

**"THE CONSTITUTION OF MEDINA" – A SUPREME EXAMPLE
OF TOLERANCE**

KOBILJON ZAKHIDOV

DSc in History, Associate Professor

Yangi Asr University, Tashkent. Uzbekistan

Abstract. *This article analyzes the role of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in establishing the foundations of the Islamic state centralized in Medina, with particular emphasis on the “Constitution of Medina” (Şahīfa). After the Hijra, an alliance was concluded among various tribes and religious groups (the Muhājirūn, Anşār, Aws, Khazraj, and Jewish tribes), defining their rights and obligations. This document, regarded as the first political-legal contract in Islamic history, encompassed principles of collective cooperation, mutual protection, personal accountability for crimes, elimination of hostilities, and unity against external enemies. Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) consolidated the tribes, centralized religious and political authority, and laid the foundation of a new ummah. Based on scholarly sources, the article highlights the socio-political significance of the Constitution of Medina and its role in the development of Islamic civilization.*

Keywords: *Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hijra, Constitution of Medina, Şahīfa, Ummah, Muhājirūn, Anşār, Aws, Khazraj, Jewish tribes, political unity, Islamic statehood.*

Muhammad ibn Abdullah (peace be upon him) undertook significant work to unite tribes, which were living in a scattered state and did not acknowledge a clear, unified law, into a single Medina state. Naturally, he also developed and implemented a distinct legislation for the centralized state, based on Islamic rulings. The universally equal principles advanced by the Islamic religion, and the equality of all people before God regardless of their ethnic origin, created great





opportunities for the Prophet (pbuh). As a result, several Arab tribes united under the banner of Islam. The Hijrah to Medina marked a pivotal turning point in the development of statehood, leading to the foundation of the centralized Mecca-Medina state.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) entered Yathrib in 622 AD not only as a Prophet. At that time, Yathrib was a city without a unified governing body, where tribes with different lifestyles lived in a scattered state. Sources provide various accounts regarding the city's name, "*Yathrib*" ([يثرب]). In his "*Geography*," Ptolemy referred to this city as "*Yatrippa*," while the Byzantine Stephanus called it "*Yatrippa polis*" (city-state). The city of Medina is also mentioned in the Quran by the name "*Yathrib*"¹. The city's new name, "*Al-Madina*" ([المدينة]), which appears in the Quran, emerged after the Hijrah.

Upon Muhammad's (pbuh) arrival in Medina, the objective was to conclude a pact with groups that could potentially pose opposition, ensure the security of the Muslim community (*Ummah* – [أمة]), and to centralize political and military authority from the tribal and clan leaders into his own hands. Researchers O.G. Bolshakov and M.A. Usmonov state in their works that "After the Hijrah, four major groups began to form in Medina: the *Muhajirun* (Emigrants), the *Aws*, the *Khazraj*, and the Jews. In the initial period, on the initiative of the Prophet (pbuh), a pact was drawn up and formalized in writing to achieve solidarity among all four groups". Furthermore, the researcher Hasan Ibrahim identified three groups formed in Medina: 1. The Emigrants (*Muhajirun*); 2. The Arab tribes; 3. The Jewish tribes². However, these views of the researchers are ambiguous in several respects. Firstly, one cannot conclude that all members of the Arab tribes of Medina, the *Aws* ([الأوس]) and the *Khazraj* ([الخزرج]), had accepted the Islamic faith. Secondly, why were the *Aws* and *Khazraj* tribes mentioned separately, while *Banu Qaynuqa*, *Banu Qurayza*, and *Banu Nadir* were referred to

¹ Quran. 33:13.

² Hasan Ibrāhīm Hasan. Ta' rīx al-islām al-siyāsī va ad-dīnī va as-saqāfī va al-ijtimā'ī: 4 m. Bayrūt, 2001. – M.1. – S. 236.



collectively as the "Jewish group"? Thirdly, the group in Medina that had begun to accept Islam before the Hijrah – the *Ansar* (Helpers)—was not mentioned anywhere. Also, the original copy of the pact began with: "*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. This is a pact [Kitab] from the Prophet Muhammad between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib...*". The problem arose from O.G. Bolshakov's incorrect interpretation of the sentence from the original document:

"[هذا كتاب من محمد النبي بين المؤمنين و المسلمين من قريش و يثرب]"

which he translated as "...between the believers and Muslims of the Quraysh and the <inhabitants> of Yathrib..."³. Therefore, after the Hijrah, there were four communities in Medina: the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*), the Helpers (*Ansar*), the Arab tribes (*Aws* and *Khazraj*), and the Jewish tribes (*Banu Qaynuqa*, *Banu Qurayza*, *Banu Nadir*).

