

**My arguments and counter-arguments (in defending
the Quran) with Dr. Stephen Shoemaker (and others)
related to his 3 articles about the Quran that were
published and discussed in Bart Ehrman blog in June,
July and August 2023**

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Dec 2023

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The Introduction:

Dr. Stephen Shoemaker has published 3 articles in Bart Ehrman blog, which were based on his book: *Creating the Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Study*. These articles were published in the blog in following dates:

Article 1: June 25, 2023. The link for this article in the blog:

<https://ehrmanblog.org/can-the-quran-and-early-islam-be-studied-critically-like-the-nt-and-early-christianity/>

Article 2: July 15, 2023. The link for this article in the blog:

<https://ehrmanblog.org/radiocarbon-dating-of-the-quran-has-it-solved-the-problem-guest-post-by-stephen-shoemaker/>

Article 3: August 8, 2023. The link for this article in the blog:

<https://ehrmanblog.org/creating-the-quran-where-did-the-scripture-of-islam-really-come-from-guest-post-by-stephen-shoemaker/>

I totally disagree with his conclusions and I did present my arguments in the blog, and we entered (Me, Dr. Shoemaker and Others) in a set of arguments and counter-arguments.

I need to highlight and acknowledge that the arguments were tough (as the subject was sensitive) but all the participants in these arguments were polite and tactful, which made the exchange of information and thoughts very interesting and very useful. Therefore, I am assuming here that collecting these arguments into this documents would be very useful as a reference for myself and it might also be useful for others as well.

In this document, I am only going to present the arguments and counter-arguments that I was involved with. It should be noted that there were so many arguments related to these 3 articles in the blog that I wasn't involved with, and therefore, it is not included in this document. To see all the arguments then go to the linked articles above.

Editing Notes:

1# Any note between [{}] are editing notes for this document and they are not part of the original arguments.

2# My account-name in Bart-Ehrman blog is **OmarRobb**.

3# Dr. Stephen Shoemaker account-name in the blog is **Sshoema**.

4# There were many other participants in the arguments, and we will just refer to them with their own account-names highlighted in their arguments.

5# There were many threads in the arguments for each article. Each thread includes many arguments. However, one of the rules of the blog is that the comment cannot exceed 200 words, therefore, each argument (i.e. reply) might include many comments. I used the notation [{}-->] to highlight the multiple comments for the arguments.

6# I have included all the arguments in the threads that I was involved in up to Dec 4, 2023. Therefore, any added comments/arguments in these threads after this date would obviously not be included in this document.

7# NT here refers to the New Testament, and OT refers to the Old Testament.

[{Article 1 for Dr. Shoemaker in Bart Ehrman blog:

<https://ehrmanblog.org/can-the-quran-and-early-islam-be-studied-critically-like-the-nt-and-early-christianity/> }]

Can the Qur’an and Early Islam Be Studied Critically (Like the NT and Early Christianity?) Guest Post by Stephen Shoemaker

June 25, 2023

Why don’t scholars engage in a historical-critical study of the Qur’an the way they do with the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible? I get asked this kind of thing all the time – with variations: “Where can I find a scholarly discussion the critical problems with the Qur’an like scholars publish about the Bible all the time?” or “I know Muslims claim the Qur’an is perfect, but what to critical scholars say about it?” or “Why don’t scholars take a historical to early Islam like they do with early Christianity?”

For most of my career there really hasn’t been much out there to suggest, but in recent years that has begun to change. In large part that’s because of a former student of mine who is now a prominent scholar of early Christianity, Stephen Shoemaker, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Oregon. Stephen is an unusually productive scholar with a wide range of expertise (and a deep knowledge of a crazy number of ancient languages and obscure texts!). Check him out here: <https://www.stephen-shoemaker.com/>

One of Stephen’s areas of expertise is early Islam, and he has recently written books that take a historical approach to what we can really know. Of particular interest to most blog readers will be the one that came out last year: *Creating the Qur’an: A Historical-Critical Study* (University of California Press, 2022). Click here: https://www.amazon.com/Creating-Quran-Historical-Critical-Stephen-Shoemaker-ebook/dp/B0B13YBB27/ref=sr_1_2?crid=2SL036XMLMOSP&keywords=stephen+shoemaker&qid=1686899063&srefix=%2Caps%2C166&sr=8-2

I have asked Stephen to write a couple of guest blog posts to give us a taste of what he covers in his studies of Islam. It’s not what we normally hear in discussions of the Qur’an. His title for this post is:

Problems in the Critical study of Early Islam, or Why there is no Bart Ehrman of the Qur’an.

I am a former student of Bart – much longer ago than either of us would care to admit. My training (at Duke actually) was originally in early Christian studies, and I continue to be active in that field, but I’ve also done a lot of work studying the beginnings of Islam. In my publications on the origins of Islam, I borrow the historical-critical approach that we routinely use in the study of early Christianity – which is undoubtedly well known to members of this blog – and apply it to similar problems and questions that arise from the early Islamic tradition.

As many of you may be aware, such approaches to the beginnings of Islam are very rare, almost to the point of being non-existent. Bart tells me that he regularly hears from

subscribers to this blog that they want to read something on the origins of the Qur'an and Islam like his books on the New Testament and early Christianity. But the truth is, there is really nothing comparable out there, and in this blog post I'd like to talk a little bit about why.

The simplest explanation is that the study of Islamic origins remains stalled at the point where early Christian studies stood more or less at the middle of the nineteenth century. Why it remains stalled there is a more complicated matter that we can't get into here. But the result is that scholars of the Qur'an have been extremely reluctant to adopt the critical approaches, and particularly the methodological skepticism, that have characterized the study of earliest Christianity since the middle of the nineteenth century. Instead, they still rely very heavily on the historical framework of the Islamic tradition itself to guide their studies. It is as if, in early Christian studies, one still allowed Eusebius to set the terms of our investigation of Christian origins.

To be fair, scholars of early Islam have not been entirely unwilling to subject certain aspects of the traditional narratives of Islamic origins to historical criticism. But when it comes to the most important points regarding the historical Muhammad and the formation of the Qur'an, fundamental deference to the tradition remains paramount. For instance, the Islamic tradition maintains that the Qur'an was established – in exactly the same format and wording that we have it today – by the middle of the seventh century. And so when the overwhelming majority of scholars set out to study the Qur'an, they do so with confidence that its contents were fixed within twenty years of Muhammad's death. The result is that most western scholarship on the Qur'an serves to reinscribe, rather than challenge, the traditional Islamic narrative of the Qur'an's formation. Acceptance of this viewpoint limits both the questions that may be asked and how they will be answered, resulting in a scholarly cocoon that protects – whether intentionally or not – the views of the Islamic tradition.

Collective confidence in this received account of the Qur'an's formation obviously leaves off the table many basic questions that scholars routinely ask about the New Testament writings, not to mention other sacred texts. In effect, one is not allowed to probe the history of the Qur'anic traditions and their development. These traditions were recorded soon after Muhammad's death, by those who had followed him and under careful state supervision, thereby ensuring their accuracy. Accordingly, there is no possibility for form critical analysis of individual traditions or investigations of redactional development within the Qur'anic text. What we find in the Qur'an, scholars regularly assume and assert, is in fact what Muhammad actually taught, thereby obviating the complicated questions that constantly vex (and delight) biblical scholars.

This conviction that the Qur'an indeed preserves the very words of Muhammad himself is perhaps the strangest presumption of Qur'anic studies as practiced in the modern west, particularly when compared with biblical studies. Qur'anic scholars regularly insist that the words found in the Qur'an today are the exact words spoken by Muhammad to his followers in Mecca and Medina during the early seventh century. It is truly astonishing, I think, that so many ostensibly critical, non-Muslim scholars would stalwartly profess the authenticity of the Qur'an as more or less a simple transcript of what Muhammad taught. As readers of Bart's many works, you will all

know that this is of course an impossibility, absent dictation or a miracle, both of which are highly unlikely.

Western scholars of the Qur'an also accept as fundamental to their investigations the Islamic tradition's chronological schema of the Qur'an's serial revelation to Muhammad, with only some minor adjustments. According to tradition, Muhammad did not receive the entirety of the Qur'an at once, but its contents were revealed to him piecemeal across a span of two decades. Medieval Muslim scholars therefore established a specific order for these revelations across the span of Muhammad's career. And so modern scholars, with this dataset in hand (which is presumed to be historically accurate), attempt to trace the development of the Qur'anic text in relation to the progress of Muhammad's prophetic mission. Frequently (although not always) this chronological reading of the Qur'an is undertaken in conjunction with his traditional biographies, notoriously unreliable texts that were composed more than 100 years after Muhammad's death. It is as if, by comparison, one were to use the Acts of Paul and Thecla as an interpretive key for understanding the letters of Paul!

Related to this principle of Qur'anic studies is a parallel conviction that everything in the Qur'an had its origin in Muhammad's prophetic career in Mecca and Medina between 610-632. Any possibility some part of the Qur'an might be a later interpolation after Muhammad's life is for the most part strictly excluded. Yet even with a window of only around twenty years between Muhammad's death and the fixation of the canonical Qur'anic text, as acknowledged even in the traditional account, there is ample opportunity for additions and changes to the text. To be sure, the biblical scholar can only respond to such claims with complete, dumbstruck bewilderment. Nevertheless, specialists on early Islam persist in maintaining that everything in the Qur'an comes from Muhammad, and from Mecca and Medina.

There are, however, a number of intractable problems with the presumption that all of the Qur'an must derive from the mouth of Muhammad in either Mecca or Medina. In the first place, Mecca in Muhammad's lifetime was a remote, hardscrabble place in the arid deserts of western Arabia. According to a recent study, the likely number of total inhabitants in Mecca at this time was around five hundred or so, with only around one-hundred and thirty free adult men. Its nonliterate, pastoralist inhabitants appear to have been quite isolated from the broader world of the ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamia.

These cultural and economic limitations obviously raise profound questions about the traditional linkage of a text as sophisticated as the Qur'an with a sleepy hamlet such as Muhammad's Mecca. The Qur'an's content demands an audience steeped in the traditions of ancient Judaism and Christianity. How would the goatherds of Mecca have possessed the level of religious literacy required to understand the Qur'an's persistent and elliptic invocations of Jewish and Christian lore? There is, for that matter, no evidence of any significant Christian presence anywhere remotely near Mecca: the closest known community was over 500 miles (900km) distant.

Clearly there must be more to the Qur'an's origins than the later Islamic tradition has remembered, since Muhammad's Mecca (or his Medina for that matter) does not seem capable of having produced such a highly cosmopolitan religious text. Nor does it seem

likely that the entirety of the Qur'an may be understood as preserving an accurate transcript of the very words that Muhammad spoke to his followers in Mecca and Medina. Unsurprisingly, once we let go of the restrictive assumptions that modern scholarship on the Qur'an has inherited from the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an quickly emerges as a scriptural tradition with a history no less complex than the Jewish and Christian bibles. And so a great task presently awaits those who are willing and able to meet it: the beginnings of the historical-critical study of the Qur'an.

[{End of Article 1}]

[{The start of **Thread 1.1** - Main Subject: Chain Oral Tradition}]

OmarRobb June 26, 2023 at 9:42 am:

I do criticize many of the “Western Scholars of Islamic Studies” from an academic perspective, and I hope you see my comments from within this perspective.

We (the Muslims) claim that the Muslims are the only civilization in history prior to 1900 that large bulk of its history were documented via “Chain-Oral-Tradition” (in Arabic: the Sanad). The Roman historians who wrote about Rome were depending on sources that we don't know, therefore, their written history is depending on “Anonymous-Oral-Tradition”. The same is said for the Greek history and the Christian History. But if you look at the book of Al-Bukhari (for example) you find that he starts with the following structure: I heard from A from B from C from D that he witnessed an event. And we know exactly who Al-Bukhari is and who is A, B, C, and D. We know where they born and died, we know their teachers, we know a lot of things about them. And there is a distinctive body of knowledge with specific criteria to filter the narrators (in this case A, B, C and D) in order to identify the trusted from the non-trusted ones.

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And there are narratives that have multiple unique trusted chains, and we (the Muslims) do claim that a history based on trusted and multiple “Chains” is more accurate than a history that is based on “Anonymous Oral Tradition”, but this is just our claim.

However, when “Western Scholars” speak about the history of Islam, most of them say that it depends on “Oral Tradition”, therefore it is not reliable. But even in analyzing the reliability of the Roman History (for example) and the “New Testament” they depend on specific criteria, but in the history of Islamic, they made the ultimate conclusion without even conducting any “criteria”.

Furthermore, the Muslims claim that they have special type of “oral tradition” (the Sanad), which is completely different than the normal “oral tradition”. However, the “Western Scholars” don't acknowledge that there is a claim here, they don't want to study it, they didn't examine if it can provide accurate data, they would just ignore the whole matter, and produce their conclusions without it!

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Now ... Islam depends on the Quran and the Hadith, and both are interlinked because the Hadith explains the Quran and related “history”. The first subject that is studied in

the Hadith is the concept of the Sanad (i.e. the “Chain Oral Tradition”), because if the Chain is not trusted then the whole narrative will be ignored regardless of its content. This is a fundamental topic to the point that it is briefly introduced in the curriculum of the elementary public schools in the middle east. So, is it not surprising that the “Western Scholars of Islamic Studies” are ignoring this topic!

If the “Western Scholars of Islamic Studies” start to study this topic and presented some scientific based conclusions about its accuracy (with or against) then we can start discussing their conclusions with them. But how can we discuss this subject with them if they don’t even acknowledge it!

Are you aware of the “claim” of the Muslims that they have special type of “oral tradition”? Have you study it (in your critical analysis) and presented your conclusions about it (with or against) in the book? Or did you just form your conclusions without studying it?

Sshoema June 26, 2023 at 1:13 pm:

Hi Omar – Stephen here. Oh yes, this has been studied in great detail by a number of scholars, including myself, and there is largely a consensus among critical (and particularly non-believer) scholars that this oral tradition, despite the overlay of purported transmitters, is no more reliable than any other sort of oral tradition. Don’t forget that al-Bukhari, whom you mention, examined 600,000 traditions and he rejected 593,000 as forgeries. Forgery was simply rampant, again, despite the attribution of isnads – which only seem to have begun, in fact, around one hundred years after Muhammad’s death! So for the first century of Islam, scholars consider them unreliable and generally fictitious.

The most classic studies are

Goldziher, Ignác. *Muslim Studies*. Translated by C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern. Edited by S. M. Stern. 2 vols. London: Allen & Unwin, 1967-71.

Schacht, Joseph. *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950.

OmarRobb June 26, 2023 at 1:52 pm:

Can you highlight the criteria and the reasoning that these Scholars used to conclude that this “chain-oral-tradition” is not reliable? Afterall, it is a special type of “oral tradition”, therefore, I would assume that they have good reason to make this conclusion.

Now ... In the NT studies, there are criteria (as the multiple attestation) to filter out the right verses from the false ones. And many critical non-believer Scholars have highlighted many of the verses in the NT that they think that it is accurate using these criteria. But the NT is based on an “Anonymous-Oral-Tradition”: anonymous sources, and anonymous authors, but still, the critical non-believer Scholars have highlighted many verses that they think are accurate using specific criteria.

Now ... you want to use the same critical thinking that is used in the NT. In the NT you are not really refusing all the “oral tradition” but you have criteria for making the decision. So, do you have a clear criteria to filter the hadith, the same as you have a clear criteria to filter the NT?

Sshoema June 26, 2023 at 2:15 pm:

I’m still trying to figure out how this blog thing workds. Maybe this will – I usually don’t engage much with social media. So, here is the thing. First of all, I’m not interested in the legal tradition, so let’s leave that to the side. I am, however, interested in the historical tradition and especially the accounts of the beginnings of Islam, the so-called “sira” of Muhammad. So you want criteria? Well, this is tricky. For instance, we cannot use multiple independent attestation on this corpus (which is completely different, by the way, from the Qur’an, the subject of my post). Why? Because we really have only one source: the Sira of Ibn Ishaq which was written in the middle of the eighth century on the basis of 100 years of – anonymous – oral tradition before it! It was only at this later stage that names were introduced; previously the transmission had been anonymous.

OmarRobb June 26, 2023 at 2:08 pm:

I need to point out the following notes:

1# The interest for the Sanad came about 40 years after the death of the prophet starting from Ibn-Abbas (the prophet’s cousin). The purpose is that the civil war at the time caused many people to invent narratives. For this reason, Ibn Abbas highlighted that narratives will not be accepted without knowing the people.

3# With these civil wars, there were thousands of forgeries, and there is a need here to separate between “collectors” and “auditors”. Al-Bukhari is an auditor who only selected the narratives according to the trust level of all the narrators. Al-Tabarani is a collector, he collected all narratives regardless of the auditing. Therefore, the narratives in Al-Tabarani are not regarded valid without making sufficient auditing.

So, no one denied that there were forgeries, but there were also very serious efforts and criteria (from the start) to filter out these forgeries, the same as the efforts that are used by Scholars today (after many many centuries) to filter out the forgeries in the NT.

These efforts were based on identifying the trust level of all the narrators, and then Identifying the multiple unique chains for the narrative itself.

Sshoema June 26, 2023 at 2:17 pm:

So, all later accounts, with some minor exceptions, derive from this single source, and we do not even have this source today but only revisions of it that were made in the ninth and tenth centuries. So the situation is very different from the gospels, for instance. In this case the evidence is, for the historian, much worse. Basically the main criterion that we are left with for judging the antiquity and/or authenticity of material related to the life of Muhammad and beginnings of Islam is therefore the criterion of embarrassment or criterion of dissimilarity. In a very few instances we can get some independent attestation from some of the non-Muslim sources that were actually written

in the seventh century, but that is pretty minimal. On that topic you should see my book *A Prophet Has Appeared*.

[{-->}]

If you need to go further than that, I think you will just have to dive into some more technical studies to see why this is the consensus among scholars writing from a non-confessional perspective. I can recommend a couple of studies of my own where I worked on this issue.

Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, chapter 2

Shoemaker, Stephen J. "In Search of 'Urwa's Sīra: Some Methodological Issues in the Quest for 'Authenticity' in the Life of Muḥammad." *Der Islam* 85, no. 2 (2009-11): 257-344.

Shoemaker, Stephen J. "Muḥammad and the Qur'ān." In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, edited by Scott F. Johnson, 1078-1108. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Just as a few examples. Maybe start with the latter one – you can find the last two on my academia page.

And of course, chapters 5, 6, 7 of *Creating the Qur'an* apply in full as well.

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One additional thought. There is one really striking case where we have multiple independent attestation – concerning the timing of Muhammad's death. According to the Islamic tradition, following the single stream of memory received and transmitted by Ibn Ishaq starting in the mid-eighth century, Muhammad died at Medina in 632 before his followers invaded Syro-Palestine and Mesopotamia.

But, we have multiple independent accounts written during the seventh century that remember Muhammad as still alive and leading his followers as they invaded Syro-Palestine and Mesopotamia. Some of these sources are nearly contemporary with what they describe. So, when and where did Muhammad die? I don't think we really know, and it would appear that the earliest memories of the end of his life had him still alive into the middle of the 630s and leading his followers in their campaigns in the levant. Or at least, this is the indication of our evidence if we value multiple independent attestation.

This is the entire focus of my book *The Death of a Prophet*, if you are curious.

OmarRobb June 26, 2023 at 4:13 pm:

Thank you, Stephen.

