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Meccan Trade Prior to the Rise of Islam

by

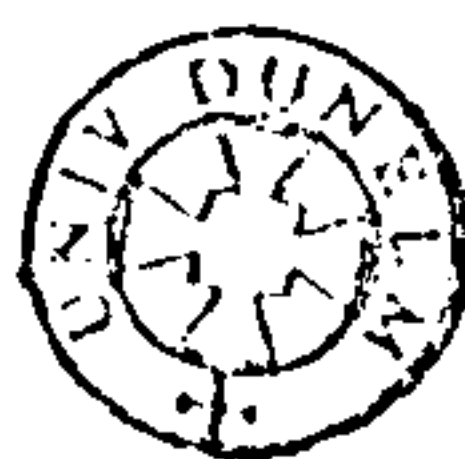
Salamah Salih Sulayman Aladieh

**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

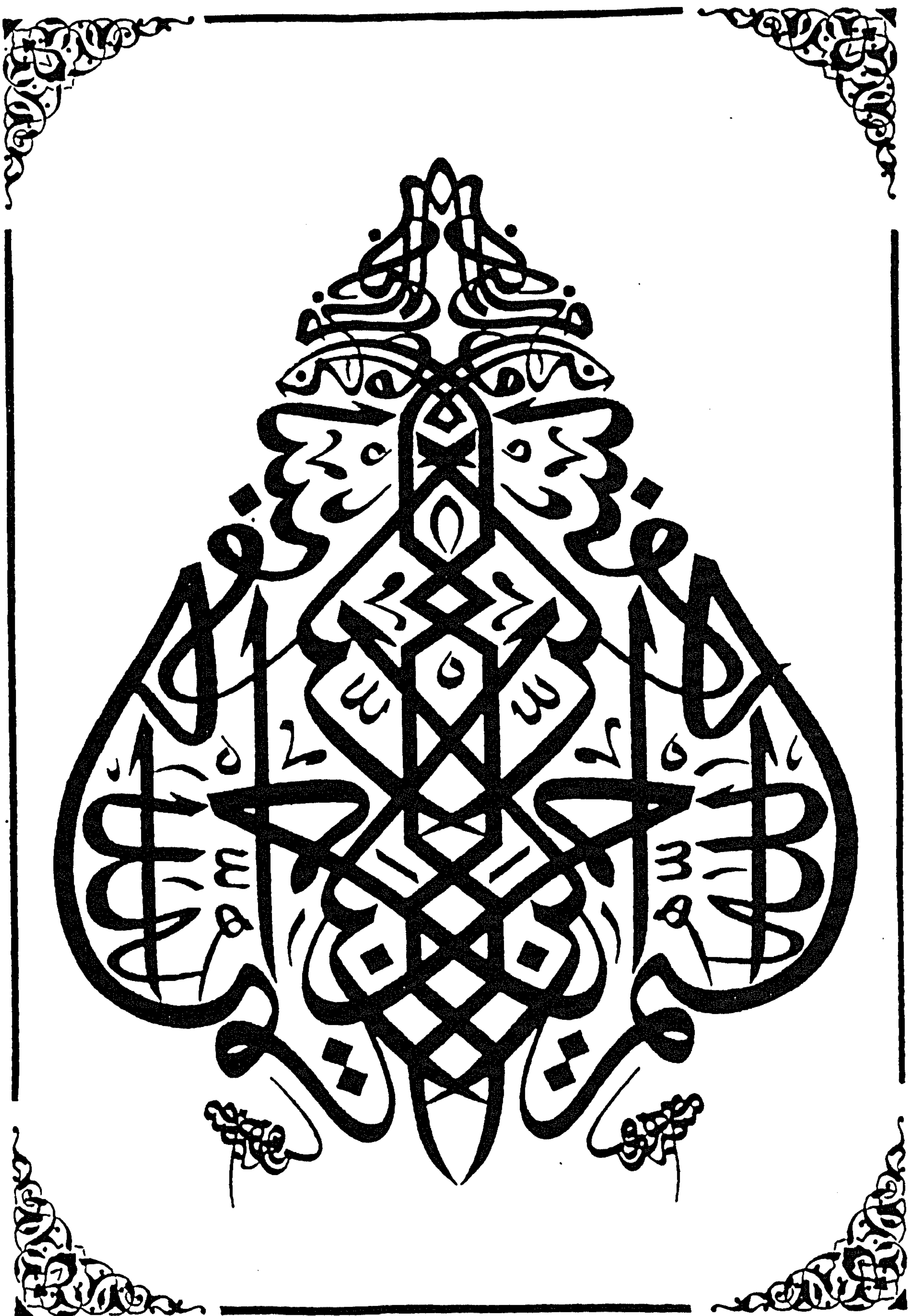
School of Oriental Studies

The University of Durham

1991



10 FEB 1992



Abstract

The thesis consists of nine chapters and an introduction. The introduction contains, among other matters, a review of the primary and secondary sources used. Chapter one offers a geographical perspective of the Arabian Peninsula and chapter two deals with the political situation in Arabia in the sixth century A.D. Chapter three offers an historical background of Mecca since the time of Qusayy to whom, perhaps, is to be attributed the distinction between Quraysh al-Biṭāh and Quraysh al-Zawāhir. Chapter four discusses the *Īlāf* and its impact on Meccan trade and stresses the role of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf in transforming Meccan trade from being purely local in character to an activity which encompassed, directly or indirectly, most of the nations of the civilized world of the time. Chapter five confines itself to a discussion of the strength of Quraysh and the latter’s relations with the Arabian tribes and external relations. Chapter six deals with pre-Islamic markets with emphasis on those held in the Ḥijāz, in particular that of ‘Ukāẓ. Chapter seven is concerned with the Ka‘bah and the sacred months and the effect of both on Meccan trade. Chapter eight deals with the inland trade routes of Arabia with special reference to the caravans. In the final chapter commercial practices peculiar to Mecca are discussed in some detail, including monopolization, debt, partnership, usury, and coinage. The thesis ends with a conclusion, maps, a genealogical tree, tables showing details of the pre-Islamic markets as portrayed in the sources and a comprehensive bibliography.

Dedication

In memory of my beloved father who died when I was one year old.

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Contents

Acknowledgements xi

List of illustrations xiv

List of abbreviations xv

Transliteration xvii

Introduction xviii

The Sources xxv

 0.1 Classical sources xxvi

 0.2 Islamic sources xxix

 0.3 Secondary sources xliv

1 The Geography of the Arabian Peninsula xlix

 1.1 The division of the Arab land (Arabia) 4

 1.1.1 Arabia Deserta 4

 1.1.2 Arabia Petraeae 5

 1.2 The Division of the Arabian Peninsula by the Arabs 6

 1.2.1 Ḥijāz 6

 1.2.2 Tihāmah 7

 1.2.3 The Yemen 8

 1.2.4 Al-‘Arūd 8

 1.2.5 Najd 9

2 The political situation in Arabia in the sixth century A.D. . 10

3 Mecca, the Historical Background 24

3.1	Quṣayy b. Kilāb	31
3.2	Quraysh	34
3.3	Divisions of Quraysh	35
3.3.1	<i>Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ</i>	35
3.3.2	Quraysh al-Ẓawāhir	36
3.4	al-Aḥābīsh	37
3.5	The internal politics of Mecca	39
3.6	Religious offices in Mecca	41
3.7	Tribal disputes of Quraysh and its allies	44
4	The ‘Abd Manāf Family and the <i>ilāf</i> Agreement	49
4.0.1	Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf	49
4.0.2	al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Manāf	55
4.0.3	‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim	57
4.1	The <i>ilāf</i> and its effect on Meccan trade	65
5	Mecca’s Relation with the Arabian Tribes and External Relations	88
5.1	The strength of Quraysh and relations with Arabian tribes	88
5.2	Mecca’s Foreign Relations	93
5.2.1	Mecca’s Relationship with the Yemen	96
5.2.2	Mecca’s Relationship with Abyssinia	98
5.2.3	Mecca’s Relationship with the North	100
5.2.4	Mecca’s Relationship with Persia and al-Ḥīrah	103
5.2.5	Raid of al-Qaradah	110
6	Pre-Islamic Arab Markets	112
6.1	Introduction	112
6.1.1	Dūmat al-Jandal	113

6.1.2	Al-Mushaqqar Market	115
6.1.3	Hajar Market	115
6.1.4	Markets of Oman	116
6.1.5	Ḥubāshah Market	117
6.1.6	al-Shiḥr Market	117
6.1.7	Aden Market	118
6.1.8	Ṣan'ā' Market	119
6.1.9	Ḥaḍramawt Market	120
6.1.10	'Ukāz Market	120
6.1.11	Majannah market	125
6.1.12	Dhū 'l-Majāz Market	126
6.1.13	Naṭāt Khaybar Market	127
6.1.14	Adhru'āt Market	128
6.1.15	Al-Ḥīrah Market	129
6.1.16	Conclusion	132
6.2	Methods of trade in pre-Islamic Arabia	135
7	The Ka'bah and the sacred months - their effects in Meccan trade	140
7.1	The Ka'bah	140
7.1.1	The Social and economic effects of the pilgrimage	144
7.2	The Sacred months and their importance	147
7.3	Muḥillūn, Muḥrimūn and Ḥums	150
8	The Trade Routes and Caravans	159
8.1	Trade Routes	159
8.1.1	Introduction	159
8.1.2	Al-Ḥīrah – Mecca route	160

8.1.3	The route to the Yemen	166
8.1.4	The coastal route between the Yemen and Mecca	167
8.2	The Caravans	170
8.2.1	Guarding the Caravans	173
9	Meccan trade and commercial practices	176
9.1	Commercial Practices	176
9.1.1	Monopolisation	176
9.1.2	Debt	177
9.1.3	Partnership	177
9.1.4	Types of Partnerships	179
9.1.5	Proxy	180
9.1.6	Brokerage (<i>samsarah</i>)	181
9.1.7	Usury (<i>ribā</i>)	182
9.1.8	Commercial commodities	185
9.2	Manifestation of Meccan Trade	188
9.2.1	Investment of wealth	188
9.2.2	Capitalists	189
9.2.3	The wealthy of Mecca	192
9.3	Currency of pre-Islamic Arabia	196
9.4	Taxes	205
	Conclusion	208
	Bibliography	228

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor Professor G.R. Smith whose consistent patience and encouragement, valuable advice, constructive comments and suggestions for improvement have all been of inestimable value in preparation of this work in its present form.

I am grateful to Professor R. Serjeant for sending me his review of P. Crone's book, and for his valuable comments during several meetings of the Arabian Seminar.

My special thanks go to my friend 'Abd al-Malik Rossley Eagle for his proof-reading and helpful comments. I should also like to thank my friends 'Alī 'Umrān and Dr 'Isam al-Rawas for their considerable encouragement and for the numerous profitable discussions we have had together about this study during the past four years.

I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to a number of fine friends and colleagues whose support has helped me immeasurably throughout my years at Durham University. First to Dr P. Sluglett at the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at Durham who has taken an interest in my work and who has helped me in many ways during my stay in Durham; to Professors Maḥmūd Sammra, 'Auḍ Khulayfāt, 'Adnān Bakhīt and 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Durī for their moral

support and encouragement; Drs H. Kennedy, G. Blake, Martin Daly, Paul Starkey, James Dickins and to Simon and Judith Tate, Miss Melissa Smith, David Baldwin, Jim Whitaker, Nawaf 'Ubaydāt, Sayf b. Aboud and 'Alī al-Mahaimed, I am very grateful for their assistance. Thanks are also due to all the staff of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and to Mrs Norma Gough for their support.

I would like to thank the staff of Maktabat al-Ḥaram al-Makki for their kind assistance during my visit to Mecca.

Many thanks go to Nawfan al-Ḥamūd and Qāsim al-Rawāshdeh for all the help they gave me during my visit to Jordan.

My gratitude also goes to my friend who has insisted that I do not name him but simply call him Abū 'Ukāshah, for his great help. I would like to place on record my deep gratitude to the staff of the History Department of the University of Jordan for their encouragement and support, especially during the period of my illness.

A special word of gratitude to the University of Jordan for their financial and moral support to me since I was an undergraduate.

A special word of appreciation must go to Mrs Janet Starkey for her care and kindness, and also for her admirable skills in typing the final draft of this work.

Thanks are also extended to the staff of Durham University Library, S.O.A.S. Library and the British Library for their expert help at all times.

Last but not least I would like to thank all my relatives and friends for their encouragement and for all their help and support over the years who are too numerous to mention. Especial gratitude is owed to my beloved mother who has

been so patient during my several long absences from Jordan, and then to my wife Dalal who has at all times remained faithfully by my side and looked after me with such love and devotion during my several periods of illness.

List of illustrations

A. maps	217
B. Geneaological tree - Quraysh	219
C. Tables - Pre-Islamic markets	220

List of abbreviations

BSOAS : Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies

EI¹ : Encyclopaedia of Islam (first edition)

EI² : Encyclopaedia of Islam (new edition)

GJ : Geographical Journal

IJMES : International Journal of Middle East Studies

IOS : Israel Oriental studies

IQ : Islamic Quarterly

JA : Journal Asiatique

JAOS : Journal of the American Oriental Society

JEA : The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology

JESHO : Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient

JPHS : Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society

JRAS : Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society

JSAI : Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam

MW : Muslim World

SI : Studia Islamica

A note on References

In the notes at the bottom of each page works are referred to by the author's name and short title. The full references can be found under the author's name in the bibliography.

TRANSLITERATION

Arabic Letter

Transliteration

Short Vowels

ا	'	اَ a
ب	b	اُ u
ت	t	اِ i
ث	th	
ج	j	Long Vowels
ح	h	
خ	kh	آ ā
د	d	أ u
ذ	dh	إ i
ر	r	
ز	z	Diphthongs
س	s	
ش	sh	أوَ aw
ص	ṣ	أَي ay
ض	ḍ	إِيَّ iyy
ط	ṭ	أُوَّ uww
ظ	ẓ	
ع	'	أَ -ah in pause/-at
غ	gh	
ف	f	
ق	q	
ك	k	
ل	l	
م	m	
ن	n	
ه	h	
و	w	
ي	y	

Introduction

For many hundreds of years Mecca, in common with several other towns of Arabia, had been both a centre for pilgrimage and also a place of much commercial activity. This latter activity enabled the Meccans to survive since there could be little or no agriculture in the barren region in which Mecca was situated. By the end of the sixth century A.D. a development occurred which to some extent singled out Mecca from other pilgrimage markets and towns. The trade activity, which had been previously largely local in character, expanded beyond the Meccan region, to the extent that certain branches of Quraysh, in particular, had succeeded, in effect, to control the slave and spice trade which passed through west Arabia.

The reason for this extraordinary growth of Mecca as a transit 'market-place', has been, up to now, not at all clear, as has been already pointed out,¹ even though the matter has received the attention of several scholars. I have tried, in the present study, to clarify the matter on the basis of the limited information which we have at our disposal. I have thus avoided fanciful speculation and likewise any theory which cannot be supported by strong textual authority.

It would be impossible to study Mecca in isolation without any reference to contemporary events which were taking place not only in other parts of Arabia but

¹ See Donner, *Islamic conquests*, 51-52.

beyond its borders. The sixth century A.D. witnessed a conflict, bloody at times, between the two great powers of the region, which is known today as the Middle and Near East, namely Byzantium and Persia. Throughout this conflict, from which Arabia itself was not excluded, Mecca maintained a position of neutrality in the political arena. The thesis thus contains a chapter in which this conflict and repercussions on the area as a whole are discussed in some detail. This chapter however, is preceded by a shorter one dealing with the geography of the Arabian Peninsula in general.

Naturally, in such a study as this, concerned with the Mecca of the sixth century A.D., the previous history of the city cannot be ignored and this applies especially to the period after Qusayy, so it is usually claimed, had gathered together the various Qurashī clans and settled them in Mecca. Another chapter, therefore, has been allotted to cover, in the opinion of this writer, that highly significant period of Mecca's long history.

As has already been pointed out, Mecca is located in an arid valley with no cultivation and water. It must in these circumstances search for other sources of provision. Subsequently this led the Meccan to be involved in the transportation of commodities, both in Arabia and outwith its borders. But the question that should be raised here is how could Mecca engage in trade or business transactions while it did not possess any commodities or any other source of provisions? This is where the importance of the geographical location of Mecca and the existence of its *Haram* comes in. Mecca was located at the crossroads of all the principle trade routes in Arabia, or at least would have been a natural stopping point on the incense route from South Arabia to Syria.

Mecca, before and in the early part of the sixth century A.D. was restricted to local trade since foreign trading was in the hands of the Yemenis. The people of Mecca traded in the products of the Arabian Peninsula or in foreign merchandise that reached them via the Yemen. Mecca did not gain enough profit to change its circumstances until the beginning of the sixth century A.D., when the situation in the Yemen deteriorated, due to internal conflicts. These conflicts arose largely due to hostilities between the adherents of Judaism and Christianity. Such deterioration was also due to the Yemen being located in the region of international conflict, between the Persian and Byzantine empires and the latter used its ally, Abyssinia, to extend its influence in South Arabia, by raiding across the Red Sea into the Yemen. The Yemen fell to the hands of the Abyssinians in A.D. 525 and so remained until they were driven out by the Persians in A.D. 575. All these events caused the Yemen to lose its importance as a trade centre. Mecca, at that time, enjoyed a degree of stability and organisation in the hands of the Quraysh. They organised the pilgrimage, upheld its sanctity and that of the sacred months, for those making the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah. They also supervised its markets. Quraysh began to occupy the predominant trade position which had been occupied previously by the Yemen.

