

(see FREEDOM AND PREDESTINATION; GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE). Carrying the argument further, he says that, had there been no choice and all were true believers, the world would be a perfect place and the notion of later punishment or reward would cease to have any meaning (see REWARD AND PUNISHMENT). Believers are subjected to trials in this world, both materially and spiritually (e.g. Q 2:155; 3:186; 5:48; 6:165; 21:35; 89:16). Hope (q.v.) and endurance (patience; see TRUST AND PATIENCE) help a believer during moments of trial (Q 4:104; 31:17). God gives signs (q.v.) as a test to people (Q 44:33) and God rewards those who stand in the face of adversity (Q 2:155-7). Even God's prophets (see PROPHETS AND PROPHETHOOD) are not exempt from these tests: "Thus we have appointed for every prophet an adversary (see ENEMIES; OPPOSITION TO MUḤAMMAD): the demons of humankind or of jinn (q.v.), who inspire to one another pleasing speech intended to lead astray (q.v.) through guile" (Q 6:112; cf. also Q 22:52; see DEVIL).

In light of the above, trials of past prophets and communities serve as examples for humankind. Abraham (q.v.), for instance, endured trials but in the end succeeded because he accepted God's commandments (Q 2:124; 37:104-7). The story of Joseph (q.v.) recounts his torment but final victory (Q 12) and that of his father Jacob (q.v.) who had lost his sight as a result of his distress over the loss of his son (Q 12:84), only to regain it later after learning that, true to his inner belief, his son was indeed not dead (Q 12:96). The Children of Israel (q.v.) suffered persecutions under the people of Pharaoh (q.v.; Q 2:49) but were delivered from this shame by the lord (q.v.; Q 44:30; see also DELIVERANCE). God grants mercy (q.v.) to those who are faithful in the face of numerous trials, illustrated, for example, by the initial childlessness of Zechariah (q.v.), and the allegations of

Mary's (q.v.) immoral behavior — both of whom were ultimately rewarded and/or exonerated (Q 19:2-33; see CHASTITY; ADULTERY AND FORNICATION). Satan, too, may tempt and hence test people by raising doubt in sick hearts (Q 22:53; see HEART) and Satan brought agony to the prophet Job (q.v.) which was taken away after Job asked God for help (Q 38:41f.).

The qur'ānic emphasis on the trials of this world is reflected in the theological gloss given to the struggles of the Islamic community, particularly in its early years. This is especially evident in the portrayal of social and political upheavals of the first generations as rebellion (q.v.) against the divine law (see LAW AND THE QUR'ĀN), leading to schism which could threaten the purity of the faith (q.v.) of the believers (cf. Gardet, *Fitna*). Disturbances such as that between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya were often labeled as eras of *fitna*, or trial, for the believing community (see also POLITICS AND THE QUR'ĀN).

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Tribes and Clans

The social units that constituted Arabian society in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times (see PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA AND THE QUR'ĀN). As the Muslim polity developed, Muslim society became more complex and

tribes ceased to be the sole constituent element. Nonetheless, Arab tribes did not disappear altogether (see ARABS; BEDOUIN). Modern historians of Islam understand the word “tribe” as a social unit larger than a “clan,” but there is no consensus about the definition of either of these terms. Other words are occasionally used as synonyms of “clan,” such as “sub-tribe,” “branch,” “faction,” and “subdivision,” but all of these lack a fixed meaning. Anthropologists, in contrast, use such terms in a much more technical and precise fashion. The Arabic designations of social units, such as *qabīla*, *ḥayy*, *‘ashīra*, *qawm*, *batn*, etc., also lack precision and the sources often use them interchangeably (see also KINSHIP). The common practice among modern Islamicists is to translate *qabīla* as “tribe.”

