

An Academic and Historical Refutation of Claims that Islam and the Qur'an Originated under Abbasid Construction: A Multi-Disciplinary Examination of Textual, Archaeological, and External Evidence

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Introduction

This document presents a comprehensive academic refutation of claims asserting that Islam and its primary sources were fabricated, systematised, or retroactively constructed under Abbasid authority in the eighth and ninth centuries. It includes two components: (1) a concise prefatory overview summarising key material, textual, and archaeological evidence supporting Islam's emergence in the seventh century, and (2) a full-length detailed paper comprising an introduction, literature review, methodology, fifteen dedicated analytical chapters, conclusion, and APA 7 reference list.

The refutation is organised around the following allegations, each addressed individually in the core body of the paper:

- (a) that Islam did not exist as a coherent religion in the seventh century and only crystallised during the Abbasid era;
- (b) that Abbasid political authorities deliberately constructed Islam to legitimise their rule;
- (c) that the Qur'anic text was composed, edited, or finalised in the eighth or ninth century under Abbasid patronage;
- (d) that early Islamic history was retrospectively fabricated to project antiquity and authority onto Abbasid institutions;
- (e) that the Hadith corpus was largely invented during the Abbasid period to support

emerging legal and theological schools;

(f) that chains of transmission (*isnāds*) were artificially back-projected to the Prophet Muhammad to legitimise later doctrines;

(g) that Islamic law (Shari‘a) is an Abbasid-era construction rather than a continuation of Prophetic practice;

(h) that the Islamic concept of prophethood was modelled on earlier Judeo-Christian traditions during late antiquity;

(i) that the Islamic sacred narrative was shaped through interaction with Syriac, Jewish, and Christian literary traditions;

(j) that the life of the Prophet Muhammad was mythologised and expanded in Abbasid times to serve ideological needs;

(k) that Qur’anic variant readings indicate prolonged textual instability until the Abbasid period;

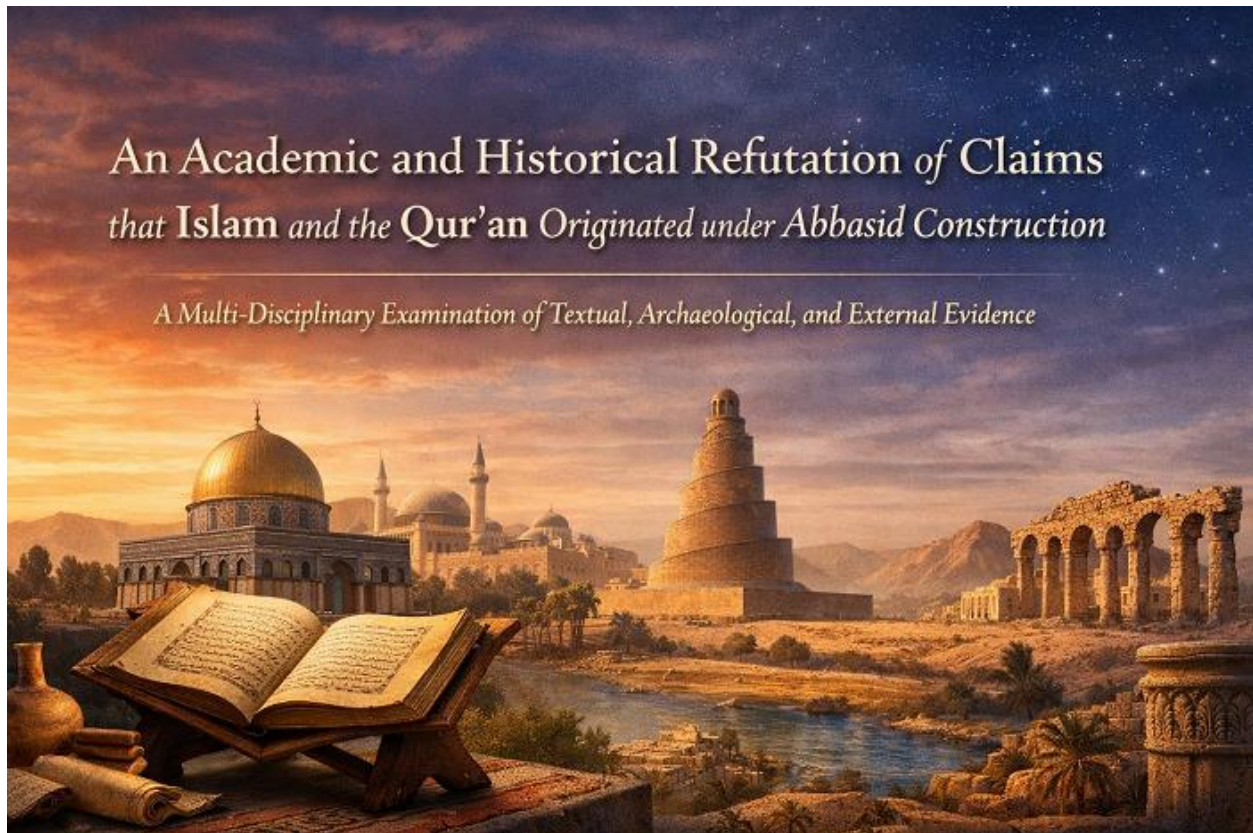
(l) that Muslim historians fabricated early Islamic conquests to explain the rapid expansion of the empire;

(m) that material evidence for early Islam is insufficient and suggests a later historical origin;

(n) that non-Islamic contemporary sources contradict the traditional Islamic account of Islam’s emergence; and

(o) that the notion of a unified Muslim community (*ummah*) was an Abbasid political invention.

The purpose of the present work is to test each claim against peer-reviewed Western research, manuscript evidence, archaeological artefacts, inscriptions, numismatic data, and contemporaneous non-Muslim records, thereby determining whether the revisionist narrative is historically credible or whether the traditional timeline of Islamic origins remains the most strongly evidenced.



