RASŪL AND *NABĪ*: RE-EVALUATING THE QURANIC TERMINOLOGY FROM A NEW

PERSPECTIVE

by

MATTHEW LONG

(Under the Direction of Kenneth Honerkamp)

ABSTRACT

Degrees of prophetic office have been a facet of Islamic discourse since the days of Muhammad's early community. Are there degrees of prophecy? Are certain prophets superior to other prophets? The focal point of my thesis will be the two terms employed to designate prophetic office in the Quran, *nabī* and *rasūl*. This thesis will examine the linguistic features of each word then examine the attributes ascribed to each in the Quran. Following that will be a detailed study of the discourse on the eminence of these two terms. This survey of the discourse will feature theories by both Muslim and Western scholars. The final portion of this paper will examine the socio-historical setting of Muhammad and a quantitative-historical analysis of the Quranic terms *rasūl* and *nabī*. These analyses will demonstrate that Judaic influences shaped the language of Muhammad and the Quran in the Medinan time period.

INDEX WORDS: *Rasūl*, *Rusul*, *Nabī*, *Anbiyā'*, *Nabīyūn*, *Nubūwah*, *Tafsīr*, Socio-historical, Sociolinguistics

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents. Thank you for all the support and encouragement you have given me my entire life.

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Introduction

Degrees of prophetic office have been a facet of Islamic discourse since the days of Muhammad's early community. Are there degrees of prophecy? Are certain prophets superior to other prophets? These questions were being posed even during the life of Muhammad. Over the centuries the question has not lost its relevance. Quranic commentators and other scholars from the earliest times have felt compelled to respond to questions on the levels of prophecy and began to distinguish one group of prophets, *anbiyā'*, from another group of divinely inspired messengers, *rusul*. In the late nineteenth century and for the first fifty plus years of the twentieth century this debate found new life amongst Western scholars. My thesis will briefly summarize these past debates and contribute a new element to the Muslim discourse on prophecy and prophetic terminology.

The focal point of my thesis will be the two terms employed to designate prophetic office in the Quran, *nabī* and *rasūl*. I will begin with a thorough examination of the terminology in the Quran itself. Then I will examine the literature and discourse which treat the nuanced meanings of *rasūl* and *nabī*. This examination will comprise the views of both the Western and Muslim scholars who contributed to the discourse. Toward contextualizing this discourse I will give a socio-historical history of Judaism, Jewish peoples, and Christianity in Arabia prior to and during the life of Muhammad. This will lead to the final portion of my paper which will examine the usage of *nabī* and the socio-historical setting of Muhammad's life. I will also trace the influence Judaic customs, laws, and vocabulary had on Muhammad and his compatriots.

The first chapter will provide a general overview of prophecy in the Western traditions and specifically in the Islamic tradition. This overview will feature the universal aspects shared by prophets in the Western traditions and the many dissimilar attributes and features which underscore prophetic experiences. I will then focus on the Islamic view of prophetic heritage. Within the Islamic framework of prophecy I will explore both the universal and particular aspects of prophetic messages and the role of prophets in the Quran. I will also introduce the literary genre in Islam that deal with prophets.

In chapter two, I will identify the manner in which the terms for prophets and messengers in the Quran are employed and provide the classic definitions attributed to the words *nabī*, *rasūl*, and their cognates. Through this identification process my audience will come to an understanding of both the different usages of each word and the frequency with which the words occur. I will also identify the prophets and messengers who are mentioned by name in the Quran and how each prophet is identified by the Quran. Is Muhammad a *nabī*? Is he a *rasūl*? Or is Muhammad both a *nabī* and a *rasūl*? Lastly, besides identifying the divinely inspired men I will highlight some of the different characteristics, functions, and degrees of prophetic office mentioned in the Quran.

In Chapter three, I will treat the development of prophetic office and apostleship that is derived from secondary works on the Quran. I will divide this material into two fields, Muslim discourse on the terminology through commentary and the Western discourse primarily derived from Muslim scholarship. In the Muslim discourse I will translate and examine different traditional texts such as Quranic commentaries, like al-

Baydāwī, and Sūfī writings, like the works of Ibn 'Arabī. I will then shift my discussion to Western scholarship which relates directly to the subject matter of this thesis. Certain scholars, like Richard Bell and Arthur Jeffery, believe that Muslim historians and commentators had incorporated material beyond the Quranic context in theorizing that "every *rasūl* is a *nabī* but not every *nabī* is a *rasūl*." Other scholars prefer to adhere to the mainstream Muslim view, such as Fazlur Rahman. A third camp of scholars, like John Wansbrough, understands that a distinction may exist but is unimportant or inconsequential. This thesis will go beyond a summarization of the Western and Muslim scholarship and will attempt to deduce the logic behind their theories, for the purpose of adding to and elucidating this discourse further.

In Chapter four, I will examine the socio-historical setting of Muhammad and his early community. Because my thesis supports the view that *nabī* is not originally a central aspect Islam but its eminence developed due to external sociological factors, I will examine the religious phenomena of the Arabian context. Specifically, the influence of Judaism in Arabia then focus my attention on monotheism in Mecca and Medina and Judaic influence in the city of Medina. I will examine both the Jewish communities in general as well as individuals who may have had a great impact on Muhammad and the early Muslim community. The historical data of this chapter must be viewed in conjunction with the material of chapter five which will illustrate key elements of my argument. A reciprocal relationship exists between the socio-historics of this chapter and the quantitative data in the following chapter.

The last chapter will center on the quantitative occurrences of the terms *rasūl* and *nabī* chronologically. I have created a chart mapping out seven chronological schemas

concerned with the dating of the Quranic verses. Employing this chart I will demonstrate that *nabī* and its cognates appear far more frequently in the early Medinan period of revelation than in the Meccan period. Then using the socio-historical material from the previous chapter I will attempt to prove that Muhammad adopted a new language in post-Ḥijra Medina. The new language and vocabulary he selected would resonate in the hearts of both the Jews of Medina and the Arab residents, because of the influence the Jewish tribes had upon the Arabs, in order to strength Muhammad's religious movement and Muhammad's authority.

Claims of Judaic influence upon Islamic thought have long pervaded Western scholarship. Scholars participating or pursuing theories which claim that Muhammad and the Muslim community borrowed ideas from the Jews are numerous. Abraham Geiger,[1] Charles C. Torrey,[2] Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally,[3] Abraham Katsh,[4] and Tor Andrea[5] are the earliest and the most noted scholars who believed that Muhammad was heavily influenced by Jewish people and traditions. Following in the tradition of these scholars I believe that Muhammad employed the word *nabī* into the Islamic terminology. These scholars studied Muhammad and/or Islam in an attempt to find the origins of laws, practices, or traditions in order to reject the legitimacy of Islam as a religion or Muhammad as a religious leader. This thesis will analyze the Quran without rejecting the authenticity of the historicity of the Quran or its value.

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[1] Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* (Bonn: F. Baaden, 1833).
[2] Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Jewish foundation of Islam* (New York: KTAV Pub. House 1968).
[3] Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally, *Geschichte des Qor'ans* (Hildesheim: G. Olans, 1970).
[4] Abraham Isaac Katsh, *Judaism in Islam, Biblical and Talmudic backgrounds of the Koran and its commentaries: suras II and III* (New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1954).
[5] Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, the Man and his Faith* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1956).

This thesis, in the end, is an appraisal of Muhammad's position as leader, mediator, and exemplar for humanity. Scholars, such as W. Montgomery Watt,[6] recognized the influence and strong character of Muhammad which had gone either unnoticed or unappreciated for centuries in Western scholarship. By adopting language outside of the standard Arabian vocabulary Muhammad found a means of embracing many variant traditions of the Arabian Peninsula. For example, Muhammad's message preached the belief in the singular God, Allah, known to all idolaters of Arabia. Allah sent prophets, Moses, Jesus, and so on, figures almost universally recognized and followed by the monotheists of the land. Not until the coming of Muhammad and Islam had another Western religious leader tried to blend a vast amount of traditions and beliefs to create a universal religious system for all of humanity.

In conclusion I hope to contribute a new perspective to this discourse which has occupied scholars for close to 1500 years. Two original elements of my study will be the translation and explanation of original Muslim texts. This has yet to be undertaken on a large scale by any Western scholar. Secondly, my socio-historical analysis coupled with the quantitative study of the Quranic verses opens a door allowing scholars to take into account with more certainty the introduction of both words and concepts into Islam. In the end Muhammad and his language, his sociolinguistics, changed with the peoples he encountered.

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[6] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (London,: Oxford University Press, 1969), 250.

Chapter 1 General Introduction to the Prophets and Prophecy

Overview of the Western Traditions Prophetic Models

The arrival on the scene of prophetic figures is one of the most important facets of Western religious tradition. Prophecy is a specific experience, meaning there are very few universally shared elements of prophecy. But most scholars would agree that there are two features universal to all prophets in each tradition. First, prophets are selected as the beneficiaries of Divine inspiration. But even communication with the Divine came through a variety of forms or mediums. The Torah relates that Moses was the only human who "saw" God face to face. Other prophets received inspiration through other mediums. Dreams, visions, and oracles are the standard means the Divine communicates with the prophet. In the case of Muhammad and other Prophets, revelation was transmitted by Divine speech. God either speaks directly to the Prophet or God employs one of his heavenly bodies, an angel, to deliver the message.

The second shared feature is that prophets are usually chosen or begin receiving revelations because only via the prophet can humanity become acquainted with the Divine. The Divine motivation for sending a prophet varies though. A prophet's appearance may mark a time of serious crisis, such as the Hebrew prophets of Israel before its destruction to the Assyrians. Other times the prophet appears not in times of physical danger, but in times of spiritual danger, such as Muhammad who appeared to proclaim the oneness of God to the pagan Arabs. Prophets are a reaction on the behalf of the Divine to a specific historical context. Therefore, the nature of each message differs based upon the context which the prophet appeared. Correct action and living a moral

life were only a few elements present in the prophetic messages of the Christianity and Islam. Society during the life of Muhammad and Jesus was plagued far more with spiritual corruption than actual physical threats.

The historical context in which a prophet appears will also affect the content of the prophetic experience. Prophecy sometimes provides information about the past but prophets spoke primarily of the present. The Quran does not address future events specifically, with one exception in *sūra al-Rūm*, but the Hebrew Prophets often spoke of events which may come to pass in the future if the people, i.e. Israelites, did not restore fulfill their duties of the covenant. Prophets, such as Muhammad and Jesus, were responsible for the delivery of a moral message, for the most part, rather than foretelling the future.

Characteristically, there is no uniformity between the prophets. In Western traditions it is often the case that persons are selected as worthy hosts of Divine inspiration because they are an exemplar for people to follow. In the Islamic tradition Muhammad is not only the messenger sent by God but a paragon of proper religious and human behavior. But archetypal characteristics are not a universal feature of prophets in the Western traditions. Prophets in the Judaeo-Christian tradition occasionally come across as simple and sometime bitter and cynical men. For example, Elijah became quite bitter with his election to prophecy and complained to God. This should not be shocking considering the many trials and tribulations which all prophets face at some point.

Prophetic experience takes a tremendous physical and psychological toll on many of the figures who were chosen as messengers. Only a few narratives relate eagerness or a yearning desire to carryout the responsibilities of a prophet. Hebrew prophets and

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Muhammad both showed great reluctance about their prophetic elections and even remained unsure about their own qualifications during their prophetic office. Hebrew prophets often played the role of mediator between the Divine and His people. Moses exemplifies this function best. Playing the role of courier from one side, the Divine, to the other, the people, and back again drained and sometimes agitated the prophets. Physically prophecy was burdensome on two levels. First, there was a threat of physical harm to any prophet teaching a message not readily accepted by the masses or by the rulers. Second, there was the actual physical strain which occurred when revelation came to a person. Traditions relate that revelation came to Muhammad in the form of an unbearably loud ringing bell whose sound would not cease for hours after the end of the commune with the Divine. [1]

The audience the prophet is obligated to address is determined by the Divine. Some of the prophets, such as Jesus and Muhammad, were said to have been messengers to the entire world. The Hebrew prophets were selected as messengers to their own people and not necessarily preachers to all the nations. Lastly there were prophets designated with the mission of communicating a specific message to a specific individual. The Torah relates frequently how Kings of Israel and Judah would be visited by men and women. These individuals would warn the King of God's displeasure and the wrath which would be showered upon the Kings house if he was not turned from his evil. However, here I have assumed that a prophet is charged with the duty of transmission. There are prophets who are responsible for the delivery of a prophetic message and then others who communicate with the Divine without being a messenger of

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[1] Muhammad b. Ismāʿīl Bukhārī, *a-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, book 54, Numer 438, http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/054.sbt.html#004.054.438; Mālik b. ʿAnas, *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, Book 15, Number 15.4.7, http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muwatta/015.mmt.html#015.15.4.7.

the Divine. For instance, Jacob communicated with God but was not commanded to deliver any divine message.

Prophecy in the Western religious traditions is a universal experience, but its dimensions are not. No definitive model would encapsulate every divinely inspired personage. Their character, their message, their communication, and their audience are determined by the Divine. But prophets are central to the Western tradition because through these special people humanity has come into contact with the Divine. Thus, prophets have taken a central role in all the Western religious traditions.

Islamic Overview of Prophecy and Prophets

In the Islamic tradition, perhaps more so than Judaism and Christianity, prophets are essential to comprehending both the Divine and the will of the Divine. Muslims believe that with the creation of humanity came the need for guidance. Thus, when God created humanity, God also created prophets as aides for humanity. Like the other Western traditions, Muslims hold that all the prophets came to people with a message. William Chittick and Sachiko Murata observed that prophecy in the Muslim tradition is simultaneously universal and particular. [2] It is particular in that messages took different forms. They sometimes came through dreams, through angels, and so on. But the proclamation remained the same universally, "There is no God but God."

Murata and Chittick highlight how God continued to send reminders, i.e. prophets, in each historical context to each people ensuring that the inhabitants of the earth had access the truth. Reiterating the message of God became necessary for two reasons. First, each message God provided to his messengers came during a particular

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[2] Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), 164-165.

historical context. Therefore the message changed as the world, society, and people changed. Secondly, people began to alter the message themselves. Often the Quran speaks of the continual need for a prophet to restore the law or the true message of God, which had become disfigured by the hands of the people. This cycle, the appearance of a prophet with a message, the people forgetting the message, and the reappearance of a prophet, came to a conclusion with Muhammad, as stated in the Quran.

According to Muslim tradition, in 610 C.E. God sent down revelation to his people through His last prophet Muhammad. The words and meanings which God gave to Muhammad by means of the angel Gabriel are known as the Quran. The Quran is the primary source for knowledge of the prophets who appeared before the time of Muhammad. Upon opening a Quran, one will immediately begin to realize the emphasis prophets have in the Islamic tradition. A number of chapters in the Quran are named after specific prophets, such as *sūra al-Yūsuf* and *sūra al-'Ibrāhīm*, and two chapters are named after the two terms designating divinely inspired figures, *surā al-Anbiyā'* and *sūra al-Mursalāt*. Narratives of the prophetic figures pervade the Quran and played a central role for both Muhammad and the community. The stories strengthened Muhammad's resolve by making him aware that he was a link in a chain extending back to the creation of humanity. These stories also recorded the downfall of civilizations that rejected the message of the prophets. With the death of Muhammad, revelation ceased but the development of the stories of the prophets continued.

Muslim scholars began writing literature on the legends of prophets and still carry on that literary heritage today. Prophets and messengers in the Islamic tradition, and for the most part in the other Western religious traditions, hold attributes which other humans

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hope to obtain. The Prophets are exemplars of justice, fairness, forgiveness, and so on.

Muhammad remains the model of behavior for all Muslims. But the other prophets and

messengers possess many of the same traits making them and their lives figures of

emulation as well. A new type of literary genre was born out of the Muslim desire to

follow the actions of the prophets and that genre is *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (The Stories of the

Prophets). Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923),[3] Isḥāq ibn Bashīr (d. 215 [216]/831),[4] Muḥammad al-

Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035),[5] and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)[6] are just a few of the scholars who

developed the stories of the prophets.

Stories on the lives of the prophets began to appear in other Muslim literature

before long. Muhammad obviously found inspiration, both for his self and for his

community, in the legends of the previous messengers, so much so that most people are

well aware of hadith focused on the prophets and messengers of the past. Al-Bukhārī's

(d. 256/870) collection of hadith contains a chapter dedicated specifically to the lives and

actions of the prophets, named *aḥādīth al-anbiyā'*. Even *Sīra* authors, those writing on

the life and exploits of Muhammad, addressed the prophets in their works. Muhammad

ibn Saʿd (d. 427/1035)[7] is one of the early Muslim *sīra/maghāzī* scholars known to write

on the subject of prophecy and prophets. Even earlier was the *Sīrat* of Ibn Ishaq (d.

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[3] Abū Jafar Muḥammad ibn Jirir al-Ṭabarī - from Persia and he is one of the most famous Muslim historians and exegetes. The work I am referring to here is his *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk (Chronicle of Apostles and Kings)*.

[4] Isḥāq ibn Bashir - author of *Mubtada' al-Dunyā Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' (The Beginning of the World and the Stories of the Prophets)* is the oldest work in the Literature of the Prophets genre.

[5] Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī - another tafsir scholar, he also wrote *ʿArā'is al-Majālis: Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' (Brides of the Sessions: Tales of the Prophets)*.

[6] Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Kathīr - was born in Syria. His *Tafsīr* of the Qur'an has become one of the most well known and used across the Muslim world, though he did publish a *Sira* of the Muhammad and legal texts.

[7] Muhammad ibn Saʿd - worked under al-Wāqidī has his student and secretary in Baghdad. He is most noted for his work *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Saʿd*.

151/768)[8] which contained a series of narratives on the previous prophets and messengers, according to Newby.[9] The prominence of the prophets/messengers is found in other Islamic literary genres as well. *Sira/maghāzī* and hadith texts were never part of the grounds of our discourse however. Debate and discussion surrounding the nature, function, and attributes of prophets and messengers commenced in the *tafsīr* literature and other texts addressing aspects of faith (*īmān*). Even as literature on the prophets was flourishing debate surrounding Quranic terminology was beginning.

A close reading of the Quranic message and hadith reveals that questions of prophecy began in the early periods of Islam. Initial debate over differences between the prophets probably arose over the qualities of, feats accomplished by, or honors granted unto the prophets. In other words, Muslims may have claimed Muhammad's superiority because he was the seal (*khātim*) of prophecy, i.e. after Muhammad there would no longer be any prophets who would deliver the message of God. Proof of these debates is clearly stated in both the Quran and the hadith. The Quran explicitly states that, "…**we make no distinction between them [the prophets]**" [8:34]. Muhammad validated this principle in a tradition recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection of Muslim (d. 261/875). A disagreement over some property arose between a Jew and another man. The Jew was a native of Yathrib, the town of Muhammad and the Muslims residence after 622 C.E. During the dispute the Jewish man called upon Moses as his witness. One of the Muslim hearing this oath took the Jew to Muhammad, scolding the Jew for calling upon Moses when a living prophet, Muhammad, was in the vicinity. When the Muslim and the Jew

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[8] Muḥammad b. Isḥāq - born in Medina around 704 is the first biographer on the life of Muhammad. As one of the Tābiʿīn he knew ʿAnas ibn Mālik. Eventually he left Medina moving to Iraq and later died in Bagdad. His work was lost and only portions were preserved in a redaction by Ibn Hishām

[9] Gordon Darnell Newby, *The making of the last prophet: a reconstruction of the earliest biography of Muhammad* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

appeared before Muhammad and the events were retold Muhammad grew angry. He said to the Muslim and the Jew, "Don't make distinction between the Prophets of God."[10]

Little attention was given to the Quranic terminology in the early stages of Islamic scholarship. A few texts in the 8th century began to address the terminologies involved in prophethood however it was not until the 10th century that more Muslim scholars began to debate the semantic fields of the terms *nabī* and *rasūl*. Scholars involved in this discourse were mostly Quran commentators (*mufassirūn*) or were writing commentaries on the articles of faith (*īmān*), because belief in the prophets is one of the six tenets of faith in Islam. The majority of Muslim scholars treated these terms as distinct. Each term has its own meanings and nuances giving the words uniqueness but simultaneously keeping a sense of similarity between the words.