Four terms in the Qur’ān express the notion of a social unit: *‘ashīra*, *asbāt*, *shu‘ūb* and *qabā’il*. The first of these, *‘ashīra*, occurs three times (Q 9:24; 26:214; 58:22) and seems to denote an extended family (q.v.) rather than a tribe. The second, *asbāt*, occurs five times, invariably referring to the tribes of the Children of Israel (q.v.; Q 2:136, 140; 3:84; 4:163; 7:160). Medieval Muslim exegetes (see EXEGESIS OF THE QUR’ĀN: CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL) explain that the word *asbāt* is used to denote the tribes of the descendants of Isaac (q.v.; Ishāq) in order to distinguish them from the descendants of Ishmael (q.v.; Ismā‘īl); the latter, the Arabian tribes, are referred to as *qabā’il*. As for etymology, certain exegetes derive the term *asbāt* from *sibt* in the sense of “a grandchild,” for the Children of Israel are like grandchildren to Jacob (q.v.; Ya‘qūb). Others assign to *sibt* the meaning of “succession,” explaining that the generations (q.v.) of the Children of Israel succeeded one another and therefore they are *asbāt*. Yet another derivation of *asbāt* is from *sabat*, a certain tree; the exe-

getes explain that the father is likened to a tree and the descendants to its branches (Ibn al-Hā’im, *Tibyān*, i, 111; Qurṭubī, *Jāmi’*, ii, 141; vii, 303; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, i, 188; Shawkānī, *Fath*, i, 147). The word *asbāt*, however, seems to be a loan word from the Hebrew *shevaṭim* (sing. *shevet*), “tribes.”

The third and the fourth terms, *shu‘ūb* and *qabā’il*, occur in the Qur’ān once, in the famous verse that served the Shu‘ūbiyya movement (see below), “O people, we have created you male and female, and made you groups and tribes (*shu‘ūban wa-qabā’ilā*) so that you may know one another; the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most pious” (Q 49:13). *Sha‘b* (pl. *shu‘ūb*) probably was the South Arabic term parallel to the Arabic *qabīla* (pl. *qabā’il*; see Beeston, Some features; al-Sayyid, *al-Umma*, 29). There were, however, important differences. First, the Arabian social units called *qabā’il* were based on common descent, whereas the south Arabian units called *shu‘ūb* were not; secondly, the latter were sedentary, whereas the former included both nomads (q.v.) and settled people. Muslim exegetes, however, interpreted the Qur’ānic *shu‘ūb* and *qabā’il* according to the needs of their own days. The various interpretations reflect the dispute about equality between Arab Muslims and other Muslims, the ideas of the Shu‘ūbiyya movement and the response of their rivals (see POLITICS AND THE QUR’ĀN). One line of interpretation conceives of the two words as applying to north and central Arabian social units of different size and different genealogical depth. According to this interpretation a *qabīla* is a tribe, such as the Quraysh (q.v.), whereas a *sha‘b* is a “super tribe,” that is, the framework that includes several tribes, such as Muḍar. Another line of interpretation endows the two words with an ethnic coloring. According to this, *qabā’il* refers to Arabs, whereas *shu‘ūb* means non-Arabs

or *mawālī* (clients; see CLIENTS AND CLIENTAGE) or social units based on territory rather than on genealogy (which again amounts to non-Arabs, see e.g. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*; iv, 218; for a detailed discussion and references, see Goldziher, *MS*, i, 137-98; Mottahedeh, *Shu'ūbiyya*; Marlow, *Hierarchy*, 2-3, 96-9, 106; al-Sayyid, *al-Umma*, 26-36).

The scarcity of resources in Arabia on the one hand and the tribal structure of the society on the other, led to incessant competitions and feuds between the Arabian social units. These facts of life were idealized and became the basis of the social values of the Arabs (Goldziher, *MS*, i, 18-27; Obermann, *Early Islam*; al-Sayyid, *al-Umma*, 19-25). Naturally, when the Prophet sought to establish a community of believers, he hoped to achieve unity among all Muslims (Goldziher, *MS*, i, 45-9). Many prophetic traditions (ḥadīths; see ḤADĪTH AND THE QUR'ĀN) were circulated, denouncing tribal pride, tribal feuds and tribal solidarity that disrupted the overall unity of the Muslim community. The Qur'ān, however, advocates unity among Muslims (e.g. Q 3:103; 8:63; 49:10) without denouncing tribal values. Indeed, the Qur'ān does not even reflect the fact that pre-Islamic Arabian society was a tribal society. It is nevertheless important to understand the structure and the social concepts that constituted the setting prior to the advent of Islam.