Another factor which contributed to the growth of Mecca and to the domination of the lucrative west Arabian transit trade in luxuries such as slaves and spices was the preoccupation of the Persians and the Byzantines in bloody conflict, which prevented Persia from being involved in the internal affairs of Arabia for some time. Furthermore, the power and influence of the Arab buffer states, on the outskirts of Iraq and Syria, waned, due to the participation of Lakhmids, kings of al-Hīrah, on the side of the Persians in their conflict, and the participation of

Ghassanids on the side of the Byzantines. Then the policy of the two great powers changed towards the two Arabian kingdoms. This situation led to:

1. The closure of the trade route which passed through Iraq and the Syrian cities.

2. The vanishing of the influence of these two empires on the bedouin tribes, since al-Ḥīrah could no longer be considered as being able to protect the caravans which were heading for the markets of the Arabian Peninsula, unless they paid taxes to these tribes. Even when the taxes were paid, the tribes often attacked the caravans. The tribes also dared to enter into war with the Persians and succeeded in defeating their army and that of al-Ḥīrah at the battle of Dhū Qār.

Mecca benefited from all this disruption, and was able to take on the role of mediator, and thus able to transport trade goods between the north and south. Because of its location far from the influence of the two empires and also because of the need of the latter to retain international trade (particularly the Byzantine empire), the idea that the Meccans (i.e. Quraysh) should take up this role was accepted by the Byzantines and Persians.

Mecca came out of its isolation to enter a period of great prosperity at the end of the sixth century A.D. Its men made contracts with neighbouring countries, so that they could trade there and so that they could permit Qurashī traders to enter those countries in peace. This role was taken up by the sons of ‘Abd Manāf, Hāshim and his brothers, who were the men of greatest importance in Quraysh.

It is clear from the sources, that Mecca from the time of the rule of Quṣayy, the ancestor of the Quraysh tribe, was a highly ordered, organised society, both politically and socially. Supreme examples of this are the establishment of the

office of holding the keys of the temple (*ḥijābah*), providing water (*siqāyah*) and food (*rifādah*) to the pilgrims and, above all, the formation of Dār al-Nadwah. Each of these institutions will be discussed in some detail below.

There can be little doubt that the existence of the Ka'bah in Mecca contributed greatly to the development of Mecca before Islam a major centre in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. It was due to the Ka'bah that Mecca for most of the year was a centre of human activity, which reached its peak in the great markets of 'Ukāz, Majannah and Dhū 'l-Majāz during the sacred months. These markets were not only places where buying and selling took place but became, without exaggeration, centres of literary, cultural and even political activity. In these markets, poets from most of the great Arab tribes vied with each other on what were, in effect, poetry competitions. The substance of these poems was the supreme praise of a particular tribe, its exploits and deeds in battles and encounters with other tribes and subsequently the division and even vilification of its opponents, a factor which sometimes led to armed conflict. It appears that Quraysh were not themselves involved except, of course, in the war of al-Fijār. These markets were also an occasion for the exchange of political ideas. This might have been one of the principal factors which contributed to Mecca becoming a politically aware society at that time.

Quraysh had been rulers of Mecca ever since the time of Quṣayy. In addition, the position of Quraysh among the other Arab tribes became increasingly more prominent, especially after the establishment of the *ilāf* system by Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf to be discussed in detail below. The increasing ascendancy of Quraysh is evident from the negotiations and treaties which they initiated with the other great Arab tribes, and also neighbouring countries like Abyssinia, Byzantium and

Persia.

It seems that the influence and power of Quraysh reached its peak after the defeat of the Abyssinian Abrahah outside Mecca during the days of Hāshim's son, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. This defeat was of great significance with regard to the role of Quraysh. Before this event, Quraysh had gained the respect of the Arab tribes mainly because it looked after the affairs of the Ka'bah and because it represented the tradition of Ismā'īl, in particular that of monotheism. After Abrahah's defeat, Quraysh became, in the eyes of the Arabs, a kind of sacred clan and was then revered with a degree of reverence which had not existed before.

After the appearance of Islam, most of Quraysh violently opposed the *da'wah* of the Prophet Muḥammad, even though he was a direct descendant of B. Hāshim, whom Quraysh, as we have seen, held in the highest reverence. Their opposition to this *da'wah* was not principally due to the fact that the Prophet preached that worship must be of God alone and that, consequently, the worship of idols (*aṣṇām*) must be abandoned absolutely. Their opposition was rather the result of their realization that Islam threatened their trading privileges and material interests. It is clear that the Arab tribes in general were hesitant to embrace Islam when confronted by the opposition to the Prophet Muḥammad on the part of Quraysh and even many of his closest relatives. However, when eventually Quraysh did accept Islam, the tribes did likewise, an occurrence which of course indicates how Quraysh were regarded by the other Arabs of Arabia.

It seems to me that both the privileged position in which Quraysh in general, and B. Hāshim in particular, were held in the eyes of Arabs and also the unique status of Mecca among the Arabian cities are phenomena that have been somewhat

neglected by scholars. I hope that this humble effort will contribute towards a greater understanding of both the city and the actual tribe from which Islam emerged.

The Sources

A study of the history of pre-Islamic Arabia is considered to be an important prerequisite to a full understanding of Islamic history. What is unfortunate is that, in spite of the importance of studying this historical period, the sources are not easily available. The general impression of pre-Islamic history is of it being myths and legends. This impression is more prevalent the further back we go into the history of ancient Arabia. Perhaps the reason for this impression comes from the Islamic sources, which look at the period prior to Islam with caution, since much of it contradicts the teaching of Islam. In addition to this, the information that has reached us is by oral transmission and some of it is logically unacceptable.

With regard to non-Arabic sources which deal with the pre-Islamic history of Arabia, these are scarce, particularly in relation to the subject of this study. If we exclude any geographical indication in these sources about the region of the western Arabian Peninsula, and its mention as a route for passing trade caravans we hardly find any valuable information in these sources concerning the history of Mecca, in particular its history before Islam.

Therefore most of the sources referred to in this study are Arabic and this is where we face the problem of a lack of information about the economic life of the Hījāz and Mecca, in particular before Islam. There is no doubt that most Muslim historians concerned themselves with the political history of Mecca because

it was the cradle of Islam, the birth place of the Prophet, and the location of the Ka'bah. Therefore these sources mention the traditions which express the sanctity of the city and the sanctity of the Ka'bah, but provide hardly any detailed information about the economic life of the city. So it was necessary for us to search for this information in books of *hadīth*, commentary (*tafsīr*), history and literature, particularly the pre-Islamic poetry, in order to draw a clearer picture about trade in Mecca before Islam. It is possible to divide the sources used in this study into three categories:

1. classical sources,
2. Islamic sources,
3. modern sources, both Arabic and non-Arabic.

0.1 Classical sources

These comprise writings by Greek or Roman authors, whether historians, travellers or geographers. In this respect these sources provide the first detailed and objective information about the Arabian Peninsula. They differ in this respect to what is recorded in the Assyrian and Babylonian documents.²

The first detailed mention of the Arabs and their land are found in the writings of Herodotus, the first Greek historian in the middle of the fifth century B.C. He does not restrict the Arab land to the Arabian Peninsula but also includes the internal parts of Syria, and the Sinai desert, and the eastern part of the Egyptian desert.³ It is also noticeable that his references concerning Arabs or their land

² See Luckenbill, D.D., *Ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1968.

³ Herodotus, Book II, 16-17.

are not always connected, but in most cases are scattered throughout his writings. This is because of the demands of his primary subject, i.e. the conflict between the Persian empire and the Greek world. Despite this he provides much documentary information dealing with the traditions and religious beliefs of the Arabs. He refers to their commodities such as frankincense, myrrh and cinnamon. He generally gives us the idea that the Arabs traded in these commodities with other countries.⁴

The other source is *Periplus Maris Erythraci*, translated by W.H. Schoff as *The Periplus of the Erthraean Sea*. So far the author of this book is not known, since there is still a dispute concerning his identity. This book first appeared between the first and third centuries A.D.⁵ It contains descriptions of the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The new information contained in this book is the location of the land of incense, particularly that of the Sabaeans for which he gives further details about their products. The *Periplus* is primarily a guide for merchants; it supplies some sailing information, but the emphasis is mainly on trading information, such as the products that could be bought or sold in each port.⁶

As for Roman sources, the first Roman who was interested in the Arabian Peninsula was the historian and geographer Strabo,⁷ who gives some geographical information about the region and the trade routes. He mentions that the incense caravans which reached Leukē Kōmē then Petra, in his time came directly through the Red Sea to the port of Myos Hormos on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea. From there it travelled by caravan to Qaft and finally to Alexandria.

⁴ See further Yahyā, 'al-Hazīrah al-'Arabiyyah', 64.

⁵ See *The Periplus Maris Erythraci*, text with introduction, translation and commentary by Lionel Casson, Princeton, 1989, 7.

⁶ Casson, *The Periplus*, 8.

⁷ Strabo, *Geography*, XVI,iv,4,18,19.

The important thing that Strabo mentions is his description of the Roman campaign against the Arabian Peninsula. It was led by Aelius Gallus. The value of his information about this campaign is that he was a contemporary of it and that he was also a personal friend of its commander. Therefore he was able to obtain inside information not available to others.

The Roman writer who wrote most about the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula was Galus Plinius Secundus in his book *Natural History*. In the first chapter he mentions the geographic nature of the Arabian Peninsula and the treasures that exist therein. He also talks about tribes, their names and the trade routes. In the second part, the author presents information about the products of the Arabian Peninsula, such as incense. He goes on to talk about the problems faced by merchants on routes who were forced to pay tax or part of what they carry in kind to those who opposed them or to gain water, food and protection, and how this consequently lead to increases in the prices of these commodities when they reached Rome.

The major geographical study that appeared in the age of the Romans and which studies the Arabian Peninsula was carried out by Claudius Ptolemaius during the first half of the second century (121-151 A.D.). For the first time Ptolemy listed on his map of Arabia the town of Mecca under the name of Makoraba.⁸ The important information provided by Ptolemy about the Arabian Peninsula is his attempts to put boundaries and divisions and places, by way of longitudes and latitude lines. He divided the Arabian Peninsula into three parts:

1. Arabia Deserta,

⁸ See below p.25.

2. Arabia Petrea,

3. Arabia Felix.

The most outstanding Byzantine author for the history of Bilād al-Shām is Procopios. He has a keen interest in peoples both inside and outside the Byzantine empire who did not speak Greek and whose culture varied from the Greco-Roman culture.⁹ He provides us with valuable information about the Ghassanid tribes, the allies of the Byzantines.

0.2 Islamic sources

The Qur'ān is the prime source linked to the history of the Arabs before and during Islam. It contains many historical indications mentioning the names of the many nations which perished such as 'Ād, Thamūd, Ṭasm. It also points to many of the habits of the Arabs before Islam such as drinking alcohol, gambling, burying their daughters alive and practicing usury. The Qur'ān also speaks of the deities of the Arabs before Islam. It mentions various names of idols which they worshipped, such as al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt.

What concerns us in our study are the economic references in the Qur'ān. There are references to capital, buying and selling, loans and companies and methods of trade dealings.¹⁰

However the Qur'ān is not explicit about events. The need for details, meaning of the events and the explanation of ambiguities from it led to the creation of the science of *tafsīr*. This science had many of its own schools and literature. They

⁹ Christides, 'Byzantine sources', 13.

¹⁰ For more details see Torrey, *The Commercial - Theological terms in the Koran*, Leiden, 1892; Watt, 'The Arabian background of the Qur'ān', *Studies in the history of Arabia*, Riyadh, 1979, 3-13.

all had great historic value. Among the books of *tafsīr* which comes close to the work of an historian is the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). This work is known as *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.

As for books of tradition (*aḥādīth*), they refer to the affairs of Arabs before Islam and their inter-relationships and the Arab-foreign relations.

Some of the early biographers were, 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d.94/712) and his student Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.142/759), Abān b. 'Affān (d.105/723), Wahb b. Munabbih (dep.110/728), Shuraḥbīl b. Sa'd (d.123/740), 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr b. Hishām (d.125/752), Mūsā b. 'Uqbah (d.141/758), Ma'mar b. Rāshid al-Baṣrī (d.150/767). The traditions of these are mentioned in the writings of Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, Ibn Sa'd, al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī, Abū Na'im al-Iṣbahānī, Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī.

These sources talk about the same aspects of the society of the Arabian Peninsula in pre-Islamic times as an introduction to discussing the advent of Islam in Mecca. It would be difficult to shed some light on all these sources, but we must point to the most important aspects concerning our study in particular.

The first of these primary sources of crucial importance are the works of Ibn Ishāq (d.150-153 A.H.), in particular his work *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* in which he offers information on the life and the military campaigns (*ghazawāt*) of the Prophet.¹¹ Ibn Ishāq was born and grew up in Medina where he gained much of his information from the descendants of the Prophet's close companions, namely, Abān b. 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, Abū Salamā b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf and the two

¹¹ 'Ibn Ishāq', *EI*²

sons of ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr, Hishām and Yahya.¹² What concerns our study is the scattered information in the first section of Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīrah* relating to the Meccan caravan trade, such as the activities of Abū Ṭālib and Khadījah as merchants and the Prophet’s own trading journeys to Syria. But the most important information we have is his interpretation of the *ilāf* of Quraysh, where he runs together *Sūrat al-Fīl* and *Sūrat Quraysh* as a single unit.¹³ Although several of his contemporaries, such as Hishām b. ‘Urwah, question the veracity of his work, others, such as Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī considered the author to be the leading authority on the *Maghāzī* and *Sīrat al-Nabī*.

Al-Ṭabarī (d.310/922) is a prime source. His book entitled *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, known as the *History of Ṭabarī* (*Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*) is the most important source for the history of the Arabs before and after Islam. He discusses history on a yearly basis, and gathers his material in the manner of *muhaddithūn*, biographers and historians, relying on the chain of authority. He does not content himself with one report for a particular incident, but rather mentions all reports he can gather together for one incident.¹⁴ This makes it the richest work in historical material for the Islamic period, covering the first three centuries of the Islamic era. Despite the fact that al-Ṭabarī concerned himself with the history of prophets and kings, as is evident from his title, scholars also find many indications of the intellectual, social and economic sides as well.¹⁵ It is a useful book which covers Meccan trade before Islam and the relationship of Quraysh with the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. I do not believe that a scholar of Arab history before Islam and for early Islam can

¹² See Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, I, 214-218. Cf. Naboodah, *Eastern Arabia*, 11.

¹³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 191,199. Cf. Jones, ‘al-Sira al-Nabawiyyah’, 15-17; also see below p.64.

¹⁴ Darādikah, *Buḥūth*, 33-34

¹⁵ Durī, *Baḥth*, 55; cf. M. Rasul, *The origin and development of Muslim historiography*, Lahore, 1969, 26; Darādikah, *Buḥūth*, 44

do without this book.

As for al-Ya'qūbī's *Tārīkh*, it contains much valuable information regarding the customs of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era.¹⁶ We also find some economic indications from which we have benefitted in this study, particularly references to the *ṭlāf* and the role of Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf in achieving it. He also points to the relationships that existed between the Arabian tribes in pre-Islamic times.

Other books that proved valuable for this study include:- *Akhhbār Makkah* by al-Azraqī,¹⁷ considered to be among the most important books which comprised the history of Mecca from the earliest ages. Perhaps this is among the best books which talks comprehensively about the history of Mecca.

Al-Azraqī's book is divided into two parts. In the first part he deals with the Ka'bah and its construction. He records many legends on the subject (pp.22-27); then he talks about the control of the Ka'bah by Jurhum, followed by Khuzā'ah and then Quṣayy b. Kilāb (pp.39-56). He provides useful information about those who first put the idols in the Ka'bah. He then counts these idols (pp.69-77). Then he goes on to speak about the Year of the Elephant (the raid of Abraham the Abyssinian on Mecca). We notice that there is no historic sequence in mentioning these events. He brings out valuable information regarding the pilgrimage of pre-Islamic people and then goes on to what is known as bringing forward or prolonging of the sacred months (pp.111). He also gives us information about the sources which Quraysh provided for pilgrims and the Ka'bah. The rest of the first part deals with the Ka'bah, praying in it and providing the cover (*kiswah*) it from

¹⁶ See Rosenthal, *Muslim historiography*, 133-134; Durī, *Baḥth*, 50-51

¹⁷ See M. Mukhtār, 'al- Azraqī al-Mu'arrikh min khilāl Riwāyātih', *Studies of the history of Arabia*, Riyadh, 1979, 199-218.

pre-Islamic times.

The second part deals with circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) and its rewards (pp.1-16). Then he jumps to the digging of the well of Zamzam by ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim and the virtues of the water of Zamzam (p.34). Then follows a talk about the sacred mosque and the virtue of performing prayer there (pp.49ff). In what is left of the second part, he speaks about the history of Mecca during the Islamic period. As has been already mentioned there is no historic sequence in the information put forward by al-Azraqī. Nevertheless his book is considered to be among the most important books written on Mecca, not merely this but we find unique and valuable information not found elsewhere.

As for those books which speak of Quraysh specifically, there is *al-Munammaq* by Ibn Ḥabīb. He was among the clients (*mawālī*) who were the bearers of knowledge (*ḥamalat al-‘ilm*) during the Abbasid period and likewise during the Umayyad. Ibn Ḥabīb read from the famous Ibn al-‘Arabī. He also attended a number of circles of the ulema of Baghdad. Among them were Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī and Abū ‘Ubaydah. Ibn Ḥabīb was most influenced by Ibn al-Kalbī. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī describes Ibn Ḥabīb as knowledgeable about genealogy and the history of Arabs, and trusted his reports. But when a postmortem is carried out, we find that not all of his reports are sound. He records some weak reports without any checking because they agree with his inclinations. The goal that he is trying to achieve is to please the ruling family. Many scholars who lived under the shadow of government or desired to have connections with it and have the pleasure of receiving gifts from caliphs wrote books on subjects suggested by those rulers, or on subjects that pleased them and suited their inclinations. Then they would present them as a gift to the rulers. Among the subjects of great importance in

the early Abbasid era was the history of Quraysh, who were the ruling tribe, and the leading family, i.e. the B. Hāshim.

