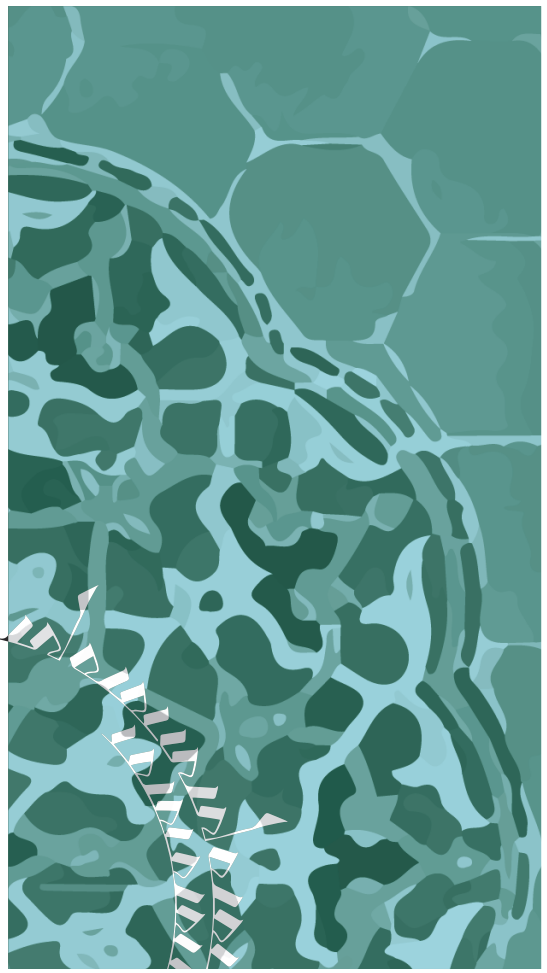


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Abstract

by orientalists, whether these events and stances had logical interpretations or not. Hence, the orientalists, especially Italian ones, have approached the biography of the Prophet Muhammad with a particular lens. Given their lack of faith in Islamic sources, if they found something they deemed accurate, they resorted to their methodologies to interpret or attempt to deny it. Conversely, if they found inaccuracies, they relied on Islamic sources to prove them.

The Incident of Banu Qurayzah in the 5th year of Hijrah underwent various interpretations regarding the incident and the treaty's clauses concluded by prophet Muhammad with all tribes, including the Jewish ones. Italian orientalist interpretations either denied some treaty clauses or entirely rejected them.

Therefore, this research will delve into the origin of Jewish tribes and their presence in the Hijaz, their relationship with the Islamic state, and the stance of Italian Orientalists towards the Medina Charter and the Incident of Banu Qurayzah.

Section One

Lineage of Banu Qurayzah and Their Arrival in Yathrib

Banu Qurayzah is a group of Jews whose lineage traces back to Banu al-Nadir, the son of Yannhum, son of 'Awf, son of Qays, son of Fannhas, son of Al-Azhar, son of the Kahen, son of Harun, son of Imran, son of Qahith, son of Levi. They are brothers of Banu al-Nadhir and Hudayl¹, descendants of the Prophet Aaron. Ibn Hisham mentions their lineage differently from Ibn Habib, as they are traced back to Banu al-Khazraj from Sari'ah bin Tawam, son of Sabt, son of Yassaa, son of Saad, son of Levi, son of Khair, son of Naham, son of Tanhum, son of Azar, son of 'Uzra, son of Harun, son of Imran, son of Yashar, son of Qahith (or Qaht), son of Levi, son of Jacob, who is also named Israel, son of Isaac, son of Abraham.² It's mentioned that they were named Qurayzah because they settled in a mountain called Qurayzah and were attributed to it. Some say Qurayzah is the name of their grandfather^{3 4}, who settled with his children in a fortified castle near the city.⁵

Regarding their settlement in Yathrib, several accounts discuss the reasons for the presence of Jewish tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. One account suggests that their initial arrival in Yathrib and other villages was during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, who conquered Palestine. Some tribes fled towards the Hijaz and settled there until the advent of Islam.*⁶

There are also narratives indicating that Jewish settlement in the Hijaz dates back to the time of Moses, when Allah manifested His power upon Pharaoh and his army,

1 Ibn Habib, Al-Muhabbir, p. 387.

2 Ibn Hisham, Al-Seerah Al-Nabawiyah, Vol. 1, p. 21.

3 Al-Ya'qoubi, Tarikh Al-Ya'qoubi, , Vol. 2, p. 52.

4 Al-Sam'ani, Al-Ansab, Vol. 13, p. 132.

5 Al-Sam'ani, Al-Ansab, Vol. 10, p. 379.

6 Ali, Al-Mufassal fi Tarikh al-Arab Qabl al-Islam, Vol. 12, p. 94.

* One of the most famous kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire from 605 to 562 BCE attacked Jerusalem, destroyed it, killed some Jews, and exiled others, known to Jews as the Babylonian captivity.

leading to their destruction. Following this event, some Jews were dispatched to the Hijaz with the command to exterminate the Amalekites. They carried out this order, killing their king and capturing his son, a young man of noble character. However, before their arrival, Moses died. Upon hearing of their arrival, people welcomed them and inquired about their situation. The Jews informed them of God's victory and explained that they had spared only this young man, intending to seek Moses's counsel regarding him. The Children of Israel responded, objecting to their disobedience to their prophet, declaring that they should not enter their land. Consequently, they were diverted towards Greater Syria but eventually returned to the Hijaz, settling in Medina. The Hijaz was known for its abundance of trees and purity of water, making it an ideal dwelling place for the Jews after the defeat of Amalekites.^{7 8}

This narrative lacks persuasiveness as it attempts to portray the strength and bravery of the Jews. Moreover, if he possessed one, Prophet Moses could have dispatched an organized army to combat the Amalekites instead of sending individual tribes. Even if we accept the authenticity of this account, why would these tribes migrate from their original territories and settle in the Hijaz when they could have inhabited neighboring regions such as Jordan, Syria, or even Sinai?

