

When Did the Qibla Change?

Part Six of Early Islamic Qiblas

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Introduction

So far in this series of papers we have examined the Qiblas of the early mosques of Islam discovering that the city of Petra in Jordan was the focus of the first Qilba, followed by three other Qiblas which were introduced in the following two hundred years. By 252 AH (866 CE) Mecca was the only surviving Qibla, and remains the only Qibla in use today. The question we address now is: When did these Qibla changes take place, and what evidence is there of why they were used?

This series of papers includes the following, and this paper assumes you have read them.

1. Early Islamic Qiblas
2. The Accuracy of Google Earth
3. Visiting a Mosque
4. The Qibla Misunderstanding
5. Could the Arabs of the 7th and 8th centuries accurately determine Qibla direction?
6. When did the Qibla change?

Future papers:

7. Supporting Evidence of the Qibla change
8. More Supporting Evidence of the Qibla Change
9. Conclusion and Bibliography

I plan to eventually combine these papers under one cover, but for now they are being released one at a time.

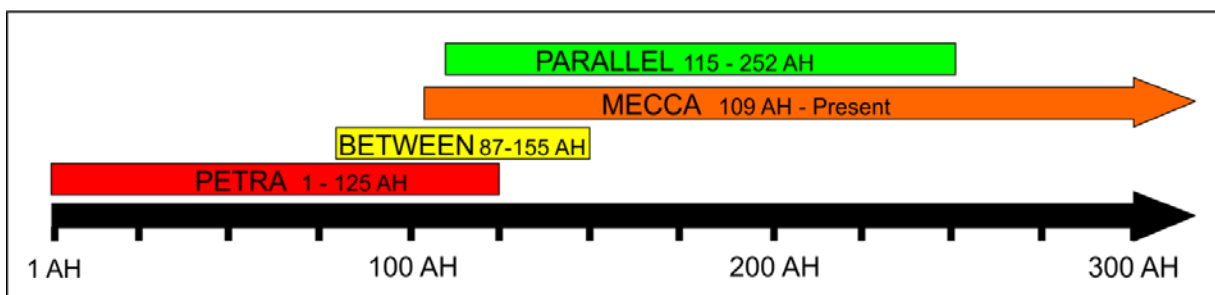
Dan Gibson

When did the Qibla change take place?

Progressive Change

From the archeological record of ancient Qiblas (presented in my first paper) we can deduce that the first Qiblas pointed to the city of Petra in Southern Jordan. In my book *Qur'anic Geography*¹ (pages 251-330) I demonstrate that many of the descriptions of ancient Mecca actually fit the ancient city of Petra better. This is highlighted in the film “*The Sacred City*” where viewers are taken to the locations around Petra that correlate with descriptions of the original holy city of Islam. All of this indicates that Islam began in the city of Petra and it was the location of the original Ka’ba, the original focus of Islamic prayer and the focus of the ancient pilgrimage. Then something major occurred that caused the Qibla to change. The archeological record taken from the construction of mosques is not clear enough to pinpoint actual dates, but can be used to indicate when events happened within a few years. As the chart below indicates four Qibla directions emerge just before and after 100 AH (719 CE), with only the Mecca Qibla surviving until today. While the archeological data is not sufficient to determine when exactly the first Qibla change took place, the earliest mosque to make a Qibla change was around 87 AH (706 CE). When we examine the story behind this rogue mosque, we find that it was constructed by General al Ḥajjāj. This provides clues as to what might have taken place. As General al Ḥajjāj is known to Islamic historians, we can delve into some of the tensions of his day and try to understand why his Qibla was so radically different from the original Qibla of Petra.

When building his new mosque, Ḥajjāj pointed it directly between Petra and Mecca. This is a radical change from previous mosque construction. From the archeological record we can see that several mosques followed this pattern over the next 68 years. However, after 252 AH (866 CE) Mecca becomes the sole Qibla used by the Abbasids and the other Qiblas fade from view. Eventually all mosques everywhere point to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.



