

Could this Qur'an fragment be older than Muhammad?

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([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) Researchers from the University of Oxford have said that recently discovered fragments from the oldest Qur'an appear to predate the founding of Islam, the *Times of London* reports.

"This gives more ground to what have been peripheral views of the Qur'an's genesis, like that Muhammad and his early followers used a text that was already in existence and shaped it to fit their own political and theological agenda, rather than Muhammad receiving a revelation from heaven," Keith Small, a researcher at the University of Oxford, told the *Times*.

In July, England's Birmingham University unveiled parts of the world's oldest fragments of the Qur'an, with radiocarbon dating projecting the manuscript to be at least 1,370 years old.

But then Oxford University researchers used carbon dating, finding the pages were from about 1,448 to 1,371 years ago.

"It destabilizes, to put it mildly, the idea that we can know anything with certainty about how the Qur'an emerged—and that in turn has implications for the history of Muhammad and the Companions," historian Tom Holland told the *Times*.

If Oxford's dating is correct, the "Birmingham Qur'an" was created between 568 and 645 AD, while Muhammad is believed to have lived between 570 to 632 AD.

"At the very latest, it was made before the first formal text of the Qur'an is supposed to have been collated at the behest of the caliph Uthman, the third of the Prophet's successors, in 653. At the earliest it could date back to Muhammad's childhood, or possibly even before his birth," the newspaper reported.

However Muslim scholars have disputed the claims that the ancient fragments predate Islam.

“If anything, the manuscript has consolidated traditional accounts of the Koran’s origins,” Mustafa Shah, from London's School of Oriental and African Studies, told the *Times*.

Shady Hekmat Nasser, from the University of Cambridge, said, “We already know from our sources that the Qur’an was a closed text very early on in Islam, and these discoveries only attest to the accuracy of these sources.”