

# What was the Role of the Prophet?

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This document will deal with what was the social role of Muhammad as distinct from his role as a messenger of the Message of the Qur'an. This is to answer the question often raised "Was Muhammad just a mouthpiece for the Qur'an and nothing else?".

As part of this social role, Muhammad was indeed to be obeyed as the leader of the community, but this is in a manner distinct from the obedience to word of Allah.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعُنَكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ  
وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِيَنَّكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ  
فَبَايِعُهُنَّ وَاسْتَعْفَرَ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*"O Prophet! when believing women come to you giving you a pledge that they will not associate aught with Allah, and will not steal, and will not commit fornication, and will not kill their children, and will not bring a calumny which they have forged of themselves, and will not disobey you in what is good, accept their pledge, and ask forgiveness for them from Allah; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."*

(60:12)

Muhammad judges by what is revealed to him, if he errs in this he is not to be obeyed as he has not the right of Allah to be absolutely obeyed. The reality is that when the Qur'an was not being revealed to him, Muhammad had to judge by it and lead his people in that regard, in this sense he was to be obeyed as the leader of the Muslims who in his capacity ruled by the Qur'an. The obedience to him was however not absolute, it was only in what was good.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا  
اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

*"We sent no Messenger except to be obeyed by Allah's permission. If only when they wronged themselves they had come to you and asked Allah's forgiveness and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them they would have found Allah Ever-Returning, Most Merciful."*

(4:64)

Every prophet that Allah has sent was to be obeyed by Allah's permission as part of the prophet's mission, as mentioned also in 60:12, so this not something new. And as Muhammad is dead, we have no obligation to obey him (he is no longer the leader of the Muslims); hence we obey what he proclaimed, the Qur'an.

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ  
قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

*"Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful  
Say: Obey Allah and the Messenger; but if they turn back, then surely Allah does not love the unbelievers."  
(3:31-32)*

From this we see that there is a distinction made between following the messenger (making him the leader who judges by the Qur'an and uses consultation) because they love Allah, and obeying Allah and the messenger (The verbatim word of Allah).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

*"O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable in the end."  
(4:59)*

This verse tells us that those who we elect by consultation to be figures of authority should be obeyed in their capacity, which is to fulfil their roles by consultation, unless they are going against the revelation of Allah through his prophet Muhammad. Muhammad as societal leader was also bound by such constraints.

So the general message is to obey 'Allah and his messenger' (The Qur'an) as the primary authority in all affairs, and to obey leaders that are selected as long as they do not deviate from the Qur'an. As a general rule, Muslims should conduct their affairs by consultation:-

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

*"Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;"  
(42:38)*

Consultation must also take place on the affairs of state and how they are established in accordance with the words of Allah, this verse applied even to Muhammad in his role as state leader. But he could be wrong; Muhammad used his judgement in (9:43) and was wrong, because it was not the judgement of Allah. So we must always be vigilant.

Decisions or judgements must be made in accordance with the Qur'an, and if some believe that this is not happening, then the Qur'an will be referred to. In the Day of the prophet he was the go-to man as it was through him that revelation came. And we must recall that Allah tells Muhammad that he reveals the Qur'an to him to answer questions and steady his heart (Note all the 'say' verses in which Allah answers Muslims and kafirs).

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلاً  
وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا

"The rejecters say: 'Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once? Thus (it is revealed gradually) that We may strengthen your heart thereby and We have arranged it in right order. And no example do they bring to you but We bring to you the truth and the best explanation"  
(25:32-33)

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ إِنْ تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ تَسْؤُكُمْ وَإِنْ سَأَلْتُمْ عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنزَّلُ  
الْقُرْآنُ تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ عَمَّا أَلَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

"O you who believe! Do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you, and if you question about them when the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you; Allah pardons this, and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing." (5:101)

It must be noted that Muhammad was the community leader, because as Islam regulates our actions in life, the person responsible to tell us these responsibilities and actions will also be the leader in the community.

فَلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَاءٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرَى مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا  
أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

"Say: 'I am nothing new among the Messengers. I have no idea what will be done with me or you. I only follow what has been revealed to me. I am only a clear warner.'" (46:9)

Let us not forget that nothing new comes through the prophet except the Qur'an and that it is only the Qur'an that he follows. Muhammad was a messenger of Allah among them.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم  
بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا  
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ  
مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

وَأَنْ أَحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَأَخَذَرَهُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا  
أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُصَيِّبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ دُورِهِمْ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ  
لَفَاسِقُونَ

"And We have sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming and conserving the previous Books. So judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their whims and desires deviating from the Truth that has come to you. We have appointed a law and a practice for every one of you. Had Allah willed, He would have made you a single community,

but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to Allah and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed. Judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their whims and desires. And beware of them lest they lure you away from some of what Allah has sent down to you (The Qur'an). If they turn their backs, then know that Allah wants to afflict them with some of their wrong actions. Many of mankind are deviators."

(5:48-49)

These ayahs clarify that the prophet was to judge among his followers according to what Allah had revealed to him. Muhammad was as such a judge among them, but Allah is The judge, so nothing new comes from Muhammad, he merely judges by what is with him of the Qur'an.

So it is clear that when the leader judges by what has been revealed, it makes sense that Allah requires the Muslims to follow him and help him in what he says and does.

أَفَعَبَّرَ اللَّهُ أَتْبَعِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ  
يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

"Am I to desire someone other than Allah as a judge when it is He Who has sent down the Book to you clarifying everything?" Those We have given the Book know that it has been sent down from your Lord with truth, so on no account be among the doubters."

(6:114)

Muhammad is made to proclaim that it is only Allah he seeks as a judge.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ  
عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

"Say: 'I am only a human being like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your god is One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act rightly and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.'"

