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(un)Common Sounds

*Songs of Peace and Reconciliation
among Muslims and Christians*

EDITED BY

Roberta R. King
and Sooi Ling Tan



CASCADE Books • Eugene, Oregon

(UN)COMMON SOUNDS

Songs of Peace and Reconciliation among Muslims and Christians

Art for Faith's Sake

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Contents

Resource Links and Accompanying Multimedia | vii
List of Illustrations | vii
Notes on Transliteration and Translation | x
Notes on Contributors | xi
Foreword (William Dyrness) | xiii
Foreword (Najeeba Syeed-Miller) | xv
Acknowledgments | xvii

Prologue | 1

From Beirut to Yogyakarta

(Roberta R. King and Sooi Ling Tan)

Introduction | 17

Pursuing Songs of Peace and Reconciliation

(Roberta R. King)

Part One: Historical Contexts

1 Muslim-Christian Relations and Peacemaking in the Arab World | 51

(Jon Hoover)

2 Peacemaking in the Indonesian Context | 71

(Bernard Adeney-Risakotta)

Part Two: Theological Considerations

3 Biblical Approaches to Music and Peace | 87

(James R. Krabill)

4 A Peaceful Message beyond the Permission of Warfare (*Jihād*):

An Interpretation of Qur'an 22:39-40 | 104

(Sahiron Syamsuddin)

CHAPTER 4

A Peaceful Message beyond
the Permission of Warfare (Jihād)*An Interpretation of Qur'an 22:39–40*

by Sahiron Syamsuddin

Introduction

The Qur'an deals, on the one hand, with peace (and reconciliation) and, on the other, with "justified" conflict and violence. There are some verses that articulate the establishment of peace and reconciliation and other verses that speak about punishment for infidels and *jihād* in the sense of "justified" war. This seemingly contradictory phenomenon is closely related to the existence of what the Qur'an (chapter 3:7) calls *muḥkamāt* ("clear") and *mutashābihāt* ("ambiguous"/"unclear") verses. Muslim scholars have defined these two terms in different ways that I will not explain in detail in this paper.¹ However, I would like to express my position in this case. The verses whose "direct" meanings are in line with moral ideas and messages are called *muḥkamāt* (clear) verses, whereas those that seemingly contradict moral ideas are called *mutashābihāt* (unclear) verses. On this basis, one can say that verses on peace and reconciliation are *muḥkamāt*, whereas verses on "punishment-stories" and on "justified" war (*jihād*) are *mutashābihāt*.

This brings us to the methodical question: How do we understand these verses? For purposes of this paper, two approaches are used. First, the hermeneutical method known as the quasi-objectivist modernist method

1. For the different opinions on the definition of *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*, see Syamsuddin 2009, 80–81).

will be applied to the interpretation of Qur'anic verses on war. Second, because there are a large number of "sword" verses, this chapter focuses solely on the interpretation of Qur'an 22:39–40, the verses that, according to Islamic tradition, constitute the first verses on war that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. There are at least two reasons for choosing these verses. First, by paying attention to these verses, the main reasons why the Prophet and his followers went to war can be understood. Second, all other verses on war should be understood with reference to these two verses. Otherwise, they could be misinterpreted and misunderstood.

Method of Interpretation

According to the quasi-objectivist modernist method, the Qur'an is understood and interpreted by paying attention to its textual and historical contexts, grasping its moral values, and applying it in accordance with these moral values. The methodical strategy goes beyond understanding the literal meaning of the Qur'anic text. Scholars such as Fazlur Rahman (1982), Mohammed Talbi (1992), and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1995), who use this method, focus on the universal moral intentions (*maqāṣid*) of the verses. They maintain that the universality of the Qur'an lies in Talbi's concept of *maqāṣid* (universal moral intentions), Rahman's *rationes legis*, and Abu Zayd's *maghzá* (significance). In order to understand the central message of the Qur'anic verse, both traditional and modern methods of interpretation are to be used.