Above: the four Qiblas as revealed by original mosque construction

1. *Qur'anic Geography* pages 251-330

So what triggered Al Ḥajjāj's dislike of the Petra Qibla and why did he not point it to the newly emerging Mecca Qibla? To understand this, we need to go back into early Islamic history to understand the issues and tensions taking place.

On March 7th, 634 CE (12 AH) a small but significant change took place in the Islamic Empire. Upon the death of Caliph Abū Bakr, 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb became the new caliph. The day after the burial of Abū Bakr, 'Umar climbed into the pulpit and declared, "*I am going to say words to which you must say 'Amen.'*"² "*The likeness of the Arabs is only to a camel led by the nose following its leader; therefore let its leader look where he leads. As for me, by the Lord of the Ka'ba, I will indeed bring them along on the road.*"

This signaled a new style of leadership. The companions of the prophets were slowly pushed aside as Caliph 'Umar began to forge a more military leadership rather than a religious one. His first step was to conquer Damascus, and then to push against the Persians, finally expanding the empire in all directions. This pattern was followed by Uthmān who was also a very strong, almost ruthless, leader.

The first civil war began when the Caliph Uthmān ibn Affān was assassinated by Egyptian rebels in 36 AH (656 CE) and continued through the four-year reign of Uthmān's successor Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib. It ended in 661 when Ali's heir Hasan ibn Alī concluded a treaty acknowledging the rule to belong to the Umayyad caliphate.

Caliph Yazid's brother Mu'āwiya assumed command of the Arab Muslim forces based in Damascus. Mu'āwiya succeeded Ali as caliph after a series of confrontations in 658–661 CE and designated the city of Damascus as the capital of the new Umayyad dynasty.

When Mu'āwiya chose Damascus as his new capital city he further alienated the religious leaders. They would have preferred Medina or even Mecca (then located at Petra).³

In the Holy City (Petra) a man known as *Ibn al-Zubayr* was the governor. He was particularly incensed at the deliberate snub, and so he formed a rebellion and declared himself as caliph.

2 Ṭabarī Volume 11, page 157 - 158

3 Burns, Ross (2005). *Damascus: A History*. Routledge

The rulers in Damascus then dispatched an army to the Holy City to fight against Ibn Zubayr and his companions. Then one day Ibn Zubayr shouted to the Syrians that he had heard that the caliph in Damascus had died. It seems that the armies were close enough to one another to shout to each other.⁴ With that, the army decided they must return to Damascus until a new caliph had been appointed.⁵

The members of the Umayyad royal family said to them “Do not leave without taking us with you to Syria.” So they did that and the army continued until it reached Syria. There Yazīd ibn Mu’āwiyah had willed that the oath of allegiance be given to his son Mu’āwiyah ibn Yazīd, According to Awanah, Yazīd ibn Mu’āwiyah designated his son Mu’āwiyah ibn Yazīd as caliph, but the latter only survived forty days.”⁶

Al Ṭabarī notes that later historians say the new caliph lived three months, not forty days, but then he adds: *“Umar told me on the authority of Alī ibn Muḥammad: When Mu’āwiyah ibn Yazīd had been designated caliph, gathered together the officials of his father and the oath of allegiance given to him in Damascus, he perished there after forty days of his rule. He died when he was thirteen years and eighteen days old.”⁷*

Al Ṭabarī tells us: *According to Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Wāqidi - Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā Ikrimah ibn Khālīd: Ibn al-Zubayr demolished the sanctuary (Ka’ba) until he had leveled it to the ground, and he dug out its foundation He placed the Black Cornerstone by it in an ark [tabut] in a strip of silk.⁸ With the Ka’ba destroyed, Ibn Al Zubayr himself led the pilgrimage that year, and then for the the next three years there was no pilgrimage, as no one came to the Holy City.*

When there was a lull in the war to choose a new caliph, Ibn Zubayr decided to rebuilt the Ka’aba. The Islamic records, written some two hundred years later, do not tell us where this construction took place. It could have been in Petra, or it could have been in far away Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, in a valley where it was safe from the Umayyad armies.

