



The Kaba – the Sacred House of God

By [Aisha Stacey](#) (© 2009 IslamReligion.com)

The *Kaba*^[1] is the sacred House of God situated in the middle of the Holy mosque in the city of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. The black cube shaped



box is familiar to people of all faiths due to the images that come out of Saudi Arabia every year at pilgrimage time. Usually when people see these images, their attention is focused on the black box being circled by hundreds if not thousands of worshippers. This box is the Kaba.

“God has made the Kaba, the Sacred House, an asylum of security, Hajj, and 'Umrah (pilgrimage) for mankind...” (Quran 5:97)

The Kaba is the holiest site in Islam, and it is the *qibla*, the direction Muslims face when praying. It is called the Kaba because of its shape; cube in the Arabic language is *ka'b*. Sometimes the Kaba is called *Al Bait Al Atiq*,

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AI-MIZAN

YOUTH CORNER

STAGES OF PROPHET SAWS'S LIFE

(Abstracted from Tahfeem ul Quran by Maulana Maududi)

The first stage began with his appointment as a Messenger and ended with the proclamation of Prophethood three years later. During this period the Message was given secretly to some selected persons only, but the common people of Makkah were not aware of it.

The second stage lasted for two years after the proclamation of his Prophethood. It began with opposition by individuals: then by and by, it took the shape of antagonism, ridicule, derision,, accusation, abuse, and false propaganda then gangs were formed to persecute those Muslims who were comparatively poor, weak' and helpless.

The third stage lasted for about six years from the beginning of the persecution to the death of Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah in the tenth year of Prophethood. During this period, the persecution of the Muslims became' so savage and brutal that many of them were forced to migrate to Habash. Social and economic boycott was applied against the Holy Prophet and the members of his family, and those Muslims who continued to stay in Makkah were forced to take refuge in Shi'b-i-A'bi Talib which was besieged.

The fourth stage lasted for about three years from the tenth to the thirteenth year of Prophethood. This was a period of hard trials and grievous

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sufferings for the Holy Prophet and his followers. Life had become unendurable at Makkah and there appeared to be no place of refuge even outside it. So much so that when the Holy Prophet went to Ta'if, it offered no shelter or protection. Besides this, on the occasion of Haj, he would appeal to each and every Arab clan to accept his invitation to Islam but met with blank refusal from every quarter. At the same time, the people of Makkah were holding counsels' to get rid of him by killing or imprisoning or banishing him from their city. It was at that most critical time that Allah opened for Islam the hearts of the *Ansar* of Yathrab where he migrated at their invitation.

Now that we are aware of the stages of the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah , it is easier for one to identify, as far as possible, the particular stage in which a certain Makki Surah was revealed. This is because the Surahs belonging to a particular stage can be distinguished from those of the other stages with the help of their subject matter and style. Besides this, they also contain references that throw light on the circumstances and events that form the background of their revelation.

Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love. And whatever you spend - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.

[Qur'an 3:92](#)

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or the emancipated house, Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said that this name was used due to the fact that God has protected the Kaba from coming under the control of tyrants.[2]

The Kaba is made from granite taken from the hills near Mecca, and stands 15 meters (49 feet) high, the sides measure 10.5 m (34') by 12 m (39'). Today the Kaba is covered by a black silk cloth decorated with gold-embroidered calligraphy known as the *kiswah*.

On the southwest side of the Kaba is a semi-circular wall, this represents the border, or *al hatim*. Entrance to the Kaba is gained through a door, 2.13 metres off the ground, on the north-eastern wall. Inside, the floor is made from marble and the walls are clad with marble up to the halfway point between the floor and the ceiling.

Amongst the traditions of Prophet Muhammad we learn that his beloved wife Aisha asked about the wall and the door. She says, **"I asked the Messenger of God about the wall and whether it was part of the House [the Kaba]. He said, 'Yes.' I asked, 'So why is it not incorporated into the House?' He said, 'Your people ran out of money.' I asked, 'What about the door? Why is it high up?' He said, 'Your people did that so they could let in whomever they wanted and keep out whomever they wanted. If it were not for the fact that your people are still new [in Islam] and too close to their time of ignorance, I would incorporate the wall into the House and bring the door down to ground level."**[3]

Verses from the Quran are written on tablets inset in the marble and the upper part of the interior wall is clad with green cloth decorated with gold embroidered verses. Lamps hang from a cross beam; there is also a small table for incense burners. Caretakers perfume the marble cladding with scented oil, the same oil is used to anoint the Black Stone outside.