Rahman, who is familiar with the hermeneutics of Emilio Betti and Hans-Georg Gadamer, proposes the idea of a "double movement" and explains that "the process of interpretation proposed here consists of a double movement, from the present situation to Qur'anic times, then back to the present" (Rahman 1982, 5). According to this theory, one must first understand the meaning of a certain Qur'anic passage(s) by paying attention to its historical situation or specific problem to which it was the response. In this step the macro-situation in terms of society, religion, customs, institutions, and the life of the Arab community as a whole at that time has to be considered. Second, one must extrapolate a certain moral principle from the historical understanding of the Qur'anic passage. Finally, this moral principle that constitutes the main message of the text, is then applied to the present context.

A similar idea is suggested by Mohammed Talbi who proposes a "maqāṣid -oriented reading" (*qirā'ah maqāṣidiyah*), in which the orientation of a text (*tahlīl ittijāhī*) is to be examined by using historical,

anthropological, and intention-based analyses (Talbi 1992, 118). However, a point to note is that these scholars do not provide a detailed explanation as to the “significance” of these verses leaving the following question unclear: Is the main message the one that was understood in the time of the prophet Muhammad or the one that is defined during the moment of interpretation?

In my opinion, there are two types of “significance”: the phenomenal and the ideal. The former proposes that the main message be understood and applied according to the needs of the community during that particular timeframe, beginning from the period of Prophet Muhammad until today (the moment of interpretation). From this definition, there are two types of significance, the historical-phenomenal and the dynamically-developed type. The historical one is the main message of the Qur’an which is understood and applied at the time of revelation, while the other (i.e., the dynamically-developed one) is the main message that is understood and defined during the time of interpretation. In order to understand the historical one, it is necessary to understand the historical context of the macro and micro socioreligious communities at the time of revelation. The historical information contained in *asbāb al-nuzūl* becomes very important. Meanwhile, understanding the dynamically-developed significance requires the development of thinking and the understanding of the *Zeitgeist* (“spirit of the time”) of the interpretation. This kind of interpretation represents a combination between objectivity and subjectivity, past and present, and divinity and humanity.

The second type of significance, the ideal one, refers to the accumulation of human insights regarding the main message of the verse. However, in my opinion, the ideal significance is not that relevant because, regardless of the wisdom of human insights, absolute truths can only be known by Allah and will only be revealed at the end of human civilization.

Verses on Peace and War: Muḥkamāt and Mutashābihāt

Let us turn to address the types and priorities of verses in relation to peace and war and then consider the interpretative issues surrounding the term *jihād*.

Understanding and Interpretation of the Verses

In the introduction I mentioned the existence of “clear” (*muḥkamāt*) and “unclear” (*mutashābihāt*) verses and that the verses on peace be included in the category of *muḥkamāt* (“clear”) verses because they are evidently

in line with moral principles. On the contrary, verses on the justification of war/conflict are *mutashābihāt* (“unclear”) verses. There are different ways to approach *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* verses, particularly if the verses seem contradictory to each other. In this respect, al-Zamakhshari’s opinion in *al-Kashshaf*, that *mutashābihāt* verses are secondary to *muḥkamāt* verses, is pertinent. He advocates *tuhmalu al-mutashābihāt ‘alayhā wa turaddu ilayhā*, that “the *mutashābihāt* should be understood in light of the *muḥkamāt* ones and with reference to them” (See al-Zamakhshari 1998, 1:528). In other words, the level of the *mutashābihāt* verses is considered to be lower than that of the *muḥkamāt*. On this basis, if there are verses in the Qur’an that seem to be contradictory and are difficult to reconcile, the priority and authority lies first with *muḥkamāt* verses. The best method of interpretation understands the verses in their own textual and historical contexts.

