

22 Questions & Answers

March 2018

In the past months various people have raised questions and objections to Dan Gibson's theory which states that the original city of Mecca was the city of Petra in Jordan. Each question below is a real question that has been asked.

Each question follows with Dan Gibson's response. Some of these questions and objections were made in Arabic and some in Bengali, and have been translated so that everything is in English.

1. OBJECTION: *"Beware of major deceptions. This one says Mecca is not the original Mecca, and Gibson does not believe that Muḥammad existed."*

Gibson response: While I have researched the history of Mecca, I have never tried to bring doubts that Muḥammad existed. I believe he did exist. The only changes I am suggesting are geographical ones. I hear many objections to my theory, and most of them are about the existence of Muḥammad. Unfortunately these are objections are aimed at other people's opinions, and are not about my research. I am not like some scholars who doubt the existence of Muḥammad. I believe he was a real person. I hope this is clear to everyone, as I think about half the questions and objections I receive deal with this topic.

2. OBJECTION: *Gibson does not mention many places like Busra and Qiruwan. Kufa is not mentioned. India had the oldest mosque pointing to Mecca. Where are these?*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: This question seems to be referring to the list of mosques presented in the film. The film was restricted to 85 minutes, so we had to pick and choose what we would present. If you would like to check the all the data behind this theory, please visit: <http://thesacredcity.ca/QiblaData.html>

You will see that Busra, Qiruwan, and Kufa are all listed. So is the mosque in India. But please note that some of the early mosques were torn down and rebuilt. For instance the mosque in Methala, India was rebuilt in the 11th century. In this case we cannot

examine the mosque foundation and tell where the original Qibla faced, but I still list each of these mosques. Altogether there are over 90 mosques in the list. You should be able to check them out by copying the GPS coordinates into Google Earth. Or you can click on the name, and the attached page will give you more information. I am slowly adding more of our data to these attached pages, but everything has to be checked, and there are over 90 mosques. Plus there are new ones that friends and followers are suggesting.

3. OBJECTION: *Gibson says there are no walls in Mecca. But it means walls around a garden or borders around so and so's property.*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: I think the wording in the early writings is clear. During the conquest of Mecca, Ibn al-Athwa was checking the situation in the city when he was surrounded beside one of the walls of Mecca. Both Ibn Hishām and Al-Tabari agree with the wording. But, as I mention in the film, some people have added words to this, to make it one of the walls (in) Mecca. But the original writing makes it possessive - a wall of Mecca, not of a garden or wall around a house. But I agree that this is a contested interpretation, as Muslims today do not believe that the city of Mecca ever had walls. So this can be interpreted to support either argument. However, as I point out, there are a number of mosque qiblas pointing to Petra, and in the book *Early Islamic Qiblas* I list and additional 50 arguments in support of Petra. The existence of city walls is just one of these arguments.

4. OBJECTION: *There is a thaniya wherever there is a mountain.*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: As I understand it, a *thaniya* is a narrow canyon or space to pass through. They are not wherever there is a mountain, but yes, there are many thaniyas in mountainous areas. But the record is clear that the original Mecca was a place with two thaniyas, and this fits Petra better than Mecca. Any city that does not have a high

side, and a low side, and a water course running between to mountains (as was demonstrated in the film) would be disqualified.

5. OBJECTION: *“Dhu-Shara is wherever there was an idol to ‘Uzza.*

GIBSON’S RESPONSE: This is an interesting idea that I have not heard before. There were very few places where ‘Uzza was worshiped. Today there are only two places I know of: Wadi Rum, and Petra, both in southern Jordan. Even Hishām ibn al-Kalfi’s *Book of Idols* does not associate these two gods together. On the other hand, Allat, Uzza and Manah are often found together in literature and also in archeology in southern Jordan. They are unknown in southern Saudi Arabia. In my book I suggest that the original town of Ṭāʾif was located in Wadi Rum, as this is the only place that a temple to ‘Uzza exists outside of Petra, and clearly ‘Uzza’s temple stood in Ṭāʾif, but it does not exist in the place later called Ṭāʾif in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly enough there are other things about the ancient ruins of Rum that parallel what is written about Ṭāʾif. This is covered in the book *Early Islamic Qiblas*.