From the title of the book *al-Munammaq fī Akhbār Quraysh* it is clear that it deals with the history of the tribe. It covers the history during Islam and in pre-Islamic times, but most of it is centred on its history before Islam. The report of other tribes is but rarely mentioned. The information which Ibn Ḥabīb recorded deals with various aspects of life of Quraysh. However it is not organised chronologically or according to events but is a collection of many reports taken from various transmitters about different events in the history of Quraysh and their prominent men. The other aspects which took up most of the book are the Fijār wars and the allies of Quraysh and disputes of B. Hāshim and B. ‘Abd Shams. Consequently the control of the Ka‘bah and the conflict that arose over it between the two families is discussed. Lastly we may point to the value or the importance of this book. This can be seen in two ways:

1. It throws new light on various aspects of the history of Quraysh, not mentioned in other sources;
2. It does not only rely on the reports of Ibn al- Kalbī, but also records those of other transmitters. This gives a scholar the opportunity to compare between these reports and accept the more plausible one from them.

The other book by Ibn Ḥabīb is *al-Muḥabbar*.¹⁸ This book is considered among the most important sources which speak of the history of the Arabs before Islam in general terms. We also find some unique information which may not be available in other sources. It talks of the history of Quraysh and its position in pre-Islamic

¹⁸ For more details see Lise Lichtenstädter, ‘Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb and his *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1939, 1- 27.

times. Since Ibn Ḥabīb mostly relies on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī, there does not appear to be any time sequence or clear procedure followed by the author in the *Muḥabbar*. He begins by mentioning the names of the orthodox caliphs, also the Umayyads and the Abbasids. He concludes his work with the list of names of people who fled from battlefields.

This book was of great use for this study since he talks about the *ilāf* system, and the allies of Quraysh, such as the *muṭayyibīn* alliance and the *fuḍūl* alliance. He also deals with the division of Quraysh into al-Biṭāḥ and Quraysh al-Zāwahir.¹⁹ He tells us about the *ḥums* organisation and about the prolonging and shortening of the months. He also informs us about the markets held in pre-Islamic times in the Arabian Peninsula and also about idols of the Arabs.²⁰ There is no doubt that this book is indispensable for any scholar of pre-Islamic times or the early Islamic period.

The other type of Islamic source which is of great value and benefit to our study are books on genealogy. These books are considered an important source for Arab history before Islam. The interest in genealogy began during the first century after the *Hijrah*. In the early stages it one finds a genealogist for each tribe with a book describing their history, poetry and genealogy. Al-Hamdānī points to the existence of some documents (*zubbūr*) with the Yemenis which contain their genealogies. He had seen some himself.²¹ The later genealogies extended their work to more than just one tribe. They started to collect genealogies of the tribes in the first half of the second/eighth century, in addition to particular the genealogy of Quraysh.²²

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 166-168, 173, 263.

²⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263, 315.

²¹ Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, I, 70-71, 111

²² Dūrī, 'Kutub al-Ansāb', 129.

The only work on this subject that has reached us is from the third century A.D. The prime source of this type of work is *Jamharat al-Nasab* by Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī, then *Nasab Quraysh* by Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī. A collection of work from *Jamharat al-Nasab* by his brother, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār is also important. Knowledge of this subject reached its peak with al-Balādhurī (d.274/892) in his book *Ansāb al-ashrāf*.²³

Jamharat al-Nasab of Ibn al-Kalbī (d.204/819) is a comprehensive piece of work, since it contains many ways of life of the tribes, such as their names, costumes and traditions. Sometimes he mentions of their settlements, for example, when talking about B. Aswad b. Mālīk - who are a branch of B. Mālīk b. Tha'labah - he says that they were the owners of the palm groves on al-Yamāmah.

Among the early genealogists is Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayrī (d.233/847). He is a descendent of 'Abd Allāh b. Zubayr. Of his two works *al-Nasab al-Kabīr* and *Nasab Quraysh* only the latter reached us. Quotations by historians such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī from this book indicate its importance.

It appears that the sources of Ibn Zubayr were extensive, as he reports from al-Zuhri, al-Wāqidī and Mūsā b. 'Uqbah, however Muṣ'ab sometimes provides his reports and information without indicating his sources. For example when he says, 'Someone who knows reports to me', or that, 'they said this is reported by an unbroken chain'.

Perhaps what distinguishes the work of *Nasab Quraysh* is that it combines genealogical, historical and literary information. He reports information and history of some men from pre-Islamic era right down to al-Rashīd, or sometimes

²³ Dūrī, 'Kutub al-Ansāb', 129-120.

to al-Ma'mūn (pp.228- 272). Sometimes he gives such detailed information about certain men that it almost looks like a biography, such as Ibn 'Abbās (pp.26-27), 'Abd Allāh b. Jad'ān (pp.291-297), al-Ḥakam b. al-Muṭṭalib (pp.339-341). Al-Zubayrī gives valuable information about social relationships as well as complete information about some women such as Ṣafīyyah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. He documents many verses of poetry which were said at functions or refer to those about whom he wrote in his work.²⁴

As for the *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī, it is a complete study of Islamic Arab history and a large collection of biographies in stages beginning with the Prophet Muḥammad and his kinsmen. After the introduction into the genealogy of the Arabs, he begins with the life of the Prophet, reaching his forefathers and history of Quraysh before Islam. He goes on to discuss Abū Ṭālib and his descendants (*al-'Alawiyyīn*), then al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his descendants (Abbasids)), then Umayyah b. 'Abd Shams (Umayyads), then the rest of Quraysh, and finally the rest of Muḍar.²⁵ In his methodology Balādhurī uses the lengthy *isnād* as a matter of course, referring to the source only where an *isnād* is considered well-known.

The distinction of the work *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* is that it presents a history of the noble Arabs in various fields, along with the history of the caliphs. This is unique in its comprehensiveness. Balādhurī is interested in the affairs of the tribes and its genealogy. He gives us extended information about Quraysh before and after Islam with full details which may not be found with other historians.²⁶

²⁴ al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 216, 232-3, 315, 334-7.

²⁵ Dūrī, *Baḥth*, 49; Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 96.

²⁶ Dūrī, 'Kutub al-Ansāb', 139-140.

What concerns us in particular in this study is his discussion of the attempt undertaken by ‘Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith to rule Mecca and his relationship with the emperor of Byzantium. Then there is his information about the *īlāf* and the *ayyām al-‘Arab*. He also discusses the various affairs of the tribes before Islam, raids such as the raid of B. Yarbū‘ b. Tha‘labah on B. Asad; he mentions allies, such as the alliance of Quraysh with al-Aḥābīsh, or other matters such as the agreement to supervise the ‘Ukāẓ market. Al-Balādhurī relies heavily on Ibn al-Kalbī for the history of Quraysh before Islam.

A third kind of Islamic source is the work of biographies. These works tell about the personal and general life of people. Through this work we learn about the nature of the society in which they lived. Not only this, but it is also possible to understand the social, economic, political and intellectual aspects of the society in which they lived. We can also appreciate the value of this work through the information it contains. Perhaps the most important works for our study of Mecca are two books of biography.

1. *al-Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah* by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī,
2. *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* by Ibn Sa‘d.

The *Iṣābah* is compiled in eight volumes. The last volume deals with the biography of women. Therefore this book has great value for our study since it is valuable for the important information about the Companions of the Prophet (*Ṣaḥābah*) mentioned in this work, particularly their life before Islam.

Ibn Ḥajar benefited from the book of his predecessor Ibn al- Athīr al-Jazrī (d.630/1233) *Usd al-ghābah fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, except that Ibn Ḥajar included another thirteen thousand biographies. He criticised Ibn al-Athīr for mistakingly

mentioning those who were not *Ṣaḥābah* and yet leaving out many of the Companions.

Sources used by Ibn Ḥajar other than Ibn al-Athīr include ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām, Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah (d.141/758), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, Ibn Sa’d and al-Bukhārī, beside others.

Out of many of the writings of Ibn Sa’d (d.230/845) only *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* reached us. Beginning with the life of the Prophet and extending to the envoys that came to him to proclaim their Islam. He mentions all the envoys under the heading ‘Envoys of Arabs to the Prophet’. He begins with the biography of the Companions and then al-Tābi‘ūn and then those who came later. He also set aside special chapters for the biographies of women.²⁷

In most of his reports Ibn Sa’d relies on the strict chain of authorities on which a tradition is based. The importance of this work can be appreciated since it was the original source for later works in history and biography. Among these are *Futūḥ al-Buldān* and *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī. It is known that Balādhurī was among the students of Ibn Sa’d.²⁸

From some existing biographies by Ibn Sa’d we notice that Mecca relied for its food on the grain imported to it from al-Yamāmah. It is recorded in the biography of Thumāmah b. Athāl al-Ḥanafī after he became a Muslim that he used to prevent any caravan carrying grain from al-Yamāmah from going to Quraysh or reaching Quraysh in Mecca. This was just before the conquest of Mecca.²⁹ The important thing that Ibn Sa’d points to in the personal biography of the Companions is their

²⁷ Ṭarkhān, ‘Ibn Sa’d’, 160.

²⁸ Muṣṭafā, *Tārīkh*, I, 166-167.

²⁹ Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 401.

practices, particularly in trade and what they gained in wealth as a result of this trade, such as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf (d. 32/652).

The fourth source is literary material. There is no doubt that the poetry of the pre-Islamic era is a prime source, from which valuable information about the history of Arabia before Islam can be gained. Pre-Islamic literature can be divided into two main sections: The prose literature of the *Ayyām al-‘Arab* and pre-Islamic poetry. The *Ayyām al-‘Arab*, which the Arabs inherited from their forefathers, are prose works interspersed with poetry which may or may not be related to the description of the battle to which the account is referring.

Arabic traditions mention several authors as having compiled works on the *Ayyām al-‘Arab*, including al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. 168/784), Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/819), al-Aṣma‘ī (d. 216/831) and others, but the most distinguished appears to have been Abū ‘Ubaydah Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā (d. 207/822).

Unfortunately none of these compilations of the *Ayyām al-‘Arab* has reached us in its original form. However it is noteworthy that a few were preserved as part of other literary works, to be found in the valuable commentaries to the collections of early Arab literature such as the *Mu‘allaqāt*, *al-Qaṣā’id al-Ṭiwāl*, *Naqā’id*, *Sharḥ al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* by Ibn al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah* by al-Marzūqī and by al-Tabrīzī, *al-Amālī* of al-Qālī, *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd* of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Aghānī* of al-Iṣfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Arab* of al-Nuwayrī, *al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn* of al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Kāmil fī al-lughah wa-al-Adab* of al-Mubarrad and finally the *Bulūgh al-Arab* of al-Ālūsī.³⁰

It would be difficult to give detailed accounts of each title. However it should

³⁰ See I. Lichtenstadter, *Introduction to classical Arabic literature*, New York, 1974, 31-32; Darādikah, *Buḥūth*, 36-38.

be pointed out that valuable information about the history of Mecca before Islam is contained in these works, whether poetry or prose, particularly the relationship of Mecca with Arabian tribes and the relationship of these tribes with Persia. For example Abū ‘Ubaydah gives much information which clarifies Arab relations with Persia, particularly the relationship between Bakr b. Wā’il and Persia. Al-A‘shā also mentions the complexity of these relationships. We see him ridiculing the tribe of Shaybān for their relationship with the Persians.³¹

Al-Nuwayrī in *Nihāyat al-Arab* clarifies for us commercial exchanges between al-Ḥīrah and the Arabian tribes, particularly the tribe of Quraysh. He reports that al-Nu‘man b. al-Mundhir, the king of al-Ḥīrah used to send a caravan every year to ‘Ukāz market, under the protection of a noble of the Arabs.³²

Pre-Islamic poetry, along with the *Ayyām al-‘Arab*, represents an important source, offering the historian an insight into socio-political life in the pre-Islamic era. As a subject it is now widely studied, especially in the West.³³

Pre-Islamic poetry itself is a witness to the linguistic standard and strength of expression which the Arabs achieved before Islam. Poetry is, as is said, the *dīwān* of the Arabs.³⁴

Finally we must notice the importance of pre-Islamic poetry in assisting in locating place names in the Arabian Peninsula. Arabian poetry has recorded names of these places during that period. Thilo believed that ancient Arabic poetry is richer than the poetry of any other nation in regards to place names. The reason

³¹ al-A‘shā, *Dīwān*, 79;cf. Haddārah, ‘Tārīkh al-Jazīrah’, 345.

³² Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, XV, 425.

³³ Lichtenstadter, *Introduction*, 20; Marqoloth, ‘The origins of Arabic poetry’, *JRAS*, 1925, 447-449.

³⁴ See Asad, *Maṣādir*, 352-367.

for this to him is because of the nature of desert life, and the bedouin's being forced to move from place to place.³⁵ Consequently the poet must record the name of the place where he spends his time. But we must be aware of our relying solely on poetry for this purpose.

The final Islamic sources are works of geography and travel.³⁶ They are of benefit in locating geographical features and places in the Arabian Peninsula. They are also a valuable source of information concerning trade routes to the pilgrimage inside the Arabian Peninsula. When talking of the *Hajj* route in the early Islamic period or the period that followed, these sources inform us that these are the same routes which existed in pre-Islamic times with little change. We can say that these routes were the same as those taken by early Muslim conquests to Syria, Iraq and the east of the Peninsula.

Ibn Khurdādhbeh is considered to be the earliest Arab geographer. Born in Khurāsān in 205/820, he died in 300/912. He has many writings, not all of which survived. What concerns us here is his work entitled *al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik*. The aim of writing this work was to ascertain the routes connecting Baghdad and other Islamic cities. He mentions the road between Baghdad and Mecca, the road to Medina, the road from Mecca to Medina, Mecca to al-Ṭā'if, from al-Yamāmah to Mecca and from Mecca to Oman, etc..

Abū Muḥammad al-Hamdanī (d.334/945) wrote his famous work *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab*. The importance of this work is shown by his thorough investigation of the reports of others. He also relied upon his personal research by visiting the

³⁵ U. Thilo, *Die Ortsnamen in der Alterabischen Poesie*, Wiesbaden, 1958, 11. See also Wahaybī, 'Ṭahdīd al-Shu'arā', 364.

³⁶ See further, Nafis Aḥmad, *Muslim contribution to Geography*, Lahore, 2nd ed., 1972.

locations in order to make sure of their names. In the above mentioned work, he gives unique information about the geography of the Arabian Peninsula and the settlement of the tribes there. Al-Hamdānī bore the title *Lisān al-Yaman* [The Tongue of the Yemen] which was given to him because of his excellent knowledge of this region, and his extreme prejudice for it and for Qaḥṭān. It appears that his family was involved in transporting pilgrims to Mecca.

Other geographical books include *al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* by al-Iṣṭakhrī (d.340/951). Other works include *Ṣūrat al-Ard* by Ibn Ḥawqal which describes his travels in Islamic countries. He visited Morocco, al-Andalus and the Sudan between the years 336-340/947-951, and Egypt, Armenia and Azerbaijan in 344/955. Later on he visited Iraq, Khurāsān and Persia in 350-358/961- 969. Ibn Ḥawqal records his personal expressions and observations during his visits to these countries.

Other works include al-Maqaddasī's *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*. He relies on his personal observations to describe the Arabian Peninsula. He also relies on other works, but criticises them severely.

Yet other works include *Mu'jam mā ista'jam min asmā' al-bilād wa-al-mawāḍi'* by al-Bakrī and Yāqūt in his *Mu'jam al-Buldān*. As for Bakrī, he gives precise accounts of places, which he sets in alphabetical order, thus making it easy for a scholar to use and rely on his sources. Yāqūt's work is also alphabetically set but has two distinct features:

3. he did not confine himself to the Arabian Peninsula, but included all Islamic countries,
4. he described the cities and villages on the eastern coast of the Gulf, something to which other writers paid no attention.

Finally we must mention the other geographical works: *al-Buldān* of al-Ya'qūbī. Here the author relies on his own observations in describing the place and habits of the people.

0.3 Secondary sources

Modern Arab historians have shown an interest in the history of Mecca, but have not paid much attention to the pre-Islamic history of the city, especially the economic, social and political history. To the best of my knowledge, as yet there is no single book written that deals solely with the pre-Islamic trade of Mecca; rather historians treat it within the framework of the general history of Mecca, in which the religious importance of the town is emphasised. Doubtless, some books have been written on the history of pre-Islamic Arabs. Some of them are brief, like Jurjī Zaydān's *Tārīkh al-'Arab qabla al-Islām*, and others are detailed, such as Jawād 'Alī's *al-Mufaṣṣal*. The latter is considered to be one of the most important books on the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs, and was published in 10 volumes. In his book 'Alī examines all aspects of pre-Islamic Arabia, including social, economic, political, religious and cultural aspects. He takes pains to collect the material for this book from different sources and languages. We are mainly concerned with three volumes of his work, namely IV, VI, and VII, and the rest to a lesser extent. In volume IV he examines the geographical characteristics of Mecca and its political history. In this volume he mentions the tribes that settled there, such as Jurhum Khuzā'ah and Quraysh. He describes the role played by Quṣayy in gathering the tribe together and settling them in Mecca. He also describes the religious functionaries who looked after the pilgrims and the Ka'bah. Volume VI concentrates on the religious life of the Arabs in pre-Islamic Arabia, for example idol worship, the construction of the Ka'bah, the ceremony of covering

the Ka‘bah, and the importance of the Ka‘bah in attracting the people to worship it. This probably led to the founding of the markets around Mecca such as ‘Ukāz, Majannah, and Dhū al-Majāz.

In Volume VII, ‘Alī deals with the economic life of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times. He mentions the effect of the geographical characteristics of the Arabian Peninsula on this economic life. In a separate part of the book he examines the trade of pre-Islamic Mecca and also the markets that existed at that time.