The language of the Quran is the focus of this thesis. Specifically I will be addressing two words found throughout the Quran. The first word is *nabī* and the second word is *rasūl*. I will address the semantic field of each word later but it is sufficient to state that *nabī* is translated into the English "prophet" and that *rasūl* is the word which is translated into "messenger, envoy, or apostle." Up to this point I have been using the terms "prophet" and "messenger" indiscriminately. Many Muslims treat the terms as synonyms. Using the English terms "prophet" and "messenger" interchangeable is not unusual. Often when Muslims speak or write not much deliberation is given to the usage of either *rasūl* or *nabī*. Muslims often interchange the phrase, "Muhammad is the prophet of God," with, "Muhammad is the messenger of God." These terms are not synonymous and should not be treated as such. Understanding the debate on prophecy in

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[10] Abū Ḥusayn Muslim, *Ṣaḥīh Muslim*, Book 30-No. 5853,
   http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/030.smt.html#030.5853

Islam one must become familiar with the core of the debate, the Quran. Before addressing the scholarly discourses on prophets and messengers a thorough study terms in the Quran is required.

Chapter 2 The Quranic Material

In this chapter I will present the Quranic material relevant to the discourse on prophets and messengers. In the first section of this chapter, I will provide a detailed examination of the two Quranic terms applied to divinely inspired individuals. This will include cognates, definitions, and the total amount each term is located in Quranic verses (*āyāt*). In the second section, I will examine the attributes associated with the prophetic figures. This examination will lead into the following chapter where I will evaluate Muslim and Western debates on the nature and function of prophets and messengers.

Definitions and Quantities of the terms Rasūl, Nabī, and their Cognates

The two words found in the Quran which are the focused of this thesis are *rasūl* and *nabī*. The following is an introduction and examination of both words as they occur in the Quran. This will include a treatment of the linguistic features of each word. I will not cite every instance in which they occur or all of their cognates, because, as will be shown, not every usage refers to the topic of prophethood or apostleship.

The first term I will examine is *rasūl*. *Rasūl* and all of its related terms, plurals, participles, and so on, are formed with the Arabic letters *Rā'*, *Sīn*, and *Lām*. The singular and plural forms of the noun are found a total of three hundred and thirty-one times in the Quran. It appears two hundred and thirty-six times in the singular form, *rasūl* [رسول],[1]

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[1] Hanna E. Kassis, *A concordance of the Qur'an* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 1023-1027. Chapters and verses containing *rasūl*- 2:87, 101, 108, 129, 143 (2), 151, 214, 279, 285; 3:32, 49, 53, 81, 86, 101, 132, 144, 153, 164, 172, 183; 4:13, 14, 42, 59 (2), 61, 64 (2), 69, 79, 80, 83, 100, 115, 136 (2), 157, 170, 171; 5:15, 19, 33,41, 55, 56, 67, 70, 75, 83, 92 (2), 99, 104, 111; 7:61, 67, 104, 157, 158 (2); 8:1 (2), 13 (2), 20, 24, 27, 41, 46; 9:1, 3 (2), 7, 13, 16, 24, 26, 29, 33, 54, 59 (2), 61, 62, 63, 65, 71, 74, 80, 81, 84, 86, 88, 90, 91, 94, 97, 99, 105, 107, 120, 128; 10:47 (2); 13:38; 14:4; 15:11; 16:36, 113; 17:15, 93, 94, 95; 19:19, 51, 54; 20:96, 134; 21:25; 22:52, 78; 23:32, 44, 69; 24:47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54 (2), 56, 62 (2), 63; 25:7, 27, 30, 41; 26:16, 27, 107, 125, 143, 162, 178; 28:47, 59; 29:18; 33:12, 21, 22 (2), 29, 31, 33, 36 (2), 40, 53, 57, 66, 71; 36:30; 40:5, 34, 78; 42:51; 43:29, 46; 44:13, 17, 18; 47:32, 33; 48:9, 12, 13, 17, 26, 27, 28, 29; 49:1, 3, 7, 14, 15; 51:52; 57:7, 8, 28; 58:4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 20, 22; 59:4, 6, 7 (3), 8; 60:1; 61:5, 6 (2), 9, 11; 62:2; 63:1 (2), 5, 7, 8; 64:8, 12 (2),; 65:11; 69:10, 40; 72:23, 27; 73:15 (2), 16; 81:19; 91:13; 98:2.

and ninety-five times in the plural *rusul* [رسل].[2] There are a multitude of possible translations for the terms *rasūl*, *rusul,* and its verbal cognates. They are translated as "envoy, messenger" but another common translation given for *rasūl* is "apostle."[3]

Another term related to *rasūl* and pivotal to this discourse is *mursal*. This term is the passive participle of the verb *Arsala* [أرْسل] and means "one who is sent; an envoy."[4] This variation of the word is found a total of thirty-six times in the Quran. All but two of the occurrences, thirty-four in total, of this word are in the plural form *mursalūn* [مرسلون].[5] *Mursal* and *mursalūn* are derived form the verb *Arsala* [أرْسل] a Form IV verb meaning "he sent." This verb is used one hundred and thirty-five times.[6] Eighty times it is mentioned in passages referring to the apostles or prophets.[7] Adding all of these numbers produces a total of four hundred and forty-five uses of some form of *rasūl*. When compared with the frequency of the term *nabī* in the Quranic *rasūl* and its cognates appear far more often.

The second word and focal point of my examination is *nabī* and its forms. Debate on the Semitic background of this word begins with its lettering. According to the dictionary of Hans Wehr its trilateral root is composed of the letters *Nūn*, *Bā'*, and

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[2] Chapters and verses containing *rusul*- 2:87, 98, 253, 285 (2); 3:144, 179 (2), 183, 184, 194; 4:136, 150 (2), 152, 164 (2), 165 (2), 171; 5:32, 70, 75, 109; 6:10, 34, 61, 124, 130; 7:35, 37, 43, 53, 101; 9:70; 10:13, 21, 74, 103; 11:59, 69, 77, 81, 120; 12:110; 13:32, 38; 14:9, 10, 13, 44, 47; 16:35; 17:77; 18:106; 20:47; 21:41; 22:75; 23:44, 51; 25:37; 29:31, 33; 30:9, 47; 34:45; 35:1, 4, 25; 38:14; 39:71; 40:22, 50, 51, 70, 78, 83; 41:14, 43: 43:45, 80; 46:9, 35; 50:14; 57:19, 21, 25 (2), 27; 58:21; 59:6; 64:6; 65:8; 77:11.
[3] From this point forward I will begin to interchange the English words, messenger, apostle, and envoy when discussing the Arabic term *rasūl*.
[4] Kassis, 1029, 1032-1033.
[5] Chapters and verses containing *mursalūn*- 2:252; 6:34, 48; 7:6; 13:43; 15:57, 61, 80; 18:56; 25:20; 26:21, 105, 123, 141, 160, 176; 27:10, 35; 28:7, 65; 36:3, 13, 14, 16, 20, 52; 37:37, 123, 133, 139, 171, 181; 51:31; 77:1. Chapters and verses containing *mursal*- 7:75, 77.
[6] Kassis, 1029-1032
[7] Bijlefeld,142.

Wāw/'Alif.[8] But there is another word composed of a *Nūn*, *Bā'*, and *Hamza* with a similar meaning. Lane's *Lexicon* positions the word before the verb *nabata*, meaning that its root should be read *Nūn*, *Bā'*, and *Hamza*.[9]

No dialogue between Western and Muslim scholars regarding the origins of the word *nabī* was pursued but each side had its own opinions. According to Arthur Jeffery *nabī* is one of the 275 words of foreign origin in the Quran.[10] Jeffery asserts that in the Quran the word *nabī* is a borrowing from the Hebrew word *nevi* [נְבִיא], meaning "prophet," and that "in the meaning of 'prophet' (*nabī*) is a borrowing into Arabic from the Judaeo-Christian tradition."[11] Jeffery does note that it originated from the Aramaic language, as stated by William Wright.[12] The word *nubūwah* [نبوّة], meaning prophecy or prophethood, is also thought to be borrowed from either Aramaic or Hebrew.[13] There exists a verb in Arabic, *naba'a*, which in Form II and Form IV, *nabba'a* [نبّأ] and *anba'a* [أنبأ], respectively, means "to tell, to inform, to notify."[14] Verbal forms of *naba'a* occur around eighty times throughout the Meccan and Medina time periods of the Quran.[15] This word had been a central point of debate on whether *nabī* truly originated from the Arabic language because of its root letters *Nūn*, *Bā'*, *Hamza*.

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[8] Hans Wehr, *A dictionary of modern written Arabic: (Arabic-English)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), 1105.

[9] W. Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1877), 2753.

[10] Arthur Jeffery, *The foreign vocabulary of the Qur'an* (Baroda: Oriental institute, 1938), 276.

[11] Jeffery, "Foreign Vocabulary," 108. Other words, such as ro'eh [ראה], usually translated as "seer" (Sam 9:9), were an older term but usually shared this notion of prophecy. However, *nevi* is the specific word which was borrowed.

[12] William Wright and W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the comparative grammar of the Semitic languages* (Cambridge: University Press, 1890), 42.

[13] Jeffery, "Foreign Vocabulary," 277.

[14] Kassis, 808-809.

[15] Muhammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Fāqī, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li al-ʿalfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Hadīth, 1959), 858-859.

Lane's identification of the root, *Nūn*, *Bā'*, *Hamza*, gives a sense that *nabī* was an originally Arabic word. The lexicographers, al-Jawharī (d. 393-8/1003-7)[16] and al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415),[17] he quotes claim that the word appears in the Meccan dialect of Arabic making it seem that *nabī* is a genuine Arabic word.[18] However, Lane's *Lexicon* is only an assemblage of various Arabic philological and lexicographical works and dictionaries. His lexicon does not critically analyze the genesis of terminology. There are two reasons why which this conclusion should be questioned. First, Muslim and Western scholars have accepted that the Quran contains words of various languages, such as Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Greek, and Persian. Most of the scholars contributing to the discourse on the use of *rasūl* and *nabī* accept that the term *nabī* as being of foreign origin.[19] But they qualify this statement by adding that *nabī*, though being foreign, is an Arabic word by the fact it is used in the Arabic language. *Nabī* takes on a new meaning and significance with its addition to the Arabic language.[20]

Second, two of the lexicons Lane cites, specifically the *al- Ṣiḥāḥ*[21] written by al-Jawharī of and the *al-Qāmūs* written by al-Fīrūzābādī, state that the Meccan form or pronunciation of "prophet" is *nabī'* [نبيء], ends in a *Hamza*. If this is the case it is unusual that the Meccan form is an exact replica of the Hebraic/Aramaic word. Scholars versed in Judaeo-Arabic, Arabic written in Hebrew characters, will immediately notice that all the letters *Nūn*, *Bā'*, *Yā'*, and *Hamza* [نبيء] correspond to the *Nûn*, *Bêth*, *Yôdh*,

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[16] Abū Naṣr Ismā'īl (b. Naṣr?) b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī - little is known about either is life or his death. He was educated by his uncle and took up the same field of study, philology. He is most noted for his dictionary, which I cite later, *Tāj al-lugha wa ṣiḥāḥ al-'Arabiya*.

[17] Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb Fīrūzābādī - was born in Shiraz, Iran. He spent the majority of his life traveling between Jerusalem, Yemen, and Mecca. Though publishing a number of books, he his most noted for his lexicographical work *al-Qāmūs*, "The Ocean," called so for the vastness of its depth.

[18] Lane, 2753.

[19] Toshihiko Iutsu, *God and man in the Koran* (North Stratford, N.H.: Ayers, 1998), 181; Wright, 42; Jeffery, 276.

[20] Iutsu, 182.

[21] Also known as the Ṣaḥāḥ according to Lane, xiv.

'āleph [נְבִיא] of the Hebraic/Aramaic structure. The Meccan dialectical form so resembles the Aramaic term I believe there is little doubt that *nabī* is indeed a word belonging to the Aramaic language. However this point can only be validated by further examination of Hebrew and Aramaic words borrowed into Arabic during the life of Muhammad.

The word *nabī* [نبي] occurs seventy-five times in the Quran. This word is usually translated into the English as, "prophet," but some Quranic translations will use "messenger" or "apostle." The word appears fifty-three times in the singular and twenty-one times in the plural.[22] There are two plurals that exist for *nabī*: *nabiyūn* [نبيّون], a sound masculine plural, and *anbiyā'* [أنبياء], a broken plural. *Nabiyūn* is used sixteen times, three times in the nominative and the remainder in either the accusative or genitive *nabiyīn* [نبيّين], while *anbiyā'* is used five times. *Nubūwah* [نبوّة] meaning, "prophecy" or "prophethood," is only found five times in the Qur'an.[23] Therefore, even if one were to include the five uses of *nubūwah*, *nabī* and its cognates are only located eighty times in the Qur'an, which is less than one third of the total usage of *rasūl* and its cognates.

The Prophets, Messengers, and their Attributes

Names and stories of the prophets and the apostles, who came before Muhammad, play a central role in this discourse. Stories of the prophets (*anbiyā'*) and the apostles (*rusul*) began chronologically appearing in the middle and later periods of Mecca and continue through the Medinan period, according division of Quranic verses by Richard Bell. Typically these prophets and apostles appear in clusters, meaning in a given chapter

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[22] 'Abd al-Fāqī, 859-860. Chapters and verses containing *nabī*- 2:246, 247, 248; 3:39, 68, 146, 161; 5:81; 6:112; 7:94, 157, 158; 8:64, 65, 67, 70; 9:61, 73, 113, 117; 19:30, 41, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56; 22:52; 25:31; 33:1, 6, 13, 28, 30, 32, 38, 45, 50 (3), 53 (2), 33:56, 33:59; 37:112; 43:6, 7; 49:2; 60:12; 65:1; 66:1, 3, 8, 9. Chapters and verses containing *nabiyūn*- 2:61, 136, 177, 213; 3:21, 80, 81, 84; 4:69, 163; 5:44; 17:55; 19:58; 33:7, 40; 39:69. Chapters and verses containing *anbiyā'*- 2:91; 3:112, 181; 4:155; 5:20.
[23] 'Abd al-Fāqī, 861.

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(*sūra*) there will appear a list of these men or a series of narratives about each prophet or messenger.   Richard Bell lists several of these clusters of stories in the Quran: 7:57-91, 11:27-98, 54:9-42, and 29:13-39.[24] Lists, not containing narratives, of the prophets can be found in such verses as 6:87-90[25] and 21:51-101.[26] From these lists we can begin to identify, by name, who are prophets, who messengers, and who are both in the Muslim tradition.

The term *nabī* is applied to the following men in the Qur'an: Nūh (Noah), Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Ismāʿīl (Ishmael), Isḥaq (Isaac), Yaʿqūb (Jacob), Mūsa (Moses), Hārūn (Aaron), Dāwūd (David), Sulaymān (Solomon), Idrīs (Enoch), Ayyūb (Job), Yūnus (Jonah), Yaḥya (John the Baptist), ʿĪsā (Jesus), Ilyās (Elijah), al-Yasaʿ (Elisha), Lūt (Lot), Yūsuf (Joseph), Zakāriyyā (Zacharias), and Muhammad. At this juncture a few points should be mentioned. Idrīs, Ilyās, and al-Yasaʿ had the following Biblical names, Enoch, Elijah, and Elisha, respectively, attributed to them. Later Muslim scholars provided these names, Enoch, Elijah, Elisha, because the Quran was not clear on the identity of these three men. Secondly, Adam is not included in this list but it has been agreed upon by both Muslim and Western scholars that the Quran alludes to Adam's status as a *nabī* in *sūrah al-Āli ʿImrān* verse 33 which states, "**Surely Allah chose Adam and Nūh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of Imran above the nations**."[27] Lastly, Jonah is known by two names in the Quran. The Arab equivalent of his name is Yūnus as already indicated, but he is also known as Dhū al-Nūn (the one of the fish) in the Quran [31:87].

[24] Bell, 125-126.

[25] Robert Tottoli, *Biblical prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim literature* (Richmond Curzon Press, 2002), 73.

[26] Aflord T.Welch, "Formulaic Features of the Punishment Stories", in *Literary structures of religious meaning in the Qur'ān,* ed. Issa J. Boullata, (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000), 80.

[27] Arthur Jeffery, *The Qur'an as Scripture* (New York: R.F. Moore Co, 1952), 29 and Bijlefeld, 147.

The men whom the Quran identifies as the *rāsūl* are: Nūh, Lūt, Ismāʿīl, Mūsā, ʿĪsā, Ṣāliḥ, Shuʿayb, Hūd, and Muhammad. Ilyās and Yūnus are also considered part of this list by Bijlefeld because they appear in connection with the word *mursal*. Hārūn (Aaron) is mentioned twice in conjunction with Moses in the lists of the *rusul*.[28] There is again reason to assert that Adam is amongst those called apostles, from the Quranic verse 3:51. Ṣāliḥ, Shuʿayb, Hūd are the three names that may be unknown to most people. They are identified as Arabian apostles before the time of Muhammad and their stories are located in the clusters of verses mentioned before and are part of the "punishment story" literary genre.[29] Hūd is sent to the people of ʿĀd, Ṣāliḥ to the people of Thamūd, and Shuʿayb to the Midianites.[30] Muslim exegetes and Western scholars agree that Shuʿayb is father in-law of Moses, Jethro. Though this is not specified in the Quran, the story of Shuʿayb resembles the story of in the Torah. ʿĀd and Thamūd were ancient cities of southern Arabia and Hūd and Sāliḥ were probably genuine holy men of Arabia.[31] Most scholars rejected the radical view that Hūd and Ṣāliḥ were the Biblical figures Eber and Shelah, the father of Eber, who were the great-grandson and grandson of Shem.[32]

Examining the list of *nabī* and the list of *rasūl* one will observe that some names appear on both lists. Through a comparison of the previous two lists I have constructed a third list of men who are the *rasūl-nabī* amalgam: Nūh, Lūt, Ismāʿīl, Mūsā, ʿĪsā, and Muhammad. Ilyās, Yūnus, Adam, and Hārūn are also indirectly signified as *rasūl-nabī*. And within this group of *rasūl-nabī* is a subset of individuals who are part of this list but

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[28] Bijlefeld, 137.
[29] Jacques Jomier, *The great themes of the Qur'an* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 73; Bell, 121-124.
[30] Ibid., 121-122.
[31] Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1979), vol.1, 135-136.
[32] Jeffery, "Scripture," 38.

have their own Quranic designation. Mūsā [19:51], Ismāʿīl [19:54], and Muhammad [7:157] are the men who are *rasūlan nabīyan*, "an apostle, a prophet." The appearance of certain individuals in one list and their absence in another begins to shed light on why a dialogue on terminology and a multiplicity of assessments on their attributes and functions exists.