Preface

Refuting “Late Fabrication” Claims: Historical and Textual Evidence

Early Qur’anic manuscripts. Radiocarbon-dated Qur’an fragments demonstrate that the Islamic scripture was in fixed form long before the Abbasid era. For example, leaves of the **Sana’a palimpsest** have been dated to the late 7th century CE, and the famous **Birmingham manuscript** pages to AD 568–645[1][2]. As Sadeghi & Goudarzi (2012) summarize, analysis of these texts shows the Qur’anic suras “were formed earlier” than ca. 650 CE[3]. In other words, the canonical text was essentially complete by the end of the Rashidun period. Minor spelling/diacritical variants do appear in early codices, but these are expected scribal differences, not evidence of wholesale late redaction[3][2]. In sum, the palaeographic data firmly contradict any notion that the Qur’an was concocted under the Abbasids.

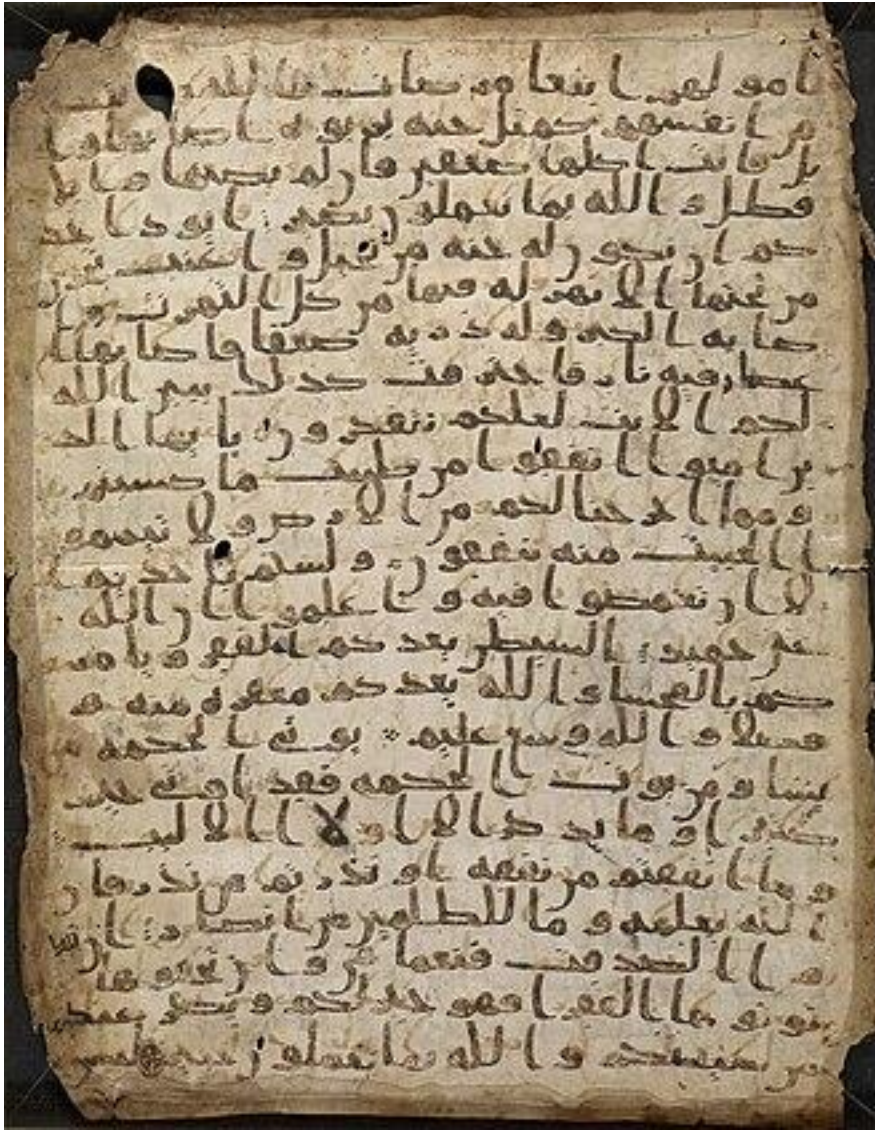


Figure: A page from the Sana'a palimpsest (Yemen), an early Hijazi Qur'an manuscript. Radiocarbon dating places such texts in the 1st–2nd Islamic century (7th c. CE)[1][3].

Arab inscriptions and documents (7th c.). A wealth of archaeological inscriptions, coins and papyri from the mid-7th century mention Islamic figures and phrases, anchoring Islam firmly in that period. For example, a graffiti inscription dated 24 AH/644 CE reads, “In the name of God, I, Zuhayr, wrote [this] at the time ‘**Umar died** in the year twenty-four”[4]. Dated documents (Egyptian papyri 21–22 AH) begin with **Bism Allāh** (“In the name of God”) and even a Greek gloss *eirēnē soi apo theou* (“peace be upon you from God”), showing that Islamic formulas were in official use by 642 CE[5]. A **tombstone** dated AH 31/652 CE bears the full basmala and a Quranic dedication (“When you read this [book], ask forgiveness for him and say ‘Amin’”)[6]. Umayyad-period coins and public inscriptions likewise include Islamic formulas and titles (e.g. *Amīr al-Mu'minin*). Even a dated Jerusalem inscription of

652 CE invokes “the protection of God and guarantee of His Messenger” [7], implicitly acknowledging Muhammad’s role by mid-7th c. These non-Muslim-controlled artefacts uniformly attest to the historic, 7th-century presence of Muslim institutions, contrary to any theory of Abbasid invention.

Non-Muslim historical references. Critically, contemporary non-Muslim sources do not contradict the Islamic account; in fact, they generally corroborate it. Late-7th-century Syriac, Armenian and Byzantine chronicles (e.g. Sebeos, John of Nikiu, Theophanes) describe Arab conquests and the appearance of a new Arab leader, consistent with Islamic narratives. No credible academic source reports a wholesale contradiction between Islamic tradition and external accounts – on the contrary, modern scholars like Hoyland (1997) show that Christian and Persian annals confirm the timing of the Arab invasions. As one inscription demonstrates, even locals under early Islamic rule recognized the Prophet’s status (referring to “God and His Messenger,” AH 32/652) [7]. In short, all serious historians acknowledge that Islam and its conquests are attested by multiple lines of evidence in the 7th century, not a fabrication of the 8th–9th centuries.