As mentioned above, ‘Alī used many different sources, both from Arabic and other languages, and tried to be very accurate in his treatment. The one criticism which can be levelled at this book is that there is little analysis or criticism.

Of the other books, the most important is *Aswāq al-‘Arab fī al-Jāhiliyyah wa-al-Islām* by al-Afghānī. Al-Afghānī starts his book by mentioning the methods of buying and selling during the Jāhiliyyah, and describes the history of the Quraysh and their allies. He also discusses the *ilāf* agreement. In spite of the importance of this book, some faults remain, including inaccuracies in determining the precise location of markets, a lack of analysis and discussion of the different kinds of traditions, and in many cases he neglects to mention his sources.

There is one other book *Tārīkh Quraysh* by Ḥusayn Mu‘nis, which examines the history of the Quraysh before and after the coming of Islam. He poses a question in the introduction which he subsequently attempts to answer. This question is how were the Quraysh, a small tribe among the Arabs, able to build themselves up and impose their power over the other tribes of the Arabian Peninsula?³⁷

The author emphasises the factors by which the Quraysh enabled themselves

³⁷ Mu‘nis, *Quraysh*, 7.

to become strong politically, economically, socially and in religious affairs. In this context, the author discusses the role of B. ‘Abd Manāf in building up Meccan trade, and especially the role of Hāshim. He then debates the date of the Year of the Elephant, since he does not agree with Islamic sources that claim it coincides with the birth of the Prophet, but places it previous to that, without giving a precise date.

There are other books written in Arabic which discuss similar topics, such as *Makka wa-al-Madīnah fī al-Jāhiliyyah wa-‘aṣr al-Rasūl* by Aḥmad al-Sharīf.

Apart from these books, there are some articles written in Arabic which concentrate on the *ilāf* and the markets and the history of the Arabian tribes and their relations with the Quraysh. Of these, the most important article written is about the *ilāf* by Sāliḥ Darādikah entitled *Īlāf Quraysh* in which he discusses the meaning of the *ilāf* in the commentators and lexicographers. He also discusses the factors which created this phenomenon, and the relations of the Quraysh with other Arab tribes, especially those who dwelled on the trade routes.

Another article by Nāṣir b. Sa‘d al-Rashīd called *Ta‘āmul al-‘Arab al-tijārī wa-kayfiyyatuhu fī al-‘aṣr al-Jāhilī* commences by mentioning the importance of the location of the Arabian Peninsula to international trade routes at that time. He then details the trading activity of the pre-Islamic Arabs and their success in creating commercial laws (*‘urf*) and their methods of buying and selling. He emphasises the activity of Qurashī trade and their dealings with the other Arab tribes and their relationships with surrounding countries such as Persia, Byzantium, Abyssinia and the Yemen, without neglecting the activity of the other Arab tribes in the Peninsula and non-Arabs who conducted trade in the Peninsula, like

the Jews.

In addition to Arabic secondary sources there are the secondary sources which are written in other languages, mainly in English. The groundwork on the trade of Mecca was done by Lammens, but there are many mistakes and controversial issues in his book, and much of his work collapses on inspection of his footnotes.

Some scholars examined the importance of the *īlāf* and its effect on Meccan trade, among these scholars was Kister, who gives us valuable information about the *īlāf* in his article 'Mecca and Tamīm, aspects of their relations' in which he also gives a detail examination of the relationship between Mecca and Tamīm in the second half of the sixth century.

The importance of the *ḥaram* and the sacred places in Arabia has attracted the attention of many scholars, among whom was Serjeant who adequately emphasizes the role of the *ḥaram* and *ḥawṭah* on socio-economic and political life in ancient Arabia and in contemporary South Arabia, with a focus on the Ḥijāz region.

We have seen recently the interest of some scholars in the subject of Meccan trade in the rise of Islam. P. Crone represents this interest by publishing her book *Meccan trade and the rise of Islam*. In writing this controversial book she is tries to demolish all we know about Meccan trade and the importance of its sanctuary in pre-Islamic times through her selective style in using the Traditions to support her argument, as Serjeant quite rightly observes, "to attract publicity by shocking Islamists through the strange theories it advances on pre-Islamic Mecca, novel theories to be sure, but founded upon misinterpretation, misunderstanding of sources, even at times on incorrect translations of Arabic."³⁸ Crone's basic argument is built

³⁸ Serjeant, 'Meccan trade', *JOAS*, 472.

on three erroneous premises: she claims that Mecca did not lie on a major trade route, that the Meccan sanctuary was of minor importance, and that there was no pilgrim fair there in pre-Islamic times. I have avoided a detailed critique of her work in this thesis, mentioning it only where appropriate, since an exhaustive 14 page critical review of Crone's work is to be found in Serjeant's 'Meccan trade and the Rise of Islam'.³⁹

Another author who has researched this subject was R. Simon.⁴⁰ He tries to analyse in his book the origin and the structure of Meccan trade. He emphasizes that research has not succeeded in finding a satisfactory answer to the problem of the genesis of long-distance Meccan trade operating in a traditional tribal society. In analysing Meccan trade he compares it with the activities of 'local markets' operating in the Arabian Peninsula and tries to define the concrete differences between the isolated small-scale markets of tribal society and the commercial city of Mecca also existing on a tribal basis, but serving the state controlled foreign trade of the surrounding great powers. Simon's main sources were Arabic but he uses also non-Arabic (Byzantine, Syrian, Abyssinian) sources.

His method of analysing the events which took place in the Arabian peninsula in general and Mecca in particular before the rise of Islam and also his use of non-Arabic sources make this a useful source.

³⁹ Serjeant, 'Meccan trade and the rise of Islam', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, CX, 1990, 422-486; H. Kennedy supplies a short but useful and critical review in *MESA*, Vol XXII, 1989, 55; Also Bonner provides a brief review in *ISMES*, Vol XXII, 3, 338-9 but his criticism is too vague to be of much help.

⁴⁰ R. Simon, *Meccan trade and Islam, problems of origin and structure*, Budapest, 1989.

Chapter I

The Geography of the Arabian Peninsula

The earliest geographical description of Arabia is to be found in the literature of Greek and Roman writers who divided the Peninsula initially into two areas: Arabia Deserta covering the northern zone of the Peninsula extending from the City of Heroes (near modern Suez) to Babylon in Iraq, and Arabia Felix covering the remainder of the area to the south.⁴¹ Then a third division was added by Ptolemy, Petraea or Stony Arabia, covering the north-western zone of the Peninsula which included the Sinai desert.⁴² The traditional Arab division of the Arabian Peninsula has come to us through Islamic sources. They divided it into five provinces (as we will see later), Tihāmah, Ḥijāz, Najd, the Yemen and al-‘Arūd. This division of the Arabian Peninsula appears in the statement of Ibn al-Kalbī,⁴³ a noted authority on pre-Islamic history, who most likely based his version on that which existed in the pre-Islamic era, since this division, as described above, does not conform to the geographical or political definitions of the early Islamic period.⁴⁴

The Arabian Peninsula is bordered in the east by the Arabian Gulf, which was known to the Greeks as the Persian Gulf (*Sinus Persicus*): this name is still used in contemporary sources. The ancient inhabitants of Iraq knew it by the name of the ‘South Sea’ (al-Baḥr al-Janūbī) and the ‘Lower Sea’ (al-Baḥr al-Asfal or al-Baḥr

⁴¹ Strabo, *Geography*, VII, 13K, XVI, 309.

⁴² Cf. al-Naboodah, *Eastern Arabia*, 17-21.

⁴³ Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 531.

⁴⁴ al-Naboodah, *Eastern Arabia*, 37-38.



al-Taḥṭānī), as well as various other names.⁴⁵ In the south the Arabian Peninsula is bordered by the Indian Ocean; some Greek and Roman writers gave to the part of the Indian Ocean which adjoins the south coast of the Arabian Peninsula and the East Coast of Africa the name of the 'Eritrean Sea' (*Mare Erthraenum* and *Mare Rubrum*).⁴⁶ On the west it is bordered by the Red Sea, which is known as the Arabian Gulf (*Sinus Arabicus*) and *Baḥr al-Qulzum* in the Arabic sources.⁴⁷ In Hebrew it was referred to as *ha-Yam* (*yām* meaning the Sea).⁴⁸ Bayḍāwī also explains the word *yamm*, which occurs in the Qur'ān, as meaning 'sea'.⁴⁹

The northern boundary of the Arabian Peninsula is an imaginary line which extends, (according to Arab geographers)⁵⁰ from the Gulf of Aqabah to the mouth of Shaṭṭ al-'Arab in the Arabian Gulf. The northern Nufūdh stretches from the boundary between the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. It extends about 140 miles from north to south, and 180 from east to west. However, from a geological point of view the Fertile Crescent is made up of the same type of soil as that of the Arabian Peninsula and cannot be separated from it. Also, the geological make-up of its desert is the same as that of the Arabian Peninsula. From an historical point of view, this line is indeed imaginary, and is incorrect, since the Arabs lived to the north of it hundreds of years before the Christian era. They lived mostly on the western bank of the Euphrates, and moved across the desert until they reached the outskirts of al-Shām; they also lived in Palestine and around Mount Sinai. Latin, Hebrew and Syriac sources mention these areas, which were

⁴⁵ Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 47; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh al-Arab*, I, 182; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, III, 100; Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 29; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 140.

⁴⁶ Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 247.

⁴⁷ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 184; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 13.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Dictionary*, 1009; Hasting, *Dictionary*, I, 833.

⁴⁹ Bayḍāwī, *Tafsīr*, VII, 132.

⁵⁰ O'Leary, *Arabia*, 5.

inhabited by Arabs, and refer to them as al-‘Arabiyyah and Bilād al-‘Arab. In the Torah, there were the lands of the Ishmaelites, that is the lands inhabited by the tribes descended from Ismā‘īl.⁵¹

The names ‘Arabi (‘Arabāyā in Assyrian inscriptions), Matu-a-Rabi (the land of the Arabs, in Babylonian texts), Arabaya in Persian texts, and Beth Arabaya in Aramaic, all refer to the vast desert which separates Iraq and Greater Syria.⁵² These texts do not mention the southern borders of Bilād al-‘Arab. Jawād ‘Alī considers that the knowledge of these peoples concerning the southern borders would have depended on the extent to which they dealt with the inhabitants of Bilād al-‘Arab.⁵³

If we look at the map of the Arabian Peninsula we see that there are highlands in the west, in the form of mountain chains stretching from the Gulf of ‘Aqabah to the Yemen, which overlook narrow coastal plains. These highlands are known as the Sarāt,⁵⁴ and run parallel to the Red Sea coastal plain; their average height is about 5000 feet. The stretch of land between the mountains and the coast is very narrow, while the coast is itself so rocky that it is difficult for ships to approach.⁵⁵ The central areas of the Arabian Peninsula are made up of mountains (sing. *haḍabah*) called Najd, the average height being 2500 feet.

In the south of the Arabian Peninsula there is a large chain of mountains of varying heights, which is connected to the Yemeni mountain range. In this area

⁵¹ Hasting, *Dictionary*, 585; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 144.

⁵² *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, I, 273. The first reference in Assyrian records comes from the reign of Salmanssar III concerning the battle of Qarar in 853 B.C., in which he defeated a confederacy that included ‘Gindībū (Jundub) the Arab’, who had come with a thousand camels. See *E.I.*(2), I, 524ff.

⁵³ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 144.

⁵⁴ Kaḥḥālah, *Jughrāfiyat*, 10; cf. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XIV, 383.

⁵⁵ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 145; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, II, 169.

there are many wadis which divide the mountains.⁵⁶

1.1 The division of the Arab land (Arabia)

The Greeks and Romans divided the Arabian Peninsula into three parts, **Arabia Felix**, **Arabia Petreae** and **Arabia Deserta**. This division was in accordance with the political situation of Bilād al-‘Arab in the first century A.D.

The first part was independent, the second bordered the Roman Empire, and the third part consisted of the desert up to the Euphrates.⁵⁷ The classical sources refer to Arabia Felix and Arabia Deserta.⁵⁸ Arabia Felix was the largest of three areas and was also referred to as *Arabia Beata* and *Arabia Eudaimon*. It included all the areas referred to as Jazīrat al-‘Arab in some Arabic sources.⁵⁹ Arabia Felix had no fixed northern border, since it changed according to political circumstances.⁶⁰ However, in the opinion of most Roman and Greek authors, its borders extended from the city of Heropolis, near the present city of Suez, and ran parallel to the southern borders of Arabia Petreae, before traversing the desert to reach the marsh areas.⁶¹

1.1.1 Arabia Deserta

Arabia Deserta was known as *Arabia Eremes*⁶² in Greek although Greek and Roman writers did not specify its borders. However, we know from their writings that by this area they meant the vast desert between Iraq and Greater Syria (al-

⁵⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, II, 164.

⁵⁷ Grant, *Syrian Desert*, 10; Forster, *Geography*, II, 109; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 163.

⁵⁸ Strabo, III, 189-190. He mentions also *Arabia Nabataea*. Strabo, III, 241.

⁵⁹ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 163.

⁶⁰ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 163.

⁶¹ Ptolemy, VI, 7,2,27; Strabo, III, 189; Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, 498.

⁶² Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, 497.

Shām), which is known as Bādiyat al-Shām. The Euphrates represented the eastern border, while the northern border varied, according to political circumstances. This was also the case with the western boundaries, but in general they were the desert areas adjoining the agricultural regions of Bilād al-Shām.⁶³ Diodorus understood Arabia Deserta to be the desert regions inhabited by the nomadic tribes, with the kingdom of Palmyra (Tadmur) situated in the north-east of this area.⁶⁴ Arabia Deserta was the *Arbai* of the Assyrians, the *Matu-Arabi* of the Babylonians, and the *Arabaya* mentioned in Syriac and Persian texts.⁶⁵ This area was inhabited by Arab tribes hundreds of years before the Christian era. The oldest inscriptions we possess relating to these tribes are those of the Assyrians. The most ancient of these inscriptions dates from 853 B.C.⁶⁶ In it the Arabs are mentioned as being among those peoples exposed to Assyrian policy. In view of the fact that this inscription points to the existence of an Arab kingdom, it is inconceivable that the Arabs inhabited the area only from the time of the inscription. Rather, it strongly suggests that they were there many years before, perhaps even 2,000 years B.C.⁶⁷ These tribes frequently attacked the areas between Mesopotamia and Bilād al-Shām, acknowledging no boundaries, but settling wherever they found sufficient pastureland and water.⁶⁸

1.1.2 Arabia Petreae

Arabia Petreae was composed of the areas inhabited by the Nabataeans. The name was applied to the Sinai Peninsula and the Nabataean kingdom with its cap-

⁶³ Forster, *Geography*, II, 100ff; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 164; see also Zwemer, *Arabia*, 25.

⁶⁴ Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, 499.

⁶⁵ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, I, 611.

⁶⁶ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, I, 611.

⁶⁷ Forster, *Geography*, I, 347; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 166.

⁶⁸ Forster, *Geography*, I, 347.

ital at Petra.⁶⁹ The borders were extended and retraced according to the political situation and the strength of the Arabs; for example, in the era of al-Ḥārith IV, the Nabataean king (9 B.C.–A.D. 40) the borders were extended as far as Damascus.⁷⁰ After the power of the Nabataeans had declined about 106 A.D., the Trajan Byzantine Empire took control of the area, calling it Provincia Arabia.⁷¹

Diodorus's description shows this region to be the areas east of Egypt, south and south-west of the Dead Sea and north of Arabia Felix.⁷²

1.2 The Division of the Arabian Peninsula by the Arabs

Unfortunately we have no information from the pre-Islamic peoples either in the texts or in the oral recitations, relating to the Arabs' division of the Arabian Peninsula, since it is not mentioned in the texts and oral recitations. However, the Islamic geographers mention the Arabian Peninsula, excluding the vast desert (Bādiyat al-Shām) and also Arabia Petraeae, (as it was known in classical sources).⁷³ They divide the Arabian Peninsula into five parts: the Ḥijāz, Tihāmah, the Yemen, al-ʿArūd and the Najd. The oldest accounts (*riwāyāt*) relating to this division date to the time of ʿAbdallāh b. al-ʿAbbās (d.68/687).⁷⁴

1.2.1 Ḥijāz

In the opinion of most Muslim geographers, the Ḥijāz extended from the bor-

⁶⁹ ʿAlī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 166. For more details concerning the Nabataeans, see Hamond, *Nabataeans*; Burckhardt, *Travels*; Cooke, 'Nabataeans', Riddle, 'Political History', 1961.

⁷⁰ Peters, 'Nabataeans', *JAOS*, XCVII, 263-77.

⁷¹ Negev, 'Nabataeans', *ANRW*, XI, 21-25.

⁷² Diodorus, II, 49; Musil, *Ḥijāz*, 3, 9.

⁷³ Strabo, III, 241. See also Forster, *Geography*, II, 112; Zwemer, *Arabia*, 5ff.; cf. Doughty, *Travels*, I, 186, 190, 330, 396; II, 32, 38, 74, 94.