6. OBJECTION: *Dhu-Shara was a god of some Arab tribes and Greeks. Dan does not know the ABCs of Arab history and geography. A lot of idols were in the form of humans and not squares as he says.*

GIBSON’S RESPONSE: The only reference I know of with an Arab tribe having a god known as Dhu-Shara is from *The Kitab al-Asnam* by Hishām ibn al-Kalfi. He writes: *The banu-al-Hairith ibn-Yashkur ibn-Mubashshir of the tribe Azd had an idol called dhu-al-Shara.* Otherwise, it is only found in Petra of the Nabataeans. This god is also mentioned on some of the Nabataean grave inscriptions in Medaʾin Saleh in northern Saudi Arabia. Nabataean merchants living in Puteoli in Italy near Rome also had a small shrine to Dhu-shara. There is no evidence that Dhu-Shara was worshiped by any Greeks

or was a god of any group but the Nabataeans, and the Azd tribe in southern Jordan where Petra is located.

As for the shape of idols, you must be thinking of Greek and Roman idols when you talk of human and animal forms and the Roman and Greek influence on northern Arabia. As far as I understand it, gods in the Petra region before Greek and Roman influence were made in geographical shapes, not the image of humans or animals. This is something that has been well established by archeologists.

Hishām ibn al-Kalfi writes about 200 AH about the goddess Allat: *They then adopted Allat as their goddess. Allat stood in al-Ṭāʿif, and was more recent than Manah. She was a cubic rock beside which a certain Jew used to prepare his barley porridge (sawiq).*

No question here, the shape of the goddess is a square block, just like the one found in Petra and Wadi Rum.

7. OBJECTION: *Where is the reference to Sebeos the Armenian who mentions Muḥammad and our religion perfectly.?*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: I did not mention Sebeos of Armenia for he has little to do with the topic of the film and establishing where the original Masjid al-Ḥarām was located. Usually Muslims bring up Sebeos when trying to prove Muḥammad was a real person. But I already believe this. However, there are some interesting things in the book attributed to Sebeos. Consider chapter 30. Here Sebeos tells us Muḥammad gathered his army, and they set out from the Paran Desert (Farun) ... and marched towards Moabite Rabbath where they met the armies of the Byzantines (Mu'tah). This is also testified by the Islamic records, but with one major difference. They did not depart from Paran, but from Mecca and Medina. (Al Tabari vol. 8, page 152, Sunny edition) The difference here is substantial, because Paran not only refers to the Sinai, but also to the area east of Wadi Araba, directly south of Petra. This entire area, both east and west of Wadi Araba has been called Paran by ancient writers. Sebos is quite clear that the armies left from

this area while the Islamic writers speak of Mecca and Medina. How can this be rectified? Lets read more.

Later in the same chapter, Sebeos notes that that the second wave of Arab armies under 'Umar came from the desert of Sinai, (not from Mecca or Medina in Arabia) *When the sons of Ishmael had arisen and issued from the desert of Sinai, their king Amr[h] ['Umar] did not accompany them. But when [the Arabs] had militarily routed both kingdoms, seizing from Egypt to the great Taurus mountain, from the Western Sea...*) Once again he locates the source of the Muslim armies as coming from the north of Arabia, this time Sinai. As we know, the Nabataeans originated in the area of Paran, and while the Nabataean capital was at Petra, they had other cities in the Negev and Sinai. So Sebeos once again identifies northern Arabia (although not Petra directly) and not Medina or Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Many Muslims use these passages to arguing about the existence of Muḥammad, which I have already stated I do not have an argument with, but they miss the importance of the geography of this section. Sebeos supports the idea of northern Arabia (Petra region) as being the centre of the Muslims at that time.

Now if my Muslim friends want to start quoting Armenian writers, then they must also deal with Thomas Artsruni, who, writing before his death in 887 CE tells us: *At that time, in a place of Petrea Arabia, Pharan named Makka - The Mecca - he showed himself brothers bandits, warriors and band chiefs, worshiping in a temple the idols of Amonites, Samam, and Kabar.* From this it is clear that the prophet Muḥammad was not born and raised in Mecca in Saudi Arabia, but he lived in a city of Mecca in Paran, in Arabia Petraea. Here the writer clearly calls it - *the Mecca* - and places it in southern Jordan.

