

Reason for Meccan Pagan resistance against Prophet Muhammad call and their consideration of Islam as a threat

Muhammad Nasir *

Department of Da'wah and Islamic Culture, Islamic University of Medina, Medina 42351, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Department of Islamic Studies, International Open University, 21 Kanifing Mosque Road, P.O. Box 2340, Kanifing South, KMC, Banjul, The Gambia

Article history:

Received: 28 May 2025 / Received in revised form: 18 December 2025 / Accepted: 19 December 2025

Abstract

The objective of this present study is to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of the resistance of Meccan pagan to the Prophet's call and their viewpoint about the call as a threat. Mecca city, the birthplace of Islam, is the place where Prophet Muhammad firstly declared his Call. However, Meccan Pagan were the first to encounter that call. Instead of receiving the call, they rejected and fought against it. This paper is regard as an endeavor to re-educate about the significance of Tawheed in field of da'wah. The objective of this paper is to provide a reminder to the relevant parties, particularly the preachers, of the significance of Tawheed and its role as a fundamental distinction between Islamic call and other. It also explores the concept of resistance as a natural phenomenon within today society as it already occurred in the Prophet era. To explain this phenomenon, this library research employed a simple comparative study as a research instrument. This study places particular emphasis on two primary aspects. Firstly, Tawheed is a pivotal clash point for this resistance and secondly this paper underwent simple comparative study about the impacts of Tawheed that were resisted by the pagan. The study used secondary source as its main source of information, given that the condition of the Prophet has been mainly documented in book of Seerah written by Moslem scholars. The research indicates that Tawheed is the factor contributing to the resistance against Prophet Muhammad's call. Thus, it is important for the Moslem preachers to always deepen their understanding about Tawheed and maintain a commitment to it considering the test given to their endeavor to propagate Islam inherently founded on Tawheed principle.

Keywords: Meccan Pagan; Prophet's call; Tawheed; Pagan's resistance; Islam's threat

1. Introduction

The Islamic call spread across Mecca precipitated a sense of threat among pagans. While it was tolerable for individuals of differing pagan beliefs to exist, with each of them worshiped a different idol, it never became permissible to coexist for Muslims. Ghazali, (1999) stated that pagan did not persist in its persecution of Muslims from the time the prophet proclaimed his call openly.

In the Qur'an Allah clear says: "Do you kill a man who proclaimed that My Lord is Allah, while he already came to you with proofs from your Lord." (Qur'an 40:28) and He said, "Likewise, we have made an opponent for every prophet from criminals, and Allah is sufficient as a guide and a protector." (Qur'an 25: 31)

The fundamental question that appears is "What are the reasons for resistance and feeling being threatened, particularly in relation to Islam and its followers?"

The urgency of this study arises from the importance of the role of preacher in maintaining steadfastness and resolve in da'wa, Abdullah & Shareef (2021) proposed the solution of the challenges in path of da'wa is being firm and strong on the right

path.

The gap of his study and this study lies in the absence of adequate explanation about the main truth and core values of Islam that a preacher must uphold.

Other research also has sought to ascertain the underlying political motivation behind the phenomenon as evidenced by the work of Nopriansyah et al (2024), or mixture of many factors such as social, political or economic factors as posited by Yazar& Uzunöz (2021).

This study is intended to combine intersection of religion, politic, economic, cultural and social to be compared between pagan and Islam, thereby facilitating a deep understanding about the root of the problem and the reason behind this resistance. This study is built on the perspective that Tawheed is a key reason why these two societies (Islam and Pagan) resist each other.

Through this paper, the author emphasized two key points: Firstly, Tawheed is a pivotal clash point for this resistance. Secondly, this paper employs simple comparative study to analyze the impact of Tawheed that are resisted and anticipated by Pagan.

2. Methodology

This present research is based on library research, as it is

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +966-53-514-4862

Email: muhammadnasir1100@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.21924/chss.5.2.2025.100>



also supported by other methodologies, including deductive thematic analysis, comparative approach, and historical approach. The selection of sources was undertaken through a conventional literature review.