⁷⁴ Hamdānī, *Ṣifāh*, 47ff., Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 218; al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, I, 5ff.

ders of al-Shām at ‘Aqabah to al-Layth, a wadi at the end of the Sarāt range, which marks the beginning of the Tihāmah region.⁷⁵ The north of the Ḥijāz was known as Midian and Ḥismā regions, after the mountain chain of this name which extended from north to south.⁷⁶ This area was inhabited by the pre-Islamic tribes known as Judhām,⁷⁷ but it is now inhabited by ‘Arab al-Ḥuwayṭāt, whom Orientalists considered to be descendants of the Nabataeans.⁷⁸

Many wadis are to be found in the Ḥijāz region, for instance Wadi Aḍm, which is mentioned in pre-Islamic poetry and in reports of expeditions of the Prophet,⁷⁹ Wadi Nakhāl which meets the sea at al-Safrā’ between Mecca and Medina,⁸⁰ Wadi Badā near ‘Aqabah, and Wadi al-Qurā, an important wadi situated between al-‘Ulā’ and Medina, along which ran the old caravan route of the ancient world.⁸¹ Wadi al-Qurā is also known as Wadi Daydabān,⁸² and many Sabaic, Minean and Liḥyanic inscriptions have been found here. One of the most important sites in Wadi al-Qurā is al-‘Ulā’, known as DDN in the pre-Islamic inscriptions, (e.g. R.3570), which is situated in the area of ancient Dedan, and also the town of Qārah, one of the pre-Islamic Arab markets.⁸³

1.2.2 Tihāmah

In the opinion of some geographers, the borders of Tihāmah commence at the Red Sea and it is therefore made up of the narrow coastal area parallel to the Red

⁷⁵ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 46; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 219; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 187; al-Hamādhānī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 26.

⁷⁶ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 219; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, V, 331.

⁷⁷ *El²*, I, 368; Doughty, *Travels*, II, 624.

⁷⁸ *El²*, III, 349.

⁷⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, I, 214; Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 171; al-Jāsir, *Mu‘jam*, I, 77.

⁸⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 275.

⁸¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 345ff.

⁸² Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 87; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 169.

⁸³ Musil, *Hegaz*, 295; Doughty, *Travels*, I, 203; al-Jāzīr, *Fī Shamāl Gharb al-Jazīrah*, 504.

Sea.⁸⁴ The part of Tihāmah located in the Yemen is known as Tihāmat al-Yaman. Since Tihāmah is low-lying, it was given the name of al-Ghawī (meaning depression or hollow). The word Tihāmah appeared in the form THMT in the south Arabian inscriptions.⁸⁵

1.2.3 The Yemen

In the southern South Arabian inscriptions, the borders of the Yemen were not specified.⁸⁶ However, inscriptions refer to YMNT. This area is mentioned in an inscription dating to the era of King Shummar Yahra'sh, known as Shummar Yar'ash in the Islamic sources.⁸⁷ It is also mentioned in an inscription dating back to A.D. 543 which refers to Abrahah al-Ḥabashī, the governor of the Negus in the Yemen.⁸⁸ If we now turn to the geography of the Yemen we notice first that the Sarāt cut across the Yemen from north to south wadis fed by rain water are numerous in these mountains, while to the north of the Aden area is a desert adjoining the Empty Quarter.⁸⁹ The Yemen is bounded by the line of fertility on the north and east, so as to include the important region of 'Asīr.⁹⁰

1.2.4 Al-'Arūd

The fourth Province of the Arabian Peninsula is al-'Arūd area, which extends from the eastern borders of the Yemen in an easternly and north-easterly direction

⁸⁴ Yāqūt, *Buldān*, VI, 311; Hamdānī, *Ṣifāh*, 54, 119, 1221.

⁸⁵ Biella, *Dictionary*, 532; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 437; VI, 311; *E.I.*¹, IV, 764.

⁸⁶ For further information about the border of the Yemen in Arabic geographical sources, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 81; al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifāh*, 51-52; al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1401; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 202; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135, 137, 189.

⁸⁷ Yamanī, *Mu'jam*, V, 82; Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, 547.

⁸⁸ Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, VIII, 108ff.

⁸⁹ Hamdānī, *Ṣifāt*, 53; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 419.

⁹⁰ Zwemer, *Arabia*, 26.

to al-Yamāmah and the coast of Bahrain.⁹¹ This area is composed of deserts and coastal plains as well as several oases. Amongst its towns are Hajar (known to classical writers as Egra), and al-‘Aqīr, which was possibly the important trading city known as Gerrha.⁹²

1.2.5 Najd

The fifth province of the Arabian Peninsula is the Najd, at the heart of the Peninsula.⁹³ The area is a plateau gently sloping downwards from a height of 5,000 feet in the west to 2,000 feet in the east. Within the province are stony and sandy deserts, smaller plateaux, and depressions. Running north-east – south-west is a major depression, bounded by steep escarpments, which has provided a natural dividing line for the migratory peoples coming from the north and south.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 112; Hamdāni, *Ṣifah*, 4748, 86, 136.

⁹² Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, VI, 148; see also Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, I, 91; Strabo, III, 186; Foster, *Geography*, II, 217.

⁹³ For further information, see Philby, *Arabia*; Doughty, *Wandering*; Thesiger, ‘Journey’, *Geographical Journal*, 113-114, 1949, 21-46; Philby, ‘al-Rūb ‘ al-Khālī’, *Geographical Journal*, LXXXI, 1933, pp.1-26.

⁹⁴ Lipsky, *Saudi Arabia*, 21.

Chapter II

The political situation in Arabia in the sixth century A.D.

In order to obtain a clear picture of Mecca before Islam and its commercial role we must examine the political situation in the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century A.D. We must also link this with the events that took place in that century, within the borders of two of the greatest empires of the time, namely the Persian and Byzantium, as these events reflect the events which took place in the Arabian Peninsula in general and in Mecca in particular.

The sixth century A.D. marked an important period in history and witnessed the beginning of the decline of the Persian Empire established by Ardashir I after the revolution of A.D. 224. It then fell dramatically in the sixth century A.D. In the second half of the sixth century A.D. the Prophet Muḥammad was born. A further important event took place in the first half of the seventh century A.D., the birth of the new religion of Islam, with its new set of ethical values.

This new religion quickly spread in a way in which no other religion had done before. This new religion was able to unite the Arabs who had previously been engaged in conflicts and feuds. This led to the destruction of one of the greatest empires of the time, the Persian Empire. It also led to the occupation of the important regions of the other empire; the Byzantium.

A far reaching transformation in Arab life emerged from the advent of Islam. They were in effect the founding fathers of its thought and civilisation and the first bearers of its message. It endowed them with a sense of mission.

Islam established between Arabs the bond of the creed which rejected inter-tribal disputes, tribal custom (*‘urf*) and the divisive clannishness of tribes. Instead new values and standards coupled with a common goal in life superseded this previous fractiousness. There was now a comprehensive set of religious laws, a creed to bind all Arabs in their mission in life.⁹⁵

Of particular importance was the concept of the *ummah*, the ‘community’. Thus Islam enjoined the *jihād*, the struggle to uphold the faith and protect the *ummah*, whilst frowning on the raid. The *ummah* was fundamentally based on the faith. The principles on which it developed were equality, respect for the individual (indeed all earthly things), consultation, not imposition, in public affairs and ranking based on deeds.⁹⁶

The sixth century and the first half of the seventh century witnessed a great many events. Whereas some regions were exposed to epidemics and calamities, others faced hunger and natural disasters. Out of this of course grew economic, political and social problems. Anūshirvān (531-579) the Sasanian emperor, decided to make reforms in his empire. He ordered a new constitution to be drawn up concerning taxes, reducing some of the burden on the payer. He also ordered land reform and its just distribution among the people and justice for all. He sought the help of wise men who advised and consulted with him. He took a keen interest in the spiritual side of life, and brought back the old Zoroastrians. He resisted the Mazdakian movement which was established by Mazdak in the days of his father Kawād I (Qubād) (488-531). This movement called for the abolishment of the royalty for allowing libertinism, and for the withdrawal of the privileges of noble

⁹⁵ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 160.

⁹⁶ Dūrī, *Formation*, 23, 29.

and religious men.⁹⁷

During his time he attacked the Byzantine empire of the time of his counterpart Justinian (A.D. 527-565). He expanded the empire to the east. He sent a military detachment to the Yemen at the request of the local rulers who were against Abyssinian rule established over them. Wars between the Persian and Byzantines extended into the time of Parwēz II (A.D. 580-628) when he captured Syria. His army entered Jerusalem in A.D. 614 and he captured Egypt in 619. When his son deposed him the Byzantines were able to reclaim all the territories he had occupied.⁹⁸

These continuous wars weakened the Persian government and affected internal security and the economic situation, particularly in the regions in which war was concentrated. The governors and army commanders had influence in government. In addition there was a rise in feeling among the army that it was not fighting to protect any religion or dogma, but rather that it was being taken to the battle-field unwillingly. All these events led to the gradual decline of the empire which could not protect its widespread borders from repeated tribal attacks. This weakness was shown in the battle of Dhū Qār (A.D. 611) in which the Arabian tribes defeated the Persian army.⁹⁹ This victory raised the Arabs' morale and illustrated their power. They also discovered the military weak points of the Persians. The tribes also started to attack al-Ḥīrah, when it began to weaken. They also attacked the caravan which the kings of al-Ḥīrah sent to trade in the markets of the Ḥijāz and the Yemen. Thus the trade routes too became unsafe and the Persians were unable to

⁹⁷ *El*², IV, 178.

⁹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 93.

⁹⁹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 161-16; Donner, 'The Bakr B. Wā'il Tribes', *SI*, 5-37. For further details about the battle of Dhū Qār, see al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 193-212; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, I, 236; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 245, 249, 257, 258; II, 47, 211; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 285-293.

help or protect them, since their own internal situation was as bad. This increased the determination of the tribes to attack al-Ḥīrah and the Persian borders at the same time. It is probable that these raids were among the causes which led the emperor to depose al-Nu'mān, the ruler of al-Ḥīrah, and to put an end to the rule of the Lakhmids. This was for one of two reasons; either the emperor realised that al-Nu'mān was unable to prevent attacks and safeguard the caravans, or because al-Nu'mān had started to negotiate with the tribal chiefs to please them and win them to his side. This act threatened Persian interests. There are reports which indicate that al-Nu'mān said to the leaders of the tribes, 'Indeed I am one of you, I ruled and was honourable only through you. I do not perceive any danger from your side. Let him (i.e. the Sasanian emperor) know that Arabs are not as he perceived them to be.'¹⁰⁰ Other reports indicate that he killed al-Nu'mān because he and his whole family colluded with the tribes against the Persians.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the inability of the rulers of al-Ḥīrah to protect the caravans of Persia heading for the Yemen and the important land routes which linked Iraq with the Yemen, their inability to prevent the tribes from attacking the Persian borders and the fact that al-Nu'mān contacted the tribal leaders to please them, to have them side with him and to strengthen his weak rule, were all among the factors which led the Sasanian emperor to depose al-Nu'mān. He changed the ruling family for another, and entrusted the affairs of al-Ḥīrah totally to a Persian leader, to rule it militarily.¹⁰²

However the problems of the other great empire of Byzantium were no less than those of the Persians. After some resistance and repression, Christianity

¹⁰⁰ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, I, 169; see also Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', *JESHO*, XIII, 114.

¹⁰¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 286.

¹⁰² Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, S, 332.

was made the official religion of the government and the people. As a result it was expected that the nation would unite, but such unity did not occur due to divisions within the religion itself. Therefore religion intervened in politics, which resulted in resistance from the government towards the Christian factions, and repression for anyone who opposed the king's faith.¹⁰³

The continuous wars which took place between Persia and Byzantium, the split of the latter empire into two ruling capitals, Rome and Constantinople, and the attacks to which some regions of the empire were exposed from the west and the north, resulted in serious problems for the Arabs in general and for the Byzantines in particular. Anūshirvān seized the opportunity to attack the eastern part of the empire, while Justinian (527-565) was busy defending the west. The Persian army occupied Syria and reached the shores of the Mediterranean. Later, several negotiations took place between the two sides to sign a truce to cease fighting for five years. After a long period of negotiations with the Persians this truce was extended for fifty years. It was signed in A.D. 561. The truce stipulated that Rome should pay a high annual tribute to the Persians who in return should not repress the Christians and allow the Roman traders to trade in their sphere of sovereignty.¹⁰⁴

The Byzantines under Justinian (A.D. 527-565) were much concerned with trade affairs which was an important source of income for the empire. The empire was actively involved in trade with the Far East because of the importance of its commodities for Europe. Silk was the most important commodity imported from China, followed by perfumes, cotton and spices and so on which were imported by

¹⁰³ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 164; Vasiliev, *History*, 137.

¹⁰⁴ Vasiliev, *History*, 138; Bury, *Empire*, II, 120.

the Roman traders. After the government took the taxes imposed on them the traders were allowed to deal freely.¹⁰⁵

The prices of these commodities caused problems for the Byzantine empire. Therefore it constantly contacted the Persian empire to arrange an agreement to fix the prices and to specify the amount of taxes. This was because most of the commodities coming from the east passed through the Persian empire and from there they were transported to the Byzantine empire, and were then distributed from the capital to the European markets.

Another possible trade route was by sea where the Chinese traders carried their commodities by ship to Ceylon, from there on to the Persian Gulf and up the Euphrates or the Tigris to al-Hīrah or al-Madā'in. After that, goods passed to Syria and from thence to Europe, or from the east across the Red Sea to Byzantium.¹⁰⁶

While relations between the two empires were unstable, because of continuous wars, this trade was liable to cease during times of hostility. This led to a rise in prices of the commodities, in addition to the high taxes imposed by the Persians in time of peace. These events led Justinian to think about another route by which he would acquire the commodities of the east. This route was the Red Sea. The step which Justinian took to free Byzantine trade from the domination of the Persians was to initiate direct contact with markets of the Far East and transport the commodities by means of the Red Sea.¹⁰⁷ The Byzantines had control over the port of Aylah ('Aqabah) and Clysma (Qulzum). As for the island of Iotabe, present day Terran, it was an important centre for collecting taxes from the ships

¹⁰⁵ See Smith, 'Events', *BSOAS*, 426.

¹⁰⁶ Vasiliev, *History*, 163.

¹⁰⁷ Runcimann, *Civilisation*, 301.

approaching from India. This island was under the control of tribal leaders, so Justinian ordered the appointment of Byzantine officials to collect taxes.¹⁰⁸ To be successful in this, it was necessary for Justinian to have control of the Red Sea since from there he could enter the Indian Ocean and then reach the Far East. This could only be achieved in two ways: firstly by military action, however they were unable to carry out this action at that time because they had not sufficient forces to enable them to penetrate through Western Arabia to reach the Yemen. They had learned from previous experience that hunger and thirst destroys an army, bearing in mind that they could not trust for supplies the tribes settled between Syria and the Yemen. They sought an alternative route to the Yemen, namely by sea, but were again unable to penetrate with their weak navy. The second way, and the only way left to them, was by political means.

Political action meant relying on the co-operation of the Abyssinians who ruled the Yemen and hence controlled Bāb al-Mandab at the Red Sea, and also on developing good relations with the tribes dwelling in the north of the Arabian Peninsula and the Syrian desert. Hence these tribes would be linked with the Byzantines against the Persians. This meant that the Byzantines would be a greater danger to the Persians and would be able to carry on trade peacefully and securely with the markets of the west across the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea.¹⁰⁹ The roots of the trade between the Mediterranean world and China, India, the Yemen, and the eastern coast of Africa go back to antiquity when the main receiving market was, from the time of Augustus, Rome, and later Rome's heir, Byzantium. In the first two centuries A.D. the Romans tried to take an active part

¹⁰⁸ Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 10; Vasiliev, *History*, 167; Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 67. For more details of *Iotabe*, see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 352; Musil, *Hijāz*, 306.

¹⁰⁹ ʿAlī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 170-171.

in trade and their merchant navy was busy in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.¹¹⁰ With the decline of the Roman Empire, after Antonines, the Romans gradually lost direct control of trade, which passed into the hands of various middlemen. Persia, Byzantium's main rival and itself one of the consumers by virtue of its geographic and political position, could control a decisive part of the transit trade. In addition to the two empires there were several minor state - Abyssinia, the Yemen, the Ghassanids and the Lakhmids - all participating in this transit trade who were unable to survive as independent traders between the two great powers; as a result, the direction and the survival of their participation in transit trade depended upon their relations with the two great powers.¹¹¹

Byzantium began to adopt the policy of winning over the minor middlemen and making them economic, political, or ideological allies. This policy was one of the reasons for the increasing importance of the Arabian Peninsula. The Persian empire responded with a similar policy. This policy of gaining allies resulted, from 502, in continuous warfare between the two empires that lasted right up to the eve of the Muslim conquests.¹¹² Because of its geographical location between the Byzantine empire and Persia, the Arabian Peninsula began to assume considerable strategic importance. Both empires considered it a place where potential allies might be found.¹¹³

The economic importance of the Arabian Peninsula was due to the fact that, geographically, it was a transit territory of east-west trade since it was situated between the producers (partly the Far East, but mainly Abyssinia and the Yemen)

¹¹⁰ Simon, *Trade*, 24. For more details of Roman and Oriental trade in general, see O'Leary, *Arabia*, 74-81; Hourani, *Seafaring*, 14-34; Vasiliev, *Justin*, 24-25.

¹¹¹ Ghirsman, *L'Iran des origines à l'Islam*, 268 (1951).

¹¹² Kavar, 'Arethas', *JAOS*, 205-216.

¹¹³ Simon, *Trade*, 25.

and the consumer (Byzantium). Its role in transit trade increased as a result of the endless Byzantine-Persian skirmishes, therefore Byzantium had to look for new routes and new allies. The Byzantines tried to extend their influence on the overland trade-route, the famous 'incense route', which started from the Yemen and passed through Western Arabia, which till the beginning of the sixth century had been under the control of the Himyar family. This plan had been achieved by the Abyssinian conquest of the Yemen and by their relations with some Arab tribes through their puppet state the Ghassanids.¹¹⁴ As a result Western Arabia gained a prominent role, and this in turn offered it the possibility of participating in trade on a large scale.

