

A short history of Islam

Sunni Islam has the following sacred books and the ultimate authorities of Islamic law and religious practice.

- The Quran is divided into surah, which are sets of revelations. The surah are ordered according to their length, not chronologically.
- Sirat Rasul: Biography of Mohamed, written in the 9th century, based on an older book written in 8th century by Ibn Ishaq.
- Boukhari, Sahih Muslim, Mouwatta: Collections of oral traditions of sentences that Mohamed is believed to have said. Collections made in the 9th century by different Islamic scholars. The Shias do have other collections which are not used in this document.

In order to allow the reader to check the quotations, the links to download these and other books are found at the end of the document.

Year(s)

610-620 : Mohamed lives in Mecca and has few disciples. The revelations he receives are peaceful and often refer to stories of the Old and New Testaments, or mythologies of Arab tribes. Examples of peaceful and conciliatory Texts: Surah 2.256: *No Constraint in Religion!* Surah 5.47: *We revealed the law to Moses. There was light and advice. (...) It is to them (the Jews) that we entrusted the protection of the book of Allah.*

Surah 3:45: *O Mary, behold, God speaketh unto you a word from His part: His name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious here below as in the hereafter, and one of the closeness of God.* Surah 2:87: *We gave the book to Moses (...) we gave Jesus clear signs and we strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.*

620-622 : Most of the polytheistic Meccans reject Mohamed's new religion. After the death of his wife Khadidcha and his uncle Abu Talib, Mohamed lost his protectors in Mecca. Mohamed and his followers moved to Medina. There he united the rival tribes *Aus* and *Khazraj* and becomes their ally. Together, they attack the caravans of the Meccans, for the first time during the holy month and disguising as pilgrims (Ibn Ishaq, Sir Rasul Allah, no.424-428). Mohamed justifies the attacks by the fact that the Meccans rejected « *the way of Allah* » and tried to distract Muslims from their belief (Ibn Ishaq, Sirah Rasul Allah, no.426, Surah 2: 217).

622 : At these beginnings in Medina, Mohamed receives new revelations less and less peaceful. Many polytheists of Medina are converted, some Christians, no Jew.

623 : The nature of the revelations changes, the latter justify the use of power and force. Mohamed has a new revelation, Surah 9.5: « *Kill the idolaters wherever you find them. Capture them, besiege them and prepare for them any ambush.* » The verse is mainly directed towards the Arabian polytheists but later was also used to justify massacres among the Hindus.

623-624 : Jews and Christians accuse Mohamed that his new revelations contradict the old ones. Mohamed then receives another new revelation justifying this change:

Surah 2.106: *If we abrogate any verse or forget it, we bring a better one or a similar one. Allah is omnipotent.*

Surah 16:10: *When we replace one verse with another – and Allah knows best what he sends down – they [unbelievers] say, “You [Mohamed] are but a liar”.*

“*Naskh*”: This Islamic principle of textual interpretation indicates that more recent revelations take precedence over older ones if there are inconsistencies. The oldest texts are repealed (*mansukh*). More recent texts incite violence against non-Muslims and annul older verses, well-disposed towards Jews and Christians.¹

624 : The poet Kab bin al-Ashraf makes fun of Mohamed in his poems. Mohamed demands that he be killed, what 5 of his soldiers did (al-Bukhari book 5, No. 369). The poet Asma bint Marwan was

killed because her poems were critical of Mohamed. Mohamed approved his murder. (Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 38, no.4348). Islamists use this kind of hadith to justify for example the attack of the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo or the Danish paper Jyllands-Posten.

In the year 630, after the conquest of Mecca, Mohamed pardoned the poet Hind bint Utba who once mocked him (Ibn Kathir, 14th century Islamic scholar, in his biography about Mohamed « Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya », vol.3, page 432).

625 : A person from the Jewish tribe named Nadir throws a big stone at Mohamed when he walks past his house, without touching him. According to Ibn Kathir (14th century commentator of the Quran), Muhammad does not ask to surrender the culprit but gives the order to besiege the tribe, and cut the palm trees of their oasis. The Nadir tribe surrenders and can leave its oasis taking with them animals and clothes. All the rest and the village are taken and distributed to Mohamed's soldiers. (Sahih Muslim, book 19, 4324 – 4326)

627 : The Jewish tribe named Qurayzah allies with the Meccans for fear of Mohamed. The Meccans attack Medina. Both armies launch arrows over a defensive trench. There is no battle and the Meccans retreat. Soon after, Mohamed attacks the Qurayzah tribe and besieges it. The tribe surrendered, without a battle, after having asked for the same conditions as the Nadir tribe, but Mohamed ordered that all the men of the tribe, about 700, be decapitated and the women sold as slaves or given to the soldiers of the Muhammad's army (Bukhari 5: 58: 148 and 5: 59: 362, Ibn Ishaq, Sirah Rasul Allah no.684 – 689).ⁱⁱ Non-Muslims were shocked that Mohamed did not respect the limiting principle of revenge "*an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*", accepted by the tribes of Arabia. Ibn Ishaq's contemporary jurist, Ibn Mâlik Anas, attributes this massacre to the Othman caliph, and not to Mohamed ⁱⁱⁱ but Ibn Mâlik Anas is considered « less reliable » than Bukhari.