Ibn-Ishaq and Ibn-Hisham are not regarded as authoritative books because they are based on "Anonymous-Oral-Tradition". We don't reject these books, but we regard them as history books the same as the history of Alexander or the history of the Romans. We don't use the contents of these books when we argue about the Quran, Muhammed

or the companions. We might use them as supporting accounts, but they are not the main evidence, and for one reason: we cannot assess the chains in these accounts.

Now ... the audited chains are not only related to legal aspects, they cover many domains, including the collection of the Quran, the story of Muhammed, and the story of Othman and the Quran.

If you based your conclusions on Ibn-Ishaq and Ibn-Hisham, then I am telling you straight forward, these are not authoritative books in the history of Islam.

But as you want to use the same critical process of thinking related to the NT, then let us compare the book of Ibn-Hisham with the NT:

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\$ Both are without chains.

\$ The NT were written by anonymous authors (except Paul who we really don't know much about) but we know Ibn-Hisham.

\$ We don't know exactly when the NT were written (except for Paul) but we know about Ibn-Hisham.

\$\$\$\$

So, although I am upfront in saying that Ibn-Hisham is not an authoritative book for Islam, but I think it has more credibility.

##Regarding your reply to 1#:

This is your opinion without data (i.e. evidences) as I far as I can see. As you might claim that Muslims Scholars were biased in their conclusions, I can say the same thing about Western Scholars that they have bias in interpreting the data. Actually, there are many biased Western Scholars about Islam, and that it is not hard to prove, but I would assume that it is hard to prove that the main Muslims scholars were biased in there work due to the appeared seriousness in creating their criteria. So, the bias card can be used from both parties. So, let us skip the opinions and go to the evidences.

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An oral tradition is a data. If this data doesn't contradict science, then it does have a level of credibility. You might not put it as high, but also, you cannot put it at zero.

However, an opinion that is supported by probable data has more weight that an opinion without data.

So, in 1#, we have an oral tradition that doesn't contradict with science. We know the person of this data (Ibn-Abbas). We have the date of this data (about 40AD), and we have the reason attached to this data (forgeries started by the civil war), and we have a trusted chain for this data.

I am presenting an opinion with data, but you have an opinion without data.

[{-->}]

An additional note:

You are saying that the contents of the Quran were fixed within twenty years of Muhammad's death. This is not what the Muslims are saying.

You are referring to Othman and the burning of the Quran. However, look at this matter from this angle: Othman was not a dictator and he didn't burn people on the stick to enforce his opinion. This should let us ask how the people accepted his decision for burning the Quran.

However, he didn't burn the Quran, because the Quran is an oral recited book, but each tribe at that time wrote in different spelling scripts, exactly the same for some different spellings between UK and USA. But the reciting was the same.

Let us speak a bit about this history of this region:

What the Westerners call "The Arabian Peninsula" are called by the Arabs as "The Arabian Island". The ancient Arabs regarded their land to be from the "Euphrates River" in the north to the Arabian sea in the south. It is highly likely that the word "Arab" came from the Sumerian, which ironically means the "Westerners" referring to the people living in the west of the Euphrates.

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As far as we know, this land of Arabs (The Arabian Peninsula) has never been united in the past 8000 years (at least) before Islam. The people in this land were either under foreign occupation or they were fighting each other. Nonetheless, large part of this land (especially in the middle and the west) was never controlled by foreign power for the past 8000 years (at least) before Islam.

There were many languages in this land, few of them are still spoken today. But it seems that the Arabic language started to be the de facto language for commerce and poetry, probably about 250AD. However, as Arabs were never united before, every region would have their own spelling standard.

This didn't raise a problem at the start of Islam because the Quran was an oral recited book and writing the Quran was for memory aid. However, in Iraq, people started to argue about the best spelling standard. That immediately alarmed the capital, and a committee was established to standardize the spelling.

[{-->}]

Another note:

I am pretty sure (and please correct me if I am wrong) that you don't precisely know in details the criteria that Muslim scholars used to evaluate the chain-oral-tradition.

When a narrative passes the trust level, then, it becomes a trusted narrative, then there is classification for these trusted narratives:

The single chain, and this is for a narrative that has only one trusted chain. In Arabic it is called Gareeb meaning Strange.

The double chain, and this is for a narrative that has two unique trusted chains. In Arabic it is called Azeez, meaning Honored.

The Mustafeed (overflow), and this is for a narrative that has 3 to 7 unique trusted chains.

The Mutawter (Numerous), and is for a narrative that has more than 7 unique trusted chains.

In all of the above classification, only the Mutawater is regarded to be “certain”. The others are “highly likely” were the Mustafeed is the most likely. So, when we speak about a trusted chain, we are aware that it is not certain, but it does have a high likely level.

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After that, Scholars do the “content analysis”, in which the narrative can be compared with other trusted narratives, and there is a clear methodology of how to reject a trusted narrative, especially if it clearly contradicts with other trusted narratives.

This is what I meant that the Muslims Scholars were very serious in creating the criteria for the Sanad.

If you are interested, I did write an article detailing a bit the criteria related to the chain-Oral-tradition, which you can find in chapter 8 in this link:

<https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/59-Notes-About-NobleQuran-19.pdf>

[{This is article #59 in the library site: omr-mhmd.yolasite.com}]

Sshoema June 26, 2023 at 9:27 pm:

All of these things are addressed in the articles and chapters that I recommend. If you want to enage in more detail what I have argued, I would suggest turning there. Much of what you suggest I may not know in fact I do and I have addressed thse topics at length. There is just so much more nuance and data than can be handled in a series of blog comments!

As for Ibn Ishaq, etc., indeed, these are not historically reliable sources. They are more or less the equivalent of the the apocryphal acts of the apostles in the Christian tradition. But they are all that we have to go on for the life of Muhammad and the history of the early community, outside of the non-Islamic sources.

OmarRobb June 26, 2023 at 10:01 pm:

This is simply not true, Ibn-Ishaq and Ibn-Hisham are not the only source for the life of Muhammed, and they are not used in any arguments related to the life of Muhammed, because the life of Muhammed is regarded to be a source for the laws, therefore, his life would only be accepted from the trusted chains of narratives and there are many sources for these chains.

If you based your conclusions on Ibn-Ishaq, then I am telling you clearly: Muslims scholars don't regard this book to be an authoritative book for the life of Muhammed.

Having said all the above, can you clarify to me why you equated Ibn-Ishaq to the “apocryphal acts” and not to the four Gospels?

How the 4 Gospels are more credible than Ibn-Ishaq?

You said that you want to use the same critical thinking process of the NT, so how did you derive to the conclusion to equate Ibn-Ishaq to the “apocryphal acts” and not to the 4 Gospels?

Let me be clear here, Ibn-Ishaq is not an authoritative book for the life of Muhammed, I finished discussing this matter, but I am surprised that you didn’t equate Ibn-Ishaq with the 4 Gospels.

OmarRobb June 27, 2023 at 11:41 pm:

Stephen,

I am reviewing my comments here and it seems that I was a bit tough. I probably could have been able to be more tactful, but this is actually a tough subject which does have (as I truly think) a large room for possible bias either hidden or apparent, intentional or unintentional. If it appeared that I was unreasonably tough, then I do sincerely apologize.

Sshoema July 12, 2023 at 2:35 pm:

Omar,

No worries. I am not troubled at all, and these are hardly the toughest comments that I have faced (no offense). But I dropped off the conversation because we are simply talking past each other. I do not accept the accuracy of the Islamic tradition’s memories of what happened at the time of origins, particularly given the late recording of these memories and the problematic influences of oral transmission and the contours of memory. As I have indicated, many of my reasons are laid out in the hundreds of thousands of words that I have published on the beginnings of Islam. So if you really want to engage some of these questions at a deeper level, we have to start by going there – blog comments simply aren’t the right forum to tackle such complex things that have to be explained and argued over the course of books. So, no offense at all, just a recognition that we were not really speaking in the same terms.

OmarRobb July 12, 2023 at 3:33 pm:

Thank you, Stephen.

I agree that the comments here wouldn’t support a deep debate and it wasn’t designed for it, but it can summarize positions. I would like to summarize my position here:

1# I truly think that most of the Western Scholars of Islamic Studies (WSIS) are biased in their analysis to the Islamic traditions specially in their analysis to the Chain Oral Tradition (COT).

2# I truly think that most of the WSIS don’t know or didn’t thoroughly study the COT.

3# I truly think that most of the WSIS are not using the proper critical analysis in looking at the COT: All Oral Traditions (AOT & COT) have right data, deformed data, and false data. The critical analysis of the NT didn't end up by brushing off the NT as unreliable, but Scholars started to create the criteria to filter the right data from this Oral Tradition. It seems to me the WSIS didn't do the same effort with the Islamic COT.

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It seems to me that the WSIS just decided to brush off the COT and to depend on sources (as Ibn-Ishaq and Ibn-Hisham) that the Muslims Scholars themselves regarded them to be unauthoritative for the life of Muhammed because it is based on AOT and not COT.

[AOT: Anonymous Oral Tradition].

This is my position, and I did write about this matter in the linked article that I have highlighted previously.

However, there is one question here: I understood from you that you have discussed the COT (the Sanad) in details. I looked at your work at the "academia", but it was mostly about Ibn-Hisham and I didn't look deep there because (as I have said before) we don't regard Ibn-Hisham to be an authoritative book for the life of Muhammed.

Can you guide me to the articles and chapters where you have analyzed and discussed the COT (Sanad) in details?

AngeloB July 14, 2023 at 6:17 pm:

The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity. Stephen Shoemaker has a chapter in that book on Muhammad and the Qur'an. It is available online (the Oxford University Press website).

OmarRobb July 16, 2023 at 9:05 am:

Thank you, AngeloB.

Found your Provided-Reference (Hereafter PR): Chapter 33 for Oxford-handbook. It is also available in Academia:

https://www.academia.edu/3535666/Mu%E1%B8%A5ammad_and_the_Qur%CA%BE%C4%81n_-_Oxford_Handbook_of_Late_Antiquity

Where are the Criteria in details?

The Chain-Oral-Tradition (COT – In the PR: "Isnad"), is mentioned in a brief introduction. The stuff I have mentioned here about the COT is very limited (single-chain, double-chain, multiple-chain, criteria for identifying the trusted from the weak, the difference between the audited books and the collections, chain-analysis, content-analysis, etc.), still the details in the PR didn't even come near.

It seems to me that I might have been speaking Gibberish here about the COT. So, let us forget about Muhammed and Islam, let us speak about today: You have a story about an event from your friend from his boss from his son. So, we have here a chain of three narrators. You trust your friend and he told you that the boss and his son are "OK".

However, “OK” doesn’t give a high level of trust but an average level. So, you take the story as “OK” (an average acceptance). But next day another different “OK” chain tell you about the same story.

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Although the narrators are “OK”, but the story now is more than “OK”.

Isn’t this common sense?!

This is the concept that the ancient Muslim Scholars built the criteria and classifications for the COT. Shouldn’t this be discussed in your Provided-Reference?!

Furthermore, in the Provided-Reference, it is mentioned that Al-Bukhari reject 593K of the hadith from 600k. But this is not mentioned in the ancient Islamic sources. What is mentioned is that Al-Bukhari selected 7k from 600k of the Hadith. This is because Al-Bukhari had a strict criteria for his book. No ancient Islamic source said that Al-Bukhari regarded the 593k to be forgeries. Changing “selected” to “rejected” is a misleading twist.

Now... we don’t deny the existence of forgeries, this is why the ancient Muslims Scholars established the COT criteria: to distinguish the trusted COTs from the Weak ones.

My question still: if the Western Scholars accepted many Anonymous-Oral-Traditions then how on earth they are ignoring the multiple COT’s!!

I think the Provided-Reference is rich with the supporting opinions of other Western Scholars, but there are little in-depth analyses to the data “as is” from the source. And to me, this is not “critical analysis”.

Sshoema July 24, 2023 at 7:15 pm:

Hi Omar. Simply adding in the names of some famous figures from the early tradition doesn’t really solve the problem. Especially when those chains were only added at the beginning of the second century of Islam and are known to be highly artificial.

If you want to see a lengthy discussion of the problems and limitations with this method, particularly with respect to Muhammad’s biographies, see the following article, where I give my explanation.

https://www.academia.edu/1057322/In_Search_of_%CA%BFUrwa_s_S%C4%ABra_Some_Methodological_Issues_in_the_Quest_for_Authenticity_in_the_Life_of_Mu%E1%B8%A5ammad?source=swp_share

OmarRobb July 25, 2023 at 1:12 pm:

Hi Stephen,

I am not sure about the names you are referring to here, but my arguments were focused on common sense and probability analysis (as I have explained many times here). If I mentioned few names, then they were probably just supporting data.

I looked briefly on the referenced-article, and my comments would be the same as I have discussed here, and in the pdf-reply in the radiocarbon-post.

You have lots of citations to Westerns Scholars without any true analysis or even thorough introduction to the things that the Muslim Scholars themselves have established and said, and without analyzing if the perceived trusted Muslims narrators were serious and dedicated or not.

For example, you have discussed in brief one classification of the COT which is the multiple chains that originated from someone who is not the source to a single chain to the source. This is “Khabar-Ahad”, and if these chains are trusted then it is still “lower” than the double-chain narrative (because double-chains are linked directly to the source), but higher than the trusted single-chain. However, you have just ended this brief discussion by saying: “this method is not foolproof” (page 264-265).

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This was a very brief analysis to this classification and your conclusion here is not based on thorough evidences, but I think it was just a personal judgement.

Also, you supported your conclusion with the “widespread forgery of hadith” (page 266), but no one denied the existence of these forgeries (as I have discussed before). It is for this forgeries that the Muslims Scholars established the COT (i.e. no hadith is accepted without a chain), and then they established the criteria for trusted narrators, the criteria for “chain analysis and “content analysis”, etc. All the above are fundamental for COT, which are absent from your analysis.

I think this work represents your judgments as you have many times clarified in the article: “Yet Motzki’s arguments in this instance are not persuasive” (page 266), “his efforts to press beyond this barrier are considerably less convincing” (page 267), etc.

I don’t think that you introduce the COT as established by the Muslim Scholars, and I think you based your conclusions on lots of unsupported claims, and to me, this is not critical analysis.

I have discussed in details my major arguments here and in the pdf-reply in the radiocarbon-post.

[{End of thread 1.1}]

[{The Start of **Thread 1.2** - Main Subject: Uthman’s Script}]

Kt June 27, 2023 at 12:56 pm:

I believe that critically studying the emergence of Islam can be challenging, given that it primarily relies on multiple oral sources and narratives (probably also written qur’anic materials). To assert that the suggested oral tradition offers and can provide an objective standard, regardless of the variation of individual in the vast area it refers to is really challenging to even begin or try to believe in. I think the truth is that the process was not purely based on oral transmissions, and even Islamic traditions and sources affirm this. Islamic sources seems to my understanding to acknowledged that written sources were circulating during this early period, although all of them have been lost. The

process undertaken by Uthman around 652 AD to compile a unified Quran suggest that there were circulating a whole lot of materials which Uthman supposedly chose from, upon where he dismissed (destroyed, burned they say) a whole lot of them who he did not approve of. Scholars, including Dr. Shady Nassar, suggests that they didn't rely exclusively on oral traditions, particularly after the Uthmanic period. He asserts that If the oral readings deviated from the written sources, they were disregarded. This raises questions about their view of oral tradition, suggesting it wasn't automatically considered a reliable source. Dr. Nassar highlights the five stages of Quran canonization and the variations in Quranic readings which in itself might raise a lot of scholarly concerns.

In relation to this, examining these belief materials (not even discussing the religious content in these) with a scholarly critical lens must in my mind be challenging for many reasons:

1. The supposed revelation, which occurred over a few decades, lacks concrete evidence and witnesses. The processes of its “recording”, memorization over centuries (Hadiths and the Siras), and even during the canonization of the Quran are complex and problematic.
2. The process of canonizing the different versions/readings of the would normally be considered problematic for any scriptures in an evolving belief system.
3. The Siras (Biography) by Ibn Ishaq, as narrated by Ibn Hisham, who lived and died 200 years after Muhammad and far from where Muhammad lived, adds another layer of complexity or perhaps complexities.
4. The Hadiths (sayings of Muhammad), from which Al Bukhari of Uzbekistan dismissed almost 600,000 (keeping only about 1%), also present challenges. Al Bukhari, living hundreds of years later and thousands of miles from Mecca, managed to select the 1%. The rest of the orally transmitted Hadiths which he was were dismissed. Other scholars, such as Muslim Ibn Al-Hajjaj (Sahih Muslim), lived centuries later, further complicating the narrative.
5. The Tafsirs, or interpretations, came even later (in the 10th century).

Unless one adopts a strong “apologeti”c position, I can't understand that a good critical scholarship should not be welcomed, also within the islamic belief system.

OmarRobb July 1, 2023 at 10:18 am:

I would like to comment on some of your points here:

1# From the time of Ahmad Deedat (probably the first recorded Islamic debater), the Muslims are claiming that Uthman just standardized the script (i.e. the spelling). But still, the West regarded that Uthman updated the Quran.

However, it is a free world for forming opinions, but I would assume that it would be more fair to highlight first what the Muslims are claiming then to attach other opinions afterwards.

To my opinion, this is not totally fair because an academic opinion should be supported with data (i.e. evidences), and the West opinion here is without data, and the Muslims claim are clarified with answers about the What, When, Where, Who, Why, and How. Therefore, it is a claim with details.

Nonetheless, it might be more fair just to clarify first what the Muslims are claiming in this regard before attaching other opinions, specially that the only source for this matter is just the Muslims, and even if some of the Western Scholars decided to be suspicious of any data the came from the Muslims, still, they need first to clarify the claims of the source.

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2# The first attempt to gather the Quran was about a year after Muhammed. The criteria were simple: the verses of the Quran need to be supported by one written document and two trusted witnesses (at least). So, your conclusion about the first Muslims distrusting the oral tradition is not very accurate.

3# The Islamic culture did encourage memorizing the Quran from the start. You need to read the Quran when praying and you cannot hold a book while praying. I don't think the Torah was widely memorized, neither the NT, but the Quran was memorized from many of the people (scholars and commons) from the start until today, and this need to be added in the critical analysis parameters.

4# Stephen did mentioned that Al-Bukhari rejected 530k hadith, but looking at the references, it didn't say that he rejected 530k, but he selected 70k. Al-Bukhari in his Saheeh have selected the most trusted narrators.

For example, Al-Turmithi is a well-known auditor, but he included narrators that are Accepted. A person with high morality and high Memory would be regarded Trusted, but a person with high morality and normal memory would be regarded Accepted.

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So, Al-Bukhari was very selective. Therefore, the implying that comes with the word "Selected" is different than the implying from the word "Rejected".

However, the West can form the opinions they want, but it would be more fair to clarify first the data that are claimed by the source.

5# Ibn-Ishaq and Ibn-Hisham are not authoritative books in regard to the life of Muhammed. So, it would be fair if the West want to use these books in their analysis to clarify first the Muslims position of these books.

6# The West have used the "Anonymous Oral Tradition" (AOT) to highlight many things that they regarded true. I would assume that the "chain oral tradition" (COT) is much more accurate, because we know more data about the transmission of this tradition compared with AOT. However, if we are going to regard all "Oral Tradition" (OT) to be inaccurate then we need to cancel all human history from before 1900, because all of human history depend on OT.

Also, If scholars are not consistent with their methods of critical analysis, then these scholars are biased.

7# Al-Bukhari was born in 810 AD, Muslim Ibn Hajaj was born in 822 AD.

OmarRobb July 1, 2023 at 10:40 am:

There is an error in my previous comment: the Hadith in Al-Bukhari Saheeh is 7k not 70k.