With the conquest of the Yemen by the Abyssinians Byzantium really secured this area for itself. It was crucially important for many reasons: it is an essential junction between the route from Abyssinia to India. Justinian sent c. A.D. 529 an embassy with Julian as its leader and with the participation of Nonosus to the Abyssinian emperor Ell Thaios (Ella Aṣbeḥa), to the latter's governor over his South Arabian possessions, Esimiphaïos (SMYF' of the inscriptions), and to the Kindite leader of the Ma'add tribes, Kaisos (Qays), with the aim of forming a strong Abyssinian – South Arabian coalition against the Persians. The ambassador returned bringing good news of success. However the two rulers did nothing to implement what they promised and the coalition was not realized.¹¹⁵ However Abraha's famous 547 campaign against North Arabia was also one of the outcomes of the exchange of embassies, and Justinian's attempts clearly showed the limits of Byzantine influence.¹¹⁶ This situation is reflected in ad-Dīnawarī's reference where

¹¹⁴ Simon, *Trade*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Procopius, *Wars*, I, XX, 1-13. See also, Smith, 'Events', 433; Simon, *Trade*, 27; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 171-172.

¹¹⁶ Simon, *Trade*, 27. The expedition of Abrahah against Ma'add and especially against the 'Āmir

in all probability it refers to the events of 528, the year when Ḥārith b. Jabalah (Dīnawarī says Khālīd) attacked and plundered al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir. 'And Kistrā Anūshirvān wrote in a letter to the Byzantine emperor that he would order Khālīd (i.e. al-Ḥārith) to compensate al-Mundhir and those of his companions whom he had killed and would order that the goods he had taken be returned. But the emperor paid no attention to his letter.'¹¹⁷ Anūshirvān prepared for war against al-Nu'mān and marched into that territory of the Arabian Peninsula which was in the hands of Byzantium. It can be assumed that Byzantium - with the help of the Yemen ruled by Abyssinia and the Ghassānids - expended its influence in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula and on transit trade. From the beginning of the sixth century the role of the buffer-states had increased tremendously, particularly when the hostilities between the two great powers extended. 'In order to understand the buffer-states we must know that they were artificial political formations, that they were the creations, not of internal socio-economic development but of exogenous political interests.'¹¹⁸

Kindah, which had under its control several tribes and a fairly large territory, fulfilled up to the end of the 520s multiple functions evolved their own spheres of influence in the Arabian Peninsula, and also controlled the caravan routes from the Yemen to Persia (through Bahrain) and to Byzantium (through Syria).¹¹⁹

After the downfall of the South Arabian kingdoms, Kindah collapsed under

b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah is discussed by Kister in his article 'Campaign', *Le Museon*, 425-436. The record of this campaign found on an inscription on a rock in the vicinity of the well of al-Murayghān refers to the tribal division of Tamīm. This inscription (RY 506) was published by G. Rychmans in *Le Museon*, LXVI, 275-284. It was published with a German translation by W. Caskel in *Entdeckungen*, 27-31, and also made available into English with notes and remarks by Sidney Smith, 'Events', 435-37 and by A.F.L. Beeston 'Notes', *BSOAS*, 389-92. The inscription was partly translated into Arabic by 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 396-98.

¹¹⁷ al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār*, 430.

¹¹⁸ Simon, *Trade*, 27-28.

¹¹⁹ 'Abbās, *Sharḥ*, 7-9; Simon, *Trade*, 28.

the violent attack of the Lakhmid Mundir III supported by Arūsharvān. At the end of the twenties, and from the beginning of the thirties of the sixth century the two buffer-states between Byzantium and Persia, the Ghassanids and Lakhmids, gained in importance, and in the constant struggle for power, built their own circles of interest on the Arabian Peninsula.¹²⁰ In the development of Meccan trade, after the elimination of the Yemen and Kindah, it was primarily al-Ḥīrah which gained in significance, partly because it acquired the greater part of the territories previously controlled by Kindah and partly because it was an important transit-trade centre. Furthermore, it seems probable that in the middle of the sixth century al-Ḥīrah controlled not only the trade routes from the Yemen to Bahrain (Hajar, al-Mushaqqar)¹²¹ and to Iraq (al-Ḥīrah) but had under its influence a major part of West Arabia and the incense-route. The increased military and commercial role of the Lakhmids and to a lesser degree of the Ghassanids is shown most clearly in the paragraph of the A.D. 561 peace treaty between Byzantium and Persia which concerned the buffer-states. The fifth clause in the treaty ordered the Arabs to bring their wares to Daras and Nisibis, the Roman and the Persian emporia, and not smuggle them through out-of-way paths. Furthermore it gives them to understand that failure to fulfil these orders will result in severe punishments on the traders who are caught. Such a specific mention of its Arabs clearly indicate their economic and political importance in the eyes of the two empires.¹²²

From the aspect of the development of Meccan trade it is mainly al-Ḥīrah which is of interest to us, since we know that the Lakhmids had taken control of a major part of Kindah. The Sabaic inscription RY 506¹²³ from the year A.D. 547

¹²⁰ Simon, *Trade*, 28.

¹²¹ Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma'ārif*, 319; Simon, *Trade*, 27.

¹²² c.f. Kavar, 'The Arabs', *Arabica*, 192-193.

¹²³ See Rychmans, 'Inscriptions', *Le Muséon*, 278; Simon, *Trade*, 29.

shows beyond doubt the 'supremacy of al-Ḥīrah over the Ma'add tribes. Since the settlement of the Ma'add was near Mecca,¹²⁴ that is in the vicinity of the incense route, which means that around the middle of the sixth century al-Ḥīrah was in control of this area. By the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies the situation had changed. The two powers took a firm stand against the two buffer-states and the sources suggest that the influence of the buffer-states on the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula had greatly diminished and was about to vanish'.¹²⁵

We know that under Justinian II (565-578) hostilities broke out between Byzantium and the Ghassanids, and that under Tiberius (578-582) the Ghassanids had ceased to exist with the capture and exile of al-Mundhir b. Ḥārith b. Jabalah and his son Nu'mān.¹²⁶ The Lakhmids went through a similar slower decline. The sources reveal that around A.D. 570 the influence of the Persians and Lakhmids on the tribes of central and western Arabia had almost completely finished or was about to finish, despite the fact that the Persians tried to use Ḥanīfah who were settled in Yamāmah as a sort of buffer-state.¹²⁷ One piece of information we have about the disappearance of Persian, i.e. Lakhmid, influence on the Arabian Peninsula is that around 570 when Anūsharwān was preparing for the conquest of the Yemen (occupied at that time by the Abyssinians), he could not send his troops by land but had to approach the Yemen by sea. As al-Ṭabarī reports, only after the victory was won did Wahriz, the Persian commander, dare to send the loot by the land route to Persia, where the caravan had been attacked and looted by Tamīm. Also the report states that, when Anūsharwān wanted to start a military expedition against Tamīm, he was advised to abandon this plan because 'their land

¹²⁴ al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, I, 60. Cf. Simon, *Trade*, 29.

¹²⁵ Simon, *Trade*, 29.

¹²⁶ al-'Alī, *Muḥāḍarat*, 46.

¹²⁷ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 17, 237; Ibn Darayd, *al-Ishtiqāq*, 348; Simon, *Trade*, 29.

is a vast desert two paths of which are difficult to know and the water of which is from wells which they might destroy and as a result the army will die'.¹²⁸ Because of these circumstances he abandoned the invasion of Tamīm and used instead a ruse through his governor in Bahrain to punish Tamīm.

Noteworthy, from the point of view of the development of Meccan trade, is the fact that by about 570 North Arabia had freed itself of all influences and the various rivals (Abyssinians, Lakhmids, Ghassanids) had weakened or had fallen. At last the possibilities created for North Arabia and for the incense route by the continuous warfare between Byzantium and Persia and by the attempts of Byzantium to possess an independent trade were utilized by the inhabitants of the area for their own benefit, and Mecca was able to seize control of the trade passing through Arabia and trade became the dominant economic activity. Although there were internal rivals to Mecca and Quraysh like the tribes of al-Ṭā'if and their allies, the Hawāzin tribes with Lakhmid interests. They were thus unable to pursue independent trade transactions and could not control transit trade in Arabia. Yet they were greatly interested in trading activities such as escorts, guides etc. of the earlier middlemen (primarily of the Lakhmids).¹²⁹

As far as the development of the events in the Byzantine empire was concerned, the empire after Justinian's death faced many relapses. The severe repression of Christian sects which contradicted the orthodox increased. Confusion and chaos returned to the government. War between Byzantine and the Persian empires was renewed. After continuous fighting the Persians entered Syria in A.D. 614 and occupied Jerusalem. The empire was then inflicted with an even greater disaster

¹²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 984-985.

¹²⁹ Simon, *Trade*, 30; Kavar, 'The Arabs', 190-191.

when the Persians occupied Egypt and the Persian army reached the opposite shore of Constantinople, the Byzantine capital.¹³⁰ All these events took place at the time when the Prophet Muḥammad started preaching a new faith to the inhabitants of Mecca. When the news reached the Meccan people about the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians, they were joyful because they were followers of paganism. The polytheists of Mecca told the followers of Muḥammad that the Persians had defeated the people of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) and they would defeat them should they fight them.¹³¹ The conflict between the Byzantine and the Persian empires is referred to in the Qur'ān XXX. 'The Roman empire has been defeated in a land close by. But they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs will soon be victorious within a few years. With God is the decision in the past and in the future. On that Day shall the believers rejoice with the help of God.'¹³²

The Muslims were happy about this and knew that they would also defeat the Meccans. The Byzantine defeats at the hands of the Persians took place in the days of Heraclius (610-641). It was not long before the emperor regained his lost territories. It is probable that Heraclius conducted three Persian campaigns between the years 622 and 628. Thereafter a truce was completed between Heraclius and the Sasanian emperor, Shahvaroz, stipulating that the Persians must give up all that they had gained and subsequently they agreed to return to the borders they had held before the invasion.¹³³

¹³⁰ Vasiliev, *History*, 193.

¹³¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXI, 13; Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, XIV, 1ff.

¹³² Qur'ān, XXX, 1-5.

¹³³ Vasiliev, *History*, 198.

Chapter III

Mecca, the Historical Background

Mecca is situated half-way along the caravan route between the Yemen and al-Shām¹³⁴ in one of the wadis of the Sarāt mountains and is surrounded on all sides by barren mountains.¹³⁵ It lies in the southern Ḥijāz in Tihāmah, about forty eight miles from the Red Sea, a barren rocky valley described in the Qur'ān as unsuitable for cultivation. Mecca owed its economic prosperity to its geographical position and its relations with the important trade route to India.¹³⁶

Mecca is an ancient town referred to in the Greek and Roman sources; Ptolemy, who lived in the second century A.D., calls it Macoraba.¹³⁷

Jawād 'Alī considers that the name Macoroba is an Arabic word which was corrupted to suit Greek pronunciation. It was originally Maqraba from the word *taqrīb* (bringing, drawing closer). He believes that this name is derived from the name adopted by the ancient Sabaean rulers who were priests (*kuhhān*) ruling in the name of their gods. Each ruler would name himself 'makrab' (sic), which Jawād 'Alī relates to *muqarrib* (sic) in Arabic who then goes on to maintain that he is the closest person to the gods and therefore the one who interceded on their behalf. In other words his role was to bring the people closer to the gods. Thus

¹³⁴ Cf Crone, *Meccan Trade*, whose basic thesis is built on the erroneous foundation that Mecca did *not* sit on a major trade route and Meccan sanctuary was of minor importance. For this reason I have avoided a detailed critique of her work in this thesis, mentioning it occasionally where appropriate.

¹³⁵ *EI*², 'Mecca', 144-145. Cf Sālim, *Tārīkh*, I, 294-320.

¹³⁶ Rustum, *Readings*, 23.

¹³⁷ Ptolemy, *Geography*, VI, 7, 32.

the town of Macoraba received its name, since it was considered close to the gods, also sacred and inviolable.¹³⁸ This theory however can hardly be maintained. The Sabaic MKRB (being both a title and meaning also a temple or sanctuary) is derived from the root KRB which has nothing to do with the idea of 'bringing close', etc. The latter notion is expressed by QRB in Sabaic similar to *qaraba* in Arabic. Since the K and Q in Sabaic are quite distinct from each other (as in Arabic) it is quite fanciful, as Jawād 'Alī has done, to confuse them.¹³⁹

Diodorus Siculus writes of a temple found in the territory of an Arab tribe called 'Bizain'.¹⁴⁰ Some scholars hold that this was Mecca. However, this theory is not based upon satisfactory evidence, since the temple lies at a great distance from Mecca in the Ḥisma region (S. Jordan), where there were many other temples mentioned by the Greek and Roman writers. Some of these ruins can still be seen today.¹⁴¹

Islamic sources and writers on the history of Mecca do not refer to the name given by Ptolemy. However they refer to a 'Bakkah' which is also mentioned in the Qur'ān.¹⁴² The Qur'ān has the name Mecca in XLVIII, 24, and the alternative name Bakkah in III, 96. It also speaks of the building of the Ka'bah by Abraham and Ismael, but this is generally not accepted by western scholars, since it cannot be connected with what is otherwise known of Abraham.¹⁴³ Some sources claim that the letter 'mīm' was replaced by a 'bā'. Others claim that 'Bakkah' refers to

¹³⁸ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 9-10.

¹³⁹ See Beeston, *Sabaic Dictionary*, 78, 106; Biella, *Dictionary*, 251.

¹⁴⁰ Oldfather, *Bibliotheca*, XXXI; Booth, *The Historical Library*, 105; De Gaury, *Rulers*, 12.

¹⁴¹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 10.

¹⁴² Qur'ān, III, 69.

¹⁴³ *ET*², VI, 144. For other names of Mecca mentioned in the Qur'ān see: Qur'ān, XCV, 1-3, XC, 1-2, XXII, 44.

the site of a temple and 'Mecca' to the area beyond it. Many attempts have been made to find meanings and interpretations for the words 'Mecca' and 'Bakkah', and these can be found in Arabic lexica, as well as in geographical and historical works.¹⁴⁴

Islamic sources say that Mecca was known by other names, for instance Ṣalāḥ,¹⁴⁵ Umm Raḥm, al-Bāssah and al-Nāssah.¹⁴⁶ It is referred to in the Qur'ān as Umm al-Qurā.¹⁴⁷

Since no pre-Islamic sources have yet been discovered giving clear indications of the former name of this town or information about its ancient history, it is extremely difficult to determine the date and circumstances of its foundation. However, it is probable that it dates back thousands of years, to the days of Abraham and Ishmael, that is to the nineteenth century B.C.¹⁴⁸ Its wadi was probably used by caravans as a resting place, because of the many springs which were to be found there; such resting places were to be found all along the trade routes across the desert.¹⁴⁹

As Islamic sources indicated that Abraham and Ishmael built the Ka'bah in the wadi of Mecca,¹⁵⁰ it is possible that Ishmael was its first inhabitant, after it had passed through the stage of simply being a trading post for travellers from

¹⁴⁴ Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt*, 56; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 256; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 248; *Tāj*, VII, 179; al-Juharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, IV, 1609; Azraqī, *Akḥbār*, I, 188.

¹⁴⁵ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 228; Fīrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs*, I, 235.

¹⁴⁶ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 228; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 284.

¹⁴⁷ Qur'ān, XI, 92.

¹⁴⁸ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 188; Sahrīf, *Mecca*, 96.

¹⁴⁹ Haykal, *Ḥayāt*, 84; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, I, 299-300.

¹⁵⁰ The Islamic sources have undoubtedly been influenced by the numerous verses in the Qur'ān in which the names of Abraham and Ishmael are connected with the Ka'bah. See Qur'ān, II, 125-127, XXII, 26-28.

north to south.¹⁵¹ Islamic sources say that Abraham took his wife, Hagar, and their son Ishmael southwards to this wadi. He then left them there with food and water and returned to the place from which he had come. We are told that Hagar made a shelter near a reddish-coloured hill which possibly was considered sacred since the travellers in the caravans came to take a blessing from it.¹⁵²

When the water was exhausted, Hagar and Ishmael were on the point of dying of thirst. Hagar began to search for water, whereupon the well of Zamzam gushed forth. Hagar and her son stayed and were supplied with food by passing caravans. The well attracted several tribes to the area.¹⁵³

Some sources claim that the first of the tribes to settle was the Yemeni tribe of Jurhum.¹⁵⁴ However, others claim that Jurhum were present before the well of Zamzam appeared, together with another tribe called the 'Amāliqah.¹⁵⁵

Ishmael grew up and married a Jurhumite girl and he and his father built the Ka'bah in this place, making it a centre of pilgrimage for the people.

Muir doubts the veracity of this story, and considers that it was fabricated by the Jews in pre-Islamic days in order to suggest that there were bonds of kinship between the Jews and the Arabs, which would thus necessitate the good treatment of Jews living amongst the Arabs and facilitate Jewish trade in the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁵⁶ He bases his theory on the fact that there was no connection between religious practices in the Arabian Peninsula and the religion of Abraham,

¹⁵¹ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 96.

¹⁵² Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 6; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 155; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 178.

¹⁵³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 123-124.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 124.

¹⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 179, II, 37. Cf *EI*², VI, 144-145; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, II, 46; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 40.

¹⁵⁶ Muir, *Mahomet*, lxxxvii.

since these practices were pagan, and Abraham was a *ḥanīf*. While he dismisses the story of the journey of Abraham and Ishmael to the Ḥijāz, he considers it possible that a group of their descendants later travelled from Palestine to the Arabian Peninsula and intermarried with the Arabs there.¹⁵⁷

Haykal debates Muir's theory, saying that his evidence is not sufficient to repudiate a historical truth, and that the fact that the Arabs were pagans centuries after the death of Abraham and Ishmael does not indicate that they were pagans when the latter built the Ka'bah.¹⁵⁸ Haykal considers that logic confirms the historical story, since Abraham who fled from Iraq with his family to Palestine and Egypt, was accustomed to travelling and crossing deserts. The road between Palestine and Mecca had been used by caravans since ancient times. If it is possible that the descendants of Abraham and Ishmael made the journey, then why could the two men themselves not have made it? How can the story of Abraham and Ishmael be inaccurate when the historical story confirms it and when it is mentioned in the Qur'ān as well as in the Torah and the Old Testament.¹⁵⁹

Abraham knew of the existence of the trading centre of Mecca which was at the crossroads where several caravan routes met. There is no doubt that the Quranic verse, 'Behold we gave the site of the sacred House to Abraham',¹⁶⁰ indicates Abraham's inspiration to build the Ka'bah in Mecca, which would probably have met with a favourable response from the inhabitants of the area and the traveller who passed through.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Muir, *Mahomet*, xci-xciii.

