Excursus on Islamic origins

allows for the possible existence of an indigenous monotheistic tradition of Arabian prophets also alluded to in the Qur'an. As for all other non- or extra-Qur'anic sources, I assume that they mirror different stages and varying aspects of the developing Islamic tradition during which Judeo-Christian influence is stronger and more pervasive. In this perspective, the Qur'an is crucially the bed-rock of practically every aspect of Islamic religious culture which I have tried to demonstrate throughout the book. The Sceptics' view that our present assumptions and knowledge about the origins of Islam may indeed rest upon precarious foundations can be taken seriously. It does not follow that their alternative hypotheses need be accepted as well, a cautionary word which naturally applies to my own position as well. It is in the very nature of research that our present state of knowledge is tentative and subject to change should new source material come to light or new interpretations of the existing sources be proposed.


Glossary

'sal: the mean or balance between two extremes, hence "justice" in human affairs; a person who possesses high moral qualities necessary to hold public or juridical office; also refers to the absolute justice of Allah.
al-ahkam al-khamisah: "the five legal values or qualifications" applied to individual actions in Islamic law. See haram, wajib.
ash al-bayt: "people of the House," referring to the immediate family of the Prophet.
ash al-dhimma: "communities protected by pacts." See dhimmim.
ash al-ilm: "people of knowledge." See 'alim, 'ilm.
'alim: In Islamic society, the word designates a scholar of the religious sciences (pl. 'ulama'). As one of the many epithets for Allah in the Qur'an, it means "(all) knowing." See hakim.
'amal: agreed judicial practice; for the Maliki school of law, the practice of Medina; "act" (pl. a'mal) in both the mundane and religious sense.
'amal (ai-ta'at): act of obedience, good work.
'amal: the common people. See khassah.
Ansar: "helpers." Those inhabitants of Medina who joined Muhammad's mission and supported his efforts to found a community in their midst. See Muhajirun.
'erad: one of several methods of transmitting a manuscript. See mukatabah, munawalah.
Ashraf: (pl. of sharif): "nobles," the descendants of the Prophet.
atbab: a report transmitted by a Companion or Successor of the Prophet. See hadith, hadith nabawi.
aya (pl. ayat): "signs" or "symbol" in the sense that the created order and all it contains are identified as signs of Allah's power and mercy; also refers to a single verse in the Qur'an.
Ayatullah: "sign of Allah." The highest-ranking religious dignitary in the hierarchy of the Imami or Twelver Shi'ah.
baya: "subistence," the highest station in Sufism, in which the soul is said to subsist in Allah after experiencing annihilation. See fan'a.
batin: the "inner" or esoteric aspect of a text, doctrine, or religion; also refers to an inner, spiritual state. See zahir.
Glossary

bid‘ah: “innovation” in Muslim ritual practice or beliefs for which there is no authority in the practice of the Prophet. See sunnah, talq al-bid‘ah.

bid‘ah hasanah: “a good innovation,” but one denied as valid by many jurists.

din: “law” (pl. ad-din): the entire Islamic system of belief and practice, including belief in the oneness of Allah, prophethood, and revelation.

bila kafa‘: “without (knowing) how,” referring to the doctrine of accepting what they mean in reality.

Caliph: see Khalifah.

dakr: “time,” the pre-Islamic notion of an impersonal, preordained fate; see hadith.

dar al-harb: “abode of war,” that is, territory not under Muslim sovereignty.

dar al-islam: “abode of Islam,” the Islamic realms, where Islamic law prevails.

dhikr: “remembrance”; applies particularly to the Sufi group practice of invoking or mentioning the name of Allah.

dhimmi: Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims accepted as subjects of Muslim rule who paid a special tax (jizyah) according to a pact of covenant with the Muslim state in return for legal protection of their lives and property.

fana‘: “annihilation” in Allah, one of the highest stations in Sufism. See baqa‘.

faqi‘ (pl. faqih): a Muslim jurisprudent.

fard‘: rules of inheritance; the portions allotted to heirs.

fard‘ an-I‘am: a duty incumbent upon an individual according to the religious law.

fard‘ kifaya: a collective duty.

fasiq: grave sinner.