This present paper employed deductive thematic analysis. The term deductive is employed to denote a reason for this resistance as derived from Qur'an and Sunnah (see Johson, 1999 & 2010). The authors then sought to find the patterns in historical events and modern essay that serve to strengthen its deducted reason. (see Joffe, 2011; Riger & Sigurvinssdottir, 2016).

Comparative method, as explained by Lijphart (1971), is a method to find an empirical relation between variables; it does not constitute a means of measurement. Applying this definition on the topic, it can be understood that this paper studies a phenomenon of resistance by comparing two points of view (Pagan and Islam). The historical study mostly relies on Islamic sources or perspective, Crone (2017) stated that Pagan's belief and practice can only be known from the narration of the Prophet or from his companions.

In the process of comparing, this paper employed a historical approach, signifying that the author has provided proof from historical events in the past to strengthen his argument about a phenomenon under discussion (Bosi & Reiter, 2014).

For source selection, the author employed a conventional literature review. That is attributable to the nature of the study. In contrast to systematic literature reviews (SLRs), conventional literature review emphasizes intellectual interpretation. To begin with, the author outlines key thematic and then draws upon relevant works to illuminate, insights within each area (see Kraus et al., 2022) Given that the present paper focuses on the reasons for Meccan pagan resistance to Prophet Muhammad's call and their perception of Islam as a threat, a conventional review methodologically is regarded as suitable. The text enables a more flexible, critical, and contextually grounded understanding of the complex motivations behind by Meccan's resistance. In addition, the author sought to strengthen this methodology by providing theoretical framework, namely the modern theory originating from the modern scholar and by employing other methodologies as previously mentioned.

Theoretical framework underpinning this present study is Huntington's (1993) assertion in his essay that the clash between civilizations occurs due to six factors: (1) The primary factor identified is religion as the most significant element surpassing considerations such as culture, language history and tradition, (2) The world is getting smaller, rendering people conscious about the difference and similarity between nations, (3) Economic modernization and social change has made religion more prominent source of national identity, (4) Growing consciousness among civilizations leads to a shift toward a more inward-looking perspective, frequently marked by a departure from western influence, (5) The fact that cultural differences cannot be easily compromised and (6) economic regionalism that rises among civilization. He theorized that the main factor for the clash is religion and that one factor can affect other factors, such as economy, social, and others.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The creed and basic teaching between Islam and pagan

Islam is a religion Prophet Muhammad came with, as the

final revelation to humanity. The individual in question was the proponent of monotheistic concept, a concept previously espoused by Moses and Jesus. Prophet Muhammad –peace be upon him- said, *"Parable of me and the prophets (who came) before me, like a man who built a building and perfected it, except for one brick in one of its corners. People admired it and said, 'We have never seen a building more beautiful than this, except for this one brick.' I was that brick."* (Musnad Ahmad, Musnad of Abdullah bin 'Amr, vol.12, hadith. 7485)

The word pagan was originally used to identify whoever follow any polytheistic religion (Masalha, & Wright, 2011) but in this paper, the word refers to a narrower meaning. Crone (2017) mentioned Pagan Arab refers to community of disbeliever as mentioned in Qur'an and are not categorized into people of book, generally called as associationists (*mushrikūn*). More precisely, Meccan Pagan are associationist who were dwelling in Mecca. Crone also mentioned some of their practices: assigning a partner to Allah, infanticide, rejecting concept of afterlife.

