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**REACTIONS OF THE MECCAN POLYTHEISTS AGAINST ISLAM AND THE
PROPHET (PBUH)**

Abstract. Islam, founded on the principle of Tawhid, first addressed the polytheistic society of Mecca. When the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) called the Meccans to abandon idol worship and believe in one God, they strongly opposed him. Their resistance stemmed mainly from loyalty to ancestral traditions and fear of losing their religious, social, and economic status among Arab tribes. The Meccans responded with mockery, slander, social pressure, torture, economic boycotts, and assassination attempts against the Prophet and the early Muslims. Due to the vulnerable condition of Muslims in Mecca, the Prophet encouraged patience and forbade violent retaliation. As persecution intensified and religious freedom became impossible, the Prophet and his followers migrated to Medina in 622 (Hijra). In Medina, Muslims gained political and military strength and achieved important victories in the battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Trench. The conquest of Mecca in 630 marked a turning point, leading many Meccans to embrace Islam and enabling its spread across Arabia. This article examines the reactions of the Meccan polytheists, the reasons behind their opposition, and the Prophet's policies and responses to these challenges.

Keywords: prophet Muhammad, Mecca, polytheists, Islam, muslims.

Жасым Авжы

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Мекке мүшріктерінің Исламға және пайғамбарға (с.а.у.) қарсы реакциялары

Андатпа. Таухид қағидатына негізделген Ислам діні алғаш Меккедегі көпқұдайшыл қоғамға үн қатты. Пайғамбар Мұхаммед (с.ғ.с.) Меккеліктерді пұтқа табынудан бас тартып, бір Аллаға иман келтіруге шақырғанда, олар оған қатты қарсы шықты. Бұл қарсылықтың негізгі себептері – ата-баба дәстүрлеріне берік болуы және араб тайпалары арасындағы діни, әлеуметтік әрі экономикалық беделдерінен айырылып қалудан қорқуы еді. Меккеліктер Пайғамбарға және алғашқы мұсылмандарға қарсы келемеждеу, жала жабу, қоғамдық қысым көрсету, азаптау, экономикалық бойкот жариялау және қастандық жасау сияқты әрекеттерге барды. Меккедегі мұсылмандардың әлсіз жағдайына байланысты Пайғамбар жанындағы сахабаларын сабыр сақтауға үндеп, күш қолдану арқылы жауап

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беруге тыйым салды. Қудалау күшейіп, діни еркіндік мүмкін болмай қалған кезде, Пайғамбар мен мұсылмандар 622 жылы (Хижра) Мәдинаға қоныс аударды. Мәдинада мұсылмандар саяси және әскери күшке ие болып, Бәдір, Ұхұд және Хандақ шайқастарында маңызды жеңістерге жетті. 630 жылы Меккенің алынуы бетбұрыс кезеңіне айналып, көптеген меккеліктердің Исламды қабылдауына және діннің бүкіл Араб түбегіне таралуына жол ашты. Бұл мақалада меккелік мүшріктердің реакциялары, олардың қарсылығының себептері және Пайғамбардың осы қиындықтарға қатысты ұстанған саясаты мен шаралары қарастырылады.

Кілт сөздер: Мұхаммед пайғамбар, Мекке, мүшріктер, Ислам, мұсылмандар.

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Реакции Мекканских многобожников на Ислам и пророка

Аннотация. Ислам, основанный на принципе таухида, впервые был обращён к многобожническому обществу Мекки. Когда пророк Мухаммад (мир ему и благословение) призвал мекканцев отказаться от поклонения идолам и уверовать в Единого Аллаха, они решительно выступили против него. Основными причинами этого сопротивления были приверженность традициям предков и страх утратить своё религиозное, социальное и экономическое положение среди арабских племён. Мекканцы прибегали к насмешкам, клевете, общественному давлению, пыткам, экономическому бойкоту и даже покушениям на пророка и первых мусульман. Учитывая уязвимое положение мусульман в Мекке, пророк призывал к терпению и запрещал отвечать насилием. Когда преследования усилились и свобода вероисповедания стала невозможной, пророк и мусульмане переселились в Медину в 622 году (Хиджра). В Медине мусульмане обрели политическую и военную силу и одержали важные победы в битвах при Бадре, Ухуде и Хандаке. Завоевание Мекки в 630 году стало поворотным моментом, приведшим к принятию ислама многими мекканцами и распространению религии по всему Аравийскому полуострову. В данной статье рассматриваются реакции мекканских многобожников, причины их сопротивления, а также политика и меры, предпринятые пророком в ответ на эти трудности.

Ключевые слова: пророк Мухаммад, Мекка, многобожники, Ислам, мусульмане.

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Mekke Müşriklerinin İslâm'a ve Hz. Peygamber'e (sav) Karşı Tepkileri

Özet. Tevhid ilkesine dayanan İslam dini, ilk olarak Mekke'deki çok tanrılı topluma hitap etmiştir. Hz. Muhammed (sav), Mekkelileri putlara tapmaktan vazgeçip tek Allah'a iman etmeye çağırduğunda, onlar kendisine şiddetle karşı çıkmışlardır. Bu direnişin temel sebepleri, atalarından kalan geleneklere bağlılıkları ve Arap kabileleri arasındaki dinî, sosyal ve ekonomik konumlarını kaybetme korkusuydu. Mekkeliler, Hz. Peygamber'e ve ilk Müslümanlara karşı alay etme, iftira atma, toplumsal baskı uygulama, işkence etme, ekonomik boykot uygulama ve suikast girişimlerinde bulunma gibi yöntemlere başvurmuşlardır. Mekke'deki Müslümanların zayıf durumu nedeniyle Hz. Peygamber sabrı tavsiye etmiş ve şiddetle karşılık verilmesini yasaklamıştır. Baskıların artması ve din özgürlüğünün imkânsız hâle gelmesi üzerine Hz. Peygamber ve Müslümanlar 622 yılında (Hicret) Medine'ye göç etmişlerdir. Medine'de Müslümanlar siyasi ve askerî güç kazanmış; Bedir, Uhud ve Hendek savaşlarında önemli zaferler