4 Ṭabarī Vol. XX 430, page 2

7 Ṭabarī, Volume XX, page 5, section 432

5. Al Ṭabarī Vol. XX progressing through several volumes

8 Ṭabarī XX, page 123, 64 AH

6. Ṭabarī Vol XX, page 5

According to Ishāq ibn Abi Israeīl – ‘Abd al-Azīz ibn Khālīd ibn Rustam al-Sanani Abū Muḥammad: Ziyād ibn Jiyāl told me he was in [the Holy City] on the day when Ibn al-Zubayr was overcome and heard him say, “My mother Asma bint Abi Bakr told me that the Messenger of God said to ‘Ā’isha: “If it were not that your people had only recently been in a state of unbelief, I would restore the Ka’ba on the foundations of Abraham and I would add to the Ka’ba part of the Ḥijr” (stone). Ibn al-Zubayr gave the order for it and it was excavated, and they found rocks as big as a camel. They moved a boulder of them and a bright light flashed out. They re-established it on its foundation and Ibn al Zubayr rebuilt it, giving it two doors, from one of which it was entered and from the other vacated.”⁹



Above: Observation of construction near the Ka’ba failed to uncover any ancient large foundation stones.

At this point, al Ḥajjāj entered the picture. The Syrians sent him to put down the rebellion and restore law and order, and access to the religious sites in the Holy City. Al Ḥajjāj was an extremely capable and ruthless statesman, strict in character, but also a harsh and demanding master. He was widely feared by his contemporaries and became a deeply controversial figure, and later an object of deep-seated enmity as he did things differently than the later Abbasid rulers desired. As we will try and demonstrate he was involved in the very controversial changing of the Qibla.

9. Ṭabarī XX, page 176, See also Azraqī, *Akhbar Makkah*, 143, and ‘Abd al-Razzaq Muṣannaf V. 9157

Al-Ḥajjāj was born ca. 661 CE (41 AH) in the city of Ṭā'if.¹⁰ His ancestry was not particularly distinguished: he came of a poor family whose members had worked as stone carriers and builders. His mother, al-Fari'a had married, and been divorced by al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba, appointed governor of Kufa by the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'āwiya (661–680).¹¹

As a boy, al-Ḥajjāj acquired the nickname *Kulayb* ("little dog") with which he was later derisively referred to. His early life is obscure, except for his having been a schoolmaster in his home town—another source of derision to his enemies.

Soon after Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (Aug 684 CE or 64 AH) assumed the throne, al-Ḥajjāj left his home town and went to the capital, Damascus, where he entered the security force of the caliph. There he attracted Abd al-Malik's attention by the rapidity and efficiency with which he restored discipline during a mutiny of the troops appointed to accompany the caliph in his campaign against Mus'ab ibn al-Zubayr in Iraq.¹²

As a result, the caliph entrusted him with command of the army's rear-guard. He apparently achieved further feats of valor, so that after the defeat of Mus'ab, Abd al-Malik decided to entrust him with the expedition to subdue Mus'ab's brother, Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, in the Holy City.

*The caliph had charged him first to negotiate with Ibn al-Zubayr and to assure him of freedom from punishment if he capitulated, but, if the opposition continued, to starve him out by siege, but on no account to let the affair result in bloodshed in the Holy City. Since the negotiations failed and al-Ḥajjāj lost patience, he sent a courier to ask 'Abd al-Malik for reinforcements and also for permission to take Mecca by force. He received both, and thereupon bombarded the Holy City with stones from a mountain.*¹³

*The war between Ibn al-Zubayr and al-Ḥajjāj took place for six months and seventeen nights in the hollow of Mecca. Here the word *batn* or stomach is used to describe the hollow. This term would justifiably mean the center of the city or the center of the canyon.*¹⁴

10 Ṭā'if - see forthcoming paper on its re-identified location.