One of the main purposes of Islam is to establish peace for human beings. Semantically, the word “peace” or *salām* or *silm* in Arabic, is closely related to “mercy” (*rahmah*) and “reconciliation” (*ṣulh* and *islah baynahum*). These words and concepts are mentioned explicitly in many Qur’anic verses and speak of peace firstly between God and human beings and also among human beings. For example, it is clearly stated in Qur’an 21:107 that the Prophet Muhammad was sent as “a mercy to the world” because “he brought teachings that can make the people of the world happy, if they follow him” (ibid., 4:170). This happiness can be achieved in this world and in the world thereafter.

Peace is also mentioned in the context of the Qur’anic revelation (Qur’an 97:1–5):

We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power:
And what will explain to thee what the night of power is? The
Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come
down the angels and the Spirit by Allah’s permission, on every
errand: Peace! This until the rise of morn!

Qur’an 6:125–27 mentions that God gives a peace to the true believers and welcomes them to paradise. God also greets all the Prophets with peace.² The word *islah* (reconciliation) is mentioned, for example, in Qur’an 49:10: “The believers are but a single brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy.”

2. Qur’an 37:79, 84, 109, 120, 130, and 180.

Notably, all the verses that speak of establishing peace and reconciliation are *muhkamāt* verses because they are considered easy to understand and their literal meaning is accompanied by a moral principle, that is, peace. On this basis, we can conclude that, for Muslims, peace is a fundamental component of Islam (See Waugh 2004, 33–35). As such, Muslims are to apply this theological concept of peace in their lives.

A stirring example is that of Prophet Muhammad. The notion of peace played a role in his interactions with the community. Muslim historians mention that it was a difficult task for the Prophet to deal with the Arabs in Mecca at that time. Yet he maintained a peaceable attitude toward them. There are verses in the Qur'an where Prophet Muhammad was ordered to be patient with infidels.³ The Prophet's forgiveness can be seen, for instance, in Qur'an 2:109; 5:13; 15:85; 43:89; 45:14; 60:8–9; 64:14. He also tolerated them as much as he could (Qur'an 2:62, 256; 5:69; 3:19; and 5:82). His peaceful preaching and debates with them are mentioned in Qur'an 3:64; 4:63; 16:64, 125; 29:46; 41:34. There are also some Qur'anic verses (2:208; 4:90; 8:61; 3:28; 47:35) that refer to treaties with infidels that promoted peacemaking. In short, during the early period of his career in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad avoided conflict with unbelievers, preferring to deal peaceably with them. It was only in the later Meccan period when he no longer could find any peaceful means for dealing with non-believers, that he responded with violence and finally adopted the military aspect of *jihād* during the Medinan period (see Landau-Tasserion 2003, 40).

The Meaning of the Word Jihād in the Qur'an

The term *jihād* in the Qur'an is a polysemious word, that is, a word that contains multiple meanings. As such, there is a need to pay attention to the context of its use in order to know the intended meaning of a certain verse. Harun ibn Musa (d. at the end of the second year of *Hijrah*), for example, mentions in his *al-Wujuh wa al-Naza'ir* that the word *jihād* has three possible meanings (see ibn Musa 1998, 319). First, it means *al-jihād bi-l-qawl* or jihad-by-oral-statement (Qur'an 25:52; and 9:73). The statement *wa-jāhidhum bi-hi jihādan kabīran* in Qur'an 25:52 is interpreted by Ibn Musa as an order for the Prophet Muhammad to preach the Qur'an to the unbelievers. Other interpreters who agree with this understanding

3. Qur'an 2:139; 3:20, 111; 4:80–81; 5:99, 105; 6:66, 69, 70, 104; 7:180, 199; 10:99, 108–9; 11:121–22; 13:40; 15:3, 94–95; 16:82; 17:54; 19:84; 20:130; 22:68; 23:54; 24:54; 25:43; 27:92; 29:50; 30:60; 31:23; 32:30; 33:48; 34:25; 35:23; 37:174; 38:70; 39:15; 40:55, 77; 42:6, 48; 43:83; 44:59; 46:35; 50:45; 51:54; 52:31, 45, 48; 53:29; 54:6; 68:44, 48; 70:5, 42; 73:10–11; 4:11; 76:24; and 88:22.