elde etmişlerdir. 630 yılında Mekke'nin fethi bir dönüm noktası olmuş, birçok Mekkelinin İslam'ı kabul etmesine ve dinin tüm Arap Yarımadası'na yayılmasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Bu makalede Mekke müşriklerinin tepkileri, bu karşı çıkışın sebepleri ve Hz. Peygamber'in bu zorluklara karşı izlediği politika ve yöntemler ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Muhammet Peygamber, Mekke, müşrikler, İslâm, müslümanlar.

Introduction

The first addressees of Islam, the “Religion of Tawhid” based on the principle of the existence and oneness of Almighty Allah, were the pagan Meccans. Receiving the first revelation from Allah through Gabriel in the Hira cave in 610 AD when he was forty years old, the Prophet conducted the invitation to Islam secretly at the beginning. During this process, which lasted three years, he called people he felt close to and trusted to Islam. Subsequently, with the revelation of the verses “And warn your closest kindred” (Ash-Shu‘ara 26: 214) and “(O Muhammad!) Proclaim high what thou art commanded, and turn away from the idolaters” (Al-Hijr 15:94), he began an open invitation to all Qurayshites, starting from his close relatives, and then to other tribes.

According to sources, the Meccan polytheists did not oppose the Prophet much at first. However, when the Prophet began to recite verses criticizing idolatry and declaring that a rational person could not worship idols and that those who worshiped idols would go to hell, they began to see his message as a great danger, adopt a hostile attitude, and do their best to prevent his invitation (Ibn Hişâm, 1955: I, 264; Ibn Sa’d, 1968: I, 199; Belâzürî, 1959: 115-116). Some of the verses on this subject are as follows:

“They worship besides Allah that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say, ‘These are our intercessors with Allah.’ Say, ‘Do you inform Allah of something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?’ Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him!” (Yunus 10: 18)

“Indeed, you and what you worship instead of Allah are the fuel of Hell. You will [surely] come to it. Had these been gods, they would not have come to it, but all will abide therein eternally. For them therein is heavy sighing, and they therein will not hear.” (Al-Anbiya 21: 98-99).

Research Methods

In the preparation of the article, besides the Holy Qur’an and hadith books, classical sirah (prophetic biography) and Islamic history sources, research works related to the subject were utilized. The article is examined under the subheadings of the reasons for the Meccan polytheists’ opposition to Islam, the various methods they resorted to in order to prevent the Prophet’s preaching, and the policy followed by the Messenger of Allah against these attempts. During this process, narrations in classical sources regarding the subject were identified, references were made to different views and evaluations where necessary, and the results reached in the research were mentioned.

Discussion and Results

Reasons for the Meccan polytheists’ opposition to Islam

The reasons for the Meccan polytheists’ opposition to Islam can be summarized as follows:

1. The Arabs were extremely attached to the tradition coming from their ancestors and to paganism, which was their religion. They believed that the religion coming from their ancestors was the absolute truth and did not feel the need for any questioning. When the Prophet called them to give up paganism and worship the one Allah, they would reply, “Do you want to turn us away from the religion of our ancestors? We will not turn back from the religion of our fathers”:

“And when it is said to them, ‘Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger,’ they say, ‘Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers.’ Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided?” (Al-Ma’idah 5:104)

2. Islam's belief system did not resemble the belief of the polytheists. Islam was, above all, a religion that rejected the idols that had a very important place in their lives and which they believed brought them closer to Allah and acted as intercessors. It commanded that only Allah be worshipped and that nothing else be recognized as a deity. On the other hand, the religion brought by the Prophet reported that there is an eternal afterlife after this worldly life, that people will be held accountable for what they did in the world, and that divine justice will be provided in the hereafter. The polytheists could not give up their idols, nor did they believe that they would be resurrected after death and give an account in the presence of Allah:

“Unquestionably, for Allah is the pure religion. And those who take protectors besides Him [say], ‘We only worship them so that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position.’” (Az-Zumar 39:3)

“They say, ‘There is not but our worldly life; we will not be resurrected.’” (Al-An'am 6:29)

3. The polytheist Arabs wanted a person who would lead them to be wealthy, have many children, and be powerful. The Prophet was not wealthy, nor was he the leader of a tribe. He was an orphan from both his mother and father. According to the perspective of the polytheists, the Qur'an should have been revealed not to Muhammad, but to one of the leading figures of Mecca or Taif, such as Umayyah b. Khalaf, Walid b. Mughira, Mas'ud b. Amr, Kinana b. Abdiyalil, or Urwa b. Mas'ud (Ibn Hişâm, 1955: I, 361; Belâzürî, 1959: 134).

“And they said, ‘Why was this Qur'an not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?’ Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord?...” (Az-Zukhruf 43:31-32).

