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From Traders to Caliphs: Prosopography, Geography and the Marriages of Muḥammad's Tribe

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ABSTRACT

When viewed prosopographically, the marriages of the Umayyad caliphs recorded within the Arabic genealogical literary tradition present us with a compelling insight into the evolution of the early Islamic polity. Following a brief outline of the methodology, this paper will then extract the marriages of the Umayyad caliphs and their sons and use these data to illustrate trends in marriage behaviour over the course of their dynastic reign. This will then be compared with the marriage behaviour of two other cohorts: those of Muḥammad and the early Muslims, and those of the Quraysh of Muḥammad's father's generation. By comparing the behaviour of these three groups we shall demonstrate the efficacy of the methodology and the accuracy of the source material and ultimately develop our narrative of Islamic history prior to the fall of the Umayyads.

KEYWORDS

Genealogy and Prosopography / Social History; Middle East; Muḥammad, prophet; Arabia – society; Marriage – in Islam; Umayyads, Arab dynasty; Quraysh, Arab tribe

The idea that prosopographical approaches might tell us something new about the history of early Islam[1] is long established; Leone Caetani began his *Onomasticon Arabicum* a century ago and the intervening years have witnessed a steady flow of prosopographical studies.[2] Interest in this approach is in part due to the nature of the sources themselves (the historiographies record a *lot* of names), but it is also a reflection of the direction taken by academic study of early Islamic history. The pertinent trend here is the widespread belief amongst modern scholars that our default position when reading the traditional historical sources should be one of scepticism when it comes to the question of whether or not these sources are telling us anything reliable about the events they recount. The appeal of prosopography in this context is that it can discern within these sources trends and patterns that would not have been visible to the historians who transmitted and recorded the information. Their invisibility to those best placed to manipulate them means that these data are more likely to have been the product of actual historical events rather than a by-product of the historiographical forces that have so clearly left their impression on the narrative traditions as a whole.[3]

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[1]For the purposes of this paper "early Islam" is defined as the period from Muḥammad's birth to 750 CE.

[2]"Prosopography" here is defined as "the study of the collective lives of a historical group".

[3]These strands can be seen coming together in 1980 when Patricia Crone argued that "early Islamic history has to be almost *exclusively* prosopographical" (emphasis hers): Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 17.

But although the results of these efforts have on occasion been influential, the approach has for the most part been beset with problems. Too often the investigators' ambition has outstripped their ability to manage the data and the amount of time involved in gathering the datasets has frequently failed to repay the investment.[4]

There are signs, however, that the situation is changing. A number of scholars in recent years have taken the prosopographical approach and been more successful in applying it to the Islamic sources; notable amongst these are Maxim Romanov, Teresa Bernheimer and Asad Ahmed whose publications – when added to the precursor works of Carl Petry, John Nawas, Salih Said Agha and Michael Ebstein – add up to something of a movement within the field of pre-modern Islamic history and it is into this context that the present study fits.[5]

In a counterpart article has been shown that we can take a single data-category (child-bearing marriages) from a single source and analyse it longitudinally to demonstrate trends in early Islamic history.[6] These trends demonstrate remarkable concurrence with the broad historical narratives of early Islamic origins and this can only be explained by the accuracy of the source material and the efficacy of the methodology. This article will extend this study to look at the same data on a smaller scale; this will provide further evidence for the accuracy of the source material and the potency of the methodology, but will also show us that we can use the same methodology to look at intergenerational change. In addition to this, we shall also seek to demonstrate another (and hitherto under-explored) benefit of mass-data approaches, which is their ability to create data visualisations. These visualisations are not only useful for explaining complex ideas to non-specialist audiences, but they can also provoke further research directions that would otherwise have remained hidden.

Source material

Our principle source for this study is the *Nasab Quraysh* of al-Zubayrī (d. 851).[7] This is ostensibly[8] the genealogy of the Quraysh tribe, who are traditionally defined as being the descendants of Fihr, who was born eleven generations before Muḥammad. A typical entry in this book looks like the following:

[4]For the *Onomasticon*'s troubled history, see Charles Müller, *Onomasticon Arabicum-online: A Historical Survey*, 2012, http://onomasticon.irht.cnrs.fr/bundles/irhtoafront/pdf/The_Project.pdf (accessed 29 June 2015); more successful (yet somewhat controversial) early examples include Charles Pellat, "Peut-on connaître le taux de natalité au temps du Prophète? A la recherche d'une méthode", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14/2 (1971): 107–35; and Richard Bulliet's *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[5]For a more detailed account of prosopographical approaches in recent years, see Maxim Romanov, "Writing Digital History: A Database of Biographical Records from the Pre-Modern Muslim World", in *Analysis of Ancient and Medieval Texts and Manuscripts: Digital Approaches*, ed. T.L. Andrews and C. Macé (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015): pp. 229–44, esp 229–34.