Among the reasons cited for the Jews' arrival in Yathrib is their belief, based on the Torah, that a prophet would migrate to a land with date palms between two lava tracks. They traveled from Greater Syria in search of this land. When they encountered Yathrib, with its marshes, lava tracks, and date palms, they concluded that this was the prophesied land of migration for the prophet. Therefore, they settled there, believing it to be inhabited by the Children of Israel.⁹ However, upon realizing that the descendants of Ishmael inhabited it, they rejected the prophethood of its inhabitants

7 Ibn al-Najjar, *Al-Durrat al-Thameenah fi Akhbar al-Madinah*, p. 9.

8 Abu al-Fida, *Al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar*, Vol. 1, p. 98.

9 Ibn al-Najjar, *Al-Durrat al-Thameenah fi Akhbar al-Madinah*, p. 37.

and returned.^{10 11}

Another perspective suggests that the origin of Jewish tribes in Medina lies with the Arab tribes who converted to Judaism in Yemen and migrated northward after the Ethiopian occupation of Yemen.¹²

Furthermore, some accounts indicate that the arrival of Jews in Yathrib dates back to the days of persecution and displacement they faced under the Romans, who invaded and destroyed Palestine. This forced some Jewish tribes to flee or escape to the Arabian Peninsula, where they settled in Yathrib and adjacent areas.^{13 14}

The latter account may indeed be closer to the truth. It suggests that the Romans conducted extensive campaigns to destroy Jewish communities and cities in Palestine. This compelled Jewish tribes to seek refuge far from the reach of the Romans. They chose Yathrib due to the geographical nature of the Arabian Peninsula, where it was difficult for Roman armies to penetrate. Undoubtedly, the migrating Jewish tribes were familiar with the regions of the Hijaz, possibly through trade or having contacts who resided in the area before their arrival.

10 Al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Quran*, Vol. 1, p. 347.

11 Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 1, p. 158.

12 Budaywi, *Defense of Muhammad against Those Who Diminish His Status*, p. 89.

13 Al-Asfahani, *Al-Aghani*, vol. 22, p. 78.

14 Fensoun, *The History of Jews in Arab Lands*, p. 9.

Section Two

Nature of Relationship between Jewish Tribes and Islamic State

Upon his arrival in Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) worked towards organizing or establishing a legal document to which all residents of the city and its surroundings would adhere. This aimed to lay the foundations of a state based on peaceful coexistence and to end internal discord and conflict. All parties involved in this document pledged to defend the city and its surroundings.

Furthermore, the Prophet entered into agreements or covenants with various Jewish factions, in which they agreed not to harm or inflict injury upon him, his companions, or assist enemies in their war against Muslims. If they violated any of these terms, the Prophet had the right to seek retribution according to the document's terms. It stated: "Retribution shall be over through those who fight against the people of this document. Indeed, there is mutual counsel, advice, and loyalty without any intent of offense. A person is not sinful in aiding his ally. Victory belongs to the oppressed. The Jews will contribute to the believers as long as they are engaged in warfare. Yathrib is sacred for its people."¹⁵

The Jewish tribes did not adhere to the terms of the document and displayed animosity towards Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and the Muslims. They committed various transgressions and crimes. Despite this, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) remained committed to the document's terms that he had ratified. Even if there were reactions from the Muslims, they were explicitly directed at those responsible for the crimes rather than indiscriminately targeting all Jews or members of their tribe.

One of those who fought against Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and the Muslims was Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf¹⁶ *, a Jewish member of the Banu

15 Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah, Vol. 2, p. 350.

16 Al-Marzubani, Mu'jam al-Shu'ara, p. 343.

* Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, Al-Tayy Al-Yahudi, his mother was from the Banu al-Nadir, he was a leader among them and was known as Abu Layla. He wept over the killed pagans of Badr. He flirted with the women of the Prophet and the Muslim women, so the Prophet ordered him to be punished.

al-Nadir tribe. He led a fierce war against the Muslims, openly insulting God and His Messenger (peace be upon him and his family). He composed poems mocking the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and incited tribes, including the Quraysh, against the Muslims, reminding them of their losses in the Battle of Badr. He went as far as indulging in obscenities in his poetry regarding Muslim women.^{17 18} Matters escalated when he conspired with a group of Jews to invite the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) to a banquet to assassinate him. However, divine intervention thwarted their plan when the Angel Gabriel informed the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) of their plot, and God saved him from them. This led the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) to pray: "O God, suffice me against al-Ashraf however You will."^{19 20}

