moses is easily recognized as a topic. Then there are the repetitive Arabic stories of Thamud and others. But there remains a lot of verbiage that is not a story. How should it be arranged into topics?

Once the Koran is placed into the right chronological order, the next step is to group together all of the similar repetitive material. One of the most tiresome things about the Koran is the endless repetition.

The reason for the repetition is simple. The Koran is an exact recording of Mohammed’s campaign of persuasion. Imagine that you are a reporter and follow a political candidate around as he speaks. You will find that he constantly repeats the same points, but with slight variations. This is what happened with the Koran. Mohammed covered the same points over and over again. Hence, the repetitive Koran. The Koran is an exact history of Mohammed’s career as a prophet of Allah.

Once the Koran is categorized, similar topics can be grouped together. This greatly simplifies the comprehension and ease of reading. When similar topics are grouped, it becomes easy to skip over them and not feel like

2 *Discovering the Quran*, Neal Robinson, SCM Press Ltd, 1996, pgs. 78-79.

you are missing anything. It also allows the reader to see the small changes in the stories. The Koran did not always repeat the story in the same way.

When the stories are grouped, another thing really stands out. Allah was no storyteller. A story has a beginning, middle and an end. Not one story in the Koran can stand on its own. There are always missing pieces. Even the Joseph story, technically the best told story in the Koran, is incomplete.

Problem 4: Context

There is a missing piece to the Koranic puzzle. The missing piece is Mohammed. Only Mohammed can make the Koran coherent. Take as an example:

Koran 59:5 Allah gave you permission to cut down some palm trees and leave others intact so as to shame the wicked [the Jews]. After Allah gave the spoils to His Messenger, you made no move with horses or camels to capture them [the Jews], but Allah gives His messengers power over what He chooses. Allah is all-powerful.

As you read along, this verse, without any context, just jumps out at you. Why does Allah suddenly talk about palm trees? The answer is that Mohammed attacked the Jews near Medina and he wanted to destroy their economy by cutting down their date palm plantations.

So, if we weave Mohammed's life into the Koran, then the Koran has a context and all of the mystery is gone. By including Mohammed, we have reproduced the original version. The Koran unfolded as needed by Mohammed. The Koran frequently gives a solution to an ongoing problem in his life. When Mohammed's life is integrated into it, the Koran becomes an epic story that ends with the triumph of Political Islam.

Problem 5: Arabic

Islam frequently claims that the Koran cannot be translated. Much of the Koran is written in a poetic style that is similar to the ancient classical texts such as the Greek *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* is an epic tale that is written in poetry, which makes it easy to memorize. The Koran is also written, in great part, in a poetic form that is easy to memorize.

Take an English proverb: "Birds of a feather, flock together." We have the information that a flock of birds only contains one type of bird, but it is written in poetic form. Can the poetry of "Birds of a feather, flock together" be translated into Arabic? No. But the meaning of "a flock of birds contains only one type of bird," can be easily translated into Arabic.

The poetry of the Koran does not translate, but the meaning can be translated. Read many different translations of the Koran and you will find the meaning is consistent across the translations.

So, can the Koran be translated? In one sense, no. Can the meaning be translated into any other language? Yes. If the meaning of a particular section of the Koran cannot be translated, then that implies that the concept is not applicable to that language. Or said another way, that part of the Koran would not be universal. But the Koran is very insistent upon the fact that it is universal. It follows that the universal meaning can be translated into all languages. In particular, anything that is said about the Kafir can be understood by the Kafir. If there are religious verses that only those trained in classical Arabic can read, it does not concern the Kafir. Kafirs do not care about the religion of Islam.

Problem 6: Strange Names And Terms

Nothing can be done about the names, as such. But it is simple to define the names and terms and put them in brackets as an in-line comment.

Problems 7, 8, 9: Contradictions, Violence And Kafir

There is no way to temper these verses, except to say that they provide the deepest insight into the true inner nature of the Koran. The violence against the Kafir is central to the Koran, since it is frequent. The contradictions are part of Koranic doctrine called abrogation. The Koran directly addresses the contradictions within it and provides a way to resolve the issues. There will be much more said about this in the next chapter. The contradictions are part of Islamic dualism. None of these problems can be removed.

SUMMARY

The Koran can be made understandable by using:

- Chronology—putting the verses in the original historical order
- Categorizing—the method of grouping verses around the same subject.
- Context—using Mohammed’s life to explain the circumstances and environment of the text.

Any Muslim will tell you that this book is not a Koran. That may or may not be, but this book is a key or map to the “real” Koran. After you read this Koran, you will be able to pick up a “real” Koran and it will be easily understood.

READING THE KORAN

The Koran is a difficult book when it is viewed as a religious text. But when it is viewed as a historical and political text as well as a religious text, it is a straightforward story. To understand the language, you need some background. Islam holds that the Koran is the perfect record of what the angel Gabriel (also called a spirit) told Mohammed. When the words I, We, Us, and Me are used, they refer to Allah. I and We can occur in the same verse.

The term "Say:" is used frequently and means that Gabriel is telling Mohammed to say this to the people.