[6]Majied Robinson, "Statistical Approaches to the Rise of Concubinage in Islam", in *Courtesans and Concubines*, ed. Matthew Gordon and Kathryn Hain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); the counterpart article also contains a fuller explanation of the methodology.

[7]Muṣʿab b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zubayrī, *Kitāb Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1953).

[8]This qualification is necessary because the author has clearly done some editing: his interest wanes as he approaches his own era; he includes many more men than women; there is a bias towards families based in the Ḥijāz; and he as "forgotten" to mention some of his own relatives who were involved in an anti-ʿAbbāsid uprising.

> ʿAbd Allāh al-Aṣghar (the younger) b. Wahb b. Zamʿa was born to a concubine (*umm walad*) … his wife was Karīma bt al-Miqdād b. ʿAmrū l-Bahrānī, whose mother was Ḍubāʿa bt Zubayr b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. She (Karīma) gave birth to: al-Miqdād b. ʿAbd Allāh, who had no descendants and was killed at the battle of Ḥarra; Wahb b. ʿAbd Allāh who had no descendants and was killed at the battle of Ḥarra; and Yaʿqūb, Abū l-Ḥārith, Yazīd, and Zubayr, the sons of ʿAbd Allāh al-Aṣghar b. Wahb.[9]

Although this is one of the simpler entries, we can already see that there is an enormous amount of information recorded within it: we are told that the subject's mother was a concubine; we have the tribal affiliation of his wife; we are told that two sons definitely had no progeny; and we are told in which battle they were killed. But for the purposes of this investigation we are only interested in one category, and that is the child-bearing marriage[10] behaviour of the individuals recorded.

The selection of marriage behaviour is justified on a number of grounds. First, we have reason to believe it is accurate; child-bearing marriages produce large numbers of "stakeholders" keen to maintain the memory of a particular union.[11] Second, marriages lasted for an extensive period of time, which makes them suitable for longitudinal study. Finally, marriage is a useful data category because – as will be shown in this article – it has the capacity to tell us something interesting about the Quraysh in the pre-ʿAbbāsid era.

By extracting the data from the *Nasab Quryash*, we end up with a database containing nearly 3,000 individuals for whom we know the nature of the relationship that brought them into existence. Thanks to Arabian naming practices, we automatically know where the father fits into the genealogical tree; mothers can be a little more problematic but in most cases we can establish her tribal affiliation unless she is a concubine (*umm walad*).

This in itself shows us what a remarkable source the *Nasab Quraysh* is; to this author's knowledge no other pre-modern historical source contains information on such a detailed wealth of marriage behaviour. But we can do more than establish the *Nasab Quraysh* as a historiographical curiosity – we can also show how the work can intersect with our existing scholarly narratives of Qurashī history from the second half of the sixth century to the end of the Umayyad dynasty. To do this however we must overcome the major hurdle that is dating.

[9] Al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 228.

[10] For the purposes of this article a "marriage" is a "child-bearing marriage" unless otherwise stated.

[11] It is accepted that genealogists in general have a poor reputation in terms of consistency; this is a natural corollary of the function of genealogy as a means of explaining current relationships (as Michael Lecker puts it: "Genealogies are not correct or incorrect; genealogical claims reflect the situation at a certain point in time, or attempts to transform it": Michael Lecker, "Tribes in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia", in *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia Around the Time of Muḥammad*, ed. Michael Lecker (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 1–106, esp. 2). But in the three-to-five generations closest to the living, the degree of consistency is striking; see Michael Erben, "Genealogy and Sociology: A Preliminary Set of Statements and Speculations", *Sociology* 25/2 (1991): 275–92, p. 278; Emrys Peters, "The Proliferation of Segments in the Lineage of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica", *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 90/1 (1960): 29–53, pp. 40–1; Alois Musil, *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1928), p. 48; and William Lancaster, *The Rwala Bedouin Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 32. The last two works are discussed in Hugh Kennedy, "From Oral Tradition to Written Record in Arabic Genealogy", *Arabica* 44/4 (1997): 531–44, pp. 532–3. The high quality of the genealogical data within al-Zubayrī's work would therefore indicate that they are drawn directly from sources recorded while the unions in question were still well-remembered.

Structuring the data

The *Nasab Quraysh* contains almost no dates of births, marriages or deaths. Occasionally, we can date a death to the unfortunate outcome of battle participation, but incidents of this type tend to be restricted to the conquest era and do not tell us the individual's age when he died (which would be useful as an indicator of when the parental union was active).

