

Predestination, chance and Mektoub in certain Muslim societies

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Received: 25 Feb 2023; Accepted: 28 Feb 2023; Published: 25 Mar 2023

Citation: Abdelkader Abdellaoui, Predestination, chance and Mektoub in certain Muslim societies. AJMCRR 2023; 2(3): 1-7.

ABSTRACT

Chance, qadha, qadar, predestination or free will caused many of the Al-mu'tazila time to flow before they were blacklisted by religious authorities. It should be remembered that Mutazilism, or Mu'tazilas also known as Al-mu'tazila, is an important school of Muslim theology ('Aqîda) which developed from the 2nd century of the Hegera/8th century.

This current radically rejects divine anthropomorphism, refutes the idea that the Koran would be eternal and uncreated and gives a central place to the notion of human free will in its foundations. The Mu'tazilite theology develops in particular thanks to the translated works of Greek philosophy. The tools developed by the Greeks, logic, rational reasoning, are then remobilized by these Muslim theologians in synergy with the Muslim sources, Koran and Sunna.

In this work we are interested in the question of how the Algerian society apprehends, understands the concepts of qadar, qadha, mektoub and free will and integrates them into everyday life. To this end, we carried out a six-question survey that we distributed to around a hundred of our contacts and acquaintances. We also searched the bibliography for what the authors say about these concepts. We also searched the Quran for the verses relating to qadar and free will: a long list is thus established.

The term qadar has two meanings in the Quran: i) that which is written (predestined) and ii) the measure or just measure by which God does things. This second meaning is of course very different from the first; but many are those who amalgamate and confuse the two meanings.

The results concerning Algerian society can be generalized to North African societies but not to other nations where Muslim communities exist.

As of February 3, 2023, 16 people responded to the questionnaire out of approximately three hundred mailings among our relations, all age groups combined. The people contacted are either students or university teachers, in other words representing the intelligentsia of society. The percentage of responses is very low, not to say negligible (0.05%). One can wonder why this low percentage of response. By way of comparison, a colleague from a dissemination group had asked 273 recipients for a survey on the use of traditional dishes; he had only one answer: ours. There is therefore a serious problem with the acceptance of the concept of survey by Algerian society. The reasons for this are multiple and we could cite: i) distrust of the system, of the Other; ii) the fear of disclosing one's convictions (or simply one's opinion).

We must, in any case, take this situation into account and not expect survey results in line with conventional standards.

INTRODUCTION

Tamine Khemmar (<https://www.ajib.fr/questions-concernant-la-predestination-dans-lislam-al-qadar-1/>; published on October 21, 2021 and consulted on January 17, 2023) wonders about the questions concerning predestination in Islam. He affirms: "Faith in qadar (predestination), favorable or unfavorable, is the sixth pillar of Islamic belief as it was clarified by the Prophet [ﷺ] in the known hadith of Jibril (according to Muslim) where he replied to Jibril who questioned him about faith by saying: "Let you have faith in Allah, in his Angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Last Day and in the qadar (predestination) which he either for good or for bad". To this end, he relies in particular on verse 49 of sura 55 which stipulates "We have certainly created everything bi qadar" which could be translated, according to the author, by "We have created everything according to a measure that We have predestined and decided". The author also refers to verse 38 of sura 33 which affirms "the commandment of Allah is certainly an ineluctable qadar (predestination). To the question of knowing what would be the difference between the qadha and the qadar, the author proposes that when the qadha (the decree) is mentioned alone, it includes the qadar and vice versa; on the other hand, if the two are mentioned together, their meanings differ; the qadha then means the act of Allah and the qadar means what has written what Allah has written in the eternal past (azal). The author then proposes four levels of faith in qadar.

Chance, qadha, qadar, predestination or free will caused many of the Mu'tazilite's time to flow before they were blacklisted by religious authorities. It should be remembered that Mutazilism, or mu'tazilism also known as Al-mu'tazila, is an important school of Muslim theology ('Aqida) which developed from the 2nd century of the Hegira/8th century.

This current radically rejects divine anthropomorphism, refutes the idea that the Koran would be eternal and un-

created and gives a central place to the notion of human free will in its foundations. The Mu'tazilite theology develops in particular thanks to the translated works of Greek philosophy. The tools developed by the Greeks, logic, rational reasoning, are then remobilized by these Muslim theologians in synergy with the Muslim sources, Koran and Sunna.