Another common term is "signs." Signs can be manifestations of nature, e.g. rain after a drought, or signs can be verses of the Koran. Each verse is considered a miracle by Islam.

With this background, read one of the epic stories of history. When you finish it, you will be able to pick up any translation of the Koran and read it with understanding.

HOW THE VERSES ARE GROUPED

The classical arrangement of the Koran is by chapters (suras) and verses. The verses are not so useful in understanding since a verse is usually a sentence, not an complete idea. So the first step for easy understanding is to group the verses into paragraphs. As an example:

93:4 *Certainly the future will be better than the past.*

93:5 *In the end your Lord will be generous to you, and you will be satisfied.*

93:6 *Did He not find you living like an orphan and give you a home?*

93:7 *Did He not find you lost and give you guidance?*

93:8 *Did He not find you poor, and did He not give you enough?*

These verses have been grouped into a paragraph:

93:4 *Certainly the future will be better than the past, and in the end your Lord will be generous to you, and you will be satisfied. Did He not find you living like an orphan and give you a home? Did He not find you lost and give you guidance? Did He not find you poor, and did He not give you enough?*

REFERENCE NUMBERS

The information in this book can be traced back to the source by use of the reference numbers:

OVERVIEW

I234 is a reference to Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, translated by A. Guillaume as *The Life of Muhammad*. This is a reference to margin note 234.

T123 is a reference to *The History of al-Tabari* by the State University of New York. The number refers to the margin note 123.

M234 is a reference to *The Life of Mohammed* by Sir William Muir, AMS Press, New York, NY, 1975. The number is page 234.

B2,3,45 is a reference to Bukhari's Hadith. The three example numbers are volume 2, book 3, and number 45, a standard reference system.

M2,345 is a reference to Muslim's Hadith. The example would be book 2, number 345.

12:45 is Koran chapter (sura) 12, verse 45.

It is the present state of knowledge of the West about Islam that there is no standardized spelling of proper Arabic nouns. Examples: Muslim/Moslem, Mohammed/Muhammad, Koran/Quran.



IN THE BEGINNING

CHAPTER 1

*33:21 You have an excellent example in Allah's Messenger
for those of you who put your hope in Allah and the
Last Day and who praise Allah continually.*

Read the Overview chapter, page vii.

Fourteen hundred years ago in Arabia, there was an orphan who became the first king of Arabia. Mohammed's name would become the most common name in the world. He was to create an empire that would dwarf the Roman Empire, and he was to become the ideal pattern for all men and make the god of the Arabs the god of all. The smallest aspect of his behavior would be recorded in great detail and would set the pattern of life for billions of people over the millennia.

Mohammed's father was called Abdullah, meaning slave of Allah. Allah was a high god of the many gods worshiped in the town of Mecca. His father died while his mother was pregnant. When he was five years old, his mother died and his grandfather took over his upbringing. Then Mohammed was orphaned for the third time when his grandfather died and his raising was assumed by his uncle, Abu Talib. All were of the Quraysh tribe. These brief facts are the history known about his early childhood.

MOHAMMED'S TRIBE—THE QURAYSH

When Mohammed was born, there was no nation of Arabia, no Arabian king, no political unity. The society was tribal in nature and had the usual tribal aspects. A person was not an individual as much as he was a part of a tribe. Blood relations were everything, and when someone met someone outside the tribe, the first question was what is your tribe and your lineage? Your name gave a portion of your lineage. Without your tribe you were fair game and very weak. Squabbling and fighting amongst clans were common and were ruled by blood laws.

The Quraysh came to Mecca five generations before Mohammed under the leadership of Qusayy. Under Qusayy the rituals of worship at the Kabah [a stone temple] were established. The Quraysh became the

priestly tribe of Mecca. They were the nobility of the town and held the ceremonial offices.

In addition to being religious leaders, the Quraysh were traders and business men. Religion and business came together in the form of the different religious pilgrimages and the accompanying business transactions.

Mohammed's clan was the Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe. The Hashimite clan is active in politics today.

MECCA AS A RELIGIOUS CENTER

In Mecca there was a stone building in the shape of a cube called the Kabah. The Kabah was a religious site that contained many images of several tribal gods. We know of at least six other square stone houses called Kabahs that were in other towns in Arabia. However, Islam holds that the Kabah in Mecca was built by Abraham, the patriarch of the Jews.

The Kabah was the focus of religious rituals and a community center. Rituals established by Qusayy included prostrations, ritual prayers, and circling the Kabah while praying and drinking from the well called Zam Zam. Other rituals included throwing stones at pillars which symbolized the devil. Islam's rituals come from the aboriginal Arabic religions.

Stones played an important part of the religions of Arabia. The Kabah was made of stone and had an important stone, the Black Stone, built into the corner of the Kabah. It was probably a meteorite and was a composite of several stones. It is small in size, roughly seven inches in diameter. This stone was touched only with the right hand and kissed by pilgrims. All of these native rituals were incorporated into Islam.

The god, Allah, seems to have been a male god of the moon and was probably the god of the Quraysh. Each tribe had its gods. There was not much organization of gods, unlike the Greeks or Romans. Mohammed's father was named after Allah, but his other brothers were named after other Arabic gods.