¹⁵⁸ Haykal, *Ḥayāt*, 89-90.

¹⁵⁹ Haykal, *Ḥayāt*, 89-90; Sharīf, *Mecca*, 99.

¹⁶⁰ Qur'ān, XXII, 26- 28.

¹⁶¹ Haykal, *Ḥayāt*, 90.

Abraham would not have brought his wife and his son to an uncultivated desert area without a particular reason. That reason was to worship at the Ka'bah and to preach God's religion. The Quranic verse, 'Our Lord, I have made some of my seed to dwell in a valley where there is no sown land by thy Holy House; Our Lord, let them perform the prayer, and make hearts of men yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; haply they will be thankful',¹⁶² clearly indicates this fact. It also indicates Abraham's hopes that the place would flourish as a trading centre in the future, because of the many caravan routes which converged there.¹⁶³

Abraham, as mentioned in Islamic sources, visited his wife and his son several times to confirm the suitability of the place he had chosen. He then built the Ka'bah with the help of his son, 'And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing: and, Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee: and show us our holy rites, and turn towards us; surely Thou turnest, and art All-Compassionate;'¹⁶⁴ When Abraham had witnessed the development of the town around the Ka'bah for which he had hoped, and was certain that he had been successful in his task, he prayed to God, saying 'My Lord! Make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols.'¹⁶⁵ Thus, from what we can deduce from the Qur'ān and Islamic sources we can form an impression of the foundation of Mecca.

The Jurhum¹⁶⁶ tribe, who were originally from the Yemen, controlled the Ka'bah for a time until the arrival of the Khuzā'ah tribe.¹⁶⁷ This was another

¹⁶² Qur'ān, XIV, 35.

¹⁶³ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 100.

¹⁶⁴ Qur'ān, II, 127-128.

¹⁶⁵ Qur'ān, XIV, 35.

¹⁶⁶ For further information concerning Jurhum see Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, II, 291; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 69; Qalqashandī, *Subih*, I, 308; Kaḥḥālah, *Mu'jam*, I, 183; de Gaury, *Rulers*, 33.

¹⁶⁷ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, I, 54. Cf *El*², VI, 145. For more details about Khuzā'ah see Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I,

Yemeni tribe who had emigrated from the south with other Azd tribes after the destruction of the dam of Ma'rib. Khuzā'ah settled in the area around Mecca. A conflict arose between the tribes of Jurhum and Khuzā'ah and culminated in a battle, in which Khuzā'ah were victorious and expelled Jurhum from Mecca.¹⁶⁸

The first of the Khuzā'ah tribes to take control of Mecca was the one led by 'Amr b. Luḥayy.¹⁶⁹ He replaced the religion of Abraham with a pagan religion, and it is recorded that he brought idols from Balqā' in Syria, which were placed around the Ka'bah.¹⁷⁰

Mecca began to develop in the days of Khuzā'ah's rule, and 'Amr b. Luḥayy strove to increase the number of pilgrims coming to the Ka'bah. This followed a period of decline under Jurhum due to their animosity towards the caravans, traders and pilgrims.¹⁷¹

Khuzā'ah remained in power for a significant period of time, estimated by some historians to be as long as five hundred years.¹⁷² They were the rulers of Mecca and the custodians of the Ka'bah and they also took tithes from the traders. However, some of the offices connected with the pilgrimage remained in the hands of Kinānah, who were those descendants of Ishmael who had remained in the environs of Mecca.¹⁷³

The real history of Mecca commences with Quṣayy b. Kilāb, who took control

34; al-Fāsī, *Shifā'*, II, 44-45; Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 7-8; Ibn Duryd, *Ishtiḳāq*, 468; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 81, 83, 86, 285-288; Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu'jam*, I, 338-340.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣṇām*, 8; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 89; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 211.

¹⁶⁹ For more detailed information about 'Amr b. Luḥayy, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣṇām*, 8-9; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 211; Ziriklī, *A'lām*, V, 257.

¹⁷⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 89; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 211.

¹⁷¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 125; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, I, 314; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣṇām*, 8; al-Fāsī, *Shifā'*, II, 22.

¹⁷² Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 183.

¹⁷³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 131-136.

in the middle of the fifth century A.D. Little is known of the history of Mecca before this period, and the sources we have related to this period cannot be relied upon. However this is not the case with Qusayy and Quraysh, who settled in Mecca and encouraged its development, making it a distinguished religious and literary centre.¹⁷⁴

3.1 Qusayy b. Kilāb

Legend has it that Qusayy's mother (Fāṭimah b. Sa'd) married a man from 'Udhrah after the death of Kilāb b. Murrah, Qusayy's father. Qusayy's mother went with her new husband, who was a member of the B. 'Udhrah, to live with his tribe in Bādiyat al-Shām, taking with her her son, Zayd, who was later nicknamed Qusayy (which means 'far away', because of the great distance between him and his native land). Qusayy remained with the B. 'Udhrah until he grew up. However when he learnt of his ancestry, he returned to his tribe and settled in Mecca. There he distinguished himself to such an extent that he was able to marry Ḥubā, the daughter of Ḥalīl b. al-Ḥabashiyyah, the leader of the Khazā'ah tribe.¹⁷⁵ Qusayy became a prosperous man due to his distinguished position in Mecca, and as a result became more ambitious. His shrewdness and strength of character are shown in the way he laid his plans to take control of the town and the custody (*sidānah*) of the Ka'bah, secretly contacting the Quraysh who were scattered throughout Tihāmah and around the Mecca area.¹⁷⁶ He united them and gathered them to his cause, making an alliance with the Kinānah tribe and corresponding with his stepbrother, Razāḥ b. Rabī'ah b. Ḥirām al-'Udhri to seek his support if it proved

¹⁷⁴ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 103.

¹⁷⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 130.

¹⁷⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 15; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 130-136; *ET*², IV, 1158-1159. See also Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 39-42; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 11-14; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, 164; Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 84; Ziriklī, *A'lām*, VI, 43.

necessary. Having completed his plans Qusayy took advantage of the death of his father-in-law, the custodian of the Ka'bah, and obtained the key, thereby gaining the right to control it.¹⁷⁷

Khuzā'ah opposed any control of the tasks and functions connected with the Ka'bah by another tribe. Qusayy called upon Kinānah and Quraysh and requested help from his step-brother, who came to his aid together with men from Quḍā'ah. In the battle, the Qusayy was victorious over Khuzā'ah and their allies, B. Bakr, and he expelled them from Mecca.¹⁷⁸ He was also able to impose his authority over Kinānah, who had control of some of the offices connected with the pilgrimage.¹⁷⁹ He bought Quraysh to live in Mecca dividing it up between them. They acknowledged his rule over Mecca and Qusayy was able to take control of all the offices connected with the pilgrimage.¹⁸⁰

Some Islamic sources hold that there were no buildings in Mecca apart from the Ka'bah until Qusayy came to power. According to them, Jurhum and Khuzā'ah did not want any other structure near the House of God. They did not spend the night in the Ka'bah, but would rather go to their tents (*hill*).¹⁸¹

When Qusayy took control he gathered Quraysh together and instructed them to settle around the Ka'bah. He then built his home and made it into a council (*nadwah*). It became known as Dār al-Nadwah, and the notables of Mecca would gather there under Qusayy's authority to discuss local affairs.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 130.

¹⁷⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 130.

¹⁷⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 15; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 40.

¹⁸⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 137; Baladhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 52; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 197; al-Nahrawānī, *al-'Alām*, 45.

¹⁸¹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 197; Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, I, 426; Haykal, *Ḥayāt*, 94. *Hill* means tents and is so called *hill*, because it is easy to remove. Cf. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XI, 195.

¹⁸² Baladhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 52; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 197; cf. Serjeant, 'Ḥaram and Ḥawtah', 53; Watt,

From this time onwards, Mecca developed rapidly into a civilized stable town with an organised economy. By the end of the sixth century A.D., it had become the most important town of the Arabian Peninsula. It is as if Islamic sources wish to prove that Mecca remained underdeveloped until Qusayy took power in the middle of the fifth century A.D. However, some orientalist doubt the very existence of Qusayy, considering him to be an imaginary figure invented by Islamic historians, although such arguments have little to back them up.¹⁸³ Be that as it may, the theory that Mecca remained undeveloped until the rule of Qusayy seems to be unacceptable, since it is contradicted by information which the Islamic historians themselves give us, with regard to its former rulers. This information suggests that after the death of Ishmael and the defeat of Jurhum, control of the Ka'bah passed into the hands of Khuzā'ah. The significance of this lies in the fact that Khuzā'ah had come from the Yemen, a civilised and stable country with a well developed system of government. When Khuzā'ah took control of the Ka'bah, they made efforts to organise the pilgrimage more effectively, increased the number of pilgrims, and attracted the Arab tribes to Mecca. Furthermore, Mecca was the point at which the caravan routes from the Yemen, al-Hīrah, and al-Shām converged. The Islamic historians also refer to the respect in which Mecca was held by the *tubba's*. For example, they point out that the *tubba'*, As'ad Abū Karib al-Himyarī, visited Mecca and placed the *kiswah* on the Ka'bah.¹⁸⁴ It is difficult to imagine a town of the status of Mecca not attracting civilising influences as a result of its contact with the outside world.¹⁸⁵

Muhammad, 8-9; Bashier, *Crucible*, 34; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, 315; 'Auḍallah, *Mecca*, 55.

¹⁸³ Watt, *Muhammad*, 4; Lammens, *La Mecque*, 148-194.

¹⁸⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 20-21; Azrāqī, *Akhbār*, I, 165; Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 129; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VI, 441.

¹⁸⁵ Haykal, *Ḥayāt*, 92-93; Sharīf, *Mecca*, 107; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, 314.

Thus we are justified in saying that Mecca had known a stable pattern of life for many generations before the rule of Quṣayy. The Qur'ān gives Mecca the name Umm al-Qurā,¹⁸⁶ 'the Mother of Settlements', and from this we can deduce that it was a town of a size and status that could not be attained in a mere hundred years.¹⁸⁷ Ṭabarī also mentions that after Khuzā'ah were defeated by Quṣayy, they fled from Mecca, either selling, renting or giving their houses to others. Quṣayy then took control of the Ka'bah and Mecca, gathering Quraysh together, settling some of them in the centre of Mecca (*anḏalahum fī abṭah Makkah*) and others in the mountains surrounding the town.¹⁸⁸ This story indicates that the town of Mecca was in existence before Quṣayy came to power.

3.2 Quraysh

Scholars have not reached a definite conclusion as regards the derivation and meaning of the word Quraysh. Many regard Quraysh as having been a fish or a kind of sea-creature.¹⁸⁹ One authority holds that Quraysh used to be known as al-Naḍr b. Kinānah.¹⁹⁰ It is also said that the tribe of Quraysh was given its name because of its *taqarrush*, i.e. the way it brought back to Mecca those members of the tribe who were scattered on the outskirts of the town after the victory of Quṣayy.¹⁹¹ This tribe was scattered, and Quṣayy gathered them together. Thus he became known as *mujammi'*. Ḥudāfah b. Ghānim b. 'Amr al-Qurashī wrote the following verse:

¹⁸⁶ Qur'ān, XL, 7, XXVIII, 59, VI, 62.

¹⁸⁷ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 107.

¹⁸⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 16.

¹⁸⁹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, VI, 335; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al'Iqd*, III, 312; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, IV, 337; Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 12.

¹⁹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 264; Cf. Goldfeld, *Policy*, 4; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, III, 337.

¹⁹¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 264.

أَبُوكُم قُصَيٌّ كَانَ يُدْعَى مُجَمِّعًا بِهِ جَمَعَ اللَّهُ الْقَبَائِلَ مِنْ فِهْرٍ

‘Qusayy, your ancestor, is called ‘the unifier’;

through him God has unified the tribes of Fihir.’¹⁹²

Quraysh were described as *Āl Allāh* (family of God), *Jīrān Allāh* (those under God’s protection) and *Sukkān Ḥaram Allāh* (inhabitants of the sanctuary of God).¹⁹³

The many definitions of the word Quraysh, and the differing opinions as to its origin, indicate a large degree of confusion amongst the Islamic writers.

3.3 Divisions of Quraysh

Qusayy was the first person to divide Quraysh into groups (*buṭūn*) and to distinguish between Quraysh, al-Ẓawāhir and Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ.¹⁹⁴

3.3.1 Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ

These were the groups living in Mecca itself, who monopolized the important administrative positions, and also carried out most of the trade. They lived in the Akhshab mountains, and were considered to be nobler than Quraysh al-Ẓawāhir.

Ibn Ḥabīb states that Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ consisted of the following groups: B. ‘Abd Manāf, B. ‘Abd al-Dār, B. ‘Abd Qusayy, B. Zuhrah b. Kilāb, B. Taym b. Murrah, B. Makhzūm b. Yaqẓah b. Murrah, B. Sahm and B. Jumah Abnā’, ‘Amr b. Huṣayṣ, B. ‘Udiyy b. Ka‘b, B. Ḥasl b. ‘Āmir b. Lu‘ayy, B. Hilāl b. Ahyab

¹⁹² Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd*, III, 312; See also *EF*², IV, 1122-1126.

¹⁹³ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, III, 313, *al-Tha‘ālibī*, *Thimār*, 11.

¹⁹⁴ al-Alūsī, *Nihāyah*, XVI, 16; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, IV, 337; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 25. Cf. Kister, ‘Reports’, *JESHO*, 83-84.

b. al-Ḥārith b. Fahr, and B. Hilāl b. Mālīk b. al-Ḥārith b. Fahr.¹⁹⁵

Al-Mas'ūdī omits Hilāl b. Ahyab and Hilāl b. Mālīk from this list. However he adds B. Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf, B. al-Muṭṭalib b. 'Abd Manāf, B. al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāf, B. Umayyah b. 'Abd Shams, B. Nawfal b. 'Abd Manāf and B. al-Ḥārith b. Fīhr.¹⁹⁶

There is no doubt that the addition made by al-Mas'ūdī does not apply to the time of the Prophet. At the same time, the list of Ibn Ḥabīb is not applicable in its entirety to the time of Quṣayy since 'Abd Manāf, 'Abd al-Dār and 'Abd Quṣayy were the sons of Quṣayy. Doubtless the various tribes were inter-related by way of marriage. We cannot estimate how many members each tribe had, since the books of genealogy only mention a few individuals from each tribe.¹⁹⁷

3.3.2 Quraysh al-Zawāhir

These were those groups who lived on the outskirts of Mecca and consisted of B. Muṭṭas b. 'Amir b. Lu'ayy, B. Taym b. Ghālīb b. Fīhr, Muḥārib and al-Ḥārith Abnā' Fīhr.¹⁹⁸ From the descriptions given by historians it seems that they were bedouins (*a'rāb*) i.e. nomadic people (*ahl wabar*), where as Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ were sedentary (*ahl Madar*). Quraysh al-Zawāhir enjoyed the reputation of being fierce fighters and the defenders of the Ka'bah.¹⁹⁹

In spite of their common genealogy and the fact that Quraysh al-Zawāhir defended the Ka'bah, they were considered inferior by the Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ, who

¹⁹⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 168-176.

¹⁹⁶ al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, II, 58, 176.

¹⁹⁷ al-'Alī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, 90.

¹⁹⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 168, Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 36; Tha'ālibī, *Thimār*, 97.

¹⁹⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 168.

enjoyed a far greater degree of power and wealth.²⁰⁰ In addition to Quraysh al-Zawāhir and Quraysh al-Bitāḥ, there was another group known as al-Aḥlāf. This group consisted of bedouin tribes who did not form part of the organisational structure of Mecca. They were descendants of B. Kinānah, and participated with Quraysh in most battles. They were known as al-Aḥābīsh.²⁰¹

3.4 al-Aḥābīsh

These were the allies of Quraysh and consisted of B. al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abd Manāt b. Kinānah, B. al-Hūn b. Khuzaymah b. Mudrikah and B. al Muṣṭaliq of Kuzā‘ah and al-Ḥayā’ b. Sa‘d b. ‘Āmir.²⁰² They gathered at the bottom of Jabal Ḥabashī and swore that they would be united against their enemies.²⁰³ Also they were called Aḥābīsh because they gathered together and *taḥābush* means gathering (*tajāmu‘*). We are told that ‘Abd Manāf and ‘Amr b. Hilāl b. Mu‘ayṭ al-Kinānī made an alliance.²⁰⁴ Al-Ya‘qūbī describes the Aḥābīsh alliance: ‘When ‘Abd Manāf b. Quṣayy grew up, Khuzā‘ah and B. al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abd Manāt b. Kinānah came to him and asked to form an alliance, in order to gain strength. Thus an alliance was made between them which was known as *ḥilf al-Aḥābīsh*’.²⁰⁵

The Aḥābīsh, like other Arab tribes such as Quraysh and Hawāzin, Ghatafān and Aslam, would visit the market of ‘Ukāẓ in order to buy and sell.²⁰⁶ Lammens researched the subject of the Aḥābīsh and it was his opinion that they were a military power, composed of slaves brought from Africa and Arab conscripts, created

²⁰⁰ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 28; Kister, ‘Reports’, 81.

²⁰¹ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 18; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 266.

²⁰² Ibn Munzūr, *Lisān*, VI, 278.

²⁰³ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 52, 76.

²⁰⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 246.

²⁰⁵ 5. al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 212.