Additionally, there is what the Banu Qaynuqa' ^{* 21 22} tribe did in the incident involving a Muslim woman from the Arab tribes. They behaved indecently towards her by tying the edge of her garment to her back, causing her to be exposed. This led to a skirmish between them and the Muslims.^{23 24} Despite this, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) worked to maintain the social security of the state, which was threatened by the actions and conspiracies of the Jews. He advised and guided them²⁵, in adherence to the terms of the document he had concluded with them upon his arrival in Medina, aiming to establish a state based on peaceful

17 Al-Tabari, History of al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 179.

18 Al-Mas'udi, Al-Tanbih wa al-Ashraf, p. 209.

19 Al-Salihi, Subul al-Huda wa al-Rashad fi Sirat Khayr al-'Ibad, vol. 6, p. 26.

20 Al-Diyar Bakri, Tarikh al-Khamis fi Ahwal Anfus al-Nafis, vol. 1, p. 413.

21 Al-Zuhri, Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra, vol. 2, p. 29.

22 Al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 4, p. 424.

23 Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, vol. 4, p. 5.

24 Al-Maqrizi, Imta' al-Asma', vol. 8, p. 346.

25 Al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 172.

* The Banu Qaynuqa' were a Jewish tribe residing in Medina, affiliated with the Khazraj tribe and allies of Abdullah bin Obai bin Salul. Despite their small number, they boasted of their strength, and their profession was jewelry making.

coexistence and to end internal discord and conflict. However, their stubbornness and arrogance were evident in their response to him (peace be upon him and his family). They said: “Muhammad, you think we are like your people. Do not be deceived because you encountered people without knowledge of warfare. If you fight us, you will know we are the people of warfare.”^{26 27} This statement was essentially a call to battle, and they broke the covenant they had made with him (peace be upon him and his family) in the document.

As for the Banu al-Nadir tribe^{28 29 *}, their conduct was not different from that of the Banu Qaynuqa’ in instigating schemes and inciting tribes against the Muslims. One of their first plots occurred during the arrival of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb with a group of Quraysh horsemen who raided the city at night. Abu Sufyan visited the Banu al-Nadir, where their elder, Salam ibn Mishkam, welcomed him^{30 31 **}. Salam entertained him and divulged information about the Muslims, facilitating Abu Sufyan and his men’s subsequent raid on the orchards of the city, their burning, destruction, looting, and the killing of two Ansar men.^{32 33 34} Additionally, they relayed information about the Muslims to the Quraysh before the Battle of Uhud, including the Muslims’ prepara-

26 Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari*, vol. 2, p. 172.

27 Al-Salhi, *Subul al-Huda wa al-Rashad*, vol. 4, p. 179.

28 Al-Ya’qubi, *Tarikh al-Ya’qubi*, vol. 2, p. 49.

29 Al-Isfahani, *Al-Aghani*, vol. 22, p. 77.

30 Ibn Hisham, *The Biography of the Prophet*, vol. 3, p. 800.

31 Ibn Kathir, *The Biography of the Prophet*, Vol. 2, p. 540.

32 Ibn Hisham, *The Biography of the Prophet*, Vol. 2, p. 559.

33 Al-Waqidi, *Al-Maghazi*, Vol. 1, p. 181.

34 Al-Zuhri, *Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, Vol. 2, p. 30.

* The Banu al-Nadir were a Jewish tribe that inhabited Medina. They were a branch of the Jutham tribe, but they embraced Judaism. They settled in a mountain called al-Nadir and named it after themselves. It is mentioned that they were descendants of Prophet Aaron and originally came from Palestine.

** Salam bin Mishkam was the leader of the Banu al-Nadir in his time and possessed their wealth. His wife was Zaynab bint al-Harith, who presented a poisoned sheep to the Prophet peace be upon him and his family after the Battle of Khaybar. He used to engage in frequent arguments with the Messenger of God peace be upon him and his family.

tions and readiness.³⁵ Their most despicable act, deserving of retribution, was their attempt to assassinate the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) when he visited them, accompanied by some of his companions.^{36 37 38}

Section Three

Position of Italian Orientalists on Document

Some passages in the document did not impress the Italian Orientalist Caetani,^{*39} who provided an interpretation attempting to highlight the plight of the Jews by stating: “Muslim scholars misunderstood the meaning and value of this document. Pre-conceived and biased judgments confused their minds, leading them to consider the clauses of this document, which they superficially read, as treaties with the Jews. They could not interpret the existence of this document in any other way, as its contents appeared incomprehensible to them, considering themselves believers. They could not accept that the Prophet had made a covenant with the infidels, enemies of God, and understood the document as exclusively dealing with the Jews. Consequently, they barely grasped this misleading concept, which historians reiterated in the same manner, echoing it with the same blind and irrational confidence characteristic of Easterners, without attempting to scrutinize or investigate it. However, it is easy to discern this if we scrutinize the document.”⁴⁰

He also attempts to portray Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) as providing opportunities to get rid of the Jews without valid reason by

35 Ibn 'Uqbah, Al-Maghazi, p. 210 .

36 Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah, Vol. 3, p. 682- 683.