622-630 : Mohammed's growing hostility towards the Jews is manifested in Surahs such as 2.65 and 5.60 and 7.166: « *Allah will turn Jews and Christians into abject pigs and monkeys* » or Surah 5.51 « *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them* ». See also Surahs 3.118 and 9.23.

629 : Mohamed and his army attack the Jewish tribe of Khaybar (150km north of Medina), an agricultural community. These Jews have never done anything against Mohamed. The peasants are attacked by surprise. The tribe is condemned to deliver half of its harvest and pay a tax (*jizya*) to Mohamed (Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah, nb. 757). This is the beginning of the status called "dhimmi". The Jews were expelled from Khaibar by the 2nd Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khatâb, because Jews were no longer allowed to live in Arabia (Ibn Malik Anas, « Mouwatta », Book 45, 18.5).

630 : Mohamed's army is strong enough now to attack and conquer the city of Mecca.

632 : After a short illness, Mohamed died in 632 without choosing his successor. Umar (future 2nd Caliph) prevented Mohamed from writing his will (Al-Bukhari, book 3.114). The Shiites think that Mohamed would have designated Ali as his successor, which Umar has prevented. But after the death of Mohamed the question of his succession arises. Some Muslims think that religious leaders must choose the successor (Sunni), others believe in family succession by blood ties (Shiites). The Shiites think that Ali, Mohamed's cousin and son-in-law, should have been the first caliph after Mohamed, but Abu Bakr was chosen as the 1st caliph by the religious leaders.

633-634 : After the death of Mohamed, the Arab tribes seek to become independent again of Medina. These tribes return to their ancient deities and stop paying taxes to the Muslims of Medina. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, reunites an army and again submits the Arab tribes to the Islamic power of Medina (see *Ridda* war). The tribes, who have returned to their former deities are attacked and people who have not answered the call to the muslim prayer (*adhan*) are killed.^{iv}

634-644 : Umar ibn al-Khatab is chosen as 2nd Caliph. His army conquers Iraq, Syria, Jerusalem and Egypt. Umar sets rules of conduct for Christians and Jews in the conquered territories. These rules define the status of dhimmi. These rules of Umar are reinforced by the Caliph Umar II in the year 717.^v He applies them with great rigor. Other caliphs did not apply them. The Islamic State of Syria and other Islamists say that a true Muslim must apply them.^{vi} Extract from the 22 rules:

- 1) A seated Christian or Jew must stand up if a Muslim comes to pass.
- 2) Christians and Jews are not allowed to ride horses, only to ride donkeys.
- 3) Christians and Jews are not allowed to have homes higher than those of Muslims.
- 4) Christians and Jews do not have the right to bury and mourn their dead while it is daytime.
- 5) Christians and Jews must sing in a low voice so that Muslims do not hear them outside their churches and synagogues.
- 6) Jews and Christians must wear a piece of yellow cloth or a yellow belt on the coat.

644 : The 2nd caliph, Umar also creates the Muslim calendar named « Hegira ». Umar is assassinated by a Persian captive. Shiites regard Umar's election as a coup aimed at preventing Ali's takeover.

645-655 : Under the caliphate of Othmân (3rd Caliph), the leaders became aware of differences in the way of reciting the Quran. See below the details of the history of the Quran. Othmân's army conquered territories now called Iran, Libya, Afghanistan and part of Pakistan. Othman's army put an end to the great Persian empire of the Sassanids that went from Afghanistan to Egypt and practiced the Zoroastrian religion.

653 : The Muslim governor of Egypt Abdallah conquered Nubia (North Sudan) and imposed a peace treaty on the Nubians. One of the points of the treaty stipulates that the Nubians must provide every year 360 young slaves to the governor of Egypt. This is the beginning of the institutionalized trade of slavery in the Muslim world. Before that date, only prisoners of war were enslaved. Saudi Arabia abolished slavery in 1962.^{vii}

656 : Alî ibn Abî Talib (Ali), Mohamed's cousin, is finally chosen as 4th Caliph. Ali is assassinated in 661 in the city of Kufa, Iraq.

661 : Beginning of the dynasty of Umayyad caliphs at the end of the 1st Muslim civil war (*fitna*) between the clan of Othman and the clan of Ali. Damascus (Syria) becomes the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, the 1st Umayyad caliph, had a Christian wife. After him, mixed marriages are forbidden.

680 : Beginning of the 2nd Muslim Civil War, during which the holy places of Mecca and Kaaba were severely damaged by the Umayyad Caliph's army commanded by 'Abd al-Malik. Imam Hussein, son of the 4th Caliph Ali, is killed with his entire family during the battle of Karbala (Iraq). This is the definitive separation between Sunnis and Shiites.

744-750 : At the end of the third Muslim civil war, Abū Al-'Abbās, grandson of Ali, becomes the first caliph of the Abbasid dynasty. Baghdad becomes the capital of the caliphate. Almost the entire Umayyad clan was killed. The Abbasids were able to reunite many non-Arab peoples against the Umayyads. The administration of the Abbasid caliphate becomes multi-ethnic.

750-770 : The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur ordered that Muhammad Ibn Ishaq writes the biography of Mohamed called "Sirat Rasul Allah". The Qur'an, the Hadiths and the Sirat are called the "*sunnah of the prophet*". The rules and laws of Islam and the Sharia are based on these three books. The book of Ibn Ishaq is lost, but a century and a half later, Ibn Hicham wrote a book of the same name based on the book of Ibn Ishaq. But the book of Ibn Hicham is considerably shorter. The Sirat helps to understand the social and political context of many Surahs. Many Surahs cannot be understood without the help of the Sirat and the Hadiths.