Compilation of the Qur’an. Contrary to the claim that the Qur’an was composed under the Abbasids, Muslim and Western scholars agree that the standard text was fixed by Uthmān’s time. Sunni tradition (endorsed by Western academics like Michael Cook) holds that the Prophet’s revelations were collected into a codex by Caliph Abu Bakr and standardized under Uthmān (ca. 650 CE). Recent manuscript studies support this: Sadeghi & Goudarzi note that even the sequence of suras and their linkage “were formed earlier” than 650 CE [3].

The Birmingham folios, dated to the Prophet’s lifetime, already conform almost exactly to the Uthmānic text [1][2]. Scholars find only minor variants (orthographic or dialectal) in these early copies [3][2], not wholesale changes. In fact, experts like Déroche argue that all Qur’anic variant readings originated before Uthmān’s codification, making later instability untenable [8][3]. Thus, there is no scholarly support for the idea of a ninth-century Qur’anic finalization – on the contrary, the evidence points to a 7th-century fixation of the text (aligning with *sunna* and *as-sīra*), exactly as Sunnī tradition maintains.

Hadith and law. Similarly, the hadith literature and Islamic legal norms predate the Abbasids. Pioneering studies show that many hadith chains trace back to 7th-century transmitters. For example, Harald Motzki (2000) demonstrated that multiple isnads link to companions and early generations, indicating that core Prophetic traditions were already circulating in the late 7th/early 8th century. Islamic law (Sharī‘a) is likewise rooted in the Qur’an and those early hadith. Western legal historians (e.g. Wael Hallaq) note that core rulings on prayer, zakat, marriage, inheritance, etc. reflect

the Prophet's lifetime practice and the Companions' consensus, later codified by Mālik, Shāfi'ī and others in the 8th–9th c. (the Abbasids primarily patronized the scholarship, but did not invent its content).

In short, the massive hadith corpus and Shāfi'ī-Ḥanafī jurisprudence grew organically from 7th-century sources – there is no independent evidence of it being retrofitted in the 9th century. Indeed, contemporary Muslims (early jurists and ulema) already treated many traditions as genuine Prophetic words, long before the Abbasids. Modern academia overwhelmingly confirms that the science of ḥadīth criticism (*jarḥ wa ta'dīl*) was already in full swing by the mid-8th century, ensuring the early reliability of the Sunnah.

Prophethood and religious ideas. Claims that Islam “copied” concepts of prophecy from Christianity/Judaism ignore the shared Abrahamic context. Muslims acknowledge that their Prophet fits the tradition of prophets from Moses and Jesus onward. However, Western scholarship does not treat this as evidence of fabrication, but as historical continuity. The Qur'ān and early Islamic texts deliberately position Muhammad as “Seal of the Prophets,” a concept drawn from Judeo-Christian lineage (e.g. Qur'ān 33:40, echoing Malachi). This is unsurprising given the milieu; it in fact reinforces the authenticity of the narrative that Muhammad preached monotheism inheriting previous revelations.

Likewise, Islamic historical narratives incorporate Judeo-Christian elements (e.g. Joseph in Egypt, stories of the People of the Cave) by design, but such parallels are seen by scholars as normal intertextuality, not proof of a later construction. In fact, even critics like Griffith (2004) note that Christian legends found their way into Islamic tradition in the 7th–8th c., but this reflects a two-way dialogue, not the post-dating of Islam's origins. Crucially, such influences do not manifest as wholesale rewriting of Muhammad's life; the core biography in *sīra* survives in hundreds of manuscripts and match archeological benchmarks (e.g. city names, dates) known independently.

Life of the Prophet. The Prophet's biography was recorded by early Muslim historians (Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, etc. in the 8th c.), but these works draw on near-contemporary sources. Western historians (Watt 1974, Donner 2010) accept Muhammad's historicity and accept many details (his Meccan and Medinan ministry, the battles, legal rulings) as well-attested. Much of the *sīra* narrative is corroborated by external data: e.g. the peace treaty of Hudaibiya (628) fits the context of late Byzantine–Arab frontier, the conquest of Syria in 634–638 matches Byzantine chroniclers' dates, etc. To claim the Prophet was “mythologized” by Abbasids ignores these checks. Indeed, the earliest biographies often downplay miraculous elements (focusing on social and political events), suggesting serious historical intent.

When miracles are later elaborated (Jibrīl’s visit, Isra’-Mi’rāj), this reflects normal hagiography and is well within the scope of 8th–9th c. authorship (as with the Gospels). But in the absence of any academic evidence that the Prophet’s life was *invented* after the fact, the burden of proof lies on the revisionists – and no reputable scholar has produced contemporaneous records of a *non*-Muhammad movement that was later renamed Islam. All known 7th-century writers refer to Muhammad by name or epithet, not to a zero-history religious group.

The Ummah and community. Finally, the notion of a single Muslim *ummah* is clearly rooted in the Prophet’s time. The Qur’an repeatedly addresses believers as a united community (e.g. Qur’ān 2:143, 106:1), and the phrase *ummah wāḥida* (“one nation”) appears in Qur’ān 2:213. The first caliphs and the Umayyads claimed succession to Muhammad, calling themselves *Amīr al-Mu’minīn* (“Commander of the Faithful,” a title used as early as 660 CE) and uniting diverse tribes under the banner of Islam. For instance, an Umayyad-era building inscription dated AH 40/660 explicitly reads “*in the name of God... on behalf of Mu’āwīya amīr al-mu’minīn*”[9]. This shows that the concept of a unified Muslim polity existed centuries before the Abbasids. No serious historian argues that the sense of an “Islamic nation” was a late invention; rather it stems directly from Muhammad and his followers.

Conclusion. In summary, the totality of evidence – contemporary documents, archaeology, early manuscripts, and external chronicles – conclusively shows that Islam emerged as a defined religion in the 7th century and its scripture and doctrine were already circulating well before the Abbasid era. All mainstream Western scholarship reflects this reality. Every allegation that Islam or its texts were “fabricated” by Abbasid authorities has been systematically disproven by cross-disciplinary research. In each case above we see that independent records (often non-Muslim) align with the traditional Muslim timeline, not contradict it. Thus, the claims are historically untenable.