37 Al-Waqidi, Al-Maghazi, Vol. 1, p. 365- 364.

38 Al-Halabi, Al-Sirah Al-Halabiyyah, Vol. 2, p. 560.

39 Al-Aqiqi, Al-Orientalists, Vol. 1, p. 429.

40 Badawi, Defense of Muhammad against Those who Diminish his Status, p. 95.

* Leone Caetani was born in Rome on September 12, 1869 CE, studied at the University of Rome and obtained his degree from there. His wealth was estimated at five million gold lira, which he spent on conducting research and scientific and literary studies. One of his most important works is Annals of Islam.

stating: “This error is significant because it was used as a justification in favor of Muhammad in his malicious traditions, which aimed to depict the Jews as oath-breakers who violate their agreements and harm public peace.”⁴¹

It is no wonder that many Western scholars and Arab historians have criticized Caetani’s views due to his excessive skepticism. Among them is his compatriot Alessandro Bausani^{42 43 *}, who remarked: “ I do not share the doubts of most orientalists, especially Caetani’s extreme skepticism, which reached its peak in his work *The Annals of Islam*, where he concluded that almost nothing authentic about Muhammad could be found in Islamic tradition. Due to his overly critical approach, Caetani even accepted the well-known Druze-Khojas theory, which denies the historical existence of Jesus.”⁴⁴

Caetani also faced criticism from the British orientalist Montgomery Watt ^{45 **}. Watt criticized him for his excessively skeptical approach in his extensive studies, particularly in *The Annals of Islam*. He remarked that correcting Caetani’s exaggerations of doubt was not difficult.^{46 ***}

Among those who also criticized Caetani were Arab historians like Dr. Jawad Ali, who wrote his book, *History of the Arabs in Islam*⁴⁷. Ali recounts Caetani’s biased and unrealistic opinion that “the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his

41 Badawi, *Defense of Muhammad against Those who Diminish his Status*, p. 95.

42 Al-Aqiqi, *Al-Mustashriqun*, Vol. 1, p. 397.

43 Hamdan, *Layers of Orientalists*, p. 108.

44 Busani, Alessandro. *IL Corano*, Settima edizione, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milano, 1996, P.XX-XXI.

45 Al-Aqiqi, *Orientalists*, Vol. 1, p. 554.

46 Zaqzouq, *Islam in Western Perceptions*, p. 187.

47 Al-Mousa, *Prince Caetani and the Prophet’s Biography*, p. 23-25.

* He is an Italian orientalist, born in 1921, studied Eastern languages and was appointed as a Persian language teacher in Rome. He authored numerous works on Islam, Western civilization, the new religious character in Islam, the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity, and others.

** Montgomery Watt, a British orientalist who served as the head of the Department of Arabic Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He authored extensive writings on Islam and its prophet, including prominent works such as *Muhammad in Mecca*, *Muhammad in Medina*, and his book *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, among others.

*** Quoted from Al-Mousa, Saad bin Mousa, “Prince Kaitani and the Prophet’s Biography,” *Journal of Sharia and Islamic Studies*, Issue 20, p. 23.

Household, and his father Abdullah was not originally from Mecca, but from Yathrib, i.e., Medina. He attempted to cast doubt on their lineage by distancing them from the Quraysh tribe and, more broadly, from the Adnanites among the Arabs. He spoke about narratives from the Arabized Arabs. The Prophet and the rest of the Adnanites are known to be from these Arabs, as mentioned by those narrators. Furthermore, he even suggested the possibility of a lineage connection to the Israelites based on their presence in Yathrib and the fact that his family was from Yathrib. This juxtaposition, contact, and cohabitation in one place lead him to extrapolate his opinion to the fusion of lineage, ideas, and beliefs.”⁴⁸

Even if we hypothetically entertain his opinion, which is neither logical nor supported by Islamic or other narratives, a question naturally arises: If the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his Household, indeed had lineage connections to the Israelites, as Caetani suggests, then why did he harbor hatred towards the Jews, expel them from Medina, and allegedly kill some of them, as some Orientalists claim? Wouldn't it have been more fitting for him to embrace them and have them as his supporters by the lineage he supposedly shared with them?

Furthermore, Ali adds: “However, Caetani had a specific opinion and idea in mind, which he formulated before embarking on documenting the biography. As he began the process, he relied on every piece of information that suited his opinion, whether weak or strong. He disregarded weak reports and focused solely on the strong ones, considering them as evidence and basing his judgments upon them. Who knows? Perhaps he was aware of the widely-known chains of falsehood among scholars but chose to overlook them, ignoring the opinions of those scholars. This is because he was committed to a specific idea that he wanted to prove by any means possible. Thus, he left aside those narratives and treated them critically, employing modern research methods. Consequently, his approach to documenting the biography became similar to those who accepted Israelite stories among Muslims, as well as the late fabricated narratives that contradict the spirit of the Quran and the actions of the

48 Ali, History of the Arabs in Islam, p. 133.

Prophet. They believed that embellishing the biography in such a way would make it more appealing and closer to the understanding of the people.”⁴⁹

However, these unfounded assertions and baseless claims have no response except Caetani’s desire for distinction and prominence and his excessive inclination towards skepticism and disparagement of Islamic narratives. On the other hand, the Italian orientalist Virijina Vacca⁵⁰ * questions the existence of a specific treaty between the Prophet and the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza altogether. She suggests that the issue of the treaty may have been fabricated to justify the actions taken against them, and even their alleged support for the Quraysh was unrealistic.⁵¹

It would have been more appropriate for Vacca to question the incident rather than the treaty because historical sources confirm the existence of this document. Many studies have relied on it, and it was not exclusive to the Jews; instead, it contained numerous provisions to establish the state of Medina. Furthermore, some narratives suggest that the incident involving the Banu Qurayza tribe was embellished and exaggerated, as we will discuss later.