11 Dietrich, A. (1991). "al-Ḥaḍḍjādj b. Yūsuf". *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, Volume II: C–G. Leiden and New York: BRILL. pp. 39–42*

12 Dietrich 1991, p. 40.

13 Deitrich A.. E2 2, page 40 Jebal Abu Kubays, which is an unknown location today.

14 Ṭabari XXI page 224

According to al-Ḥārith [ibn Muḥammad] – Muḥammad ibn Sa’d – Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar [al-Wāqidi] – Ishāq ibn Yaḥyā – Yūsuf ibn Mahak, who said: I saw the manjaniq (trebuchet) with which [stones] were being hurled. The sky was thundering and lightening and the sound of thunder and lightning rose above that of the stones, so that it masked it.¹⁵

The Ka’ba was so damaged that it looked “like the torn bosoms of mourning women.”¹⁶ The siege lasted for seven months and in the end 10,000 men, among them two of Ibn al-Zubayr's sons, had gone over to al-Ḥajjāj. In the end Ibn al-Zubayr and his youngest son were killed in the fighting in a ruined building near the Ka’ba.¹⁷

As a reward al-Ḥajjāj was given the governorship of the Hijaz, Yemen, and al-Yamama. It was here that he began to persecute the Companions of Muḥammad by making them wear a lead seal around their necks.¹⁸ During his lifetime Al-Ḥajjāj killed four companions (ṣaḥaba) of Muḥammad: Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, Jabir ibn Abd-Allah, Sa’id ibn Jubayr and Kumayl ibn Ziyad. Despite these actions, in 75 AH Caliph Abd al-Malik appointed al-Ḥajjāj as govern of Iraq. This placed Ḥajjāj in a very powerful position, governing the entire eastern half of the caliphate. The following years were filled with bloody wars, putting down rebellions and ruling with an iron fist.

What interests us the most is the construction of the city of Wāsiṭ in the year 83 AH and Wāsiṭ al-Qaṣab in 95 AH. A number of interesting mosque constructions or renovations took place during this time. As archeological evidence now shows us, the Qiblas of these mosques did not all agree.

The first striking evidence is that al-Ḥajjāj’s mosque in Wāsiṭ faced a spot directly between Mecca and Petra. This was followed by the principle mosque in Damascus in 91 AH (709 CE), the mosque of Boṣra in 102 AH (721 CE), Hayr al-Gharbi mosque in 107 AH (726 CE), Hayr al-Sharqi in 110 AH (728 CE), Ba’albeck in 122 AH (740 CE), and Ḥarrān in 127 AH (744 CE), and finally Raqqa in 155 AH (772 CE). These mosques, built over a 70 year period, demonstrate that there was a part of Islam that rejected the Qiblas of Petra and also of Mecca. (See map page 15)

15 Ṭabarī, Volume XXI, page 225

16 Gibb, Ka’ba, Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, pg 193

17. Most likely what is known today as The Great Temple in Petra, located near to the Petra Ka’ba location. It was fortified for war sometime during the early years of Islam. (dated from the roofing tiles used in the fortifications. These tiles came down in the earthquake of 551 July 9th 551CE, 19 years before Islamic records say Muḥammad was born.)

18. Ṭabarī, Volume XXII, page 2

Next, let us first consider the character of the man who started this trend. He was the most powerful man in the eastern half of the Islamic Empire. He was ruthless and arrogant enough to persecute the companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of Muḥammad, and he was involved with the destruction of the Ka’aba in Petra. Because of his attack on Petra the Black Rock was moved to Saudi Arabia sometime around 65 AH (685 CE). Such a ruler would have distained pointing his principle mosque towards the now ruined city of Petra, which he had helped to destroy. Additionally, the city of Petra was further destroyed in powerful earthquakes in 94 AH (715 CE)¹⁹ and again in 128 AH(746 CE)²⁰.