The proposed solution to this difficulty is to look at the data generationally. This is possible because the data points are all (by definition) connected to men who are related to a common ancestor and we can use this to create generational cohorts from the mass of data. The numbering in this schema is structured around the figure Quṣayy b. Kilāb who, according to the traditional historical narrative, established the Quraysh in Mecca and is our Generation 0.[12] Muḥammad, therefore, would be Generation 5 (his lineage being Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim b. ʿAbd Manāf b. Quṣayy). If a Qurashī is not descended from Quṣayy, we simply go back to their shared ancestor and count from there. For example, Abū Bakr's shared ancestor with Quṣayy is Murra and, as Murra is Quṣayy's grandfather, this means Abū Bakr is of Generation 5. This is illustrated in Table 1. It is important to note that, although the two men are separated from their common ancestor by seven generations, they still fall within the same generational cohort. This argument for the accuracy of the genealogical data is maintained when we look at some other prominent early Muslims (see Table 2).

With this generational structuring in place, we can visualise the marriage data diachronically. The graph in Figure 1 illustrates the number of children born by generation and differentiates between children born of concubines and those born of free women.[13]

This graph shows that the emergence of slave women as the mothers of Qurashī children begins in Generation 3 and peaks with the cohorts of men who were involved in the Arab conquests. In the absence of any evidence that historiographical distortion could have created this concurrence, the link between the historical narrative and the statistical analysis proves that at least some elements of the marriage data within the *Nasab Quraysh* are accurate and that the generational structuring as proposed above works successfully.[14]

Marriages of the *Nasab Quraysh*

With our arguments in place for the veracity of the data, and equipped with a robust means of temporally structuring these data, we are now in a position to look at a more complex type of marriage beyond the concubine/freewoman distinction – namely marriages differentiated by the tribal origins of the wives. It will quickly be seen that even adding a small amount of information to this basic data category adds multiple layers of complications and so we shall progress carefully by focusing on small cohorts of marriages. The advantage of this approach is that it allows us to fully explore the complexities

[12]The selection of Quṣayy rather than Muḥammad is for clarity because any discussion of the Prophet's era would lead to numerous references to -1s, 0s and 1s which can be confusing when embedded in text.

[13]When discussing concubines, we are forced to discuss numbers of children born rather than number of child-bearing unions; this is because the *Nasab Quraysh* frequently gives us lists of children born to a particular man and states only that they were born to "concubines". This is not the case with free women, who are always named and explicitly linked to their progeny.

[14]This is discussed in greater detail in Robinson, "Statistical Approaches".

Table 1. Generational structuring

Generation	Lineage 1	Lineage 2
-2	Murra	Murra
-1	Kilāb	Taym
0	Quṣayy	Saʿd
1	ʿAbd Manāf	Kaʿb
2	Hāshim	ʿAmr
3	ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib	ʿĀmir
4	ʿAbd Allāh	Abū Quḥāfa
5	Muḥammad	Abū Bakr

Table 2. Generational distances

Name	Generation	Degree of separation	Estimated years separation from common ancestor*
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh	5	NA	NA
Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq	5	7	210
ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb	6	9	270
ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān	6	5	150
ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib	5	2	60
Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh	5	7	210
Zubayr b. ʿAwwām	5	5	150

* This calculation assumes a generational distance of 30 years; this is a problematic figure but is based on our best current studies; see e.g. Shuichi Matsumura and Peter Forster, "Generation Time and Effective Population Size in Polar Eskimos", *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 275/1642 (2008): 1501–8.

of the marriages in relation to our methodology, which will hopefully prove useful for future investigations using prosopographical approaches; the small size of the cohorts does mean, however, that the resulting findings should be considered as indicative rather than conclusive.

Our starting point here is the final point of the counterpart article,[15] which looked at the 56 child-bearing marriages made by the Umayyad caliphs and their sons over a span of four generations. It showed that, as the family progressed through time, the number of children produced by concubines increased from under 10% of all children fathered by the first generation of caliphs to nearly 60% in the generation of their great-grandsons. Concurrent with this increasing exogamy, however, there was increasing endogamy when they married Arab women; of the 29 marriages by the final two generations of Umayyad caliphs and their sons, 25 were made to Umayyad women and only two were to Arab women from outside the Quraysh. In the first two generations however, of the 27 marriages only six were made to Umayyad women. Of the remainder, 15 were to other Qurashī brides and a further six to non-Qurashī Arab women.