Fath: “opening,” the first chapter of the Qur’an, which forms part of the prayer ritual.

fatwa (pl. fatwa‘a): an authoritative, advisory legal opinion issued by a specialist (mufti) on a point of law but which, in itself, had no binding force. See fiqh.

figh: “understanding”; the science of jurisprudence; Islamic religious law, which includes ritual, civil, criminal, and public law.

falsah: “temptation” or “trial,” commonly used in the sense of sedition or political upheaval.

fursa‘ al-fiqh: “branches,” positive law as distinct from its theoretical “roots” (usul).

ghafur: “(All) Forgiving,” one of the epithets for Allah in the Qur’an. See ra‘im, haqim, ‘alim.

ghaybah: “occultation” of the twelfth and last Shi‘ah Imam.

hadd (pl. haddah): fixed punishment for a certain crime/sin as specified in the Qur’an.

hadith (pl. hadith): a report or Tradition of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, containing his exemplary practice or sunnah, the second source of authority for Muslims after the Qur’an. According to its validity, a Tradition may be classed as sahih, “sound,” hasan, “fair,” or da‘if, “weak.” The Shi‘ah use the term hadith for sayings of the twelve Imams, but they distinguish clearly between the sayings of the Prophet and those of the Imams. See also athar.

hadith nabawi (also hadith al-nabi): a report transmitted directly from Prophet. See athar.

hadith qudsi: “divine saying,” a report or saying transmitted by the Prophet in which Allah speaks in the first person. These reports do not form part of the Qur’an.

hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca, held annually and prescribed for all Muslims at least once in their lifetime. A person who has performed the pilgrimage is given the honorific title of Hajj (Hajjah for a woman). See ithnam, Ka‘bah.

hakim: “(All) Wise,” one of the many epithets in the Qur’an for Allah. See ‘ulam.

hal (pl. ahad): a spiritual “state” which the disciple experiences on the Sufi path.

halal: lawful, allowable, contrary to haram.

hajah: “circle” of students studying in a mosque; applies also to meditating Sufis.

al-hamd li-Llah: “praise be to Allah.”

haqiq: the term in the Qur’an for a true “monotheist,” associated with the prophet Abraham and others who lived in pagan times, but followed a belief in one God.

haram: a sacred enclave, where fighting was prohibited during four holy months during which rituals were held saccrosanct, for example, the haram of Mecca.

haram: “prohibited,” “forbidden” action according to the law. See halal, wajib.

hijrah: the migration of Muhammad and his Companions from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, marking the commencement of the Muslim era.

hijrah: legal devices.

hujjah: “proof” from Allah; designation for the Shi‘ah Imams; also used by Sunnis to refer to certain great scholars.

hujjah: incarnation.

Huṣayn: places of Shi‘ah worship or halls for the performance of religious drama commemorating the death of al-Husayn. See ta‘ziyeh.

‘ibadah (pl. ‘ibada): an act of worship, including prayer, fasting, pilgrimage; one of the two general divisions of the law. See mu‘amalat.

Iblis: One of the Qur‘anic terms for Satan, the devil.

‘id al-‘adha: feast of the sacrifice, celebrated on the tenth of the pilgrimage month, Dhu al-Hijjah.

‘id al-fitr: the Muslim festival celebrating breaking the fast of Ramadan.

‘iddah: the “waiting period” of a woman after the termination of marriage or death of her husband.
**Glossary**

**ihram:** the Meccan pilgrim's state of ritual purity; the special two-piece white cloth worn by pilgrims.

**ilham:** perfection (of belief, faith).

**ijaza:** a document given by a teacher to a student certifying that he or she is capable of teaching and transmitting a particular work of his or her master.

**ijma:** "consensus" in Islamic jurisprudence, generally meaning the agreement of legal scholars on a point of law determined explicitly by the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

**ijtihad:** "effort," "exerting oneself"; the exercise of independent judgment in Islamic law so as to arrive at a fresh interpretation of a point at issue; often used in the sense of ijrat, reasoning by analogy. See mujtahid.

**'ilah:** the common denominator, or "effective cause" shared between two cases in the law.

**'ilm:** "knowledge," "learning," "science"; especially theoretical knowledge of the religious sciences; truths derived from the Qur'an and prophetic Traditions. See talab al-'ilm.

Imam: "one who stands before"; a leader, especially in prayer and thus by extension the supreme leader of the Muslim community (see khalifah); legitimate successor of the Prophet, used by the Shi'ah for 'Ali and his descendants.

**imamah:** political and/or religious leadership; office of the Imam.

**in sha'a Allah:** "If Allah wills."

**iqra' (bi'l-iqra):** verbal confession of one's faith (in Allah and his Messenger). See tadziq.

**izlah:** reform.

**Islam:** in the religious sense, "the willing and active recognition of and submission to the Command of the One, Allah."

**iznad:** chain of transmitters or authorities appended to a hadith whose names indicate the degree of its validity. See main.