[{End of thread 1.2}]

[{The Start of **Thread 1.3** - Main Subject: Gibson's hypothesis}]

DirkCampbell July 3, 2023 at 10:59 am:

Having read through all the comments here (including the large amount of special pleading from our Muslim friend) I notice the absence of references to Jay Smith and al-Fadi's CIRA youtube series. Is that because they are not considered rigorous enough, or because as Christians they are not impartial? Dan Gibson's research on the likely birthplace of Muhammad in Petra is pretty fascinating. Petra conforms to the descriptions in the qur'an of 'the mother of cities' whereas Mecca certainly does not. It would seem that the location was changed from Petra to Mecca for political reasons but the qur'anic text was not modified accordingly.

OmarRobb July 12, 2023 at 10:40 am:

Researchers who {only present the supporting data for their affirmed assured conclusions while ignoring the main opposing data (or presenting these data unfairly)} are probably biased.

In my view, Jay Smith is biased in his research and analysis.

For Gibson's hypothesis:

There are essential data that are missing from his hypothesis that should have been addressed:

1# Who is the ruler that changed the praying direction from Petra? when was that, and how the Muslims reacted?

2# Petra is the Greek name for the city, and the Nabataean name is Raqem. This is known from the historical records and the archaeological inscriptions. This city was never named as Mecca.

Gibson needs to address this matter.

3# From the historical records and archaeological findings, Petra encountered a devastating earthquake about 360AD, which destroyed a large part of the city. Many people start to leave the city gradually aftermath until the population were no longer sufficient to maintain the city, especially the complex water-supply system. Hence after, the city was quickly abandoned. It is suggested that at 500AD, there were no one in Petra and the city was lost to history for a long time.

Gibson needs to address this matter.

[{End of thread 1.3}]

[{The Start of **Thread 1.4** - Main Subject: More on Chain Oral Tradition}]

Riverart July 4, 2023 at 1:11 pm:

This discussion highlights for me the difficulties in reaching consensus in Religious scholarship. There will always be at minimum two camps – believers and unbelievers. The construction or belief in “reliable” oral transmission is an apologetic argument of the religious faithful believer as to why their scripture and therefore their faith is reliable in spite of what non-sectarian, non-believing academics know from experience – oral transmission is not a reliable means of transmission. You will never get 100% percent accuracy. That’s not to say that the core message of an oral tradition would necessarily be lost or changed but the idea that you would get word for word accuracy over the span or years, decades or even centuries of or oral transmission is not feasible.

OmarRobb July 12, 2023 at 10:29 am:

Thank you, Riverart.

I did write a point to point reply, but it was long, so I put it in this link:

<https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/R1-Riverart-2.pdf>

[{This pdf article will be presented after this post}]

This is not an article; it is just a 9-points reply to your 3 comments.

However, I will put here a brief for the first two points:

1# In my comments, did I imply anything related to faith, beliefs, or metaphysics?

How am I acting as an apologetic by discussing a type of an “Oral Tradition”?

The Chain-Oral-Tradition (COT) has nothing to do with faith and we don’t regard COT to be God’s inspired method. But the COT is a method that is recognized by common sense and understanding probabilities. I will discuss this further in point 6.

2# We don’t regard Al-Bukhari book to be God’s inspired book, and if you asked all Muslims about Al-Bukhari book then they will tell you that it is the most accurate book after the Quran. But the word “most accurate” does imply that it is not totally accurate. I do admit that many Scholars act as though Al-Bukhari book is totally accurate, but there were many well-known Muslims Scholars that rejected some narratives in Al-Bukhari

[{### The Start of the article: R1-Riverart-2.pdf ###}]

[A reply for some of the points mentioned in the comments of Riverart in the post: Can the Qur’an and Early Islam Be Studied Critically (Like the NT and Early Christianity?) Guest Post by Stephen Shoemaker, 25 June 2023, Bart Ehrman Blog].

Thank you, Riverart. Your comments were genuine, and I would like to highlight the following points.

It would be easier to establish here the following short abbreviations:

- WSIS: Western Scholars of Islamic Studies.
- AOT: Anonymous Oral Tradition. COT: Chain Oral Tradition.

1# In my comments, did I imply anything related to faith, beliefs, or metaphysics?

How am I acting as an apologetic by discussing a type of an “Oral Tradition”?

The COT has nothing to do with faith and we don’t regard COT to be God’s inspired method. But the COT is a method that is recognized by common sense and understanding probabilities. I will discuss this further in point 6.

2# We don’t regard Al-Bukhari book (The Saheeh) to be God’s inspired book, and if you asked all Muslims about Al-Bukhari book then they will tell you that it is the most accurate book after the Quran. But the word “most accurate” does imply that it is not totally accurate. I do admit that many Scholars act as though Al-Bukhari book is totally accurate, but there were many well-known Muslims Scholars that rejected some narratives in Al-Bukhari, for example Al-Daraqutni who is a well-known ancient HadithScholar (born in 901AD) and Al-Albani, who is well known recent Hadith-Scholar (born in 1914AD) .

Nonetheless, All Muslim Scholars regard Al-Bukhari book to be based on a sincere and professional effort. Therefore, rejecting narratives in it requires a sincere and professional effort as well. This is not only related to Al-Bukhari book, but it is related to all sincere and professional books in all fields of knowledge.

It should be noted that there is a clear method for analyzing the COT narratives. First, we do the “Chain Analysis” to check if the chain is trusted. Then we do the “Content Analysis”, and some of the trusted narratives can be rejected due to the content analysis. I did explain this method in the following linked article:

<https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/59-Notes-About-NobleQuran-19.pdf>

[{This is article #59 in the library site: omr-mhmd.yolasite.com}]

3# You compared the Muslims COT with the Talmud. But the Talmud isn’t based on COT. The Jewish Scholars do claim that their data passed from a scholar to a scholar, but still, the transmission method is AOT. For example, Rabbi Akiva spoke about a narrative, which is documented in the Talmud after about a century or so, but we don’t know the narrators between Akiva to the documentation. Therefore, this transmission was based on AOT.

For the Islamic narratives, the narrators between the source and the documentation is known, so if you open a COT audited book, you will find the author clarifying the

narrators from the event to the documentation. This is a very unique method for transmitting data.

4# Regarding the disagreement between me and Stephen about the 40 or 100 Years:

Let me clarify the following:

- 1- We have the Prophet.
- 2- We have the Companions, who were the witnesses for the words of the Prophet.
- 3- We have the 1st followers (1F), which includes also the children of the Companions.
- 4- We have 2nd followers (2F).

In 40 APD (After the Prophet's Death), there were still companions alive, and the 1F did encounter with the Companions. So, the COT method was established without any gap between the witnesses and the 1F.

As I have said to Stephen: the WSIS can claim that Muslims Scholars are biased in their analysis. But equally, we can say that the WSIS are biased in analyzing the accounts of the Muslims. Therefore, the "Bias Card" can be issued from each party to the other. For this reason, let us just leave this card out and analyze the data:

The Muslims does have a claim and they also have the details related to What, When, Where, Who, Why, and How questions. The WSIS have a claim without any data. I do assume here that a claim with detailed data (that don't contradict with science) is much more reliable than a claim without data.

5# The Islamic culture did encourage memorizing the Quran from the start, as you cannot hold a book while praying. I don't think the Torah was widely memorized, neither the NT, but the Quran was memorized from many of the people (scholars and commons) from the start until today. So, from the start of this civilization, there were processes to train and improve the memory and keeping it active as possible, and this need to be added to the critical analysis.

6# You mentioned the Chinese Whisper: passing a story between 20 people and see how the story deviate through. However, this doesn't fit exactly with the COT method. So, let us invent here an experiment that might fit:

Notice first that most of the narrators in the Islamic COT were teachers. So, they didn't hear a verse at their 20's and then they pass it on at their 60's. Islamic laws and the life of Mohammed were the subject of their teaching.

So, let us have 5 people in our experiment that are morally good and have "strong memory", and let them be historians and we will invent a narrative that seems historical.

When I say that these people have strong memory then I expect that at all of them are able to conduct their classes perfectly without looking at any notes. Probably this is rare today, but this how things were in the past.

So, we have 5 historians with good morality and strong memory. We invent a story that seems historical and then we pass it through them: one telling the next in the same method of the “Chinese Whisper”.

Now ... what is the probability that the outcome would be the same (in general) as the input.

This is what I said before that the COT is based on common sense, and I am certain that the outcome here will be much more accurate than AOT. I think if we have 100 outputs passed on trusted single-chains then I would assume that we might have about 80% (or more) of the narratives to be accurate. However, this is an assumption, but it is almost a fact that the probability of accuracy is much higher than AOT.

Let us now have 10 historians making two chains (that is two groups of 5 historians). Let us pass the story for the first group and the second group. So, we have two outputs for the same input. If the two outputs were “generally the same”, then what is the probability that these two outputs are the same as the input (i.e. the probability of the accuracy of the outputs compared to the input)?

The probability of accuracy would be highly increased for this double-chain case.

How about if we have three groups of fives. Therefore, we would have three outputs for the same input. If these 3 outputs were generally the same, then what is the probability for the accuracy of these outputs compared to the input?

The probability of accuracy would be highly increased for this case than the case before.

Many Muslim Scholars regard that a narrative would be certain if it has more than 7 unique trusted chains, but less than that would be regarded likely with the 7 chains as the most likely.

This is what I meant before by the common sense and understanding probabilities. And I did explain this matter in detail in the linked article which I will put it here again as well: <https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/59-Notes-About-NobleQuran-19.pdf>

7# As I have said to Stephen: Ibn-Ishaq books are not regarded authoritative for the life of Muhammed; because these books are based on AOT and not COT.

Now, we don't reject these books, and we are actually using it as one of the sources related to the history of Arabs before Muhammed, and we would be using here the same tools that are used for analyzing the history of the Romans and the Greeks, as all of these histories are based on AOT. But we don't use these books as “evidences” and “main data” for the life of Muhammed, but they might be used as “supporting” data. This is so, because the AOT narratives do have a large substantial margin of error.

So, it is really surprising that the WSIS would criticize the Muslims for some narratives in Ibn-Ishaq when the Muslim Scholars themselves don't regard Ibn-Ishaq to be authoritative for the life of Muhammed.

But the most surprising was when Stephen equated Ibn-Ishaq to the “Apocryphal Acts” and not to the 4 Gospels.

If we look at it objectively, then I think Ibn-Ishaq is probably more credible than the 4 Gospels:

- The 4 Gospels have 5 authors: Mark, Q, Matthew, Luke and John. But Ibn-Ishaq is only one author, but his work was edited by other historians (as Ibn-Hisham). However, let us give one positive point here for the 4 Gospels.
- But these 5 authors are anonymous, and we know nothing about them, but we know exactly who is Ibn-Ishaq. So, this would be a point for Ibn-Ishaq.
- Jesus was living in Palestine, speaking Aramaic. The stories of Jesus started to pass through the Jewish community via AOT. Then there were points of translations from the Jewish community to the Greek community, then the stories started to pass through Greek community via AOT, then it was collected by 5 anonymous authors.

So, we have 5 anonymous Greek authors writing in Greek for the Greeks about a Jewish man speaking Aramaic.

But in the case of Ibn-Ishaq, he was an Arab writing in Arabic for the Arabs about an Arab. Therefore, this would be a positive point for Ibn-Ishaq.

8# When Scholars applied the critical analysis to the NT, they didn't brush the NT off, and they didn't coin the whole NT to be unreliable. Critical analysis is not about criticizing, it is about objectively analyzing the subject and find the truth about it (or at least this is part of the analysis).

As all types of Oral Traditions (AOT & COT) have right data, deformed data, and false data,, then it is part of the critical analysis of the NT to create the criteria that can be used to filter the right data in the related Oral Tradition.

Did the WSIS used the same concept of this "Critical Analysis" in analyzing the Muslim's COT? Did the WSIS explained clearly how the Muslims analyzed the COT? Did the WSIS clearly explained the criteria of the Muslims in filtering the COT?

How on earth can people apply a professional critical analysis on a subject that they don't know the details of it. And I can positively say that Most of the WSIS don't know the details of the COT.

This was my question to Stephen when he told me that the COT is not reliable, and I did ask him about the criteria and reasoning that is used to come up with this conclusion. However, Stephen was under the impression that the COT is only related for the Laws. But this is very wrong: Muslims Scholars don't validate any narrative related to the life of Muhammed if it wasn't based on a trusted COT.

That what I was saying to Stephen that he is generating conclusions based on a source (Ibn-Ishaq) that is regarded by Muslim Scholars to be unauthoritative for the life of Muhammed.

9# Now this is my question to you, Riverart:

Regardless whether you agree with me or not about the high probability of the COT, still, I did include lot of solid data about the work of the ancient Muslims Scholars (singlechain, double chain, Ibn-Ishaq, Al-Bukhari, Al-Daraqutni, The criteria for COT, chain analysis, content analysis, etc.), which I think it is 100% accurate, meaning that Muslim Scholars did discuss the data I am presenting here.

However, suppose you did your research about the data here, and let us say for argument's sake that you concluded that the data that I have presented here was 60% accurate and 40% questionable (just for argument's sake). Does this 60% justify the claim that most of the WSIS are truly biased and they are not doing a proper and professional job in presenting the data from the source (i.e. the Muslims Scholars) before conducting their analysis and presenting their conclusions?

I mean here that if the data I am presenting here was 60% accurate (for argument's sake) then is it right for me to claim that most of the WSIS are presenting their conclusions without proper analysis?

[#### End of the article: R1-Riverart-2.pdf ####]

Riverart July 13, 2023 at 6:01 pm:

Omar,

It's quite clear to me from the replies to Stephen's post that we won't agree on the reliability of COT. I understand the examples you sent me and the only point that I'll address because I don't think it's been mentioned yet is the qualification for the people who were passing on the tradition "being morally good and having good memories". Lee Strobel makes an almost identical argument as your example in his book "The Case for Christ". Dr. Erhman has previously addressed the flaws in the logic of that argument so I won't repeat them here.

In my view the nature of what your describing is still a form of Apologetics, what I mean by that is simply that it's a defense of the faith. I do promise to read the article that you linked about COT and if anything in it changes my mind then I'll let you know. I very sincerely thank you for taking the time to reply to me and for linking the article. At the end of the day, while we may not be in agreement or reach any consensus, I still find the discussion very valuable in furthering mutual understanding.

OmarRobb July 16, 2023 at 7:18 am:

I am not trying to change your mind, because this is related to the belief system and this is a very complex system, which surprisingly, logic is not the major factor in it. So, I am not heading there. My aim was to clarify some points from a specific perspective and to put on the table some possible new thoughts. I think I was clear about this aim in point 9 in my pdf reply.

For Strobel opinion: This is the same as your previous example of the Talmud, and both are not an apple to apple comparison: regardless of Strobel opinion, the data related to Christ was transmitted via AOT; because we know nothing about the people who

transmitted this data. This is completely different than the COT as I have explained before and I will repeat it here again: In the COT, we know exactly the people who transmitted the data from the event to the documentation. We know where they born and died, their career, their teachers and students, what the people have said about them, etc. And there is a clear criteria of how to identify the trusted from the weak narrator.

[{-->}]

The irony here is that I shouldn't be telling you all of this, because this should have been the job of the WSIS: they should have explained to the Western Audience the data available "as is" from the source (i.e. what the ancient Muslims Scholars have said) then-after. they need to analyze this data. Also, this is not related to the "faith" of the WSIS or any anyone "else", it is about analyzing the "available data".

However, if the Western Scholars accepted many data based on the AOT for the NT and others, then the data that is based on multiple COTs should have more weight. But the WSIS just decided to ignore all the COT. So, I am asking here: Do the WSIS think that the anonymous people are more trusted than the well-known ones!!!

To me, this is not "critical analysis". To me this is bias.

However, this is our common sense and our understanding for the probability analysis, and I acknowledge your right to disagree with all of that regardless whether you have supporting data or not.

Thank you for having the time to look at my long pdf reply.

[{End of thread 1.4}]

[{Article 2 for Dr. Shoemaker in Bart Ehrman blog:

[https://ehrmanblog.org/radiocarbon-dating-of-the-quran-has-it-solved-the-problem-guest-post-by-stephen-shoemaker/ }](https://ehrmanblog.org/radiocarbon-dating-of-the-quran-has-it-solved-the-problem-guest-post-by-stephen-shoemaker/) }

Radiocarbon Dating of the Qur'an. Has It Solved the Problem? Guest Post by Stephen Shoemaker

July 15, 2023

This is an unusually important post on how to solve the problem of the date of the Qur'an, by my colleague Stephen Shoemaker, connected with his earlier scintillating discussion based on his recent book *Creating the Qur'an*, which you can check out here: Amazon.com: *Creating the Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Study eBook* : Shoemaker, Stephen J.: Books

The question is: can't you just do a scientific dating of the Qur'an manuscripts and quickly solve the question: when were they produced? The answer may surprise you. It enlightened *me*

Radiocarbon Dating and the Origins of the Qur'an:

The Perils of Scientism and Internet Sensationalism

Bart invited me to make another post or two about studying the origins of the Qur'an from a historical-critical perspective, and right off the bat I knew that I needed to write something about attempts to radiocarbon date early Qur'anic manuscripts. It turns out that over the last ten years this topic has become the 800-pound gorilla in the room (to mix metaphors), and much like an actual 800-pound gorilla in any room, it has become a huge distraction and a hindrance to clear thinking. To borrow another trite metaphor, many scholars have invoked the radiocarbon analyses of certain early manuscripts as if these were a kind of silver bullet capable of bringing an end to all further discussion about the Qur'an's origins. With the evidence of "science" now firmly in hand, the conversation is over, they maintain, and abracadabra, the Qur'an's early history is, as it turns out, exactly what the Islamic tradition says it is.

Nevertheless, the problem is that most scholars who are eager to impose such scientific closure on this thorny and contested topic do not appear to understand fully the subtleties and limitations of the method in question. In the interests of brevity, I will not explain in detail how this method of radiocarbon analysis works, although interested readers may consult the third chapter of my *Creating the Qur'an*, where I explain the process, its basis, and its limitations in clear and basic terms. There too I address in a much more sophisticated manner the various points that I make in this post, as well as identifying even deeper problems with the ways that radiocarbon dating has been used in Qur'anic studies.

Radiocarbon dating is of course a remarkable tool for the historian when used properly, but in our case, it turns out to be more of a chainsaw than a chisel, when the latter is what we need. For instance, if one needs to date an object broadly, say to determine whether it was manufactured in either late antiquity or the late Middle Ages, then radiocarbon dating is your best friend. With this sort of range in view, its results are clear and decisive. So, for instance, when scholars used this method to date the Shroud of Turin, the results definitively identified

this object as a medieval, rather than ancient, fabrication. Within a range of centuries, then, radiocarbon dating is rock solid.

The problem in our case, however, is that debates around the formation of the Qur'an hinge on a matter of a couple of decades, rather than centuries. There can be little question that the Qur'an as we now have it had come into existence by the early eighth century, which radiocarbon dating solidly confirms. Yet the more pressing question is whether the Qur'an's definitive, canonical form was established by around 650, or 670, or 690. Such precision is more than radiocarbon dating can provide, as any archaeologist or historian familiar with this method will acknowledge. It is a lesson that scholars of biblical studies, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in particular, learned decades ago, and even still New Testament scholars struggle to identify the dates of the earliest fragments of the gospels and Paul's letters. But back to the Qur'an.