are al-Tabari (see Ibn Jarir al-Tabari 2001, 17:470) and al-Zamakhshari (see Al-Zamakhshari 1998, 4:362–63). Second, it also means *al-qitāl bi-al-silāh* or war, such as in Qur'an 4:95. This theme will be explored further later. Third, it means *al-'amal*, hard work (Qur'an 29:6, 69; and 22:78). The statement *wa-man jāhada fa-innamā yujāhidu li-nafsihi* (and whoever strives hard, he strives only for his own soul) in Qur'an 29:6 is interpreted by Ibn Musa as *man 'amila al-khayra fa-innamā ya'malu li-nafsihi wa la-hu naf'u dhālika* (those who do good things actually do good things for themselves and they will receive the benefit of the things). Al-Zamakhshari's *Kashshaf* has a similar interpretation (see Al-Zamakhshari 1998 4:535–36).⁴ In the case of the polyvalent nature of the word *jihād*, Ella Landou-Tasserion makes four guidelines, by which one recognizes that the term denotes warfare: (1) when the word comes together with military idioms, such as "shirkers" (*mukhallafūn*, *qā'idūn*; Qur'an 4:95; 9:81, 86), or to "go on raids" (*infirū*; Qur'an 9:41); (2) when the verse deals with a military action, such as Qur'an 5:54, in which a linkage between harshness toward unbelievers, fearlessness and *jihād* appears; (3) when the textual context of a verse refers to a military significance, such as Qur'an 9:44; and (4) "when *j-h-d* in the third form is followed by a direct object," such as in Quran 9:73; 66:9. On the basis of these criteria, she points out that there are only ten verses in which the word *jihād* means warfare (Landau-Tasserion 2003, 36). In contemporary Muslim society however, the word *jihād* is often used with reference to warfare. This reduction in meaning has systemically been taking place throughout history by Muslim scholars of Islamic law. Almost all the classical books on Islamic law contain one chapter on war, and the term used here is *jihād*. However, it is important to note that, in terms of the application of *jihād* in the sense of war, Muslim scholars in the past have been very careful, applying "war" only in very limited situations, such as if they are defending their country from imperialists. However, this attitude was adopted by a vast majority of Muslims before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. As such, the usage of the concept of *jihād* by some Muslims presently as a basis for terror and for attacking unbelievers in several countries seems unfounded and can be seen as "false." It is important to reiterate at this point that the Qur'anic verses on war must be understood correctly by paying attention to their historical and textual contexts in order to grasp the main message of the text.

4. In this case, al-Tabari has a different interpretation. He mentions that the word *jihād* in the verse refers to war against the polytheists. See Ibn Jarir al-Tabari 2001, 18:361.

The Interpretation of Qur'an 22:39–40

Next we investigate more specifically the first direct Qur'anic verses on warfare via their historical context and linguistic analysis with a view to coming to their central message.

Historical Context of the Verses

If we look at the chronology of the revelation of Qur'anic verses on war, we will find that the first verses to be revealed are Qur'an 22:39–40 (See Ibn Jarir al-Tabari 2001, 16:576). It reads:

Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them. Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who helps His cause; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.

These verses were revealed in Medina after the Prophet and his Companions were expelled from Mecca and subsequently migrated to Medina. Al-Tabari interprets Qur'an 22:39 in *Jami' al-Bayan*, as follows: "God gave permission to the believers who fought against the polytheists, because the latter oppressed the former by fighting them" (ibid., 16:571). Similarly, al-Zamakhshari mentions in his *al-Kashshaf* that the Meccan polytheists had inflicted serious harm to the believers and had come to the Prophet with the intent purpose of hurting him. However the Prophet still chose the way of peace and said to his followers, "Be patient! I am not ordered yet to go to war" (Al-Zamakhshari 1998, 4:199). The same account is also found in al-Razi's *Mafatih al-Ghayb* (al-Razi 1981, 23:40). Both al-Zamakhshari and al-Razi also insist that fighting was finally permitted in this verse only after war had been forbidden in more than seventy verses (Al-Zamakhshari 1998 4:199; al-Razi 1981, 23:40). Al-Tabari quoted, among others, Ibn Zayd's statement: "This permission was granted after the Prophet and his companions had practiced forgiveness on the polytheists for a period ten years" (Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari 2001, 16:575). It is evident that this indicates that all possible avenues of peace with the Meccan polytheists who had inflicted violence on Prophet Muhammad and his followers have been exhausted. Attempts to avoid violence, including practicing patience, forgiveness, and leaving the