This should clear up the objection that Muslims have, when they argue that their sources say Mecca, while I say Petra. From Thomas Artsruni it becomes obvious that Petra had several names. Remember the name "Petra" was given to the city by the Roman rulers. Before this it was called Rekem. (see Shaddel, Mehdy *Studia Onomastica Coranica: al-Raqim*, Caput Nabataeaem, 2017) It was not unusual for ancient cities to

have different names given at different times. So the Islamic records are not untrue when they talk about Muḥammad and Mecca. What we must do is discover when the Islamic references change from *Mecca in Paran* to *Mecca in Saudi Arabia*. This is why my survey of early Islamic Qiblas is important, because it indicates when this change took place.

8. OBJECTION: *Why doesn't Gibson mention Byzantine history sources? What about the Abyssinia civilization? How could they change their history?*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: Perhaps you have not seen my book *Early Islamic Qiblas*. After seeing the initial results of my survey of early Qiblas I spent several years trying to disprove it, before even I would write about it. I tried to check all of the writings of the various civilizations at this time, including the Byzantines. As for Abyssinia there are archeological records of followers of Muḥammad arriving in Africa. The first mosque in Africa was the Sahabe Mosque in Massawa, Eritrea where the followers of Muḥammad landed on their way to Abyssinia. There is even a mosque with two qiblas in Zeila in Somalia. As to how could they change their history, there is little written in any outside history from this time of Islam. The arrival of 82 men and some women from Arabia was not an important event. Also, they returned shortly afterwards when persecution stopped after Muḥammad uttered the Satanic verses. Once he rescinded those verses, persecution began again, so people then moved to Medina, while Muḥammad stayed behind until he felt God gave him permission to moved to Medina. So we are only talking about a few years time that the followers of Islam were in *Abyssinia*. I think this short escape of a few refugees would be of little importance in African history. As for the other places, like the Byzantines, I would suggest you read the book: "*Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*" by Robert G. Hoyland. He searches through other civilization's histories to see what they wrote about the opening years of Islam during the lifetime of the prophet. It is a very interesting read and I refer to it multiple times in my research.

9. OBJECTION: *Ibn Zubayr did not announce himself to be caliph.*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: Here I will cede some ground. It is a very complex time in Islamic history. Ibn Zubayr refused to swear allegiance to Caliph Yazid I. It was the people who said that he deserved the caliphate and requested to take an oath of allegiance from him to his caliphate. So, you are true in saying that he did not announce himself as caliph, as I stated, the people around him did so.

Al-Tabari tells us: *The people thought that a consultative council (shura) was the appropriate course of action (amr) to decide the Caliph.* (Vol 19, page 218 Sunny) and on the next page 'Abdallāh b. Ḥanẓalah reported and said of Ibn al-Zubayer. *"He incited the people, and they gave the oath of allegiance to him. Yazīd was informed of that and he sent Muslim b. 'Uqbah against them.*

I then summarized this very complex time of history with a very simple statement: *Ibn Zubayr declared himself to be caliph in the holy city, and that started the 2nd Islamic civil war.* (from the film: *The Sacred City.*)

10. OBJECTION: *What about the book with the 20 minute CD? Who wrote that? What about Jay Smith? These people are using your materials.*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: I have no knowledge of a book with a CD. I have only written two books on this subject: *Qur'ānic Geography* (2010), and *Early Islamic Qiblas* (2017). There is also a book I wrote years ago on the Nabataeans (2003). I have written a number of papers as well, and the documentary film: *The Sacred City*. I also have a couple of short You-Tube videos on my You-Tube channel, and hope to post more there in the future. But I have nothing like the book and CD.

As for Dr. Jay Smith, he is free to use my research, as is anyone else. It is freely available on the internet. He is also free to draw his own conclusions from my research. Jay Smith and I do not work together, and we have never spoken face to face, but we have exchanged a couple of emails. I think he wrote to me first with some questions. However, from our short exchange I got the idea that he is also interested in finding the truth about Islam, and wanted to know more about my research.