In recent years samples were taken from several early Qur'anic manuscripts in order to determine the date of their production using radiometric analysis. Some of the initial results appeared to align very favorably with the canonical account of the Qur'an's origins (which I outlined in my previous post), quickly creating a sense among more traditional scholars that at last science had proven the "skeptics" wrong. The first efforts to date a Qur'anic manuscript using this method involved a single folio that was stolen from Yemen and now is in the possession of Stanford University. Although these initial results were published in a scholarly journal, soon thereafter radiocarbon datings of early Qur'anic manuscripts in Birmingham, England and Tübingen were announced on library websites, only without full publication and analysis of the data. Encouraged by online articles breathlessly heralding discovery of "the oldest Qur'an," social media (and Twitter especially) quickly declared that the matter of the Qur'an's origins had been decided. Science had proven the veracity of the traditional Islamic account of the Qur'an's formation, a verdict pronounced via Twitter threads rather than through the careful argument and evidence of a scholarly publication. Science had spoken, and science was infallible.

Of course, any good scientist will tell you that scientific data must always, just like any other evidence, be carefully interpreted, and while scientific measurement can be decisive in some instances, in others, the investigator is confronted with significant ambiguity. Within a range of centuries, radiocarbon data is decisive. But beyond this broad scope, more precision requires greater interpretation of the radiometric data. And once we begin to reach for individual decades, the data can no longer be meaningfully interpreted. Ironically, in applying this method of dating to early Qur'anic manuscripts, scholars have seemingly created more problems than they have been able to solve. For example, some folios returned dates indicating that the manuscript in question was a hundred years or more earlier than Muhammad himself!

In other instances, a single page was analyzed independently by as many as four different labs. One would expect that if this method were accurate and reliable, the results would be consistent, regardless of where the analysis was done. But instead, the results were often all over the place: a folio dated to 611-660 by one lab was determined by another to date sometime between 433-599; another folio dated 590-660 by one lab was dated by another to 388-535. Now, these results are rather decisive if one wants to know whether the object in question is ancient or medieval. Yet given such widely varying datings of the same object,

one obviously cannot seek to pinpoint a particular decade. The data are too skewed, and even by the standards of radiocarbon analysis, these results were more inconsistent than one generally expects from this method. Still, the Qur’anic sages of the Twitterverse were unshaken. Clearly – they proclaimed with neither evidence nor argument – the labs that returned the data that they didn’t like simply had botched the job (I am not making this up).

Eventually, some scholars instead began to take the scientific data seriously and to ask whether, for whatever reason, something was not working quite right with the radiocarbon dating of objects from the early medieval Near East. And so, they turned to early manuscripts whose dates were already well established, through scribal notes or the like, and had them dated using radiocarbon analysis. In each instance, the date that was returned was significantly off, by as much as a century in some cases, further calling into question the use of this method for dating early Qur’anic manuscripts within more than a century or two. Of course, these problems do not mean that radiocarbon dating is worthless or does not work. Far from it. Yet it does remind us that we must respect the method’s limitations. We cannot ask it to do more than it is capable of and must likewise allow for its constraints.

Even so, something still seems to be significantly off in our efforts to date manuscripts from this era using radiocarbon analysis. Presumably there are some underlying errors in the framework that we use to analyze the raw data obtained from these objects. Such inaccuracies in interpretation have been relatively common in the history of radiocarbon dating, and as the discipline has progressed, these have regularly been corrected. Presently we stand at a moment where significant correction is seemingly needed for dating objects from the early medieval Near East. The good news, however, is that scientists who specialize in this kind of analysis are aware of the constant need for such adjustments, and already new avenues are being pursued that will potentially yield more consistent results in seeking to date early Islamic artifacts. Yet even once such refinements are in place, it remains extremely unlikely that radiocarbon dating alone will fully resolve the mystery of the Qur’an’s origins, and historical-critical investigation of the text itself will remain the most vital set of tools for this endeavor.

[{End of Article 2}]

[{The start of **Thread 2.1** - Main Subject: Dating the Quran}]

OmarRobb July 16, 2023 at 6:57 am:

Hi Stephen,

This is a tough subject as you know, and I truly think that there are issues in your “analysis”. I did start to write my reply but realized that it covers the size of many comments. Therefore, I decided to put it as a linked pdf to reduce the space of comments.

I know that the comments in the blog here are not designed for debates, but for quick notes and for clarifying positions, however, I preferred to put this pdf reply here as a part of the “Opinion and the Opposite Opinion” for this sensitive subject.

The pdf reply link:

<https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/R2-Stephen-2.pdf>

[{This pdf article will be presented after this post}]

I need to clarify here that this is not an article, it is just a 5 points reply to your post.

[{#### The Start of the article: R2-Stephen-2.pdf ####}]

[Reply for Stephen Shoemaker about his post in Bart Ehrman blog: Radiocarbon Dating of the Qur'an. Has It Solved the Problem? – Friday, July 15, 2023] Thank you, Stephen.

I would like to highlight the following 5 points related to your analysis.

1# When the Birmingham manuscript was dated, Jay Smith claimed that the Quran existed before the birth of Muhammed. Many atheists follow his claim to the point that it caused Rebecca Watson (an atheist youtuber) to ask atheists to stop discussing this subject because it makes atheists look bad.

[Ref: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TFTj-7JHDo>

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzceTMtfGec>]

She then explained a bit about the carbon-dating and highlighted that it is related to the skin of the parchment, not necessary the date of writing.

So, yes, carbon-dating doesn't give a pinpoint date, but it does give a probability range, and with it, we can increase the probability-of-accuracy of some conclusions over others.

So, the question here: did the carbon-dating increase the probability-of-accuracy of the Islamic tradition claim?!!

[The Chain Oral Tradition is vital in this discussion, but I will leave it to your previous post, and here I will just use the term "Islamic tradition"].

2# You spoke about 4 lab-results: 388-535, 433-599, 590-660, 611-660. These results might be meaningless if you are looking for a pinpoint date, but we aren't looking for that. Are we!

We can clearly conclude from these results that the animal was highly-likely killed before 660AD. Can't this data increase the probability-of-accuracy for the Islamic tradition claim?!!

Also, the first datum can be regarded as a statistical anomaly. The next three data have a shared band which also can provide useful average statistical data. Can't this data increase the probability-of-accuracy for the Islamic tradition claim?!!

3# Just on last Thursday, Bart put a post about dating the NT. He explained that dating is based on paleography, which is using the hand-writing style for dating. This doesn't give a pinpoint date, but it gives a valuable range of probabilities and the NT Scholars are happy with it.

We can use the same method with ancient Quranic Manuscripts, but in this case the probability range is much more accurate: Arabic script has no short vowels. This script

was influenced by the Nabataean script which was influenced by the Canaanite script. The Arabs, Nabataeans and the Canaanites didn't have any problem in writing and reading their scripts. However, when non-Arabs started to learn the Quran, they found this script to be confusing, therefore, Scholars started to put signs, dots and dashes (Diacritics) to guide the pronunciation of the words. But this happened gradually, and this development was documented.

Would the analysis of the diacritics and the carbon-dating increase the probability-ofaccuracy for the Islamic tradition claim?

This is an important subject, so have you covered this subject in your "critical analysis" of the Quran?!!

4# It has been said that the Sunna and Shia have a different version of the Quran. This is totally false: The Shia in Iran and Iraq have the same Quran of the Sunni in Arabia.

However, there are two main Qera't (which Westerns call it "versions) between the Muslims in Arabia and the Muslims in North Africa. In Arabia, the Qera't of "Aasim" is the dominant, while in North-Africa, the Qera't of "Nafi'" is the dominant. But let us call them here versions. These versions are not "news", they are discussed thoroughly in the ancient books. So, this is not "critical analysis", this is just a description.

When the NT Scholars started to "critically analyze" the NT, they started to compare the manuscripts. They found that the difference between the NT manuscripts is about 400k words. (k=1000), with many words that are "contradicting". This was a very valuable "critical analysis" for the NT field.

Did you cover this angle in your critical analysis of the Quran?! This is a very important angle for the origin of the Quran as it was an important angle for the origin of the NT.

What are the differences between Aasim version and Nafi' version? Because just saying that {there are versions for the Quran} is truly misleading.

The difference between the versions of the Quran doesn't exceed 1000 words. This is based on my quick counting to the differences that was collected by Abu Bakr AsSijistani (died 928AD) in his book Kitab al-Masahif. It should be noted that none of these differences causing any contradictions to the verses of the Quran.

These differences represent about 1.3% of the 77,437 words of the Quran. I will double the count for safety margin, so we have about 2.6% of differences, and I will round this figure to 3%. Therefore, we have about 1300 words as a safety-margin at the top of the 1000 original count. This would cover any possible lost differences.

In the hidden (lower-text) of the Sana'a manuscript (which we can say that it was ancient due to the lack of diacritics), the well-known article of Sadeghi and Goudarzi identified 60 points of differences between this manuscript and Aasim version. Many of these points related to one word, some were for 2 words, and rarely for 3 words. For safety calculations, we will regard all the points for 3 words, which will give us 180 words difference.

The readable part of this manuscript is about 10,259 words (based on approximate calculation for the number and percentage of the readable parts of the folios). So, we have about 1.75% difference. It should be noted here that these 180 words don't make any contradictions for the verses of the Quran.

The 180 words can be included within the 1300 words safety-margin that we have established. So, we still have the 3%. It should be noted that the Scribe of the hidden manuscript was not professional as it is shown by his style of writing, but this is a different story.

The appeared (upper-text) of the Sana'a manuscript (which is ancient by the style of writing) is almost identical to Aasim version, the same as the Birmingham manuscript.

So, all versions have 100% of the meaning with a "minimum" of 97% of its exact wording.

How significant is this?

With all of the quick and miraculous expansion of the Muslims to the east and west, then the civil wars and the defragmentation, but still, the Muslims from the far east of the old world to the far west of that world have the Quran with 100% of the meaning and at least 97% of its exact wording, and the 3% don't give any contradictions to the verses.

Doesn't this support the claim that the Quran has one source?!! Doesn't this support the claim of the Islamic tradition?!!

Have you covered this part in your "critical analysis" of the Quran?

5# My understanding to the "critical analysis" is to detach from previous conclusions, then to gather data (specially the raw data from the source), analyze the data, and then form the conclusions accordingly.

But I truly feel that you have reversed this process in your analysis to the Quran. I feel that you have already formed your conclusions and you were gathering the data that support these conclusions, and most of these data are just the opinions of other Westerners Scholars.

So, I think you have very detailed descriptions of many Westerners Scholars supporting opinions, but with very little in-depth analysis for the raw data from the source.

I acknowledge that this is my opinion, but I have examples to support it:

From the first TV recorded debate between Muslims and Westerners (early 1970's), the Muslims always say that Othman standardized the "script", and this is supported by "detailed ancient data". Still, the Western Scholars of Islamic Studies (WSIS) continue to say that Othman collected the Quran, standardized the Quran, finalized the Quran, etc.

So, I am requesting the WSIS: Will you please start by clarifying the data "as is" from the source, and then attach any opinion you want!

I would rather prefer that opinions to be supported by evidences (and the opinions of other Scholars are not evidences). But still, I am limiting my request to the WSIS for

one thing only: Just start by clarifying the data “as is” from the source, and then attach any opinion you like.

Is this a fair request!

Also (as a supporting example to my previous opinion) no ancient Islamic source said that Al-Bukhari reject 593K of the hadith from 600k. This is not true. The ancient sources said that Al-Bukhari selected 7k from 600k of the Hadith. This is because AlBukhari had a strict criteria for his Saheeh. No ancient Islamic source said that AlBukhari regarded the 593k to be forgeries.

Again, I am requesting the WSIS to start by presenting the data “as is” from the source, then they can attach any opinion they like.

I also think that if I dig more, then I would probably find more examples to support my previous opinion.

[{### End of the article: R2-Stephen-2.pdf ###}]

Sshoema July 21, 2023 at 2:06 pm:

Hi Omar. I took a quick look at your points. My response is: why don't you just read my book, rather than asking if I address this that or the other thing (I do). It is free!, and I think you would learn a lot.

OmarRobb July 22, 2023 at 4:27 am:

Hi Stephen,

I looked briefly at few chapters, and I think that there are lots of unsupported claims (or at least in the parts that I have looked), and I do regard that point 5# in my pdf reply still hold.

For example: you didn't clarify in the review of the traditional narrative (chapter-1) that the committee at the time of Abu-Baker followed a clear criteria for collecting the Quran: the verses of the Quran need to be supported by one written document and two trusted witnesses (at least). This is a fundamental narrative that should have been mentioned.

Also, you didn't clarify the traditional view about Othman's work. I told you in your previous post that Arabia was never united before Islam for at least 8000 years, and every tribe had some variations in their scripting (i.e. the way they wrote the words). Othman just standardized the script. If Othman standardized the pronunciation then he should have sent reciters to the east and west to teach “the official reciting”, but he didn't, he just sent the official script of the Quran according to the Meccans' scripting standard.

[{-->}]

You said that Hudhayfa reported to Abu-Baker “that significantly divergent versions of the Qur'an were in use in Syria and Iraq”. But this is misleading: there were variations

in the way that people were writing the Quran, but the pronunciation was the same. Again: Othman didn't standardize the Quran; he just standardized the script.

Also, the issue of the COT (which I did discuss in your previous post) is vital here:

[Note: COT: Chain-Oral-Tradition. AOT: Anonymous-Oral-Tradition].

In the critical analysis of the NT, Scholars collected and analyzed the data that were based on AOT and made the criteria to filter the right stuff from it. But you decided to regard the COT to be unreliable, and then, you gave all Islamic narratives (the AOT, the weak COT, and the trusted COT) equal weights, therefore, it is not surprising that you came to the conclusion that: "The Islamic tradition instead reports a tangle of conflicting and disjointed memories about the origins of the Qur'an". But this is not critical analysis; even in the analysis of the NT, you don't give equal weights to the narratives, but you differentiate the narratives according to some established criteria.

[{->}]

For example, Al-Tabarani is a trusted Scholar, but he didn't do any chain-analyses, he just recorded the COT that he heard. Therefore, you will find lots of contradictions in his collection; because he collected the weak COT with the trusted COT. So, to use a narrative from Al-Tabarani, then we need first to conduct a proper chain-analysis for it.

But it is unfair and misleading to prove the contradiction in the Islamic tradition by pointing to the Book of Al-Tabarani. This is the same as using Ibn-Ishaq to prove the contradiction in the Islamic tradition, as Ibn-Ishaq is based on AOT.

So, you didn't establish a clear criteria and you regarded all COT to be unreliable, and you gave all narratives equal weights. So, we have here a fundamental issue with the way you conducted your research.

Also, You said that the lower-text of Sana'a was erased because it was nonstandard version, but I doubt it, not with just maximum of 180 different words. But it is clear that the scribe of the lower-text wasn't professional (due to his style). Isn't this a valid reason?!

I think if I dig more deeply, I might find even more issues.

[{End of thread 2.1}]

[{The Start of **Thread 2.2** - Main Subject: Uthman's Script}]

OmarRobb July 22, 2023 at 4:53 am:

[{This is as reply to Stephen in a discussion that I was not involved in}]

Hi Stephen,

I am not sure if you would regard the following to be logical, but as I have mentioned in point 4# (in the pdf reply), the quick expansion of the Muslims to the east and west, then the civil wars and the defragmentation would all suggest a single origin for the current Quran.

So, what do you suggest here: do you think that Othman when he standardized the script (about 20 years after the death of the Prophet) heard about the Christian stories and said: these are very good stories, let us add them to the Quran, and all the Muslims said yeah!

It is so easy to make a claim, but an academic claim needs (at least) to be within a reasonable model, then there should be efforts to try and prove or refute this model.

But here you are presenting a claim without a reasonable model:

How (and when) these narratives have been added to the Quran after Muhammed?

What was the Muslim reactions? Did they object/fight or they just accepted it?

If these narratives have been added after the quick expansion then how this could fit with the logic presented previously?

Etc.

[{End of thread 2.2}]

[{The Start of **Thread 2.3** - Main Subject: Statistical discussion}]

Stevenpirog July 17, 2023 at 9:09 pm:

I read most of this pdf reply- my strongest contention is with your point #2.

[{The pdf reply refers to R2-Stephen-2.pdf}]

How does dating the Qur'an to a certain time does not "increase" the probability of any other claims regarding the Qur'an? I can see how it can decrease the probability of alternative claims that require different dating. But can you explain how data that are consistent with potentially multiple claims increases the probability of one specific claim that is dependent on other independent evidence?

Also, is there some criteria by which you label one dating a "statistical anomaly"? It seems the 388-535 dating overlap is just as consistent with the other sets as the 611-660 dating overlap is.

OmarRobb July 20, 2023 at 12:48 pm:

This pdf reply started by a generalization that carbon-dating is not precise, but it can support some conclusions over the others. If this generalization is not accurate at the least then what is the use of it!

Conclusions shouldn't be just claims, but they should be claims supported by some sort of data. The Islamic tradition claims are not based on thin-air but points 3# and 4# of this pdf reply provided some of these data. In point 3#, the ancient Quranic manuscripts can be dated by noting the used diacritics and the style of writing. From this we could conclude that the Sana'a lower-text is the oldest, then the Birmingham, then the Sana'a upper-text. The Birmingham and upper-text can be dated to the middle

of the Umayyad reign, while the lower-text is probably much before. This can be concluded even before utilizing the carbon-dating data.

Point 4# highlighted the single origin claim for the Quran by noting the quick spread of the Muslims in the east and west then the civil wars later and the fact that all versions of the Quran in the east and west are almost identical.

[{-->}]

But as we have three different “ancient” documents that are almost identical to the current Quran, then this could also be used to enforce the “single origin” claim.

Point 2# in this pdf reply highlighted two issues: All the lab tests do suggest that the skin that is used for the Birmingham manuscript was for an animal that died before 660AD. Doesn't this support the previous claim related to the dating of this manuscript?!!

For any loop of tests that are influenced by assumptions then the test sets might be spread in the chart, or most of the tests are within a reasonable range while some others are far off, etc. For example, a skillful (though not perfect) archer hitting a target for 100 times, then I can expect that most of the hits would be closely around the target, but there might be some few that are far off that target.

That what I suggested in the second part of point 2#: the last three data tests are within a good proximity while the first test is far off.

Stevenpirog July 20, 2023 at 4:13 pm:

I really only am focused on claims in point 2, as they are more statistically oriented and that is something I have been trained in and taught myself. In your pdf you state the evidence “increases the probability” of a claim, when technically it supports it. It is a common to get the two conflated but there is a difference between data “supporting” or “increasing the probability” of a claim.

As for throwing out a set of data because it is off- there are formal processes involved in justifying dismissing collected data, which require more than just saying it's “off”. The information required to make that justification is not in either this original post by Dr. Shoemaker or your pdf reply. You would likely have to cite data from the statistical analysis of the original papers. You're free to throw out the data however you want, but doing so is very susceptible to unjustified biases.

OmarRobb July 23, 2023 at 1:04 pm:

Point 2 is not technical: The post implied that these datasets cannot provide useful data as there were skewed. I discussed this matter from a general perspective that these sets are useful as they can provide at least an upper limit. Also, a three sets are within a good proximity and one set is a bit off, therefore, this set could be ignored. This was a general discussion not a technical one.

I don't see a big difference between E1: “an evidence supporting a claim”, and E2: “an evidence increasing the probability-of-accuracy for that claim”.

E2 is the result of E1: If you managed to support a claim with an evidence (i.e. E1) then this evidence should lead to E2. Therefore, both expressions would lead (in a general discussion) to the same intended meaning.