polytheists alone, were unsuccessful as the polytheists consistently treated the believers violently and cruelly to the extent that they did not permit the Muslims to enter Mecca in order to perform the pilgrimage.

Linguistic Analysis

The verses comprise some words and idioms that clearly refer to specific conditions when war is permitted and that indicate the main message of the verses. The words and idioms are as follow:

1. *Udhina li-lladhina yuqataluna bi-annahum zulimū* (Qur'an 22:39).

In order to gain an accurate understanding of this verse, we should note that the statement translates as, "Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed," which requires us to pay attention to two important words: *udhina* ("permission [to fight] is given") and *zulimū* (they are oppressed). The word *udhina* is the passive form of the word *adhina*, the active form. Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-'Arab* points out that the words *adhina lahu fi l-shay'i* have the same meaning as *abahahu lahu* (one permits something to someone else) (Ibn Manzur n.d., 1:52). The subject of *udhina* in Qur'an 22:39 is *al-damir al-mustatir* and refers to a particular historical war engaged by Prophet Muhammad and his companions. In that context, the companions asked the Prophet regarding the permissibility of conducting war against polytheists. The word *udhina* used indicates that war is only permitted on the condition that all other avenues for peace have been exhausted. The paraphrases *li-lladhina yuqataluna* ("to those upon whom war is made") and *bi-annahum zulimū* ("because they are oppressed") denote that war is permitted only under certain conditions. In this case it is because of oppression.

Again, in terms of legal implications, the "permission-structure" for war, that occurs for example in Qur'an 22:39, is often regarded as lower in the quality of conduct than the "instruction-structure" of other verses, such as *qatilū* ("fight!") in Qur'an 2:190, 244; 3:167; 4:76; and *infirū* ("go in raids!") in Qur'an 9:38–41. However, in my opinion, the "instruction-structure" should be understood as under the shadow of the "permission-structure," and not on the contrary, because the former (i.e., the "instruction-structure") comes after the wars had transpired. In other words, the main message of permission for going to war should always be kept in mind, when the "sword verses" are being applied. The main message of Qur'an 22:39–40 will be mentioned in the next section.

2. *Alladhīna ukhrijū min diyārihim bi-ghayri haqqin illā an yaqūlū rabbunā llāhu* (Qur'an 22:40a).

The inference from this statement, translated, “those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah,” infers that a legitimate reason to go to war is the unjust behavior of their enemies who have driven Muslim believers from their homes without an acceptable reason. This is likened to the oppression mentioned in Qur'an 22:39. The latter part of the verse “*illā an yaqūlū rabbunā llāhu*” (“except that they say: Our Lord is Allah”) informs us that there was no religious freedom at that time and the reason for their expulsion from Mecca was that they believed in the one and only Allah. The Meccan infidels forced every person to subscribe to their polytheistic beliefs and if anyone were to refuse and become a Muslim, they would be punished or even killed.

3. *wa-lawlā daf'u Llāhi n-nāsa ba'dahum bi-ba'din la-huddimat sawā mi'u wa-biya'un wa-ḥalawātun wa-masājidu yudhkaru fi-hā smu Llāhi kathīran* (Qur'an 22:40b).