Contrary to Vacca, Francisco Gabrilie^{52 53} **, another prominent orientalist, strongly supports the existence of the treaty. He states: “The conditions of the Medina pe-

49 Ali, History of the Arabs in Islam, p. 134-135.

50 Al-Aqiqi, Orientalists, Vol. 1, p. 405.

51 Encyclopedia of Islam, V. Vaca, Kuraiza, Vol. 2, p. 1127.

52 Al-Aqiqi, Orientalists, Vol. 1, p. 394.

53 Hamed, Islam and its Prophet in the Thoughts of These People, p. 120.

* She is a renowned Italian orientalist who made significant contributions to Islamic history. She wrote about Jews and Arabs in Palestine in 1929 and assisted Vincent in the collection of Hadith in Leiden in 1933. She also authored Verses from the Quran in Florence in 1943. She wrote about the Alawites in the Italian encyclopedia and about famous women in Islam in the Islamic encyclopedia.

** Francesco Gabrieli was born in Rome in 1904. He studied at its university under prominent orientalists, including his father, the eminent orientalist Giuseppe Gabrielli. He graduated in 1925 and began studying Islamic sciences and Arabic literature at the University of Naples in 1938. He later obtained a seat for study at Sapienza University in Rome, where his scholarly output flourished, enriching the libraries of Italy. He became prominent in the study of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and its development and made significant contributions as a historian of Islam. He published numerous articles and contributed to the emergence and evolution of Italian orientalism in the twentieth century.

riod, as well as the policies and wise tactics of the Prophet, are reflected in a valuable and reliable document that leaves no room for doubt.”⁵⁴

He also adds: “In this document, which carries historical, legal, and linguistic significance, the Prophet declared that the inhabitants of Medina, whether believers, polytheists, or Jews, constitute one community. He diligently sought to organize relations among its various elements, advising them to adhere to certain traditional norms prevalent in the pre-Islamic era, such as collective responsibility of the tribal group in cases of redemption, bloodshed, and revenge, alongside the new reality he had achieved.”⁵⁵

54 Gabrieli, Muhammad and Islamic Conquests, p. 150.

55 Gabrieli, p. 151.

Section Four

Their Perspective on the Mass Killing Incident of Banu Quraza

In this incident, the Italian orientalist Claudio Lo Jacono* highlights the armed events of the Islamic nation – the Muslim community – which, in 630 CE, succeeded in subduing the wealthy Mecca to its authority. In the Battle of Hunayn, Mecca and the Hijaz nomads were subdued. All of this was accompanied by increasing coercive measures against the Jewish groups in Medina. The culmination of these measures was the destruction of the Banu Qurayza group, including adult males, while children and women were sold as enslaved people before reaching puberty.⁵⁶

Here, the orientalist refers to coercive measures, raising questions about the intent behind these measures. Was it Prophet Muhammad himself who devised schemes against the Jews, or were they the ones who instigated them, particularly regarding the Banu Qurayza and their pivotal role in the Battle of Ahzab, where they conspired in plotting against the Muslims upon seeing the Meccan army besieging Medina? Instead of supporting the Muslims, with whom the terms of the treaty bound them, they believed that the military would eradicate Islam and the Muslims, leading them to act accordingly.

What the Banu Qurayza did by breaking their covenant with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) was at the most critical stage, the most challenging time, during the siege of Medina in the Battle of Ahzab. They opened another front behind the Muslims' defenses, sending information about the Muslim army and the city of Medina from within. This put the Muslims face to face with the confederates, with their armies advancing from the front, separated only by the trench, and the Banu Qurayza from the rear, who were sending messages to the enemies of the Prophet. They attempted to cause chaos within the city to distract the Muslims from their decisive battle.

After the failure of the siege of the Meccan army and their dispersal, and the victory achieved by the Muslims with the help and guidance of God, along with their

⁵⁶ Lo Jacono, di Claudio, Maometto e la prima espansione dell'islam, Storia della civiltà europea a cura di Umberto Eco 2014 https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maometto-e-la-prima-espansione-dell-islam_%28Storia-della-civilt%C3%A0-europea-a-cura-di-Umberto-Eco%29/

* I could not find a translation of the text.

political and military wisdom, as well as their patience and perseverance during this ordeal, the divine command came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) saying: “And if you fear treachery from a people, then throw [their treaty] back to them, [putting you] on equal terms.”^{57 58 59} This command prompted the Prophet to address the issue of Banu Qurayza⁶⁰, who threatened Medina’s peace and stability and whose betrayal undermined the Islamic cause. Therefore, the Prophet swiftly marched with his army towards them, without hesitation or respite from the Battle of Ahzab. Ali ibn Abi Talib led this expedition and laid siege to their forts, which lasted nearly twenty-five days. Despite the siege, the Jews did not surrender or seek forgiveness from the Prophet for their actions. Instead, they surrendered after the prolonged blockade, compelled by the circumstances.^{61 62 63 64 65 66}

