

## Appendix 3

# The Qur'an, the Hadith

The Muslim 'holy book' is considered by scholars to be the earliest and by far the finest work of classical Arabic prose, constituting the foundation of Islam. Islam cannot be truly understood without an adequate appreciation of the Qur'an. They are the written record of Mohammed's religious experiences – of revelations claimed to be from the Angel Gabriel.

Mohammed's revelations purport to cover a period of 23 years. After his death, his followers realised that they needed to gather together all the scattered pieces of these revelations and put them into one collective book, for the use of the Muslim community. They had relied on the fact that when Mohammed was alive he acted as Allah's mouthpiece, and there was then no urgent need to gather the revelations together. So, on his death, that concern became focused, and they collated all the material, putting it all into one book.

Alongside this they also realised the need for practical guidelines on many issues, and so they also gathered together several collections of the *sayings* of Mohammed. These sayings, over and above the revelations, addressed a wide variety of issues gave answers to questions concerning the how and when of situations. Many of them were incidents from Mohammed's life, and the response he gave as he dealt with different circumstances. These were collected together, from several sources of those who were close to Mohammed, and became known as the *hadith* – the traditions. These do not have equivalence with the Qur'an, but they are used extensively and authoritatively to support the 'revelations.'

On collecting the 'revelations' of Mohammed, they were not compiled into any chronological sequence. The Qur'an was arranged roughly in order of the length of the revelations: the longest first, and the shortest last.

Here are some interesting facts! The Qur'an is said to require twelve hours to read right through. There are 114 chapters (*surah*), and 6,226 verses (*ayat*), containing 99,464 words. The longest is *surah* 2, with 286 verses, and the shortest *surah* is 108 with 4 verses (*surah* 103 and 100 also compete). Every *surah* begins with the *Bismillah* – *bismillahir rahmanir rahim*: 'In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful', except *surah* 9. Each of these *surah* are given names, derived from important or distinguishing words in the text itself, or from its first few words, although they do not indicate the theme of the whole chapter. There are those who see a great miracle in the compiling of the Qur'an, and claim a mathematical foundation for it, based on the number 19 (the *Bismillah* consists of 19 Arabic letters, and the figures quoted above are divisible by this number!)

There were distinct periods in Mohammed's life. Consequently, there was a notable difference in his ministry in the later Medina period, after he had been expelled from Mecca. The revelations of this period take on a distinctly different emphasis – one major difference being seen in a change in attitude to Jews and Christians who would not accept his revelations. Although they cannot be dated accurately, it is usually considered that 86 chapters were revealed in the Meccan period and 28 in Medina, though there is some mixture.

There are 24 *surah* of the Medinan period, namely nos. 2-5, 8, 9, 22, 24, 33, 47-49, 55, 57-66, 76, 98, 110. These *surah* are characterised by mention of *Jihad* and details of its rulings, mention of 'hypocrisy' and dealing with hypocrites, arguments with the 'people of the Book', namely Jews and Christians. Hence these are the most vitriolic with references to violence against those who would not believe (the *kafir*), with the strongest condemnations of non-Muslims. These chapters contain references that prove that Islam is anything but 'peaceful'.