At the same time, Ḥajjāj would not want to point his mosque to Mecca in Arabia, as it was an “upstart” religious site, and only just beginning to grow in popularity. In fact, Ḥajjāj wrote to Caliph Walid: “The people of hypocrisy and schism have taken refuge in Mecca.”²¹ To date the earliest Meccan mosque we have uncovered dates to more than 20 years after Ḥajjāj built his rouge mosque in Wāsiṭ. And so it comes as no surprise that Ḥajjāj took a middle path, rejecting both the old and the new Qiblas of his day.

So when did Ibn al-Zubayr move the Black Rock to Mecca in Saudi Arabia? While we cannot pinpoint an actual date, we can identify several things that will help us. Consider these things in chronological order:

- 64 AH (684 CE): Ibn Zubayr declares himself caliph in the Holy City. Palestine, Baṣra and Kufa also rebel. The Syrians send an army against the Holy City and blockade them in. The caliph in Damascus dies, the army returns to Damascus vowing the battle is not over. The army returns and during the fighting, the Ka’ba burns.²² Ibn Zubayr then destroys the rest of the first Ka’ba and places the Black Rock on a silk strip on a temporary stand.²³
- 65 AH (684 CE): Followers of Hussein gather at his tomb and vow to remove Ibn al-Zubayr and restore the authority to a member of Muḥammad’s family. A large battle follows. Ibn al-Zubayr’s followers are called the “destroyers of the sacred sanctuary.”²⁴ Later, Ibn al-Zubayr rebuilds the Ka’aba, this time on the foundation stones laid by Abraham. It seems to me that this new Ka’aba was built in Mecca in Saudi Arabia, out of reach of both the Umayyad armies and the followers of Ali. I will address this later in this paper. Abdallāh Ibn Al-Zubayr himself leads the pilgrimage that year.

19 Ṭabari, Volume XXIII, page 204

22 Ṭabari XX page 114

20 Oleson, 1995

23 Ṭabari XX page 50, 123

21 Ṭabari, Volume XXIII, page 210

24 Ṭabari XX page 156

- 66 AH (685 CE): The fighting continues. During the dispute with Ibn al- Ḥanafiyyah, Abū ‘Abdallāh al Jadālī swears “*by the Lord of the Corner and the Station...*”²⁵ but does not mention the Black Rock which would have been in the corner. This strange utterance suggests to us that the Black Rock was no longer in the Ka’ba wall.
- 67 AH (686 CE) Al Ṭabarī relates an account where the people of Kūfa say to Ibn al-Zubayr that they were “*people who turn to the same Qibla as you.*”²⁶ This indicates that there were at least two Qiblas at this time, and that the people of Kūfa prayed towards the same Qibla as al-Zubayr (suggesting Mecca not Petra.) Ṭabarī also notes that there was no official pilgrimage that year, indicating that there was some conflict over the pilgrimage.
- 68 AH (687 CE): Al Ṭabarī tells us that there were severe droughts in Syria, so they could not go campaigning. That year there were four separate groups that went on pilgrimage, each under different banners because the various factions fighting in the civil war.^{27a}
- 69 (688 CE): AH there was a revolt in Damascus itself, further diverting attention from the problems in the Holy City.
- 70 AH (689 CE): This is a missing year, with little information other than Muṣ’ab Ibn Al-Zubayr bringing horses and camels to the Holy City, presumably to move people out of the city, possibly to join others already in Mecca in Saudi Arabia.²⁷
- 71-74 AH (690-693 CE): Ḥajjāj and the Syrian armies surrounded the Holy City of Petra and destroyed the Ka’aba sanctuary using a trebuchet.²⁸ It would seem strange that they would bombard the Ka’ba if it contained the Black Stone. However, if the Black Stone was not there, they may have felt freedom to use a trebuchet which they knew would destroy the Ka’ba building. Apparently the Black Stone was not damaged during this time, which would indicate it was moved to safety in Mecca.
- 83 - 87 AH (702-706 CE): There are no recorded pilgrimages
- 87 AH (706 CE): Ḥajjāj builds his rouge mosque in Wāsiṭ
- 89 AH (708 CE): The Mihrab Niche is introduced in old and new mosques to point to Mecca. This starts in Medina, an area not under the control of Ḥajjāj.²⁹
- 94 AH (714 CE): An earthquake destroyed much of Petra and the city was abandoned. Mecca in Arabia became the focal point of worship, deemed approved by God, due to the divine action seen in the earthquake.