These figures were used in the counterpart article[16] to place the Umayyad marriages in the wider context of increasing concubinage within the Islamic polity; it was argued that the forces that engendered increasing exogamy (i.e. concubinage) were the same that instigated increasing endogamy (i.e. cousin marriage). But as concubinage is intimately linked with the influx of slave women that came with the first Arab invasions, it can tell us little about marriage behaviour before Islam. In order to complete this part of the picture, we shall therefore compare the 56 full marriages of the Umayyads and their sons with those

[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*

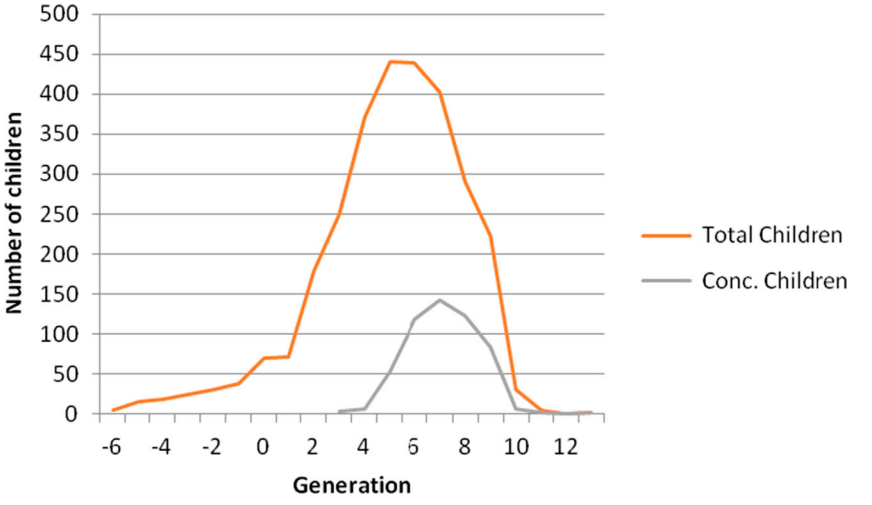

Figure 1. Total children born vs. children born of concubines

made by earlier generations to see whether here, too, we can discern further trends within the data. If these trends can be illustrated, it will be further evidence of the quality of the *nasab* data and the efficacy of the methodology; it will also place Umayyad caliphal marriage in the context of the pre-Islamic and Prophetic Ḥijāz.

In order to do this, the marriage behaviour of the Umayyad caliphs and their sons will be compared with that of two earlier cohorts that made roughly the same number of marriages. The first cohort investigated in terms of chronology will be that of the fourth generation male descendants of Quṣayy (i.e. the men of Muḥammad's father's generation and those of Umayya's sons) and is intended to give us a snapshot of marriage as it occurred amongst the Quraysh before the arrival of Islam. By extracting every child-bearing union made by these men with a woman of known tribal affiliation, we end up with a database comprising 53 marriages.

The second cohort consists of the men at the heart of the Islamic project in its formative years: Muḥammad, the first four caliphs, and the Companions Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf and Saʿd b. Abū Waqqās (according to the traditional historical sources these last four were potential caliphs, thanks to their appointment to ʿUmar's *shūra*). The *Nasab Quraysh* preserves 52 child-bearing marriages made by this group to women of known tribal groupings. The analysis of this cohort is intended to indicate how the arrival of Islam changed the patterns of Qurashī marriage.

Our final cohort consists of the aforementioned marriages of the Umayyad caliphs and their sons. The number of marriages undertaken by this group is similar to those of the other two cohorts (56) but extends over a far longer period in time (four generations). This should not be an issue, as our purpose here is to put the marriages into wider context; like-for-like claims will hence only be made with reference to necessary caveats.

Marriages will be grouped into three categories; lineal, non-lineal and non-Qurashī. "Lineal" refers to a marriage made by a man with a woman from the same segment of the Quraysh (this could be defined as "cousin marriage"); "non-lineal" refers to a marriage

Table 3. Cohort 1 marriages

Wife's tribal affiliation	Number	Proportion of total
All wives of known tribal affiliation	53	
Non-Qurashī	23	43.40%
Non-lineal	14	26.42%
Lineal	16	30.19%

Table 4. Cohort 2 marriages

Wife's tribal affiliation	Number	Proportion of total
All Arab wives of known tribal affiliation	52	
Non-Qurashī	33	63.46%
Non-lineal	11	21.15%
Lineal	8	15.39%

Table 5. Cohort 3 marriages

Wife's tribal affiliation	Number	Proportion of total
All wives of known tribal affiliation	56	
Non-Qurashī	8	14.29%
Non-lineal	17	30.36%
Lineal	31	55.36%

made by a man to a Qurashī woman outwith his segment; and "non-Qurashī" refers to a marriage made to a woman from a non-Qurashī tribe. Given that tribal segments emerge and disappear over time, what is meant by the "lineal" and "non-lineal" categories must be explained for each cohort.