This statement translates to: “Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled-down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid his (cause).” Another legitimate reason to go to war was the lack of religious freedom at that time. This verse suggests that if the Prophet and his companions had not gone to war, the Meccan infidels would have destroyed all places of worship, such as monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques. Interpreting the above statement, al-Zamakhshari states:

Allah gives power to the Muslims over the infidels through war. If not, the polytheists would have seized the followers of different religions in their times and taken over their places of worship and then destroyed them. They would not have left Christians churches, Christian monks, monasteries, Jews synagogues or Muslim mosques alone. (Al-Zamakhshari 1998, 4:199)

The Central Message of Q. 22:39–40: the Abolishment of Oppression, the Establishment of Religious Freedom and of Peace

An analysis of the textual and historical contexts of Qur'an 22:39–40 was required in order to provide an accurate understanding of why permission for war was granted to the Prophet and his companions. This analysis revealed

that the central message of these verses is threefold: the abolishment of oppression, the establishment of religious freedom, and of peace. Going to war is thus not the central issue but rather a means to achieve a moral and ethical end. This suggests that war is to be avoided as long as there are any remaining possible nonviolent ways to achieve this moral end. This conclusion is reiterated by Muhammad Shahrur's *Tajfif Manabi' al-Irhab*. He asserts:

Indeed, the peaceful *jihād* on the way of Allah might only be followed by warfare in situations of the highest necessity in order that all human beings have freedom of choice (*hurriyat al-ikhtiyar*) and this includes freedom of religious belief and expression, freedom to establish the religious symbols of all religions and sects, justice and equality. (Shahrur 2008, 138)

Following this, strict guidelines and restrictions as to who can be killed in battle are laid out. The Prophet and his companions were commanded in Qur'an 2:190 not to kill non-combatants and those who cannot offer resistance such as women, children, old people, the handicapped, and their likes. Ibn 'Abbas provides this useful interpretation, “Do not kill women, children, old people and those who submit themselves to you peacefully” (see Ibn Jarir al-Tabari 2001, 3:291). This clear prohibition of killing applies (1) only to those who engage in violence and oppression over Muslim believers, (2) to those who do not accept religious pluralism, and (3) to those who do not want to make peace. It thus suggests that the act of killing is not the main purpose of war. A discussion of the purposes of war follows:

1. The Abolishment of Oppression

Oppression or *zulm* in Arabic is considered morally wrong in Islam. Lexically, the word *zulm* means *wad' al-shay'i fi ghayri mah' allihi* (to put something in a place that is not correct) (Ibn Manzur n.d., 4:2756). When used in the Qur'an, it connotes that this is an attitude that is against God's law. The most negative type of oppression is *shirk* or polytheism (Qur'an 6:82; and 31:13). Another meaning of the word *zulm* is to act with the intention of hurting a person or violating a person's rights or property. I submit that this is the most relevant meaning for Qur'an 22:39: *udhina li-lladhina yuqātalūna bi-annahum zulimū* (“Permission [to fight] is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed”). On another level, *zulm* refers to the act of expelling people from their land, as mentioned in Q. 22:40. Drawing from these meanings, we can infer that this verse communicates that Allah hates oppression. As such, Muslim believers are allowed to take necessary action, even war, to prevent themselves from such a predicament. However, war is indeed the last recourse and is only to be

used when all possible means of a peaceful resolution have been sought and exhausted.

2. The Establishment of Religious Freedom

The second main message is regarding religious freedom. The Qur'an stresses the importance of human choice and freedom of belief. Qur'an 2:256 mentions that force should not be used where religious beliefs are concerned (see Syamsuddin 2010, 49–60). Permission for war during the time of Prophet Muhammad was granted in order to establish this religious freedom, a principle that the Meccan infidels did not uphold, as indicated in Qur'an 22:40. However, in order to establish religious freedom, peaceful ways should be explored first and Prophet Muhammad set this very example. It is reported that in the sixth year of Hijrah, when the Hudaibiya treaty was agreed upon, the Prophet and his Companions wanted to perform the *'umrah*, but the polytheists prevented them to do so. After some "diplomatic" communication, both sides came to an agreement that Muslims were allowed to perform the religious ritual every seventh year (see Ibn Jarir al-Tabari 2001, 3:304–5).