4. The moral condition of the Qurayshites was not at a level to easily accept the invitation of the last prophet. In Meccan society, where the Jahiliyyah (Ignorance) mentality prevailed, bad habits such as alcohol, gambling and adultery were widespread. In addition, those who were materially wealthy and members of noble tribes saw themselves as superior to other people. The Holy Qur'an criticized these bad behaviors and understandings, made no distinction between people, and reported that the measure of superiority is only *taqwa* (piety/consciousness of Allah), and that those who display contrary behavior will be punished in the hereafter. The leading figures of the polytheists did not want to lose their status and influence within society. For Islam made no distinction between people; it saw the slave and the master as equal because of their humanity. Indeed, when the elders of the Quraysh came to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), they did not want the poor and needy believers to be present with them. Thereupon, this verse was revealed: “And do not send away those who call upon their Lord morning and afternoon, seeking His countenance. Not upon you is anything of their account and not upon them is anything of your account, that you should send them away and [thereby] be among the wrongdoers.” (Al-An'am 6: 52)

5. The image of a prophet in the minds of the polytheists did not coincide with the characteristics of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). They thought that prophets should be superhuman beings and could not comprehend the wisdom in Almighty Allah sending the prophet from among the human race. According to them, a mortal who eats and drinks like themselves and goes to the markets and bazaars should not be a prophet. A prophet should only be a superhuman being, an angel, or there should be an angel with him to prove his prophethood. Even if the prophet were a mortal, he should have some extraordinary powers and characteristics different from other people – for example, he should know the ghayb (unseen), possess the treasures of Allah, and make springs gush from the ground.

“And they say, ‘What is this messenger that eats food and walks in the markets? Why was there not sent down to him an angel to be, with him, a warner? Or [why is not] a treasure presented to him [from heaven], or does he [not] have a garden from which he eats?’ And the wrongdoers say, ‘You follow not but a man affected by magic.’” (Al-Furqan 25:7-8; Al-Isra 17: 90-96)

6. Mecca was a religious center where all polytheist Arabs came for Hajj and Umrah. The Kaaba, known as Baytullah (the House of Allah), was located here, and the services related to the pilgrims coming to visit this holy shrine were carried out by the Qurayshites.

Therefore, the Quraysh tribe had a great superiority and prestige in the eyes of other tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. If the Meccans accepted the new religion, it was possible to lose their influence over other Arab tribes.

7. In terms of the Meccan polytheists, trade was of vital importance. Meccan polytheists obtained significant income both from the shopping done by people coming here for Hajj and Umrah, from the idol trade, and from the fairs established during the Hajj season. They thought that if paganism were abandoned, the economic life of Mecca would be directly or indirectly damaged. This was one of the obstacles to their acceptance of Islam.

8. The fact that the Arabs were a tribal society was one of the most important obstacles to their acceptance of the religion brought by the Prophet. Since an Arab lived with the identity of a tribe, he could not easily go against the opinion of the tribe. This situation would cause him to be left unprotected by his tribe. A person deprived of the protection of his tribe would have to take refuge in another tribe to survive. This meant using the identity of that tribe. Since the Quraysh leaders in Mecca showed resistance to Islam, tribal members adopting the new religion in opposition to them caused various difficulties and troubles due to tribalism (*asabiyyah*). Furthermore, the rivalries and enmities between the Quraysh tribes, whose roots went back to the Jahiliyyah period, are seen as an important obstacle regarding faith and obedience to the Prophet. For example, Abu Jahl, one of the bitter enemies of Islam belonging to the Bani Makhzum branch of the Quraysh, evaluated the acceptance of Muhammad's prophethood as accepting the superiority of the Hashimites and said: "Until today, we competed with the sons of Abdumanaf for glory and honor. They fed people, and so did we. They took on responsibilities, and so did we. They made donations, and so did we. When we and they became like racing horses running neck and neck, they said, 'There is a prophet among us to whom revelation comes.' How will we have an equal to this? By Allah, we will never believe in him." (Ibn ʾIshāk, 1981: 170; Ibn Hiṣām, 1955: I, 316; Avcı, 2016: 47)

Efforts to obstruct the prophet's preaching

Seeing that the Prophet was gaining more followers and criticizing their beliefs and behaviors, the Qurayshites began to belittle and insult him; after a while, they did not hesitate to resort to violence.

The Meccan polytheists simply refused to accept that a human being like themselves could bring news from Allah, arguing instead that an angel should have been appointed for this task. Furthermore, they made various demands of the Prophet, such as turning Mecca into a place with flowing rivers, resurrecting their deceased ancestors, or Allah granting him palaces and treasures with keys made of gold and silver and even demanding that Allah punish them. In the face of such arbitrary demands from the Meccans, the Prophet stated that doing these things depended on the will of Allah and that he was not sent for such purposes, saying, "I am only a prophet chosen by Allah from among mankind."

It is possible to list the polytheists' reactions against the Prophet as follows:

Mockery and Slander

The Qurayshites, bewildered by the impact of the Qur'an which addressed both the human mind and heart, began to mock the Prophet and the Muslims who followed him. When they saw the Prophet, they would say, "Here is the son of the sons of Abdulmuttalib, the one spoken to from the heavens" (Ibn Sa'd, 1968: I, 199; Belâzürî, 1959: 115). Some polytheists would ask mocking questions upon encountering him, such as, "Did you speak with the 'above' today, O Muhammad?" When he walked with his companions and encountered Muslims, he would sarcastically remark, "Look! Here are the world rulers who will possess the realms of Khosrow and Caesar!" The polytheists mostly laughed and made eye signals to one another when they saw the Prophet. This was particularly the attitude of Umayyah b. Khalaf (Ibn Hiṣām, 1955: I-II, 356). Surah al-Humazah was revealed concerning Umayyah b. Khalaf and his ilk, announcing that they would be cast into Hell (Al-Humazah 104:1-9). Some also mocked the Prophet by saying, "Could Allah find no one else but you to send as a prophet?" (Belâzürî, 1959: I, 144).