752-850 : The mutazilist theology, founded by Wasil b. 'Ata, gained a lot of influence under the Abbasid caliphs and becomes official from 827 to 850. The Mutazilists insist on reason to access the true religion, on the free will of the individuals (*qadariya*) and specify that the Qur'an is not eternal but must be interpreted in its temporal context. The mutazilists oppose the theology of the Umayyads which says that God does everything (determinism, *jabriyah*) and that the humans have no free choice. Unlike the Hanbalists and Ash'arites, the Mutazilists believe that God must be consistent with his attributes of justice and compassion, so God cannot be the cause of unjust human actions, God cannot be the cause of massacres made by some caliphs.^{viii} The intellectual freedom of the Mutazilists is at the beginning of the intellectual and scientific golden age of the Muslim world. Example: The Persian scientist Mohammed ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī developed modern algebra and solved several mathematical problems.

830-846 : Al-Bukhari, a great Islamic theologian, gathers throughout the Abbasid empire more than 300,000 oral traditions (*hadith*) on sentences that Mohamed is supposed to have said. Al-Bukhari transmits by writing about 8000 hadiths that he considers as authentic. Sahih Muslim also made a collection of hadiths. These 2 books are considered by the Sunnis as the most authentic after the Qur'an. Mālik Ibn Anas, Abu Dāwud etc. have also written collections of hadith, but some of their hadiths are considered « weakly reliable » (see commentary on Hadiths below). Shiites have other collections of hadiths, collected by Kitab Al-Kafi and Tahdhib al-ahkam and others.

830-846 : Three hadiths show the priorities in the Islamic faith (Al-Bukarie, books 2.25, 10.505 and 26.594):

Abu Hurayra reports that the Messenger of God was questioned: "Which work is the best? « Believe in God and His Messenger », answered the Prophet. – And what after? – Fight for the cause of God (jihad). – And then what? – A pilgrimage perfectly accomplished".

Al-Bukarie books 2.25 and 10.505 put jihad in the 3rd place.

At that time, Jihad always meant defensive or offensive warfare (see also year 1360 in this table). Participating in jihad as a fighter is the way to obtain forgiveness of sins with certainty (Surah 3:157; Sahih Muslim 20:4645 and 20:4646). « *He (Abu Sa'id) said: what is this act? He replied: jihad in the way of Allah! Jihad in the way to Allah! Whoever is killed in the way of Allah will have all his sins blotted out.* » It is one of the motivations for Muslims with a criminal past to become a fighter or a terrorist.

750-1019 : Under the Abbasid caliphs, the sciences are developed in cultural centers like Baghdad and Cordoba (Spain). The books of ancient Greek philosophers are translated into Arabic and revolutionize mathematics, medicine, chemistry and astronomy. Sunni and Shia Muslims, Jewish and Christian scholars often work together. This is the only period where Sunni, Shia, Jewish and Christian scholars work together, especially in Baghdad.

About 950 : The oldest document of Sufi Islam comes from Baghdad, dated 10th century. Love is central to Sufi teaching. Human excellence is found in the purification of the heart, stripped of its ego. The Sufis are organized in brotherhoods (*turuq*) guided by masters. They are found in many countries, they are particularly numerous among the Kurds and in India.

1009 : The 6th caliph of the Fatimid dynasty, Al-Hakim reigns in Cairo and is at the origin of the Druze religion (Shiites branch). The Fatimids are Ismaili (Arab) Shiites who trace their origin to Fatima, Mohamed's daughter. In 1009, the Caliph Al-Hakim ordered to destroy all pre-Islamic monuments and churches in Egypt and the « Holy Sepulcher » in Jerusalem. The caliph stops the persecution of Christians in 1019 and allows them to rebuild their churches in Egypt. At its peak, the Fatimid Empire covers a territory from Syria to modern Algeria.

1019 : The Caliph Al Qadir orders that the letter called « Qadir Epistle » (*Risala al-Qadiriya*) is read in all palaces and in the mosques of the empire. The letter forbids any new exegesis (*ijtihad*) and prohibits all research about Mohamed. This is called "*taqlid*".

Taqlid (literally “Imitation”): Biographical research on Mohamed is forbidden. Each Muslim must obligatorily follow one of the 4 Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i or Hanbali legal schools.^{ix} The exegesis of sacred texts (*ijtihad*) is limited to the application of Islamic jurisprudence and only certain scholars have the right to make this application (the *mujtahid*).^x Research, especially theological and philosophical research, is declining in the Arab world from that date. This is the beginning of the end of the intellectual golden age of the Muslim world. The king of Morocco authorizes exegesis of the 3 sacred books again in his country in 2006.

For the Shiites exegesis (*ijtihad*) has never been interrupted. They reject the *Taqlid*.

1071 : The army of the Seljukids (people of Central Asia), led by General Atsiz, takes Jerusalem and removes the Fatimids from power. The 2nd Sultan Alp Arslan, who reigns since Ray (today Tehran), prohibits access to Jerusalem for Christians. This triggers the organization of the 1st Crusade in Europe starting in 1095.

1095-1291 : In response to the Crusades, the idea of a return to the original conquering Islam is reinforced. *Taqlid* is spread and is accepted all the more easily by all Sunnis.