Also, to my understanding, “probability-of-accuracy” is not a technical term, it is a description. I think the technical term is the “confidence level”. But I think all would understand the meaning of the “probability-of-accuracy”.

Stevenpirog July 24, 2023 at 12:17 am:

1) Ignoring data because simply because it is skewed is working with the assumption that skewed data is somehow invalid. That is not the case. Some data, like death rates per age group, are skewed by nature. Some only look skewed. But the data is the data. You do not get to ignore it because you feel it doesn't match up

2) Certainly a single piece of evidence E supporting claim C1 “could” by definition increase the probability of claim C1, but only if the alternative is “Not C1”. If evidence supports C1 as equally well as other claims C2, C3, C4, etc, then you really haven't increased the probability of C1 over other claims. For instance, you mentioned yourself the RC data (the ones you didn't ignore at least) show the animal used for parchment was likely killed before 660. Why couldn't the animal have just been killed earlier (rough estimate 610 by my terrible averaging here), with all other details the same? It doesn't change the overall narrative.

I really don't have a problem with the overall conclusions you make. I'm not knowledgeable enough to argue with them. But I do have problems with the demonstrated statistical methodology here.

OmarRobb July 26, 2023 at 2:33 pm:

I totally agree with you but “from a technical perspective”. As I have said, my comment wasn't technical, but it was from a general perspective. As I have said before: the post implied that these datasets cannot provide useful data as there were skewed, and I highlighted that the off data “can” be ignored. The post was presenting a general (and not “technical”) argument and my argument here wasn't technical.

If we have 3 claims (A, B, C) and we have an evidence that support all of them, then I think it is misleading to say that “this evidence supports A”, as this is just part of the truth. However, this is a communication issue about how to describe things, and it is not a technical issue.

Nonetheless, my comment was clear in this regard: {So, yes, carbon-dating doesn't give a pinpoint date, but it does give a probability range, and with it, we can increase the probability-of-accuracy of some conclusions over others}, which I think is valid.

[{End of thread 2.3}]

[{Article 3 for Dr. Shoemaker in Bart Ehrman blog:

<https://ehrmanblog.org/creating-the-quran-where-did-the-scripture-of-islam-really-come-from-guest-post-by-stephen-shoemaker/> }]

Creating the Qur'an: Where Did the Scripture of Islam Really Come From? Guest post by Stephen Shoemaker

August 8, 2023

Here now is the third and final post on the Qur'an by scholar of Early Islam and Ancient Christianity Stephen Shoemaker, Professor at the University of Oregon. Stephen is an internationally-known scholar and his first two posts are highly informed and have been controversial among some of our blog members—as one would expect for someone whose research leads to conclusions different from what everyone has always said and assumed to be true!

In this post he addresses the question many of us have long had: when was the Qur'an actually produced and could the traditions it contains have been changed over the years before it was written?

Creating the Qur'an: The Formation of the Last Ancient Scripture

Hi again. Welcome to my final post, and I'd like to thank Bart for the opportunity to engage this lively forum and also all of its members for reading and considering my thoughts. In my two previous posts, you will recall, I noted some significant problems with prevailing understandings of how the Qur'an as we now have it came into existence. In my first post, I noted the rather uncritical manner in which most scholarship on early Islam has simply accepted the Islamic tradition's own accounts of the Qur'an's formation. Such acquiescence to tradition of course marks a sharp contrast with the rigorous skepticism that scholars of the bible and early Christianity (and early Judaism) bring to their respective objects of study and to traditional narratives of origins in particular.

This deference to traditional perspectives currently marks the sharpest divide between the study of early Islam and the formative histories of other religious traditions. I would also note that, if you look back over many of the comments to my earlier posts, those with the strongest objections tend to base their critiques in references to the authority of traditional Islamic materials – all of which were written much later than the period in question. In my second post, I also explained why radiocarbon dating, despite the enthusiastic hopes of many scholars, cannot solve the problem of the Qur'an's origins by securing it an early date, leaving open many significant questions about the Qur'an's early history.

So far, then, I've explained some of the major problems that have hindered critical study of early Islam and the formation of the Qur'an, but what I haven't done is told you when, where, why, and how I am convinced the Qur'an as we now have it came into being. Therefore, to conclude this trilogy of posts, I thought I would describe how I

understand the Qur'an's formation from a historical-critical, rather than traditional, point of view.

Where did the Qur'an come from and how did the text come to be in the form that it has come down to us today? If one were to peruse the scholarly literature on the Qur'an from the last century and a half, one would find that the vast majority of scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim, follow the (Sunni) Islamic tradition in ascribing the collection of the Qur'an as we have it today to the fourth Caliph ("successor" of Muhammad), Uthman (644-56). Since this particular tradition was included in an early and authoritative collection of Islamic religious traditions (al-Bukhari's collection of *hadith*), it became the canonical account of the Qur'an's formation for Muslims and, by consequence, for most scholars of Islamic studies.

The truth of the matter, however, is that this is not the only memory of the Qur'an's origins that one will find in the Islamic historical tradition. Indeed, the Islamic evidence for the Qur'an's collection and composition is itself a convoluted tangle of traditions. Of course, it is certainly understandable that the Islamic tradition would eventually settle on a particular narrative of the Qur'an's origins chosen from among these various accounts. Nevertheless, the sheer diversity of information coming from the early Islamic tradition and its complexities regarding the matter of the Qur'an's production should occasion far less certainty from modern scholars.

As it turns out, there is also a memory in the Islamic tradition that the canonical version of the Qur'an – the text that has come down to us today – was established in its final form much later: under the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who reigned from the end of the seventh century into the beginning of the eighth (685-705). And judging from all the evidence available to us, if we take a true historical-critical and skeptical approach to the sources in question, this era in fact seems to present the most likely context for the Qur'an's formation.

Although the evidence and arguments involved in reaching this conclusion are of course highly complex (as is so often the case: again, see my [free book](#) for further details), this tradition holds the most consistency with the full range of our available evidence. For instance, in purely historical terms, caliphal (Islamic) state at the time of Uthman does not seem to have been sufficiently organized that it could have established a stable, canonical Qur'an, as the tradition maintains. Only in the time of 'Abd al-Malik, do we find evidence of a state apparatus that could actually achieve this. Yet even more importantly, the canonical Qur'an's establishment under 'Abd al-Malik is witnessed not only by the early Islamic tradition, but these reports are also confirmed by several non-Islamic sources that are almost contemporary with the events in question. Need I say, multiple independent attestation?

Nevertheless, let me be clear: I am not suggesting that the Qur'an was created out of whole cloth only at this relatively late point in time. Rather, it was under 'Abd al-Malik that earlier collections of Islamic sacred traditions, both oral and written, were compiled into the final, canonical version of the Qur'an that we have today. Thus, the collective witness of the Islamic tradition and contemporary non-Islamic sources informs us. This means, that the content of the Qur'an was still in process and undergoing development until it reached this final stage when 'Abd al-Malik established and imposed – with imperial coercion – the canonical version of the Qur'an. Indeed, through forceful

intervention by the state, all versions of the Qur'an that deviated from this new standard were seized and destroyed.

Accordingly, we need to adopt an understanding of the Qur'an's formation that envisions its development over a period of several decades, involving oral transmission from memory as well as, one imagines, the production of local written collections to aid with memory. One important consequence of adopting this perspective of the Qur'an is that it is no longer tenable to imagine its contents as having a singular origin in Muhammad's teaching. Rather, the various components of the Qur'an must instead derive from a range of different historical contexts. These were then brought together by the early Islamic tradition into a single canonical text that was sanctioned as a new scripture for Muhammad's followers around the close of the seventh century.

At the same time, I have no doubts whatsoever that many elements of the Qur'an have significant roots in the teaching of Muhammad to his followers in Mecca and Medina. Yet we must recognize that this material has been highly modified in the process of its transmission and has been supplemented significantly with new traditions that his followers encountered after invading and occupying the lands of the Roman and Sassanian Near East. Indeed, we must also bear in mind that as Muhammad's followers shared their memories of sacred traditions with one another during these early decades, whether orally or in writing, they did so independently in pockets scattered across the vast empire that Muhammad's followers had conquered and colonized.

Therefore, to briefly conclude, what we now have in the Qur'an is not in fact the exact words of an early seventh-century Arabian prophet, but a collection made by his early followers over many years after his death. The contents of this corpus were therefore shaped and reshaped by decades of oral (and eventually written) transmission, along with constant adoption and adaptation of new traditions learned from ongoing dialogue with the other religions and cultures of western Asia in late antiquity. In fact, many Qur'anic traditions, as other scholars have already noted, suppose an environmental, or economic, or cultural context that is simply not compatible with the conditions of central Hijaz during the early seventh century. Accordingly, numerous elements of the Qur'an make far better sense if we understand the collection as an evolving product of decades of memory work and oral transmission, much of which took place within the culturally diverse contexts of late ancient Syro-Palestine and Iraq in dialogue with other Abrahamic traditions.

Only through the direct intervention of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik did this process finally come to an end around the turn of the eighth century. The result is the Qur'an that we have today: an imperially produced and enforced collection that brought uniformity and order to the diverse and diffuse sacred traditions that were circulating among Muhammad's followers for decades after his death. And thanks to 'Abd al-Malik's highly effective exercise of raw political power, much that we would like to know about the complexity of Qur'an's prior history remains shrouded in mystery. Accordingly, moving forward in our efforts to understand the Qur'an's formation we must proceed cautiously and skeptically, guided always by the hermeneutics of suspicion, historical criticism, and the historical study of religions.

[{End of Article 3}]

[{The start of **Thread 3.1** - Main Subject: Arguing about the Methodology}]

OmarRobb August 9, 2023 at 3:43 pm:

Hi Stephen,

My reply here is with the same frame as my replies in your previous two posts with some new points. It is a bit long, so I preferred to put it in a 2nd-pdf reply (as the 1st-pdf reply in the previous post). I hope I am allowed to do so in this particular subject because it is a tough subject.

The 2nd-pdf reply:

<https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/R3-Stephen-3.pdf>

[{This pdf article will be presented after this post}]

In a nutshell, I disagree with your methodology because it is not based on critical analysis (as claimed) but on personal judgments. To my understanding: critical research requires the establishment of clear criteria so that this criteria are the tool to be used to filter the data to true or false, otherwise, the research will be based on personal judgments and cherry-pickings.

This exactly the process of critical approach of the scholarship for the analysis of the NT although the NT was based on Anonymous-Oral-Tradition (AOT) then documented by Anonymous-Authors.

As I have clarified in your previous two posts and in this 2nd-pdf reply: I don't think that you have established a clear criteria here, and most of your conclusions were based on your personal judgments, and to me, this is not critical analysis.

[{### **The Start of the article: R3-Stephen-3.pdf** ###}]

[A pdf reply by Omar Abur-Robb to Stephen Shoemaker about his third post in Bart Ehrman blog: Creating the Qu'ran: Where Did the Scripture of Islam Really Come From?

Guest post by Stephen Shoemaker – Tuesday, August 8, 2023]

Hi Stephen,

My reply here is the same as my replies in your previous two posts with some new points. It is a bit long, so I preferred to put it in a 2nd-pdf reply (as the 1st-pdf reply in the previous post). I truly preferred it this way so to put it as part of the “Opinion and the Opposite Opinion” for this sensitive subject.

1# You said in this post: “if you look back over many of the comments to my earlier posts, those with the strongest objections tend to base their critiques in references to the authority of traditional Islamic materials – all of which were written much later than the period in question”.

I suppose I am among those mentioned here, but I didn't base my critiques on these authorities, I based it on the available data, and my true criticism was about the methodology: you decided to ignore the "Chain-Oral-Tradition (COT) without proper discussion (as I have discussed in your two previous posts).

Let me here clarify the following point again: Scholars have made a good critical analysis to the New-Testament (NT), and although the NT is based on Anonymous-OralTradition (AOT), which then documented by Anonymous-Authors, but still, these Scholars have established a criteria to filter the data in the NT because "Oral Traditions" do have right data that are mixed with false data.

This is the core of critical analysis: to create an objective criteria in which we faithfully apply to filter the available data. This means that this criteria will be the tool for our decision in accepting or refusing a piece of data. But you didn't do this here: you have decided without proper discussion that the COT is not reliable, and then you based your conclusions in disputed AOT data. So, what are your criteria in deciding that this info is right, and the other info is wrong; because if you didn't have this criteria then you are just making cherry-pickings!

Just to clarify here: If I am allowed to use the rumors and the disputed data in the yellow newspapers in the West then I can prove anything and everything, but this is not critical analysis; because this analysis require a clear and discussed criteria of how we will decide that one info is false and the other is true.

2# You said in this post: "If one were to peruse the scholarly literature on the Qur'an from the last century and a half, one would find that the vast majority of scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim, follow the (Sunnī) Islamic tradition in ascribing the collection of the Qur'an as we have it today to the fourth Caliph ("successor" of Muhammad)".

But this is totally false, and the Muslims have discussed this subject tera times now, and I did discuss it extensively in your first post (Othman just standardized the script) and I made a plea there that I am going to make it here again: When the Western-Scholars-OfIslamic-Studies (WSIS) discuss this matter, would they please just explain the Islamic raw-data as-is first before presenting their opinions. I think this would probably be a little bit more professional because this matter has mostly one source, which is the Islamic data.

3# I did look at the book in brief to see from where you got the conclusion that AbdMalik is the one who collected the Quran, and I have the following comments to some of the parts that I looked into:

3.1# You said in page 41: "Uthmān was deeply unpopular in many quarters; his reign was short and contentious".

How this is right!

The first Caliph (Abu-Baker) ruled for 2 years, the second Caliph (Omar) ruled for 11 years, Othman ruled for 12 years, and Ali ruled for 5 years. So how this 12 years are short!

Also, The 1st, 2nd and 4th Caliphs died at about 63 years of age, but Othman Died at 82 years of age. So how this 12 years are short!

Of course, if you want to compare it to the ruling of Queen Elizabeth then yes, it is very short, but if you want to compare it to the Caliphs before and after, then this is not short.

For the unpopularity part, this is true but at the end of this reign (about the last 5 years), but in the beginning of his reign, he was popular, and he has overseen the ruling of new many territories.

The interesting part is that you didn't cite this info from an ancient Islamic source but from a WSIS source, and this why I think you are just making cherry-pickings!

3.2# You said in Page 44: "There seems to be little doubt that 'Abd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj played a critical role in establishing the text of the Qur'an".

I didn't find clear ancient sources to support this claim, so from where you got it!

The idea here is that if you are basing this info on obscure sources based on AOT that does not fit with the general "Islamic Tradition" then in the least it is "unfair" to regard this info as part of the "Islamic Tradition". I am not here discussing which info is right or wrong, I am here discussing the methodology itself from a clear common sense: if there was an ancient Greek scholar who had an opinion X that was in the margin, then it is misleading and "unfair" to say that this X was part of the "Greek tradition".

I truly think here that you have pre-decided your conclusions and you were just looking for any data that supported them and ignoring the rest (including the COT). If this was the case, then this research is just a record of your personal judgments and it is not part of a critical analysis.

3.3# You said in page 45: "Other reports from the Islamic tradition instead describe 'Abd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj as making considerable alterations to the Qur'anic text".

The same comment in 3.2 applies here, as you didn't clarify the "Islamic Tradition" sources. Let me just clarify this again: when you say that this is supported by the "Islamic Tradition" then I expect that you are referring to the main stream (or at least a highly recognized stream) of the Muslim Scholars, but it will be truly misleading to regard an obscure sources as part of the "Islamic Tradition".

I also want to clarify another major important point here: 'Abd al-Malik did have a stable reign but it wasn't unanimous as he was in constant fighting with Al-Khawarij, and they continue fighting his state much after him, and actually the ruling family in Oman today are descendants from them.

Now ... Al-Khawarij did accuse Abd al-Malik with so many things, but altering the Quran wasn't among their claims!

3.4# You said in page 45: "Abd al-Malik is reported to have said that he feared death in the month of Ramadan, since "That is the month in which I was born, it is the month in which I was weaned, it is the month in which I gathered together the Qur'an [jama'tu lQur'an]".

What is the source for this report? You didn't mention the ancient source! So, if this was from an obscure source (or recent source) then you cannot regard this info to be part of the "Islamic Tradition"!

3.5# You mentioned the letters of Leo to Omar II. I haven't look deeply into these letters therefore, I am just going to discuss here your methodology:

You regarded that the letter of Leo is a high-quality source --- but is it really!

There was a new civilization that is trying to overcome an older one, and the new civilization is claiming that the Christians are forging their holly books. Would you expect the leader of the Christians to keep silent! There is an interest here that could have motivated the writing of this letter.

I did make a quick search and found the following dissertation about these letters:

<https://cuislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/cuislandora%3A64674/datastream/PDF/view>

It discussed the Byzantine Chroniclers (which was the first to mention these letters) and its major compiler: Theophilus of Edessa (8cAD), who reported that Omar II forced the Christians to convert to Islam (among other claims)!

Would you regard this piece of information to be a high-quality source that prove beyond doubt that Omar II did force the conversion of Christians to Islam!

I am just going to refer to a known letter that presumably was written by the Samaritan leader to Antiochus IV that they weren't related to the Jews and that they were descendants of the Medes and Persians.

Is there a clear interest here that motivated the compilation of this letter at that time - or - this is a high-quality source that the Samaritans are truly not related to the Jews!

Ironically, the Karaite Jews were saved in Poland from the Nazis by their claim that they weren't Jewish, which was supported by some Jewish historians at that time, highlylikely to save the Karaites from the Nazis.

So, can anyone today use this letter as a high-quality source to prove that the Karaites are actually not Jewish -- or -- we could agree that there was a persistent interest that dictated the writing of this letter!

This is what I am referring to over and over again: I truly think that you didn't establish a clear criteria to filter the available data and you were just picking the data that fit your pre-decided conclusions. To me, this is not critical analysis.

4# You said in the post: "For instance, in purely historical terms, caliphial (Islamic) state at the time of Uthman does not seem to have been sufficiently organized that it could have established a stable, canonical Qur'an, as the tradition maintains".

How this is evident from historical terms!

Let me just make a comparison here; suppose someone claiming the following: The expansion of Alexander (supposedly the great) is not really true from purely historical terms, because Alexander was so young to have the needed skills. This all was falsified data that came from the “Greek Tradition”, and the expansion itself was due to many generations after Alexander.

Is Alexander being young is an evidence (from purely historical terms) that the related Greek Tradition is false!

Is this really based on logical deductions or are they just sentences that were glued together to give a perception of logic!

However, this “unsophisticated” state before the time of Othman managed in just two decades to cripple one superpower and overcome the other, and then ruling a vast size of people in this large large land, and that was much before ‘Abd al-Malik. So, I think there should have been a good level of sophistication here unless you started to believe in true miracles.

This is actually the main argument that I have presented over and over again in your previous posts:

With all of the quick and miraculous expansion of the Muslims to the east and west, then the civil wars and the defragmentation, but still, the Muslims from the far east of the old world to the far west of that world (until today) have the Quran with 100% of the meaning and at least 97% of its exact wording, and the 3% don’t give any contradictions to the verses (as I have discussed in detail in your previous post).

Doesn’t this support the claim that the Quran has one source?!!

I looked briefly in the book just to form this reply, and if I took a deeper look, then I would probably find more stuff as I truly think that the problem here is in the methodology. If the methodology of the road is false, then you would probably find a lot of broken cars at both of its sides.