While the polytheists mocked the Prophet, they also began to spread various rumors and slanders against him. They claimed that the Prophet was a soothsayer (*Ioahin*), a madman (*majnun*), possessed by magic, or a poet; that he learned the Qur'an from a Christian; that this book was magic or "fables of the ancients"; and that the Qur'an was not the word of Allah but something fabricated by the Prophet (Ibn Hişâm, 1955: I-II, 289).

In the face of the polytheists' mockery and slander, Almighty Allah consoled the Prophet by reporting that previous prophets had faced similar reactions (Al-Anbiya 21:41; Al-Furqan 25:41-42). Furthermore, the Qur'an emphasized that it was a book sent down from Allah (Al-Haqqâ 69: 40-43) and challenged the polytheists, if they were sincere in their claims to produce something like the Qur'an (At-Tur 52: 33-34), or ten surahs (Hud 11:13-14), or even a single surah (Al-Baqarah 2: 23).

As b. Wa'il, one of the Meccan polytheist leaders, attempted to label the Prophet as "*abtar*" (one whose lineage is cut off) because his male children did not survive. Shortly after, Surah al-Kawthar was revealed to console the Prophet, declaring that the one whose lineage is actually cut off is the owner of those words (Al-Kawthar 108:1-3).

The Meccan polytheists acted together to prevent the Prophet's invitation and the spread of Islam, resorting to various methods. One of these was to prevent those coming to Mecca for Hajj, Umrah, or trade from speaking with the Prophet, or to ensure they were not influenced by him by conducting negative propaganda about the Messenger of Allah. According to narrations, a team belonging to various tribes in Mecca would hold the entry roads to the city to meet visitors; if asked about the Prophet, they would use derogatory terms like "he is a madman, a poet, a magician" to prevent them from meeting him (Ibn Habib, 1942: 160; Sariçam, 2003: 93). In particular, Walid b. Mughira, a fierce enemy of Islam and one of the leading figures of Mecca in terms of age, experience, wealth, and prestige, gathered the Qurayshites as a Hajj season approached and advised them to spread propaganda that Muhammad was a "magician" because he caused the breakup of families (Ibn Hişâm, 1955: I-II, 270-271; Belâzürî, 1959: 133, 150). Walid b. Mughira is one of the most prominent enemies of Islam about whom many verses were revealed (Al-Muddaththir 74: 11-26; Fayda, 2013: 33-34). Similarly, when Abu Jahl learned that a sheep merchant named Amr from the Huzayl tribe had come to Mecca and met with the Prophet, he tried to prevent him from becoming a Muslim by speaking ill of the Prophet (Belâzürî, 1959: 128). The polytheists continued to prevent people from meeting the Prophet even after the Hijra. See Süleyman Tülücü, "A'şâ, Meymûn b. Kays". (Tülücü, 1991: III, 545). However, despite all these obstructions, there were those from outside Mecca who met with the Prophet and accepted Islam. For example, Dimad b. Tha'laba from Yemen (Ibn Sa'd, 1968 : IV, 241 ; Muslim, 1981: «Jumu'ah», 46 ; Sariçam, 2003: 93; Yardım, 1994: IX, 272-273) and Tufayl b. Amr met with the Messenger of Allah and were moved to become Muslim by his words, especially by the Qur'an he recited (Ibn Hişâm, 1955: I-II, 382-383; Ibn Sa'd, 1968: IV, 237-240; Zehebî, 1985: I, 344-345; Sariçam, 2003: 94; Güler, 2012: 323).

Proposal for Agreement/Compromise

The Quraysh polytheists resorted to various ways to stop the Prophet, who continued his invitation to Islam with great patience and determination. One of these was meeting with and pressuring his uncle Abu Talib, who had protected the Prophet since childhood and continued to support him. According to Ibn Hisham's narration, the leading polytheists applied to Abu Talib three times on separate occasions, asking him to make his nephew give up his cause or to withdraw his protection. A delegation including polytheist chiefs like Utbah b. Rabi'ah and his brother Shaybah, Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl, Walid b. Mughira, and As b. Wa'il went to Abu Talib with such a request. Abu Talib sent them away with soothing and conciliatory words. Seeing that the Prophet's invitation activities continued exactly as before and that Islam was spreading every day, the polytheists applied to Abu Talib a second time. This time they took a harsher stance and threatened that if he continued to support his nephew, they would target him as well. Abu Talib, seeing that the situation was moving toward a dangerous point, called the Prophet to him and

explained what had happened. He asked him to give up his cause, saying that he was in a very difficult position against his tribe and could not resist any longer. The Prophet, thinking that his uncle would no longer protect him, grew tearful and gave his uncle this resolute answer: “Even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to make me give up this work, nothing will change. I will not give up this cause until Allah makes this religion superior or until I die.” Moved by his nephew’s firm stance, Abu Talib consoled him and continued his protection. Having failed to get the desired result from both applications to Abu Talib, the polytheists came a third time and asked him to give them his nephew in exchange for Walid b. Mughira’s young and handsome son, Umarah. Abu Talib sternly rejected this ridiculous and arrogant offer from the Meccan polytheists (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 265-267; Taberî, 1986: II, 323-326; Sariçam, 2003: 94-95; see also Ibn Sa’d, 1968: I, 201-202).