**irad:** in Islamic tradition, this refers to the night journey by Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem. See bu'raj.

**ittihad:** a discretionary decision of "approval" on a point of law, given by a judge where the public interest may be concerned.

**ittihad:** public welfare. See maslahah.

**itrid:** unitive fusion with Allah.

**iwan:** rectangular arched façade of a vaulted open hall in a mosque.

**jahiliyyah:** "time of ignorance," a Qur'anic term, applied by Muslim theologians to the period of paganism prior to the advent of Islam; in modern usage, the term has been applied by radical Muslims to other Muslims whom they regard as having gone astray from the true path, and are therefore unbelievers.

**jami':** congregational mosque. See masjid.

**jihad:** "striving," "exertion," usually translated as holy war against infidels.

**jizyah:** see dhimmi.

Ka'bah: the cube-shaped shrine, of pre-Islamic origin, located in the center of the great mosque in Mecca. It is the focal point of Muslims' daily prayers and the annual pilgrimage.

**ka'far:** religious expiation.

**kafr:** (pl. kufar): "infidel," "unbeliever;" in its original sense "one who is ungrateful," and by extension, one who is ungrateful for the bounties and mercies of Allah; can also apply to a Muslim whose beliefs or practices are judged to go beyond the permitted limits of variation. See mu'amal.

**kalam:** "word;" the term used for the discipline of "dialectical theology," which sought to defend by rational argument Muslim beliefs and provide proofs for many subjects such as the unity of Allah, his attributes, human free will and predetermination.

**kalam:** state or administrative law.

**karamah:** (pl. karmanat): "miracle" attributed to the Prophet or a holy person.

**kash (also ikasib):** the theological doctrine that humans "aquire" their actions from Allah, are therefore responsible for committing them, and can be punished or rewarded accordingly in the afterlife.

**Khalifah:** "Successor" of the Prophet and head of the Muslim community. See Imam.

**khandaq:** Persian word for a Sufi lodge. See zawiyah.

**khass:** "elect," "elite." See 'ummah.

**khatib:** see khatibah.

**khatibah:** office of the Caliphate.

**khirah:** patched garment of a Sufi.

**al-khulafa al-rashidun:** The Rightly Guided Caliphs, being the first four successors of Muhammad (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali) to lead the Muslim community. All are accepted by the Sunnis as legitimate leaders; only 'Ali is regarded as legitimate by the Shi'ah.

**khulud:** "eternity," understood in the pre-Islamic Arabian era as the time between birth and death.

**khutbah:** sermon delivered by the khatib in the mosque at the Friday congregational prayer.

**kafr:** unbelief. See kafir.

**laylat al-qadr:** "the night of power," one of the odd-numbered of the last ten nights of Ramadan when the Qur'an is said to have been first revealed. See sawm, 'id al-fitr.

**madhab:** (pl. madhahib): "school" of Muslim religious law; the four Sunni schools are the Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi‘i, and Hanbali.
madrasha: in medieval times a college for the study and teaching of the law, often but not necessarily attached to a mosque.

Mahdi: also called al-Muntazar, the Expected, Awaited One; in Shi’ah belief, the Twelfth Imam, who is said to be present hidden but whose return will herald the end of time and the immanence of the Day of Judgment.

mahr: dowry or nuptial gift promised by a prospective husband in a marriage contract.

makruh: "reprehensible" action. See al-akhiam al-khamshah.

makruh tahrif: a reprehensible action, utterly discouraged, but where evidence for its total prohibition is uncertain.

manjib: "commendable" action. See al-akhiam al-khamshah.

magam: "station" on the Sufi path.

ma’rifah: gnosis, experiential knowledge of Allah; mystical knowledge.

masjid: "place of prostration"; a mosque for worship and a center of communal affairs.

maslahah (also istislah): "public welfare."

mawat: the “body” or substance of a report or hadith. See inad.

mawali (s. mawla): “clients” or “freedmen,” non-Arab converts to Islam in the early Islamic centuries. Mawla can also refer to a patron or master, including Allah in this sense as well.

mawla’at: forged Traditions. See hadith.

mawla: see mawali.

mawlid: celebration of the Prophet’s birthday or the birthdays of Sufi holy persons.

mazalim (pl. of maslama): the court of complaints where inquiries were conducted, originally by the Caliph in person and later by his officials, into charges brought against government officials.

mihrah: arched concave niche in a mosque, indicating the direction toward Mecca.