25 Ṭabarī XXI, pg 61 & XXIII pg 222

26 Ṭabarī XXI, pg 107, 112

27a Ṭabarī XXI, pg 134, 151

27 Ṭabarī XXI, pg 169

28 Ṭabarī 19: 22-224

29 Ṭabarī 23, pg 141

- 98 AH (717 CE): It is during these years that the Christian Roman powers in Byzantium were accusing the Muslims of many things. Leo also tells us that Abū Turāb and Salmān the Persian composed the Qur'ān *even though the rumor has got around among you that God sent it down from the heavens.... As for your book, you have already given us examples of such falsifications and one knows among others of a certain Ḥajjāj named by you as governor of Persia, who had men gather your ancient books, which he replaced by others composed by himself according to his taste and which he disseminated everywhere in your nation, because it was easier by far to undertake such a task among a people speaking a single language. From this destruction, nevertheless, there escaped a few of the works of Abū Turāb, for Hajjaj could not make them disappear completely.*³⁰

A similar account is told by 'Abd al-Masīḥ al Kindī and Abraham of Tiberias, both writing during the reign of Ma'mūn (813-833 CE). *“Then there was the matter of Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, namely that he gathered together every last copy and caused to be omitted from the text many things.... and a version (naskhah) was written according to the composition (ta'lif) favored by Ḥajjāj in six copies (maṣāḥif) and one was sent to Egypt, another to Syria another to Medina, another to Mecca, another to Kūfa and another to Baṣra.”*³¹

From these accounts it appears that more than the Qibla direction was at stake. Claims were made that Ḥajjāj not only tampered with the text of the Qur'an, but that he made major changes in it, by deleting large portions of it. While this paper is not the place to tackle this subject, it does indicate that Islam was in turmoil at this time, and that Al-Ṭabarī writing some 160 years later does not delve into it at all. Perhaps the Abbasid rulers who ruled in Al-Ṭabarī's day (240 AH or 854 CE)) refused to acknowledge how tumultuous these early years really were.

- 109 AH (727 CE): The earliest “Mecca” mosque built in Banbhor Pakistan.
- 115 AH (733 CE): New mosques in Umayyad Spain now pointed their Qibla in a line parallel to a line drawn between Petra and Mecca.
- 122 AH (740 CE): The *Continuatio Byzantia Arabica* mentions Mecca. This is the first instance of the name Mecca appearing in ancient literature.
- 128 AH (746 CE): Another earthquake destroyed buildings in Syria and Jordan. All hope of returning the Black Stone to the Holy City is lost.
- 132 AH (749): The Abbāsids now rule from Iraq. Since Kūfa had adopted the Mecca Qibla very early on, all mosques now faced Mecca in Saudi Arabia and all Qur'āns written in the Kūfic script contain verses in sūra 2 referring to the change of the Qibla.
- 30 Leo-'Umar, Letter, in Armenian, 292, 297-98, Hoyland, 1997, page 501
- 31 Hoyland, 1997, page 501

So using the above timeline I would like to suggest that the Black Rock was moved somewhere between years 65 and 66 AH (684-685 CE), a time when the Muslim world was reeling under wars, rebellions and theological upheaval. The historical record coincides with the archeological records except for several points. They fail to mention the moving of the Black Rock to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and they refer to both Petra and Mecca with the same name: that of Mecca. By the time of Al-Ṭabarī's writing, these two locations had merged into one in the minds of the Abbasid Muslims.