Cohort 1: The pre-Islamic Quraysh

This cohort includes all the fourth-generation descendants of Quṣayy who are recorded in the *Nasab Quraysh* as having had children with named women. Only one individual had children with concubines – this was ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (Muḥammad's uncle and ancestor of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty). This makes sense when we consider that he outlived his nephew Muḥammad by over 20 years, which would have given him access to the first wave of slave women coming from the Arab conquests. "Lineal" in this category includes all women who were descended from Quṣayy. The dataset of child-bearing marriages is set out in Table 3.

Cohort 2: Prominent early Muslims

This dataset incorporates: the childbearing marriages of Muḥammad; the child-bearing marriages of the first four caliphs (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib); and the child-bearing marriages of the four men who were reputedly appointed to the *shūra* established by the caliph ʿUmar to select his successor from amongst their number (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh, Zubayr b. ʿAwwām, and Saʿd b. Abī Waqqās). These last eight men were all early converts from the Meccan period, and were either caliphs or could potentially have become caliphs.

Table 6. Comparison of marriages across Cohorts 1, 2 and 3

Wife affiliation	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
Non-Qurashī	43.40%	63.46%	14.29%
Non-lineal	26.42%	21.15%	30.36%
Lineal	30.19%	15.39%	55.36%

They are hence intended to represent the behaviour of the inner-circle of the Prophetic polity.

"Lineal" marriages in this category are marriages within the segment of the Quraysh to which the husband belongs. So for Abū Bakr and Ṭalḥa this would be a marriage within Taym b. Murra; for ʿUmar it would be a marriage within ʿAdī b. Kaʿb; for Saʿd b. Abī Waqqās and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān it would be within Zuhra; and for Muḥammad, ʿAlī and Zubayr it would be marriage to other descendants of Quṣayy.[17]

Cohort 3: The Umayyad caliphs and their sons

This final cohort consists of the child-bearing marriages of those men who made it to the political summit of Islamic society during the Umayyad period.[18] For this cohort "lineal" refers to marriages made with Umayyad women (e.g. women descended from Umayya b. ʿAbd Shams), while "non-lineal" refers to marriages made with women from any other Qurashī segment.

Analysis

Looking at the three cohorts side-by-side, we can see how marriage patterns evolved from the pre-Prophetic era to the time of the ʿAbbāsid revolution (see Table 6).

It is clear from this preliminary analysis that the category of marriages that fluctuates the least is the "Non-Lineal"; i.e. marriages made to Qurashī women from outside the particular marriage segment of the husband. It is somewhat higher in the Umayyad period, with 17 marriages made to non-Umayyad Qurashīs (though four of these are descendants of ʿAbd Shams, the father of Umayya). The smallest number of marriages to non-lineal Quraysh is made in the Prophetic period, which may seem surprising, given that these nine men came from four different segments and the marital links between the men has often been noted. While this is indeed true, it needs to be placed in the context that these men married a lot of other women too; of the 52 child-bearing marriages they made to Arab women, the *Nasab Quraysh* records only six that were made to other members of the cohort.

[17]This last category was of course not a recognised grouping of the Quraysh at the time of the Prophet and it may be objected that ʿAlī and Muḥammad should more accurately be considered part of Hāshim. The issue with defining lineage at this granularity, however, is that sub-groups of this size appeared and disappeared in line with politics and could potentially be the constructs of later historians; although we might be relatively secure with Hāshim, we may not be so confident with similar sized groups in other parts of the Quraysh. We must also make an effort to equalise the size of the various sub-groups; otherwise we may think certain men are marrying out at a higher rate than normal for socio-political reasons, when the actual cause was the small number of women available to them.

[18]The inclusion of sons is defensible, given the power the caliphs would have had over the marriages of their children. See Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 32.

It is instead exogamy that is the most striking element of the Prophetic cohort's marriage behaviour, with nearly two-thirds of their child-bearing marriages being made to women who were not Qurashī and – when compared with the behaviour of their father's generation – it appears that this was at the expense of marrying women from their own lineages. This exogamy becomes all the more noteworthy when we contrast it with the marriage behaviour of the Umayyads, amongst whom marriage to non-Qurashī women becomes incredibly infrequent.

Like concubinage, trends of marriages to non-Qurashī women track the broad historical narrative. The increase we see in the Prophetic cohort corresponds to historical reports of their ostracism from the Quraysh (which included a marriage ban) and their new ideology with respects to what constituted a tribe (namely one delineated by profession of Islam rather than by ancestry). The decline we see in the Umayyad period is also clearly linked to the emergence of an increasingly distant elite that no longer needed to marry into the leading families of the Islamic project in order to maintain their authority; we correspondingly see an increase in the number of deracinated women being brought in from outside the Muslim world (e.g. concubines). These changes confirm the findings of the counterpart investigation into concubinage;[19] the transition from tribal kingdom to Islamic empire was not swept in with the ʿAbbāsids but part of an evolutionary development with which the Umayyad dynasty had long been engaging.