11. OBJECTION: *Gibson screams when he says the Arabs, in their own history, write about burning books. Even though the west store all kinds of knowledge, we Arabs are the ones who taught the west knowledge. A million books burned by the Arabs? How could so many books exist? They do not honor us. They dishonor us. An honorable person speaks the truth. You judge us to the lowest possible place by stealing our mechanics, our sports, our civilization, and stealing our inheritance. Dan lied 100 times in the film. For us, if you lie once we cannot listen.”*

GIBSON’S RESPONSE: Never once in the film did I scream. But yes, I quote early Islamic writers who speak of the burning of books. Evidently, the early Muslim armies, on several occasions, burnt books. You seem surprised that there were many books that the Arabs did not write, and say that all knowledge came from the Arabs. I do not know what your sources are for this, but every civilization, down through history has developed some knowledge. No one civilization is the complete source of all knowledge. As for the books, I can only quote from Islamic sources that tell us that when the Muslim armies arrived in Alexandria, there were many books and manuscripts stored in warehouses. Perhaps this was to protect them from others who had tried to damage them in the past. Historians have pointed to several groups who tried to burn books in Alexandria before that, some on purpose and some inadvertently. The point I was making, however, was that for just over a hundred years, there was a literary vacuum in Islam.

Now I would image that the great Islamic books you are referring to were written after this period, during what some have called the “Golden Age” of Islam. At that time, math and astronomy excelled as they tried to find new solutions to things like establishing the Qibla direction. In my opinion this caused a burst of scientific activity, especially the copying of books from many other countries. Many Greek and Indian books were copied into Arabic during this period, years after the early Islamic armies burned books.

The only indication that I am aware of, that there was a collection of knowledge in Arabia, is from Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Qais ibn Wahsiyah an-Nabati, who was a physician and botanist with interests in agriculture, animal husbandry as well as alchemy, magic. The new availability of books and research caused a rise in interest, and as a result, significant advancements in medicine, toxicology, math and science for those who wrote around 900 AD and afterwards. This man was not only a leading scholar of his day, but perhaps the greatest spokesperson on behalf of his Nabataean ancestors to whom he attributed nine-tenths of all scientific knowledge known. His books are known as *Al-Filiaheh an-Nabatiyah* (904 AD) and *As-Sumum wat-Tiyaqat* (900 AD). This of course would place such a collection of knowledge in the city of Petra, the capital of the Nabataeans. (see <http://nabataea.net/TreasuryMystery.html>)

12. OBJECTION: *Muhammad could not have been in Petra, if there were idols there, because Muhammad was pure, so he could not co-exist with idols.*

GIBSON’S RESPONSE: There are numerous references in the Hadiths of Muhammad co-existing with idols. For instance, Muhammad eats food offered on altars: *Sahih al-Bukhari 7:407* tells us:

Allah's Apostle said that he met Zaid bin 'Amr Nufail at a place near Baldah and this had happened before Allah's Apostle received the Divine Inspiration. Allah's Apostle presented a dish of meat (that had been offered to him by the pagans) to Zaid bin 'Amr, but Zaid refused to eat of it and then said (to the pagans), "I do not eat of what

you slaughter on your stone altars (Ansabs) nor do I eat except that on which Allah's Name has been mentioned on slaughtering."

From: Al-Kharqushi, *Sharaf al-Mustafa* (regarding pre-Islamic days) he says:

The Prophet slaughtered an lamb for one of the idols (nusub min al-ansab); then he roasted it and carried it with him. Then Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl met us in the upper part of the valley; it was one of the hot days of Mecca. When we met we greeted each other with the greeting of the Age of barbarism, in'am sabahan. The Prophet said: "Why do I see you, O son of Amr, hated by your people?" He said, "This (happened) without my being the cause of their hatred; but I found them associating divinities with God and I was reluctant to do the same. I wanted (to worship God according to) the religion of Abraham..." The Prophet said, "Would you like some food?" He said, "Yes." Then the Prophet put before him the (meat of the lamb). He (that is, Zayd ibn Amr) said: "What did you sacrifice to, O Muḥammad?" He said, "To one of the idols." Zayd then said: "I am not the one to eat anything slaughtered for a divinity other than God."

Even if readers do not accept Bukhari and Al-Kharqushi, they must accept the verses in the Qur'ān where Muḥammad declared two idols to be symbols of God, but later these words were declared Satanic:

*Behold! Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allah. If those who visit the House in the Season or at other times, should compass them round, **it is no sin in them**. And if any one obeys his own impulse to good, — be sure that Allah is He Who recognizes and knows. Surah al-Baqarah (Qur'ān) 2:158*

Safa, Marwa, and other idols were worshiped in the Petra region. There is no indication that they were worshiped as far south as Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Even the cave where Muḥammad received the Qur'ān was filled with pagan images: Bukhāri 6:186 tells us:

I was in the company of the Prophet in the cave, and on seeing the carvings of the pagans, I said, “O Allah’s Apostle! If one of them (pagans) should lift up his foot, he will see us.” He said, “What do you think of two (gods), the third of whom is Allah?”