There are a number of other figures whose prophetic/apostolic identity is unknown. Maryam (Mary the mother of Jesus), Dhū al-Kifl (Ezekiel), al-Khidr (the Green man), and Dhū al-Qarnayn (He with two Horns) are the four people that some believe to be prophets/messengers. Some Quranic commentators recognize these four figures as prophets/messengers because of their attributes. In the next section I will examine the characteristics of the prophets and messengers but let it suffice that these four people possess characteristics which differentiate prophets and messengers from the remainder of humanity. Then there are prophets and messengers whose identities are unspecified. The Quran states that,

> **And certainly We sent messengers before you: there are some of them that We have mentioned to you and there are others whom We have not mentioned to you** [40:78]

This Quranic passage clearly reveals that certain prophets/messenger existed who are not named. Commentators have long speculated on the identity of these people, some have been identified as Biblical figures. Daniel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah are identified by Ibn Kathīr as unnamed prophets of the Quran.[33] This concludes the names of prophets and messenger in the Quran and secondary material.

An evaluation of all the nouns and adjectives associated with the two central terms creates a problem for scholars seeking to place each prophet/messenger into a

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[33] Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *Stories of the prophets (Qisas al-Anbiyʾ)* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1999).

clearly defined niche. However, this does not mean that the Quran does not explicitly

and implicitly distinguish the prophets and messengers. Toward clarifying the attributes

associated with the prophets and messengers I have created four categories. In the first

category are characteristics which are shared by all prophets/messengers. In the second

category are traits shared by specific prophets/messengers but not shared by the other

prophets/messengers. In the third category are characteristics possessed only by the

anbiyā'. And in the fourth category are attributes shared only amongst the *rasūl*.

The first category of attributes is shared by both the messengers (*rusul*) and

prophets (*anbiyā'*). In the Quranic context there is often a lack of indication to

differentiate the qualities associated with each divinely inspired person. Often times

various *rusul* and *anbiyā'* are mentioned simultaneously in the Quran. Uri Rubin and

Arthur Jeffery both outline the numerous qualities possessed by both the *rusul* and the

anbiyā'. All of the prophets and messengers of the Quran are divinely elected. Three

verbs are associated with the election of a prophet or a messenger *iṣṭafā* [إصطفا], *ijtabā*

[إجتبا], and *iṣṭana'a* [إصطنع].[34] Prophets and apostles received revelations from God. This

revelation or inspiration is known by the Arabic word *waḥy*.[35] The messengers and

prophets are usually provided with signs (*āyāt*) and miracles (*bayyināt*), also known as

"clear proofs," as a means of verifying the authority of their divine qualification. The

prophets and messengers as a rule are rejected by their communities and sometimes even

suffer great oppression.[36] This is another feature shared amongst the prophets and the

messengers. A further quality held by the *rusul* and *anbiyā'* is that they are sent to warn

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[34] Uri Rubin, 'Prophets and Prophethood', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* (Leiden: Brill, 2001): 292.
[35] Rubin, 294.
[36] Ibid., 301.

their communities.[37] The two words used in relation to this idea of warning are, *mundhir* [منذر] and *nadhīr* [نذير]. Muhammad [10:2], Hūd [24:136], and Noah [71:2] are just a few examples in which "warner" is associated with the *rusul*. There are far too many characteristics associated with the *rusul* and the *anbiyā'* to give a completely comprehensive examination, though Jeffery in his work *Qur'ān as Scripture* extensively treats this subject.[38]

One quality which represents a major source of debate in Muslim literary genres is the question of bringing the good news. Is a *rasūl* or is a *nabī* a bringer of good news (*mubashshir*)? Both are said to receive clear proofs (*bayyināt*) but the question has been a central point of debate amongst both the Muslim and Western scholars. Jeffery asserts that the tasks of being a warner (*mundhir*) and a bringer of good news (*mubashshhir*) are a component of prophetic office (*nubūwah*).[39] I will address this point further in the next chapter expressly dealing with Muslim and Western opinions on the roles of *nabī* and *rasūl*.

The second category of attributes is limited to specific prophets/messenger. As a standard the Quran and Muhammad made no distinction between prophets/messengers but particular instances within the Quranic context seem to offer another perspective. The Quran mentions individuals who received special gifts or traits other prophets/messengers did not have the privilege to obtain. Nūh, Ibrāhīm, 'Īsā, Mūsā, and Muhammad are five prophets/messengers with whom God established a pact or covenant *(mīthāq)*.

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[37] Jeffery, "Scripture," 49.
[38] Jeffery's *Qur'ān as Scripture* is by far the most comprehensive study on traits of the prophets and apostles.
[39] Jeffery, "Scripture," 35.

And when We made a covenant with the prophets and with you, and with Nūh and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Isā, son of Maryam, and We made with them a strong covenant [33:7]

The Quran states that there are, "**those endowed with constancy** (*ūlū al-'azm*)" [46:35]. Rubin asserts that Quran exegetes have long debated the identity of these men. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad are one group exegetes believe were "endowed with constancy" because these five prophets/messengers brought a new law (*sharī'a*). But other commentators believe it is the prophets/messengers who have undergone the most serious oppression and trails.[40]

The third category is traits which are restricted to the prophets. The difference between the application of *rasūl* and *nabī* is their association the Abrahamic lineage. *Nabī* and *Anbiyā'* are the only terms used when Abraham is mentioned in the Quran. All of the divinely inspired men who have come from his genealogy, i.e. the Israelites, are given the title of *nabī*. Rubin though claims that Prophetic lineage begins with Adam. The *dhurriya* (seed) of Adam have prophetic preference compared with the rest of humanity.[41] Rubin's argument may be incorrect for two reasons. First, as I previously highlighted, Adam is only known as a prophet/messenger by allusion and is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an.

Second, if the seed of Adam is blessed with prophecy, then, technically, all of humanity is blessed with prophecy because all of humanity is the seed of Adam. This final point may be worth further scrutiny. God only provided prophecy to humanity. The other beings created by God, angels and *jinn* (other beings of the world), were ever divinely elected to be prophets/messengers. I believe that Rubin meant to associate

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[40] Rubin, 292. The second group, those oppressed beyond any other prophet/messenger, is Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.
[41] Ibid., 291.

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Prophetic lineage with the Israelites which should include Adam. The Quran, in 3:33 and in *sūra Maryam* verse 58 which states,"**…from among the prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Nūh, and of the seed of Ibrāhīm and Israel…**," ties both Noah and Adam, who are not traditionally viewed as Israelites, into the same class of people as Abraham and his descendents, i.e. Israelites.

Receiving a book (*kitāb*) is the other feature which is limited to the *nabī*. All messengers and prophets receive the words (*kalimāt*) of Allah,[42] but only six are said to have received the written word.

> **He has revealed to you the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Tawrāt and the Injīl aforetime, a guidance for the people, and He sent the Furqān** [3:3]

The Quran states that Moses received the *Tawrāt* (Torah), David received the *Zabūr* (Psalms), Jesus received the *Injīl* (Gospels), and Muhammad received the Quran.[43] But these are the only books which are clearly identified by name. There is mention of both Abraham and Moses receiving *ṣuḥuf* (sheets) though the identity of the sheets is unknown.[44] None of the remaining *rasūl* or *nabī* are said to have received any written book or sheets. But the Quran does state that previous messengers (*rusul*) were given scriptures (*zubur*). **"…their apostles had come to them with clear arguments (*bayyināt*), and with scriptures (*zubur*), and with the illuminating book**" [35:25]. This may lead one to believe that both *rasūl* and *nabī* received some form of a written revelation. However, I believe that the reception of a *kitāb* is nearer to the responsibilities of the *anbiyā'* for two reasons. First, as Rubin states, the reception of a

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[42] Jeffery, "Scripture," 33.
[43] Ahmad Von Denffer, *`Ulum al-Qur'ān: an introduction to the sciences of the Qur'ān* (Leicester, U.K.: Islamic Foundation, 1994), 15.
[44] Denffer, 15.

book is always associated with the term *nubūwah*.[45] Second, in 29:27 the Quran states that both prophecy and the book will be passed through the seed (*dhurriya*) of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[46] All of these men are *nabī* and none of them appear in the list of *rasūl*.

The fourth category of attributes is specific to the messengers. *Rusul*, unlike the *anbiyā'*, are not necessarily an assemblage of divinely elected humans. The prophets are descendants of Abraham in the Quran. However, *rasūl* represents numerous groups of individuals in the Quran. We already know that a *rasūl* is a person elected by the Divine, with similar features of a *nabī*. But angels are also known as *rusul*.[47] The Quran states, "**We would certainly have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as an apostle**" [17:95]. Angels are the celestial messengers delivering the divine message to prophets and messengers. The Quran, in passages such as 15:57 and 15:61, proclaim angels, the visitors of Abraham, were messengers. Furthermore, there are groups of *rasūl* who have no unique qualities or functions at all. For instance, the story of Solomon and his affair with the Queen of Sheba, in *sūrah al-Naml* verses 17-44, records that Solomon employed birds as his messengers and that the Queen of Sheba used humans as her messengers.

The usage of *rasūl* for celestial beings and human beings, both ordinary men and those interacting with God, represents a broader dimension of the term *rasūl* than *nabī*. *Rasūl*, *rusul*, *mursal*, etc. are universal expressions. The Arab communities understood these terminologies without any supplements. However, because *nabī* is so intimately correlated to the men of the Tanakh, this word and its cognates are not as common. A

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[45] Rubin, 297.
[46] A similar genealogical claim can be found in Q 57:26, here the seed mentioned is that of Noah and Abraham.
[47] Jeffery, "Scripture," 19.

review of the total usage of each word and its cognates, *nabī* is found seventy five times while *rasūl* is found three hundred and thirty three times, verifies the specialization of the term *nabī*. Furthermore, Jeffery's states that *rasūl* and its cognates are given a special religious significance within the Quranic context.[48] If this is the case it would explain the wide usage of *rasūl* and its cognates in the early periods of revelation, which will be the focus of Chapter five.

Not as many characters can be clearly attributed to the category of *rasūl*. These traits are located throughout the Quran in narrative sections Bell entitles "Punishment Story" genres. "**Every community (*'umma*) [on earth] has its [own] *rasūl*,**"[49] is the most important facet which facilitates a distinction between the *rasūl* and the *nabī*. This idea of a *rasūl* coming to all communities on earth is found in 10:47, 16:36, 17:15-16, 23:44-46, and 30:47-46.[50]

It could be said that the Quran is a record of prophecy and apostleship given the abundance of material allotted to the terms *nabī*, *rasūl*, and their cognates. The stories of the Prophets represent a large segment of the Quran. This is why literature pertaining to the prophets and apostles became important from an early period. However, this wealth of material on the prophets and messenger presents a challenge to the research. Clear categorization of the prophets, messengers, and their attributes is not always evident. At the heart of the matter was the question as to whether or not the terms *rasūl* and *nabī* are synonymous. In order to avoid confusions within the Quran, Muslims began to write

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[48] Jeffery, "Scripture," 19.
[49] Bijlefeld, 149.
[50] A position of contention may arise if one were to assert that I have claimed all of the *rasūl-nabī* categories are members' of the Israelite bloodline. Hence, if they are Israelites, why are some many *rusul* sent to the Israelites? Those who are part of the *rasūl-nabī* class are sent to different communities in different generations. Moses to those who left Egypt, Noah to the people before the flood, or Lot to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are a few instances of those of the *rasūl-nabī* class delivered unto different communities

commentaries. Eventually these commentators turned their attention toward the terms *rasūl* and *nabī*.

Chapter 3 Development of Islamic Prophetology: the Discourse on *Rasūl* and *Nabī*

Prophets and stories of the prophets/messengers are a major component of the
Quran. In the previous chapter, I indicated that the Quran often lacks definitive
attributive classifications of the prophets and messengers. This eventually led Muslims
and Western scholars to question the nature and function of prophets and messengers. In
this chapter, I will examine explanations of both Muslim and Western scholars on the
distinction between *rasūl* and *nabī*. These expositions on the prophets/messengers
focused primarily on the attributes and functions possessed by each assemblage. By the
conclusion of this section the reader will observe a shift in the dynamic of the Western
academic discourse. The shift of Quranic language due largely to external circumstances
will be the focal point of the remainder of this thesis. Instead of understanding the
relevance of the prophets and messengers from only a "qualitative" perspective one can
understand that a quantitative distinction between the terms exists as well.

Muslim Discourse on the Prophets/Messengers

Who is given the duty of disseminating the law of God? Who merely reiterates
the law of God? Who functions as a warner to the people of the world? Which of these
terms, *rasūl* or *nabī*, designates a divine station with more responsibilities and
obligations? All these questions were initiated due to the lack of information on
prophetic office and apostleship in the Quran. With the death of Muhammad it was left
to the Islamic scholars (*ʿulama*) to supply the community with answers to these types of
questions. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss Muslim scholarly opinions on

the differences between *rasūl* and *nabī*. Then, I will attempt to deduce the reasons

behind Muslim scholarly conclusions.

This discourse was initiated on the basis of conflicting Quranic passages. The

Quran mentions that no distinction should be made between prophets, yet there are

prophets who are favored over other prophets. The Quran states, "…**we do not make**

any distinction between any of them…" [2:136] but also states, "**We have made some**

of these apostles to excel the others among them are they to whom Allah spoke…"

[2:253]. However, *sūra al-Ḥajj* verse 52 became the center piece of this discourse. The

phrase of verse 52 which became the focal point of the Quran commentators is, "**Never**

did we send before you a messenger or a prophet…" (*wa mā arsalnā min qablika min*

rasūlin wa lā nabīyin). The majority of the commentary explicating the nature and

function of both the *rasūl* and the *nabī* was formulated based upon this Quranic verse.

Therefore, the following examination the commentaries (*tafāsīr*) and other texts revolve

primarily around this Quran verse.

Islamic scholarship is divided on the question on the nature and function of the

terms *rasūl* and *nabī*. Some Muslim scholars treat the prophets and messengers as being

part of one group. This is often the case in texts which discuss the nature of

prophecy/apostleship on a general level. A primary example is a modern commentary,

al-Jawāhir al-kalāmīya fī al-'aqīdah al-Islāmīya written by Ṭāhir b. Ṣālih Jazā'irī (d.

1338/1920) on the Islamic articles of faith. The author provides a list of prophets

(*anbiyā'*) from the Quran including individuals, Shu'ayb, Hūd, etc., who are not specified

as prophets (*anbiyā'*) in the Quran.[1] The text also indicates that it is the prophets

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[1] Ṭāhir b. Ṣālih Jazā'irī, *al-Jawāhir al-kalāmīya fī al-'aqīdah al-Islāmīya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1995?), 53.

(*anbiyā'*) who are granted the task of legislation, a trait limited to the *rasūl* according to

the Quran commentators. Theological factions articulated doctrines, specific to their

adherents, on the prophets as well. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.607/[1209]1210)[2] indicates

that many of the rationalists, i.e. Mu'tazilites, do not accept a distinction between *rasūl*

and *nabī*. The rationalists assert that prophets and messengers are equals and neither

category is superior.[3] Quran scholars, for the most part, do not subscribe to the theories

of these scholars and schools of thought that believe *rasūl* and *nabī* are equivalent terms.

Muslim scholars who distinguished prophets and messengers articulated a number

of ideas to support this distinction. One aspect commentators attempted to work out was

the number of prophets and messengers who preceded Muhammad. In the both the

Tar'ikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk and the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, two of the earliest works which

mention the number of prophets, 124,000 is the number of prophets said to have preceded

Muhammad.[4] Crafting a number of prophets prior to Muhammad became quite a

common practice for Muslim scholars engaged in this discourse. Some of the various

numbers of prophets included 8,000, 124,000, and 224,000, but the number 124,000 was

the most common.[5] Some commentators provide names of past prophets, but these large

numbers are probably a rhetorical device used to symbolize the infiniteness of prophets.

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[2] Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī - better known as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Of Persian descent he was educate in traditional Islamic sciences and was a prolific writer, producing over 60 works.

[3] Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 32 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī 1989), vol. 23, 48-49.

[4] Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50.

[5] Friedmann, 50. On page 51, footnote 5, Friedmann provides a list of original sources discussing the number of prophets who came before Muhammad. However, the three numbers provided above are widely known and many of these other sources only attest to the unlimited amount of prophets. According to the Traditional scholars it is better to leave the number limitless then to disregard a prophet of Allah.

A second group of people, messengers who preceded Muhammad, were identified by Quran commentators such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamkhsharī (d. 538/1144),[6] 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 655/1286),[7] and others. This number is usually 313.[8] Those familiar with early Islamic history will already have noticed the connection between the number and Muslim participants in the Battle of Badr.[9] Many Islamic traditions relate that the number of Muslim participants in the Battle of Badr was 313, or 315. These numbers are not as important as the overarching concept al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamkhsharī, and other scholars demonstrated; prophets are more numerous than messengers. The total number of prophets named in the Quran is 20 and the number of messengers is 11 to 14.[10] The creation of the two sets of numbers, 124,000 prophets and 313 messengers, was articulated by the commentators to accent the Quranic data indicating that prophets are far more numerous than messengers. These numbers also demonstrate that the *rasūl* and *nabī* are clearly two distinct categories of individuals and are not be construed as one class of individuals.

The functions and responsibilities of the *rusul* and *anbiyā'* was the second and primary focus of the Quranic commentators analyzing *sūra* 22:52. When examining the commentator's insights on the role of *nabī* and *rasūl* one will encounter the mainstream

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[6] Abū al-Qāsim b. Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamkhsharī - born in Persia Zamkhsharī spent the majority of his life dedicate to study, especially philology. His most famous work *al-Kashshāf* combined numerous elements producing one of the most popular Qur'anic commentaries regardless of his unorthodox theological beliefs, he being a Mu'tazila.

[7] 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī - qāḍī of Shiraz, wrote on various subjects such as exegesis, law, and grammar. His most note work is the Qur'ānic commentary *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta'wīl*. His *tafsīr* is orthodox and revised version of the *Kashshāf* written by Zamakhsharī.

[8] Friedmann, 50; Mahmūd b. 'Umar Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf haqā'iq al-tanzīl wa-'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1970), vol. 3, 37; 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Muhammad al-Shīrāzī al-Baydāwī , *Tafsīr al-Baydāwī: 'Anwār al-tanzīl wa 'Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, 4 vols. (3; Cairo: Maṭba'a Muṣṭafa Muhammad, 1912), vol. 3, 210.

[9] Battle of Badr (624) - the first engagement of the Muslim forces against their former co-citizens the Quraysh. Though greatly outnumber the Muslims defeated the Quraysh.

[10] This variation depends upon counting certain individuals, Aaron and Adam, by association to other messengers rather than a direct Quranic identification.

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Muslim view of prophecy and apostleship. The majority of the Islamic texts which I have examined state, "Every messenger is a prophet, and not every prophet is a messenger" [كل رسول نبي و ليس كل نبي رسولا].[11] According to the mainstream opinion *rasūl* is the eminent station and *nabī* a secondary station. The commentators are for the most part in agreement that prophets are a more general ('*amm*) class of people.[12] The commentator's supposition that the messengers, not the prophets, are the special class of divinely inspired individuals is reflected in the attributes of the prophets and messengers.