Mecca.

minara: tower, minaret of a mosque.

minbar: pulpit-like structure in a mosque.

mu’ajjil: "a ascension," referring in tradition to the ascent of Muhammad to heaven and into the divine presence. See ira.

mu’akhirun: experts in dream interpretation.

mu’addidin: one who calls the faithful to prayer.

mu’ammalat: one of the two broad divisions of the law dealing with social relations. See ‘iddah.

mubah: “permissible” action, of neutral legal value. See al-akhiam al-khamshah.

mudhakkarun: popular preachers. See qassas.

mufa’a: a specialist in Islamic law competent to issue a fatwa. Usually a private person whose advice was sought by others owing to the mufa’a’s scholarly reputation and piety.

Maghrib: Muslims who accompanied Muhammad on his migration from Mecca to Medina. See Ansar.

mutashib: market inspector, charged with the detection of false weights and the punishment of public acts of immorality; his task was defined as “commanding the good and preventing evil.”

mujaddid: the traditional renewer of religion toward the end of each century.

mujahid (pl. mujahidun): a jurist qualified to give an independent opinion on the law. Today, the term is used almost exclusively in Imami Shi’ism. See ijtihad.

mukalla: a person of full legal responsibility.

mukatabah: one of several methods of transmitting a manuscript from teacher to student. See manusah, ‘ard.

mu’min (pl. mu’minun): “believer” in one God, Allah, and one who follows the injunctions of Islam. See kafir.

munaadil (pl. munafiqun): a hypocrite, one who conceals his true religious beliefs.

manusah: one of several methods of transmitting a manuscript. See mukatabah, ‘ard.

muyaddid: a jurist who employs taqlid, that is, who relies upon the teachings of a master or of a school without question and without employing independent investigation of the reasons for these teachings. Taqlid al-mayyits: reliance upon the teachings of deceased religious leaders alone; marja’ al-taqlid: "source for imitation": a leading religious figure in Shi’ah Islam.

murid: a disciple in a Sufi brotherhood.

mursal: a Tradition lacking a link in the chain of authorities.

mursid: see fsr.

murtadd: an apostate from Islam.

murwujah: a central notion of the pre-Islamic value system, understood to mean "virtue" or "manliness," and which included the qualities of loyalty, courage, and hospitality.

musanaf: a collection of Traditions arranged according to subject matter. See musnad.

mushrik (pl. mushrikun): polytheist, idolater; one who commits the cardinal sin of shirk, the association or worship of something other than Allah; one who holds that there are realities independent of Allah.

muslim (pl. muslimun): in the religious sense, "one who surrenders himself or herself (to Allah)."

musnad: a collection of Traditions arranged according to their chain of authorities (inad). See musanaf.

mu’tah: Shi’ah institution of temporary marriage.

mutakallim: "dialectical theologian." See kalâm.

mutanad: a Tradition which has been handed down by a number of different channels of transmitters or authorities, hence supposedly ruling out the possibility of its having been forged.

nabi: "prophet." See rasul.

nafs: "soul." Stages of the soul beginning with repentance are al-ammanah, al-lauausamah, al-mutma’inah.
nass: the Shi'ah doctrine that each Imam was "designated" by his predecessor, the first Imam, 'Ali, having been designated by Allah through the Prophet.

nawroz: the Persian New Year.

nikah: marriage.

pir: Persian word for spiritual master.

qadar: "power" understood both in the sense of man's free will to act by his own capacity (gurah) and Allah's power over all his creation.

gudah (pl. gudah): a judge, appointed by the ruler to settle disputes according to the shah"ah.

qiblah: the direction toward Mecca which one faces at prayer.

qiya: reasoning by analogy in Islamic jurisprudence.

gudah: see gudah.

kur'an: literally, "recitation"; the name given to Muslim scripture.

qussas: "story-tellers" who, in the early days of the Muslim community, transmitted religious knowledge in a popular manner to the general public. See madhakirun.

qub: "pole" "axis"; in Sufism, the head of an invisible hierarchy of saints upon whom depends the proper order of the universe.

raham: "(All) Merciful," one of the many epithets for Allah in the Qur'an. See ghafur, hakim, al-ilm.

Ramadan: see saum.

rashid: "messenger" (of Allah), one of the designations for the Prophet (nabi) Muhammad.

rady: a judge's decision based upon his own discretion.

ridwan: Allah's pleasure.

rihlah: "journey" for the purpose of pilgrimage to Mecca, or to study and gather knowledge from scholars elsewhere. See talab al-ilm.

saduqah: non-obligatory alms.