Until this point, we have proceeded with deliberate caution by focusing on the broadest of marriage categories and most uncontroversial of historical events. The result has been a striking degree of correlation, given the novelty of the methodology and the problematic nature of the source material. This provides further argument that the *Nasab Quraysh* is a uniquely useful source, which – when analysed prosopographically – can give us an account of marriage trends as they actually occurred amongst the Quraysh before the end of the Umayyad dynasty.[20]

This provides us with a platform from which to begin looking at more complicated relationships and also gives us the confidence to suggest bolder reformulations of the standard narrative of early Islamic history. There are myriad ways in which this can be done, but in the remainder of this article we shall explore just one further approach; the nature of the marriages that the Quraysh made to non-Qurashī Arab women. By focusing on the geography of these relationships it will be shown that the mass-data approach can be connected to individual marriage decisions and in the process provide a compelling insight into how the arrival of Islam transformed the social relationships of the Quraysh.

Non-Qurashī marriage and geography

Our focus here will be on the marriages made by the men of the three cohorts with non-Qurashī women. We have seen above that the proportion of child-bearing marriages made to women of this type fluctuates, and that this can be linked to historical circumstance; it was (in relation to what came before) high amongst the early Muslims of the Prophetic era

[19]Robinson, "Statistical Approaches".

[20]The records fall precipitously after this point; as mentioned above, al-Zubayrī has very little interest in the marriage behaviour of the generations closest to his own.

and low amongst the members of the caliphal family in the Umayyad era. We shall now consider evidence indicating that historical context had an influence on the tribal origin of the non-Qurashī bride.

The problem here is that tribal affiliations are fluid; even discounting outright forgery, a tribesperson could claim any one of several affiliations simply by selecting the relevant ancestor.[21] This makes it highly problematic for the modern scholar to establish trends in behaviour because we also can – like the genealogists themselves – select the lineage group that best serves our interests. For instance, if we wished to show continuity in marriage behaviour, we could go higher up the lineage to establish that a certain group only married with Yemeni tribes (for instance) and in so doing disguise a large amount of diversity. Conversely, if we go down the lineage, we can show far less consistent marriage behaviour and use this to argue for fluidity in terms of inter-tribal relationships.

But to abandon the notion of tribal belonging outright would be – as Lawrence Conrad puts it in a similar context – "excessive".[22] We shall instead frame the following around Meier and Büssow's elegantly minimalist definition of the word "tribe":

> The corresponding Arabic terms, especially *qabīla* and *ʿashīra*, are now widely understood to refer to social groups that claim descent from a common male ancestor and are connected with a specific territory at a particular time but that are not politically united. Solidarity within and beyond a specific group, internal hierarchies, and the role of its leaders – men referred to mainly as *shaykh* or *raʾīs* – can only be described for specific contexts, not in a general way.[23]

In the table and maps below it will be demonstrated that within the specific context of marriage amongst the Late Antique Quraysh, tribal affiliations as suggested within the historical texts can be turned into accessible visualisations that confirm some elements of what we already know of the narratives of the pre-ʿAbbāsid Quraysh, while challenging others. It is again emphasised that these findings are indicative rather than conclusive, but caution is necessary given the novelty of the methodology.

Table 7 below lays out the tribal origin of the non-Qurashī wives who married into the three cohorts outlined above. Where disambiguation is needed, it is provided in brackets.

Table 7 provides further insight into the nature of the marriages made by the second cohort; it is not simply the case that the first converts are marrying outside the Quraysh more frequently than the men of their fathers' generation; the women in question are also from a wider pool of tribes. The early Islamic cohort married into a total of 20 tribes compared with their fathers' ten, and 16 of the marriages made by the first Muslims were to women from tribes that the earlier cohort had never married into. Another indicator can be seen at the top of Table 7, where the five tribes into which cohort 1 married most frequently accounted for 18 of their child-bearing unions, while in the Prophetic era these same five tribes account for only seven of the marriages.

Again, this fits in with what we suspect from the pre-existing narrative that the emergence of Islam dislocated the early converts from the alliances of their fathers' generation

[21] For a fascinating example of how differing tribal affiliations can exist simultaneously across different generations of the same family (in this case father-son-grandson), see Lancaster, *Rwala Bedouin Today*, 27–28.

[22] Lawrence Conrad, "The Arabs", in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby, volumes I–XIV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), XIV: 678–800, p. 679.

[23] Astrid Meier and Johann Büssow, "'Anaza", in *EI*^{3}.