The commentator's outlook on prophetic and apostolic traits appears to be contrary to the Quranic principle of "non-distinction" but through careful examination one will discover the logic behind their position. One reason the commentators suggested that a *nabī* was more general than a *rasūl* was because of the different means each set of individuals received inspiration. Prophets received their inspiration through dreams or during sleep (*fī al-manām*) and visions (*ru'ya*).[13] Receiving inspiration through dreams is a medium available to all of humanity as related in a hadith from the collection of Muslim, "*Ibn 'Umar reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The pious dreams are the seventieth part of Prophecy.*"[14] Messengers, on the other hand, received their revelation through the angel Gabriel.[15] But perhaps the major distinction between the two is based around law (*sharī'a*). In the minds of the commentators, the

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[11] Zamakhsharī, vol. 3, 37; al-Baydāwī, vol. 3, 210; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 23,48-49; 'Alī b. Alī b. Muhammad Abī al-'Izz, *Sharḥ al-Ṭaḥāwīya fīal-'Aqīda al-salafiya* (Mansurah (Egypt): Dār al-Wafa', 1984), 82; Friedmann, pg 69, footnote 80, lists four other sources dealing the nature and function of prophets and messengers.

[12] Abū Hanafī and Abū Mansūr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmūd al-Hanfī, *Sharh al-fiqh al-akbar: al-matn al-mansūb ilā al-Imām Abi Hanīfah al-Nu'mān b. Thābit al-Kufī / sharahahu Abū Mansūr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmūd al-Hanafī al-Samarqandī* (Beruit: al-Maktabah al-'Asriyah, 1983), 135.

[13] Zamakhsharī, vol. 3, 37; al-Baydāwī, vol. 3, 210; al-Rāzī, vol. 23, 49.

[14] Muslim, Book 029, Number 5632, http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/029.smt.html#029.5632

[15] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, vol. 23, 49; al-Baydāwī, vol. 3, 211.

rasūl promulgate a new law, while the *nabī* only reiterates the law brought by the *rasūl*.[16] These theories are representative of the majority of Islamic doctrines on the prophets and messengers. However, this does not mean these doctrines achieved collective scholarly acceptance. A few commentaries and super-commentaries (*ḥāshīya*) either slightly alter or outright reject these positions, such as the *Sharḥ al-Ṭahāwīya* by Abī al-ʿIzz (d. 792/1390) which states that it is the *rasūl* who are more general than *nabī*.[17]

Elucidating the reasoning behind the Muslim mainstream view is difficult in most cases. The Quranic context clearly indicates that prophets are more numerous than apostles, explaining why commentators fixed the numbers of prophets as greater than apostles. However, determining the reasons commentators attributed the functions of legislations, warning, and spreading the good news to the *rasūl* is unknown. One possible explanation rests upon the verbal meaning of the terminologies. *Rasūl* is related to the verb *arsala* "to deliver a message," a more specific action compared to *naba'a* "to tell or to inform."

One aspect that has yet to be undertaken in this discourse is the congruency of Muslim ideas. Authors seem to reproduce their ideas from earlier authors without always independent investigation. Locating the originator of theories would enable one to more accurately scrutinize the mainstream Muslim stance. This is especially important because some Western scholars assert that the mainstream Muslim view, "Every messenger is a prophet, and not every prophet is a messenger," is a Christian assumption.[18] Uncovering

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[16] al-Baydāwī, vol. 3, 210; Zamakhsharī, vol. 3, 37.
[17] al-ʿIzz, 82.
[18] A.J. Wensinck, 'Rasūl', in M. Th. Houtsma et al. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Islam: A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples* (Leiden: Late E.J. Brill 1936): 1127-1128.

the original theorist would aide in determining if and how much Islamic prophetic and apostolic perspectives parallel Christian conceptions.

Historians also took an interest in the debate between the eminence Quranic terminologies. Hishām ibn al-Kalbī (d. 203[204]/819)[19] was one of the earliest historians to write the on subject of prophets and messengers. Another historical text I examined reporting the events surrounding Muhammad's prophetic life was *Taʿrīkh al-khamīs fī aḥwāl anfas nafīs* by Muhammad Diyārbakrī (d. 966/1559).[20] This Muslim historian not only focused on the nature of the *nabī* and *rasūl* but delved into particular prophetic experiences. And naturally the prophetic experience occupying most Muslim scholars was Muhammad's prophetic experience. After detailing the reception of Muhammad's first revelation the author, Diyārbakrī, discusses Quranic commencement of both Muhummad's prophetic office and his apostleship. He states,

> *Abū ʿUmar and others like him said as Abū Amām b. al-Naqāsh narrated: with the sending down of sūrah ʿIqra' was [the beginning of] prophethood (nubūwah) and in the sending down of sūrah al-Muddathir was [the beginning of] his apostleship (risālatuh) along with warning (nithāra), good news (bishāra), and legislation (tashrīʿ)…[21]*

Diyārbakrī addresses two interesting aspects relevant to our examination. First, he establishes a division between the time period of prophethood and the time period of apostleship. Dividing the periods implicitly expresses the notion that one period, apostleship, is superior to the other. Second, he lists three functions that are associated with apostleship: bringing legislation, a warning, and good news. This demonstrates that he was highly influenced by the mainstream Muslim thought on prophets/messengers.

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[19] Hishām ibn al-Kalbī - born in Kufa but studied in Baghdad. As a historian he is said to have produced 140 works.

[20] Ḥusayn b. Muhammad Diyārbakrī, *Tārīkh al-khamīs fī aḥwāl anfas nafīs* (Beirut: Muʿassasa Shuʿbān lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 1363 A. H.).

[21] Diyārbakrī, 282.

Later in his same work he goes on to pinpoint the date that messengership commenced. Diyārbakrī cites multiple traditions specifying the exact moment Muhammad transformed into a messenger. Diyārbakrī relates that some time from 612-614 C.E., around the time of Waraqa b. Nawfāl's death, prophecy (*nubūwah*) ceased and apostleship (*risāla*) commenced.[22] One tradition claims that apostleship began with the revelation of, "**Therefore expound (*fāṣdaʿ*) what you have been commanded…**," [15:94], in *sūra al-Hijr*.[23] A second tradition relates that apostleship began in *sūra al-Shuʿrā'*, "**And warn (*ʿandhir*) your clansmen…**" [26:214].[24] Repeated here is the notion that the traits of warning and revealing to others the message of the Divine are duties of the *rasūl*.

This discourse always took place in the realm of traditional Islamic scholarship, i.e. Quranic studies, *tafsīr* literature, hadith studies, and so on. But non-traditional areas of study, specifically scholarship on the Quran from a mystical perspective, and scholars of that field contributed as well. Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/ 1240) (Shaykh al-Akbar),[25] perhaps one of the most well known Muslim mystics (*sūfī*), speculated on the nature of prophecy and provided a new composition of prophetic typology. Ibn ʿArabī understood prophets as being one of two types: legislative prophets (*anbiyā' tashrīʿ*) and non-legislative prophets (*anbiyā' lā tashrīʿ lahum*).[26] Legislative prophets establish a new law while the non-legislative prophets reiterate the laws of the previous prophets. This concept appears

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[22] Diyārbakrī, 287.
[23] Ibid., 287
[24] Ibid., 287.
[25] Abū ʿAbd Allah Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. Muhammad b. ʿArabī al-Ḥātamī al-Ṭā'ī - was a medieval Islamic scholar born in Spain. He is most noted for his works in philosophy and particularly mysticism.
[26] Friedmann, 73. These ideas are detailed in Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiya.* Ibn ʿArabī's vocabulary is slightly different in his work *Fuṣūṣ.* He makes a distinction between legislative prophets (*al-anbiyā' al-musharriʿūn*) and general prophets (*al-anbiyā' al-ʿammiyūn*).

to parallel the distinction of the *rasūl* and *nabī* according to the commentators, but his understanding of prophecy and apostleship is quite unique.

Ibn ʿArabī draws no clear distinctions between the *nabī* and the *rasūl*. In fact, Ronald Nettler concludes that Ibn ʿArabī equates the *rasūl* with the legislating prophets (*al-anbiyā' al-musharriʿūn*).[27] Therefore, both the *rasūl* and the al-*nabī al-musharriʿ* are legislators. The appearance of prophets and messengers will never cease either.[28] Apostleship and prophecy after Muhammad, however, can only re-affirm the laws and principles of Islam not institute new laws. At first glance it seems that Ibn ʿArabī makes no distinctions between prophets and messengers. Yet, Ibn ʿArabī divided prophets/messengers by the "extent of revealed knowledge," possessed by each prophet.[29] This framework has its foundations in the Quranic verse 2:253, "**We have set some of the messengers above others**." Ibn ʿArabī understood there to be degrees of prophecy and apostleship but not a distinction between the terms *rasūl* and *nabī*.

The Quran commentators, Muslim historians, and traditional Islamic scholars within this discourse neglected a quantitative-historical study alongside the Quranic terminology. Islamic scholarship, as well as some Western scholarship, attempted to understand the terminology by the Quran alone. Muslim scholars, therefore, only comprehend the distinction between *rasūl* and *nabī* to be a "qualitative" distinction. No Muslim scholar has attempted to understand the difference between the *rasūl* and *nabī* by examining the external events during revelation.

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[27] Ronald L. Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'anic Prophets: Ibn 'Arabī's Thought and Method in the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 143.
[28] Friedmann, 74.
[29] Nettler, 144.

Western Perspectives

Western contributions to our discourse began during the initial stages of Islamic studies in Europe. W. A. Bijlefeld, in his article, cites many of the early Western scholars who contributed to the discourse on the prophets and messengers: Otto Pautz,[30] Leone Caetani,[31] Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally, Josef Horovitz,[32] and Karl Ahrens.[33] These authors are only a fraction of those who made contributions. Western scholarship on our subject can be divided into three branches. First, there are scholars who disregard any notion of a coherent distinction between the terms *rasūl* and *nabī*. Here I will examine the work of Wansbrough, A. T. Welch, and W. A. Bijlefeld. Secondly, there are scholars who adhere to the traditional view that a distinction exists and *rasūl* is the eminent term, such as Fazlur Rahman and Uri Rubin. These scholars hold fast to the theories postulated by the Quranic commentators and did not probe deeper into our subject. Lastly, I will examine the few Western scholars who acknowledge and recognize the eminence of term *nabī*. This last group of Western scholars represents the first set of individuals who succeeded in shifting the dynamic of the discourse. Previously studies on the Quranic terminology centered upon attributes and functions as I have shown in the Muslim discourse. Bell and Jeffery's quantitative-historical approach to the appearance of Quranic terminology represents a new methodological process to comprehend the distinction between *rasūl* and *nabī*.

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[30] Otto Pautz, *Muhammeds Lehre von der Offenbarung Quellenmässig Untersucht.* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1898).

[31] Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (Milano: Libraio della Real Casa, 1905).

[32] Josef Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin-Leipzig: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1926).

[33] Karl Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter* (Leipzig: Deutsche morgenländische gesellschaft, in kommission bei F.A. Brockhaus, 1935).

Bijlefeld presented one of the most detailed studies of this debate. His article *A prophet and more than a prophet?* provides many of the key sources on the debate, alongside a map of the usage of *rasūl* and its cognates throughout the Quran. Unfortunately he, like Wansbrough and Welch, presupposed that the discourse on terminology was superfluous, thus formulating his conclusion before even undertaking his study.[34] In the end, he concludes that undertaking a study on the terminology of the Quran is irrelevant and offers little to no insight for anyone seeking knowledge of Islam.

Wansbrough and Alford T. Welch are two recent Islamic Studies scholars who claim there is no eminence of one particular term over the other in the Quran. Wansbrough says very little about the eminence of one word over the other in his *Qur'anic Studies*. He gives no credence to theories of authors who established a distinction between *rasūl* and *nabī*. His brief claim states, "Rigorous and consistent distinction between the designations of *nabī* and *rasūl* is not justified by Quranic usage."[35] To an extent he is correct, Muslim and Western scholars are constantly interchanging one word for the other. Wansbrough's conclusion, like Welch's, ignores both the Quranic material and secondary materials pertaining to the prophets and messengers.

Besides Wansbrough, A. T. Welch is the other scholar to support the stance that no difference between *rasūl* and *nabī* can be located in the Quranic data itself. He believes, like Wansbrough, that it is not possible to say for certain that one term reflects a higher value than the other. He writes,

> *Those who have argued that these terms designate two different lists of men,*
> *with distinct functions, are either reading later ideas into the Koran, or*

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[34] Bijlefeld, 139.
[35] Wansbrough, 54.

> *placing too much emphasis on differences that happen to occur in the context of the two terms.*[36]

Welch stated a fact in that there are some authors who have attempted to read far too much into the Quranic material. However, Welch does not seem to recognize that the foundation of this discourse was the Quranic data. If there had not been divergent lists, attributes, and statements regarding the degree of prophetic office and apostleship then this discourse would not have been born.

Two scholars that I encountered during my research conforming to the mainstream Muslim perspective are Rahman and Rubin. Both authors lack depth in their explanations as to why they subscribe to the theories of the Quranic commentators. Rubin claims that he, like the Quran commentators, follows the paradigm of the New Testament, which places the apostles of Jesus on a level superior to that of the Hebrew prophets of the past.[37] Rahman writes a brief summary of the Quranic material in his book *Major themes of the Qur'an*.[38] His reasoning in claiming the eminence of the *rasūl* is their function. He points out that a *nabī* may be an assistant to a *rasūl*, while the *rasūl* may function as both a *rasūl* and a *nabī*. Rahman's overall presentation of the material is done well, and he does point out that a distinction between the terms is present in Islamic literature.[39] His conclusion though, *rasūl* being the pinnacle of divinely inspired humans, lacks explicit Quranic proof.

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[36] Alford T. Welch, 'Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data', in Jr. Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis (ed.), *Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conference* (University of California, Los Angeles: Undena Publications, 1981): 45.
[37] Rubin, 289.
[38] Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989).
[39] Rahman, 82.

Arthur Jeffery is the first scholar I studied who argues for a distinction between the *rasūl* and the *nabī* and who concludes that *nabī* is eminent in the Quran rather than *rasūl*. Jeffery acknowledged that later Islamic theologians attributed distinctions between the *rasūl* and the *nabī*.[40] Jeffery recognized that the theologians attempted to assert that the *rasūl* actually had a special significance and believed that the Quranic evidence was contrary to the position formulated by mainstream Muslim scholarship. Jeffery responded to the Islamic theologian's position saying that,

> *The Qur'ān does not support such a distinction [rasūl greater than nabī]. If anything the Qur'ānic evidence would seem to point the other way and suggest that the nabī was the narrower term, the prophet being a special class among the messengers.*[41]

Jeffery's assertion that *nabī* is supposed to reflect a narrower field is based upon his assumptions that *nabī* is a term intimately linked to the Jewish communities Muhammad was encountering in Medina.

Richard Bell asserts the term *nabī* became eminent because of the Jews who lived around Muhammad in Medina as well. Bell claims, "Under the influence of Jewish and Christian ideas…*nabīy*…assumed higher status."[42] Additionally Bell states,

> *The prophetic office [nubūwah] is thus a high distinction…In this respect the Children of Israel have been specially favored, XLV, 15. The early idea that one messenger was sent to each people was modified by the knowledge that to them more than one had been sent.*[43]

Bell and Jeffery represent the first set of scholars to alter the approach to the discourse on prophets/messengers. Previous scholars, both Muslim and Western, had only examined

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[40] Jeffery, "Scripture," 27.
[41] Ibid., 27.
[42] Bell, 147.
[43] Ibid., 147.

attributes as a means of resolving the eminence of terminology.   Bell and Jeffery

followed that same principle but began to understand that certain attributes, the

connection of *nabī* to Biblical figures, were connected to external influences.

Bell and Jeffery's contentions of the eminence of the *nabī* in the Qur'anic context

were severely criticized by Bijlefeld, Wansbourgh, Welch, and others. The problematic

aspect of Bell and Jeffery's work, Jeffery much more so than Bell, was that they failed to

substantiate their claims of *nabī* having a stronger prominence in the Quran. Both relied

on the evidence of the *nabī*'s connection with the line of Abraham to validate their

suppositions. Understandably, they were criticized for not reinforcing their ideas.

However, as more scholars studied the narrative patterns and "Punishment" stories in the

Quran, many began reaching similar conclusions. Scholars, such as Robert Tottoli[44] and

Kenneth Cragg,[45] observed the eminence of *nabī* in the later portions of Muhammad's

revelation as well as the application of term *nabī* to Muhammad himself.

At this point one might inquire about Western scholarship on the Quranic term

rasūl. Only two scholars, A. J. Wensinck and Jarl E. Fossum, scrutinized the term

rasūl.[46] Wensinck's stance on the prophets parallels the theories of Bell and Jeffery. He

subscribes to the idea that a distinction is present within Quranic context and that *nabī* is

more prevalent in the later portions of the Quran. In the second section of his work, he

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[44] Tottoli, 73.

[45] Kenneth Cragg, *The call of the minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 108.

[46] A. J. Wensinck, , 'Muhammad and the Prophets', in Uri Rubin (ed.), *The Life of Muhammad* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1998): 319-43; Jarl E. Fossum, 'The Apostle Concept in the Qur'an and Pre-Islamic Near Eastern Literature', in Mustansir Mir James A. Bellamy; Jarl E. Fossum (ed.), *Literary heritage of classical Islam : Arabic and Islamic studies in honor of James A. Bellamy* (Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 1993): 149-67.

examines some Christian perspectives on the attributes and the functions of the apostle's

in work of Christian writers around the time of Muhammad.[47]

Fossum does not engage in the Quranic debate on the eminence of one Quranic

term over another. Fossum, instead, attempts to draw parallels between Christian texts

and Muslim texts detailing the lives of the prophets. His most interesting claim is that

some early Christian texts and the Quran's list of apostles/prophets are practically

identical.[48] The Quran and these Christian texts, cited by Fossum, exclude the ancient

prophets of the Tanakh, people such as Haggai, Amos, Obadiah, and the pre-writing

prophets, but included the patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and so on. Neither

Wensinck nor Fossum argued for a linguistic connection between *rasūl* and any Greek or

Syriac counterpart. Both studies are relevant to the overall discussion of prophets and

messengers because of the impact Christians and Christianity may have had upon

Muhammad and his early career. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis does not allow

for a thorough study of the Christian texts on and theology of the Prophets in Arabia prior

to and during the life of Muhammad.

Debate on the function, nature, and attributes of the prophets and messengers has

continued for centuries. The mainstream view borne out of the Islamic scholarship

placed the *rasūl* in the position of superiority. The Western tradition did not share such

unanimity. Western scholarship marks a watershed in the study of the terminology.

Scholars such as Bell, Jeffery, Tottoli, and Cragg realized the importance of the term *nabī*

in relation to the historicity of Muhammad's Arabia. The terminology of the Quran,

nabī, cannot be fully comprehended in isolation. In order to fully understand the

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[47] Wensinck, "Prophets," 8-20.
[48] Fossum, 157.

relevance of the term one must possess knowledge of the people and events surrounding

Muhammad during the arrival of the Quran. Knowing the influences surrounding

Muhammad opens the window to understanding why *nabī* has a special emphasis

overlooked by the Muslim scholars and many of the Western scholars as well.