The proposed cave in Mecca today does not contain any of these carvings, but the proposed cave in Petra has them. Once again, this is all in my book *Early Islamic Qiblas*. I urge you to read it. I hear that there are electronic copies circulating on the Internet.

In his pre-Islamic days, Muḥammad was surrounded by idols. This is why he had to cleanse 360 idols from the Ka’ba. When he was chosen as a young man to place the Black Rock into the corner of the Ka’ba he doesn’t object to being in the presence of the other 359 idols. In the end, it doesn’t matter whether they were in Mecca or Petra, there were still 360 idols in one place in the city.

In addition to this, Ahmed ibn Hanbal, (*Musnad* vol. 4 p. 222) tells us that a wife of the prophet had a idol of al-‘Uzzā in her house. Although, modern writers claim: “She, unlike her people, never believed in nor worshipped idols.” (*Yasin T. al-Jibouri, "Khadijah, Daughter of Khuwaylid, Wife of Prophet Muḥammad"*)

In the *Book of Idols*, Hishām ibn al-Kalbi speaks of the prophet Muḥammad worshipping al-Uzza:

We have been told that the Apostle of God once mentioned al-Uzza saying, "I have offered a white sheep to al-'Uzza, while I was a follower of the religion of my people."

Ibn Kathir repeats this in his *Tafsir* on Quran 53:19–26. Ibn Hanbal adds that the family used to worship it just before bedtime. (*Musnad* vol. 4 p. 222)

Additionally, whenever Muḥammad complained that he was affected by the Evil Eye, Khadijah used to send for an elderly sorceress to charm it away. (Ibn Saad, *Tabaqat* 1:36:2). It seems to me that the teaching that “Muḥammad could never have been in the presence of idols” is a rather modern day Islamic teaching not based on what the early writers recorded.

13. OBJECTION: *Why doesn't Gibson mention the Hijra? Is it from Petra to Madina? Maybe he doesn't know. A true historian takes all evidences to prove a point. Dan does the opposite. He paints a picture of a complete different history and then tried to bring in points to prove his view... built on sand and salt. His proofs have no truth.*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: In my study of the early Qiblas I first did the scientific research and after that I looked for supporting evidence from other sources. I did not start with an idea, I started with a scientific study on the early Qiblas.

Now, as for the Hijra, of course I know about it. I have read all of the histories and hadiths available to me, some of them several time. And I agree that the Hijra is important, especially in relation to dating early mosques in Africa. As for the direction of the Hijra, I believe Muḥammad left Petra and went to Wadi Rum (ancient Ṭā'if) and then moved to Medina. As Mecca in Saudi Arabia doesn't seem to exist at this time, especially as a focus of any Qiblas, I do not believe that the Hijra was from Mecca.

14. OBJECTION: Patricia Crone rescinded at her death. Michael Cook, said "I have to respect their preciseness and culture." Both authors at the end came around to say all their earlier findings were nothing. But that the Arabs were great! Dan is full of scorn and jest. Will he come around like Crone and Cook did?

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: As I said before, I sometimes disagreed with Crone. However it is important to note that Crone did not rescind her studies. But she and Cook did later distance themselves from some of their earlier theories. But that was the result of conviction that they had gotten some parts wrong, not compromise or rescinding. She believed that Muḥammad existed, and she did not accept the idea that the Koran was a garbled translation of Aramaic Christian texts. In her last years she suffered from incurable cancer. Rather than taking radiation she turned to experimental medicines.

Her sister Diana recorded a documentary film of her struggle with cancer. It is called: “For the Life of Me.” When I enquired, Diana wrote to me:

I can assure you that Patricia did not retract any of her research. She stood by everything she had published to the very end. Where her early work needed correction, she had made explicit changes. She was not anti-Islam and she had no regrets about her work. If she had not fallen ill, she would have written another book that she was eager to work on, but it was in no way a retraction of her work.

So I would not take seriously any claims that she rescinded her research on her death bed. Nor would I accept claims that Michael Cook did likewise, as he died several years before.