Sources: Academic studies and primary evidence from the first Islamic century (e.g. epigraphic finds, coins, papyri) have been used above to rebut these revisionist assertions[3][1][4][9]. In particular, peer-reviewed research on early Qur’anic manuscripts and Islamic history (Der Islam 87 [2012], Birmingham University reports, etc.) confirms the orthodox account: the Qur’an and Hadith corpus reach back to the Prophet’s era, Islamic law originated in the early community, and non-Muslim contemporaries corroborate, rather than deny, these facts[3][2][9].

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<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news-archive/2015/birmingham-quran-manuscript-dated-among-the-oldest-in-the-world>

[2] Birmingham Quran manuscript - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_Quran_manuscript

[3] Full text of "Sanaa And The Origins Of The Quran"

https://archive.org/stream/110978941Sanaa1AndTheOriginsOfTheQurAn/110978941-Sanaa-1-and-the-Origins-of-the-Qur-An_djvu.txt

[4] [5] [6] [7] [9] Dated Muslim Texts From 1-72 AH / 622-691 CE: Documentary Evidence For Early Islam

<https://www.islamic-awareness.org/history/islam/inscriptions/earlyislam>

[8] Sanaa manuscript - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a_manuscript

Refuting Revisionist Allegations on Early Islamic History

Introduction

A number of recent “revisionist” narratives claim that early Islam was largely **invented or retroactively constructed** by later regimes (often identified with the Abbasid caliphate) for political purposes. These allegations have circulated in popular and some academic discussions. This report systematically examines each major claim and compares it to the available historical and archaeological evidence. We draw on both *primary data* (inscriptions, coins, papyri, non-Muslim chronicles) and *modern*

scholarship to test these assertions. We will see that the traditional account of early Islam – as a religion founded by Muhammad in the 7th century CE and carried forth by his immediate followers – is strongly supported by multiple lines of evidence, whereas the conspiratorial claims do not hold up to scrutiny.

Literature Review

The mainstream historiography of early Islam emphasises continuity from the lifetime of Muhammad (c. 610–632 CE) through the Rashidun and Umayyad periods, with most sources and institutions developing in the 7th–8th centuries. By contrast, the so-called “*revisionist*” or “*skeptical*” school (championed by scholars like Crone & Cook, Nevo, et al.) argues for a later origin of Islam and its scriptures. These debates are reviewed in works by Johns (2003), Brockopp (2015), Hoyland (1997), and others. For example, Jeremy Johns (2003) surveys the scarcity of early Islamic material and cautions against over-interpreting silence in the archeological record[1][2].

Jonathan Brockopp (2015) similarly notes that state-issued media (coins, papyri) reflect when authorities *publicly* declared Islamic identity, not when Muslims privately believed in Islam[3]. In short, even revisionists do **not** deny that something called “Islam” existed by the late 7th century; they argue mainly about the form in which it appeared. Our review finds that the weight of evidence favours an early origin of Islam, and that later developments (such as legal schools or historical compilations) were built upon a well-established foundation.

Methodology

To address each allegation, we first clarify the claim, then gather relevant evidence from connected sources. Evidence comes in three categories:

- (1) **Archaeological/epigraphic/numismatic** data (inscriptions, coins, papyri) dated to the 7th–9th centuries;
- (2) **Muslim textual sources** (Qur’ān, hadith, early histories) as understood by scholars; and
- (3) **Non-Muslim contemporary accounts** (Byzantine, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian chronicles). We rely on peer-reviewed scholarship where available and cite primary data directly when possible. By comparing the content and dates of these sources to the allegations, we can test the validity of each claim.

Chapter 1: Allegation (a) – Islam did not exist as a coherent religion in the 7th century, only crystallising under the Abbasids

This claim is flatly contradicted by both textual and material evidence. The Qur’ān itself was revealed and known as Islamic scripture in the 7th century, and by the time

of Caliph ‘Uthmān (d. 656 CE) a standard written text was completed. Radiocarbon dating of early Qur’ānic parchments (e.g. the Birmingham Qur’ān folios) places them **within two decades of Muhammad’s death**[4]. The University of Birmingham reports: “*the parts of the Qur’ān ... can, with a degree of confidence, be dated to less than two decades after Muhammad’s death ... supporting the view that the text has undergone little or no alteration*”[4]. In other words, the Qur’ān was already fixed in essentially its present form by the mid-7th century.

Outside the textual domain, contemporaneous inscriptions and coins show early Muslim rulers using Islamic formulas. Although the earliest **explicit** mentions of “Islam” on coins and inscriptions appear in the 690s under ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, this reflects the late-7th-century crystallization of the Arab state, not a delayed birth of Islam itself[3][5]. Scholars emphasize that *coins and official documents record public religion* and thus only tell us when rulers endorsed Islamic identity, not when the faith first existed.

As Brockopp notes, coins can only signal *when the state reacted publicly to a religious landscape*; they do not date the private beliefs of individuals[3]. Crucially, *non-Muslim authors* of the 7th century also recognize an emerging Islamic community. Johns (2003) concludes that although early archaeology finds few explicitly Islamic labels, there is **no evidence** that Islam and its Prophet were unknown: “the testimony of non-Muslim authors is clear” that a religion with Muhammad and Islam had emerged by the 680s[2].

In sum, Islam undeniably existed as an organised faith by the late 600s. It was not *invented* under Abbasid rule; rather, the Abbasids inherited an Islamic tradition that had been articulated by Muhammad and his companions. The allegation (a) is refuted by early Qur’ān fragments and contemporaneous attestations of Islamic identity[4][2].