Chapter 4 Judaism and Christianity in Arabia

In this chapter, I will trace the history of Judaism and Christianity in Arabia up to and during the lifetime of Muhammad. I assert that Judaic influence shaped Muhammad's sociolinguistics. In order to support this stance I will relate a history of Arabia emphasizing the Judaic and Christian influences of Muhammad's Arabia. Pre-Islamic Arabia and Muhammad's Mecca and Medina will be the two major areas of discussion in this chapter. Pre-Islamic and Muhammad's Mecca and Medina are paramount areas of focus because they fully illustrate the penetration of monotheistic, especially Judaic, concepts into Arabia.

I will then concentrate on the Meccan and Medinan time periods in order to demonstrate Muhammad's personal exposure to Jews and Christians in each respective city. Judaic influence is strong in the Medinan period because of Muhammad's direct and intimate contact with a long standing Jewish community. Hence, I will focus more attention to this period in Muhammad's life. The Meccan time frame will be mentioned, but since evidence, i.e. known contact between Muhammad and Jews, is lacking, little can be said about the Jews of this period. During the Medinan portion of Muhammad's life a shift the vocabulary of the Quran and Muhammad occurred due to the Judaic influence present in Medina. Therefore, I will report far more upon the Jewish history of Arabia then Christianity.

Pre-Islamic Arabia

Mystery surrounds much of the history of Arabia, especially the histories surrounding the Jewish and Christian dissemination into Arabia as well as the

communities of the Jews of Arabia. A strange mix between fact and fiction underscores

the literature reporting on the land of Arabia. Gordon Newby is correct to assert that

much must be done to distinguish the history from the lore pervading many sources.[1]

Newby and other scholars have greatly contributed to the understanding of Arabia's

origins and legends thus it is not necessary to completely repeat their work here.

However, I will commence with the first accounts of Jews and Christians in the Arabian

Peninsula. Following that I will piece together information on the Jewish and Christian

Kingdoms of Arabia.

Jewish history in Arabia, from the 1st to 6th century, represents the darkest period

of Jewish history. Josephus' *Antiquities* and Strabo's[2] *Geographica* are the first known

records of Jewish penetration into the Arabian Peninsula. Both accounts were written

prior to 50 C.E. Records of Jewish penetration into Arabia occur in the Bible, in the

stories of Moses, Saul, Samuel, and David,[3] but it is not until the writings of Josephus

and Strabo that extra-biblical sources began appearing to indicate the existence of Jews in

the Arabian Peninsula. Josephus recorded that 500 Jewish soldiers, who accompanied the

Roman army at the behest of Herod, were led on a mission into the Southern portion of

the peninsula by one Aelius Gallus.[4] Strabo, a friend of Aelius Gallus, offers

confirmation of these events in his work.[5] Gallus' prefecture of Egypt is dated to 24/25

B.C.E, thus within the same time frame of Herod's reign. Gallus' mission to subdue the

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[1] Gordon D.Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to Their Eclipse Under Islam* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 109-122.
[2] Strabo (63/64 B.C.E. - 24 C.E.) - was a historian, philosopher, and geographer for the Roman Empire under the Egyptian prefecture Aelius Gallus.
[3] Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958), 63.
[4] Flavius Josephus, *The works of Flavius Josephus, the learned and authentic Jewish historian*, trans. William Whiston (New-York: Leavitt and Allen, 1853) *Antiq*. Book xv; chapter ix; sections 2,3; page 423 column 2 and page 424 column 1 and 2.
[5] Newby, "Jews," 25.

tribes of Arabia ended in disaster, and Gallus, leaving behind his troops including those

Jews accompanying the army, eventually retreated to Alexandria.

Gallus' excursion into Arabia is also the earliest report which is verified by

archaeological evidence. Al-Ḥijrā, a city known as a Jewish city, housed the first

inscription corroborating Josephus' annals. The inscription is found on the tomb a man

named "Shubeit 'Yehudaya'" dating to 42-45 CE.[6] Postdating Aelius' mission the tomb

substantiates the theory that the Jews left behind in Aelius' raid settled in Arabia.

Stillman also asserts that at bare minimum Jewish settlements would have stretched as far

south as Northern Arabia prior to the events of 70 CE.[7] Though no writings or writers

make specific mention of Jewish relocation to Arabia, all scholars assert that major

Jewish filtration into Arabia occurred after the Roman's destruction of the Temple in 70

CE and probably following the Bar Kochba Revolt which ended around 135 CE. After

the 2nd century multiple Christian and Arab sources chronicle the territories controlled by

Jews, cities settled by Jews, and the general status of the Jewry in the Arabian Peninsula.

For instance, Baron mentions other archeological evidence pointing to a Jewish presence

after 2nd century, namely a 5th century inscription about a man named "Sahir 'Lord of

Judah.'"[8] Before proceeding with the remainder of Jewish communities and history of

Arabia, I will discuss Christianity's saturation of the peninsula and the Christian

kingdoms prior to and up through the lifetime of Muhammad.

Christianity's message began reaching the outskirts of Arabia in the early 2nd

century. Missionaries were the means in which most inhabitants of Arabia were exposed

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[6] Baron, 64.
[7] Norman A.Stillman, *The Jews of Arab lands: a History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish
 Publication Society of America, 1979), 3.
[8] Baron, 66.

to both Christianity and Judaism. Who these missionaries were and exactly what type of

Christianity was being spread through Arabia is unknown. Nestorians and later their

opponents the Monophysites represent the first forms of organized Christianity within the

peninsula, around the 4th/5th century.[9] Missionary records from Arabia also begin

appearing during these centuries verifying the establishment and proliferation of

Christianity in Arabia. Philostorgius, who is reporting on the behalf of a Yemenite

missionary Theophilus, wrote one of earliest accounts of Yemen attesting to missionary

work during the reign of Constantine.[10] Christianity, as practiced by the Abyssinians,

eventually dominated Arabian Christianity.[11] Arab tribes, the Banū Ghassān for instance,

converted to Christianity and cities, namely Najrān, became centers of Christianity.[12]

Christianity reaches its apex in Arabia with the Abyssinian conquest of Yemen dating

from 525 and until 575.[13] Watt asserts that Christianity may have been widely adopted in

various portions of Arabia because of the power and prestige of the Abyssinian Empire

during the 6th century.[14] Christianity's push into the peninsula may have been inevitable,

but evidence indicates that, on some occasions, Christianity's incursion was a reaction to

strong certain Jewish communities.

Interestingly many of the Christian missionaries of Arabia and Yemen document

the strong Jewish presence throughout the peninsula. Newby indicates that

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[9] John B. Glubb, *The Life and Times of Muhammad* (New York,: Stein and Day, 1970), 46-47.
[10] De Lacy O'Leary, *Arabia Before Muhammad* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 142; Newby, "Jews," 38.
[11] Some discrepancies exist as to what type of Christianity was in fact practiced by the Abyssinians. Glubb claims the Abyssinians followed "Orthodox Christianity" however at this time period there is no clear definition of "Orthodox Christianity," pg 52. Today we understand this type of Christianity to be associated with the Eastern or Greek Church, but orthodoxy in the 5th century is unclear. However, O'Leary states that the Abyssinians followed Monophysite Christianity, pg 142.
[12] O'Leary, 139,142.
[13] O'Leary, 146.
[14] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 27. At this point in history control of Arabia was being fought over by the Persian Empire and Byzantine Empire, the two major empires in the known world.

Philostorgius'[15] account and a 5th/6th letter by Procopius[16] of Caesarea mention a well established Jewish community in Yemen.[17] Abyssinia's appearance and installation of Christianity in South Yemen was in fact a response to a Jewish King who had seized control of Yemen. Dhū Nuwās, also known as Yūsuf (Joseph), is a notorious figure in the history of Arabian/Yemenite Jewry. Dates surrounding his reign are unclear; his reign certainly ended prior to 525 and may have commenced in 515.[18] His dynasty too, the Ḥimyar Dynasty, may have been a Judaic ruling dynasty according to Goitein, dating back to the 3rd century of Yemen.[19] What is known is that Nuwās was a convert to Judaism and was a strong "Judaizer," attempting to convert many of his neighbors.[20] His "Judaizing" became a problem to the point that many scholars believe his throne was usurped because of his anti-Christian sentiment. Glubb asserts that Dhū Nuwās' policies, specifically a raid and destruction of a Christian community, directly led an attempt to fully Christianize all of Yemen.[21]

Different religious ideology was not the sole reason for Abyssinia's attack upon Dhū Nuwās. Nuwās was a viceroy of the Persian Empire. The Persians were constantly in conflict with the Byzantine Empire, the other world power in the centuries before the rise of the Muslims, over the territories of Arabia and Yemen. Nuwās' attack opened a door for the Byzantines to retaliate against the Persian viceroy and dispose of his dynasty.

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[15] Philostorgius (368-439) - was a Byzantine historian whose church history entitled *Ecclesiastical History* is still perservered in portion.

[16] Procopius (500-565) - was a Byzantine historian who is sometimes referred to as the last major ancient historian. His works include an eight volume account of the Justinian Wars entitled *History of Wars* and a second work called the *Secret History* (also known as *Anekdota* in a biographical account of Procopius in the *Suda*).

[17] Newby, "Jews," 24

[18] Stillman, 4; Glubb, 49.

[19] S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs, their contacts through the ages*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), 47.

[20] William Muir and T. H. Weir. *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources* (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1923), XCV.

[21] Glubb, 49.

Al-Ṭabarī's work *Ta'rīkh* provides a full account of Dhū Nuwās' attack on the Christian community of Najrān and the Abyssinians conquest of Southern Arabia.[22]

Jewish and Christian cities and tribes were scattered throughout the entirety of the Arabian Peninsula during Muhammad's lifetime. Christianity was strongly rooted in Abyssinia for most of Muhammad's life. In fact, the early Muslim community found affinity with the Christians of the region after sending a deputation to Yemen. Persecution of the Muslims forced Muhammad to seek refuge in other portions of Arabia. King Negus warmly accepted the Muslim after realizing that they too worshipped the one God.[23] Najrān, previously mentioned, was also a major Christian city in Arabia. Particulars of Christianity in Arabia pale in comparison to the histories of the Jewish communities.

Arab historians preserved far more details about the Jewish communities in Arabia then the Christian communities and people. Jews in Arabia were on a decline except region of Muhammad's residence, the Ḥijaz.[24] Khaybar, Yathrib, Fadak, Hijrā, al-'Ulā, Taymā, Tabūk, and Yutabī were cities dominated by Jewish clans and tribes during the 4th century.[25] Newby's chapter on the Jewish kingdoms of Southern Arabia refers to a number of different materials verifying the power of these Jewish cities.[26] Yathrib (Medina), Fadak, and Khaybar remained powerful Jewish centers during the lifetime of Muhammad. At this point, I have sketched a general picture of Jewish and Christian

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[22] al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, The Byzantines, The Lakhmids, and Yemen*, trans. Clifford Edmund Bosworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 202-205.

[23] Ibn Isḥāq, 146-155. Isḥāq provides full details of those who were sent to Abyssinia and the conflict between the deputation sent by the Quraysh and the Muslims.

[24] Newby, "Jews," 49.

[25] Ibid., "Jews," 40. Torrey, 20.

[26] Ibid., "Jews," 33-48

history in Arabia. One question yet to be fully addressed is how exactly did Judaism and Christianity come into Arabia?

Trade by its very nature exposes communities to new and foreign goods, ideas and philosophies. Arabia was a major center of trade for centuries in the Near East, particularly during the life of Muhammad. Goods brought from India would first land in Yemen and then were transported North on the Eastern portion of Arabia, the Ḥijaz. Stretching from Yemen through the Eastern portion of Arabia into Egypt and Palestine was the major trading route, the Silk route.[27] Gallus' expedition and missionaries are just two means through which monotheistic ideas entered Arabian society and culture. But major importation of monotheistic concepts was due to the work of traders traveling to and from Arabia. Traders took active and passive roles as missionaries, conveying their traditions, practices, and more importantly stories of their religious exemplars, i.e. prophets and patriarchs, to anyone who would listen.[28]

Judaism and Christianity were well established and known in Yemen and Arabia before the arrival of Muhammad and his prophetic message. Therefore, a Christian presence in the city of Mecca and a Jewish presence in the city of Medina should not be unusual. Muhammad's direct exposure to Christianity and Judaism and their traditions occurred in his two cities of habitation, Mecca and Medina.

Muhammad's Mecca and Medina

In this section, I will be focusing on two the two cities of Muhammad's residence. I will individually address Christianity and Judaism within the two cities of Muhammad's residence, Mecca and Medina. I will examine those tribes holding to the Judaic faith but

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[27] Glubb, 43.
[28] Stillman, 5.

will also narrow my examination to specific individuals with associations to Judaism or Jews. Particularly, I will examine individuals who became closely associated with Muhammad and may have had stronger relations with him than others. I will not recount all the stories of Christians and Jews related by the Muslim biographers because these accounts are far too numerous. I will additionally provide a few historical points on Medina, specifically deal with the strong Jewish background of the city.

Mecca

Muhammad's contact with Jews or Christians during his life in Mecca was minimal. Encounters, whether fact or fable, Muhammad had with Christians in Mecca are well documented by the Muslim historians and bibliographers. In the Meccan period, the individuals who broke from the polytheistic practices of the day in order to follow monotheism were called *Ḥanif*'s. Ibn Isḥāq indicates that there were four Meccan men who followed the ways of the *Ḥanīfīya*: Waraqa b. Nawfāl, ‘Ubaydullāh b Jaḥsh, ‘Uthman b. al-Ḥuwayrith, and Zayd b. ‘Amr.[29] According to the *Sīrat* of Ibn Isḥāq all these men, except for Zayd b. ‘Amr, adopted Christianity. ‘Ubaydullāh and ‘Uthman both converted to Christianity following their migration to Abyssinia; therefore, they had no direct contact with Muhammad. Waraqa b. Nawfāl is the only figure to adopt Christianity and continue to reside in Mecca when Muhammad began receiving revelation. Coincidently, Muhammad's marriage to Khadijā, Waraqa's cousin, creates a family bond between himself and Waraqa.

Muhammad's marriage to Khadijā brought Muhammad into his closest and most intimate contact with Christianity. Through his marriage Muhammad became closely

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[29] Ibn Isḥāq, 99.

aligned with Waraqa. Hence, Muhammad's proximity to a knowledgeable source on monotheistic ideas sharply increased. Waraqa was not simply a convert to Christianity, but the histories report that he, "studied scriptures until he hand thoroughly mastered them," and was a scholar of the Gospels.[30] Watt asserts that Waraqa shared his knowledge of Christianity with Khadijā which may have strengthened Muhammad's decision to marry Khadijā.[31] Waraqa was not the only person connected to Muhammad through his marriage to Khadijā.

Muhammad's marriage to Khadijā also brought him into a relationship with one of her slaves, Zayd b. Ḥārithah. Zayd b. Ḥārithah was eventually freed by Muhammad and he practically adopted Zayd b. Ḥārithah as a son. Muir states that Muhammad's close relationship to Zayd b. Ḥārithah was due in part from Zayd b. Ḥārithah's knowledge of Christianity.[32] Zayd b. Ḥārithah did not have a comprehensive knowledge of Christianity but appears to have had some information, especially given the fact that his parents were Christians.[33] Zayd b. Ḥārithah and Waraqa constitute the documented encounters Muhammad had with Christians in Mecca. Ibn Isḥāq records other possible contacts which Christians but probably much of Muhammad's exposure to monotheism occurred during his career as a trader.

Muhammad's profession as a trader and his city being a trade center brought him into close proximity to Christians and Jews. Adopted by his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, at the age of eight, Muhammad was immediately inducted in the caravan business.[34] Muhammad

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[30] Ibn Isḥāq, 83, 99; Abū Jafar Muhammad b. Jirir al-Ṭabarī, *Muhammad at Mecca*, trans. W. Montgomery and M. V.McDonald Watt (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 72.

[31] Watt, "Mecca," 38.

[32] Muir, 35.

[33] Muir, 34.

[34] al-Ṭabarī, "Mecca,"44.

continued his work as a trader as he grew older, and it was his skills as a trader which led

Khadijā to propose to Muhammad at the age of 25. After his marriage to Khadijā, he

probably continued to work as a trader, but records do not indicate how many trips or

how long Muhammad would travel. But reports do specify that many of his travels led

him as far North as Syria, situated just outside of both Judaism and Christianity's

spawning grounds. A famous tale of Muhammad's youth, while traveling with Abū

Ṭālib, is his encounter with a Christian monk Baḥīrā.[35] Baḥīrā informs Muhammad that

he will be a prophet to the people of Arabia.[36] During his travels, Muhammad probably

encountered far more monotheists than documented.

Jews and Christians passed through Mecca as well. Mecca was both a major city

on the trade route from Yemen to Palestine and a center of religious pilgrimage for all of

Arabia. Evidence of Christians traveling to Mecca can be found in the tale in which a

boy is permitted to paint a portrait of Mary and the Jesus in the Ka'ba of Mecca.[37] The

stories of Baḥīrā and the portrait of Mary may be fables, but these stories reflect that

Muhammad, and people of Arabia for that matter, were acquainted with Jews and

Christians.

Muhammad's exposure to monotheistic ideas is strictly limited to Christianity in

the Meccan period. Torrey in his work *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* attempts to re-

interpret historical accounts by claiming the existence of a Jewish community in the city

of Mecca.[38] I agree with Torrey's premise that Mecca was a religiously tolerant city but

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[35] al-Ṭabarī, "Mecca," 44.
[36] Ibn Isḥāq, 79-81.
[37] Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983), 17.
[38] Charles C.Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York: KTAV Pub. House 1968), 13, 20.

no evidence from the either Muslim biographers, such as Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834)[39] and al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823),[40] or Western scholars validates Torrey's thesis of a Jewish community in Mecca. Watt's assertion that no Jews resided in the city of Mecca is undoubtedly the truth on the matter.[41] Now I will examine to the period of time which Muhammad's exposure to Judaism reached its climax, the Medinan period.

Medina

Medinese Jewry represents one of the longest standing and deeply influential communities in Arabia. Medina was not the site of a Jewish Kingdom like Yemen, but its roots are said to go back as far as the destruction of the 2nd temple in 70 CE. The last king of *Tubba'* and his conversion to Judaism is the first account of a Jewish community present in Medina. According to *Sirāt* of Ibn Isḥāq, Tibān b. As'ad Abū Karib was the predecessor of Dhū Nuwās who took control of Yemen. Abū Karib then began moving his army north until he came to Yathrib (Medina). He was deterred from attacking the city by two Jewish rabbis. After escorting the Rabbis back to Yemen, Abū Karib is said to have undergone a conversion to Judaism.[42] Abū Karib existed and was the king of Yemen but some scholars, like Michael Lecker, doubt the authenticity of these particular events. Jewish scholars attempting to bolster the Jewish reputation for Muslims scholars, specifically for the Muslim biographer Ibn Isḥāq, may have perpetuated this tale.[43] Dhū

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[39] Abū Muhammad 'Abd Mālik ibn Hishām - born in Egypt and later studied in Kufa. He was a historian and grammarian, also known for his work *Kitāb al-Tijan*. He is most noted for his role as the redactor of the earliest bibliography on the life of Muhammad, which was written by Ibn Isḥāq.

[40] 'Abū 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar ibn al-Wāqidī - was born in the city of Medina. The only work surviving by his hand is *al-Kitāb al-Maghāzī* and this work is itself only a portion of the original work. His work does give supplementary materials filling in portions of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*.