The Meccan polytheists tried every way to hinder the Prophet’s invitation but were unsuccessful. Thereupon, they tried a new way: meeting with the Prophet personally to convince him to give up his cause. Leading polytheists like Utbah b. Rabi’ah, his brother Shaybah b. Rabi’ah, Abu Sufyan, Nadr b. Harith, Walid b. Mughira, Abu Jahl, As b. Wa’il, and Umayyah b. Khalaf met with the Prophet near the Kaaba and made the following offers: “If your goal is to be wealthy, let us give you property and wealth. If you are after status and prestige, let us make you our leader. If you are acting this way due to a spiritual ailment, let us have you treated.” The Prophet told them that he was a prophet appointed by Allah and would never give up his cause (Ibn İshâk, 1981: 187-188; Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 293-294; Belâzürî, 1959: 151). The Messenger of Allah also rejected worldly requests from the polytheists—such as turning Mecca into a plain full of vineyards and gardens with rivers, resurrecting their ancestors (especially Qusay b. Kilab), or building palaces of gold and silver—by saying, “I was not sent for this. If Allah wills, He does what you say. My duty is to convey Allah’s religion to you and show the right way.” However, despite all the Prophet’s explanations, the polytheists insisted on their demands and stated they would not follow him (Al-Isra 17:90-93; Ibn Hisham, 1955: I-II, 295-297).

When the polytheists realized they could not make the Prophet give up his cause with worldly offers, they proposed uniting their religions: “O Muhammad! Let us worship what you worship, and you worship the idols we worship.” Against this inappropriate offer from the polytheists, Surah al-Kafirun was revealed, and the Prophet was asked to answer them: “To you be your religion, and to me my religion.” (Al-Kafirun 109: 1-6).

One of the fiercest enemies of Islam was Nadr b. Harith, who was wealthy and possessed a strong talent for oratory. Whenever the Prophet sat with a group to convey Islam, spoke of past nations, and asked them to take heed, Nadr would try to nullify his words and say: “O Qurayshites! Do not listen to him; do not credit his words. What he tells are *‘asatir al-awwalin’*, that is, the fables of the ancients. Come, let me tell you more beautiful things. Let me tell you about Rustam and Isfendiyar, the kings of Iran” (Al-Anfal 8: 31; Al-Mutaffifin 83: 13; Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 299-302; Belâzürî, 1959: I, 140; Aycan, 2006: XXXII, 280).

Nadr b. Harith also used his knowledge of music against Islam and the Prophet, presenting some song lyrics as an alternative to the Qur’an. One day, Nadr b. Harith took a decayed bone, crumbled it, and asked, “Who can bring this back to life, O Muhammad?” Upon this, the verse was revealed: “...and he forgets his own creation and says, ‘Who will give life to bones while they are disintegrated?’” (Ya-Sin 36:78) (Aycan, 2006: XXXII, 281).

Physical Attacks, Pressure, and Torture

The Meccan polytheists took their hostility toward the Prophet even further. They sought to torment him, physically attack him, and even assassinate him. Filth and thorns were strewn on the paths he traveled, his house was stoned, and while he was prostrating during prayer, camel intestines were thrown upon him in an attempt to suffocate him. One day, while the Prophet was performing *tawaf* (circumambulation) around the Kaaba, a group of Meccan polytheists attacked him. Abu Bakr, witnessing the event, intervened immediately. He stood against them, shouting, “Would you kill a man just because he says, ‘My Lord is Allah’?” and tried to push them away.

Abu Bakr himself was injured during this scuffle. On another occasion, while the Prophet was praying at the Kaaba, Abu Jahl took a large stone intending to throw it at him but failed in his attempt (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 290-291; Kapar, 1994: X, 117; Avcı, 2016: 61).

Specifically, his uncle Abu Lahab and his wife Umm Jamil caused the Prophet great distress. They tormented him by throwing filth or placing thorns on the paths he would use. Umm Jamil, the sister of Abu Sufyan (another fierce enemy of Islam), pressured her two sons—who were engaged to the Prophet’s daughters Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum—to break off the engagements. Following this, Surah al-Masad (Tabbat) was revealed concerning Abu Lahab and his wife:

“May the hands of Abu Lahab perish, and doomed is he! His wealth and his gains will not spare him. He will burn in a Fire of blazing flames, and his wife [as well]—the carrier of firewood, around her neck is a rope of twisted fiber.” (Al-Masad 111:1-5)

The polytheists applied various pressures not only to the Prophet but also to the Muslims who believed in him. These pressures ranged from mockery and insults to cold-blooded murder. Some of the pressure came from within families; wealthy families withdrew financial support from children who became Muslim. Weak and unprotected Muslims, in particular, were subjected to ruthless agony and torture. The tortures perpetrated by fierce polytheists like Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, Abu Lahab, Umayyah b. Khalaf, Walid b. Mughira, Uqba b. Abu Mu’ayt, and Hakam b. Abil-As were shameful to humanity. Those most affected were families from outside Mecca, as well as male and female slaves. They were starved, laid out on scorching sands, and tortured by having heavy boulders placed upon their chests.

Even those with prestige in Mecca could not escape the polytheists’ pressure. For example, the polytheists forbade Abu Bakr from praying in the open or reciting the Qur’an audibly. Consequently, he built a small mosque surrounded by thick walls in his courtyard to worship there. At a time when the number of Muslims had not yet reached forty, Abu Bakr gave a speech near the Kaaba to invite people to Islam, but he was attacked by polytheists, including Utbah b. Rabi’ah, and beaten nearly to death (Nazlıgöl, 1994: 322).