Arabian society of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times may be schematically described as consisting of hierarchies of agnatic descent groups that came into being by a process of segmentation. As a rule, the major part of any given group considered itself the descendants in the male line of a single male ancestor, thus differentiating itself from other descent groups (see PATRIARCHY). At the same time, it con-

sidered itself part of ever larger descent groups because its members were also the offspring of ancestors further and further removed up the same male line. Any given descent group referred sometimes to a closer, at other times to a more distant ancestor, according to its interests. When referring to a distant ancestor, a descent group ignored the dividing lines between itself and those segments which, like itself, descended from the same distant ancestor. Thus, the more distant the ancestor, the larger the descent group and the greater the number of segments included in it. All Arabs considered themselves to be ultimately descended from two distant ancestors, in two different male lines, so that the genealogical scheme may be represented approximately as two pyramids. Descent groups are typically called "*Banū* so-and-so," i.e. "the descendants of so-and-so." It should, however, be noted that not every name mentioned in the genealogies stands for a founder of a descent group and that the recorded genealogies are not always genuine (some would even say are never genuine). Groups were sometimes formed by alliances, not by segmentation; but such groups, too, were eventually integrated into the genealogical scheme by fabricated genealogies and considered to be agnatic descent groups.

The sources preserved the names of many agnatic descent groups, which varied greatly in size and in their genealogical depth or level of segmentation. It is often clear that a given descent group was an entity of considerable genealogical depth that comprised a great number of independent segments. In the genealogies, the ancestor of such a comprehensive descent group would be far removed up the male line; the constituent segments of the group would be called after various descendants in the male line of that distant ancestor. Modern scholars of Arabia and Islam

commonly refer to the comprehensive descent groups as "tribes" although, technically speaking, the term is perhaps not entirely appropriate. A descent group (comprehensive or not) consists of all descendants in the male line of a single male ancestor. A tribe, usually having a descent group at its core, includes others as well (clients, confederates; see BROTHER AND BROTHERHOOD). It is in fact difficult to determine whether the familiar names such as Quraysh, Tamīm, 'Āmir, Ṭayyī', Asad, etc., stand for tribes or for comprehensive descent groups. Obviously, the sources do not make this distinction (although they may include various specifications); neither do Islamicists who refer to these entities as tribes. As far as the medieval books of genealogy are concerned, these names stand for comprehensive descent groups. The records of Quraysh, Tamīm, etc., in these sources only include descendants in the male line of the respective distant ancestors. The genuineness of the genealogies is often disputed but no confederate or client is included as such in the record of any given group. On the other hand, it stands to reason that, in practice, a descent group and its confederates and clients counted as one entity, at least for certain purposes. Were it not so, there would have been no point to the existence of categories such as confederates and clients. This ambiguity is reflected in the way the historical sources record details of groups such as participants in a given battle (see EXPEDITIONS AND BATTLES). The names of the genuine members of each tribe are recorded first, followed by a separate list containing the names of the clients and the confederates. The same analysis applies to the segments that constituted the tribes. For the genealogical books they are descent groups but in practice they included outsiders as con-

federates and clients, so that they were not in fact descent groups; they may be referred to as "sections." The processes of segmentation and alliance effected constant changes in the composition of descent groups, tribes and sections. Because of this fact and the fluidity of the genealogical references, the distinction between tribes and sections is often blurred.

There is no dispute about the tribal nature of Arabian society before and after the advent of Islam; yet we do not know what the members of any given tribe had in common other than the name and perhaps some sense of solidarity (see an example of such solidarity in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vii, 175). Defining features such as those that exist for modern Bedouin tribes cannot be discerned for the period under discussion. A modern Bedouin tribe in the Negev and Sinai may be defined by a common name, common leadership, common territory, sometimes common customary law, and external recognition, both legal and political (see Marx, *Bedouin*, 61-3, 95, 123-4; id., *Tribal pilgrimages*, 109-16; Stewart, *Bedouin boundaries*; id., 'Urf, 891). By contrast, the defining features of the tribes of old are far from clear. The members of a given tribe sometimes occupied adjacent territories but the legal significance of this fact, if any, is unknown (see al-Jāsir, *Taḥdīd*). As often as not, sections of one and the same tribe were scattered over large, non-adjacent areas. It is therefore not possible to define a tribe by its territory. Customary law seems to have constituted a factor uniting all Arabian tribes rather than a boundary differentiating between them. A pre-Islamic tribe certainly had no common leadership and its sections did not usually unite for common activities. Political division within one and the same tribe was the rule rather than the