[41] Watt, "Mecca," 27.

[42] Ibn Isḥāq, 6.

[43] Michael Lecker, 'Conversion of Himyar to Judaism and the Jewish B. Hadl of Medina', *People, Tribes, and Society in Arabia Around the Time of Muhammad* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 129.

Nuwās is also said to have been influenced by the Jews of Medina when he converted.[44]

Doubt may surround the conversion of Abū Karib but no scholar doubts the occupation of

Medina by Jews in the 4th century.

The Jewish population of Medina was comprised of three large tribes and a few

clans of Arabs who converted to Judaism. The Banū Naḍīr, Banū Qaynuqā', and Banū

Qurayẓa were the leading Jewish tribes residing in Medina when Muhammad and the

Muslims migrated in 622. The Banū Qaynuqā' is the one tribe which scholars believe

were not authentically Jewish, the Banū Qaynuqā' were a converted Arab tribe.[45]

Contrarily, the Banū Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayẓa were of Palestinian Jewish origin and

were referred to as *al-Kāhinān*.[46] The Arabic word *al-Kāhinān* (الكاهنان) is a borrowed

word from the Hebrew *Kōhēn* (כהן) meaning "priest." Scholars believe that the Banū

Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayẓa were descendents of Palestinian priests who migrated

south.[47] Goitien and Newby indicated that the Midrash and Talmud acknowledge that a

large group of priests traveled to Arabia and continued to live together in parts of

Arabia.[48] It is important to understand that Muhammad's co-residents and converts were

descendants of priests.

Membership within a particular tribe did not limit one's allegiance to a particular

religion or political alignment. Clans, smaller groups making up a tribe, would often have

their own religious and political alignment. The Banū Naḍīr, Banū Qaynuqā', and Banū

Qurayẓa were the only Jewish tribes, but often an Arab tribe would consist of a Jewish

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[44] Franz Althei, and Ruth Stiehl, *Die Araber in der alten Welt* (vol.5; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964), 361.
[45] A. J. Wensinck, *Muhammad and the Jews of Medina*, trans. Wolfgang Behn (Freiburg im Breisgau: K. Schwarz, 1975), 32.
[46] Torrey, 33.
[47] D. S. Margoliouth, , 'The Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the Rise of Islam', *The Schweich Lectures* (London: British Academy, 1921), 73, 79. Newby, 47.
[48] Newby, "Jews," 47. Goitein, 48.

clan or a few Jewish individuals. Watt provides a full list of clans and their parental

tribes, but clans claiming to adhere to the Jewish faith were: B. Marthad, B. Maʿāwiyah,

B. Jadhmāʾ, B. Nāghiṣah, B. Zaʿūrāʾ, and B. Thaʿlabah.[49] Lecker indicates that their may

have been other clans who were also "Judaized," specifically the Murīd clan and the B.

ʿAṭiyya b. Zayd.[50] Lecker names a few individuals who were believed to be Jewish

within Arab clans and tribes. Qays b. Rifāʾa of Wāqif, a Jewish proselyte, Abū Qays b.

al-ʿAslat, the leader of the ʿAws Allāh, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Khalīfa of the ʿAbd al-Ashhal

all may have been Jewish convert amongst entirely Arab clans.[51] Each clan was member

of a larger Arab tribe, and at some point, each clan became "Judaized." ʿAlī b. ʿAbdullāh

al-Samhūdī (d. 911/1506) provides an in-depth genealogical study of the Medinan tribes

which could provide more details on the tribes and people who converted to Judaism.[52]

However, we must now ask the question of what did "Judaization" mean? What did it

mean to be Jewish during the time of Muhammad?

Scholars have debated what being a Jew actually meant for Arabs who converted

to Judaism. Goldziher determined that there were no means of establishing the Medinese

attitude toward religion during the life of Muhammad.[53] Newby too concludes that

conversion to Judaism in the days before Muhammad was for social and political

purposes over religious reasons.

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[49] Watt, W. Montgomery, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 192. Watt provides all the Arab tribes to whom each clan was attached.

[50] Lecker, Michael, *Muslims, Jews, and Pagans: Studies on Early Islamic Medina* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 42, 45.

[51] Lecker, *"Early Islamic Medina"* 41, 44.

[52] ʿAlī b. ʿAbdullāh al-Samhūdī - is by the far the most extensive and in-depth history of Medina. His work *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ* is the authority on tribes and genealogies of Medina and is the key source on the Jewish tribes of Arabia as well. His work heavily borrows from other Medinese historians, namely Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (Ibn Zabāla) and ʿUmar b. Shabba.

[53] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*, trans. S. M. Stern and C. R. Barber (1; London: Allen & Unwin, 1967).

Conversion to Judaism in pre-Islamic Arabia…was both a rejection of the old social and spiritual order and a declaration of adoption of a completely new political and social matrix…we shall never know the individual psychological dynamics, but the conversion of large groups to Judaism indicates the dominant social force that Judaism exerted in Arabia.[54]

Newby is quick to demonstrate that the Jews of Arabia, though converting for political motivations, took religious duties of Judaism seriously. He highlights portions of the Mishnah addressing the legality of certain clothing and foodstuffs for those residing in Arabia.[55] Goitein additionally claims that the authentic Jews of Medina, the Banū Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayẓa who were descendents of priests, were by no means learned in religious provisions.[56] I agree with Newby but disagree with Goitein's assertion that the Banū Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayẓa lacked religious knowledge. Goitein ignores numerous references to the religious leaders of the Jews, the *Rabbāniyūn* [ربانيون], in the biographical literature and the Quran as well.[57] For instance the Quran states,

Why do not the learned men (*rabbāniyūn*) and the doctors of law prohibit them from their speaking of what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired... [5:63]

The *Rabbāniyūn*, according to the biographical material, were well versed in religious law and narratives of the Torah. Thus, I believe that the tribes of Banū Naḍīr and Qurayẓa were well versed in Judaic law and belief. Clearly the Jews of Medina were well versed in their Jewish heritage, thus Muhammad's converts of Jewish background were not ignorant of their religion and history.

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[54] Newby, "Jews," 54.
[55] Newby, "Jews," 54-55.
[56] Goitein, 49.
[57] Ibn Isḥāq recounts many stories of Rabbi's, for instance the two Rabbis who test Muḥammad's prophecy, pg 136-139. Qur'ān 3:79, 5:44, 5:63.

Numerous Jews claimed conversion to the religion of Islam, but few were sincere in their conversion, and even fewer were significant figures. ʿAbdullāh b. Sallām, referred to as Ḥuṣayn ibn Sallām before his conversion, was one of the first and most significant converts to Islam. His conversion occurs within the first few months after Muhammad's migration to Medina. Ibn Isḥāq relates that ʿAbdullāh b. Sallām was the son of the Chief Rabbi, but when Muhammad arrived in Medina, ʿAbdullāh b. Sallām had taken over as the Chief Rabbi, which is not unusual for often leadership passed down from father to son.[58] Being the Chief Rabbi it is probable that ʿAbdullāh b. Sallām was quite familiar with the Torah, both its laws, history, the identities of the prophets. ʿUwaym b. Sāʿida, a member of the Umayya b. Zayd of the B. ʿAmr b. ʿAwf, is another Jewish convert to Islam whose knowledge significantly shaped Muhammad. ʿUwaym b. Sāʿida, according to Lecker, had a detailed knowledge of Jewish law. Specifically he was well educated in purification rites.[59] Lecker suspects that the introduction of ritual purification to the early Muslim community was due impart to ʿUwaym b. Sāʿida's conversion to Islam. Both ʿAbdullāh b. Sallām and ʿUwaym b. Sāʿida were known Jewish converts influencing Muhammad, yet one man, his background and understanding of Judaism, has often been overlooked by both the Arab and Western historians.

Zayd b. Thābit, often overlooked by Western scholars, could have been the most influential individual in Muhammad's prophetic career. Zayd was raised in the city of Medina before the migration of Muhammad and his community. Zayd was eleven years old when Muhammad and the Muslim community took up residence in Medina. The date of Zayd's conversion to Islam is unknown. Evidence does suggest that by 624, when he

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[58] Ibn Isḥāq, 241.
[59] Lecker, "Early Islamic Medina," 67.

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was thirteen years old, he was charged, by Muhammad, to record the message of the

Quran. Questions revolving around Zayd's religious background began much later. An

accusation by ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd (d. 33/653),[60] cited by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d.

656/1258),[61] stated that as a child Zayd had two "sidelocks" (*dhuʾābatayn*)[62] and played

amongst the Jewish children of the "literacy (Torah)" school.[63] ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd's

contempt for Zayd's selection as the primary Quran compiler, after Muhammad's death,

led Masʾūd to accuse Zayd of being unworthy of such an honor because Zayd briefly

practiced Judaism while Muhammad lived in Medina. ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd's accusation,

though motivated by bitterness, is verified by other Muslim historians such as ʿUmar b.

Shabba (d. 262/876) in his *Taʾrīkh al-madīna al-munawwarra*.[64] Deniers of Zayd b.

Thābit's Jewish background claim that the crucial characteristic, "sidelocks," was a

common practice of young Arab boys. Lecker dismisses such denials, he points out that

in Arab children would grow these "sidelocks" but among Arabs of Medina this was a

clear sign of a connection to the Jews.[65]

Zayd b. Thābit's Jewish background is also verified by his education. Al-Tabarī's

account of Muhammad requesting Zayd to educate himself in Hebrew and Syriac is

[60]ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd was a companion to the Prophet Muhammad and one of the main Qurʾānic memorizers, along with others such as ʿUbay b. Kaʿb, who were distraught over Zayd's selection as the primary compiler of the Qurʾān.

[61] ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Hība Allāh b. Abī Ḥadīd al-Muʿtazilī the work I am referring to here is his commentary, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha* (Commentary on the Peak of Eloquence).

[62] The Arabic word, *dhuʾābatayn* (ذؤابتين), means "lock, strand" and refers to hair.   The ending *ayn* here indicates the dual.

[63] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, 2d ed., ed. Muhammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1378/1959-1383/1964; reprint Beirut, 1407/1987) cited by Michael Lecker in 'Zayd b. Thābit, "A Jew with Two Sidelocks": Judaism and Literacy in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)', *People, tribes, and society in Arabia around the time of Muhammad* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 259, footnote 4.

[64] ʿUmar b. Shabba, *Taʾrikh al-Madīna al-munawarra* (Mecca, 1399/1979) cited by M. Lecker in "Zayd b. Thābit", 260, footnote 12.

[65] Lecker, "Zayd b. Thābit", 261.

slightly inaccurate.[66] Zayd probably possessed knowledge of Hebrew prior to his

conversion to Islam. Lecker indicates that Zayd was educated by the Banū Māsika in a

school of Torah.[67] Schools of education, under the control of the Jews of Medina, are

also described in Ibn Kathīr's biography of Muhammad.[68] Lecker is clear to note that

being a member of a literacy school did not mean one was undeniably Jewish. Teachers

of the literacy school attempt converting promising students. Hence, not all students may

have been Jewish. Jews were the educators of their own communities but also accepted

young Arab boys from the Medinan tribes. Not being Jewish does not diminish Zayd's

knowledge of Hebrew however. It is interesting that *nabī*, a word of Hebrew/Aramaic

origin, begins to appear more frequently in the Qur'ān after Zayd is promoted to Quranic

record keeper.

Muhammad's arrival in the city of Medina marked a major change in the Quran.

For the first time Muhammad was elected to a position of both spiritual leadership and

overall communal leadership. This new community of Arabs and Jews, unlike his

followers from Mecca, was well versed in the stories of spiritual leaders, i.e. prophets

(*anbiyā'*). Muhammad's encounter with this new community alongside the conversion of

certain men had a deep impact on Muhammad's psyche. In order for his religious

message to gain acceptance, he had to incorporate language which would appeal to his

new audience. His adoption of audience specific words, such as *nabī*, linked both

himself and his religious message to a chain of well-known and revered figures of the

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[66] al-Ṭabarī, *The foundation of the community*, trans. W. Montgomery and M. V.McDonald Watt (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987), 167.

[67] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 3d ed., (Cairo, 1345/1927-1394/1974) cited by M. Lecker in "Zayd b. Thābit", 264, footnote 43.

[68] Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad: a translation of al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, trans. Trevor Le Gassick (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1998), 235.

past.   Therefore, the quantitative escalation of *nabī* was a direct result of Muhammad's encounter with the Jewish and Arab communities of Medina.

Chapter 5 Quantitative-Historical Analysis

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that the language of Muhammad and the Quran shifted when Muhammad and his Meccan companions moved to the city of Medina in 622 C.E. Muslim histories testify to the fact that Muhammad came under heavy Judaic influence during his life in Medina. In this chapter I will quantitatively analyze the terms *nabī*, *rasūl*, and their cognates throughout the Quran in support of the historical testimony. First, I will provide seven chronological schemes of the verses and chapters of the Quran. These charts will display the usage of the Quranic terminology in different time periods. Second, I will provide statistics on the usage of the Quranic terminology in the time periods related to the historical evidence. These statistics will demonstrate an elevate usage of the term *nabī* and its cognates during the same time frame Muhammad had his most intense contact with Jewish community.

W. A. Bijlefeld was the first to undertake a quantitative-historical study of the Quran. His methodology was incomplete and the total amount of material he examined was inadequate. Bijlefeld in his analysis of the terms *rasūl* and *nabī* employed a chronology of the Quranic verses in order to locate the terms *nabī*, *rasūl*, and their cognates in historical time periods.[1] Bijlefeld utilized the chronological dating of the Quran by Nöldeke and Schwally in order to produce a chart which displayed the number of times *rasūl* appeared in the Meccan period of revelation and the Medinan period of revelation.[2] Originally, I used his method to produce a chart which showed the use of

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[1] Bijlefeld, 142.
[2] Ibid., 142.

both *rasūl*, *nabī*, and their plurals, but this approach failed due to the problems inherent to dating the Quran.

Bijlefeld's approach did not take into account the difficulty in accurately dating all of the chapters and verses of the Quran. Many Western scholars, such as Richard Bell and Neal Robinson, understood the difficulty in ascertaining the date of all the Quranic revelations.[3] Dating every verse of the Quran is nearly impossible. However, this does not mean that tracing the chronological occurrence of words, phrases, and themes is impossible. Instead of focusing on one attempt to chronologically date the Quran, like Bijlefeld, I have compiled seven different chronologies of the Quran in one chart.[4] Due to the difficulty of accurately dating every Quranic revelation the researcher requires an approach which will diminish, to the greatest degree, the possibility of misdating a chapter or verse and contextualize to the greatest degree the history of a chapter or verse.

The seven chronological schemes I have compiled are taken from both Muslim and Western scholars. 'Abd al-Kāfi, al-Yaʿqūbī (d.284/897),[5] Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995)[6] and the *Kitāb al-Mabāni*, written by an unidentified author, are four traditional chronologies of the Quran mentioned by Robinson in *Discovering the Qur'an*.[7] Three of these dating schemes, those of 'Abd al-Kāfi, al-Yaʿqūbī, and the *Kitāb al-Mabāni*, were

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[3] Bell, 100-104; Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (2nd ed. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 80.

[4] See pages 80-81.

[5] Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb b. Jaʿfar b. Wahb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Kātib al-ʿAbbāsī (al-Yaʿqūbī) - was a noted scholar of geography and history. His *Ta'rikh* of the world is one of the earliest comprehensive histories besides that of al-Ṭabarī.

[6] Abū al-Faraj Muhammad b. Abī Yaʿqūb Isḥāq al-Warrāq al-Baghdādī b. Nadīm - was commonly known by the name Ibn Nadīm a Shiʿa of either Persian or Arab origin who lived in Baghdad. Though he was well studied in philosophy his most known work *Kitāb al-Fihris* (which Robinson is quoting from) is an index of Arabic books.

[7] Robinson, 69-70, 308 n. 26-29.

transmitted by Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687),[8] the first person to date the Quran, and the

chronology related in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihris* supposedly was constructed by al-Zuhrī (d.

124/742),[9] one of the first major hadith compiler and transmitter.[10] These lists are among

the best known, but other Muslim scholars, such as al-Baydāwī and al-Ṣuyūtī (d.

911/1505), constructed Quran chronologies.[11] These chronologies of the Quran are

important to this survey because many of these schemes were edited and assembled into

the modern chronology of the Quran, the Egyptian Chronology, which I have included

my compilation and can be found in most modern editions of the Quran.

In addition to these five Muslim versions dating the Quran, I have included two

Western Quran chronologies. Muslim scholarship is largely based on previous

chronological lists constructed by Muslim scholars. However, Western scholars used a

variety of approaches to date the chapters of the Quran besides the traditional lists of

Muslim scholars. For example, one Western chronology in my list was constructed by

Nöldeke and Schwally and is the most widely known Western attempt to date the Quran.

Besides utilizing the traditional Muslim chronologies Nöldeke and Schwally assessed

rhyme patter, length of chapters and verses to date the Quran.[12]

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[8] ʿAbd Allāh b. Abbās - was one of the first and most eminent scholars of Islam and a companion of
Muhammad (ṣaḥāba). He was born a few years before the death of Muhammad and lived during the
period of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs (al-Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidūn). Besides being the first to date the
Quran, he had a collection of comments on the Quran and is a primary figure in chains of transmission
(*ʿisnād*) of hadith.

[9] Muhammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī - was another early scholar among the third
generation of Muslims (tābaʿ tābaʿīn). He was said to have an incredible memory and collected hadith
and was the authority on sīra/maghāzī traditions. His student Ibn Isḥāq wrote the first extensive Sīrat on
the life of Muhammad.

[10] Robinson, 70.

[11] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣuyūtī - was born in Cairo. He studied the traditional
sciences of Islam and published over 500 works. He is noted for his works on the early history of the
Muslim community and his and another scholars' commentary on the Quran which is known as the *Tafsīr
al-Jalālayn.*

[12] Robinson, 308 n. 26-29.

The final Western chronology I have included was produced by William Muir. This scheme was similar to the Nöldeke-Schwally arrangement, according to Robinson, but verses pertaining to "nature" were placed in the early stage of revelation.[13] Numerous Western scholars, such as Bell, Hubert Grimme, Arthur Jeffery, and J. M. Rodwell, created their own chronologies of the Quran.[14] Each chronology is similar but also unique because each scholar has his or her own set of criteria to date the revelations. Toward providing an extensive quantitative-historical assessment of the terms *rasūl*, *nabī*, and their cognates I compiled Quran chronologies from both Muslim and Western scholars.

Chronology of the Quran: Periods and Statistics on the Terminology

Key to verifying the theory put forth in this thesis that the language of Muhammad and the Quran changed because of the Judaic influence in Medina are the chronological occurrences of the Quranic terms *nabī*, *rasūl*, and their cognates. The following is a statistical analysis of the Quranic terms in the two time periods of the Quran: the Meccan time period and the Medinan time period. Additionally, this survey will divide the Medinan period of revelation into two time frames: the Early Medinan period and the Late Medinan period. Dividing the Medinan time periods will further support the idea Judaic traditions and stories influence Muhammad and the Quran.

Before undertaking the statistical evaluation of Quranic terminology it is necessary to identify and define the two key periods of revelation. The Meccan period and the Medinan period are the two primary time frames of Quranic revelation. These two periods were recognized by both Muslim and Western scholars. The names of these

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[13] Bell, 101.