Mu'tazilism is today poorly represented in the Muslim community; the current has experienced a gradual decline after the establishment by the Abbasid power of Sunni traditionalism. The approach inherited from Mutazilism is still used today by Shiites, in particular the Zaydites (Zayd ibn Ali was himself a student of Wassil, a precursor theologian of Mutazilism).

Chance or qadar ? Sometimes situations happen to us that we find it difficult to understand, that it would be the effect of chance alone; we are then obliged to see in it an action of predestination. Here is a very personal one:

A certain month of August of the year 1969, I had been invited to a meeting of the local authorities of Laghouat; I felt like an accused who was going to be tried. I faced the authorities with courage, strength and determination. I wanted to justify my actions which I considered honest and militant for the good of society and the city. My arguments remained in vain and I was uttered direct and undisguised threats. I then decided to leave quickly for Algiers to my cousin (who lives in the suburbs of Algiers) to whom I simply explained that I had just come to rest. The next day I left for central Algiers. I still remembered the threats that had been made against me; I was angry, tired and scared at the same time. I heard a voice calling me by my official first name. She was a friend and a neighbor whom I will not name here; I will use the term Ouarda (Flower) to talk about it. Considering my condition, she asks me what I had. When I told her my story, she suggested I go to the cinema. We bought the daily "el moudjahid"; we sit in a cafe to read it. I said to him "Ouarda, I let you choose a film; I don't have much morals about it." Ouarda leafs through the daily newspa-

per; instead of the “cinema” page, she comes to the ads page which she begins to read. She jumped for joy saying to me: “Abdelkader, you who always like to advance in your studies, here is an announcement that seems to me made for you: the Ministry of Transport is recruiting candidates to send them to train in a cycle of electronic technicians in aeronautics; it suits you. She manages to convince me and here we are at the Ministry of Transport. They ask me for papers that I had to bring back from Laghouat; I was not very keen to go back there; Ouarda still manages to convince me; I leave ; I return with the required papers, in particular my passport; a week later I received my ticket for Toulouse; I had been accepted among the candidates for the training of aeronautical technicians at the National School of Civil Aviation with a scholarship from the Ministry of Transport; we were three Algerians among I don't know how many requests.

So, let's now go back to the probabilities of the different events:

- Let's start with the meeting: there were about fifteen members present; only one had made the threat. Another member might not have had the same reaction. The probability that one person among the fifteen speaks is: 0.006%
- The meeting with someone other than Ouarda: the probability is 0.003%
- The choice of the page: Knowing that the daily is on about fifteen sheets, that is to say 30 pages, the probability of falling on the advertisement page is: 0.033%

Calculations show us that the probabilities of realizing a favorable event are so low that it is difficult for us to believe in mere chance. Without falling into the idea of predestination or Mektoub (written in advance), we prefer to relate to the idea of a temporary boost from Allah to one of his faithful. A faithful who had started prayer at the age of 14 and was at that time 25.

It should be noted that the term "qadar" which can be compared to chance can also have the meaning of "the

measure or the just measure". As noted in the verse ... of surah ...: We have created everything according to a just measure.

What are other authors saying?

- Maria de Cillis publishes in Oasis 26 on November 15, 2018 and updated on April 22, 2022 in which she affirms: “the nature of the human act has always been at the heart of Islamic theological reflection; the Qur'an seems to simultaneously support the omnipotence of God and the responsibility of man". She also points out: “The seemingly insoluble clash between the concepts of free will and divine predestination has been one of the great themes of Islamic theological reflection”. It also affirms that Islam, as a religion of a revealed law, implies the existence of intelligence capable of grasping this law and of a will likely to submit to it or not to submit to it. . Islam, in its reality as a message addressed to man for his own good, thus recognizes in the human being a creature capable of understanding the content of revealed truth and of welcoming it according to his own will. The author cites Georges C. Anawati, Louis Gardet, “Introduction to Muslim Theology” ; Vrin ; Paris 1970. The author also quotes verse 286 of sura 2 which states "God only imposes on each man what he can carry: the good he has done will come back to him, as well as the evil he has done". We will add here to complete the 111 of sura 16 which specifies: “the day when each soul questions itself and what it would have accomplished; no one is oppressed unjustly. Verse 40 of sura 4 specifies that God does not even punish the weight of a particle and if it is a good deed God the double reward. Verse 65 of sura 22 recalls that God is merciful to men.
- Anawati and Luis Gardet (1949) show in a preliminary study that it is a matter of analyzing and situating what can be called, largo sense, the “official” or rather officially taught theology of Islam, c that is to

say the dialectical method with above all apologetic aims, called kalam. But this very designation of “theology” is somewhat equivocal. A mind insufficiently instructed or too imbued with Western notions could yield too easily to the temptation to establish hasty comparisons with Christian theology from which would inevitably result false historical judgments or specious polemical and apologetic triumphs.