Sahabah: the Companions of the Prophet. See Tabi'um.

sahih: "sound," valid, legally effective, referring to the highest quality of Tradition, deemed absolutely reliable.

sahef: courtyard of a mosque.

salaf: "pious ancestors," referring to the earliest generations of Muslim religious scholars.

salat: canonical prayer, obligatory for Muslims five times daily.

saum (or syam): fasting prescribed during the month of Ramadan. See 'id al-fitr.

shahadah: "witnessing." The Muslim profession of faith expressed in the words "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

shari'ah: the will of Allah, as expressed in the Qur'an and the sunnah of the Prophet; the sacred law of Islam.

shari'ah (pl. sharifah): persons claiming descent from the Prophet.

shaykh: an elder, chief, teacher, a learned, pious man, a spiritual master.


shari: see mushrik.

shura: consultation, specifically between a ruler and his chief advisers.

Sufi: Sufi chain of spiritual authority.

Sufi: "wearer of wool (yuf)," a Muslim mystic.

sunnah: "rodden path." Tribal custom of pre-Islamic Arabs; also refers to Allah in the sense of his commands and prohibitions. It is used in Islamic law to mean the normative practice of the Prophet Muhammad, the authoritative example of the way a Muslim should live. See hadith.

surah: a chapter division of the Qur'an, of which there are 114.

Tabi'um: the Successors to the Prophet's Companions; the "second" generation of Muslims after the Prophet. See Sahabah.

ta'ifah: possible stipulation in a marriage contract that the wife may terminate the union herself.

takhrir: the action of declaring someone an unbeliever. See kafir.

takhayyar: selection of a particular position from a legal school other than the one to which a jurist belongs.

talab al-ilm: "quest for knowledge," especially religious knowledge in its broadest sense. See ilm, rihlah.

talaf: legal divorce.

talaf al-bid'ah: the irrevocable triple divorce formula which jurists had traditionally regarded as an innovation but nevertheless supported as valid.

talaf: the legal device of combining together the views of different schools or of individual scholars.

taqiyah: precautionary dissimulation; in Shi'ah practice, concealing one's true religious beliefs for fear of persecution.

taqwil: see muqalled.

tariqah: the Sufi way or path; a Sufi brotherhood.

tasawwuf: Arabic term for Sufism.

tasfiq (bi'l-qul): the silent asent to one's belief (in Allah and his Messenger) in the heart. See irtif.

tausiyah: uttering the expression "In the name of Allah."

tawdih: referring either to a person's "turning" toward Allah in repentance for his or her sins or Allah's "turning" toward his servant in compassionate acceptance.

ta'wil: the doctrine of Allah's oneness, uniqueness.

ta'wil: illumination of the inner or esoteric meaning of a text.

ta'ziyeh: the Shi'ah performance of a drama commemorating the martyr's death of al-Husayn.

ummah: the world-wide Muslim community; also called ummat al-islam.

'umrah: a form of pilgrimage to Mecca outside the pilgrimage season during
Glossary

which many of the essential pilgrimage rituals are not performed.
'urf: "custom."
wul al-figh: the "roots" or theoretical bases of Islamic law.

waḥdat al-shuhūd: unity of vision of Allah.
waḥdat al-wujūd: unity of being, ontological union with Allah.
wajib: "obligatory" action. Also called fard. See al-akhkam al-khamsah.
wali Allah (pl. auliya' Allah): "friend of Allah" or Sufi holy person, who enjoys a particular relationship (wilayah) with Allah.
waqf (pl. waqaf): pious foundation or endowment; the income from a property designated by the founder for a specific religious purpose such as the building of a school or mosque or other charity.
wasiyyah: "testamentary bequest."
wilayah: see wali Allah.

Yaum al-qiyāmah: the Day of Resurrection.

zahid: an ascetic. See zuhd.
Zaher: "outward" or "manifest"; the exoteric or literal aspect of a text or doctrine. See batin.
Zakat: obligatory alms or "purification tax" paid by Muslims, charged upon certain categories of property and assigned to certain specified purposes of benefit to the Muslim community.
Zandaqah: free-thinking or heretical beliefs.
Zawiyah: Sufi meeting place, lodge. See khanqah.
Zuhd: asceticism. See zahid.

Notes

1. "$\text{THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH...}$"

5. Ibid., p. 119.
6. Ibid.
8. The Life of Muhammad, p. 233.
9. Ibid., p. 212.
10. Ibid., p. 651.
11. Ibid., p. 683.
15. Ibid., p. 458.
18. Ibid., p. 76.