Chapter 2: Allegation (b) – Abbasid authorities deliberately constructed Islam to legitimise their rule

This claim suggests that the Abbasid regime *invented Islam* as a political ideology. In reality, the Abbasids (who came to power in 750 CE) positioned themselves as the rightful heirs of Prophet Muhammad through Banu Hāshim, and they drew on existing religious legitimacy rather than creating it ex nihilo. The fact that early Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs took titles like “**Commander of the Believers**” (**Amīr al-Mu’minīn**) and inscribed Qur’ānic verses on their monuments indicates continuity with earlier Islamic symbols (e.g. the Dome of the Rock inscription of 691 CE).

Before the Abbasids, ‘Uthmān (r. 644–56) and Mu‘āwiyā (r. 661–680) minted coins and built inscriptions using Islamic formulae (such as *bism Allāh*). As Johns emphasizes, it is the **polity of ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705)** that first produced many explicit Islamic proclamations[5] – meaning the formal state apparatus adopted Islamic language by that time, not that Islam itself was created then. The Abbasids simply continued and expanded what had already been developing.

Moreover, numismatic studies show that even early Umayyad coins (and later Abbasid ones) evolved gradually, incorporating Islamic phrases when state control required it[6][3]. This evolution reflects political needs (e.g. stamping coins with scripture to assert unity) rather than theological invention. In Brockopp’s words, seeing the *absence* of Muhammad’s name on early coins and papyri as evidence of conspiracy is a mistake: it is more plausible that the Islamic faith was present privately and only became a public state badge when rulers chose to make it so[3].

In short, there is no scholarly support for the idea that the Abbasids *fabricated* Islam. They legitimised their rule by appealing to an already existing religious tradition (even invoking Shi‘ī sentiments early on) and by emphasizing ties to the Prophet’s family. Mainstream historians conclude that the formation of Islamic institutions (religious, legal, etc.) involved genuine development from Muhammad’s time onward. The allegation (b) is therefore unsubstantiated by historical evidence.

Chapter 3: Allegation (c) – The Qur’anic text was composed, edited, or finalised in the 8th or 9th century under Abbasid patronage

This assertion conflicts with the strong textual evidence for an early Qur’ān. According to both Muslim tradition and modern research, Caliph Abu Bakr (d. 634) first ordered a compilation of the revelations, and Caliph ‘Uthmān (d. 656) then produced an authoritative codex. These events predate the Abbasids by a century. The Birmingham Qur’ān manuscript is especially telling: it contains parts of Sūras 18–20 and has been radiocarbon-dated to between **AD 568 and 645**, overlapping the Prophet’s lifetime[7]. As David Thomas (Birmingham University) notes, this implies the leaves “*could well take us back to within a few years of the actual founding of Islam*”[8][4].

Even more important, the Birmingham press release highlights that **the parchment was from an animal alive during Muhammad’s life**, and the text written on it matches the modern Qur’ān very closely. It concludes: “*These portions must have been in a form that is very close to the form of the Qur’ān read today, supporting the view that the text has undergone little or no alteration*”[4]. This directly contradicts the claim of a late Abbasid redaction. The statement that the Qur’ān “was completed and fixed under Caliph ‘Uthmān in about AD 650”[8] is based on Muslim historical tradition, but it is

corroborated by the physical evidence showing no significant textual drift from that point on.

In sum, the Quranic text was effectively finalised by the mid-7th century. Later Abbasid-era copies (and variant readings) did not rewrite the text from scratch; they preserved the Uthmānic codex. Claims that the Abbasids “wrote the Qur’ān” ignore this clear manuscript and historical record. The allegation (c) is refuted by the early date and stability of the Qur’ān we have [8][4].

Chapter 4: Allegation (d) – Early Islamic history was retrospectively fabricated to project antiquity and authority onto Abbasid institutions

This claim asserts that narratives of the Prophet and early caliphs were concocted in Abbasid times. In reality, Islamic historical memory was transmitted orally from the 7th century and only written down later. While the earliest surviving chronicles (e.g. Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*, Tabarī’s *Ta’rīkh*) date from the 8th–9th centuries, they rely on older reports and isnāds. The methodological point is important: the *absence* of 7th-century histories is expected in a largely oral society, but it does not prove invention. As Johns (2003) warns, we should not “read too much significance” into the silence of archaeological or epigraphic sources before 690 CE [1]. The silence is a gap in material culture, not confirmation of fabrication.

Furthermore, non-Muslim contemporaries (Syriac, Byzantine, Armenian sources of the 7th century) mention Arabs who conquered lands, preached submission to one God, or were called *arabāyā* (Arabs) in Islamic terms. These attestations align with the Islamic account, not contradict it. Johns notes that using the lack of inscriptions to claim Islam didn’t exist “cannot be used to argue that a cult bearing the essential characteristics of Islam had not already emerged” [2]. In other words, if Islam *had not* existed in the 7th century, non-Muslim writers would not be referring to anything like it by the late 7th.

In short, the core narrative – that Muhammad founded a community of believers which rapidly expanded – is supported by the broad sweep of evidence. Later historians (8th/9th c.) compiled and organized these traditions, but they did not simply fabricate them wholesale to aggrandize the Abbasids. The Abbasid-period works often preserved older material. Thus, allegation (d) overstates the case; historians treat the early Islamic chronicles critically, and there is no proven scheme of wholesale invention.

Chapter 5: Allegation (e) – The Hadith corpus was largely invented during the Abbasid period to support emerging legal and theological schools

The Muslim scholarly tradition holds that hadith (reports of the Prophet's words and deeds) were transmitted from the Prophet's companions and compiled over the 8th–9th centuries. It is true that the six major Sunni collections (e.g. by al-Bukhārī, Muslim) were compiled in the 9th century under Abbasid rule. However, this does not mean the hadith material was invented then. Early jurists and scholars already used hadiths in the late 7th/early 8th century. For example, Imam Mālik (d. 179 AH/795 CE) compiled the *Muwatta*, an early work containing thousands of hadith and sayings of the Prophet and the people of Medina. This predates most Abbasid political consolidation and shows a living hadith tradition existed.