The Black Stone, an ancient sacred stone, is embedded in the eastern corner of the Kaba, one and a half meters above the ground. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said, **"The black stone came down from paradise and it was whiter than milk, but the sins of the sons of Adam turned it black"**[4]

The scholars of Islam have differed on who built the Kaba. Some say that it was built by the angels. Others say the father of humankind, Adam built the Kaba but over many centuries it fell into disrepair and was lost in the mists of time, to be rebuilt by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. All agree that the Kaba was either built or rebuilt by Prophet Abraham.

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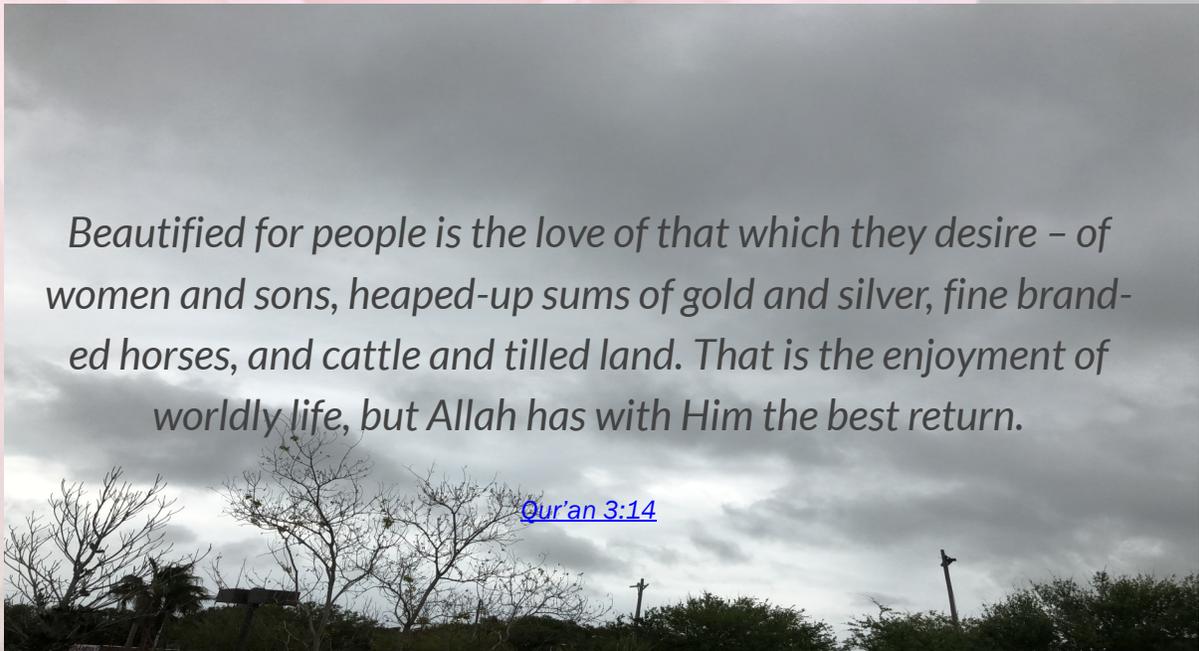
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“And (remember) when Abraham and (his son) Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House (the Kaba at Mecca), (saying), ‘Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower’” (Quran 2:127)

Since then the kaba has been rebuilt several times. By the Amalekites, the tribe of Jurham, Qusayy ibn Kilaab, the tribe of Quraish and several times after the advent of Islam. Shortly before prophet Muhammad’s mission began the Kaba was built from stones, without mortar and it was not much higher than the height of a man, people had stolen treasure from the Kaba so the Quraish decided to rebuild it and add a roof.

Each tribe collected building materials and worked cooperatively until it came time to replace the black stone. Because of the prestige involved with placing the stone arguments broke out. Abu Umayyah ibn al Mughirah one of the most senior men said, “O Quraish come to an agreement over that which you are disputing. Let the first man who enters through the gate decide the matter for you”.

The first man, was Muhammad, at that time known as *al amin* (the trustworthy one). He suggested that they carry the black stone to its place in a cloak, each tribe holding an edge so that the prestige was distributed equally. The black stone reached the Kaba in this manner and Muhammad then placed the stone in its place The Kaba consists of four corners. Finally, it is important to understand that Muslims do not worship the kaba or its surroundings. It is simply the *qibla*, the direction in which Muslims face to pray, therefore it serves as a focal point.



Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire – of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return.

[Qur'an 3:14](#)

Was Islam Spread by the Sword?