The Yasir family endured the severest of the tortures applied by the polytheists. Yasir, his wife Sumayyah, and their son Ammar were among the first Muslims and were subjected to heavy torture by polytheists, led by Abu Jahl. Every time the Prophet saw them suffering, he advised patience, saying, “Be patient, O family of Yasir! Our meeting place will be Paradise.” Eventually, Sumayyah died under Abu Jahl’s ruthless torture, earning the title of the first martyr in Islamic history. Yasir was also martyred by torture on the same day. Their son Ammar, reaching the limit of his endurance under heavy torture, was forced to speak in favor of the idols Lat and Uzza and against the Prophet. As soon as he escaped the hands of the polytheists, he went to the Prophet and explained that he had acted that way due to the threat of death. Seeing Ammar’s great inner distress, the Messenger of Allah stated that there was no harm in his actions since he protected his faith in his heart, and advised him to do the same if he faced the same situation again (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 319-320; Belâzürî, 1959: 159-160; Fayda, 1991: III, 75). Indeed, a verse was revealed stating that those forced to renounce their faith while their hearts are full of faith are not held responsible (An-Nahl 16: 106).

Muslim slaves in Mecca also faced great hardships. Bilal al-Habashi, the first slave to accept Islam, was subjected to severe torture, especially by his master Umayyah b. Khalaf. He was paraded through the streets of Mecca with a rope around his neck held by children. At noon, Umayyah b. Khalaf would lay him on hot sand and place large, burning rocks on his chest, demanding he renounce his faith in the One God and believe in Lat and Uzza instead. In response, Bilal, barely able to breathe, would emphasize his steadfastness by gasping, “Ahad! Ahad!” (One! One!). Finally, Abu Bakr saved Bilal from torture by purchasing him from Umayyah b. Khalaf (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 317-318). Habbab b. Arat was tortured so severely that the scars remained for years. One day, unable to bear it, Habbab asked the Prophet, “Will you not seek help for us? Will you not pray to Allah for us?” The Prophet told him about believers in past nations who did

not turn from their religion despite even harsher tortures, and advised patience, saying they would soon be saved (Ibn Sa'd, 1968: III, 165; Buhari, 1981: "Ikrâh", 1, "Manâqib al-ansâr", 29; Belâzürî, 1959: I, 175-176). Zinnira, one of the first female companions, lost her sight due to the violence and torture she endured. Abu Bakr saved several of these unprotected slaves by purchasing them from their masters.

Furthermore, Abdullah b. Mas'ud was beaten until he fainted for reciting the verses of Allah openly in the courtyard of the Kaaba. Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, who went to Mecca upon hearing the call to Islam and declared his faith by the Kaaba, was beaten unconscious and only saved from death by the intervention of Abbas b. Abdulmuttalib. When he was beaten again the next day for the same reason, the Prophet sent him back to invite his tribe to Islam and told him not to come to Mecca until summoned. Abu Dharr followed this command, and through his efforts, half of his tribe accepted Islam (Ibn Sa'd, 1968: IV, 225; Aydınli, 1994: X, 267).

Intra-Family Pressures

The first Muslims faced various pressures from their own families. For instance, Uthman, who accepted Islam through Abu Bakr's invitation, faced a harsh reaction from his uncle Hakam b. Abil-As. His uncle first tried to force him back from Islam by restricting his funds. When this failed, he tied Uthman's hands and feet with rope, vowing not to release him until he renounced his religion. Uthman showed great patience, saying, "By Allah, whatever you do, I will never give up my Islam." Seeing Uthman's determination, his uncle was forced to untie him. Later, Uthman's mother also tried hard to turn him back from his religion but failed (Ibn Sa'd, 1968: III, 55). Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas faced resistance from his mother, who swore not to eat or drink—and even to kill herself if necessary—unless Sa'd returned from Islam. Sa'd did not turn back from the path he knew to be true, and his mother gave up upon seeing his resolve (Köksal, 1987: IV, 121-123). Consequently, a verse was revealed stating that it is not necessary to obey parents who force one to deny Allah (Luqman 31: 15). Abu Ubayda b. al-Jarrah faced great hostility from his father. Mus'ab b. Umayr, the son of a wealthy family raised in luxury, was imprisoned by his parents for becoming Muslim. They cut off all his material support and even took his clothes, but he never gave up his faith (Ibn Sa'd, 1968: III, 116; Köksal, 1987: IV, 124).

The pressures, threats, and tortures of the polytheists, rather than turning Muslims away from their religion, only served to strengthen their faith. The hardships endured for the sake of Allah increased the Muslims' determination to struggle and demonstrated what a precious treasure faith truly is.

Socio-Economic Boycott by the Polytheists

The polytheists also implemented economic sanctions to force Muslims to renounce their religion. Habbab b. Arat, one of the first Muslims and a blacksmith, had sold several swords to As b. Wa'il, a leading polytheist, but could not collect his payment. When Habbab demanded his debt, As told him, "I will not pay your debt unless you abandon the religion of Muhammad." When Habbab reminded him of death and the hereafter, As mocked his belief, saying, "Then come on the Day of Resurrection, and I will pay my debt to you then." Thereupon, verses 77-80 of Surah Maryam were revealed, stating that As b. Wa'il would face a great punishment in the hereafter (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 357). As mentioned previously, the families of Uthman and Mus'ab b. Umayr also restricted their financial means because they had become Muslim.

The polytheists were unsuccessful in every attempt they made to block the path of Islam and the Muslims. Despite the torment and torture inflicted upon them, the number of believers grew day by day. Their appeals to Abu Talib to withdraw his protection and their direct initiatives toward the Prophet yielded no results; as will be mentioned below, the envoys they sent to the Negus (Najashi) to demand the return of Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia returned empty-handed. Furthermore, Islam gained more strength with the conversion of Hamza and Umar. In the face of all these developments, the Meccan polytheists decided to implement a social and economic boycott against the Hashemites and the Muttalibites, those who stood by the Prophet because they were Muslim, or those who, while not Muslim, protected him due to tribal solidarity (*asabiyyah*).