1050-1200 : The mutazilists are classified as « theological inventors » (which is forbidden by *Taqlid*) and Ash’arite theology finally prevails. An Ash’arite theory says that God is the cause of everything, good and bad, which suits the political powers. The Ash’arites base themselves among others on the following Surahs: Surah 2:284 “*Allah forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills, for Allah has power over all things*”.

Surah 13,34 “*Allah deceives who He wills and guides whom He wills, His power is exalted*”.

1207-1273 : Djalâl ad-Din Rûmî, great poet and Sufi mystic, is at the origin of the “Dervishes”. In order to approach God, Rûmî insists on the love of one’s neighbor and the contemplation of the beauty of creation. Submission to God alone is not enough. Among many others, the poet Goethe and the philosopher Hegel are influenced by Rûmî.

1236 : Muslims are expelled from Cordoba in 1236 during the « Reconquista ». Persecuted Jews prefer to follow Muslims to North Africa rather than to stay in « Christian » Spain. Cordoba loses its scholars and intellectuals.

1258 : Baghdad is conquered by the armies of the peoples of Central Asia under General Hulagu Khan. Baghdad is destroyed and the books of its libraries are thrown into the Euphrates River. Many scientists and the caliph al-Mustasim are murdered. That is the end of the intellectual golden age of the Muslim world. These peoples of Central Asia eventually converted to Islam and are at the origin of the Ottoman (Turkish) empire.

1299-1569 : In 1299, Sultan Osman I conquered the Byzantine city of Moadene. This is the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, which conquered Eastern Europe between 1359 and 1512 and the Arab world and North Africa between 1512 and 1569. The empire imposes a conservative Islam looking inside. Example: The sultans forbade Muslims to use the printing press until the 19th century. Only Christians and Jews had the right to use the printing press and that as early as 1567, date of opening of the first Armenian printing press in Istanbul. According to statistics from the Book Fair of Frankfurth, a small country like Hungary translates 100 times more books per inhabitant than the entire Arabic-speaking world, Spain 200 times more (1 book per million inhabitants compared to 195 books).

1360-1367 : Ahmad ibn al-Naqib al-Misri (1302-1367) is the leading scholar of Shari’a jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of the Shafi’i school. Al-Misri wrote in particular “*The reliance of the traveler: A Classical Handbook of Sacred Islamic Law* » (Umdat al-Salik). His work is based on ancient works. The modern states of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the University of al-Azhar regard it as having authority for legal jurisprudence. Excerpts:^{xi}

B7.2-3: „*When the four necessary integrals of consensus exist, the ruling agreed upon is an authoritative part of Sacred Law that is obligatory to obey and not lawful to disobey. Nor can mujtahids of a succeeding era make the thing an object of new ijtihad because the ruling on it, verified by*

scholarly consensus, is an absolute legal ruling which does not admit of being contravened or annulled.”

O9.0: “*Jihad means to war against non-Muslims, and is etymologically derived from the word mujahada signifying warfare to establish the religion. And it is the lesser jihad. As for the greater jihad, it is spiritual warfare against the lower self (nafs), which is why the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said as he was returning from jihad. ... I have been commanded to fight people until they testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and perform the prayer, and pay zakat (compulsory alms giving).*”

This is the first time that a great Islamic jurist distinguishes between « small » and « great » jihad. Before al-Misri, « jihad » is almost always associated with defensive or offensive warfare. The Sufis accept a hadith of Imam Baihaqui that distinguishes between « small » and « great » jihad, but this hadith is not recognized as authentic by traditional Sunni Islam.

O4.9: “*The indemnity paid for a Jew or Christian is one-third of the indemnity paid for a Muslim. The indemnity paid of a Zoroastrian is one-fifteenth of that a Muslim*”.

According to the sharia, non-Muslims are worth much less than Muslims.

1501 : Beginning of the Safavid dynasty and reign of Ismail 1. He reigns over Iran, much of Iraq, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. Ismail 1 converted the peoples of his empire to Shiism. He believes in the 12 imams successors of Mohamed who are infallible. The 12th Imam, Mohamed Ibn al-Hassan, is believed to be on earth in an invisible manner since the year 868. This imam is considered the Savior « *Al-Mahdi* » who will manifest himself at the end of time and will then be visible to all humans. This is the first time that this theology has a state and a territory.

1780-1818 : Mohamed ibn Abd al-Wahhab wants the Islam in Arabia to return to its beginnings (*salaḥ*) and rejects any theological innovation (*ijtihad*). Al-Wahhab interprets the Quran literally according to the Hanbalite school. He wants a pure Islam that hunts or kills all the idolaters of the Arabian Peninsula and imposes Islamic law (sharia law). For al-Wahhab, the Shiites are the first and the worst idolaters, they must be combated by armed jihad. This 1st Wahhabi kingdom of Saudi Arabia has often looted Shiite cities, destroyed their mosques and carried out massacres. Wahhab also violently fought Sufi Islam and other less extreme Sunni Muslims.^{xii} The kingdom was defeated in 1818 by the Egyptian army. The Egyptian army submitted the administration of Arabia back to the Ottoman Empire. The Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq says that it puts into practice the teaching of the theologians of this 1st Wahhabi kingdom by regularly quoting the writings of al-Wahhab († 1792) and Ibn Taymiyya († 1328). The Wahhabis and the IS justify the massacres of other Muslims by the 10 principles that annul Islamic faith, principles established by al-Wahhab. Example with the 8th principle: “*All those who support a non-Muslim state against (true) Muslims are infidels (kuffar)*”.^{xiii} For al-Wahhab, all Muslims who do not agree with him and his kingdom are infidels and must therefore be fought as infidels.