Sources have preserved the text of the pact (*Sahifa* – [الصحيفة]), and its main ideas are as follows: These four groups form one community; they fight as one force; they share the expenses related to ransoming and retrieving prisoners of war. They will not leave anyone among them without support and protection. Believers will not make a pact with the clients or allies of another believer without his master's consent. The believers are united and shall stand together against every lawbreaker and criminal, even if the wrongdoer is one of their own kin; they shall not support him. All believers are under the protection of God, and believers are protectors of one another. All believers shall jointly make peace with an enemy after hostilities have ceased. Armed groups that go out together shall take turns fighting. Believers have the right to demand blood money or retribution from one another for a slain person. However, it is preferable to accept blood money rather than seek blood vengeance. All groups shall fight together against the Quraysh, who are the enemies of Islam, and no one shall protect their property or lives. Whoever violates this pact will incur God's wrath, and his repentance will not be

³ Bolshakov, O.G. *Istoriya Khalifata*. – Vol. 1. – Moscow: GRVL, 1989. – P. 92-93.



accepted. If any dispute arises concerning the matters mentioned in the pact, they must refer it to God and to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) for resolution.

According to O.G. Bolshakov, later, in the first year of the Hijrah, a pact was also signed coordinating mutual relations between the Muslim community and the Jews, who were part of or in alliance with many Arab tribes. The text of this agreement belongs to the previous one. "The Jews shall bear their expenses alongside the Muslims while they are at war; the Jews of *Banu Awf*—they, their clients, and their coreligionists are one community, (but) the religion of the Jews is their own, and the religion of the Muslims is their own; if anyone commits injustice or a crime, he and his household alone are held responsible." In subsequent sections, with the same phrasing, the Jewish tribes of *Banu Najjar* ([بنو النجار]), *Banu Harith* ([بنو الحارث]), *Banu Sa'ida* ([بنو ساعدة]), *Banu Jusham* ([بنو جشم]), and *Banu Tha'laba* ([بنو ثعلبة]) are enumerated, referring to these same rights. They were invited to aid the Muslims in battle against their enemies. However, they did not have the right to enter a war without the permission of Muhammad (pbuh). It can be assumed that similar terms were recorded in the pacts concluded with the Jewish tribes of *Banu Qaynuqa*, *Banu Nadir*, and *Banu Qurayza*. But they have not reached us, because the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) annulled these pacts after expelling these tribes from Medina. It is important to note that at the time the pact was signed, Muslims and Jews, although adhering to different religions, were considered members of one religious community (*mu'minun* - [المؤمنون]), because they were trusted to believe in the covenant given to the Prophet Moses. This rule in the pact proves its authenticity, as it would not have occurred to any later sectarian to include Jews and Muslims in a single community.

This pact (*Hilf* - [الحلف]) established by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) served to politically unite the tribes of Medina who adhered to different religions. Furthermore, the unification of tribes and clans that accepted Islam into a single community (*Ummah*), irrespective of their nationality and race, opened up great



opportunities for the Prophet (pbuh). The religious brotherhood among the members of this community superseded the pre-existing bonds of kinship. This established principles of mutual cooperation and guarantee. The community had a religious-political character, and each individual had their own rights and obligations before the community. The Jewish community was equal to the Muslims in matters of common interest, and their rights were guaranteed.

These pacts are documents crafted by a skilled political figure. They approached the structure of the new community with care: the previous connections and obligations of individual tribes were preserved, and the prestige of local leaders was not undermined. Only Muhammad (pbuh) had the right to resolve disputes that arose between tribes. At the same time, completely new foundations for political solidarity emerged: collective struggle against an external enemy and the protection of all members of the community; the sole responsibility of the criminal himself; this deprived him of tribal protection and would have put an end to the wars between tribes that had long exacerbated the situation in the oasis. The pact concluded by the Prophet (pbuh) with the inhabitants of Medina began to function as the "*Constitution of Medina*"⁴.

Considering the level of social development in the early 7th century, it must be acknowledged that this pact was an extremely significant historical document for its time. This agreement played a crucial role in uniting the Emigrants with the existing tribes in Medina and in resolving various disputes legally and peacefully. This document was highly important for strengthening the position of Muslims in Yathrib and expanding their ranks. Once the Prophet (pbuh) was recognized by all Muslims as the sole religious, political, and military leader, he united the various tribes within the framework of a single community.

⁴ The researcher Muhammad Hamidullah referred to this agreement as "**the first constitution in human history.**"



Bibliography

1. The Holy Quran.
2. Hasan Ibrāhīm Hasan. *Tārīkh al-Islām al-siyāsī wa al-dīnī wa al-thaqāfī wa al-ijtimā'ī*: 4 vols. Bayrūt, 2001.
3. Ibn Hishām. *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*. 4 vols. Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2001.
4. Bolshakov, O.G. *Istoriya Khalifata*. – Vol. 1. – Moscow: GRVL, 1989.
5. Usmonov, M. *Qur'oni Karim va Janobi Rasulullohning Amallari*. – Toshkent, 1992.
6. Usmonov, M. Muhammad Payg'ambar // *Muloqot*. 1993. – № 5-6.
7. Hasanov, A. *Makka va Madina Tarixi*. – Toshkent: Mehnat, 1992.
8. Kobil, Z. (2024). Regulation Of The Status Of “Ahl Al-Dhimma” and “Ahl Al-Harb” In The Tax System Of Early Arab-Muslim Statehood. *Pubmedia Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(2).
9. Tairdjanovich, Z. K. (2022). The Implementation of Ahl Ad-Dhimma Status in the Politics of the Arab-Muslim Countries. *Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and History*, 3(12), 320-326.