3. The Establishment of Peace

The third aspect is the goal of establishing peace and this suggests that peace is an important tenet in Islam. Islam promotes living peaceably with all human beings regardless of their religious affiliations or cultural roots. This attitude of peacemaking was practiced by Prophet Muhammad and his followers in Medina where they lived in harmony together with Jews and Christians. As mentioned earlier, there are also Qur'anic verses that command Muslims to preserve peace in their community. On this basis, it can be inferred that the focus of Qur'an 22:39–40 is not on going to war but that of establishing peace. As long as human beings who are in conflict can achieve peace without the act of physical war, war is not permitted.

Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion, I submit that radical and terrorist Muslims have misunderstood the Qur'anic verses on war. Their misunderstanding arises because, first, they have positioned the verses on war on the same level as the Qur'anic verses on peace. In my opinion, the Qur'anic verses on war must be placed under the shadow of the Qur'anic verses on peace, and that war and sword verses have to be considered in light of the Qur'anic verses

on peace. Second, these verses on war have been understood literally and their textual and historical contexts ignored.

In this article, I have interpreted Qur'an 22: 39–40 by paying attention to their textual and historical contexts. The exegetical result is that the central message of these verses where permission for war was revealed for the first time is not that of war in and of itself. Instead it contains a message that upholds strong moral and ethical values: the abolishment of oppression, the establishment of religious freedom, and the establishment of peace. This has to be applied at all times and in all places. Warfare can only be conducted if all possible avenues of peacemaking have been explored, applied, and exhausted. This strongly advocates for all avenues toward peacemaking and peacebuilding to be explored and applied in conflict situations.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Syamsuddin employs historical context to shed light on textual interpretation. Describe the historical context of Qur'an 22:39–40.
2. Distinguish the differences between perspectives of jihad as "permission-structure" and "instruction-structure."
3. In what situations does Syamsuddin suggest, from Qur'anic verses, that *jihād* as warfare is to be utilized by Muslims? Examine various contemporary contexts of violence done in the name of Islam. In your opinion, are they justified by these principles? Discuss your evaluations with the class or study group.
4. PROJECT: Find a copy of the Treaty of Hudaibiya, a diplomatic communiqué between the Muslim community from Medina and a group from Mecca. Read the text and analyze the agreement as well as the historical context. How might this situation illustrate the concept of *jihād* from Qur'an 22:39–40, as interpreted in this chapter?

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CHAPTER 5

Cantillation as a Convergence Point of the Musical Traditions of the Abrahamic Religions

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The solemn reading of sacred texts and prayers by melodic means holds a central place in the Abrahamic monotheistic religions. This practice of melodic reading, known as cantillation, is indeed at the heart of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ceremonies; appointed celebrants assume responsibility for it. Other ritual elements having more apparent musical content are organized around it, these being undertaken by cantors or by the gathered faithful. On the periphery and bordering on the secular are these parareligious chants, often of a laudatory, jubilant, or offertory character. Transcending both doctrinal differences and differences in musical style, cantillation constitutes an important convergence point of traditional musical practices related to worship in the Mediterranean region, in line with the perspective of divine transcendence and prophetic revelation. Cantillation gives priority to theologal¹ communication channels between the divine and the human, just as it subjugates μέλος (*melos*)² to Λόγος (*Logos*).³ This chapter puts forward

1. "Theologal" refers to the quality of having God as object or being directed toward God.

2. *Melos* originates with ancient Greek ideas about music: "Music in [the] sense of a performing art was called *melos*." "[P]erfect *melos* . . . consisted not only of the melody and the text (including its inherent elements of rhythm and diction) but also highly stylized dance movement" (Mathiesen 2001, 327–48).

3. *Logos*: "the divine wisdom manifest in the creation, government, and redemption of the world and often identified with the second person of the Trinity" (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/logos [accessed July 29, 2011]).