If the Black Rock was moved around 65 AH (684 CE), then when was the Ka'ba structure and the rest of Masjid al Ḥarām built around it? To answer this question we once again need to turn to archeology. In the region of Ḥuma al-Numūr, north west of Ṭā'if (about 60 km from Mecca) over 60 early Islamic inscriptions have been found.³² These include verses of the Qur'an, supplications asking for forgiveness, mercy, martyrdom and paradise; trust and belief in Prophet Muḥammad and the sending of prayers and blessings upon him. One inscription stands out as it contains the full *shahādah* and also mention of the building of Masjid al Ḥarām that year. The inscription is clearly dated as 78 AH (697 CE).

This inscription clearly uses the word "*banā* or built. It also clearly claims that it was written in year 78, the year that Masjid al Ḥarām was constructed. There can be no doubt which location this is speaking of, as it is only 60 km from Mecca and over a thousand kilometers from Petra.

Over in Petra, Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān started the reconstruction of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in the year 75 AH (694 CE) after it sustained damage by the catapults of al-Ḥajjāj during his siege of the Holy City. So at this point two Masjid al Ḥarāms must have existed, one in the correct location, and the other with the Black Rock in Saudi. How did this dilemma get solved? It appears that later earthquakes destroyed the Ka'ba in Petra, and flooding washed away much of it, until only the foundation and a meter of stone were left.

32 Hoyland, "*The Content And Context Of Early Arabic Inscriptions*", Jerusalem Studies In Arabic And Islam, 1997, Volume 21, Number 3, pp. 77-102; *idem.*, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey And Evaluation Of Christian, Jewish And Zoroastrian Writings On Early Islam*, 1997, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam - 13, The Darwin Press, Inc.: Princeton (NJ), pp. 687-703; *idem.*, "*New Documentary Texts And The Early Islamic State*", Bulletin Of The School Of Oriental And African Studies, 2006, Volume 69, Number 3, pp. 395-416. Also see: <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/haram1.html> Retrieved 9 Feb 2017

Addendum

Questions that readers and fellow students of history have raised with me

1. Was the Qibla towards a place or an object?

The Qur'an only ever mentions the location of Masjid al Ḥarām. (Quran 2:127) No other place or object is attached to the Qibla. The Qur'an never mentions the Black Rock. In the film *The Sacred City* I suggest that Petra was the location of Masjid al Ḥarām as it was the focus of the original Qibla, and it fits all of the descriptions of the original location.

2. Was the Qibla from human origins or divine? Was it revealed by a prophet or a long held tradition?

The only specific mention of a Qibla is from the Qur'an. While there is some mention of the practice of Jews praying towards Jerusalem (eg: Daniel 6:10), there are no recorded directives from God to pray in any specific direction except in Islam. The Arab pilgrimage to Petra was established many centuries before the founding of Islam. This is covered in *Islamic Geography*.

3. What did the original Ka'ba in Petra look like? Was it covered?

I hope to cover this in a forthcoming paper dealing with identifying the Holy Places of Islam in the ancient city of Petra. For instance I believe you can see the foundation of the original Ka'ba in Petra at: 30°19'47.34"N 35°26'24.91"E. This cube stands before the temple of Dushara but has been identified as a ruined altar in the past. Since altars usually stood on a raised platform as part of the temple structure, this structure seems to be an anomaly. From my research I believe that after the earthquake of 519 AD, 19 years before Muḥammad was born in Petra, all of the idols and relics were dug from the ruins of temples and churches and brought into the wide open courtyard of the Dushara Temple to be preserved. These 360 items were scattered around the large courtyard, and people could walk around the courtyard to pray in front of whatever holy idol or relic they chose. In time people walked in a circular motion to pass in front of all of the idols and relics. The area in front of the temple of Dushara could have accommodated 360 items which would require a very large space. The Islamic records tell us that during the rebuilding of the sacred area and the adding of a roof structure of some sort (which later burned) that Muḥammad made his first appearance as someone chosen of God to place the Black Rock into the new niche. Since that action began his prophet-hood, he could never remove it, even when he destroyed the other 359 idols. When Abdallāh ibn Zubayr removed the Black Rock from the Ka'ba some people may