According to this decision, peace, security, mutual legal rights, kinship, and friendship were suspended, and the aforementioned tribes were declared enemies. It was forbidden to establish any friendly relations with them, to intermarry, to trade, or to visit and speak with them. To ensure the strict implementation of these decisions, they put them into a written document, sealed it, and hung it in the Kaaba. Their aim was to isolate and punish both the Prophet and the clans supporting him, pressuring them to cease their support and eventually hand him over to be killed. Upon these developments, at the request of Abu Talib, the Hashemites and Muttalibites gathered in the neighborhood called Shi'b Abi Talib, pledging to resist the polytheists together and to protect and support the Prophet. This way, they hoped to be less affected by the embargo and minimize potential damage by sharing common resources (Avci, 2025: 24).

This socio-economic boycott lasted for three years, from the seventh to the tenth year of Prophethood (617–620 AD). Except for Abu Lahab and his sons, who chose to side with the polytheists and were excluded from the embargo, all Hashemites and Muttalibites—whether Muslim or not—faced great hardships during this process. Khadija and Abu Talib exhausted their entire fortunes during these difficult days. It was impossible to engage in commercial activities or go out to shop except during the sacred months, which included the Hajj season. Even on days when shopping was possible, the polytheists made it difficult for Muslims by raising prices or offering higher prices to sellers to prevent them from trading with Muslims. Some individuals who had friendships with the Hashemites secretly delivered food to help those under the embargo (Ibn Ishaq, 1981: 142; Tabari, 1986: II, 336). Although such aid occasionally arrived, serious hardships occurred due to insufficient resources. On one occasion, one of the women under the embargo found a piece of dried camel skin on the road, boiled it in water, and tried to distract her children with it (Belâzürî, 1959: I, 135-136). Despite all these harsh conditions, the Prophet continued to invite people to Islam.

The polytheists eventually saw that they would not achieve their desired results from the embargo they had ruthlessly applied for three years. In particular, some individuals whose mothers were from the Hashemites came together and expressed their discomfort with the embargo. Consequently, through the initiative of several fair-minded individuals, the embargo was lifted (Ibn Ishak, 1981: 137-147; Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 374-381; Ibn Sa'd, 1968: I, 208-210; Tabari, 1986: II, 335-336; Belâzürî, 1959: I, 229-236; Hamidullah, 2003: I, 113-114; Köksal, 1987: V, 5-12, 24-26, 40-48; Sarıçam, 2003: 106-107).

The Dar al-Nadwa Meeting and the Decision to Kill the Prophet

The Prophet continued to meet with those coming from outside Mecca for Hajj, Umrah, or trade to invite them to Islam. Starting from the 11th year of Prophethood (620 AD), Islam began to spread in Medina as a result of some Medinans meeting the Prophet during Hajj and becoming Muslim. During the Hajj season of the 13th year (622 AD), members of the Aws and Khazraj tribes invited the Prophet to Medina during the meeting known as the Second Pledge of Aqaba. Following this, the Prophet requested that the Muslims who could not practice their faith and worship freely in Mecca migrate to Medina. Seeing the Muslims give up their homes and property in an unprecedented display of sacrifice for their faith, the Quraysh polytheists began to worry that the Prophet would also go there one day and, together with his companions, pose a threat to them. They gathered at Dar al-Nadwa to determine what course of action to follow. As a result of the deliberations, and upon the proposal of Abu Jahl, they decided to kill the Prophet. To prevent the Hashemites from pursuing a blood feud, they decided that the task should be carried out not by one person, but by a group consisting of one individual from every tribe. Having been informed of this decision, the Prophet migrated to Medina along with Abu Bakr (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 480-482; Belâzürî, 1959: I, 259-260; Tabari, 1986: II, 370-372; Demircan, 2000: 109).

Measures Taken by the Prophet Against the Reactions and Pressure of the Polytheists and the Policy He Followed

The Prophet took various measures against the hostile actions and attacks of the Meccan polytheists directed both at his person and at those who believed in him. These measures ranged

from advising patience to the migration to Medina, and continued in various forms during the Medina period until his death. Since the Muslims were weak in terms of numbers and power during the Mecca period, they specifically avoided retaliating against the attacks made by the polytheists. In order not to attract the attention of the polytheists and to avoid any attack, they did not gather collectively at the Kaaba but held their meetings in the remote valleys of Mecca. Their most frequent gathering place was Dar al-Arqam. Since permission for armed struggle against their enemies was not granted during this period, Muslims did not respond directly to the torture and attacks of the polytheists. During this process, Abu Bakr, who had sufficient financial means, saved enslaved men and women being tortured by their masters by purchasing them.

Some Muslims who were subjected to the inhuman, ruthless torture of the Meccan polytheists came to the Prophet. They asked him to pray to Allah and seek help against these tortures. Saddened by their situation, the Prophet reminded them that much heavier tortures were inflicted on believers during the periods of previous prophets, yet they did not turn back from their religion. Furthermore, he advised them to be patient, giving the good news that they would soon be saved and that the reward for patience would be Paradise (Belâzürî, 1959: 176).

As mentioned briefly above, while Islam was spreading slowly in Mecca, the attitude of the polytheists toward Muslims hardened, and physical interventions were added to their verbal reactions. Feeling great sorrow in the face of the oppression and torture his companions were subjected to, but lacking the power to prevent it, the Prophet advised the Muslims to go to Abyssinia as a place where they could practice their religion and have safety of life. The Christian ruler of Abyssinia, Negus (Najashi) Ashama, was a just ruler who treated those living under his reign well. Pointing to this situation, the Prophet told his companions: "If you wish, go to Abyssinia. For there is a ruler in power there in whose country no one is oppressed. It is a land of truth and honesty. Stay there until Allah provides a way out." (Ibn Ishak, 1981: 194; Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 321; Ibn Sa'd, 1968: I, 204; Taberi, 1986: II, 329). Following this advice, starting from the fifth year of Prophethood (615 AD), more than 100 companions, including Uthman and his wife Ruqayyah (the Prophet's daughter), migrated to Abyssinia at various intervals. Although the Meccan polytheists sent envoys to Abyssinia to demand the return of these migrants, they achieved no results.

