

The Prophetic Community-Building Process in the Meccan Period with an Emphasis on the Descent of the Children of Israel Story^a

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Abstract

Community-building is a process that is established over time based on specific principles. The 23-year period of the revelation of the Holy Quran, which ultimately led to the formation of the desired community, provides the stages and structure of community formation to the audience. The process of community-building can be extracted from the 23-year period of the Prophet's mission, based on the descent of the Holy Quran. In the early years of revelation, the Prophet, while conceptualizing and creating the foundations for building a community, devoted efforts to the nurturing and education of individuals to initiate the formation of an Islamic community through human resource development. This research focuses on the Prophetic community-building process in the Meccan period with an emphasis on the descent of the Children of Israel story, utilizing the Quranic revelation approach, historical teachings, content analysis method, and the story of the Children of Israel. By analyzing the revealed verses and the story of the Children of Israel and their events in the Meccan period, the author argues that the Prophet, in the Meccan period, initially focused on creating an environment and strengthening the thoughts and transformations in the cognitive structure of the audience. Based on this and through human resource development, he first formed a minimal community of believers, and towards the end of the Meccan era, the community of believers officially emerged. The Prophet then took the initiative to establish a community and subsequently a government upon the command of migration and by entering Medina.

Keywords: Holy Quran, community-building, Quranic revelation approach, Meccan period, Children of Israel story.

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Introduction:

The study of the revelation process of the Holy Quran provides insight into the path to achieving an ideal society. It took 23 years to establish such a society and government. This period reflects coordinated management, planning, and a comprehensive set of actions and words. The "guidance and training" along with such "organization and formation" and calculated migrations indicate the formation of a religious society (Safa'i Haeri, 1399 AH, p. 145-146). Examining the status of a society before its transformation helps researchers understand the various dimensions of social changes, their methods, and goals. Reflecting on the social atmosphere of Mecca at the beginning of these changes reveals the factors and conditions for transformation. Among these, the agents of change, who play a role in forming the desired society, are identified. These individuals' social actions acquire the form and characteristics of historical actions. In other words, their actions stem from beliefs, goals, and values that impact society. In general, the following can be considered as the social merits of Meccan verses, each playing a significant role in creating change or giving purpose to society: the emphasis on unity and social cohesion (Shura: 13, 15), narrating the stories of prophets and past nations for lesson-learning and modeling (see: verses of stories), commitment to life after death with an eschatological approach, focus on repentance as a tool for human purification (Hud: 114; Nisa: 17), and explaining good traits for nearness to God (Al-Najjar, 1997, p. 169; Abi Ya'qub, 1993, p. 361).

Research Method:

This research utilizes the descending approach of the Holy Quran and historical teachings, using content analysis and the story of the Israelites, to explore the process of prophetic community-building during the Meccan period, with an emphasis on the narrative of the Israelites. Accordingly, the author aims to answer the question of how the process of community-building in the Meccan period, relying on the story of the Israelites, is depicted by employing the descending method and historical teachings.

Findings:

In six Meccan surahs, during the period of public invitation when the persecution by polytheists intensified, and the Prophet (PBUH) was focused on human development to form a united community, parts of the story of Moses (AS) are detailed. These six surahs, which begin with disjointed letters, in the order of revelation are: A'raf, Taha, Shu'ara, Qasas, Yunus, and Ghafir. What is notable in these surahs is that they all start by referencing the Holy Quran. The story of the Israelites in the Meccan period concludes with Surah Ghafir, but mentions of Moses and other prophets continue, sometimes only by name or through narrating an incident involving their people. By analyzing the revealed surahs containing the story of the Israelites and examining the events of the Meccan period, the author concludes that during the Meccan period, the Prophet (PBUH) initially focused on creating a foundation and fostering thought and transformation in the intellectual framework of the audience. Based on this, and by nurturing human resources, he initially formed a minimal community of believers. In the latter

part of the Meccan period, the formal emergence of the community of believers was prioritized. The Prophet (PBUH) then established the society and government upon migration to Medina.

Results:

Divine revelation commenced with the aim of initiating transformation in all aspects, including prophetic community-building. Studying the revelation process of the Holy Quran reveals the path to achieving such an ideal society. In other words, a 23-year period was dedicated to establishing the desired society and government, outlining the stages and structure of community formation. Reflecting on the social atmosphere of Mecca at the onset of these social changes shows the factors and conditions for change.

Just as the Israelites served as an example for the audience of the Prophet (PBUH) in Hejaz, the eras of Moses (AS) and the Prophet (PBUH) serve as practical and discursive models for transformation and constructing an ideal society in contemporary times. With this perspective, two historical cases are open to the sociologist: the era of the Prophet (PBUH) and the era of Moses (AS) and the Israelites. The story of the Israelites in the Meccan surahs can be examined as a model of community-building in two stages: the initial Meccan period or the emergence phase coinciding with the first to third years of the mission, and the second Meccan period or public invitation characterized by persecution, general resistance, patience, and a system of knowledge. In the Meccan period, the focus was on laying the groundwork for establishing the society. Accordingly, the Prophet (PBUH) initially engaged in idea-building and subsequently formed a minimal community of believers. In the latter part of the Meccan period, the formal formation of the community of believers was prioritized. In reality, the primary focus of this process was human life, which then extended to individual and social actors. These teachings indicate that in societal transformation, the precedence of intellectual and human development over physical infrastructure is essential and requires long-term investment that leads to training effective human resources for society's construction. Eventually, with the command to migrate, the cohesive prophetic community formed in Medina. After training human resources, they can be relied upon in all conditions, and with these human resources, an ideal society can be achieved. The community-building process can be observed in these stages: creating the foundation and fostering thought and reflection, transforming the intellectual framework, forming a minimal community of believers, and the formal emergence of the minimal community of believers.

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