have sighed in relief that the idol was finally removed from the sacred precincts. Later the Qarmāṭians reacted strongly to the Black Rock in Mecca, seeing it as an idol.

5. Who has the authority to move the Qibla?

The Qibla was instituted by the prophet Muḥammad through a direct order given to him, as recorded in the Qur'an. (Qur'an 2:127) Prayer must be made to Masjid al Ḥarām, which the archeological evidence now reveals was located in Petra. Accordingly, all of the mosques of the first one hundred years of Islamic history point to Petra, so we can conclude that the prophet Muḥammad prayed to Masjid al Ḥarām in Petra as did Abu Bakr, Omar, 'Uthman and Ali. The Qiblas established by Ḥajjāj and Ibn al Zubayr were in rebellion to what the Qur'an commands.

6. Why didn't anyone object to the moving of the Qibla to Mecca?

The fact is, they did! But the records come to us through the Abbāsīd rulers and their historians who had adopted the Mecca Qibla, so we must try and read between the lines to understand what was happening. By 277 AH (890 CE), dissatisfaction with the Abbāsīd rule grew in central Arabia, giving room for Shī'a Ismā'īli groups to propagate their teachings. They taught that the pilgrimage to Mecca was simply a superstition, and so they desired to build a Muslim society based on reason and equality. The Muslim world at that time was economically successful and wealthy, based largely on a huge slave-based economy. (Nakash, 2006)

In 899 AD (286 AH), the Qarmāṭians took control of Baḥrain's capital Hajar, and also al-Hasa which became the capital of their state. The Qarmāṭians tried to stop Muslims from going to Mecca for the pilgrimage. They so vehemently opposed pilgrimages to Mecca that in 906 AD (293 AH) they began ambushing caravans and massacring pilgrims. Then in 927 AD (315 AH) they sacked Mecca, desecrated the Well of Zamzam with corpses of ḥajj pilgrims, and then removed the Black Stone and took it to Al-Hasa. In 931CE (316 AH) the Qarmāṭians chose a new Mahdī-Caliph who set about abolishing Shari'a law, and changing the Qibla direction yet again.

Since the old Qibla was lost, they instituted a new Qibla that required the faithful to always pray towards fire. When the new Mahdī-Caliph began to curse Muḥammad and the other prophets, instituting a number of strange new ceremonies as well as executing some of the nobles, the Qarmāṭians decided their new Mahdī-Caliph was an imposter and they killed him.

With the Black Stone in captivity and the pilgrimages halted, Islam was in crisis. In 952 AD (340 AH) the Abbāsids agreed to pay a huge sum for the return of the Black Stone. When they received it back, it had been broken into several pieces. When it was returned, it was wrapped in a sack and thrown into the Friday Mosque of Kūfa accompanied by a note saying “By command we took it, and by command we have brought it back.” Its abduction and removal caused further damage, breaking the stone into seven pieces. (Glasse, 2001, page 245)

After a defeat at the hands of the Abbāsids in 976 CE (365 AH) the Qarmāṭians focused on internal issues and slowly their status was reduced to that of a local power. According to the arabist & historian Curtis Larsen, this had important repercussions for the Qarmāṭian's ability to extract tribute from the region and slowly their finances failed. (Larsen, 1984, page 65) Eventually the Qarmāṭians were expelled from Iraq by the Buyids (985 AD) and they faded from history. (Busse, 1975) (Muir, 1915, pages 558-562)