After the difficult three-year boycott period applied by the polytheists against the Muslims, and the subsequent deaths of his closest supporters—his wife Khadija and his uncle Abu Talib—the Prophet began searching for a suitable place to convey Islam and went to Taif. However, the people of Taif not only refused to accept Islam but did not hesitate to stone the Messenger of Allah (Ibn Hişam, 1955: I-II, 420; Belâzürî, 1959: I, 237; Taberi, 1986: II, 345).

When the Meccan polytheists gathered at Dar al-Nadwa for a final solution to block the preaching of Islam and decided to kill the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah migrated to Medina. In Medina, Muslims found a suitable environment to live Islam. Nevertheless, the Meccan polytheists did not give up their hostility toward the Muslims and threatened Medina. While Muslims did not respond to the physical attacks of the polytheists in Mecca because they were weak, permission for war was granted to the Muslims in Medina once they reached a certain strength. The battles of Badr (2/624), Uhud (3/625), and the Trench (5/627) took place between the parties respectively. In the 6th year of the Hijra (628 AD), the entry of Muslims into the city who wanted to go to Mecca for Umrah and visit the Kaaba was blocked by the polytheists, and the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was signed, which envisaged a ten-year peace, although some of its articles appeared to be against the Muslims. The Messenger of Allah was able to perform Umrah by going to Mecca the following year with the Muslims accompanying him. Shortly after, when the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was violated by the polytheists, the Prophet entered Mecca with an army of 10,000 men and conquered the city without bloodshed (8/630). The Kaaba and its surroundings, the center of the belief in Tawhid (Oneness), were cleared of idols. The conversion of the Meccans led to the acceptance of Islam by tribes living in various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, as a result of the preaching

policy followed by the Prophet during both the Mecca and Medina periods, Islam dominated the whole of Arabia.

Conclusion

The first addressees of the religion of Islam, which is based on faith in the existence and oneness of Allah (Tawhid), were the pagan Meccans. It is for this reason that when the Prophet (pbuh) invited them to stop worshipping various idols and to serve only Almighty Allah, they opposed him. Not only did they refuse to accept Islam, but they also launched both verbal and physical attacks against the Prophet and the Muslims who believed in him. There are various reasons for the Meccan polytheists' opposition to Islam and the Prophet, which can be summarized as follows:

1. **Ancestral Tradition:** Arabs were extremely attached to the tradition of their ancestors and their religion of paganism. Therefore, they did not want to abandon the "religion of their fathers."
2. **Rejection of Idols and the Afterlife:** Islam rejected the idols they believed brought them closer to Allah and instead commanded the worship of Allah alone. Furthermore, it announced an eternal afterlife and accountability, which the polytheists rejected.
3. **Social Status and Leadership:** The polytheists wanted a leader to be wealthy and powerful with many children. The Prophet was neither wealthy nor a tribal chief.
4. **Moral Reforms:** Islam prohibited bad habits common in Meccan society, such as alcohol, gambling, and adultery. It emphasized human equality and *taqwa* (piety) over superiority based on wealth or lineage.
5. **Human Prophet Image:** They believed prophets should be superhuman beings (angels) and could not grasp the wisdom of a human messenger.
6. **Prestige and the Kaaba:** The Quraysh tribe held great prestige due to their management of the Kaaba and Hajj services. They feared losing this position.
7. **Economic Concerns:** They derived significant income from the idol trade and fairs. They believed the new religion would cause economic harm.
8. **Tribalism (Asabiyyah):** It was difficult for an individual to go against tribal norms; doing so meant losing protection and risking one's life.

The reactions of the Meccan polytheists were diverse. Figures such as Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab, Abu Sufyan, Umayyah b. Khalaf, Walid b. Mughira, Nadr b. Harith, Uqba b. Abu Mu'ayt, As b. Wa'il, Utbah b. Rabi'ah, and Hakam b. Abil-As were fierce enemies of Islam. They mocked the Prophet and spread slanders, claiming he was a madman, a poet, or a magician.

When their attempts to pressure his uncle Abu Talib failed, they tried to compromise with the Prophet directly by offering wealth and leadership. When this too failed, they resorted to physical violence. Slaves like Bilal al-Habashi and Zinnira were tortured; companions like Abu Bakr, Abu Dharr, Abdullah b. Mas'ud, Habbab b. Arat, and Ammar b. Yasir were attacked. Sumayyah and her husband Yasir became the first martyrs of Islam under Abu Jahl's torture.

Having failed in all prior attempts, they applied a social and economic boycott against the Hashemites and Muttalibites for three years, starting from the seventh year of Prophethood (616 AD). Finally, they met at Dar al-Nadwa and decided to assassinate the Prophet, which led to the Hijra to Medina in 622 AD.

From the beginning, the Prophet followed a long-term policy centered on the safety of Muslims and the communication of Islam. In Mecca, he advised patience and non-retaliation. In Medina, through newfound political and military strength, Muslims achieved success in the battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Trench. Ultimately, with the conquest of Mecca in 630 AD, the Prophet's policy bore fruit, and Islam spread across the entire Arabian Peninsula.

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