Here, another prominent orientalist, Francesco Gabrieli, refers, based on some Islamic narrations, that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) delegated the matter of judgment regarding the actions of Banu Qurayza to their ally Sa’d ibn Mu’adh*⁶⁷, the leader and chief of the Aws tribe. Gabrieli did not mention Sa’d ibn Mu’adh by name but stated that the Aws tribe had a pact with Banu Qurayza. Therefore, they pressured Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his

57 Mujahid, Tafsir Mujahid, p. 357.

58 Ibn Hisham, The Biography of the Prophet, Vol. 3, p. 715.

59 Al-Waqidi, Al-Maghazi, Vol. 2, p. 497.

60 Al-Tabrisi, l’lam al-Wara bi-A’lam al-Huda, p. 108.

61 Ibn Hisham, The Biography of the Prophet, Vol. 3, p. 721.

62 Al-Waqidi, Al-Maghazi, Vol. 2, p. 512-513.

63 Al-Baghdadi, Al-Amwal, p. 215.

64 Al-Tabari, History of al-Tabari, Vol. 2, p. 249.

65 Al-Tabrisi, l’lam al-Wara, p. 108.

66 Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 20, p. 212.

67 Al Basri, Tabaqat Khalifa, p. 140.

* Saad bin Muadh, bin al-Nu’man, bin Imru’ al-Qais, bin Abd al-Ashhal, bin Jashm, bin al-Harith. He is also said to be Ibn Zaid, bin Abd al-Ashhal, bin Jashm. His nickname was Abu Amr. He belonged to the Aws tribe and was their leader. He participated in the battles of Badr and Khaibar. In 5 AH, he was struck by an arrow during the Battle of Khaibar, and later succumbed to his injuries.

Household) to deal with them leniently. Muhammad responded to this request by leaving the decision-making to one of his companions from the Aws tribe, who was suffering from a wound sustained during the siege.⁶⁸

Historical accounts mention that Sa'd ibn Mu'adh ruled that the men of Banu Qurayza be killed, while the women and children be taken as captives, and their wealth and properties be divided, as narrated in history annals. It is also said that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) told him: "You have judged them with the judgment of God from above the seven heavens, so imprison the captives and kill the men among them."^{69 70 71 72 73 74}

In this context, Caetani suggests that Sa'd ibn Mu'adh was merely executing Muhammad's desire for strict judgment against Banu Qurayza⁷⁵. If Caetani's characteristic excessive skepticism about incidents in the Prophet's biography is considered, and if this skepticism is applied to the incident of the killings and the examination of the sources reporting it, perhaps it could lead to a satisfactory truth.

Upon critical reading of this narrative, a significant inconsistency becomes apparent. Why did the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family, delegate the matter of Banu Qurayzah to Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, even though they were his allies? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate for him to pass judgment on them, considering he was the infallible prophet and the rightful authority in these matters? Moreover, did the Prophet ensure that Sa'd's ruling would adhere to Islamic law regarding the treatment of prisoners of war?

Tabari subtly implies an essential point regarding Sa'd ibn Mu'adh's judgment on

68 Gabrieli, *Muhammad and Islamic Conquests*, p. 161.

69 Ibn Hisham, *The Biography of the Prophet*, Vol. 3, p. 721.

70 Al-Waqidi, *Al-Maghazi*, Vol. 2, p. 512-513.

71 Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Amwal*, p. 215.

72 Al-Tabari, *History of al-Tabari*, Vol. 2, p. 249.

73 Al-Tabrisi, *l'lam al-Wara*, p. 108.

74 Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 20, p. 212.

75 Al-Jamil, *The Prophet and the Jews of Medina*, p. 262.

Banu Qurayzah through his narration of two accounts. The first account goes as follows: “When Sa’d finished speaking to the Messenger of God and the Muslims, the Messenger of God said - as Ibn Waki’ reported to us, he said: Muhammad ibn Bashir reported to us, he said: Muhammad ibn Amr reported to us, he said: My father reported to me, from Alqamah: in a narration he mentioned, he said: Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri said: When Sa’d arrived [meaning Sa’d ibn Mu’adh], the Messenger of God said: Stand up for your leader - or he said: Stand up for your best - and honor him. Then the Messenger of God said: Judge concerning them. He said: I judge concerning them that their fighting men should be killed, their women and children should be taken as captives, and their wealth should be distributed. He said: You have indeed judged according to the judgment of God and His Messenger.”⁷⁶

The second narration reads: “As for Ibn Ishaq, he said in his narration: ‘When Sa’d finished speaking to the Messenger of God and the Muslims, the Messenger of God said: Stand up for your leader. So they stood up for him and said: O Abu ‘Amr, indeed the Messenger of God has appointed you to govern over your people so that you may judge among them.’ Sa’d said: ‘You are bound by the covenant of God and His oath that the judgment in this matter is what I have judged!’ They said: Yes. He said: And who is present here? - referring to the direction where the Messenger of God was, showing reverence to him - So the Messenger of God said: Yes. Sa’d said: ‘Then I judge concerning them that the men should be killed, the wealth should be divided, and the children and women should be taken as captives.’”⁷⁷

In the first narration, Sa’d bin Mu’adh stated: “Their fighting men should be killed.” Some may interpret “fighting men” as those who have reached the age eligible for bearing arms. Additionally, it could refer to those who actively engaged in combat against the Muslims, whether they were part of the Meccan army or those who confronted the Muslims during the siege in their fortress.

