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Old claims that the British monarch is descended from the Prophet Muhammad have resurfaced—but they may reveal more about modern perceptions of Islam than the queen.

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Who's in [Elizabeth II's](#) family tree? Various European kings and queens may come to mind, but the Prophet Muhammad may not. Unless you open up a British tabloid these days, that is—publications like *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express* have recently run breathless pieces claiming [Elizabeth](#) is one of Muhammad's descendants, recycling a recent news story that appeared in *Al Ousboue*, a Moroccan newspaper.

So is the queen really related to the prophet? It depends on whether you see a distant ancestor as related or not.

As *The Economist* [notes](#), it's not clear why the claims are resurfacing now. But they've been around since at least 1986, when the possible link was [claimed](#) by genealogist Harold B. Brooks-Baker, publisher of *Burke's Peerage*, Britain's guide to the nobility.

"It is little known by the British people that the blood of Mohammed flows in the veins of the queen," Brooks-Baker [wrote](#) to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at the time.



Brooks-Baker connected Queen Elizabeth to Muhammad via Zaida of Seville, a Muslim princess from the 11th century who converted to Christianity and **became** King Alfonso VI of Castile's concubine. However, it's not clear if Zaida was actually related to Muhammad or not.

Abdelhamid Al-Aouni, the historian who penned the article for *Al-Ousboue*, believes there is a connection, too. Using Zaida as his lynchpin, he traced Elizabeth's genealogy back 43 generations all the way to Muhammad. The purported connection "builds a bridge between our two religions and kingdoms," he tells *The Economist*.

But was Brooks-Baker right to begin with? The royal authority was known for his media savvy and often tussled with the royal family, making comments that they claimed had no basis in reality. “His great advantage for journalists was that he was always available to make an arresting comment,” *wrote The Telegraph* in his 2005 obituary; “his disadvantage was that he was often wrong.”

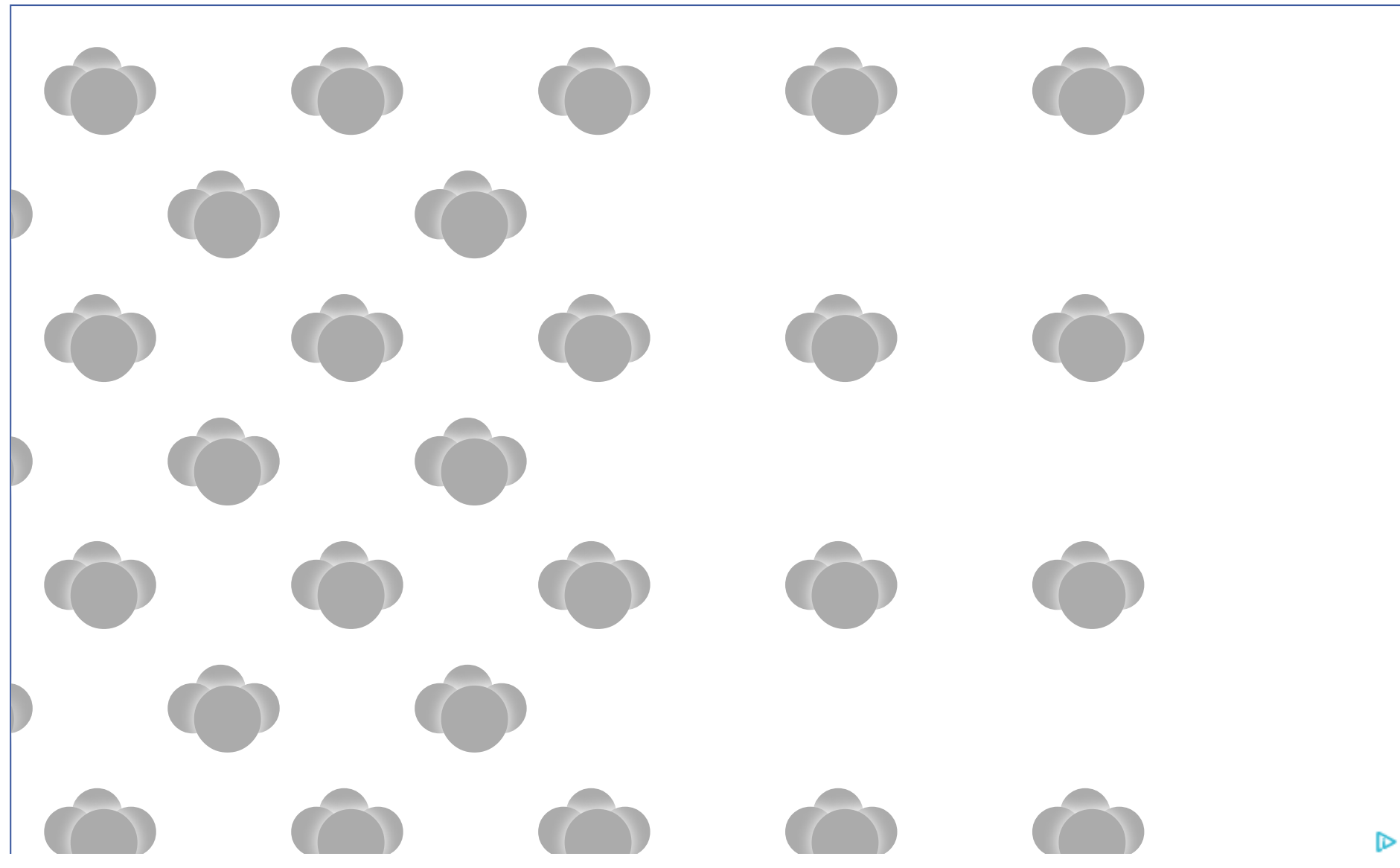
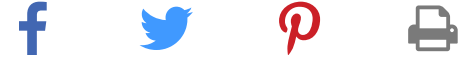
Nevertheless, the supposed link between the British royal family and the founder of Islam has been welcomed by people like Ali Gomaa, an Islamic scholar and 18th Grand Mufti of Egypt. He noted the connection and wished Elizabeth blessings and peace, [reports](#) *Al Ousboue*.