[{### End of the article: R3-Stephen-3.pdf ###}]

[{End of thread 3.1}]

[{The Start of **Thread 3.2** - Main Subject: The ideology of Atheism}]

Askia2022 August 13, 2023 at 12:35 am:

It is so fascinating to me, how similar Christian and Iskamic believers defend their texts and faith

OmarRobb August 29, 2023 at 1:15 pm:

This is probably a late reply, but actually, your comment was released just recently.

Why singling out Muslims and Christians?

I think the Jews do defend their text with faith, don’t they?

And how about the Atheists?

It has been said that Atheists believe that: There is no God but Nature, and “Richard Dawkins” is her Prophet.

Although the above was intended to be a funny line but it does contain a lot of weight:

The total disbelief of something is a belief by itself. We can argue that Atheists do believe that God doesn't exist, and everything is controlled by just the laws of nature.

This is a belief that does impact the view about life, politics and social issues. So, Atheism is actually an ideology that depend on a belief system, and probably the difference between Atheism and religion is that Atheism doesn't have praying and rituals.

What is the practical difference between conviction and faith?

I think the practical difference between them is just minimal.

Don't most Atheists defend their thoughts and ideas with conviction?

I don't think we could single out Muslims and Christians here.

Dankoh August 29, 2023 at 3:01 pm:

It is a common fallacy that atheists “believe” that there is no God. This is incorrect; atheism is the absence of belief, not a belief system. It is based on the lack of evidence for the existence of God, and the plentitude of evidence that no God exists, particularly the God as described in the Bible. While the “New Atheists” may be as dogmatic in their way as the Christian fundamentalists, most atheists – certainly the ones I've read about and studied – will admit that they could change their minds if new, convincing, scientific evidence is found.

So the difference between conviction and faith is that conviction relies on evidence and is open to correction, while faith relies on the “evidence of things not seen.”

OmarRobb August 29, 2023 at 3:55 pm:

I think this is your own opinion, which is not my understanding, and I think many Atheists would disagree. For example, if my memory and understanding to Bart Ehrman was accurate then I think he did explain his position as Agnostic Atheist. I think he explained Agnostic to be about knowledge and Atheist to be about belief, and I think he clearly said that he doesn't believe that God exist.

I think the idea that all the motions in the universe is just the laws of nature is by itself a belief.

Also, I truly think you were inaccurate about “the plentitude of evidence that no God exists”. This is just your own opinion, which most of the people on earth regardless of their religion simply disagree. There are many of the “If this then Why is that” questions but these are not evidences, they are just questions that cannot be transformed into solid logical statements. Looking at the debates between Atheists and others, the most thing that they rely on is that they are not convinced with the current evidences of God, but Atheists don't have solid logical statements that proves that God doesn't exist.

Dankoh August 29, 2023 at 5:41 pm:

Argument by numbers – the fallacy that something must be true because so many people believe it. For centuries, people believed the sun went around the earth, but that did not make it true. Also, it is not possible to prove that no god exists, just as it is not possible to prove that a god does exist, because it is not a falsifiable question. It is a question of faith, which does not depend on evidence.

But is it possible to demonstrate that no evidence so far presented can prove that God exists, that in fact the evidence points against it (which is what I meant the “plenitude of evidence”). Thus, believing in God (especially the one that Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe in) means believing that the universe with its two trillion galaxies, each with on average a half-trillion stars, was all created for the benefit of a group of (supposedly) intelligent beings on one planet around a mediocre star on the outer limb of one of those galaxies. Oh, and it often expects a belief that this universe was all created a few thousand years ago. (cont’d)

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Belief that this God exists also mandates that the Bible is accurate in all or most aspects, something else which has been shown to be incorrect (as any number of posts here have demonstrated). Note that I use “demonstrate” because, again, it is not possible to prove this in the religious sense of proof (which assumes the truth of the Bible a priori), but only in the historical or scientific sense (a posteriori). For example, if I say that the existence of dinosaur fossils contradicts Genesis, one response has been that “God created the fossils old as a test of our faith.” But that is an argument from faith made in the absence of evidence, and a circular one.

If Bart said that he doesn’t believe that God exists (which I recall he has said), that, once again, is not belief. It is the absence of belief. You don’t seem to accept that, but that, as you often like to say, is just your opinion.

OmarRobb August 30, 2023 at 3:58 am:

1# You are taking my lines out of its “clear” context! Where did I use the numbers to prove that you are wrong! I did use the numbers to show that “this is your opinion”, that I disagree with, and most of the people disagree with. If I want to prove you are wrong then I need to present the evidences for God, but I didn’t go there. I was clear in clarifying that “this is your opinion” and it is not a consensus one.

2# The existence of God is a subject much before the bible. Showing that there are contradictions in the bible have no impact on this existence, it only proves that “there are contradictions in the bible”.

3# I truly believe that there are lot of evidences for God. My analogy here is that there are lot of evidences for the spherical nature of Earth, but there is a good number of people who still believe that the earth is flat. This analogy is not for proving a point but for “clarifying” one.

4# I acknowledge that the ideology of Atheism is an opinion that I favor, and I acknowledge your position of disagreeing with it.

Dankoh August 30, 2023 at 10:25 am:

“Argument by numbers,” also known as “argumentum ad populum” (appeal to popularity), is a logical fallacy which claims that something is true because it is popular. Your statement “This is just your own opinion, which most of the people on earth regardless of their religion simply disagree.” is an example of that fallacy; you cite the popularity of a position as evidence of its validity.

Nor it is just “my opinion.” I did several years of research examining the evidence before concluding that it was strong enough to demonstrate that the probability of the existence of God is so low that it is reasonable to say no god exists, and certainly not in the form that much of the West believes in. This is not a belief; it is a conclusion – meaning that I am willing to change my mind given sufficient evidence. (Believers are very unlikely to be that willing.)

You will find my examination and conclusions in *A God of Our Invention: How Religion Shaped the Western World* (Apocryphile Press, 2023).

OmarRobb August 30, 2023 at 8:23 pm:

I am repeating myself here, and this is not right. If you have an unusual pen with an unusual color, and If I clarified this by referring to the normal pens that most people are generally using, then this is not about proving that your pen is true or false, but it is about showing that your pen is unusual.

To me, this is very clear, and I truly prefer not to go further with this argument.

I told you before in a previous post: the argument will continue to be fruitful until one is trying to impose their opinions in the argument, or when people start to repeat themselves. And I truly feel that you are trying to impose your own opinions, your own research, and your own conclusions in this argument and I totally disagree with you. And I started to repeat myself and I don't like that.

I acknowledge that you have all the rights to believe in your opinions, your research and your conclusions, but I disagree with you, and for me this argument has been concluded.

Dankoh August 30, 2023 at 9:24 pm:

If you seriously think that offering one's researched and reasoned conclusions in an argument is “imposing one's opinion,” then I agree that there is no point in any further discussion.

[{End of thread 3.2}]

[{The Start of **Thread 3.3** - Main Subject: The organization of the Quran}]

Fishician August 9, 2023 at 9:37 am:

I'm reading the Qur'an now. Interesting but it doesn't seem well-organized. I will need to read your book. Thanks!

OmarRobb August 11, 2023 at 1:43 pm:

I would like to comment on the "not well-organized". I am acknowledging your right to have this opinion, but I would rather prefer to highlight the opinion of the other side.

Muhammed didn't present the Quran as a single book from day one, but the verses of the Quran were presented through a duration of 23 years, and the verses in the Quran are not ordered according to the time of its presentation, but it was ordered and organized by Muhammed.

I am aware of the argument that if the Quran was the word of God then the Quran should have been structured in an organized flow similar to the best history and law books available.

But the above statement is based on taste and anthropomorphism. Therefore, it is not an independent claim, but it is a dependent claim linked to the believe system. So, non-Muslims would regard this claim to be wise while Muslims would regard it to be meaningless.

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If you asked the Muslims about this structure, then they don't exactly know the reason, but they might highlight some assumed wisdom for it: it would motivate the Muslims to think and discuss. If anyone read the Quran from any chapter or page then they will get the core message of the Quran, etc.

But still, these claims are not independent, but they are dependent claims linked to the believe system: so, the Muslims might regard them to be wise while the non-Muslims would regard them to be meaningless.

So, let us go out from the dependent claims to some independent claims. For example, the stories and laws in the Quran are distributed, so, are they consistent or inconsistent, how many textual contradictions are there in it, etc.

The claims in this domain are independent and can be discussed by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Fishician August 12, 2023 at 1:57 pm:

I realize the term "well-organized" may be subjective, but if a book is said to be divine instruction intended to lead people to truth then I think such matters are relevant and worth discussing. And I'm not singling out the Qur'an – I see similar problems in books of the Bible as well. I guess I have certain expectations from the highest intelligence in the universe.

OmarRobb August 12, 2023 at 3:45 pm:

Fishician, as I have said, I acknowledge your right to form your own opinions in this matter, but in the same time, I truly think that this is a matter that might have been based on taste and anthropomorphism and not on logical deduction.

I did receive two replies from you that reached my email box, but I have only seen here one, but still I rather prefer to clarify the following: You didn't make a specific question directed to the author, but you made a general comment, and my comment here is not related to any specific questions, but it was a comment directed to this particular general comment!

Fishician August 14, 2023 at 12:42 pm:

Omar, I made a comment but then thought I was being too sensitive and trashed it. I guess it went through to you anyway! Not to drag this out, but if communication of vital matters is the object then I don't think it is just a matter of taste to consider things like organization of information and how it is going to be received by a large audience of people in various cultures. I will continue to read the Qur'an – we'll see if my thoughts change any by the end!

OmarRobb August 14, 2023 at 1:20 pm:

No worries, Fishician.

Let me just highlight to you a last thought related to this taste issue: if you are making a book of current modern parables and proverbs then you will start by collecting them. Then you might classify them into many chapters according to their subjects. But still this book would be consisted of multiple units in each chapter, and each unit is related to its chapter and to many other units in other chapters. This book would be regarded by many to be entertaining and useful though it doesn't follow the current standard style of presenting books, and some might not like it, but still, this parable book would submit the information that required from it.

Now, I don't think we are arguing here whether the Quran did deliver its core messages (regardless of course of your assessments of these messages) as a new civilization was established on it from nothing in less than two decades and still the book is regarded as a guide and inspiration by many hundreds of millions.

So, this is why I am saying that this matter is highly likely related to taste, which would be influenced by the believe system.

Mak22 August 11, 2023 at 3:13 pm:

[{In comment to Fishician August 9, 2023 at 9:37 am}]

That is because you are most likely reading the English translation of the meaning of the book not the Arabic version, the Quran original language. Unfortunately, even the best translation is mediocre at best. It is like driving a Ferrari with corolla engine and transmission. Unlike other books of scripture, the Quran text doesn't contains any pros, but it is rather written in poetic language. The book's structure not in chronological but

rather circular structure in which most chapters contain multiple themes that are repeated across multiple chapters. Not only that, but each chapter itself is divided into multiple themes that address different issues. The repetitive concepts, themes, phrases, and words make it easy to enforce the message. It is also make very easy to memorize the Quran and minimize the possibility of transmission errors. There is actually an excellent article that explain one of the theories behind the Quran structure.

This is the link to the article:

<https://www.islam21c.com/islamic-thought/ring-theory-the-qurans-structural-coherence/>

OmarRobb August 13, 2023 at 9:03 pm:

Mak22 has presented an interesting comment here, and I can present a suggestion based on it: If you are reading the Quran and you finished let us say Sura Maryam then just go to Youtube and type: Quran Maryam and listen to the reciting of it in Arabic, just feel the flow of it even if you don't know Arabic.

I did the same thing with the Psalms as it has been said that they were formed with a poetic structure. So, I searched for it in Hebrew, and I don't know Hebrew, but I wanted to get a sense of the flow of the poetry. It was very interesting: There is a poetic art in Levant that is evident in Lebanon called 'Zajal' and after hearing the Psalms, I truly felt that the Zajal might probably have been a Canaanite inheritance as I sensed rethemes in the chanting of the Psalms that are similar to the chanting of the Zajal (this is just an initial impression).

So, you can sense the flow of the Quran the same way. You might like it, or you might not, but it would still be part of the experience.

This is just a suggestion.

[{End of thread 3.3}]

[{The Start of **Thread 3.4** - Main Subject: Defending the Hadith}]

Kt August 9, 2023 at 11:13 am:

According to accounts from Muslim sources, it's suggested that it took a long time for Muslims to compile the religion, their texts (both Qur'an, Siras, Hadiths and the Tafsirs). They made revisions to the teachings of Abu Bakr and Uthman, based on verses collected by Zaid. He gathered these verses from sources such as "palm leaves, small white stones, and the recollections of people". In this scenario, Muslim scholars had to work with a collection of materials. They claimed that some verses were:

- Lost due to witnesses dying in the Battle of Yamama (Ibn Abi Dawud discussed this)
- Disappeared (Al Suyuti)
- Forgotten (Sahih Muslim)
- Cancelled (Sahih al Bukhari)

- Went missing (Sahih al Bukhari)
- Overlooked (Ibn Abi Dawud)
- Changed (Muwatta Iman Malik)
- Modified (Ibn Abi Dawud)
- Substituted (Sahih al Bukhari)
- Eaten by sheep (Sunan Ibn Majah)

In addition to that, Muslims frequently warns of “bell” which is Satans instrument and comes from Satan Even islams angles are afraid of it, warns about it, and are scared of it. Then,,muslim scholars tells us that Muhammad received inspiration for the Qur’an through a bell (as mentioned in Sahih Al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim – see Sunnah.com). I really don’t understand what these muslim scholars tries to say.

Additionally, their own Qur’an refers to Allah having daughters in sura 53: 19-23. Commentaries (Tafsirs) suggest a possible Satanic influence in this context (Asbab Al-Nuzul by Al-Wahidi). It is still in the Qur’an , and the Qur’an itself affirm that all of it is a word of Allah (Quran, 81:25).

etc etc

Well, I do not believe in these Muslim sources, muslim texts, and islamic scholars as referred to above. And find it difficult to comprehend them. I am more open to and welcome a more critical, historical, and secular scholarship begins to give another interesting aspects of this belief system.

OmarRobb August 12, 2023 at 9:33 am - Edit - Reply

1# You highlighted that the Muslims took long time for them to compile their religion. But this is an ambiguous statement, because if you are referring to the grammar and commentaries then this much is true, but we aren’t discussing this, are we!

Our discussion is about the Quran “today”, which the Muslims say that it was presented by Muhammed without alteration or modification. So, this is a very specific subject about the Quran that we have today, and whether it was modified or not.

2# Can you highlight the statements of the Muslim Recognized Scholars who said that the Quran was changed, modified and substituted?

3# I truly don’t know anything about “bell”, can you please give me more info about it?

4# Please read again Quran 53-19-23: the verses are criticizing the pagans who didn’t like to have daughters and preferred male offspring, but they claimed that God have daughters.

5# I did reply to you before about the sheep issue. This statement is related to two verses of the Quran and this statement is a single-chain narrative with one weak narrator in it, therefore, it was rejected by the majority of the Muslim Scholars.

Kt August 12, 2023 at 12:50 pm:

The bell first:

* This is how the bell is explained by the ancient scholars in relation to Satan etc. It is a multiple references in islamic litterature related to the bell.

<https://sunnah.com/search?q=the+bell>

* This is a few verses from both from Sahih al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim supposedly told by Aisha (Muhammeds wife). It is worth to mention from my perspective and assessment on this , that both Bukhari and Muslim lived centuries later than Muhammed.

<https://sunnah.com/search?q=inspired+by+the+bell>

Here Muhammed was inspired by the bell which the muslims think is the instrument of Satan, and all islamic angles are afraid of its present.

As you know,, “Sunnah.com” is where all the accpeted Hadith are collected, both in Arabic and translated to English.

[{-->}]

Then what you wanted me to highlight where muslim sholars say it was changed, modified or substituted:

Regarding verse changed:

Abu Yunnus, freemdman of Aishah ordered him to write the verse “ Haftdhuu alaas-salaatti was-salaatil wastaa wa quumeuu lillaahi qaantin (2,238) He was ordered to change the verse. This was reported by Muwatta Iman Malik

Regarding verses modified;

Al Hajiaj Ibn Yusuf made eleven modification in the reading of the Uthmanic Text.In Al Baqarah (surah 2,259) it was originally read “Lam yatasanna waandhur” but was altered to “Lam yatasanna” Also in Al Ma’ida (surah 5,48) and a few others, like ibn Abi Dawud.

Regarding substituted:

Sahih al Bukhari (Volum 6, book 61, Number 527) refer to “But Allah said, “None of our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar.

[{-->}]

About Allah’s daughters in sura 53:

Well, I am not convinced you are right. According to muslim sources, (Tafsirs) talking about these pagan goddesses which some relates to Allah. It might be that these old pagan goddesses had its sources from the old pagan, pre islamic , (Egyptian) “pagan” religion where their moon god (Al-Ilah who had the goddess daughters. Anyway, in muslim Tafsirs it is explained that Muhammed sendt forces to destroy them. He even sendt some to destroy them,,,,,and if you read it, these goddesses are described VERY physical also when Khaild was sendt back to finish them.

quote”

Khalid went back and when the custodians who were also its servants of Al-`Uzza saw him, they started invoking by calling Al-`Uzza! When Khalid approached it, he found a naked woman whose hair was untidy and who was throwing sand on her head. Khalid killed her with the sword and went back to the Messenger of Allah , who said to him,

(That was Al-`Uzza!)” Muhammad bin Ishaq narrated, “Al-Lat belonged to the tribe of Thaqif in the area of At-Ta’if. Banu Mu`attib were the custodians of Al-Lat and its servants.,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

end of quote

Se reference : <https://quran.com/an-najm/19/tafsirs>

OmarRobb August 17, 2023 at 10:24 am - Edit - Reply

There is an infinite number of unfair-claims related to the Quran and Hadith, as there are many people today who take verses, twist their meanings, and present them as objective claims.

Now ... I will be interested to investigate a claim if it was major or wide-spread. But if neither then there are these options:

If they were presented by recognized Scholars then these Scholars have a level of logic that they cannot compromise due to their professional pride. Therefore, their claims would be within a confined space and it might be fruitful to investigate them.

If they were presented by non-Scholars who seem to be respecting logic and genuinely doing proper homework, then it might be fruitful to investigate their claims.

If they were presented by non-Scholars who don't have a problem in breaking the limits of logic and they don't seem to spend genuine time in doing proper homework then it is better to ignore their claims.

###

There are Muslim-Scholars that memorized the data and are able to respond to most claims without doing the investigation, and they do have sites and channels. But for me, I cannot cope with mixed claims drifting to infinity.

[{->}]

However, I will respond to the new claims here:

1# The Jewish Scholars acknowledge that “Allah” is a recognized name for the Mighty God, [check Youtube]. The same for the Coptic and Assyrian churches. “Allah” is an Arabic word that was derived many centuries before Islam from Aramaic, and the Aramaic name was derived from “El”. This matter is settled for me, “but” you have the right to form your views anyway and any shape you feel fit.

2# Ibn-Ishaq is not an authoritative source for the life of Muhammed as it is based on Anonymous-Oral-Tradition, and I did discuss this matter many times now.

3# You have claimed that God has daughters as mentioned in the Quranic verses 53:19-23. I did explain the meaning of these verses previously and I am not going to repeat things here, and the meaning of these verses are very clear without a Tafsir. But still, there is no Tafsir from any recognized Muslim Scholar that says that God has daughters as per these verses, or that God admit that he has daughters as per these verses.

Therefore, I know without any shred of any doubt that your claims about these verses are totally false.

