

Khadija

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Khadija, known in the Muslim tradition as “Tahira” (the Pure) and “Kubra” (the Great), was the first and most important wife of Muhammad, who remained monogamous during her lifetime.

Khadija, who was the daughter of Khuwaylid and Fatima, belonged to the clan of Asad of the ruling tribe of Quraysh in Mecca. Prior to her marriage to Muhammad, she had been married twice to men from Arab nobility and had borne children in both marriages. While it is believed that one of her husbands died, leaving her a widow, she was probably divorced from the other husband. The order of her marriages is disputed.

When Muhammad entered Khadija’s life, she was a single woman who owned property and engaged in trade. She employed Muhammad to take her merchandise to Syria and was so impressed by how well he executed his commission and by his personality that she offered him marriage. Muhammad accepted the offer. At the time of the marriage he is said to have been twenty-five and Khadija forty, but in the opinion of some scholars both Muhammad and Khadija were younger than what is generally stated.

Khadija bore Muhammad four girls and one or possibly two boys, supported him in every way, and stood by him through the most difficult times of his life. She was the first person to accept the authenticity of his prophetic mission, obtaining confirmation of this also from her relative Waraqa bin Nawfal, a well-known Christian scholar. Her death in 619 C.E. was a great loss to Muhammad, who continued to the end of his life to remember her with the deepest love, respect, and gratitude.

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