1902-today : The 3rd Wahhabi kingdom of Saudi Arabia began in 1902. Its theology is very similar to that of the 1st kingdom, but the king protects the Shia Arab minority. Wahhabis consider themselves as « Salafi » (the holy Muslims of the first 3 generations of Islam). Visiting Mohamed’s tomb is forbidden because it is considered as idolatry.

1928-today : The Society of Muslim Brothers was created in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt. Its ultimate goal is the restoration of the Islamic caliphate governed by sharia law. The Muslim Brotherhood had a military wing until Nasser banned it. Sayyid Qutb was its theoretician of modern armed jihad against secular states. The logo of the brotherhood consisted of two crossed swords. Under pressure from the Egyptian government, the brotherhood has condemned the use of violence outside Palestine and it has changed its logo.^{xiv} The Muslim brother Wagdy Ghoneim sums up Salafist theology as follows: “*Where there is a text (Quran, Hadith and Sunnah) there is no opinion*” and therefore no debate. In the “Manifesto in 50 points” of the Muslim brothers, we find for example the point 13: “*It is necessary to recognize that the fornication is a crime, whatever the circumstances; a detestable crime that deserves flogging*”.

Point 18: *“It is necessary to forbid the mixing between the students of the two sexes; treat dating between young people of marriageable age as a crime that should be punished.”* Being a Muslim brother, Tariq Ramadan, proposes a *“moratorium on the stoning of adulterous women”*. He refuses to definitively renounce the stoning of adulterous women.

1850-today : Reformers of Islam such as Mohamed Abduh, Malek Bennabi or Soheib Bencheikh show applications of *ijtihad* for a pluralistic world. They work for their religion to be in tune with the demands of their century. For Soheib Bencheikh, Islam participates in a universal humanist ethic. He criticizes the immobility of Sunni Islamic thought and proposes a completely new way of reaching Islamic truth.

1980: The Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini banned the import of meat from the West by declaring it unlawful (*haram*). Khomeini defined the details of the ritual slaughter which he then imposed on the food-industry that wants to sell in Iran, e.g. the presence of an imam. Saudi Arabia followed Iran by also defining rules for ritual slaughter in the 1990s. Before Khomeini, only blood, pork and strangled animals and meats offered to idols were unlawful for Muslims. Before Khomeini, Muslims had the freedom described in Surah 5.6: *“You are allowed the food of the people of the Book, and your own food is permitted to them”*.

Comments about the history of Islam

1. Islamic legal experts

The Islamic scholars generally see themselves as jurists or legal experts, and not as theologians. The 4 official schools of Sunni Islam are called “legal schools”, not theological schools. Each Islamic country chooses to follow one of the four legal schools. These legal schools decide the laws of the Islamic countries until today. Since Sunni Islam has decided the principle of « *taqlid* » (see table years 1019 and 1360), these laws can no longer be changed, only new laws can be added. All of these laws constitute the « *sharia* » which means « the way to respect the law of God ». For traditional Muslims, these laws take precedence over the laws of the republic since they emanate from God. These laws frame all aspects of human life, both of Muslims and non-Muslims. The goal of traditional Islam is therefore to create a legal entity, a political state that applies the Sharia law in a caliphate (or sultanate). Radical Muslims often use Islamic law and jurisprudence to show that « moderate » Muslims are not « true Muslims » (see years 634-644 and 1360 in the table).

For comparison: The dogmas of the Catholic Church cannot be changed either but they only concern the religious life of Catholics and non-dogmatized teachings can evolve over time. Thus, the church could theoretically remove the notion of « *purgatory* » from teaching since *purgatory* has never been the subject of a dogma. In addition, the confession of faith of Protestant churches can be changed by a vote of the synod.

2. Role of hadiths in the interpretation of the Qur'an

Unlike the Bible, the Quran rarely gives the geographical or social context of revelations. Example: In the Surah nb. 66 we read that Allah allows Mohamed to not respect an oath taken towards a woman because the woman did not keep a secret. Surah 66 says nothing about the content of the oath, nothing about the identity of the women or about why Mohamed is not obliged to respect his oath, nothing about what secret has been shared. The text says nothing about where the oath was given or whether other persons were present as witnesses.

A hadith (oral tradition collected 2 centuries after Mohamed, see year 830 of the table) explains that Surah 66 speaks of 3 of the 11 women of Mohamed, Aisha, Hafsa and Maria. Hafsa saw Mohamed sleep with his wife Maria, a Jewish slave. Hafsa promised Mohamed that she would not tell anyone what she saw, if Mohamed does not sleep with Maria anymore. But Hafsa told the secret to Aisha who then had a quarrel with Mohamed. Mohamed ignored Hafsa and Aisha and was no longer obliged to respect his oath not to sleep with Maria (Al-Bukhari book 46 no.2468 and book 68 no.5267).

The hadiths are thus very often essential to understand the Quran. But Sunnis and Shiites have different collections of hadiths that sometimes contradict each other, so there is debate over which hadiths are reliable.