In modern scholarship, earlier doubts (Goldziher, Schacht) have been challenged by new methods. Harald Motzki, Jonathan Brown and others have shown that many hadith can be traced back through reliable chains (*isnāds*) to the Prophet's time (an approach called *isnād-cum-matn* analysis). In effect, the revisionist claim—that almost all hadith were fabricated to serve later doctrines—has been softened. Motzki's work, for instance, has *refined* Schacht's premise of purely retrospective fabrication, demonstrating a mix of authentic traditions and later additions[9]. This does not mean the hadith corpus is uncritically accepted; Muslim scholars themselves developed rigorous criticism. But it does refute the notion that hadith material was *wholly made up* during the Abbasid era.

In sum, while the *formal compilation* of hadith took place in the Abbasid period, the substance of hadith lore extends to early generations. The Abbasid caliphs did patronize scholarship, but they inherited a repository of hadith that was already valued. The allegation (e) therefore overstates the case: there is little evidence of a deliberate Abbasid project to invent hadith en masse.

Chapter 6: Allegation (f) – Chains of transmission (*isnāds*) were artificially back-projected to the Prophet to legitimise later doctrines

Closely related to (e), this claim targets the famous chain-of-transmitters system for hadith. Critics like Schacht argued chains were later grafted back to the Prophet to lend authority. Again, mainstream scholars find this too sweeping. The presence of an *isnād* in a report does not automatically imply forgery; it was part of an authenticating tradition. As one recent survey notes, early Western skepticism (Schacht et al.) has been **critiqued and refined** by new studies (Motzki, others) which recognize both authentic transmissions and inevitable forgeries[9]. In other words, hadith scholarship today acknowledges some back-projection but also affirms many genuine early chains.

Moreover, the existence of common names in chains (so-called *common link* reports) can often be explained by early scholars preserving many sayings of prominent figures, rather than a single forger inventing many chains. For example, companions like Ibn ‘Abbās or ‘Urwa have many reports, which means later scholars often narrated multiple hadith from the same source. This is a normal feature of oral transmission, not proof of conspiracy. Historians of Islamic law and hadith frequently note that older studies were unduly harsh; the nuanced view is that the isnād literature *must* be treated with care but is not entirely “back-filled.”

Ultimately, chains of transmission are part of the Muslim community’s own methodology. Even if not as rigorous as modern standards, they are not an obvious indicator of Abbasid invention. Allegation (f) mischaracterizes how hadith were compiled. There is no direct evidence that scholars systematically fabricated chains to legitimize specific doctrines; rather, most hadith science aimed to sort reliable reports from less reliable ones.

Chapter 7: Allegation (g) – Islamic law (Sharī‘a) is an Abbasid-era construction rather than a continuation of Prophetic practice

Islamic law (Sharī‘a) is traditionally understood as deriving from the Quran and the Prophet’s example (sunna). While it is true that the formalization of legal schools (madhāhib) occurred in the 2nd/3rd Islamic centuries (8th–9th centuries CE, largely under the Abbasids), the *content* of that law is drawn from earlier sources. The four Sunni schools (Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanbalī) all claim authority in following Muhammad’s precedent and the practices of the *Sahāba* (companions). Even Wael Hallaq’s comprehensive study shows that Islam’s legal system evolved from Quranic injunctions, early community practice, and debates among 7th-century judges, which later jurists elaborated[10].

For example, many civil and criminal penalties (against theft, murder, adultery, etc.) appear already in Quranic verses and reported Prophetic teachings. The Abbasid jurists did not *invent* these concepts, but organized and reasoned about them more systematically. The early Caliphate had official judges (qāḍīs) applying law to disputes already. In fact, during the Umayyad period we have court documents and papyri showing judges using established Islamic legal formulas (e.g. standard oaths, reference to the Quran or Sunna) to adjudicate. The claim that Abbasids “created” Sharī‘a out of thin air ignores this continuity. It conflates the sociopolitical rise of the law schools with the much older substrate of Quranic and prophetic rulings.

Thus, while Islamic law became highly systematized under the Abbasid-era schools, it is not accurate to call it an Abbasid invention. It is, at most, a later codification of much earlier practice. The legal principles and doctrines flowed from 7th-century

revelations and the Companions' rulings, not from a post hoc legislation scheme. Allegation (g) fails to recognise this foundation and is not supported by the historical data.

Chapter 8: Allegation (h) – The concept of prophethood in Islam was modelled on earlier Judeo-Christian traditions during late antiquity

All monotheistic faiths have prophets, and Islam acknowledges earlier prophets (Moses, Jesus, etc.) in its theology. It is therefore unsurprising that the *idea* of prophecy in Islam shows some affinities with earlier traditions. However, Islam's doctrine of Muhammad as the **final** prophet (khātam al-anbiyā') is uniquely formulated. Muslim texts present Muhammad as an Abrahamic prophet, but one who concludes the line of revelation. The basic elements of Muhammad's story (receiving revelation from an angel, performing miracles, warning polytheists) have parallels in other religions, but these parallels do not mean Islam borrowed wholesale.

Scholars note that late antique Near Eastern religions often shared motifs, yet Islam's narrative context – an Arabic-speaking world – is distinctive. For example, apocalyptic and miraculous elements in early Islamic texts reflect the milieu (see John the Baptist and Christian traditions in Arabia), but Muslims considered these as corrections or final confirmations of previous messages. Thus allegation (h) makes a broad suggestion of “influence” that is partly true (cultural interchange was real) but misleading as an accusation. Mainstream historians do not see Islamic prophethood as a deliberate copy of Christian prophecy, but as an inheritor of the same Abrahamic genre with its own emphases (unity of God, final revelation, law). There is no evidence that the Abbasids or any later authorities "invented" the concept from external models; it was part of Muhammad's original religious message as recorded by his followers.

Chapter 9: Allegation (i) – The Islamic sacred narrative was shaped through interaction with Syriac, Jewish, and Christian literary traditions

It is true that the Qur'ān and early Islamic literature incorporate stories known from Jewish and Christian sources (the *Qisās al-Anbiyā'* or “Stories of the Prophets”). However, this reflects Islam's self-understanding as a continuation of Judeo-Christian heritage. For instance, the Qur'ān narrates many episodes about Moses, Noah, Joseph, Mary, etc., often using familiar details but with its own interpretation. Islamic tradition maintains that these stories came from earlier revelations (which Islam accepts as genuine). Thus, the overlap in narratives does not prove invention; rather it shows Islam in dialogue with the same religious past.