Table 7. Exogamous non-Qurashī marriages of Cohorts 1, 2 and 3

Tribe*	Pre-Islamic Cohort	Early Islamic Cohort	Umayyad Cohort
Kināna	5	3	
Thaqīf	5	2	1
ʿĀmir b. Ṣaʿṣaʿa	4	1	2
Khuzāʿa	2	1	
Sulaym	2		
Aws	1	3	
Azd	1	1	
Hudhayl	1		
Tamīm	1	3	
Bakr b. Wāʾil	1	3	
Taghlib b. Wāʾil		1	
Kalb		3	3
Fazāra		1	2
Murra (of Ghaṭafān)		1	
Khathʿam**		2	
Asad b. Khuzayma		2	
Māzin (of Qays Aylān)		1	
Kinda		1	
Ḥimyār		1	
Bahrāʾ		1	
Ḥārith (of Khazraj)		1	
Ṭayy		1	
Total	23	33	8

* Tribal affiliations are based on groupings suggested in the *Nasab Quraysh*.
** These marriages are both to the same individual.

and opened up the potential for new tribal alliances as the Islamic movement became more successful.

With the tribal origins of the wives in place, we can now consider the geography of marriage patterns by linking the relationships to the locations of the tribes as recorded in the historical narratives. This is obviously controversial, given what we know of the reliability of the traditional sources and, while Fred Donner has made arguments for the general accuracy of the geography, the linking of this geography to marriage behaviour is a major test of his conclusions.[24]

Maps 1 and 2 illustrate how the distribution of marriage behaviour differs between cohorts 1 and 2 by attaching volume markers indicating the number of marriages within the region associated with each tribe:[25]

This visual representation does not have to be map-based; the graph in Figure 2 shows the frequency of marriage for cohorts 1 and 2 against the distance from Mecca.[26]

[24]Fred Donner, "The Bakr B. Wāʾil Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam", *Studia Islamica* 51 (1980): 5–38, pp. 14–15. Archaeology supplies some limited support also; the ʿĀmir b. Ṣaʿṣaʿa are located in the Ḥijāz by the Murayghān inscription of 552 AD: Meir Kister, "The Campaign of *Huluban*: A New Light on the Expedition of Abraha", *Le Muséon* 78 (1965): 425–36. Another possible reference to a local tribe is less clear; this is the appearance in Greek sources of the "Kinaidokolpites", who have been linked to both Kināna and Kalb b. Rabīʿa b. ʿĀmir b. Ṣaʿṣaʿa (along with other theories). For extensive recent discussions, see M.D. Bukharin, "Towards the Earliest History of Kinda", *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 20/1 (2009): 64–80; Christian Robin, "Matériaux pour une prosopographie de l'Arabie antique: Les noblesses sabéenne et ḥimyarite avant et après l'islam", in *Les préludes de l'Islam*, ed. Christian Robin and Jérémie Schiettecatte (Paris: De Boccard, 2013), pp. 127–270.

[25]The sources for this geographic information are the relevant entry for each tribe within the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; the pull-out map in D.S. Margoliouth's *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, (New York: Putnam, 1905); and Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen OrientsAVO map B VII 1: *Das islamische Arabien bis zum Tode des Propheten (632/11h)* by Ulrich Rebstock, 1987.

[26]There is obviously an issue here concerning the *ḥijra*. Many of cohort 2's marriages would have been made while they were in Medina, but even if we did have the data available for which marriage took place in which city, it would not drastically alter the visualisation here. The abstraction is therefore an acceptable one.

Map 1: Geographical origins of non-Qurashī marriages made by cohort 1[27]

Map 2: Geographical origins of non-Qurashī marriages made by cohort 2

The maps and Figure 2 correlate with the broad outline of the narrative of Islamic origins in the same way as the tables above them do; they show that the arrival of Islam and the establishment of an empire had profound effects on the way the Quraysh married. The women the early Muslims married were not only from a wider range of tribes, but these tribes themselves were also geographically more dispersed.

But in another respect the maps illustrate something that we were less certain of in our understanding till now of early Islamic history, and that is the parochialism of

[27]Maps and Figure 2 were designed by A.J.C. Meehan.