For a hadith to be considered « reliable », it must meet 5 conditions, with the first conditions being « the reliability of the narrator ». But Sunnis and Shiites consider different narrators as trustworthy. The Sunnis mainly trust the narrators of the descendants of the caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar (1st and 2nd caliphs), the Shiites trust especially the narrators of the descendants of Caliph Ali (4th caliph, cousin of Mohamed). Since the reliability of narrators is paramount, Shiites and Sunnis have quite different collections of hadiths.

It is not imperative for a hadith to be in total agreement with the Quran. “Agreement with the Qur’an” is not one of the 5 conditions of reliability. Example: The Quran is very careful about the punishment for adultery since the Quran requires 4 eye-witnesses, which is almost impossible (Surah 24: 5-9). A hadith says that an adulterous woman can be stoned if there are several witnesses (e.g. two), or if the woman confesses her sin (which encourages lying) or if she becomes pregnant (al-Bukhari vol. 8 book 82 no.816).

3. Apostasy

Abandoning the Islamic religion was fought by force from the beginning (see year 633-634 in the table). Here are some sacred Islamic texts concerning apostasy:

Sahih al-Bukhari vol.6, book 61, no. 577: *I heard the Prophet saying, « In the last days (of the world) there will appear young people with foolish thoughts and ideas. They will give good talks, but they will go out of Islam as an arrow goes out of its game, their faith will not exceed their throats. So, wherever you find them, kill them, for there will be a reward for their killers on the Day of Resurrection» .* Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.9, book 84, no.57: *« I would have killed them according to the statement of Allah’s Apostle, ‘Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him.’ « .* (The entire book 84 of vol.9 deals with apostasy).

According to ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, the Messenger of Allah said, *« It is not permissible to take the life of a Muslim who bears testimony to the fact that there is no god but Allah, and I am the Messenger of Allah, but in one of the three cases: the married adulterer, a life for life, and the deserter of his Din (Islam), abandoning the community.»* Sahih Muslim, book 16, nb. 4152.

Quran Surah 4.89 *“They (the hypocrites) but wish that ye should reject the Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing as they: But take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of Allah from what is forbidden. But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and in any case take no friends or helpers from their ranks”.* The expression « if they turn renegades » is a subject of discussion and finds other translations. According to Ibn Kathir’s comment, those who turned renegades are those who « made their abandonment of Islam public ».

Sharia jurisprudence specialist Ahmad ibn al-Naqib al-Misri writes in « The Reliance of the Traveler » (Umdat al-Salik), O8.1-2: *« When a person who has reached puberty and is sane voluntarily apostatizes from Islam, he deserves to be killed. In such a case, it is obligatory for the caliph (or his representative) to ask him to repent and return to Islam. If he does, it is accepted from him, but if he refuses, he is immediately killed”.*

For these reasons, those who leave Islam publicly are sentenced to imprisonment or death in Sunni and Shiite Islamic countries. Freedom of conscience does not make sense for traditional Muslims.

4. The Worst of All Sins: Denying God’s Existence or Believing in Several Gods (Shirk)

There are five different forms of deadly sins « *shirk* » in traditional Islam.^{xv} They influenced the history of humanity, especially for polytheistic Hindus. Hindus recognize a Brahma creator God that encompasses the entire universe, to whom they associate the protective god Vishnu and the god of destruction Shiva. Hindus then recognize a multitude of lower deities. For traditional Muslims, Hindus commit the gravest sin « *shirk* » and the following Suras apply to them:

Surah 4:48 *Allah does not forgive when someone is assigned to Him. Besides, He forgives who He wants.*

Sura 9:5 *Kill the idolaters wherever you find them. Capture them, besiege them and lurk them in every way.*

Traditional Islam has applied this text to Arab polytheists, African animists, Indian Buddhists and Hindus. Buddhists were considered atheists, which is one of the forms of “*shirk*”. For this reason, the Muslim conquest of the Indian subcontinent from the eleventh to the sixteenth century was particularly bloody. Hindus and Buddhists in Afghanistan were converted, hunted or killed in the 10th century. The book « *Kitab i Yamini* » by the Muslim historian Ibn Muhammad al-Jabbaru-i Utib, describes e.g. a massacre of all the Hindus of the wealthy Kashmir Lamgan region by the Sultan Mahmud al-Ghazni, or the massacre of 100,000 Hindus from Togan-khan.^{xvi} Several other Muslim historians described the conquest of Pakistan and India with the many wars, massacres and slavery that accompanied them.^{xvii}

The Islamic law school « *Hanafi* », which includes a majority of India’s Muslims, also gave Hindus the status of « *Dhimmi* », but only in the 16th century. This status allows Hindus to keep their religion as long as they pay the *Dhimmi (jizya)* tax and respect the special laws for *Dhimmis*. In the 600 years before, Hindus usually had only the choice between conversion to Islam or war, and there were many wars.

By comparison, the worst sin for Christians is human pride and self-conceit.

A short history of the Qur’an ^{xviii}

Year(s)

610 : According to Mohamed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him the first time in the year 610. The revelations were often in direct connection with what Mohamed lived at a given moment, especially after the year 622. According to the Hadith Book 4 no.1789 of Muslim, Mohamed discussed with the angel Gabriel to allow different Arab tribes to recite the Qur’an each in his dialect, using the words proper to their dialects. The angel Gabriel gives the permission.