By AlJumuah Magazine (Reproduced with kind permission of IslamReligion.com)

A common misconception is that Islam would not have millions of adherents all over the world, if it had not been spread by the use of force.

The following points will make it clear, that far from being spread by the sword, it was the inherent force of truth, reason and logic that was responsible for the rapid spread of Islam.

Islam has always given respect and freedom of religion to all faiths. Freedom of religion is ordained in the Quran itself:

"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong." (Quran 2:256)

The noted historian De Lacy O'Leary wrote:^[1] **"History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."**

The famous historian, Thomas Carlyle, in his book *Heroes and Hero worship*, refers to this misconception about the spread of Islam: "The sword indeed, but where will you get your sword? Every new opinion, at its starting is precisely in a minority of one; in one man's head alone. There it dwells as yet. One man alone of the whole world believes it, there is one man against all men. That he takes a sword and tries to propagate with that will do little for him. You must get your sword! On the whole, a thing will propagate itself as it can."

If Islam was spread by the sword, it was the sword of intellect and convincing arguments. It is this sword that conquers the hearts and minds of people. The Quran says in this connection:

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best." (Quran 16:125)

The facts speak for themselves

□ Indonesia is the country that has the largest number of Muslims in the world, and the majority of people in Malaysia are Muslims. But, no Muslim army ever went to Indonesia or Malaysia. It is an established historical fact that Indonesia entered Islam not due to war, but because of its moral message. Despite the disappearance of Islamic government from many regions once ruled by it, their original inhabitants have remained Muslims. Moreover, they carried the message of truth, inviting others to it as well, and in so doing endured harm, affliction and oppression. The same can be said for those in the regions of Syria and Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, North Africa, Asia, the Balkans and in Spain. This shows that the effect of Islam on the

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population was one of moral conviction, in contrast to occupation by western colonialists, finally compelled to leave lands whose peoples held only memories of affliction, sorrow, subjugation and oppression.

- Muslims ruled Spain (Andalusia) for about 800 years. During this period the Christians and Jews enjoyed freedom to practice their respective religions, and this is a documented historical fact.
- Christian and Jewish minorities have survived in the Muslim lands of the Middle East for centuries. Countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan all have significant Christian and Jewish populations.
- Muslims ruled India for about a thousand years, and therefore had the power to force each and every non-Muslim of India to convert to Islam, but they did not, and thus more than 80% of the Indian population remains non-Muslim.
- Similarly, Islam spread rapidly on the East Coast of Africa. And likewise no Muslim army was ever dispatched to the East Coast of Africa.
- An article in *Reader's Digest 'Almanac'*, yearbook 1986, gives the statistics of the increase of the percentage of the major religions of the world in half a century from 1934 to 1984. This article also appeared in *The Plain Truth* magazine. At the top was Islam, which increased by 235%, while Christianity had increased by 47%. During this fifty-year period, there was no "Islamic conquest" yet Islam spread at an extraordinary rate.
- Today the fastest growing religion in America and Europe is Islam. The Muslims in these lands are a minority. The only sword they have in their possession is the sword of truth. It is this sword that is converting thousands to Islam.
- Islamic law protects the privileged status of minorities, and that is why non-Muslim places of worship have flourished all over the Islamic world. Islamic law also allows non-Muslim minorities to set up their own courts, which implement family laws drawn up by the minorities themselves. The life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred whether they are Muslims or not.

Conclusion

It is clear, therefore, that Islam did not spread by the sword. The "sword of Islam" did not convert all the non-Muslim minorities in Muslim countries. In India, where Muslims ruled for 800 years, they are still a minority. In the U.S.A., Islam is the fastest growing religion and has over six million followers.

In his book *The World's Religions*, Huston Smith discusses how the prophet Muhammad granted freedom of religion to the Jews and Christians under Muslim rule:

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The Mosque More than a Place of Prayer

(A brief look at the history of mosques and their function in the history and spread of Islam.)

By Aisha Stacey (© 2014 IslamReligion.com)



The mosque or the building that Muslims refer to as the *masjid* is a familiar sight in most parts of the world. No matter what country or era, the mosque is built in it is always renowned for its unique architecture and noble ambiance. In addition due to the sweeping nature of globalization most people know that the mosque is a house of worship; the place where the Muslim faithful offer prayer. But the mosque is much more than that. From the beginning it always fulfilled many needs and God willing it will continue to do so until the end of time as we know it.

