



## Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

### The Question of Identity: Ethnicity, Language, Religion, and Gender, Before Islam - Part I: Diversity and Pluralism

Orit Bashkin, Assistant Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History,  
University of Chicago

#### Lesson Plan 2: The Pact of Umar

**General Description of Lesson Plan:** Students will read two translations of the Pact of Umar as well as a short section of the Quran, and analyze the importance of these writings in the context of inter-ethnic or inter-religious relations in the early Islamic world.

**Created By:** Laura Wangerin, Latin School of Chicago, Chicago, IL

**Subject Area(s):** History, Religious Studies, Social Studies

**For Grade Level(s):** 6-10

**Time Needed:** One class period

#### Outcomes/Objectives:

Research: Students will develop primary source analysis skills.

Historic Understanding: Students will understand the prescriptions and proscriptions of living as a minority under Muslim rule, and develop theories about the significance of those guidelines.

**Materials:** 2 Versions of the Pact of Umar on the Internet History Sourcebook:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pact-umar.html>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jews-umar.html>

Qur'an, Sura 5 verses 43-47. Available at Qur'an Explorer: <http://www.quranexplorer.com>

#### Suggested Procedure(s):

Distribute copies of the two versions of the Pact of Umar and the following passages from the Qur'an to the class:

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(43) Lo! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the prophets who surrendered (unto Allah) judged the Jews, and the rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah's Scripture as they were bidden to observe, and thereunto were they witnesses. So fear not mankind, but fear Me. And barter not My revelations for a little gain. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers.

(44) And We prescribed for them therein: The life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whoso forgoeth it (in the way of charity) it shall be expiation for him. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are wrong-doers.

(45) And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him in the Torah, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah - a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil).

(46) Let the People of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are evil-livers.

(47) And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee. For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ.

(Sura 5:43-47, <http://www.quranexplorer.com>)

Either read these documents together in class, or assign as homework for the students to read.

Assign students to work on the following questions in a think-pair-share exercise (students spend time working alone on the questions, then pair with a classmate to work together on the questions, and then discussion ensues about the questions as a class). The time working alone on the questions can be done as homework if in-class time is an issue. This is also an exercise that lends itself well to a wiki or blog format for the collaborative efforts on the questions.

### STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. The Pact of Umar, whether or not it actually is attributable to Umar I, did form a foundation for the dhimmi relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in Muslim territories. Who, in the treaty, is addressing whom?
2. What kinds of things are being promised in the pact? Can you think of a few broad categories under which to group them?
3. Think about what basic things people need to do in order to survive, or even to prosper, from an economic standpoint. From these documents alone, does that kind of activity seem to be inhibited in any way? Why or why not?
4. It is important to remember that it was a privilege to be allowed to continue to practice one's own religion. What concessions do the Christians and Jews agree to in order to continue living in lands ruled by Muslims?
5. Christians and Jews were accorded a great deal of respect by Muslims. Why, according to the Qur'an reading, do these two religious groups get special treatment?

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Why, even though they are granted special consideration, are Christianity and Judaism seen as flawed?

6. What elements of these two versions of the Pact of Umar are concerned with issues of identity? Why are these specified, do you think?

What would be the advantages that a conqueror might have in allowing a treaty like this? What are the disadvantages?

### **Evaluation/Assessment Strategies:**

Students should not be evaluated so much on whether their ideas are right or wrong, but focus should be on drawing reasonable conclusions about the meaning of the documents. Teachers should indicate to students where their logic may be flawed, but it should be reinforced that they can make good inferences about these kinds of documents even with limited background in these areas.

### **Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:**

1. Why are the issues of identity so prominent in these primary sources? What does that tell us about the society that created them?
2. How would the kinds of concessions made for Jews and Christians in the early centuries of Islam create a tendency toward pluralistic societies? How might these be seen in modern society as more restrictive than lenient?

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### Evaluation Rubric:

### Analyzing Information: The Pact of Umar

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Identifies Important Information</b>	Student identifies all the main points of the sources.	The student identifies most of the main points of the sources.	The student identifies some of the main points of the sources.	The student cannot identify important information.
<b>Critical Analysis</b>	Student is able to infer meaning and draw meaningful conclusions from the sources.	Student is able to infer meaning but has difficulty drawing conclusions.	Student has difficulty inferring meaning, but understands the literal meaning of texts.	Student has difficulty understanding the literal meaning of the texts.
<b>Identifies details</b>	Student recalls several details in discussion to support their ideas without referring to the article.	Student recalls several details in discussion to support their ideas, but needs to refer to the article occasionally.	Student is able to locate most of the details they need to support their ideas in discussion, when looking at the article.	Student cannot locate or discuss details with accuracy.