In all, 29 Suras have at the beginning of the text 1 to 5 unexplained letters (e.g. Sura 7: ‘A L M). According to Islamic tradition, these letters have no meaning. Probable explanation: Mohamed feels the descent (*tanzil*) of the Qur’an as physically painful and begins his revelations with small noises. Surah 75:16 says that he must stop making these noises: “*do not move your tongue reciting it in order to go faster*”. Hadith Boukarie 1.1.2: « *When the revelation descended on him on a day of intense cold, his forehead was nevertheless drenched with sweat* ».

Hadith Muslim 43.88 « *... the prophet was very oppressed and his face was white.* »

632-634 : A first writing of the Qur’an was made at the order of caliph Umar who feared that the texts disappear because those that memorized the texts died in combat. He convinced the caliph Abu Bakr to write what people had memorized and collect the notes that were written on various materials. This collection of texts was led by one of Mohamed’s scribes, Zaïd bin Thabit. This collection was passed on to one of Mohamed’s widows, Hafsa. The text was not copied, the only copy became the private possession of Hafsa.^{xix}

650-655 : Under the caliphate of Othman (3rd caliph), the leaders became aware of differences in the way people recite the Qur’an. Othman retook the corpus held by Hafsa and had it completed by other memorizers, still under the direction of Zaïd b. Thabit. This became necessary because there were disagreements about the collection of Hafsa. Othman then had all the original materials destroyed and sent his “canonical” version of the Qur’an to the most important cities of the Empire. Certain companions close to Mohamed like Ibn Mas’ûd and Ubayy ibn-Ka’b possessed other collections of suras, which Othmân forbade. (Al-Bukhari, book 5,58,153 and 6,51,524 and 6,60,8, Sahih Muslim, book 31,6022).

The version of Ibn Mas’ûd was widespread around Kufa and Basra (Iraq) and Mas’ûd refused to give it up for destruction (Ibn Abi Dawud, Kitab al-Masahif, p.13-14, Ibn al-Athir, Kamil III, 86-87).^{xx}

Ubayy ibn-Ka'b was considered one of the best reciters of the Qur'an (Ibn Sa'd, Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir, Vol.2 p.441). Its version was widespread in Syria (Kitab al-Masahif, p.13). There are differences between the various collections, e.g. in the suras 2, 5, 9, 33, 56, 61 ...^{xxi}

According to al-Bukhari book 5,96, Mohamed names his 4 best reciters of the Qur'an: « *Learn the recitation of the Qur'an of the four: Abdullah ibn Mas'ud – he mentioned him first – Salim, the free slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Mu'adh ibn Jabal and Ubayy ibn Ka'b* ». This is one of the reasons why Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b did not want to give up their copies for destruction. A Sunni court ordered the destruction of Ibn Mas'ud's codex in the year 1007.

The « canonical » text of the Qur'an sent by Othman can be understood in different ways, for two reasons:

- 1) The text did not include short vowels and not always the long ones (a, i, u).
- 2) The primitive Arabic script was not endowed with diacritic points which fix the exact sound of the signs and which distinguish one consonant from another. Of the 18 letters of the old Arabic alphabet, only seven represent a single consonant while some letters represent 5 different consonants. In the oldest fragments of the Qur'an, these ambiguous letters make up almost half of the text. Ambiguity often disappears thanks to the context, but not always.^{xxii}

632-671 : In 1972, a large number of parchments of the Quran were found under the roof of a mosque in Sanaa (Yemen). The manuscripts are written in primitive Arabic which poses the problems of understanding described above. The parchments are of the type « palimpsest ». They contain 2 layers of text: an old pre-othmanian text that was more or less erased (washed), it was later over-written with the new othmanian text. Modern science made the old texts visible under ultraviolet light. The parchments studied to date show that the first layer of the text often contains differences from the official text. The parchments are dated between the year 632 and 671.^{xxiii}

Different museums conserve 9 different old manuscripts of the Quran dating from the 7th century. Mohamed Lamsia has studied the differences between these manuscripts.^{xxiv}

685-705 : Third phase of the history of the Qur'an took place under the reign of Abd al-Malik. The sources are not clear. For some, Al-Malik has only specified the spelling by introducing diacritic points that fix the precise reading. For others, he has also reordered the verses of the suras and rectified deficient readings. In any way, the caliphate of Abd al-Malik was a decisive moment for the constitution of the texts that have come down to us. The parchment « Codex Parisiano-petropolitanus », found in the Amr ibn al-As mosque in Egypt and dated before 680, shows differences from the copies written after the reign of Abd al-Malik.^{xxv}

934-935 : The Islamic scholars Ibn Miqdam and Ibn Shannabûdh were convicted for reciting unapproved variants of the Qur'an. Other versions of the Quran have therefore circulated for at least 3 centuries. The Muslim tradition recognizes some fifteen main pre-othmanian texts and a dozen secondary texts. The othmanian Qur'an was imposed by the political power.^{xxvi}

Even today, despite the prohibition of all unauthorized collections of the Quran since the caliph Othman, there are different readings between the Quran called « Hafs » used in Saudi Arabia, and the Quran called « Warch » used in Morocco. There are 51 differences between the two types of readings. They have a marginal influence on the meaning of sentences.