"That's a well-meaning interfaith spin," says Lesley Hazleton, a journalist and author who has written several books about early Islam, but "it's clickbait." Hazleton views the preponderance of this rumor as "a reaction to the demonization of Islam in the West, especially in the United States." It reveals, she says, a hope that Elizabeth might lend "respectability" to a major world religion.

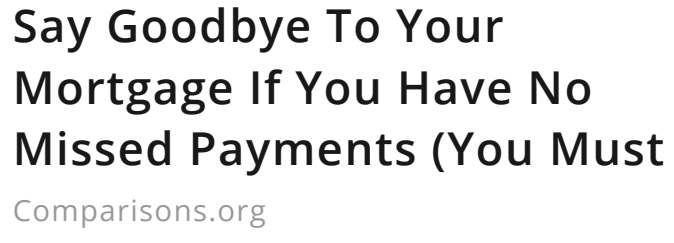
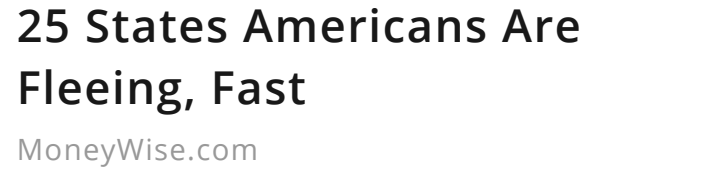
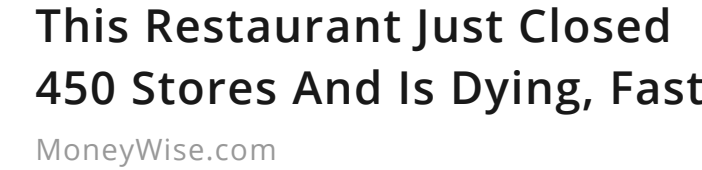
That said, Hazleton can't stop laughing at the idea of a legitimate connection between Queen Elizabeth and the Prophet Muhammad. "If you go back far enough, you can find some kind of third cousin 99 times removed for anybody in the world," she says.

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