An orientalist, and strong evangelical Christian, Scottish colonial administrator Sir William Muir (1819-1905 CE) was for many years the West's leading scholar of Islam despite the fact that he was negative and critical of Islam. However in his book, published in 1852, *The Life of Mahomet*, he described the role of the mosque in Muslim society quite brilliantly. From the description, even from a man such as this, we are able to see that the mosque was always meant to be more than a place of prayer.

"Though crude in material, and insignificant in dimensions, the Mosque of Muhammad is glorious in the history of Islam. Here, the Prophet and his Companions spent most of their time; here, the daily service, with its oft-recurring prayers was first publicly established; and here, the great congregation assembled every Friday, listening with reverence and awe to messages from Heaven. Here, the Prophet planned his victories; here he received embassies from vanquished and contrite tribes; and from hence issued edicts..."^[1]

In 622 CE, immediately after the migration from Mecca to Medina, the Muslims built the 'Prophet's Mosque', and the Prophet himself participated in its construction. From that moment the mosque became a focal point of any Islamic city. It became a place of worship,

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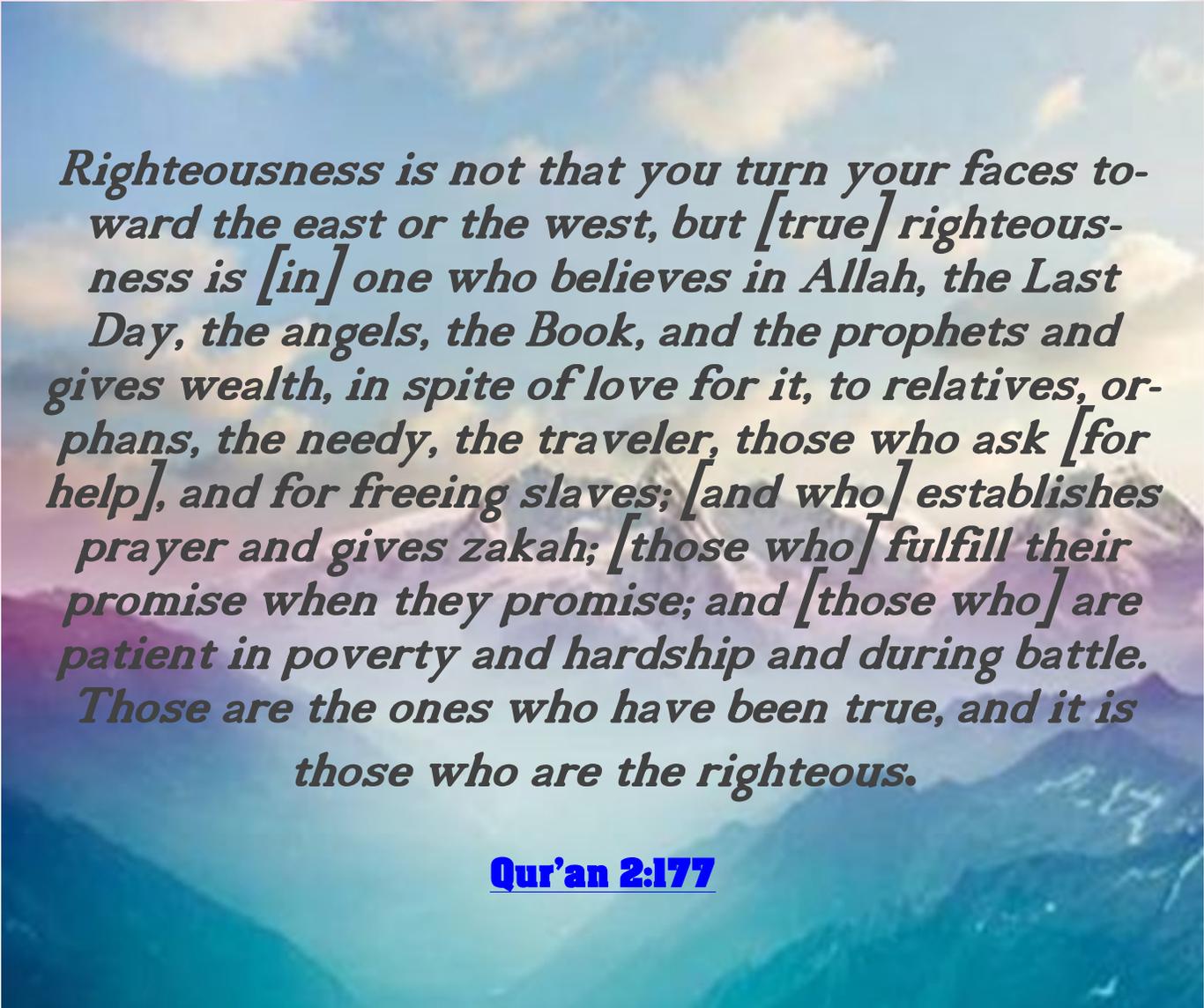
The Prophet had a document drawn up in which he stipulated that Jews and Christians “**shall be protected from all insults and harm; they shall have an equal right with our own people to our assistance and good offices,**” and further, “**they shall practice their religion as freely as the Muslims.**”[2]

Smith points out that Muslims regard that document as the first charter of freedom of conscience in human history and the authoritative model for those of every subsequent Muslim state.