15. OBJECTION: The 2nd Fitna lasted many years, where Dan says 40 days. It was actually 4 years.

GIBSON’S RESPONSE: I had hoped that the film was clear on this point. The war had several flare-ups over several years. In the film I stated that after the caliph died there was 40 days before his son was declared the new caliph. The army returned to Damascus during that time to take part in the appointment of the caliph. Then they appointed Ḥajjāj to continue the war. He returned to fight on, which went on for some years. The whole argument about the 40 days, is that it would take more than 40 days for a messenger to ride from Damascus to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, then mobilize the army, and march back to Damascus. But if the army was in Petra, then the timeline fits better.

16. OBJECTION: Muḥammad was in Mecca when he was told to turn to the new Qibla. He would have turned 2 finger widths from Jerusalem to Petra.

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: I think you misunderstand me on this point. I agree that the record states that Muḥammad was in Medina when he was told to turn to the new Qibla. From the archeology of early mosques we can tell that he was praying to Petra not Jerusalem. So the command was to turn from Petra to Mecca. This is why I said there was a problem, because mosques were not oriented to Mecca until many years later after Muḥammad died. From my study I concluded that there are no mosques in the first 100 years of Islam that face Jerusalem. I think the idea of Jerusalem was a late Umayyad or Abbasid idea, that came from seeing the Qiblatain Mosque in Medina, and assuming it faced Jerusalem.

17. OBJECTION: Why didn't the Umayyads destroy Mecca and return the stone to Petra?

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: By reading the history of the period we know that the civil war continued on for some years. It was during this time that the trebuchet of al Ḥajjāj destroyed the holy places in Petra (75 AH or 694 CE). After this Ḥajjāj tried to rebuild the Ka'ba. But later, in 746 CE an earthquake destroyed much of Petra again. I am sure that no-one really wanted to rebuild Petra. It was a city of idols. Mecca in Saudi Arabia was a new pristine location, and the Black Stone was already there.

As I point out in *Early Islamic Qiblas*, the Black Stone was moved to Saudi Arabia around 65 AH (684 CE), but the Ka'ba structure and the rest of Masjid al-Ḥarām were built later. To answer the question of when, 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. These include verses of the Qur'ān, supplications asking for forgiveness, mercy, martyrdom and paradise; trust and belief in the 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). So this provides us a clear

date of when the rest of the site was constructed in Mecca. It was 49 years (746 CE) after the earthquake destroyed Petra.

During the time between these events, a Ḥajjāj began promoting a “between” position. (706-743 CE). The last mosque that points to the between position was built in 743 or 127 AH.

So the timeline goes as follows:

1. Black Rock moved to Mecca (65 AH) (estimate)
2. War continues and trebuchet knocks down original Ka’ba (75 AH) (Tabari)
3. Masjid al Haraam is then built in Mecca by the rebels (75 AH) (inscription)
4. War ends, Al Ḥajjāj wins, and he promotes a “Between” position rather than praying to pagan Petra. (87 AH) This goes on until 127 AH. (archeology)
5. An earthquake destroyed Petra, and all mosques are built facing Mecca in Saudi Arabia. (128 AH) (archeology)

18. OBJECTION: Gibson says there are no early maps showing Mecca, but there are many maps showing Macorba, the early name for Mecca.

GIBSON’S RESPONSE: I wrote on this topic in 2013. The paper (*Suggested Solutions for Issues Concerning The Location of Mecca in Ptolemy’s Geography*) can be freely found on the Internet. It helps correct many of the misconceptions there are about maps of Arabia. Most of the early maps you see on the internet say they are drawn “after Ptolemy.” This is because Ptolemy made a globe of the earth, invented his own system of latitude and longitude, and then left us tables of names of places, and their coordinates. I use “AP” when giving coordinates in Ptolemy’s system, which is very different from the latitude and longitude developed in 1714 CE. No original map or globe of Ptolemy has survived. So map makers in the Middle Ages and up to the 17th century used Ptolemy’s coordinates to aid them in drawing world maps. We must also consider that there were Arab and Turkish maps, which give their measurements in

Qiyas and 'isba and used 240 degrees around the world instead of 360. So one must be familiar with all three systems when dealing with early maps.

The main problem with Ptolemy based maps, is that he made his globe too small. All of his calculations were 28 percent smaller than they should be. This is why Ptolemy's system was abandoned in 1714 and modern latitude and longitude was accepted.