The Islamic system is built on the principle of Tawheed. Tawheed means to declare Allah's oneness, a concept that is further classified into three types by Muslim scholars. Firstly: the concept of Allah's oneness in creation (Rububiyyah), followed by Allah's oneness in worship (Ulubiyyah), and finally Allah's oneness in his names and attributes (Asma wa sifat) (Philip, 2005). This constitutes the fundamental message of Muhammad and All messengers who preceded him, "Verily, we had sent to every nation the messengers to call, Worship Allah and stay away from *thaghut*." (Qur'an 16:36)

While pagan teaching is built on idolatry and the fanaticism to the old tradition. Allah said, " When it is said to them," Follow what Allah revealed." They said, " we will rather follow our ancestors." Even if the devil calls them to the torment of Hell (Qur'an 31:21). Damayanti & Roza (2024) in their paper stated that each tribe has its own idol to worship, they begged and bowed to them asking their need and seeking refuge to them, and these actions are not only done by the poor lowest level but also the elite people.

It is further asserted that Islam is divine teaching, as evidenced by the following passage from Qur'an (53: 3-4): "He (Muhammad) does not talk from his heart (his own), it is but an inspired revelation." In contrast, pagan is defined as a human-produced teaching. For this ideological difference, pagan will use all power to destroy the Prophet call. Nopriansyah et al., (2024) stated that Tawheed is one of the factors that has political and social implications on Meccan society. Waraqah bin Naufal said to the prophet in the beginning of his prophethood, " Noone comes with what you come but certainly he will be harassed (Sahih Bukhari, Book of Beginning of the revelation, vol.1, hadith.3).

3.2. The impact of Tawheed that is resisted by Meccan pagans

3.2.1. Religion impact

The religion impact that is disliked by Meccan pagans is characterized by the abandonment of their idols and the forsaking of their worship. The reason behind this assertion is that when someone declares Tawheed Ulubiyyah, it means he declares that there is no God worthy of worship but Allah only. Allah has told us through Qur'an about how this concept is rejected by Meccan pagans, " Does he make gods One God, this is wondrous thing. (Qur'an 38: 5).

It is evident that Quraysh has a title as neighbor of the House of Allah (Yazar & Uzunöz, 2021), signifying their responsibility to defend Ka'bah and its surroundings. This is further supported by the fact, that around Ka'bah there are already 360 idols (Sahih Muslim, Book of Jihaad, Vol.3, Hadith. 1781).

Amri (2022) stated the level of their idol worship had reached unbelievable level. Every tribe had its own idol, which was positioned it in cities, houses, road between cities and even near beaches such as Manat. They also always brought the idol wherever they went and worshiped a variety of idols, either big or small idols.

It is difficult for them to abandon those idols, as doing so would result in the revocation of their prestigious titles and well-rooted habits. Consequently, the acceptance of Tawheed Uluhiyyah posed a significant threat to them.

The Prophet also calls people to believe that Allah has names and attributes that cannot be given to others. However, in Pagan tradition, names such as Uzzah, derived from Al-Aziz, Manat derived from Al-Mannan, and Laat derived from Al-Ilah were attributed to idols (Thabari, 2021). It is threatening for them to give up those names from their idols.

3.2.2. Cultural impact

Another concept that is rejected by Pagan is that Islam propagates people to disregard their ancestors' tradition if it is contradicting to what have been commanded by Allah. Allah said, "When it is said to them," Follow what Allah revealed." They said, "we will rather follow our ancestors." Even if the devil calls them to the torment of Hell (Qur'an 31:21).

The practice that was already cultivated strongly in Pagan's hearts is to always admire and glorify anything that had been done by their ancestors. It is a vital clash point between the Islamic call and pagans. For that reason, the Islamic call poses a threat to this mindset. Yazar & Uzunöz, (2021) stated that Meccan pagans gave a huge importance to the tradition inherited from their forefathers; anything coming from them is considered a truth. It is because by following their ancestors they would get fame, money and prestige.

Zulia et al., (2024) stated that while pagans built their society on tradition, tribalistic approach, Shirk, Islam offers not only pure Tawheed religion, but also a way of life based on economic fairness, social justice, and morality.