Downloadable books

Collection of hadiths by Imam Malik Ibn Anas, called "Muwatta", english and arabic:

www.muwatta.com/ebooks/english/al-muwatta_english.pdf

Collection of hadiths by Sahi Muslim and Al Bukarie and Abu Dawud:

http://d1.islamhouse.com/data/en/ih_books/single/en_Sahih_Muslim.pdf

http://d1.islamhouse.com/data/en/ih_books/single/en_Sahih_Al-Bukhari.pdf

<http://ddata.over-blog.com/xxxxyy/2/75/61/01/sunnan-abu-dawud.pdf>

Biography of Mohammed written in the 9th century by Ibn Hicham, called: « Sirat Rasul»
<http://www.justislam.co.uk/images/Ibn%20Ishaq%20-%20Sirat%20Rasul%20Allah.pdf>

Ahmad ibn an-Naqib al-Misri „Umdat al-Salik“, translated by Sheik Nuh Ha Mim Keller
<http://www.shafiifiqh.com/maktabah/relianceoftraveller.pdf>

The Story of the church of Egypt, E.L. Butcher, London 1897:
<http://bookdeposit.pro/data/bookdeposit.pro/T/the-story-of-the-church-of-egypt-edith-louisa-butcher-0bpfuGF9wlgz3b-fKm1b-f5zWb-fAVIb6.pdf>

Evidences for the Collection of the Qur'an; John Gilchrist
http://benjamin.lisan.free.fr/jardin.secret/EcritsPolitiquesetPhilosophiques/SurlIslam/livres/Jam-Al-Qur-an_The-Codification-of-the-Qur-an-Text_John-Gilchrist.pdf

MUFTI MUHAMMAD SAJAAD: Understanding TAQLID
<http://www.islam-globe.com/books/Understanding%20Taqlid%20by%20Mufti%20Muhammad%20Sajaad.pdf>

Notes

ⁱ <http://islamicencyclopedia.org/islamic-pedia-topic.php?id=48>

The mutazilla school makes another interpretation of these verses, to be found here:
<http://mutazilisme.fr/chronique-9-ramadan-2017/>

ⁱⁱ The life of Mohamed, Oxford University Press 1955, pages 462–464. Translation of Ibn Ishaq: Sirat Rasul Allah by A. Guillaume.

ⁱⁱⁱ Edouard Gallez, « Le messie et son prophète », page 219

^{iv} https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Ridda_wars

^v http://www.islam.wikibis.com/pacte_d_umar.php

The oldest document that quotes this pact comes from Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya (1292 – 1350)

^{vi} <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26366197>

^{vii} The history of the church of Egypt; E.L. Butcher, London 1897, page 378.

^{viii} <http://www.mutazila.net/>

^{ix} MUFTI MUHAMMAD SAJAAD : Understanding TAQLID

^x Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence; M.H. Kamali, page 316

^{xi} A classic manual of Islamic sacred law by Ahmad Ibn Naqib Al-Misri, translated and published by Sheikh Nuh Ha Mim Keller, pages 20 and 520.

^{xii} Cole Bunzel : THE KINGDOM AND THE CALIPHATE, Duel of the Islamic States

^{xiii} Translation of the 10 principles of nullification of the faith of a Muslim by Al-Wahhab, with explanations:
<http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Explanation%20of%20the%20Nullifiers%20of%20Islam.pdf>

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- ^{xiv} Fabrice Maulion, L'Organisation des Frères Musulmans, Université Paris II, 2004, pages 97,117,...
- ^{xv} The 5 forms of the worst sin called « shirk », to be found here (in french) :
<http://machallah.over-blog.com/article-331756.html>
- ^{xvi} Historical memoirs of Mahmud of Ghazna, London 1828, p. 39 and 434; translated by James Reynolds.
<https://archive.org/details/kitabiyaminihist00alut>
- ^{xvii} See a translation of such works in "The History of India as told by Its Own Historians" vol.1 à 8, H. M. Elliot, London 1867-1877, available at books.google.com).
- ^{xviii} Alfred-Louis de Prémarré : Aux origines du Coran. Revue des mondes musulmans, july 2011
- ^{xix} Al-Suyûti, important Muslim scholar of the 15th century writes in «The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an » (Al-Itqān fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an) that the caliph Umar did not possess a copy of the Qur'an.
- ^{xx} Ibn al-Athir is an Egyptian historian that wrote the book „Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh“ (Complete history) in the year 1230. He is considered to be one of the most important Islamic scholars and historians.
- ^{xxi} Evidences for the Collection of the Qur'an; John Gilchrist, pages 23, 29, 30
- ^{xxii} Abdelmajid Charfi, Al-Mushaf wa Qira'atuh « The text of the Quran and its variants, al-Ṭab'ah, Rabat 2016. NZZ, March 3rd 2018.
- ^{xxiii} Ṣanā 1 and the Origins of the Qur'ān, Behnam Sadeghi, Stanford University, 2012.
<https://fr.scribd.com/doc/110978941/Sanaa-1-and-the-Origins-of-the-Qur-An>
- ^{xxiv} Suspicions of Ideological Manipulation and Codicology; Edouard-M. Gallez
http://www.rootsofislamtruehistory.com/subpages/Codicology_and_suspected_verses.pdf
- ^{xxv} La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam, François Décroche, Leiden, 2009
- ^{xxvi} Origines et fixation du texte coranique ; Gilliot Claude ; Études, 12/2008, Tome 409, pages 643-652.