However, the second narration specifies: “Their men should be killed.” This dis-

⁷⁶ Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, Vol. 2, p. 588.

⁷⁷ Al-Tabari, Vol. 2, p. 588-589.

crepancy between the narrations and the variation in the number of those killed, which we will address later, indicates the potential inaccuracies in these accounts.

Gabrieli adds that, according to Islamic sources, the number of men killed from among the Qurayzah tribe in this incident, which he describes as a brutal massacre, is six hundred.⁷⁸ However, Islamic narrations vary in the count of those killed, with some stating the number to be between six hundred and nine hundred men^{79 80 81 82 83}, while others mention four hundred or four hundred and fifty men.^{84 85 86 87} This count does not include the captives among the women, children, and elderly. However, it is essential to note that:

- Ibn Zanjawayh, in his book *Al-Amwal*⁸⁸, reports: “That the Messenger of God, Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), went to the Qurayzah tribe, besieged them until they submitted to the judgment of Sa’d bin Mu’adh, who decreed that their men should be killed and their wealth and children divided. On that day, forty men from among them were killed.”

- Abu ‘Ubayd bin Salam did not specify the number in his book *Al-Amwal*⁸⁹ but merely stated: “On that day, so and so were killed.” However, the book’s editor indicates in the margin that the Levant version mentioned forty men.

- The inconsistency in the narrations regarding the number of casualties indicates their lack of accuracy and reliability. Some sources mention the number to be be-

78 Gabrieli, Muhammad and Islamic Conquests, p. 162.

79 Ibn Hisham, *The Biography of the Prophet*, Vol. 3, p. 721.

80 Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, Vol. 2, p. 250.

81 Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, Vol. 2, p. 186.

82 Al-Dhahabi, *History of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

83 Al-Nasa’i, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, Vol. 5, p. 207.

84 Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Isti’ab fi Ma’rifat al-Ashab*, Vol. 2, p. 603.

85 Al-Tabrisi, *Majma’ al-Bayan*, Vol. 8, p. 149.

86 Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 20, p. 212.

87 Al-Tabatabai, *Tafsir al-Mizan*, Vol. 16, p. 302.

88 Ibn Zanjawayh, *Al-Amwal*, p. 299.

89 Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Amwal*, p. 193.

tween six hundred and seven hundred, while others state it to be between seven hundred and eight hundred, and still others estimate it to be between eight hundred and nine hundred.

- It is possible that the narration of their killing is fabricated or influenced by Israeli Jewish narratives. The Umayyad rulers allowed them freedom in narrating stories and interpretations, and figures like Ka'b al-Ahbar*⁹⁰ and Tamim al-Dari^{91 92 93 94} emerged among them. Moreover, the occurrence of falsification in the narration**⁹⁵, which had an impact on transmitting inaccurate accounts, elevated the Jews' status and portrayed them as victims, highlighting their bravery in facing death.

The number of forty men may be reasonable, as they could have been leaders of the Qurayzah tribe or individuals who fought against the Muslims, meaning they were armed combatants.

It is also mentioned that when the Qurayzah surrendered, they were brought into the city and housed in a small compound belonging to Bint al-Harith, a woman from the Banu al-Najjar tribe. Then, the Prophet, peace be upon him and his Household, went to the city market and ordered trenches to be dug, where they were subsequently killed and buried.^{96 97}

If the number is between six hundred and nine hundred, it becomes questionable

90 Al-Dinawari, Al-Ma'arif, p. 430.

91 Ibn al-Athir, Asad al-Ghaba fi Ma'rifat al-Sahaba, Vol. 1, p. 215.

92 Al-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, Vol. 2, p. 442-228.

93 Al-Zahry, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, Vol. 7, p. 408-409.

94 Al-Fayruzabad, Al-Qamus al-Muhit,, p. 546.

95 Ibn Hisham, The Biography of the Prophet, Vol. 3, p. 721.

96 Ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, Vol. 2, p. 186.

97 Al-Sarakhsi, Explanation of the Great Biography, Vol. 2, p. 592.

* Ka'b al-Ahbar, Ka'b ibn Mati', also known as Abu Ishaq, was from the tribe of Hemiar and originally followed Judaism. He embraced Islam and migrated to Medina during the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab. Later, he traveled to Syria and settled in Homs until he passed away there in 32 AH during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan.

** "Tadlis" comes from "dals," meaning darkness, deception, and concealment. In the context of narrations, "tadlis" refers to attributing a narration to a prominent scholar without having directly heard it from them. Instead, the narrator heard it from someone other than the scholar, which was done by a group of reliable narrators.

how such a large group could be accommodated in a small compound. Even if we consider only those killed, the space needed would be at least ten times the size of this compound. And if we include women, children, and elderly individuals, the space required would be much more significant.

Then the Prophet, peace be upon him and his Household, dug trenches in the city market where the bodies of the slain were thrown! Did he not find any other place to bury them?! It is known that the market was crowded with people. Did not the Prophet consider the spread of diseases and epidemics due to the large number of corpses? From this, it seems the number was greatly exaggerated, or the entire incident was fabricated.