Footnotes:

[1] In his book *Islam at the Crossroads*, p.8.

[2] Quoted in *The World's Religions* by Huston Smith, Harper Collins, 1991, p. 256



Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.

Qur'an 2:177

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worship, a meeting place, an educational institute, a place of social activities and a place of rest. The mosque became the centre of ritual, social, political and cultural life. There is however one function the mosque does not fulfil - it is forbidden to engage in business or trading transactions within the mosque confines.

Although business could not be conducted in the mosque, towns and villages complete with markets and merchants would often be built around the mosque. This was due to the mosque being the centre of daily life. Prayers were conducted five times a day and the local people would hear the latest news both through the sermons and groups that gathered in and outside the mosque.

Throughout the history of Islam the mosque has played a major role in the spread of Islam and the education of the Muslims. Wherever Islam took hold, mosques were established and basic education began. Mosques taught the people (men, women, boys and girls) not only to recite the Quran and understand Islamic rulings but to read, write and form opinions and debate. Education via the mosques follows the tradition established by Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet's Mosque was a school and a hostel for the poor and wayfarers.

"In scarcely any other culture has the literary life played such a role as in Islam. Learning (ilm), by which is meant the whole world of the intellect, engaged the interest of Muslims more than anything... The life that evolved in the mosques spread outward to put its mark upon influential circles everywhere." [2]

In 859CE a university was established in the Qarawiyyin Mosque in the city of Fes Morocco. It is considered by many to be the oldest university in the world. There were three separate libraries containing books on subjects such as religion, science, intellect, and languages. The mosque conducted classes in various subjects including grammar, rhetoric, logic, mathematics, and astronomy and quite possibly history, geography and chemistry. [3]

Not only were mosques the perfect location for education, they also housed the Islamic court system. Judges and jurists would meet the daily legal needs of the community as well as delivered legal opinions, and conducted research. Due to very little bureaucracy, the court system was efficient and for the most part plaintiffs and defendants represented themselves. Legal interpretation was left up to the judge who would strive to make decisions based on the Quran and the authentic *Sunnah*. Once again Morocco's al-Qarawiyyin Mosque is a perfect example of a mosque being the centre of life and learning, so too is Egypt's Al-Azhar Mosque that continues to this day to exert an influence over the daily life of Egyptians.

In many places throughout the rapidly expanding Muslim world the mosque became the source of water. Islam requires believers to perform ritual washing before prayer thus the mosque courtyard has traditionally contained water fountains. The decorative effect of water became central to Islamic architecture thus intricate and decorative pools and fountains can be found across the Islamic world and Andalusia. The Sultan Ahmed mosque in Istanbul Turkey and the Mosque of Cordoba in Spain contain splendid examples of the decorative effect of water. Wells and fountains in mosques cleanse the body and cool the air and in times past supplied water to the local community.

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The mosque is the cornerstone of the Muslim community. They were rarely used as places solely for prayer but served as community centres. People went to the mosque for education both religious and secular, to settle disputes and visit the library. They went to the mosque to pray, and to rest in secure and quiet gardens and buildings. Mosques were places of rest for the poor and destitute. Mosques traditionally distributed food and clothing to the needy. They taught countless generations how to read and memorise the Quran and other Islamic sciences. The mosque was the meeting place and the source of news in times of trouble and strife. In short the mosque was the centre of the Muslim society.

Do mosques still perform these functions? What is the role of the mosque in the 21st century?

Footnotes:

[1] *The life of Mahomet from original sources* 2nd abridged one-volume ed. 1878, 624 pp. London: Smith, Elder, & Co. P177

[2] J Pedersen: *The Arabic Book*, Tr. Geoffrey French, Princeton University Press; Princeton, New Jersey, 1984.

[3] <http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/education-islam-role-mosque>



The best sadqa is that a muslim man learns knowlege [of the Deen] and then teaches it to his Muslim brothers. (Ibn-e-Majah)



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