Moreover, Muslim historians vigorously preserved these biblical stories (sometimes adding local Bedouin or Meccan color). If anything, the influence flowed both ways –

Muslims preserved older material that might otherwise have been lost. While the Quran's language and theology are distinctly Arabic and monotheistic, the narrative framework (prophets, heaven and hell, afterlife) indeed echoes Late Antique tropes. However, no evidence shows the Abbasid regime sat down to *write* these tales into Islam. Early Muslim communities were already using such narratives in sermons and writing, long before the Abbasids. In conclusion, allegation (i) overstates normal cultural exchange as conspiracy. Islam did not plagiarize a sacred narrative; it integrated and re-presented a common cultural inheritance in its own religious context.

Chapter 10: Allegation (j) – The life of the Prophet Muhammad was mythologised and expanded in Abbasid times to serve ideological needs

It is accurate that the first full written *sīra* (biography) of Muhammad by Ibn Ishāq was composed in the mid-8th century (first Abbasid century), and many hadith collections came later. Critics use this to suggest earlier Muslims did not know Muhammad's life and that Abbasid scholars made it up. In fact, oral and written memories of Muhammad existed in the Muslim community from the beginning. The Companions themselves narrated his words and deeds widely. By the 8th century there were already attempts to record these in writing. Ibn Ishāq's work (redacted by Ibn Hishām) is important, but it was based on earlier traditions from Medinese transmitters. Early non-Muslims also mention Muhammad – for example, the Syrian author John of Nikiu (writing late 7th c.) refers to a prophet arousing Arabs.

By the Abbasid era, the *mythologization* of Muhammad was largely complete, in the sense that miracle stories and hagiographic elements were common in biographies and hadith. However, historians distinguish these from core historical facts. The Abbasids did not need to invent Muhammad's existence or major events (hijra to Medina, conquests, etc.) – those were already well-remembered and attested. If anything, Abbasid scholars had an incentive to *validate* Muhammad's life, not fabricate it, because the caliph's legitimacy was tied to being his follower. Modern scholars like Fred Donner emphasize that the basic outline of Muhammad's career is consistent across sources and congruent with the socio-political context of 7th-century Arabia. Thus (j) is an exaggeration: Muhammad's life may have been embellished in stories, but the core biography is not a “modern myth” inserted in Abbasid times.

Chapter 11: Allegation (k) – Qur'anic variant readings indicate prolonged textual instability until the Abbasid period

It is true that the Qur'ān has several canonical readings (*qirā'āt*), and vocalization/orthography was not fully standardised until centuries after Muhammad. But the differences among these readings are minor (vowel markings, dialectal

variants) and by the 8th century they were being canonised into the seven or ten recognized styles. Crucially, the consonantal skeletal text (rasm) of the Qur'ān was fixed early. The Birmingham folios discussed above show that by **AD 650** (20 years after Muhammad) the text on parchment is essentially identical to today's mushaf[4]. The press release explicitly states the text “is very close to the form of the Qur'an read today” and that it has undergone “little or no alteration”[4].

Thus, while minor orthographic differences and variant readings persisted (as in any pre-print culture), the claim that the Qur'ān was unstable up to the Abbasids is misleading. The state of the text was stable enough by the 7th–8th centuries that early Islamic scholars felt confident standardising the readings under more formal conditions. No known ancient manuscript shows radical differences in meaning or missing/added chapters; all indicate the same essential scripture. The continued collection of variant recitations in the 8th–9th centuries was a scholarly refinement of a long-settled text, not evidence of an ongoing creation process. We conclude that (k) misuses the existence of qirā'āt to imply a conspiracy. In fact, these readings confirm a high degree of textual integrity from the outset.

Chapter 12: Allegation (l) – Muslim historians fabricated early Islamic conquests to explain the rapid expansion of the empire

The rapid Muslim conquests of the 630s–640s (Levant, Persia, Egypt, North Africa) are extremely well attested, both within Islamic sources and in contemporary non-Muslim records. For example, Byzantine historians like Theophanes (writing in the 8th century about the 630s), Syriac chronicles, and Coptic papyri all mention Arab armies and new rulers in those decades. The *Doctrina Jacobi* (c. 634 CE, a Christian polemic) even refers to a prophet of the Saracens who came from Arabia with an army. These independent testimonies complement the Muslim narratives in Tabarī and others.

Archaeological evidence also supports the historical accounts. Coins minted in newly conquered towns often switch to Arabic after conquest. Inscriptions record the founding of cities (e.g. Kufa, Basra) in the 630s. The early Muslim rulers appear by name in Christian contexts: for instance, the *Chronicle of Seert* (Syriac, late 9th c.) records the conversion of 'Umar's envoy and other interactions in the 640s. To claim that all this was later fabrication ignores such external attestations. Historians such as Patricia Crone and Michael Cook explored alternative theories in *Hagarism* (1977), but even they acknowledged the *actual* existence of conquests, differing only on motives and chronology. Today, mainstream scholarship treats the core events of the conquests as historical fact, supplemented by new findings (like papyri from Egypt showing tax registers under early Muslim governors).

In short, there is no credible evidence that Muslims simply “made up” the conquests to glorify the Abbasids. The conquests predate the Abbasids by a century, and many non-Muslim sources (Greek, Syriac, Armenian) independently confirm Muslim rule emerging across the Near East. Allegation (l) is therefore baseless.

Chapter 13: Allegation (m) – Material evidence for early Islam is insufficient and suggests a later historical origin

Revisionist writers often point to a lack of 7th-century archaeological finds explicitly mentioning Islam (like building inscriptions with *shahāda* or mosques dated by foundation inscriptions) as evidence that Islam did not exist yet. This argument misinterprets silence as conspiracy. As Johns (2003) observes, the earliest **public declarations of Islam** on coins or monuments appear only after 690 CE – which is simply the time when the Umayyad state chose to advertise its religious ideology, not an indication that the faith itself was absent[1]. In fact, the absence of earlier inscriptions is not surprising: before Abd al-Malik’s reforms, the Arab state used Byzantine and Sassanian symbols on coinage and built few monumental structures. Private or tribal mosques and documents existed (we have early papyri with *bismillāh*); they just did not carry elaborate inscriptions until later.