[14] Mohammad Khalifa, *The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism* (London ; New York: Longman, 1983), 224-229; Bell, 110-113.

periods do not denote the places of revelation but time frames. Revelations occurring between the years of 610 C.E. until 622 C.E. are classified as Meccan and revelations occurring between the years 622 C.E. until 632 C.E. are Medinan.

Content, structure, and themes are a few of the aspects a scholar would examine to determine the historical time frame of revelation. For example, the Medinan revelations often contain legal content while the Meccan revelations focus on "existential issues" and "sacred history."[15] The Meccan period of revelation consists of anywhere from eighty to ninety chapters and the Medinan period consists of thirty to forty chapters. However, chapters of the Quran are not monolithic; occasionally Meccan revelations were placed into a Medinan chapter and vice versa.[16] No single chapter appears to clearly divide the Meccan period from the Medinan period, but most chronologies place *sūra al-Baqara* as the first Medinan chapter of the Quran. The wealth of material in the Meccan revelations caused many Western scholars to further divide the Meccan period of the Quran into three periods, an early, middle, and late period.[17] This division is noteworthy but is not important to this survey of Quranic terminology.

The first step in establishing a quantitative-historical assessment is locating the Quranic terminology in the Meccan and Medinan periods of revelation. I examined each occurrence the words *nabī*, *nabīyūn*, *anbiyā'*, *rasūl*, *rusul*, *mursāl*, and *muraslūn* were mentioned in a Quranic verse. I examined the seventy five overall occurrences of *nabī* and its cognates and the three hundred and sixty seven occurrences of *rasūl* and its cognates. The first objective was to determine the percentage that *nabī* was used in the

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[15] Michael A. Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: the Early Revelations* (Ashland, Or.: White Cloud Press, 1999), 14.

[16] See pages 80-81, the Egyptian and Nöldeke-Schwally chronologies specify Median chapters containing Meccan verses and Meccan chapters containing Medinan verses.

[17] Robinson, 77-78.

Meccan and Medinan periods of revelation. This first study revealed that *nabī* and its cognates were used only eighteen times in the Meccan period of revelation but was used fifty six times in the Medinan period of revelation. Thus, in the Meccan period *nabī* and its cognate's represent twenty four percent of its total usage of the word over the entirety of revelation while and seventy five percent of its total usage is located in the Medinan time frame.

    Rasūl and its cognates are located in the Quran nearly three times more often than *nabī* and its cognates. In the Meccan period there are one hundred and forty nine occurrences of *rasūl* or one its cognates and in the Medinan period there are two hundred and eighteen. In terms of percentage, *rasūl* and its cognates represent forty percent of its entire usage in the Meccan period and fifty nine percent in the Medina period.   These percentages can be best demonstrated in the following chart, **5.1**.

Table 5.1

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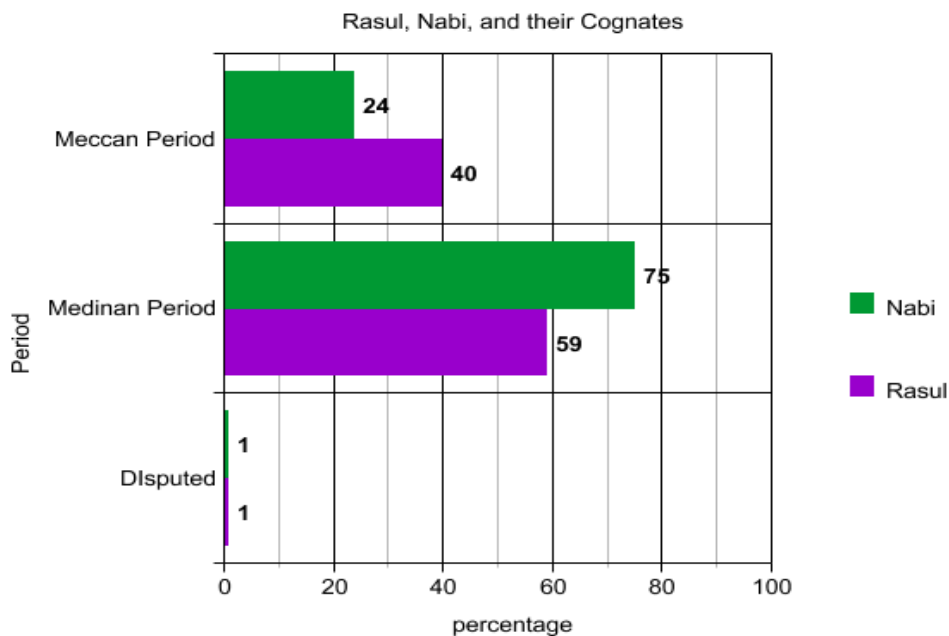
This chart clearly indicates that *nabī* and its cognates are prominent in the Medinan period of revelation. "Disputed" percentages indicate that at least two of the seven chronologies I have examined do not agree on the placement of the chapter or verse in which the terms *rasūl* or *nabī* are mentioned.

This chart raises two important questions. First, if I have argued that *nabī* is a term introduced into the vocabulary of Muhammad and the Quran then why does *nabī* appear in the Meccan period? Second, if I have argued that *nabī* is the eminent term in the Medinan period of revelation why do *rasūl* and its cognates occur in such a high percentage in that period as well?

In response to the first question I have argued for the eminence of *nabī* and its cognates in the Medinan period, this does not denote that *nabī* was an unknown or unused term in the Meccan period of revelation. The middle and later stages of the Meccan revelations focused on stories of the prophets who preceded Muhammad.[18] Figures, such as Abraham, Moses, and other prophets (*anbiyā'*), are present in the middle and later stages of Meccan revelation. Newby asserts that the stories of Jewish prophets and kings were known throughout Arabia.[19] Because of Muhammad's many probable encounters with both Christians and Jews before his migration to Medina there is no doubt he encountered the term *nabī* or one of its cognates. Jeffery, however, points out that the stories of the prophets in the Medinan period of revelation are "vague."[20] Knowing the relevance of a story does not equate knowledge of the linguistic features at work. Even if *nabī* was a concept known and understood by Muhammad the term would not have resonated with Meccan Arabs as it would with the Jews of Medina. This chart

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[18] Bell, 108; Tottoli, 7; Jomier, 70; Muir, 329; Jeffery, "Scripture," 47.
[19] Newby, 85.
[20] Jeffery, "Scripture," 47.

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demonstrates *nabī* was not used as often in the Meccan period and that is probably

because *nabī* was not as well understood to Meccan Arabs. *Rasūl* is mentioned more

often in this stage of revelation because it was the most familiar term to the Meccan

residents.

In response to the second question, this chart seems to contradict the theory that

nabī is the only eminent term in the Medinan period because of the high usage of *rasūl* in

the Medinan period as well. A further study of the Medinan period is required in order to

understand the usage of *nabī* versus *rasūl* in the later portion of the Quran. *Nabī* and its

cognates were adopted into the language of Muhammad and the Quran for the purpose of

reaching a specific audience. That audience was the Arabs and the Jews of Medina.

This, however, was not a static audience and over a period of seven years each the major

Jewish tribes, the Banū Naḍīr, Banū Qaynuqā', and Banū Qurayẓa, were expelled from

Mecca.[21] I believe that after the expulsion of the final Jewish tribe from Medina a second

shift in the language of the Quran and Muhammad occurred. Therefore, the Medinan

period of revelation should be divided into two periods of time, the Early Medinan period

and the Late Medinan period.

Dividing the Medina revelations required a revelation which could be oriented

historically. Coincidently, *sūra al-Ahzāb*, dated to the year 627 C.E., is one the half

dozen Quran verses most scholars agree can be accurately oriented in history.[22]

Furthermore, this chapter was revealed during the removal of the last major Jewish tribe

from Medina. Therefore, all the chapters following *sūra al-Ahzāb* I classified as Late

Medinan and all the chapters following Meccan period and prior to the Late Medinan

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[21] Watt, "Medina," 208-219.
[22] Robinson, 60.

period are Early Medinan. The Early Medinan period spans the years of 622 C.E. until 627 C.E. and the Late Medinan period from 627 C.E. until the death of Muhammad in 632 C.E. The Early Medinan period is the time frame in which Muhammad's exposure and communication with Jews reached its peak.

Dividing the Medinan period into two periods of revelation yields statistics supporting the idea that Judaic influence and a Jewish audience shaped the vocabulary of Muhammad and the Quran. *Nabī* or one its cognates are mentioned forty six times in the Early Medinan period while only seven uses occur in the Late Medinan period. Three uses of *nabī* or one of its cognates are disputed between the Western and Muslim scholars. These numbers are equivalent to the following percentages. *Nabī* or its cognates represent eighty two percent of its total Medinan usage in the Early Medinan period of revelation. In the Late Medinan period *nabī* and its cognates represent thirteen percent of the total usage and five percent is disputed.

The same process of examination was applied to *rasūl* and its cognates. *Rasūl* and its forms are mentioned fifty seven times in the Early Medinan period of revelation. In the Late Medinan period *rasūl* or one its cognates is found in the chapters of the Quran one hundred and twenty seven times. Percentage wise, *rasūl* is used twenty six percent of the time in the Early Medinan period and fifty eight percent of its total usage in the Late Medinan period. Disputed historical occurrence of terms is higher for the term *rasūl* and its cognates. *Rasūl* is found thirty four times in a variety of Quran chapters whose historical placement has been debated by Western and Muslim chronologies. These percentages are illustrated in the following chart, **5.2** (next page).

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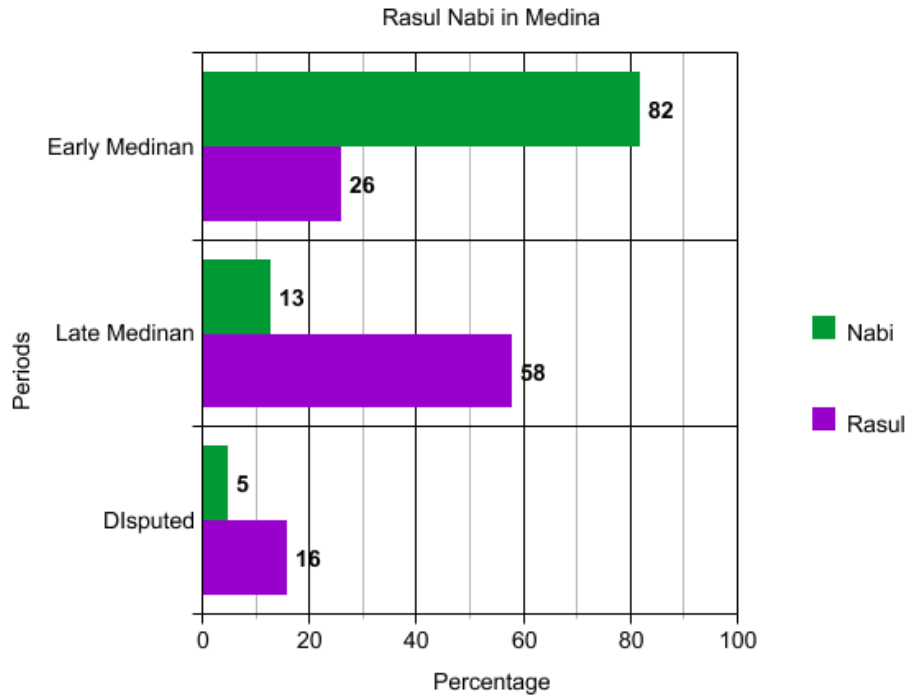
Table 5.2

This chart clearly demonstrates that the use of *nabī* reached its apex during the
Early Medinan period of revelation, the time in which Muhammad had the largest Jewish
audience and the greatest exposure to Judaic traditions. During the period of
Muhammad's large Jewish audience the term *rasūl* and its cognates reaches its lowest
percent in overall usage. If Muhammad began adopting a vocabulary which would
appeal to a certain group of people, then he would no longer need to extensively use a
general vocabulary. In other words, a general term for divinely inspired individuals, i.e.
rasūl, was not necessary for a community that understood and venerated individuals who
were divinely inspired, i.e. *nabī.*

Perhaps the most unique dimension illustrated in this chart is the usage of *rasūl*
during the Early and Late Medinan periods of revelation. This may appear puzzling but
looking at the socio-historical setting of Muhammad can provide clues as to the revival of
the term *rasūl.* First, the large Jewish audience to whom Muhammad had been

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communicating with had been removed from Medina by 627 C.E. Muhammad, therefore, could no longer heavily rely on specialized terminology, *nabī*. As in the middle and late Meccan periods, *nabī* and its cognates were still used into the Late Medinan period but became secondary terms. Secondly, a new audience to the message of Muhammad and the Quran was the major reason for the repositioning of *rasūl* as the eminent term in the Late Medinan period.

As the stature of Muhammad grew during the final five years of his life, Arab tribes throughout Arabia sought alliances with the Muslim community. The majority of these alliances were made with the Muslim communities following two major events: the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiya in 628 C.E. and the Opening of Mecca in 631 C.E. In 628 C.E. the Muslims attempted to enter Mecca to accomplish a pilgrimage to the Kaʿba but the Meccans requested a treaty with the Muslims to postpone the pilgrimage until 629 C.E. Following this event many of the tribes of Arabia realized the Muslims, not the Meccan tribes of the Quraysh, were the new dominant group of Arabia. Watt records that after al-Ḥudaybiya the tribes of Muzayna, Sulaym, Aslam, Ghifār, Juhayna, Ashjaʿ, Khuzāʿa, Ḍamra, Layth, Saʿd b. Bakr, Tamīm, Qays, and Asad had all aligned themselves with the Muslim community. These tribes then aided Muhammad and the Muslims to peacefully retake Mecca in 632 C.E.

With the Muslims retaking of Mecca and the end of Qurayshī dominance, the remainder of Arabia saw Muhammad and the Muslim as the most powerful group. Thus, one year following the victory at Mecca tribes from every district of Arabia began sending delegates to Muhammad seeking tribal alliances. Ibn Isḥāq calls this year, 631 C.E., the "Year of the Deputations," and recorded the names of eight deputations sent by

Arab tribes to Muhammad: B. Saʿd, ʿAbd al-Qays, B. Ḥānifa, Ṭayyiʾ Adī b. Ḥātim, Farwa, B. Zubayd, Kinda, al-Azd, Ḥimyar, and B. Ḥārith.[23] In *Muhammad at Medina*, Watt names over twenty Arab tribes from every district of Arabia that formed alliances with the Muhammad.[24] These alliances were mainly political and conversion to Islam was probably a nominal act however this does not negate the fact that Muhammad spread his religious message among these Bedouin. Like the Quraysh, it is likely that the Bedouin were familiar with the stories of the Biblical prophets. But, it is highly unlikely that the Bedouin understood the depth of the meaning *nabī*. Even if the Bedouin understood the meaning of *nabī* it is doubtful *nabī* had the same intrinsic value to the Bedouin Arabs as it did for the Jews of Medina.

These major shifts of vocabulary represent sociolinguistic phenomena. Sociolinguistics, put simply, is the effect that society has upon language choice.[25] Sociolinguists believe that people do not need to shift language to communicate, but if someone hopes to become socially assimilated then shifting ones language pattern becomes necessary. Muhammad did not want to assimilate with the Jews, but assimilate his position of spiritual and political leadership into a context the Jews knew and admired, that of prophecy and prophets. These shifts of language were not mere coincidences either. Speakers, according to sociolinguists, are "active, knowledgeable, purposeful agents who make choices whenever they use language."[26] I believe these charts indicate that Quranic language underwent a necessary and purposeful shift needed to appeal to a different society of people. To the Arabs who did not know the depth or

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[23] Ibn Isḥāq, 628-644.
[24] Watt, "Medina," 81-82.
[25] Florian Coulmas, *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Oxford, UK.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 11.
[26] Coulmas, 7.

importance of divinely inspired individuals, *rasūl* became the general term used by Muhammad and the Quran. But for the brief period of Jewish exposure in the city of Medina *nabī*'s frequency in the Quran reaches its pinnacle.

The idea that external circumstances influenced the language of Quran could be problematic for Muslims. Acknowledging the influence of the Jewish community may lead one to devalue the essential aspect of Divine authorship of the Quran. However, the necessity of relating to individuals in an easily understandable mode is a well known concept in the Islamic tradition. The Quran and hadith support the process of shifting or adopting vocabulary in order to facilitate communication. The Quran relates the obligation to speak with individuals in terms which they may comprehend. One example of this idea is related in *sūra al-Naḥl*, "**Invite [them] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good spiritual counsel, and debate with them [in a manner] which is best…"** [16:125]. Even further to the point is a hadith related by 'Ali stating, "Speak to people in a manner they understand. Or would you like Allah and His Messenger to be denied?"[27] This further supports the idea that the language of Quran and Muhammad shifted in order to reach a community whose understanding of the previous divinely inspired individuals was vaster then the Arab tribes.

The quantitative-historical evidence presented here clearly indicates a direct connection between the term *nabī* and the Jews of Medina. *Nabī* is used throughout the Quran but its usage reaches its highest point during the Medinan period of revelation. These statistics also demonstrate the connection between *rasūl* and the Arabian tribes. When the target audience of Muhammad and the Quran were the Arabs then *rasūl* came

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[27] Muhammad b. Ismā'īl Bukhārī, *a-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book 3, section 49, number 124, http://hadith.al-islam.com/Display/Display.asp?Doc=0&Rec=220

the dominant term. Vocabulary of Muhammad and the Quran reflects socio-historical

circumstances in each historical time frame.

Conclusion

Prophets and messengers have always been central aspects of Islamic discourse. The terms *rasūl* and *nabī* will therefore remain key elements of this discourse. This thesis has both explored the aspects of former scholarly discourse while adding new perspectives toward conceptualizing the function of *nabī* and *rasūl* within the Quranic language. *Nabī* and *rasūl* cannot be analyzed solely upon their nature and functions as specified in the Quran. The socio-historical context of Muhammad and the Quran illustrates importance of *nabī* and *rasūl*.

The Quranic materials associated with the terms *rasūl* and *nabī* revealed the difficulties in determining a clear division from those figures who are *rasūl* and those who are *nabī*. Illustrating the men and the attributes of the category of *rasūl* and *nabī* demonstrated that the Quran did not rigorously separate one category from the other. Attributes of the *rasūl* are sometimes mentioned alongside the prophets and characteristics of the *nabī* are mentioned in conjunction with the messengers.

The lack of a clear distinction within the Quranic context led many Muslim and then Western scholars to study the terms *nabī* and *rasūl* in the hopes of determining which term should be regarded as the eminent term. Mainstream Muslim scholarship concluded that *rasūl* is the term which is specific while *nabī* is a general term for divinely inspired individuals. Further research into the theories of Muslim scholars on the topic of Prophetology should be undertaken for two reasons. First, only a fraction of the texts pertaining to the discourse of *rasūl* and *nabī* have been translated. The examination of more texts would greatly contribute to the understanding of this discourse. Second, it

would be interesting to research further the claims of Western scholars who assert that the Muslim mainstream view of the eminence of *rasūl* is modeled after Christian tenets on apostleship and prophecy.

Western and Muslim scholars neglected a key approach to understanding the relevance of *rasūl* and *nabī*. Few Western scholars attempt to examine the terms *rasūl* and *nabī* within a historical context. A quantitative-historical study demonstrates the eminence of Quranic terminology over a specific period. The homeland of Muhammad's socio-historical setting had long been exposed to monotheistic traditions. However, contact with a deeply rooted monotheistic tradition reached its peak after Muhammad's migration to Medina. The Jewish community influenced the language of Muhammad and the Quran and this was evident in the quantitative assessment of the terms *rasūl* and *nabī*.