(18:110)

Muhammad was a man like any other, that is, he was merely a human. What increases his status among mankind is his carrying out of the task for which he was selected, namely, to clearly preach the words of Allah to those around him.

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا  
قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا  
قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا  
قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا  
إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَيَسْئَلُونَ مَنْ أضعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ عَدَدًا  
 قُلْ إِنْ أَدْرِي أَقْرَبُ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا

"When the servant of Allah stands calling on Him, they almost swarm all over him. Say: 'I call only upon my Lord and do not associate anyone else with Him.' Say: 'I possess for you no harm or guidance.' Say: 'No one can protect me from Allah and I will never find any refuge apart from Him –only in transmitting from Allah and His Messages. As for him who disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he will have the Fire of Hell, remaining in it timelessly, for ever and ever.' So that when they see what they were promised, they will know who has less support and smaller numbers. Say: 'I do not know whether what you are promised is close or whether my Lord will appoint a longer time before it.'"

(72:19-25)

Very important here is the statement that Muhammad has no power to guide to right. This is a clear statement of the fact that his authority and judgement is based solely upon what Allah has revealed to him.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ  
 بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ  
 إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَاَلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي  
أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا  
 هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَاْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
 تَهْتَدُونَ

"Those who follow the Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, commanding them to do right and forbidding them to do wrong, making good things lawful for them and bad things unlawful for them, relieving them of their heavy loads and the chains which were around them. Those who believe in him and honour him and help him, and follow the Light that has been sent down with him, they are the ones who are successful.' Say: 'Mankind! I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him to Whom the kingdom of the heavens and earth belongs. There is no god but Him. He gives life and causes to die.' So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that hopefully you will be guided.'"

(7:157-158)

These verses show that Muhammad was to be followed by his people, by the fact that he commands them to do good and forbids them to do wrong (Through the Qur'an). They help the prophet and they follow the revelation/commands given to him. These commands will affect any and all aspects of life... Which once again explains to us how the messenger was the community leader and what he did.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِئَتِينَ وَإِنْ  
يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِئَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مَنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

*"O Prophet! Allah is enough for you, and for the believers who follow you. O Prophet! Spur on the believers to fight. If there are twenty of you who are steadfast, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are a hundred of you, they will overcome a thousand of those who are disbelievers, because they are people who do not understand."*

(8:64-65)

This verse shows Muhammad as the war leader of his people, and that the Muslims of the time were to be his followers in establishing the rule of the Qur'an. Muhammad and the Muslims obeyed Allah in the command to fight and Muhammad consulted with his people on the manner of the fight.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ  
الْكِتَابَ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

*"On that Day We will raise up among every community a witness against them from amongst themselves, and bring you as a witness against them. We have sent down the Book to you making all things clear and as guidance and mercy and good news for the Muslims"*

(16:89)

Muhammad was a witness among his people.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ  
رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ  
قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ  
مَا كَانَ لِي مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَىٰ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ  
إِنْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

*"Say: 'I am only a warner. There is no god except Allah, the One, the All-Conquering, Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything between them, the Almighty, the Endlessly Forgiving.' Say: 'This is momentous news yet you ignore it! I knew nothing of the Highest Assembly when they debated. It is only revealed to me that I am a clear warner.'"*

(38:65-70)

Muhammad was a warner among his people.

So Muhammad was (in addition to his role as the messenger):-

- A Judge for his people
- A War leader of his people
- A community Leader

- A witness among his people
- A warner of his people

All as a result of his mission to guide to Allah's command by the Qur'an. Of course Muhammad did more than parrot the Qur'an. He judged by it, he led into war according to it, he led the community in its actions by it with consultation (Shura), and he called to the truth among the deniers of truth and the people of the book by the Qur'an. Of course Allah commanded the Muslims to follow Muhammad, he was their divinely ordained leader who ran the affairs of the Muslims with the Qur'an and by consultation.

He was Muhammad, a Muslim, a messenger from Allah, no more and no less. Let us truly love Muhammad by following the Message he fought to proclaim, by following the Qur'an alone. Not by making words that he possibly said as part of his societal role a source of guidance.

There is more that could be written, but it's not necessary in this particular topic.

I want to take the opportunity here to deal with a verse that I think may have been previously missed, this is regarding the verse which says you must take what the prophet gives you and leave what he forbids/withholds from you. The verse follow:-

مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ فَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ  
السَّبِيلِ كُنِيَ لَا يَكُونُ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ  
فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ  
لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا  
وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

*"What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger from the people of the townships,- belongs to Allah,- to His Messenger and to kindred and orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; In order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you. So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you. And fear Allah; for Allah is strict in Punishment. (the booty is) for the poor fugitives who have been driven out from their homes and their belongings, who seek bounty from Allah and help Allah and His messenger. They are the truthful."*

(59:7-8)

If you read the context it becomes very clear that this verse is talking about the distribution of wars spoils and not in any way to do with Guidance, Muhammad was only fulfilling his role as war leader and community leader. He only followed and administered with the Qur'an.

To finish consider these clear verses:-

أَفَعَيِّرَ اللَّهُ أَتَّبَعِيَ حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا

*"Shall I then seek a Ruler other than Allah? When He it is Who has revealed to you the Book (Qur'an, which is) distinctly detailed"*

(Qur'an, 6:114)

What is the answer of Muslims? Will they answer "Muhammad, his companions, the later generations and the scholars!!!" or will they answer "No one other than my Lord!!!".

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ

*These are the verses of Allah which We recite to you in truth. Then in what statement (Lit: Hadith) after Allah and His verses will they believe?*

(Qur'an, 45:6)

What is the answer of Muslims? Will they answer "The Hadith, Sunnah, fiqh and ijma'!!!!" or will they answer "Nothing other than your Qur'an my Lord!!!".