There is a narration that proves this incorrect number, as it states: "Those who carried out the killing, namely Ali ibn Abi Talib and Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, killed them at the location of Ibn Abi al-Jahm's house, and their blood flowed until it reached the stones of the olive press."⁹⁸

Why was it only Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and Zubayr ibn al-Awwam who carried out the killing? Why did the other companions from the Muhajireen or the Ansar not participate with them? This is evidence that the narration is fabricated and placed by the Umayyads due to their hatred towards the Alawites and Zubayrites, who led many uprisings during Umayyad rule. They wanted to associate this incident with these two figures, excluding others. Furthermore, can two individuals kill such a large number in one day if the number is correct? Unless, as we agreed, the number comprises forty leaders of the Qurayzah tribe or those who colluded with the Meccan army or took up arms against the Muslims.

In addition to the points above, several modern studies, such as *The Massacre of Banu Qurayzah: Between the Quranic and Historical Misrepresentation* by Dr. Nour al-Din Abu Lahiya, have refuted the number of casualties and rejected the idea that Sa'd ibn Mu'adh issued the verdict against them based on logical analysis.

Furthermore, Gabrieli displays a degree of inaccuracy or deliberate misrepresentation

98 Gabrieli, Muhammad and Islamic Conquests, p. 161.

when discussing the incident. He proposes that: “The decision was to kill all the men and enslave the women and children,”⁹⁹ and later on the same page, he remarks: “By exterminating Banu Qurayzah without leaving any survivors...”¹⁰⁰ Here, he encompasses everyone without distinguishing between women and children. This conflates events, first mentioning the killing of six hundred men, then stating that none were left alive.

He concludes by describing the morals of the people of the Arabian Peninsula, asserting that they were not Christian morals, mainly referring to Muslims, implying that their ethics differed from those of Christians and their relatives. He states: “Such incidents [referring to the killing of Banu Qurayzah] happened in the Arabian Peninsula, and their morals were not Christian, nor modern.”¹⁰¹

We say Islam is and continues to be the religion of love and tolerance, distinguishing humans as the highest value in this world. When God sent His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), he sent him for all humanity, not for certain people over others. When God says: “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in God” (3: 110), this is a divine declaration of the excellence of this nation, meaning the Islamic nation, and its distinction from other countries.

Therefore, when orientalists attribute acts of killing and brutality to the people of the Arabian Peninsula, referring to the Muslims, and justify it by saying that its people were not Christians, they should refer back to the era of the Inquisition that took place in Christian Spain and what was done to the Muslims. These inquisitions carried out brutal acts that defy human reason. Their torture methods included dismemberment and breaking of limbs, burying individuals alive, cutting off prisoners’ hands, feet, and tongues until death, and many other horrific acts that terrorized humanity, especially Muslims in Spain.¹⁰²

99 Gabrieli, Muhammad and Islamic Conquests, p. 162.

100 Gabrieli, 162.

101 Hatamleh, Al-Andalusia, history, civilization and ordeal, p. 1134-1136.

102 Sharaf, The Reversed Holocaust, p. 9-10.

It is no wonder they look the other way. They always hold guard in the face of any criticism of Jews. But why don't they look at the crimes committed by Jews, especially in modern times? After World War II, Jews detained German civilians—men, women, and children—and subjected them to the most heinous forms of torture in specific camps. They killed around 80,000 Germans under torture, with one camp alone responsible for over 1,500 deaths. The commander of this camp fled to Israel, which refused to extradite him for trial.

Another example is what is happening to Palestinian Muslims today. It's among the worst crimes perpetrated by Zionist Jews against humanity, despite the condemnation of human rights organizations. Yet the Zionists have disregarded all that amid significant silence from those who claim humankind under the banner of Christians, whom Gabrieli describes as having high morals. The number of victims, including men, women, and children, reached nearly eight thousand in 2023 alone, not to mention previous massacres.

Conclusion

The incident of Banu Qurayza is among the events in the Prophet's biography, which is addressed by Arab and Oriental studies. Some studies have substantiated this incident and the number of casualties based on the premise that they betrayed the city and provisions in the document mandating retribution against them. Oriental studies have embraced these views, using them as a pretext to accuse the Prophet and Muslims in the worst possible manner.

By comparing Islamic sources, significant discrepancies in the numbers are evident. There is no consensus on a specific number, and exaggeration is present, even though the Prophet was sent as a mercy to the world, not as a shedder of blood or a slaughterer. Additionally, the inconsistency in the narratives regarding the number of casualties indicates their lack of accuracy. At times, the figure is limited to between six hundred and seven hundred, while at others, it ranges between seven hundred and eight hundred, with some accounts extending it to eight hundred or nine hundred.

Blame should not be solely placed on Italian Orientalists; rather, Islamic narratives that convey numerous accounts tarnishing the reputation of Prophet Muhammad without scrutiny or verification of the incident of the killing of Banu Qurayza should also be criticized.

It is noted that most Orientalists, including Italians, use Jewish incidents during the prophetic era as a pretext to criticize the religion of Islam, defending Jews to appease them and to align with their Masonic institutions that dominate Europe.

Finally, despite the methodological skepticism of Italian Orientalism towards Islamic sources, when studying incidents that affect Islam and its Prophet, they strive to prove them, relying on the same sources they criticized earlier.

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