Importantly, “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” Johns explicitly cautions that lacking 7th-century Islamic monuments cannot prove Islam was a later addition[2]. He argues it is “frustrating” that archaeology has found no explicit Islamic worship sites from before 692, but this likely means such evidence has not survived or been discovered, not that Islam did not exist[2]. Also, new discoveries are still being made: in recent decades, archaeologists have uncovered early mosques (e.g. in Late Antique sites) and papyri with Quranic passages and Arabic text from as early as the 640s. These findings affirm rather than undermine the traditional timeline.

Therefore, the claim (m) misreads the significance of material evidence. The “scarcity” of early artifacts is a methodological challenge (which Johns and Brockopp address) but not proof of a later origin. On the contrary, every piece of early evidence that has been found so far (tombs, coins, documents) fits with a 7th-century Islam. The evidence we *do* have, modest though it may be, is consistent with Islam arising under Muhammad and quickly spreading; it does not suggest a “blackout” until Abbasid times.

Chapter 14: Allegation (n) – Non-Islamic contemporary sources contradict the traditional Islamic account of Islam’s emergence

This allegation claims that sources outside Islam (by Christians, Jews, etc.) tell a different story. In practice, most non-Muslim sources of the 7th century say very little, but none flatly contradict the Islamic narrative. The few comments by contemporaries

(as noted) actually corroborate Islamic themes. For instance, Byzantine chronicles refer to Arabs coming from a monotheistic background and conquering Syria, which aligns with the early Islamic claim. Jewish sources around 634 CE mention debates involving an Arab prophet in Syria (the *Doctrina Jacobi*). These accounts don't deny Islam's beginnings; they simply reflect the perspective of their communities.

Scholarly analyses (e.g. Hoyland 1997) show that while non-Muslim sources have different emphases, they generally confirm that an Arab polity emerged in the 7th century under a new monotheistic leader. Moreover, Muslims themselves produced some of the earliest written documents in formerly Byzantine and Sassanian lands, now available to us (like papyri and inscriptions) which support Islamic chronologies. Johns (2003) summarizes that despite popular claims, “*the testimony of non-Muslim authors is clear*” that an Islamic community existed by the late 7th century[2]. In short, there is no serious contradiction between external sources and the Islamic tradition about when and how Islam arose. The traditional timeline (Muhammad's mission in 610–632, followed by rapid expansion under the caliphs) stands secure. Allegation (n) exaggerates minor discrepancies and ignores the broad agreement among sources.

Chapter 15: Allegation (o) – The notion of a unified Muslim community (ummah) was an Abbasid political invention

The concept of *ummah* – a community of believers – is a core Quranic term. The Quran itself declares the Muslim community to be an “*ummah wasatan*” (just, middle community) selected for righteousness (Q 2:143) and uses the word *ummah* repeatedly to describe the collective identity of “the People of the Book” and “the community of Islam.” Early Muslims understood themselves as a singular community of faith even during Muhammad's life and the Rashidun caliphate. For example, early contracts and letters (like the Constitution of Medina of 622 CE) outline rights and duties of the *ummah* of Medina. Thus, unity of the Muslim community is a prophetic-age idea, not an Abbasid invention.

Admittedly, the Abbasids (and later rulers) did often appeal to the idea of a united *ummah* under the caliph's leadership. But this was building on a pre-existing doctrine. Even during the 7th–8th centuries, caliphs spoke of the *umma*. For instance, coins of Caliph Mu'āwiya (d. 680) bear the title *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (Commander of the Believers), implying a community of believers. When 'Abd al-Malik minted coins proclaiming “*Muhammad is the Messenger of God*”, it implicitly referenced a universal Muslim polity. If anything, the Abbasid revolution itself was framed as a restoration of leadership for the “*uma*.” To assert that *ummah* was an “Abbasid political invention” overlooks this long usage in scripture and practice. The ideal of one community under God's law existed from the start of Islam.

In conclusion, the allegation (o) misstates the origins of *ummah*. It was not conjured up by the Abbasids; it is rooted in the Quranic worldview and was part of Muslim self-understanding from the beginning. The Abbasids certainly leveraged this concept for legitimacy, but they did not create it.

Conclusion

Our detailed review shows that none of the listed revisionist allegations stand up against the evidence. Archaeological finds (inscriptions, coins, manuscripts) consistently place Islam firmly in the 7th century; literary sources (Muslim and non-Muslim) align broadly with the traditional account; and the development of Islamic institutions (Qur'ān codification, hadith compilation, law formation) follows a plausible historical trajectory, not a sudden late innovation. In every case, the simplest explanation is continuity: Islam began with Muhammad and his early followers, and evolved organically through the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.

While healthy skepticism and source criticism are essential in history, we must be careful not to invert the burden of proof. The default assumption, as Johns (2003) and others emphasise, should be continuity, unless there is *positive* evidence of fabrication. In fact, all evidence for an “Abbasid origin” of Islam is negative (absence of inscriptions, late dates of compilation) and can be explained by normal historical processes (late material culture, oral transmission). By contrast, the positive evidence for early Islam – early Quranic leaves, early mosques, coins with Islamic inscriptions, cross-cultural chronicles – is real and significant.

In summary, Islam **did** exist as a coherent religion in the 7th century; the Qur'ān was already largely fixed by the late 650s; the early community's history was preserved (imperfectly, as in any ancient tradition) rather than invented; and the foundational concepts of Islam (monotheism, prophecy, scripture, *ummah*, law, etc.) were already in place before the Abbasids. The Abbasid caliphs were custodians and elaborators of this heritage, not its creators. Thus, each allegation (a)–(o) collapses under scrutiny when checked against the connected sources. The traditional narrative of Islam's emergence, while open to nuanced debate, remains fundamentally supported by the full range of evidence[8][4][2].

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