Kt August 17, 2023 at 1:16 pm:

Thank you for the feedback. I, who do not believe in the god of Islam or its prophet, don't think that today's Muslims believe that Allah has three daughters, even though some accepted/unaccepted scholars have written stories in relation to this. I lack the in-depth knowledge that allows me to evaluate what Muslim scholars put forward. This also applies to everything written in the Hadiths, which in my view often present many unexpected stories about Muhammad, such as:

* Muhammad receiving guests naked (see reference <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:2732>)

* Muhammad jokingly poking a friend and asking him in public to remove his upper garments, and the other embraces and kisses Muhammad's body (see reference <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:5224>)

* A handsome man asking to come close to Muhammad and touching him on his knees (see reference <https://sunnah.com/nasai:4991>)

* Aisha recounting that Quranic verses tied to “stoning” and “Breastfeeding an adult 10 times” were eaten by a sheep (see reference <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:1944>)

* Muhammad marrying a preschool girl at 6 years old (see reference <https://sunnah.com/nasai:3255>)

* Muhammad's attempt at suicide by throwing himself from a mountain after, according to Islamic tradition, he began receiving divine revelations (see reference <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6982>)

The “black stone” in the Kaaba that Muslims venerate can partly grant absolution of sins if they touch the black stone and Yamani corner and circle it 7 times. It will also be a witness with two eyes and a mouth (see reference and reference <https://sunnah.com/nasai:2919> og referensen <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:961>)

* Muhammad being under the influence of “magic” (see reference <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6391>)

(continue)

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continue,,,

Additionally, there are all the matters previously mentioned related to the Quran, including that verses have been replaced (abrogated, such as verse 2:178).

I can understand an interest to take an apologetic stand, but for me, it is challenging to adopt an academic stance on this when the premise for Muslims is that the verses come directly from God, unchanged since before existence began (,,,,,,,,,even before the Big Bang),,,,

For me, these rather disturbing details as mentioned above (those are just a few of them) are mere observations that provide someone like me, a non-Muslim, with a better foundation to try to understand the background of the religion from a non-religious perspective. I find it VERY difficult to understand it from an islamic religious approach.

OmarRobb August 28, 2023 at 1:20 pm:

I will reply to your claims in a new thread just down below.

Mak22 August 17, 2023 at 10:47 am:

Hi Kt. I am not sure how you read the sources but you are way off. Chapter 52:21 is God addressing the idols worshipper who claim that their godets are daughter of God, “Do you ‘prefer to’ have sons while ‘you attribute’ to Him daughters?”

see this commentary:

<https://islamicstudies.info/towards.php?sura=53&verse=21&to=27#:~:text=Still%20another%20meaning%20can%20be,do%20no%20one%20any%20good.>

2- Al Suyuti is not reliable and not considered as one of the collector of traditions. No one cite him for that purpose.

3-The goat story is a weak tradition that was attribute to someone name Ibn Is-Haqq, which was rejected by the hadeeth scholars, yet still find its way to one of the books. Notice that most of the peculiar tradition are involved A’isha.

See the link:

<https://islamqa.info/en/answers/175355/the-hadith-about-the-sheep-eating-the-page-containing-the-verse-about-stoning-and-breastfeeding-in-the-house-of-aaishah-is-not-saheeh>

No one claims that everything in these books are 100%. You still have to use common sense. If Muhammad and thousands of his followers memorized the Quran and many written it down, a lost one page from one collection will make no dent in the corpus.

As for some verses went missing, see Bukhari 780, page 280 and 1911, page 709 in which Bukhari speaks about the Angle of revelation review the Quran with Muhammad, which contradict the missing verses tradition.

Kt August 24, 2023 at 7:38 am:

[{In reply to Mak22 above}]

Sources,,, my sources are from what I understand to be respected muslim sources, and for the chapter An Najm (chapter 53) explained in Tafsir Al Jalalayn, page 338, Ayah 22:52 – 22:55

<https://quranunlocked.com/en.jalalayn/text/22/55>

All those muslim hadiths about breastfeeding for adult is said recited from his wife A'isha but also others like :

<https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:1940>

“that the Messenger of Allah said: “Breastfeeding once or twice, or suckling once or twice, does not make (marriage) unlawful.”

My point is that I find it difficult to get a good understanding of the muslim religion just by reading muslim scriptures, its hadiths and the tafsirs (also the examples of respected muslim sources like linked here).

OmarRobb August 28, 2023 at 1:23 pm:

A reply to Kt regarding his comment dated: August 17, 2023 at 1:17 pm

Hi Kt,

I replied to all of your claims in the following pdf-reply:

<https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/resources/R4-PdfToKt-3.pdf>

[{This pdf article will be presented after this post}]

However, I don't think I will investigate any of your Quranic claims after this comment; because I don't think that are making any fact-checking before presenting these claims.

If some people hated a book (any book) and they don't have a problem in breaking the limits of logic and they don't do any fact-checking, then they are able to generate an “infinite” number of unfair claims in just a very short time. And it doesn't feel easy that many of these claims can be generated in less than 10 minutes while it would take long time to be investigated and replied.

However, I did spend the time in writing the replies for your claims just to clarify and justify my above decision.

Furthermore, you did highlight that I am presenting an apologetic work, but I truly don't think that you are differentiating properly between apologetic and academic work and I did clarify this at the linked pdf-reply.

[{### The Start of the article: R4-PdfToKt-3.pdf ###}]

Subject: A reply to Kt regarding his comments in the third post of Stephen Shoemaker in Bart Ehrman blog, titled: Creating the Qu'ran: Where Did the Scripture of Islam Really Come From? Dated at August 8, 2023.

Author: Omar Abur-Robb

Library: <https://omr-mhmd.yolasite.com/> Date: August 27, 2023.

Hi Kt,

This is a reply to your claims related to the Quranic and Hadith interpretations, and I did cover all your claims here. However, I truly don't feel that you have done any proper homework or fact-checking before presenting these claims, and I think most of these claims could have been verified with just a quick fact-checking, and I feel that you have just copied these claims from these websites and pasted them here without even reading them properly.

It does feel a bit unfair that you are able to present many unfounded claims in less than 10 minutes while it would take me (and others) a long time to investigate and compose the needed replies.

Therefore, the pdf-reply here is a “**DONE**” one and I am not planning to investigate any of your Quranic claims after today, hoping that the serious people are able to recognize the serious claims from the non-serious ones.

The reply here addresses 12 claims that you have presented, and it does include good deal of technical data that some readers might want to skip. If this was the case, then these readers can just jump to the “general discussion” on **page 12**.

The start of the claim-by-claim replies:

1-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): Muhammad receiving guests naked (see reference <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:2732>).

Answer:

You don't see the chain of the narrators in the English translation. However, you can just copy all the Arabic narrative and paste it in Google-Translate from Arabic to English and you will see the chain of narrators **but** note that you might get a weird translation of some of the names.

Now ... This is a single-chain narrative, and in the chain, you get a narrator with the name “Muhammed bin Ishaq” and he is “weak” by many of the ancient hadithexperts. One the major experts who regarded this narrator to be “weak” is “Malik bin Anas” the well-known scholar.

I was aware about this narrator and his status, and I thought that this narrator is different than “Ibn Ishaq” the historian. But after digging for this claim, it turned out that they are the same person.

As this is a single-chain narrative with a weak narrator in the chain, then this narrative is rejected [I did discuss the meaning of the single-chain narrative and the process of rejection in the first post of Dr. Shoemaker here in the blog].

However, the content of this narrative it is not problematic as I will discuss here:

1# “Naked” here is just a figure of speech, because there are many narratives that do request to cover the “private parts”, and it is valid from the linguistic perspective to say that the word here is just a figure of speech. For example, if someone was wearing only his underwear and went into the main market in London in the 1900AD, then the people will not say that this man was 9th of 10 naked, but they would say that this man was naked, and this would be a figure of speech. In Muhammed case, he was half dressed, probably wearing the Ezar.

There were many types of attires in ancient Arabia, and among them was a style that consists of two main components. The first part was the Ezar: a cloth wrapped around the waist, extending from the belly-button to the knees or even down to the feet. This Ezar closely resembles the garment depicted in ancient Egyptian drawings. The second part is either the Thoub, which is a dress worn from the neck down to the feet or it might be a shirt, which a dress from the neck to bellow the waist. Remarkably, the Thoub and Ezar is still the main style in eastern Arabia today, and the Shirt and Ezar is still a style that can be seen in modern-day Yemen. In the middle and west of Arabia today, the Ezar was substituted with a light white trousers.

Therefore, the highly conclusion here is that the prophet was wearing the Ezar when Zaid came in. This is clearly explained in the English translation which I don't think you have read.

2# Zaid bin Haritha is not just a guest, he is the adopted son of Muhammed. Muhammed adopted him even before the prophethood. For more than 15 years, Zaid name was: Zaid bin Muhammed. This continued until Quran 33:5 which said that adopted sons need to be called to their true fathers, therefore his name returned back to “Zaid bin Haritha” but still, Muhammed continued to regard Zaid as his adopted son. ###

But regardless of the analysis of the content, still, the narrative itself is rejected as it is a single-chain narrative with a weak narrator in it.

2-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): Muhammad jokingly poking a friend and asking him in public to remove his upper garments, and the other embraces and kisses Muhammad's body (see reference <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:5224>).

Answer: Your claim here is just unfair, and I truly think that you didn't even read the narrative before presenting it here as a claim. Muhammed poked a man with a stick, the man claimed to be harmed and Muhammed told him to “take retaliation”, the man said,

you are wearing a shirt, therefore, Muhammed raised the Shirt, and the man just kissed him instead of taking a retaliation.

I didn't even bother to check the "chain analysis" of this hadith as I don't see any problem in it. But you can form any view that you feel fit.

3-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): A handsome man asking to come close to Muhammad and touching him on his knees (see reference <https://sunnah.com/nasai:4991>).

Answer:

What is your point here!

I don't think you regard the knees to be part of the "private parts". Also, you failed to mention that this handsome man was (as in the Hadith) the archangel Gabriel. This led me to think that you didn't really read this narrative to the end, and you probably just copied it from those websites and pasted it here..

However, in this particular hadith there are two prophecies that were clearly and vividly fulfilled in the last century:

[The signs for the judgment day are:] When you see the herdsmen competing in building tall buildings, when you see the barefoot and naked ruling the Earth, when you see a woman giving birth to her mistress.

The people in east Arabia before 1970AD were mostly uneducated and very poor, and in just 20 years after that (by the wealth of producing oil), these people started to compete on high sky-risers, and in just no time they became influential in the politics of the world.

Also, until about the 1950, the larger family still had influence as it did provide support for the branched families (and I am speaking her about the whole world not just Arabia). This large family did enforce the adults to respect their parents. However, after the 1950, the adults started to see that they didn't need the support of the larger family and they started to break from the larger-family norms. Therefore, it can be seen clearly that many of the adults today (in the East and the West) have no care about their parents and even they don't want to recognize them. This is the explanation of the line: "a woman giving birth to her mistress", which means that the daughter treats her mother as though the daughter is the one who knows all.

4-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): Aisha recounting that Quranic verses tied to "stoning" and "Breastfeeding an adult 10 times" were eaten by a sheep (see reference <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:1944>)

Answer: This is a single-chain narrative, and by looking at the chain of narrators (using google-translate as explained in point 1), you will find that one of the narrators is (again) "Muhammed bin Ishaq" the one we have discussed in point 1. Therefore, this narrative

has been rejected by many scholars as it is a single-chain narrative with a weak narrator in it.

You have repeated this claim (The Quran was eaten by a sheep) many times now, and I did reply to you about this narrative many times as well. So, maybe next time when you repeat this claim again you would probably add that some Muslims “claim” that this narrative is rejected because one of the narrators is weak. This would be more fair and it will be much appreciated.

5-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): Muhammad marrying a preschool girl at 6 years old (see reference <https://sunnah.com/nasai:3255>)

Answer: You know very well that the Muslims have two stages of marriage: the “contract” and then the “act of marriage” itself. So, your claim is misleading as Muhammed made the contract when Aisha was 6 but he took her when she was 9.

Now ... taking a wife of 9 is not exceptional to Muhammed but this was the Arabian culture for thousands of years before, and I assume it was also the culture in Africa and India.

This culture is simple: when the female reach puberty then she can get married, and the sign for puberty is the first menstruation. So, the culture of Arabia was: when a female reaches her first menstruation then she can be legally married.

The current age in the West for the first menstruation is between 12 and 13. But the first menstruation in the hot environments happens between 8 and 9. If you know nothing about this then just check google.

Now ... I am aware that the West criticize this young age of marriage, but this position is not based on their scriptures or biology, because in biology: females in mammals (other than humans) start to be active immediately after puberty. So, no scriptures and no biology here, therefore, this position of the West is just based on their own private special “social moralities”.

Now ... I might be wrong here but I am under the impression that many current Westerners are tolerant for the female that reached puberty to be active (as long as she takes the needed precautions and her partner did reach puberty but under the legal age) but they don’t allow her to get married. So, she can be active but not to be married. I assume that many cultures would regard this to be bizarre.

Also, the Westerners today have some “new” special private social moralities that the majority of the people on earth today are totally disagreeing with, and totally criticizing these moralities. The majority of the people here includes the Muslim world, the Indians, the Chinese, the Russians, the Conservative Christians in Africa, and the Conservative Christians in South America.

So, I would rather prefer if the West would try their best to restrain themselves from imposing their own private special social moralities on other cultures. That would be so kind from them.

6-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): Muhammad’s attempt at suicide by throwing himself from a mountain after, according to Islamic tradition, he began receiving divine revelations (see reference <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6982>)

Answer: From only the content of this narrative, I can say that Muhammed is just a human who could have been overwhelmed by this new reality and therefore, he might have been confused or even depressed.

However, many Muslim Scholars are questioning this narrative from a technical perspective (although it is from Al-Bukhari). I did say in the first post of Dr. Shoemaker that many Muslim Scholars have rejected some narratives in Al-Bukhari based on the “chain analysis”.

This narrative is a single-chain narrative [and I did explain in details the single and double chains in the first post of Dr. Shoemaker] but the chain here is broken. Aisha is totally honest, but in this narrative, she is the first of the chain and she is not the witness for the related events. If she said that she heard the Prophet say: {...} then the chain is complete, but this is not the case.

She might have taken this info from the Prophet, or she might have taken it from others, or this might be her understanding. We just don’t know. Therefore, the chain here is broken; because the definition of the Sahih is to have a trusted chain from the documentation to the witness. But if there was a gap in the chain (for example unknown person or the first in the chain is not the witness) then by definition this is not Sahih.

Now ... many Scholars would regard a chain that reach one of the companions to be complete, but many others are strict with the definition of the Sahih, which means that the first in the chain need to be the witness.

Furthermore, one of the narrators of this narrative is Abul-Razzaq [If you put the Arabic narrative in google-translate you might get the strange name: Dr. Al-Razzaq, and this is one of the weird things that you might get from google-translate). His full name is Abdul-Razzaq bin Humam. He is trusted from the moral perspective, but many ancient hadith-experts have regarded him to be making a lot of mistakes, therefore, these Experts are not trusting him fully from the memory perspective.

So, we have here a single-chain narrative with a broken chain and a disputed narrator in it, therefore, this narrative can legitimately be rejected by the “chain analysis”.

7-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): The “black stone” in the Kaaba that Muslims venerate can partly grant absolution of sins if they touch the black stone and Yamani corner and circle it 7 times. It will also be a witness with two eyes and a mouth (see reference and reference <https://sunnah.com/nasai:2919> og referensen <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:961>)

Answer: The first reference that you have provided is not problematic.

It says that touching them erases sins, but this is understood from Quran 11:114, which says that the “good deeds wipe out evil deeds”. This is exactly the same as voluntary

praying, charity, reading the Quran, etc. Of course, this is related to equivalent deeds: a minor evil-deed would be wiped by a minor good-deed, and major evil-deed might be wiped by a major good-deed. But there are some evil-deeds that would not be wiped, and they will be accounted for in the judgment day.

There are no issues in the first reference that you have provided, but you can form your views anyway you feel fit.

###

Regarding the second reference which is related to the back stone: **So, What!!!**

We do believe in many other things: we believe an illiterate man from the middle of nowhere in Arabia who had no experience in leadership or management is the Prophet of God. We believe that the sea parted for Moses. We believe that Jesus raised the dead and healed the sick. We also believe that at the Judgment day, the hands and feet of some people will testify against them (see Quran 36:65).

So, how the things in the second reference are different from the above!!!

However, from a technical perspective, Ibn Khuthaym is one of the narrators of this narrative. His full name is: Abdulla bin Othman bin Khuthaym and he has been regarded by many ancient hadith-experts to be “Not Strong”.

8-- Your Claim (August 17, 2023): Muhammad being under the influence of “magic” (see reference <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6391>)

Answer: Yes, but this allegedly happened for a short time, because this narrative should have been wide-spread but it is actually a single-chain narrative.

However, if you looked at the attitude of the companions and many generations of the followers after them, they really didn't care about black-magic, they didn't discuss it, but they just ignored it. I think they did have a very decisive penalty against practicing black-magic but I assume that was mainly based on Quran 2:102. But still, the companions and the followers (for many generations) just ignored this matter. I assume that this was based on part of the verse in Quran 2:102: “although their magic could not harm anyone except by Allah's Will” [translated by quran.com]. But there is here double-negations, which cannot be really explained properly except by saying that this magic could only last for a short duration. Therefore, I can understand why the companions have just ignored this subject as there were more serious sickness than this magic.

However, this subject started to be a major thing for some Muslims many centuries afterward when they learned the process of Exorcism (!!) from the Jews and Christians. The detail of this process wasn't known at the time of the companions.

Returning back to your reference: Muslim Scholars have disputed this narrative: It is a single-chain narrative that should have been wide-spread, and it does seem that it contradicts with some verses of the Quran, therefore, many Scholars did reject this

narrative by using the **content analysis** (i.e. the content here is based on a single chain that contradict another stronger narrative without any possible reconciliation).

However, other Scholars have highlighted a possible reconciliation that: the impact of this issue was just for a short duration of time.

9-- Your Claim: The issue of the Bell:

In August 9, you said:

“In addition to that, Muslims frequently warns of “bell” which is Satans instrument and comes from Satan Even islams angles are afraid of it, warns about it, and are scared of it. Then,, muslim scholars tells us that Muhammad received inspiration for the Qur’an through a bell (as mentioned in Sahih Al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim – see Sunnah.com). I really don’t understand what these muslim scholars tries to say.” # I answered in August 12:

“I truly don’t know anything about “bell”, can you please give me more info about it?”

You answered in August 12 (in a comment that was released by the moderator about August 26):

* This is how the bell is explained by the ancient scholars in relation to Satan etc. It is a multiple references in islamic litterature related to the bell.

<https://sunnah.com/search?q=the+bell>

* This is a few verses from both from Sahih al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim supposedly told by Aisha (Muhammeds wife). It is worth to mention from my perspective and assessment on this , that both Bukhari and Muslim lived centuries later than Muhammed.

<https://sunnah.com/search?q=inspired+by+the+bell>

Here Muhammed was inspired by the bell which the muslims think is the instrument of Satan, and all islamic angles are afraid of its present.” **Answer:**

For the first reference: the Bell here is a product that is manufactured by humans for humans, it is simply a “bell”: a musical instrument. Today, there are many musical instruments that can be regarded as bells.

The narrative mentioned the “bell” to represent the Music in general. It is common in ancient Arabic to mention the part to mean the whole, or to mention the whole to mean the part.