3.2.3. Social impact

As Allah is the sole creator, he has said that He created the first human Adam from clay, "I am creating human beings out of clay" (Qur'an 38: 71). This is the basic reason why society's segmentation or caste system is rejected by Islam. The prophet said, "All of you are sons of Adam, and Adam was created from dust." (Musnad Bazzar, Musnad Hudzaifah bin Yaman, vol.7, Hadith. 3938). The result of this principle is that pagans must drop the caste system, and their habit of getting over pride and boasting about their fathers.

According to Yazar & Uzunöz, (2021), the main call of Prophet Muhammad is that all people are equal in the context of justice and creation. The issues were that the defenders of old tradition, Pagan, had difficulty to accept it because what

Pagan call is a'sabiyya (tribalistic favoritism), something completely opposite to the concept of Islam.

The decisive factor in defining who is better and more honorable is only piety (taqwa). Allah said, "The most honorable of you in the Sight of Allah is the most pious of you." (Quran 49: 13).

The pagan society was also contaminated with adultery and alcoholism that further worsened their society's morality (Nafa, Dzuriyyah & AR, 2023). These practices were deeply entrenched within the pagan society, as evidenced by hadith of Aisyah (Sahih Bukhari, Book of Virtues of Quran, vol.6, Hadith.4993). Consequently, the Prophet emerged to abolish those practices, proclaiming the prohibition of adultery (Qur'an 17:32) and alcohol (Qur'an 5:91).

3.2.4. Political impact

Another impact anticipated by Pagan is the political dominance of Islam if it ever spreads in Mecca society. All pagan faction is competing to acquire highest political authority. However, it is the Quraysh who won the competition, but even so, inside the Quraysh there is still an ongoing contest between its branches.

According to Yazar & Uzunöz, (2021), Quraysh believed that they themselves were the people of Allah. The reason behind it is that Allah defended Ka'ba (located in Mecca, the city that belongs to Quraysh) against Abrahah and his huge army. They believed it as a sign of Allah's favor to them. Quraysh exploited it to elevate their position high above the rest of the Arab.

Nopriasyah et al., (2024) reached the conclusion that there are at least three internal reasons for the disdain of Islam among non-Muslims. These reasons are as follows: the fear of losing authority, conflict of economic and political interest and threat to the established system.

Al-Achsanah, et.al (2025) posited that the concept of a unified nation was not one, which Pagan Arab were familiar with. They demonstrated fanaticism to the leader of their tribe as the foundation of their political affiliation.

In contrast, Islam established its political system on the premise of divine rule, as evidenced by the Qur'an verse, "There is no judgment but God's" (Qur'an 6:57), and "The best whom you hire is the strong and trustworthy" (Qur'an 28:26), "And judge between them with what Allah has revealed to you and don't follow their whims"(Qur'an 5:49).

3.2.5. Economic impact

Another reason for feeling threatened is that their usury system will be disturbed if the Islamic call prevails in society. The prevailing economic system in pagan society is erroneous. The acceptance of Islam would result in the collapse of this system. Allah recorded Pagan statement in His Qur'an, "They said that sale is just like usury." (Qur'an 2:275).

Ibnu Kathir (1999) posited that the pagan legalized the usury as they went against Allah's rule, and what they said was not analogy of usury to sale because in the first place they did not believe in the legality of sale (al-bai'). This rejection of Allah's decree is a fundamental tenet of their belief system.

Ibnu Hisyam (1955) narrated in his book, one of Quraysh pagan said, "Do not include in his renovation funding but good income, don't include income from prostitution nor usury nor oppression." This statement provides a reason that a part of Ka'ba is not completely built, which was attributed to a lack of funds that met the requirements for the project.

Amri (2023) stated that the usury was very rooted in Arab society's economical practices, affecting both the upper class and lower classes. The interest rate could escalate to one hundred percent.

On the other hands, Islam built its economy system on the fairness and non-usury practices. It is evident that Islam's position about usury is unequivocal. Allah said, "And Allah legalize sale (Al-Bai') and prohibits usury (Qur'an 2:275) and "O the believers, fear Allah and leave what is left of the usury if you are believers" (Qur'an 2:279). And Allah and the prophet declare a war to whoever does not stop from practicing usury as mentioned in next verse.