- Youcef Djedi published in 2011 “predestination or predetermination in Islam? From Friedrich to Max Weber” (Open Edition Journals n° 49-2; pp 259-274; ISBN: 978-2-600-01575-2; publisher Library Droz). Quoting Max Weber (2001, I, 22/2, p. 260), the author notes the disqualification of Islam but adds that Max Weber certainly knew Islam but it would be necessary to recognize that some of his affirmations are subject to bail. The author adds that one should not however dispute the reality of the fatalism in which bathed the Muslim masses at the time of Max Weber. The author also recalls that according to Friedrich Ulrich, it would be the absence of a mediating personality of Savior (a Pope in a way) because Islam, strictly monotheistic, would not dare to give this role to any mortal, not even to the Prophet Muhammad (QSSL). The main difference between Islam and Christianity would be, according to the author, the fact that Christianity is based on faith and love, whereas among Muslims it is law and obligation that prevail.
- Tamine Khemmar in an article published on October 21, 2021 in Ajib (<https://www.ajib.fr/questions-concernant-la-predestination-dans-lislam-al-qadar-1/>; consulted on January 17, 2023) s Questions about Predestination in Islam: Al-Qadar. He affirms that faith in qadar (predestination), whether favorable or unfavorable, is the sixth pillar of Islamic belief as it would have been specified by the Prophet Muhammad (QSSL) in the known hadith of Jibril. The au-

thor quotes a number of verses:

- Verse 49 of sura 55 which states: “We certainly created everything bi qadar; that is, according to a measure that we have predestined and decided. It seems to us, however, that the author is confusing here between predestination and quantity because it is a question here of quantity or good quantity and not of predestination.
- Verse 38 of sura 33 which states: “The command of Allah is certainly an inescapable qadar”. We returned to the reading of the Quran (copy published on September 4, 2008 in Cairo under number 6482). We have not found the verse indicated by the author after having gone through all of sura 33. There must still be some confusion.
- We consulted another edition of the Koran: SNED 1981 edition; we actually find the verse quoted by the author; the verse indeed ends with “wa kaana amrou allahi qadaran makdouran”. It is a question here of qadar in its sense of measure and not of predestination. The last term "makdouran" may seem ambiguous to us: is it precision or predestination?
- The author asks what would be the difference between qadha and qadar and affirms that when qadha (the decree) is mentioned alone, it includes qadar and when qadar is mentioned alone it includes qadha. On the other hand, if the two are mentioned together, their meanings differ: the qadha then means the act of Allah and the qadar means what Allah has written in the eternal past.

Tools and method

It should be noted in the first place that sometimes the edition versions of the Quran may differ as we have seen above; it will have to be taken into account

We first consulted what could be written by various authors concerning the perception of the concepts of qadar (predestination), qadha (decree of God) and free will (personal choice of the believer). First we clarified that

the term qadar can also mean measure, or just measure; we are then far from the sense of “predestination”.

We evoked a personal adventure which had happened to us in August 1969. We were able to show, by calculating the probabilities of occurrences, that chance was not there and that it would be, in any case of cause, a nudge from Allah to put a devotee towards the right choice.

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from Allah to put a devotee towards the right choice.

In this work, we are particularly interested in the Muslim society in Algeria; it seems to us that the results can be generalized to North African societies at least. Muslim societies in other continents are obviously different in terms of their history, their traditions and their cultures.

