

Field Research Analysis and Exam

- Field Research Analysis
- Due Dec 6, 11:59pm
- You will get your grade back before the exam!
- OR, due Dec 10, 11:59pm
- You will not get your grade back before the exam

Exam

- Wednesday Dec 18, 9am-12pm
- CL125

Friday Class and Office
Hours *Canceled*



ISLAM

Introduction, Myths, and Texts



Islam today

- Over 1 billion Muslims world-wide
- Fastest growing religion in the world
- Majority of Muslims live outside of the Middle East
- Most populous Muslim country?
- Indonesia: c. 209 million
- Majority of Muslims live in Southeast Asia and North Africa

Why Study Islam?

- Has played fundamental role in world history
- Philosophy, medicine, astronomy, math, science generally
- Large population and large diaspora thanks to colonization and globalization
- Half a million Muslim people in Canada
- Canada's largest religious minority

Why Study Islam?

- Dispelling negative stereotypes
- Important to counter narratives that Muslims are backward, oppressors of women, and terrorists

Mythic Origins

- Relatively young religion, established in 7th century CE
- Emerges from prophecies received by Muhammad
- Prophecies written down in **Qur'an**
- **Muhammad's** life written down in many Hadiths

Qur'an

- “Qur'an” means recitation, refers to oral origins of the text
- The recording of revelations from God to Muhammad
- Originally circulated orally, but written down in order to preserve “authenticity”
- Communicated and written in Arabic



Qur'an

- Understood in Islam as the literal word of God
- Only properly communicated and appreciated in the original Arabic language
- Qur'an organized into 114 *surahs* (chapters)
- Not organized chronologically
- Arranged according to length of *surahs*: longest to shortest
- Main exception...

The *Fatiha*

1. *In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.*
2. *Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;*
3. *Most Gracious, Most Merciful;*
4. *Master of the Day of Judgement.*
6. *Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.*
7. *Show us the straight way,*
8. *The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy grace,
Those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who do not go astray.*

■ (Translation by 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *Introduction to Religious Studies*, 141)

The *Fatiha*

- The most recited part of the Qur'an
- Recited before daily prayer
- Recited before formal observance

Content of Qur'an

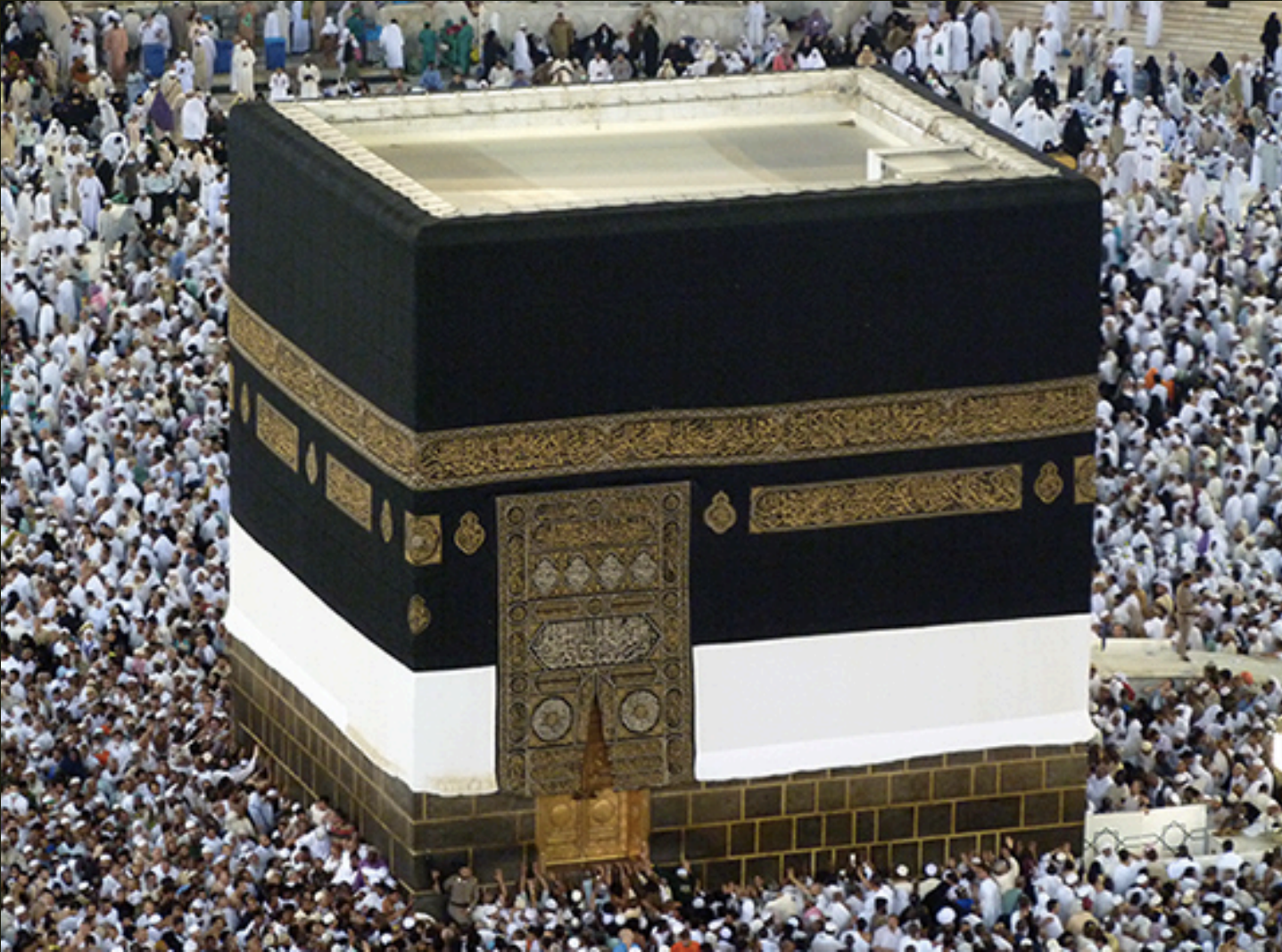
- Revelations of God to Muhammad
- Often mediated through angel Gabriel
- Not arranged chronologically
- Not a narrative
- Oracular in style



CONTEXT OF QUR'AN

7th Century Arabia

- Between Byzantine Empire (Greek and Christian) and Persian Sassanid Empire (Zoroastrian)
- Tribally organized nomadic farmers
- Several urban centres, including Mecca
- Religiously polytheistic (acknowledged the presence of many gods and supernatural beings)



7th Century Arabia

- Mecca home to Ka'ba, the shrine Muslims believe was built by Abraham and his son Ismail and originally dedicated to the one God, Allah
- By 7th century the shrine hosted many tribal deities

Muhammad

- Born in Arabia 570 CE
- An orphan, adopted by wealthy widow named Khadijah
- They later married
- Muhammad spent a lot of time away from his family in spiritual retreat

Muhammad

- In 610 Muhammad experienced the first of a series of encounters with the word of God that he was ordered to recite
- These words were collected after his death in a compendium called the Qur'an (meaning "recitation")

Muhammad

- Muhammad gained many followers, but Islam was still small and vulnerable
- Fortunately, Muhammad was asked to be a mediator between warring tribes, and he agreed on the condition that his Muslim followers be welcomed with him