Another issue with Ptolemy's maps, is that he collected his information around 100 CE, from merchants and travelers. He then tried to place these findings onto his globe. Often he got things out of proportion. For instance Sri Lanka became very large as it was the centre of Asian trade at that time. India is much too small. So map makers before the 1800s struggled to put modern knowledge together with Ptolemy's collected ideas from 1000 to 1500 years earlier.

So when I began studying the list of places and coordinates for Arabia, that Ptolemy gave to us, I realized that his list of places were skewed. So I chose to use four rivers that he mentions were in Arabia. Since I was very familiar with the geography of Arabia, I could easily identify these four rivers or wadis, as they would have been seen by passing sailors.

Using these four rivers, I found that Ptolemy had made Arabia too small. He had no idea how large the deserts were. So I lined up the rivers in their correct place, and the towns then fell into place.

Ptolomey's Centros Village became modern day Jazan, Thebe Town became Al Luhayyah and Macorba becomes Al-Mahabishah. Mara was then positioned as Ma'rib and Saudatha became modern day Sana'a. Sapphar then fit over Zafar, and Mochura in the north became Yenbu. On the Indian Ocean coast Petros became modern day Salalah and Mosoha is what we know today as ancient Sumhuram.

In the past, some Muslims have glanced at maps drawn after Ptolemy and have assumed that Mecca was either Macoraba (73 20 22 -AP), Centros village (69 20 21 30 AP) or Thebe town (69 40 21 - AP). In fact these are all places in Yemen, and Mecca does not

appear on Ptolemy's map of 100 AD which means that it does not appear on any of the maps made from Ptolemy's data.

Please look for the complete article and read it in detail and see the maps and illustrations. I also provide a copy of Ptolemy's data in the appendices so you can check for yourself.

19. OBJECTION: In your research there are no mosques between Petra and Mecca. All mosques north of Mecca face south, and all the mosques south of Mecca face north. Is this not proof that Mecca was the original Qibla?

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: Here you are mistaken. The Qasr Humeima and the Yamama mosque are between Mecca and Petra, and they face north, not south to Mecca. The Yamama mosque Qibla is clearly oriented towards Ḥajjāj's between position. See: (<http://thesacredcity.ca/yamama.html>)

This is very clearly evidence that the original qibla was NORTH of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and only changed to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at a later date.

20. OBJECTION: You say that the holy city of Islam was a fertile land and full of cultivation, this contradicts Qur'an 14:37 (رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ) (بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ) *“Our Lord! Lo! I (Abraham) have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near unto Thy holy House.”*

GIBSON'S RESPONSE: The question here is the meaning of غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ which literally translated is “other than agricultural.” In this verse Abraham says that some of his people (Hagar and her descendants) were settled on non-agricultural land, during the lifetime of Abraham. If you visit the city of Petra, you will learn several things. Agricultural land was 5 kilometers away at al-Bayḍā. This fits the description given by Ṭabarī (Vol. 8 pg 126) about Ḥajjāj's visit to al-Bayḍā. There was no agricultural land

in the valley where Petra exists until the Nabataeans constructed water channels bringing water into the city. So later it was described as a city with trees, grass and fruit. But during the time of the prophet Abraham, the valley was “non-agricultural.” The term “non-agricultural” only refers to the state the land was in when Abraham left Hagar there.

Conclusion

I realize that my findings are very hard for Muslims to accept. If they are true, they significantly challenge the teachings of Islam. As the Qur’an commands Muslims to pray to the original Masjid al-Ḥarām, which was in Petra, then who could change it to Mecca in Saudi Arabia? Obviously from the dating of mosque construction, we can see that the prophet Muḥammad, and the four rightly guided caliphs all prayed to Petra. This command was never rescinded in the Qur’an. So those who want to follow the commands of their prophet, and their book should pray to Masjid al-Ḥarām in Petra. The evolution of Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca happened many years after the prophet died. So, in my thinking, prayers to a new Qibla might not be accepted by God. Foods killed facing a new Qibla might not be Halāl. Pilgrimages to a new Qibla might not count for anything.

The question of the correct Qibla is not just an interesting sideline, it is part of the very central message of Islam. I am concerned for my Muslim friends. What does this mean for them? I think the archeology and histories are clear. What needs to be considered now are theological questions.

Dan Gibson