Field survey:

We have launched a survey with a number enough of our acquaintances and relatives. The survey is based on a six-question questionnaire.

enquête sur le concept de qadar et de libre arbitre		cocher une case	
n° question		réponse oui/non	
		oui	non
1	pensez-vous que tout est écrit à l'avance		
2	pensez-vous que nous avons le choix de nos actes		
3	pensez-vous qu'Allah connaît notre futur mais nous laisse libre de nos choix		
4	pensez-vous que le qadar fait partie intégrale de notre foi		
5	vous est-il arrivé une aventure dans laquelle vous n'arrivez pas à expliquer le hasard		
6	pensez-vous que le hasard peut être le résultat de l'action d'Allah pour vous mettre dans la bonne voie		

Quran Reading

We have read the Quran on the copy published on September 4, 2008 in Cairo under the number 6482. We will however have to note the difficulty of translating certain important terms such as dhalama; neither classic printed dictionaries nor digital translation (Google translation) can give us a satisfactory translation; we used to intimidate or to attack which seem to us the closest. We have found many verses relating or close to our work theme: qadar, qadha, free will, we quote a few:

- Verse 40 of sura 4 affirms, beginning with the interjection inna: “God does not attack (or intimidate the term used in Arabic is – the yadhlimou) the smallest particle; if the act is a benefit, God doubles it.
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- Verse 65 of sura 22 also begins with the interjection

of affirmation “inna”: God, for men, is merciful and full of goodness.

- Verse 17 of sura 22 affirms: God is witness of all things
- Verse 20 of Sura 19 states: “...will not be intimidated (or assaulted)
- Verse 111 of sura 16: “the day will come when each soul defends itself for the actions it would have accomplished; none will be intimidated or attacked.
- Verse 284 of Sura 2 states: “He forgives and chastises Whoever He wills; God is capable of anything.

From these verses we retain two principles :

- God is almighty and He is witness to all things
- God does not intimidate (or attack) anyone, not even the smallest particle; in other words, each soul is free to act and answer for it on the day of the Last Judgment.

Results and discussion

On February 5, 2023, 22 people responded to the questionnaire out of approximately three hundred mailings among our relations, all age groups combined. The people contacted are either students or university teachers, in other words representing the intelligentsia of society. The percentage of responses is very low, not to say negligible (0.07%). One can wonder why this low percentage of response. It seems to us that certain answers can be put forward: i) the persons questioned may think that these are their intimate convictions and hesitate to disseminate them, even if we specified during the mailings that the results are completely anonymous; (ii) respondents may also think that this survey is useless and does not contribute anything to society; iii) the questionnaire is misunderstood.

1	pensez-vous que nous avons le choix de nos actes	22	6
2	pensez-vous qu'Allah connaît notre futur mais nous laisse libre de nos choix	24	2
3	pensez-vous qu'Allah connaît notre futur mais nous laisse libre de nos choix	26	1
4	pensez-vous que le qadar fait partie intégrale de notre foi	25	1
5	vous est-il arrivé une aventure dans laquelle vous n'arrivez pas à expliquer le hasard	19	8
6	pensez-vous que le sasard peut être le résultat de l'action d'Allah pour vous mettre dans la bonne voie	21	4
résultats au 10 février 2023		137	22
Figure 2			
nombre de réponses au 10 février 2023 : 29			

How to analyze these results:

- If we combine the results of questions 1, 2 and 3: the answers in favor of free will are 72 out of 85, or 0.82%; while the responses against free will represent only 9 out of 85, or 0.10%
- The answers to question 4, to know if the qadar is part of our faith are 25 for yes (i.e. 0.88%) and only 1 for no (i.e. 0.038%)

- The answers to question 6 on the fact that chance can be due to an action of Allah (who knows our future) to give us a push in the right direction are 21 (0.84%) for yes and 4 (0.16%) for no: most results for yes.

Conclusion

The survey we conducted with many relations and relatives did not collect as many responses as we had hoped. However, in addition to the messages sent by personalized emails, we have published the questionnaire on our Facebook page in both languages (Arabic and French) to try to reach as many people as possible. As of February 10, 2023, 29 people have returned the completed questionnaire. A preliminary analysis has shown that 0.82% are in favor of the concept of free will; against only 0.038% are against it. In addition, 0.88% affirm that qadar is part of the faith and only 0.038% are against it. Finally 0.84% think that chance can be due to an action of God (who knows the future in advance) to put us on the right track; 0.16% are not convinced.

We wondered about the few answers obtained. We recalled that a researcher from the University of Oran (Algeria) had launched a survey on the use of traditional dishes; he had sent 273 but; he received only one answer: ours. This could have several meanings including: i) that society is not used to the concept of investigation; ii) individuals do not like to express their opinions; finally distrust of the system and the Other in a particular way.

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