The link between this instrument and the “Shytan” is metaphorical. This is the same as in Quran 5:90 when it highlighted that wine and gambling are filth from the work of the “Shytan”. The link to the Shytan here is metaphoric, and this metaphoric style is accepted in the Arabic language and I think it is accepted in all other languages.

Now ... Music is a debated subject within the Muslim Scholars, and I did mention in the first post of Dr. Shoemaker that there are two analyses that are conducted for the narratives: the chain analysis and the content analysis. In the content analysis, we might find many opposing trusted narratives. However, it is a pre-mature decision to immediately reject one for the others. Therefore, in the content analysis, Scholars will do the best to try and reconcile these opposing narratives (as it is possible that these narratives are related to different contexts). If the Scholars couldn't reconcile the opposing narratives, then they would reject one for the others (as we have discussed in point 8).

The Music narratives went into the content analysis and there were many legitimate judgments regarding this subject from the normal judgment that Music is allowed except in some specific circumstances, to the judgment of the extreme Scholars who regarded Music to be forbidden.

But this is not our subject here.

You have claimed that "the angles are afraid of it, warns about it, and are scared of it" and this totally **false** as there is **nothing** in the list you have provided says this.

Regarding your other claim that "Muhammad received inspiration for the Qur'an through a bell":

This is just an untruthful description. These references mentioned the following: Muhammed was asked how he received the inspiration from the divine and he answered: Sometimes it is like the ringing of a bell

So, he didn't receive the inspiration through a bell (as you have claimed) but he described the inspiration to be like the ringing of a bell.

To me, there is a different between your claim and the data in the references that you have provided. But you can form your views anyway you feel fit.

###

I need to highlight one more point here: probably all the current translations of the Quran use "Satan" as a translation for the Arabic word "Shytan" but this (in my opinion) is terribly wrong:

Satan in the Hebrew means the "opposer". So, someone stopping you in the street could be called Satan, and this word can be used for good or bad.

Shytan in ancient Arabic is the malicious rebellious of humans or non-humans. For example, there was an aggressive poisonous snake and the ancient Arabs called it Shytan. A rebellious camel could be called Shytan. And I assume that abstract entities (as forgetfulness and laziness) can be called Shytan. The word Shytan is used much before Islam and it does have a clear meaning.

Also, Satan today refer to the Devil (which in Arabic is called "Iblees"). However, Shytan in the Quran doesn't necessary mean Iblees, but it can mean other things

depending of the context. Therefore, the best translation for the Arabic word “Shytan” is just “Shytan”.

10-- Your Claim:

In August 9, you made many claims that Muslim Scholars said that the Quran was changed, modified and substituted.

In August 12, I asked you: Can you highlight the statements of the Muslim Recognized Scholars who said that the Quran was changed, modified and substituted?

You answered in August 12 (in a comment that was released by the moderator about August 26):

Regarding verse changed:

Abu Yunnus, freemdan of Aishah ordered him to write the verse “ HaftdhUU alaas-salaatti was-salaatil wastaa wa quumeuu lillaahi qaantin (2,238) He was ordered to change the verse. This was reported by Muwatta Iman Malik

Regarding verses modified;

Al Hajiaj Ibn Yusuf made eleven modification in the reading of the Uthmanic Text.In Al Baqarah (surah 2,259) it was originally read “Lam yatasanna waandhur” but was altered to “Lam yatasanna” Also in Al Ma’ida (surah 5,48) and a few others, like ibn Abi Dawud.

Regarding substituted:

Sahih al Bukhari (Volum 6, book 61, Number 527) refer to “But Allah said, “None of our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar.

Answer:

10.1.1# The first narrative is not just mentioned in Muwatta Malik, it is clearly mentioned in Tafsir Al-Tabari and Tafsir Al-Qurtubi. And it is not just Aishah, but it is also reported for Umm-Salama, Hafsa, and Ibn-Masud.

10.1.2# There are word variations in the Quran (as I have discussed in my pdf-reply to Dr. Shoemaker in his second post), and these variations doesn’t exceed 3% of the Quran and it does not impact the general meaning of the verses. We believe that these variations are legitimate, and they were said by Muhammed himself.

Now ... you probably criticize that a book of God has word variations, but this view of yours has “zero” interest to us; because this view of yours is not based on solid logic but on personal judgements, so why should we discuss your personal judgements about the Quran!

However, from the scientific historical perspective: the Muslims expanded so quickly in the east and the west of the world, then they went into serious civil wars, then they went into awful defragmentation, but still, they share a book with 100% of the meaning

and at least 97% of its exact wording, therefore, this book can only be from one source (or at least, this is our opinion).

10.1.3# When you say the book was changed then you are saying that some people deliberately decided to take the original words of the author and change it. Therefore, your claim here is totally **false** and **misleading**, because what Aisha did was asking the scribe to write what she heard from the Prophet, and this is completely not changing the Quran.

10.2# Regarding the second narrative:

This narrative is a single-chain that was mentioned only in the Book of Al-Masahif authored by Abu-Baker bin Abu-Dawud. In this chain, there is one narrator with the name: Abbad bin Suhayb. His status within the ancient hadith-experts is “left out” (Matrook). This status is much lower than the status of “weak” or “unknow”.

So, this narrative that you have mentioned (which you could have easily verified by yourself if you have done a bit of homework and fact-checking) is rejected by the Muslim Scholars.

10.3# Regarding the third narrative: The narrative you have mentioned is this:

<https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5005>

Where in it do you find that the Muslims substituted the Quran!!!

I didn't analyze the chain of this narrative and I didn't look for the Scholar opinions about it, I am just going to discuss the content of it “as-is”:

The narrative speaks about Omar that he doesn't seem to be agreeing about a verse in the Quran that Ubai insisted that he heard it from the Prophet.

I did discuss in the first post of Dr. Shoemaker the criteria of Zaid bin Thabit for gathering the Quran. His criteria were simple: The verse of the Quran need to be supported by at least two witnesses and one written document.

Now ... Omar opinion is not a witness statement here, it is just a personal judgment, therefore, the statements of trusted witnesses will override personal judgments, and I think this is a universal common sense.

So, regardless of Omar opinion, the verse in question was supported by at least two witnesses and one written document.

But Still, there is nothing in the narrative that says that the Muslims have substituted the verses of the Quran. Therefore, you claim here is just **false**.

11-- Your Claim:

#####

I am going here to comment on your claims that you have addressed to Mak22, and I hope that Mak22 won't mind me replying to your claims in this "final" pdf-reply.

#####

In August 9, you have claimed that God has daughters in reference to Quran 53:19-23, and I did reply to this claim twice (August 12 & 17) as I will clarify in point 13.

However, Mak22 commented in August 17: "I am not sure how you read the sources but you are way off ...".

In August 24, you said to him:

Sources,,, my sources are from what I understand to be respected muslim sources, and for the chapter An Najm (chapter 53) explained in Tafsir Al Jalalayn, page 338, Ayah 22:52 – 22:55

<https://quranunlocked.com/en.jalalayn/text/22/55>

Now ... I am completely surprised how this is related to your claim that God has daughters!!!

The second thing is: what are your objections here!!!

Let me just be very clear: We don't regard Muhammed to be a divine being. He is a human and we believe that he is the Prophet of God. But as a human he might make some mistakes. However, when you surround humans with a proper Quality Management System then this system is capable of containing the errors of humans. The best example is aviation, which many would regard as the most dangerous method of transportation. However, since this transportation is governed by a very strict Quality Management System, it is not surprising to learn that aviation is actually the least fatal method of transportation.

We believe that Muhammed was a Prophet of God and he was a human, and he also was governed by a proper quality management system that included following up, reciting, checking, rectifying, etc.

So, the Quran verses 22:52-55 are very normal, and I don't really know your objections here, but also, I don't have the desire to know any of your Quranic objections after today.

12-- Your Claim:

In the same comment to Mak22 (August 24) you said the following:

All those muslim hadiths about breastfeeding for adult is said recited from his wife A'isha but also others like : <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:1940>

“that the Messenger of Allah said: “Breastfeeding once or twice, or suckling once or twice, does not make (marriage) unlawful.”

You know **nothing** about this matter, and you could have clarified this matter by just making a little bit of true homework and fact-checking. But you just took something that you don't understand and present it as a genuine claim.

But It has been said many times over and over again from the ancient times: if you don't know something then for the sake of heaven and earth just ask someone who does before making a serious judgment.

You thought that this hadith is linked to point 4, but it is **NOT**.

Islam has established a clear culture that if a woman (and let us call her Ann) breastfed an infant (and let us call him Sam) then Ann will become a Mother to Sam with all the respect and obligations except inheritance (The same case if the infant was a female).

This means that the daughters of Ann are sisters to Sam, and therefore, Sam cannot marry anyone of them.

In the hadith you have referenced, the Prophet is saying that suckling once or twice doesn't make the Breastfeeding woman (in this case Ann) a mother to the infant (in this case Sam) and it doesn't make Ann's daughters as sisters to Sam. This imply that the Breastfeeding need to be full and complete in order for Ann to become a mother for Sam.

13-- Your previous Claims in this post:

You forward some claims in August 9, which I answered in August 12. Then you replied in August 13, and I replied in August 17. These replies are related to your claim that God has daughters as per Quran 53:19-23, and about “Allah” as the name of God. I truly regard your claims here to be totally non-serious and totally false because the Quran verses are very clear, and “Allah” as the name of God has been discussed many times by Scholars from different faith in the net and YouTube.

The end of the claim-by-claim replies

The General Discussion:

Some people might have a strong repulsion toward the Quran, but this is their thoughts, their minds, their map of the world, and I shouldn't be bothered with the thoughts in the minds and hearts of these people, it is simply not my business.

However, some might present a claim that I see false, and I will be interested to present on the table my information and views related to this claim. But still, there are some people that dedicated their energy on criticizing the Quran regardless of logic, regardless of homework and regardless of fact-checking. But this is not a professional act, and the best approach is just to ignore their claims hoping that the serious people are able to recognize the serious claims from the non-serious ones.

Now ... If some people hated a book (any book) and they didn't care about logic, homework or fact-checking then they are able to present an infinite number of unfair claims by just mis-interpreting and re-mis-interpreting the verses in it,, and not all people are able to handle the "Unfair Infinity".

This is not related only to the Quran, but it is related to any subject that the nonserious people have decided to get involved in; including science, global warming, politics, social affairs, history you name it.

One of the strategies to deal with these non-serious claims is to insist on clarifying whether these claims are supported by recognized Scholars from recognized universities. If this was the case, then we could deal with only the claims of these Scholars because recognized Scholars do respect logic due to their professional pride and due to their peers' supervision.

As I have implied in a previous comment (August 17), the discussions with the recognized Scholars and serious people are always useful because both of them have a limit of logic that they cannot break, but the problem starts when the non-serious debaters jump in.

Now ... I might be wrong here (and this would not be the first time and it will not be the last) but I truly think that you didn't make any fact-checking or reasonable homework before presenting your claims, and I truly feel that if these 12 claims have been answered then you will just copy another 20 from these non-fair websites and paste them here without fact-checking in just 10 minutes, and this is not fair for time and energy.

This is the reason that I have no desire to investigate any of your Quranic claims after today, and the main reason is that I cannot handle the unfair-infinity.

###

Furthermore, you have implied before (in a previous platinum post about Daniel prophecies) that I am writing from an apologetic perspective, and I did reply to this claim at that time. But you did imply here the same claim, and I truly don't think that you differentiate between apologetic and academic works.

I have explained many times my methodology for analyzing metaphysical subjects. This methodology consists of two parallel analyses: the Scientific Historical Analysis (taking-out all the metaphysical data), and the metaphysical analysis. Then I will identify the gaps between these two analyses.

Now ... most of my discussions here in the blog are based on the Scientific Historical Analysis. I do sometimes discuss the metaphysical data, but this is about explaining the meaning of these data which can be presented by both Muslims and non-Muslims. This is the same if an Atheist was explaining the meaning of the verses in the NT. This is not an apologetic work but an academic one.

As the style of my presentation for the metaphysical data is about explaining the meaning of these data, which is a style that can as well be conducted by non-Muslims, then this style cannot be apologetic.

But as you have formed an opinion about my style of presentation, then I hope you will allow me to present my opinion about your style of presentation:

I might be wrong here (as before), but I truly think that you have a mission to criticize the Quran by any means possible regardless of logic, regardless of homework, and regardless of fact-checking. If this was the case, then this would probably be a little bit far from fair.

[{### End of the article: R4-PdfToKt-3.pdf ###}]

[{End of thread 3.4}]

[{The Start of **Thread 3.5** - Main subject: The expansion of Islam}]

GeoffClifton August 14, 2023 at 3:26 am:

These posts have clearly proved contentious. Reading the above comments (from Fishician and Omar), I have to say that I agree with Fishician. The ‘God moves in mysterious ways’ argument is one that smacks of special pleading. Using critical thinking, one surely cannot deny that communication that fails to communicate effectively is ineffective communication. If God doesn’t understand that, then we are all in trouble.

OmarRobb August 30, 2023 at 4:10 am - Edit - Reply

This is probably a late reply, but actually, your comment was released recently.

Taste might be difficult to be analyzed logically. But the effectiveness can be analyzed logically. Let us try this on the Quran:

The first state of Islam was about 622AD. In 10 years, Muhammed managed to establish a strong state by people who have no previous skills, knowledge or experience in large-state management, large-state warfare, large-state laws, large-state social orders, etc. Actually, these people were never united for at least 8000 years prior.

10 years after that, these people managed to cripple one superpower and overcome the other and rule a vast number of people in the middle east. The Quran was at the center of these people, and all Muslims (the pure, the good, the normal, the bad, the awful) from that time until today are centered (in a way) around it, even the X-Muslims have dedicated their life to attack it. And it is just a book, which just contains words, which just counts for about 78k.

So, regardless of taste and opinions, it does seem to me that it is a bit far from logic to say that this book wasn’t effective in communicating its core messages.

GeoffClifton August 30, 2023 at 10:42 am - Edit - Reply

I'm sorry but I don't see what military success has to do with the Qu'ran. It wasn't a military manual and I suspect that very few of the Arab soldiers were Qu'ranic scholars or had even heard of it. The military success of the Arab armies was more to do with the power vacuum created by the weakening Byzantine and Sassanian Empires. Although I accept that their military achievement was impressive, it was in many ways comparable to the early conquests of the Achaemenid Persians and they were Zoroastrians, not Muslims.

OmarRobb September 2, 2023 at 5:13 pm:

I mentioned the large-scale management, the large-scale warfare, the large-scale social order,, and you only objected on the warfare bit.

But it is OK ... let us discuss warfare.

I agree ... the Quran has no military manual.

However, when the Arabs hunted before Islam, they did master the trapping maneuvers. So, they were capable of understanding the process of tactics, and there were military leaders who were smart in these things, but this wasn't a superior tactics and it just contributed with 1/5th of the victory.

The 4/5th came from a very rare phenomenon: an army with an extreme discipline and an extreme well to fight (or more precisely: the extreme well to accept the suffering in the fight for the fight). The front line of the army was thin as it was required to cover the battlefield, However, this line was able to hold the enemy for sufficient time that enabled leaders to employ there plans and traps and win the day.

This phenomenon was the secret for this miraculous expansion: The extreme discipline and the extreme well.

[{->}]

There is a dilemma in the normal warfare: the ordinary army is highly disciplined, but the army might not have the extreme well. The militia might have a high well, but they probably aren't very disciplined. Some countries have decided to employ both, but this can backfire big time. The discipline even without the well is much better than the well without the discipline.

Also, when two professional armies fight then the quick decisive victory can only be achieved by superior weaponries or superior tactics. But the Arabs at the first expansion didn't have superior weaponries or tactics. But they had this rare phenomenon that I have discussed, which was installed by Muhammed and reinforced by the Quran.

So, the first expansion of the Muslims was miraculous, but it wasn't a miracle. The miracle (in my view) happened between 622 to 632AD with this dramatic miraculous paradigm shift transformation of the culture of the people there.

After a few generations of the first expansion, the Muslims discipline and well came down to the normal level, and it fluctuated around this level through the years afterwards, but the Muslims at that time did accumulate the know-how of the large-scale warfare.

GeoffClifton September 3, 2023 at 2:07 pm:

The Arab armies were extremely successful but this was not unusual, given the historical circumstances. Alexander the Great, Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan were all equally successful. There are also other examples of men becoming talented generals late in life, with no previous experience of commanding large formations, eg. Julius Caesar and Oliver Cromwell. And how do you explain the fact that the Arab armies eventually ran out of steam, and failed to penetrate much beyond Spain or into central Asia? Their Spanish conquests were eventually lost and Europe remained Christian. Military success is usually the result of a number of factors but if you are saying that a religious book's validity can be determined by the extent of its adherents' territorial gains, then the Muslim empire was not the biggest empire and not the longest lived either.

OmarRobb September 5, 2023 at 1:33 pm - Edit - Reply

1# First, there was an error in my previous comment: "well" should be "will". English is not native to me, and I have no problems with some minor errors, but this wasn't minor. So, sorry for that.

2# This discussion was about the Quran if it did convey its core messages effectively. My argument was that Arabs were scattered and never united before, and in less than 20 years they managed to create a strong vast state in the middle east. I can also add here that 80 years after the first expansion, they managed to accumulate the knowledge around them (from the Greeks, Persians, and Indians) and they became the masters of knowledge at that time. So, from nothing to a vast state in 20 years and from nothing to masters in knowledge in 100 years. This isn't very bad, is it! As all of this is centered around the Quran then at least I can say that the Quran did convey its core message effectively.

3# You questioned why the steam stopped, but if the company was bankrupted then the business manual might be fault or maybe the people didn't follow the manual properly.

[{-->}]

So, the fault of the manual is not certain here. Same argument for the Quran.

4# You concentrated on the warfare saying that the military success of the Muslims in the first expansion has nothing to do with the Quran, and I did say that the Muslims didn't have superior weaponries or superior tactics, but they had an extreme discipline and extreme will, which were installed by Muhammed and reinforced by the Quran.

5# Alexander inherited an efficient and well-trained fighting machine with superior tactics (The Macedonian phalanx). Hun are actually part of the Mongols and the Mongols always had superior tactics: They born on a horse, live on a horse, and die on

a horse. They and horses are one. However, the Hun civilization evaporated 50 years after Attila, and the Mongol civilization evaporated 200 years after Genghis.

6# However, I don't have a problem if your opinion was that the establishment of the Greek civilization (or the Mongolians or others) are similar or near to the establishment of the Islamic civilization. But I would disagree with this opinion for the reasons that I have mentioned here.

GeoffClifton September 6, 2023 at 5:44 am:

I think we can argue this subject into the ground. I would say in conclusion that the Arabs did have previous good military experience. Their achievements were impressive but not unprecedented or unsurpassed and their failures were often due to an over reliance on cavalry, which are less manoeuvrable in broken and mountainous country, hence their inability to successfully conquer Spain and parts of Central Asia. If their conquests were divinely inspired, then one would have expected God to have pointed this out to them. The Byzantine and Persian Empires were declining when the Arabs conquered them and if they hadn't, somebody else would.

OmarRobb September 11, 2023 at 11:44 am:

Yes, you are right; we could argue this subject for ages and probably not even have a slight convergence.

However, I just want to highlight a point in your previous comment: I didn't say that the first expansion was based on the inspiration of God, and even I don't think that I have mentioned the word God or divine. I was discussing things from a logical perspective trying to explain the physics by the physics, and I did highlight that the secret of the first expansion was due to the extreme discipline and extreme will.

[{End of thread 3.5}]