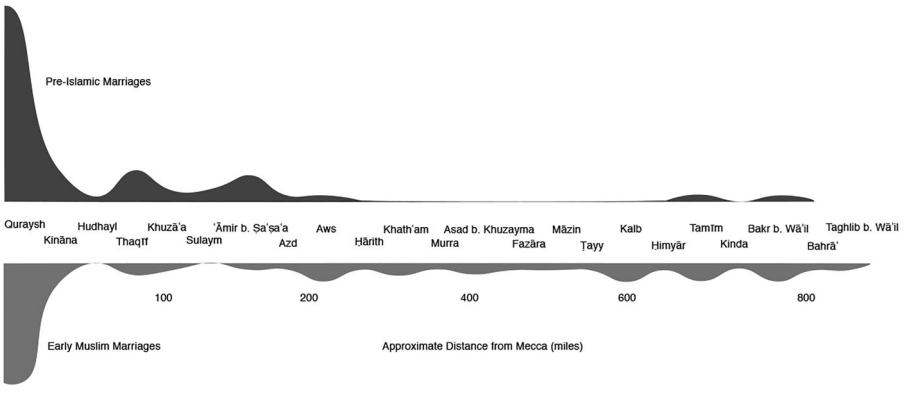

Figure 2. Marriage frequency by distance of tribe from Mecca

the pre-Islamic Quraysh. The distribution we see in Map 1 does not look like the marriage behaviour of a pre-eminent Arab tribe or the masters of a far-flung trading empire (which is how they are often presented both in the traditional sources and in contemporary scholarship); it looks far more like the revisionist position of Patricia Crone, who argued that Meccan trade should rather be understood as a West Arabian phenomenon.[28] Although this position has been revised recently in light of evidence of the importance of the leather trade to the Roman Empire, there is still no indication that this trade gave the Quraysh widespread influence anywhere outside the Ḥijāz.[29] The marriage behaviour of cohorts 2 and 3, by contrast, looks like that of truly dominant Arab tribes; in the case of the early Muslims, it illustrates a geographic influence extending to Yemen, Iraq and Syria, while, in the case of the Umayyads, their imperial trappings meant they could begin to eschew marriage to non-Qurashī Arab women altogether.

What we also see in the visualisations is a divergence in the genealogical material when compared with the narrative histories. The extant histories of the ʿAbbāsid era normally presented pre-Islamic Mecca as an international city and turned the Quraysh into a people of trans-peninsular significance. But within this same material there is an alternative story of Muḥammad as a member of a tribe of leather traders who occupied a minor shrine serving only surrounding tribes, and it is this narrative that is confirmed by the genealogical data. This alternative story may not have been unthinkable to historians in later centuries (bits of it did, after all, survive), but it was rhetorically unsatisfying; inflating the status of Muḥammad's enemies not only flattered the Prophet's achievements but also made the tale more entertaining.

Luckily for us, this reshaping of history did not extend to the marriage behaviour preserved in the *nasab* tradition. The data from al-Zubayrī's work show us that the pre-Islamic Quraysh almost exclusively married unremarkable tribes within a week's travel of Mecca and it is in this data, reformulated into the visualisations above, that we see

[28]Patrica Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 151–3.
[29]Patricia Crone, "Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70/1 (2007): 63–88.

the Quraysh as they really were from their days as Ḥijāzī traders until their fall as Umayyad caliphs.[30]

Conclusion

In the counterpart article, we have shown that prosopographical methods could identify trends within a database of nearly 3,000 people, the majority of whom lived over a 300-year period. These trends correlated with major events in Islamic history and so gave support to the validity of the methodology.

In this article, we have shown that we get similar results when using much smaller datasets. The comparison between the three cohorts illustrates that there are significant fluctuations between the types of marriages that these men made and that these changes correlate with events as recorded in the traditional narrative sources. This has provided us with further support for the methodology and, when applied to the geographical distribution of Arab tribes, gave us a tantalising glimpse of the contribution that prosopographical approaches can provide to our current understanding of early Islamic history.

It is important not to take this too far; the three cohorts are in no way presented as "samples" of a larger dataset comprising Arabian society as a whole, or even Ḥijāzī society as a whole. The relationship between the trends they illustrate and the information recorded in the traditional narrative sources also needs further exploration; while we have here tried to refer only to the most uncontroversial of early Islamic historical events, this has required a degree of subjective judgement that not all historians would agree with.

What we can be certain of, though, is that we can justify further time spent generating datasets from the *nasab* tradition, analysing them for trends and then exploring their relationship with the traditional narrative sources. The marriage data seem robust enough at multiple levels to allow this and the generational structuring schema is fit for its current purpose. With these tools now at our disposal, it is hoped that other scholars will use this framework to support their own work in teasing apart the source from the discourse of the Islamic historiographical tradition.

[30] Map 1 also refutes Patricia Crone's contention that Muḥammad's Mecca was situated much further to the north than its present location (Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 162–5); the marriage distribution we see here clearly places the locus point of Quraysh marriage somewhere in the central Ḥijāz and this has been established using methodologies Crone herself has espoused. Although Crone's relocation of Mecca has never been a mainstream theory in academic circles, it has unfortunately become more widespread in the public consciousness, thanks to a popular historian's misguided efforts to promote revisionist early Islamic scholarship. In addition to interviews and articles in the press, these views have been circulated in the form of a best-selling book: Tom Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword* (London: Little, Brown, 2012), pp. 330–2 and a documentary film: *Islam: The Untold Story*, 2012, (Channel 4).