exception. When the sources seem to be reporting a joint activity of a tribe, it often turns out that the report is misleading. The confusion arises from the fluidity of the genealogical references. Apparently following the practice of the tribesmen themselves, the sources call sections interchangeably by the names of their closer and more distant ancestors. Obviously, a designation by a more distant ancestor applies to a more comprehensive segment. As a rule, a smaller section may be designated by the name of one of the larger ones to which it belongs but not vice versa (except when a specific name becomes generic, such as Qays, which came to designate all the so-called "northern tribes"). Thus when various versions of one and the same account refer to a given group by different names, the smallest framework mentioned is probably the one that was really involved in the events related in that account (Landau-Tasserou, Asad; id., Tayyi'). We are thus left with no real definition of an Arabian tribe in the period discussed here, except its name and a measure of solidarity. The concept of *ʿaṣabiyya*, commonly rendered as "tribal solidarity," was too vague and too fluid to bind all the men of any given tribe or section.

ʿAṣabiyya should not be confused with the concept of shared legal responsibility. The latter was a factor that drew precise boundaries between groups; the groups thus defined, however, were neither tribes nor sections because they consisted of adult males only. In pre-Islamic and early Islamic society the adult male members of certain agnatic descent groups shared legal responsibility. They were accountable for each other's offenses. At its most extreme manifestation, this rule meant that they jointly sought revenge or received blood money (q.v.; see also RETALIATION) when one of them was killed by an outsider (see

MURDER; VIOLENCE); conversely, they were all exposed to vengeance (q.v.) or obliged to pay blood money when one of them killed an outsider. The obligation of mutual assistance applied not only in matters of blood revenge but also in less extreme situations. Such a group of men sharing legal responsibility may be called a co-liaible group (see Marx, *Bedouin*, chaps. 7 and 8). The rules by which co-liaible groups were formed in the past are unknown. The material at hand does not disclose whether they came into being on the basis of a certain genealogical depth, mutual consent of the members, a decision by the elders, external public opinion or any combination of these or other factors (cf. Stewart, *Texts*, i, 26-122; id., *Tha'r*; id., *Structure of Bedouin society*; Marx, *Bedouin*, 63-78, 180-242).

Agnatic descent groups often accepted outsiders into their ranks. The male adults from among these outsiders shared liability with the male adults of the descent group that they had joined. It should be noted that, as a rule, a section bore the name of the descent group that formed its core; the co-liaible group based on a given descent group, or on the section that crystallized around it (if any), bore the same name. Obviously, great confusion ensues when one and the same name designates three groups of different kinds (a descent group, the section that crystallized around it and the male adult members thereof, i.e. the co-liaible group).

Co-liaible groups were thus based either on descent groups or on sections, but not every descent group and every section constituted the framework of a single co-liaible group. The actual boundaries of liability, that is, the lines dividing the various co-liaible groups, are unknown. We may be certain that the men of a tribe never constituted a single co-liaible group; we cannot

tell, however, which sections within each tribe fulfilled this function at any given point in time.

In conclusion, we know thousands of names of tribes and sections but we cannot describe the defining features of a tribe or a section. We can define the phenomenon of the co-liable groups that were based on tribal sections but we cannot draw the lines dividing them.

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Tribute see TAXATION; POLL TAX; BOOTY; CAPTIVES; POLITICS AND THE QUR'ĀN

Trick see LAUGHTER; LIE; MOCKERY; MAGIC; HUMOR

Trinity

The distinctive Christian doctrine of one God in three persons, directly alluded to three times in the Qur'ān. The overwhelmingly powerful assertion in the Qur'ān that God is absolutely one rules out any notion that another being could share his sovereignty (q.v.) or nature (see GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES). The text abounds with deni-