Tibh & Layij (2024) stated that Islam has made indirect mechanism to realize social justice into society, including prohibition of usury.

3.3. Discussion

The theoretical implication of this study is derived from the existence of Muslim awareness about the importance of Tawheed. The following implication are posited: firstly, that the Tawheed should take its original position as the most important subject to propagate in the preacher list; considering that the Tawheed is the main reason for the clash in the history of Da'wa in the prophetic era, thereby underscoring its significance. Consequently, the preacher can formulate his approaches and plannings based on this understanding.

Secondly, as Salim & Faizas (2015) stated, Tawheed serves as a binding factor that unity Muslims and a core of unique identity of Muslims society itself. Consequently, it represents a pivotal factor in the construction of a Muslim civilization. It is imperative to integrate this understanding into Muslim society educational system either in textbooks, module or theory formulation or curriculum. This assertion is corroborated by the findings of Sanyoto et al., (2023) who contend that the main characteristic of Tawheed-based education is the prioritization of civilization over science. The term "civilize" means forming human personality based on the mission of their existence in this world, something that has been decided by Allah. Umar (2024) emphasized that Tawheed is a foundation for civilization; it has integrated and united nature and gives a clear sense of direction.

The practical implications are presented as follows: firstly, the preacher should be invited to build his target and activity based on Tawheed. In this context, Tawheed will become a main target a preacher wants to achieve in his every step in da'wa. Dar (2021) pointed that Tawheed must be a central issue for every preacher in da'wa because it is a universal message conveyed by all prophets regardless of his place or time. Secondly, Tawheed should be integrated in daily life as explained by Shuriye (2014). The following two points were concluded: (1) it is evident that Muslim individual has no clue about the reason behind his predicament in this life. It is because of his ignorance of Tawheed and religion and (2) they

agree that Tawheed has positive stimulus effect in their lives. Consequently, the clash and resistance of Pagan and its clash with The Prophet call is similar with nowadays condition that Western culture is in resistance with Islamic Values.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the reason behind Meccan Pagan resistance against Islam is the values brought by Islam itself. The tradition and pagan-built society are on the opposite side of what Islam calls. The most pivotal clashing point is the concept of Tawheed, which Islam society built upon. Thus, it is evident that the impacts of Tawheed which are translated in the field of culture, social, politic and economic, are also resisted and opposed. The Meccan pagan community perceived Islam as threat due to its capacity to strongly alter their long-established tradition and diminish their cultural interest.

References

The Holy Qur'an.

Abdullah, & Shareef, N. (2021). Challenges for preaching in Mecca, it's form in Present Era and Solution in The Prophetic Style. Religious Research Journal of Noor-E-Marfat.

Al-Achsanah, M. A., Wijaya, M. W., Solikhah, N. L., & Basyir, K. (2025). Corak Agama dan Budaya Bangsa Arab saat Kehadiran Islam: Pengaruhnya bagi Transformasi Dakwah dan Peradaban Islam [Religious and cultural characteristic of The Arab nation at advent of Islam: Its Influence on the Transformation of Islamic da'wah and Civilization]. INTELEKSIJA: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Dakwah, 7(1), 155-174.

Amri, K. (2022). Sosiohistoris Masyarakat Arab Pra Islam. *Jurnal Mumtaz*, 2(1), 1-7.

Bazzar, A. (2009). Musnad Bazzar. Madinah: Ulum Wal Hikam Publishing.

Bukhari, M.I. (1993). Sahih Bukhari. Damascus: darul Ibni Katsir, darul Yamamah.

Bosi, L., & Reiter, H. (2014). Historical methodologies. *Methodological practices in social movement research*, 117-43.

Crone, P. (2017). Pagan Arabs as God-Fearers. *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Quran*, 140-64.

Dar, O. M. (2021). Da'wa in Islam: A Discursive Analysis of South Asian Muslim Scholarly Discourses. *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, 6(1), 33-46.