The statistical analysis of the Quranic terminology showed two shifts in the language of Muhammad and the Quran over time. Whenever the majority of Muhammad's audiences were primarily Arabs of Mecca or Bedouin Arabs *rasūl* was utilized as the term designating a divinely inspired individual. During the first seven years in Medina Muhammad's social matrix radically changed. Muhammad's exposure to Judaic influence in the Medinan period led to a major shift in vocabulary. *Nabī* and its cognates were used to the greatest degree when Muhammad was living in Medina amongst the Jews.

Vocabulary pertaining to divinely inspired individuals demonstrated fluctuations over the twenty three year period of Muhammad's revelation. Among the Meccan Arabs *rasūl* was the primary word used to illustrate both Muhammad's status and the Biblical prophets. Following the migration to Medina, *nabī* replaced *rasūl* as the eminent term.

Finally, a resurgence in the eminence of *rasūl* occurred after the expulsion of the major Jewish tribes and Muhammad's consolidation of Arab tribal allegiances. These radical shifts cannot be judged as coincidences; rather these are conscious alterations in the language of Muhammad and the Quran, a sociolinguistic phenomenon. The value of Muhammad's message heightened when he was able to express his role and authority using terms and concepts familiar to his sociological setting.

This study of the two key terms of Quranic vocabulary has brought to light numerous aspects of the Quranic discourse warranting further research. First, it would be interesting to study the usage of *rasūl* and *nabī* in the traditions of Muhammad, hadith. However, such a study would be difficult in that the language of the hadith was not as important as the meaning which probably resulted in the terms *rasūl* and *nabī* being used interchangeably. Second, it would be interesting to study the chronological usage of the names of the prophets and other terms. If my theory that Judaic vocabulary and concepts influence Muhammad, then words of Judaic origin and prophets of great significance to the Jews, like Moses, would appear in the Medinan period of revelation as well. The discourse on the Quranic terms for divinely inspired figures is by no means complete.
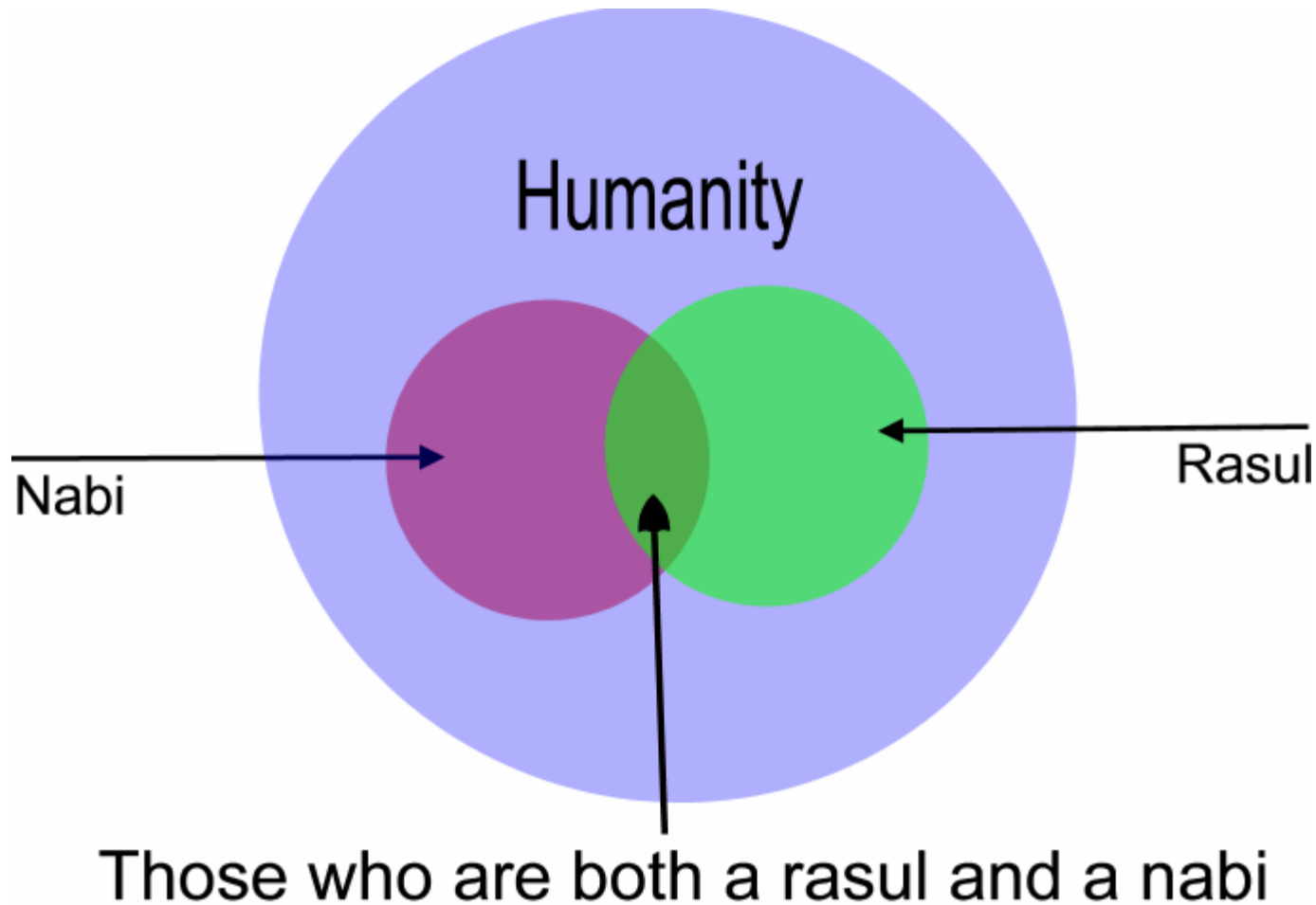
Figure One: Qur'anic scheme

One can see that Prophets and Messengers are both part of humanity but represent a special sub-class of humanity. This particular scheme is derived from the Quranic data. Here one can see there are certain people only identified as prophets, some only identified as messengers, and then at the intersection of the two are the few men who are both messengers and prophets.
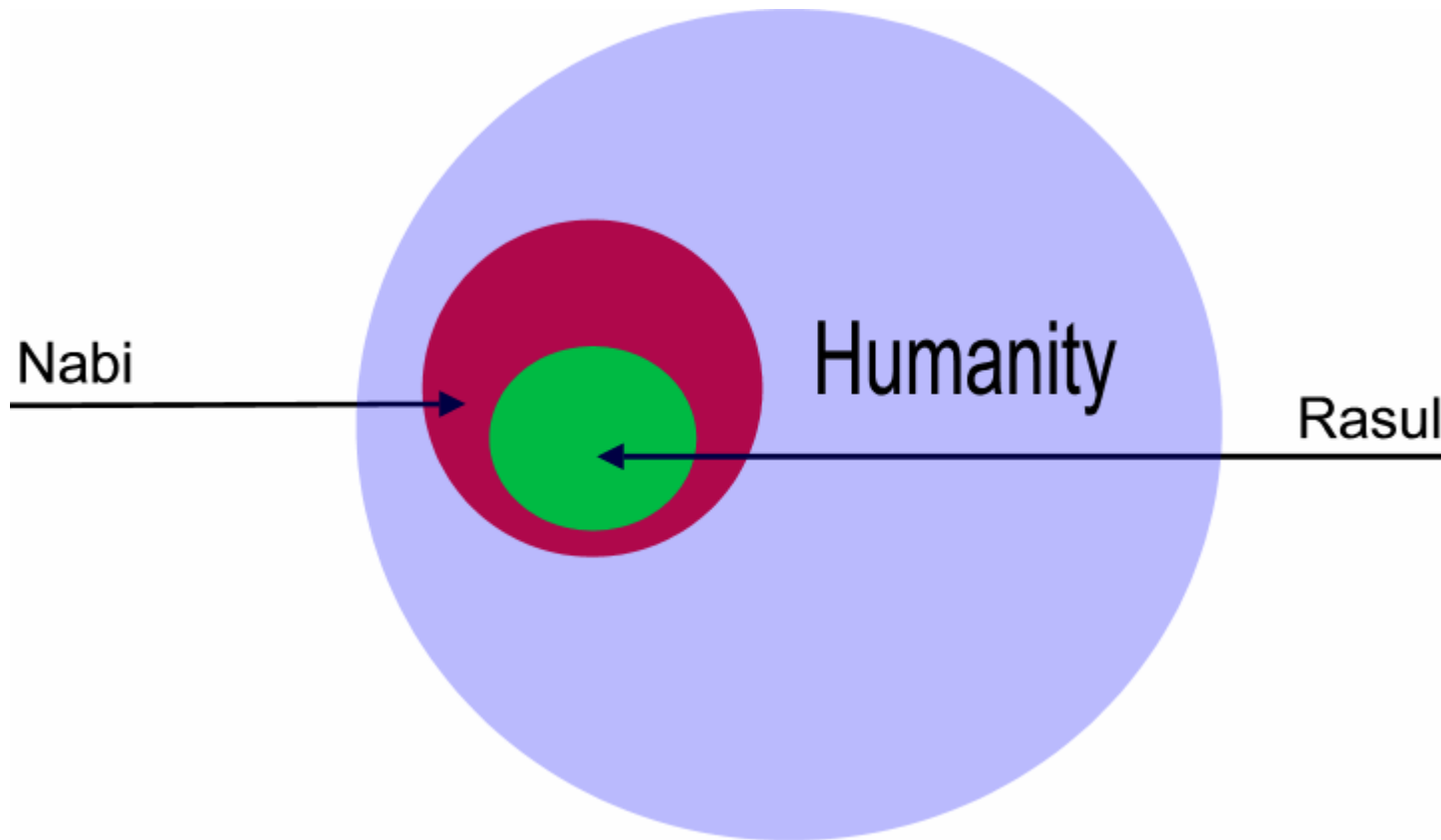
Figure Two: Qur'anic Commentators Scheme

This scheme reveals that Prophets are a special class of individuals within humanity. Furthermore, messengers are a special class of people within the prophets. Hence the key phrase of the Quranic commentators, "Every messenger is a prophet, but not every prophet is a messenger."

| Qur'an	Abd al-Kāfī	Kitāb al-Mabānī	al-Ya'qūbi	Ibn Nadīm	Egyptian	Noeldeke-Schwally	Muir
al-Fātiha (1)	96	96	96	96:1-5	96	96	103
al-Baqara (2)	68	68	68	68	68 (17-33, 48-50)	74 (31)	100
al-'Imrān (3)	73	73	93	73	73 (10, 20)	111	99
An-Nisā' (4)	74	74	73	74	74	106	91
Al-Mā'ida (5)	111	111	74	111	1	108	106
Al-'An'ām (6)	81	81	1	81	11 (12, 17, 114)	104	1
Al-'A'rāf (7)	87	87	111	87	81	107	101
Al-'Anfāl (8)	92	92	81	94	87	102	95
al-Tawba (9)	89	89	87	103	92	105	102
Yūnus (10)	93	93	92	89	89	92	104
Hūd (11)	94	94	89	93	93	90	82
Yūsuf (12)	103	55	94	92	94	94	92
al-Ra'd (13)	100	103	55	100	103	93	105
Ibrāhīm (14)	108	108	103	108	100	97	89
al-Hijr (15)	102	102	108	102	108	86	90
al-Nahl (16)	107	107	102	107	102	91	93
Banī Isrā'īl (17)	109	105	107	109	107	80	94
Al-Kahf (18)	105	109	105	105	109	68	108
Maryam (19)	113	112	53	112	105	87	96
Tā-Ha (20)	114	53	80	113	113	95	112
al-Anbiyā (21)	112	80	97	114	114	103 (3)	74
al-Hajj (22)	53	97	91	53	112	85	111
al-Mū-minūn (23)	80	22	85	80	53 (32)	73 (20)	87
al-Nūr (24)	97	91	95	97	80	101	97
al-Furqān (25)	91	85	106	91	97	99	88
al-Shu'arā (26)	85	95	101	85	91	82	80
al-Naml (27)	95	106	75	95	85	81	81
al-Qisas (28)	106	101	104	106	95	53 (23, 26-32)	84
al-'Ankabūt (29)	101	75	77	101	106	84 (25)	86
al-Rūm (30)	75	104	50	75	101	100	110
Luqmān (31)	104	77	90	104	75	79	85
al-Sajda (32)	77	50	86	77	104	77	83
al-Ahzāb (33)	50	90	54	50	77 (48)	78	78
Sabā (34)	90	86	38	90	50 (38)	88	77
Fatir (35)	86	54	7	55	90	89	76
Yā-Sīn (36)	54	38	72	72	86	75 (16-19)	75
al-Sāffāt (37)	38	7	36	36	54 (44-46)	83	70
Sād (38)	7	72	25	7	38	69	109
al-Zumar (39)	72	36	35	25	7 (163-170)	51 (24-60)	107
Mūmin (40)	36	25	19	35	72	52	55
Hā-mīn (41)	25	35	20	19	36 (45)	56 (75-96)	56
al-Shūrā (42)	35	19	26	20	25 (68-70)	70	67
al-Zukhruf (43)	19	20	27	56	35	55 (8-9, 33{except last 5 words})	53
al-Dukhān (44)	20	26	28	26	19 (58, 71)	112	32
al-Jāthiya (45)	56	27	17	27	20 (130)	109	39
al-Ahqāf (46)	26	28	10	28	56 (81)	113	73
Muhammad (47)	27	17	11	17	26 (197, 224-227)	114	79
al-Fath (48)	28	10	12	11	27	1	54
al-Hujrāt (49)	17	11	15	12	28 (52-55, 85)	54	34
Qāf (50)	10	12	6	10	17 (26, 32, 57, 73-80)	37	31
al-Zāriyāt (51)	11	15	37	15	10 (40, 94-96)	71	69
al-Tūr (52)	12	6	31	37	11	76	68
al-Najm (53)	15	37	40	31*	12 (1-3, 7)	44	41
al-Qamar (54)	6	31	41	23	15 (87)	50	71
al-Rahmān (55)	37	34	42	34	6 (20, 23, 91, 93, 114, 141, 151-153)	20	52
al-Wāqi'a (56)	31	39	43	21	37	26	50
al-Hadīd (57)	34	40	34	39	31 (27-29)	15	45
al-Mujādila (58)	39	41	39	40	34 (6)	19	44
Al-Hashr (59)	40	42	44	41	39 (52-54)	38	37
al-Mumtahina (60)	41	43	45	42	40 (56)	36	30
As-Saff (61)	42	44	46	43	41	43	26
al-Jumua (62)	43	45	51	44	42 (23-25, 27)	72	15
al-Munāfiqūn (63)	44	46	88	45	43 (54)	67	51
al-Taghābun (64)	45	51	18	46*	44	23	46
al-Talāq (65)	46	88	16	51	45 (14)	21	72
al-Tahrīm (66)	51	18	71	88	46 (10, 15, 35)	25	35
al-Mulk (67)	88	16	14	18*	51	17	36
al-Qalam (68)	18	71	21	6*	88	27	19
al-Hāqqa (69)	16	14	23	16*	18 (28, 83-101)	18	18
al-Ma'ārij (70)	71	21	13	71	16 (126-128)	32	27
Nūh (71)	14	23	52	14	71	41	42

al-Jinn (72)	21	32	67	32	14 (28)	45	40
Al-Muzzammil (73)	23	52	69	52	21	16 (41. 110-125)	38
al-Muddaththir (74)	32	67	70	67	23	30	25
al-Qiyāma (75)	52	69	78	69	32 (16-20)	11	20
al-Insān (76)	67	70	79	70	52	14 (35-39)	43
al-Mursalāt (77)	69	78	82	78	67	12	12
al-Naba (78)	70	79	30	79	69	40	11
al-Nāzi'āt (79)	78	82	29	82	70	28	10
Abasa (80)	79	84	83	84	78	39	14
al-Takwīr (81)	82	30	2	30	79	29 (1-11, 49, 69)	6
al-Infitār (82)	84	29	8	29	82	31 (11-18, 25-28)	64
al-Tatfīf (83)	30	83	3	83	84	42	28
al-Inshiqāq (84)	29	13	59	54	30 (17)	10	23
al-Burūj (85)	83	2	33	86	29 (2-11)	34	22
al-Tāriq (86)	2	8	24	X	83	35	21
al-A'lā (87)	8	3	60	X	2	7 (157)	17
al-Ghāshiya (88)	3	33	48	X	8 (30-36)	46	16
al-Fajr (89)	33	60	4	X	3	6 (91-94)	13
al-Balad (90)	60	4	22	X	33	13	29
al-Shams (91)	4	99	57	X	60	2 (163-171, 200-202, 204-207)	7
al-Layl (92)	99	57	47	X	4	98	113
al-Dhuhā (93)	57	47	76	X	99	64	114
al-Inshirāh (94)	47	76	65	X	57	62	2
At-Tīn (95)	13	65	98	X	47 (13)	8	47
al-Alaq (96)	55	98	62	X	13	47	57
al-Qadr (97)	76	59	32	X	55	3	8
al-Bayyina (98)	65	110	40	X	76	61	58
al-Zalzāl (99)	98	63	63	X	65	57	65
al-ādiyāt (100)	59	24	58	X	98	4	98
al-Qāri'a (101)	110	58	49	X	59	65	62
al-Takāthur (102)	24	49	66	X	24	59	59
al-'Asr (103)	22	66	64	X	22	33	24
al-Humaza (104)	63	62	61	X	63	63	63
al-Fīl (105)	58	64	5	X	58	24	48
Quraysh (106)	49	61	9	X	49	58	61
al-Mā'ūn (107)	66	48	110	X	66	22 (1-24, 43-55, 59-64, 66-74)	4
al-Kawthar (108)	62	5	56	X	62	48	3
al-Kāfirūn (109)	64	9	100	X	64	66	5
An-Nasr (110)	61	56	113	X	61	60	33
al-Lahab (al-Masad) (111)	48	100	114	X	48	110	60
al-'Ikhlās (112)	5	113	X	X	5	49	66
al-Falaq (113)	9	114	X	X	9	9 (12-21)	49
al-Nās (114)	X	X	X	X	110	5 (certain ayah are Meccan)	9

KEY

Black Letters Indicate Meccan Surah's

Green Letters Indicate Medina Surah's

Pink Letters Indicate Early Meccan Surah's

Blue Letters Indicate Middle Meccan Surah's

Red Letters Indicate Late Meccan Surah's

Orange Letters Indicate unspecified

Additions to the Meccan Surah's

Numbers in Parantheses indicate later or
early additions to a Surah=for example
 20 (8) indicates that Surah 20 is Meccan but
that ayah 8 is Medinan added to the Meccan
chapter, while 33 (12-28) demonstrates Surah 33
is Medinan but ayah 12-28 are of Meccan origin

NOTES

1. The Fatiha is unidentified chronologically in the lists of 'Abd al-Kāfī and in the work Kitāb al-Mabān

2. al-Ya'qūbi list does not identify the chronological placement of Surah's 84, 109, and 112

3. Ibn Nadīm's list outlines the Meccan Surah's but does not indicate the chronology of the Medinan Surah's
which are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 22, 24, 33, 38, 47, 48, 49, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 76,
remaining ayah of Surah 96, 98, 99, and 110.

* - Chapters contain verses which were revealed in the Medinan Period

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