Rizka Damayanti, R., & Roza, E. (2024) Sistem Kepercayaan Paganisme Masyarakat Arab Pra Islam [The System of Pagan Arab's Belief Before and After Islam]. TAJDID: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman dan Kemanusiaan, 8 (1), 83-96.

Ghazali, M. (1999). *Fiqhus Seerah Understanding the Life of Muhammad*. Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House.

Hanbal, A. (2001). *Musnad Ahmad*. Publishing Risalah.

Huntington, S. P. (1993). The clash of civilizations. *Foreign affairs*, 72(3), 22-49.

Ibnu Hisham, (1955). *Seerah Ibnu Hisham*. Egypt: Musthafa Al Babi Al Halabi and his sons publishing house.

Ibnu Kathir (1999). *Tafsir Ibnu Kathir*. Riyadh: Dar Toyyibah.

Joffe, H. (2011). Thematic analysis. *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*, 209-223.

Johnson-Laird, P. N. (1999). Deductive reasoning. *Annual review of*

psychology, 50(1), 109-135.

Johnson-Laird, P. (2010). Deductive reasoning. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 1(1), 8-17.

Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American political science review*, 65(3), 682-693.

Kraus, S., Breier, M., Lim, W. M., Dabić, M., Kumar, S., Kanbach, D., ... & Ferreira, J. J. (2022). Literature reviews as independent studies: guidelines for academic practice. *Review of managerial science*, 16(8), 2577-2595.

Masalha, N., & Wright, R. (2011). Pagans Aan Polytheism. *The Modern World*, 109.

Muslim, (1955). Sahih Muslim. Cairo: Isa Aleppo Publishing House.

Nafa, N., Dzuriyyah, L., & AR, I. N. (2023). Budaya Arab Pra dan Pasca Islam [Arab culture Before and After Islam]. *SABANA: Jurnal Sosiologi, Antropologi, dan Budaya Nusantara*, 2(2), 109-119.

Nopriansyah ,B., Ramadhami, G.F., Alamsyah, P., Mubaroq, Z., & Nur, K. (2024). Politic Dynamic oh The Prophetic Era of The Mecca Perion 610-623 M AD. Innovative; Journal of Social Science Research, 4(3): 1221-1239.

Philip, B., (2005). The Fundamentals of Tauhid. Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House.

Riger, S., & Sigurvinssdottir, R. (2016). Thematic analysis. *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*, 33-41.

Salim, S., & Faizaz, S. (2015). Tawheed the Milestone of Islam; A Reflection of Some Prominent Muslim Scholars and Its Implications to Educators. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 9(1), 19-25.

Sanyoto, T., Fadli, N., & Rosyadi, R. I. (2023). Implementation of Tawhid-Based Integral Education to Improve and Strengthen Hidayatullah Basic Education. *Solo Universal Journal of Islamic Education and Multiculturalism*, 1(01), 30-41.

Shuriye, A. O. (2014). The role of Tawheedic stimulus in the conscience of Muslim individuals. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), 1940-1948.

Thabari (2021). Tafseer Thabari Jamiul Bayan. Cairo: Darul Hijrah Publishing House.

Thibh, M.I., & Layij, F.H., (2024). The importance of achieving justice in Islamic theory. *Muthanna Journal for administrative and economic sciences*, 15(1): 64-71. DOI: 10.52113/6/2025-15-1/64-71

Umar, K. A. (2024). The Role of Tawhid In Promoting Islamic Civilization Among Muslim in Contemporary Societies. *Journal of Human, Social and Political Science Research*.

Yazar, N., & Uzunöz, A.Y., (2021). The First Revelation and Persecution by Meccans. *The Journal of Sirah Studies*, 11: 30-53.

Zulia, W.M., Marzuki, I., & Selamat. (2024). The Era of Prophet Muhammad (The Prophet's Muhammad in Mecca). *Judikis (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam)*. 1: 81-87.