²⁰⁶ 6. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267.

especially for the defence of Mecca.²⁰⁷ Other orientalist who have researched the same subject have formed differing opinions. Some agree with Lammens, some adopt the opinions of the Arab historians, while others have reached a sort of compromise between the two schools of thought.²⁰⁸

Jawād 'Alī has another theory as to why they were known as the Aḥābīsh. He believes that it is possible that they received this name because they were subject to Ḥabashī rule many years before Islam. The coast which Ptolemy called Cinaedocolpitaie in his *Geography* is the coast of Tihāmah, where Kinānah lived.²⁰⁹ The Ḥabashī army remained there for a long period of time, and mixed with inhabitants of the Kinānah. It is also possible that some of the Kinānah married Ḥabashī women, and their offspring were thus very dark-skinned and became known as Aḥābīsh. 'Alī believes that the Aḥābīsh were not necessarily all from Africa, rather they were a mixture of Arabs, black slaves, and conscripts, controlled by the Meccans.²¹⁰ He bases his argument on a story given by Ṭabarī which indicates that B. Kinānah and the people of Tihāmah co-operated in the Quraysh battles against the Prophet. In the battle of Uḥud, Ṭabarī reports, 'Quraysh gathered to fight against the Messenger of God when Abū Sufyān and the traders (*aṣḥāb al-ʿir*) with their Aḥābīsh and those who obeyed them from the tribes of Kinānah and the people of Tihāmah gathered also.'²¹¹ Therefore we conclude that the Aḥābīsh were Arab tribes mainly from Kinānah and Khūzā'ah, and also from some clans who were settled in Tihāmah. Quraysh under 'Abd Manāf rule formed

²⁰⁷ Lammens, *La Mecque*, 23, 29, 32, 37, 118, 204. The ironic view of Lammens in his article, 'Les Ahabīs' et l'organisation militaire de la Mecque, au siècle de l'hégire' is not supported by the sources. See *Journal Asiatique*, 1916, pp.425-482.

²⁰⁸ See for example Watt, *Muḥammad*, 154-157.

²⁰⁹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 30.

²¹⁰ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 33; cf. Mu'nis, *Quraysh*, 112-114.

²¹¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 501.

an alliance with them in order to stand firm against any outside aggression.

3.5 The internal politics of Mecca

Qusayy governed Mecca throughout his life, and made it the centre of government (*Dār al-Nadwah*). He carried out the maintenance (*‘imārah*) of the Ka‘bah, and made the office of custodianship (*sidānah*) of the Ka‘bah one of the most important functions. He also provided the pilgrims in Mecca with water (*siqāyah*), and extracted a tithe from the Quraysh at the time of the pilgrimage, in order to provide the pilgrims with food (*rifādah*).²¹²

Qusayy took charge of all these offices, and when he died his sons inherited them, increasing their number to sixteen in order to satisfy the factions within Quraysh.²¹³

We must ask ourselves the question, did some or all of these offices exist before the rule of Qusayy, or did he found them? We cannot accept the opinion held by the Arab historians, that Qusayy founded Mecca and created all of these offices. Mecca in fact had a distinctive system of organisation from the time of ‘Amr b. Luḥayy, the leader of the Khuzā‘ah, and had enjoyed a period of social stability following unrest, wars, raids and power struggles.²¹⁴

A system of social organisation had been in existence several centuries before the rule of Qusayy, although it was still in a relatively primitive state. Thus it was Qusayy’s task to complete this system which had been initiated by ‘Amr

²¹² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 137, 141-142; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 18-19; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 27, 29; Sharīf, *Mecca*, 112; Fāsī, *Shifā’*, II, 87; cf. Ḥamidullah, ‘The city-state’, *Islamic Culture*, 256-276; Watt, *Muḥammad*, 8-9; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, 316; ‘Auḍallah, *Mecca*, 57.

²¹³ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd*, III, 313.

²¹⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 123-129; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 37-38.

b. Luḥayy.²¹⁵

However, whether we refer to the rule of Khuzā‘ah or that of Quṣayy, in essence the social system was still organized on a tribal basis, even if it appeared to be a republican system.²¹⁶ Although government was by council (*shūrā*) and dependent on the opinion of the majority, we cannot go as far as Lammens did in believing that Mecca was a republic in the full sense of the word. In spite of economic and commercial development, Mecca remained a tribal society, and the function of the senate (*mala'*, an assembly of the chiefs and leading men of the various clans) did not go beyond that of the tribal councils (*majālis*). Its rulings were not binding without the assent of all the tribes, and they could escape these rulings if they were not to their liking. For example, B. Zuhrah went back on their agreement to participate in the battle of Badr.²¹⁷ Our discussion of the senate leads us on to the subject of the centre of government (*Dār al-Nadwah*), which was built by Quṣayy b. Kilāb and adjoined the Ka‘bah on its northern side.²¹⁸

The *Nadwah* received its name from a practice of the Quraysh, who, when faced with a problem, would gather in it (*naddaw ilayhā*) to discuss the matter. The word means ‘group’ or ‘gathering’, and thus *dār al-nadwah* signifies a meeting house, *dār al-jamā‘ah*.²¹⁹ Here Quraysh would meet to consult each other. Due to the importance attached to the *Dār al-Nadwah*, it was forbidden to anyone outside of B. Quṣayy under forty years of age to enter.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 112.

²¹⁶ See Lammens, *La Republique Merchante de la Mecque*; Sharīf, *Mecca*, 112.

²¹⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 258; al-Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, 29-30, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 143.

²¹⁸ Izraqī, *Akhhbār Mecca*, II, 164; Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, IV, 384.

²¹⁹ Alūsī, *Bālūgh*, I, 248.

²²⁰ Azraqī, *Akhhbār Mecca*, I, 61. Cf. ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 47; O’Leary, *Arabia*, 183; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, 316-317; Mu‘nis, *Quraysh*, 101, 105, 117, 152, 158, 249, 331; al-‘Alī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, 92-93; ‘Auḍ Allāh, *Mecca*, 50.

The *Dār al-Nadwah* was also used for other functions, such as raising banners in times of war. Trade contracts would be drawn up here. In this respect it resembles the Athenian *Ekklesia*. However, Arab democracy was less egalitarian than its Greek counterpart, since generally only the notable members of a tribe were allowed to attend the *mala'*. Although both assemblies recognised arguments based on moral principles, the Meccans tended to be more pragmatic in their outlook admiring a well-trying leader whereas the Athenians might easily be swayed by fine words alone.²²¹

3.6 Religious offices in Mecca

Since Mecca was an important religious centre, visited each year by large numbers of people, many offices (*wazā'if*) naturally came into existence in order to cope with the needs of the pilgrims. However, although these offices were of course connected with religion, the tasks involved were not all strictly religious, and the needs of the large number of pilgrims demanded particular skills and organisation.²²²

These offices were as follows: a. Custodianship (*sidānah*).²²³ This involved taking care of the Ka'bah and preparing it for the pilgrims. It was an extremely important office due to the respect in which the Ka'bah was held by the Arabs, and the fact that it was the Ka'bah which made Mecca a secure place and drew pilgrims to it from all areas. A large part of Mecca's economic life was dependent on the pilgrims, and, as a result, Quraysh took great care of the Ka'bah and spread word of it all over the Arabian Peninsula, bringing the idols of the various tribes and placing them around it. This was done in honour of the idols in order to

²²¹ Watt, *Muhammad*, 9-10.

²²² al-'Alī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, 94.

²²³ Azraqī, *Akhhār Mecca*, I, 62; Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 251; Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 32.

encourage the tribes to come to Mecca.²²⁴

b. Providing water (*siqāyah*) during the rule of Qusayy. A basin of water was mixed with raisins and *hiyaḍ min Adam*²²⁵ placed in the courtyard of the Ka'bah and in Minā and 'Arafāt, in order to provide drinking water for the pilgrims. This office had special water for the pilgrims. It had particular importance, since Mecca suffered from a shortage of water, particularly during the pilgrimage season, when the number of people in Mecca increased greatly. As a result, Qusayy paid particular attention to the digging of wells in Wadi Mecca, and Ibn Hishām reports that the Qurashī tribes also dug many wells after the death of Qusayy.²²⁶

c. Providing the pilgrims with food (*rifādah*).²²⁷ In order to provide sufficient food for the pilgrims, Qusayy imposed a tax on Quraysh during the pilgrimage season. The creation of the *rifādah* indicates considerable political wisdom on the part of Quraysh, since it was extremely difficult for the pilgrims to bring supplies with them across the desert, and thus the provision of food was a great encouragement for them to come to Mecca, and consequently their trade caravans were guaranteed safety on their journeys.²²⁸

These three offices were not tribal functions, but rather they were necessitated by the existence of the Ka'bah and the pilgrims who visited it. As a result of the pilgrimage, Mecca reaped material benefits as well as prestige and respect in the eyes of the tribes. This was essential for maintaining good relations with the

²²⁴ al-'Alī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, 94.

²²⁵ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 41, 45; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 57; Azraqī, *Akhbār Mecca*, I, 65-66; cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 66; Sālim, *Tārīkh*, 318; Watt, *Muḥammad*, 8-9.

²²⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 159-163.

²²⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 19; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, II, 207; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 41.

²²⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 141-142. See Serjeant who compares the *rifādah* and the role of the *manṣab* at his *maṭbakh* or 'kitchen' in South Arabia, Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawṭah', 53.

tribes.²²⁹

In addition to the offices of *sidānah*, *siqāyah* and *rifādah*, two other important offices also existed during the rule of Quṣayy, *liwā'* and *qiyādah*. The *liwā'* was the banner around which the fighting would take place during battles. This was traditionally carried by B. 'Abd al-Dār.²³⁰

The office of *qiyādah* entailed leadership of the army in times of war, and was in the hand of B. Umayyah.²³¹

These two functions were a traditional part of tribal organisation. The chief shaykh of the tribe would declare war on other tribes and call upon the warriors to assemble. He would either lead the tribe in battle or appoint another member of the tribe in his place. Quraysh would delegate these tasks to certain groups within the tribe, since after his death, they had no clear leader and were instead governed by the *mala'*. This was composed of the chiefs of the various groups within the tribe who divided up the offices between them.²³²

These were the main offices which appeared in the era of Quṣayy, and which were divided between the Abnā' 'Abd al-Dār and Abnā' 'Abd Manāf. But because of the willingness of the other factions of Quraysh to participate in the administration of the affairs of Mecca, and the desire of the *mala'* to maintain the unity of the tribe, and satisfy the various factions within it, they created ten other offices. The most important being:

- a. The *ḥijābah*, which involved the closing and opening of the Ka'bah to the

²²⁹ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 119.

²³⁰ 'Āqil, *Tārīkh*, 242; Sharīf, *Mecca*, 119.

²³¹ Azraqī, *Akhhār Mecca*, I, 63, 66.

²³² Sharīf, *Mecca*, 120.

visitors.²³³

b. *Sifārah*, which involved communication with other tribes, to discuss and negotiate on any matters which arose.²³⁴

c. *ashnāq*: which included the collecting of money for blood price and fines.²³⁵

These offices remained until the conquest of Mecca at which time the Prophet abolished them all except for the custodianship of the Ka‘bah and the *siqāyah*.²³⁶

It must be noticed that these offices were at the heart of the tribal organisation except for those which were connected with the Ka‘bah and al-Bayt al-Ḥarām.²³⁷

3.7 Tribal disputes of Quraysh and its allies

Quṣayy ruled Mecca after dismissing Khuzā‘ah and took charge of six posts of Mecca. When he came of age, he appointed his son ‘Abd al-Dār in his place, and placed him in full charge. Traditions argue that ‘Abd al-Dār was the oldest and weakest of his brothers and therefore his father wanted to strengthen his position. Quṣayy’s other sons accepted his decision out of respect for their father.²³⁸ Some contemporary historians consider that this contradictory to the principles of tribal custom where personal ability to rule was fundamental to assuming leadership of the tribe. They believe that by this act Quṣayy wanted to protect the unity of the tribe and to avoid any incompetence or disunity and this was done to counter any danger from outside. Quraysh appreciated this wise act of Quṣayy,²³⁹ but

²³³ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, III, 313, cf. ‘Āqil, *Tārīkh*, 240; Ḥamīdallāh, ‘City-state’, *IC*, 262.

²³⁴ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, III, 314.

²³⁵ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, III, 314.

²³⁶ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, III, 315.

²³⁷ Sharīf, *Mecca*, 121.

²³⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 143.

²³⁹ al- Sharīf, *Mecca*, 123.

disagreement soon arose when B. 'Abd Manāf said that they had more right to rule than their cousins, 'Abd al-Dār. As a result of this dispute, Quraysh were divided into two parties:

B. 'Abd Manāf. To these were allied B. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Quṣayy and B. Zuhrah b. Kilāb, B. Taym b. Murrah, B. al-Ḥārith b. Fihir. These were called the *muṭayyabūn* because they brought a bowl full of perfume and put it beside the Ka'bah and dipped their hands in it. Then they and their allies took a pledge and rubbed their hands on the walls of the Ka'bah.²⁴⁰

The second group were B. 'Abd al-Dār. To these were allied the B. Makhzūm, B. Sahm, B. Jumah, B. 'Adiyy. B. 'Abd al-Dār, and their allies took an oath at the Ka'bah, thereby gaining the name 'the allies' (*al-aḥlāf*).²⁴¹

As a result of this disunity war almost broke out between them. However they recognised the danger faced by the central tribe and realised that the unity of the tribe might be broken and the inviolability of Mecca, with which they were so concerned, could be weakened if Mecca was exposed to an outside raid. It was therefore quickly decided to put an end to this conflict between them and a compromise was reached. They gave B. 'Abd Manāf the duties or rights of providing food and drink and leadership of Mecca. They also gave the charge of protection and the keys and banners of war (sing. *liwā'*) and *nadwah* to 'Abd al-Dār.²⁴²

It must also be pointed out that there were neutral parties which did not become involved with these two parties. They were the B. 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy and

²⁴⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 143.

²⁴¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 143-144.

²⁴² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 144.

Muḥārib b. Fihr.²⁴³ As Quraysh wanted the unity of the tribe they also strived for security in Mecca for both its inhabitants and travellers to it. They stood against all those who wanted to transgress against Mecca and the freedom and the security of its people and the injustices meted out to traders. This was because Mecca depended upon provisions brought by trade, whether internal or external.²⁴⁴ The external trade of Quraysh thus expanded, leading to wealthy tribes. At the same time Quraysh secured internal trade so that the tribes who did not share in external trade to such a great extent could secure a source for provisions. Therefore they stood against everything which would hamper this trade or limit its activities. Due to this the *fuḍūl* alliance was formed. The immediate reason for forming this alliance was that al-‘Āṣ b. Wā’il al-Sahmī purchased a commodity from a Zabidi who had come to Mecca and refused to pay him. The Yemeni sought help from the allies but received no justice. This led to a strong reaction amongst the other Quraysh allies who were dependent on internal trade. They saw that rich tribes were trying to control the internal trade as well as the external trade because of its capacity to produce great wealth, by embarrassing the outside traders other than Quraysh. Therefore B. Hāshim and Asad, Zuhrah and Taym signed a treaty to stand against this injustice and to prevent any further injustices being carried out in Mecca. They gathered in the *Dār al-Nadwah* to consult and then moved to the house of ‘Abdallāh b. Jad‘ān, one of the wealthiest Meccans, where they signed a treaty which they called the treaty of prominent people *Ḥilf al-fuḍūl*. They promised to stand by the wronged against the tyrant, until what had been taken was returned in order to ‘to share a common livelihood’ (*wa-‘alā al-ta’āsī fī al-ma‘āsh*)²⁴⁵ This last sentence clearly explains the aims of this treaty, namely

²⁴³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 144

²⁴⁴ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 126.

²⁴⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 144-145; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bīdāyah*, II, 26-27; al-Ya‘qubī, *Tārīkh*, II, 12-13;

to stand against injustice which could lead to depriving some of these people the means to obtain provision. The treaty immediately achieved its aim and al-‘Āṣ b. Wā’il paid for the price for the commodity he had purchased.

Some of the historians take the view that the *fuḍūl* treaty was only an expansion of the *muṭayyibūn* treaty, considering that those who joined the treaty were the same as those who participated in the latter treaty, except for some tribes of B. ‘Abd Manāf, namely the B. Nawfal and B. ‘Abd Shams who at that time became one of the wealthiest tribes taking the side of the other party to achieve personal benefit.²⁴⁶

It is not possible to accept this view, however, since the *muṭayyibūn* treaty was agreed under different circumstances, namely the conflict about authority over Mecca, where B. ‘Abd Manāf possessed great wealth and controlled external commerce. At the same time Quraysh under the leadership of Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf and his brothers developed this external commerce and set about organising caravans to transport good north, south, east and west. They also built up communication links with Byzantines, Abyssinians, Persians and the Yemen.²⁴⁷

As for the treaty of the *fuḍūl*, its circumstances and factors differ, as did the circumstances of those in charge of it, though sometimes the participants were the same (i.e. *muṭayyabūn*). While the first treaty served to divide the authority, the second treaty was signed to restore justice and security and to support the external trade in Mecca itself.²⁴⁸

al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, II, 270; Tha‘albī, *Thimār*, 140; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 167.

²⁴⁶ Watt, *Muḥammad*, 13-14.

²⁴⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 147; Ya‘qubī, *Tārīkh*, I, 201.

²⁴⁸ Ibn Kathir, *al-Bīyadāyah*, II, 293; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 147. There is no agreement in the traditions about why it was called *hilf al-fuḍūl*, for more detail see Ya‘qubī, *Tārīkh*, II, 14; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, VIII, 63; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 86-87.

Another dispute within Quraysh took place before the advent of Islam when they pulled down the Ka'bah. They argued with each other over who should have the honour of putting the Black Stone in its place. The party of B. 'Abd al-Dār and B. 'Udiyy formed an agreement that they would not let anyone else have this honour. They brought a bowl of blood and put their hands in it to confirm their treaty. Hence it was named the Treaty of Blood (*Lu'qat al-dam*). The dispute was soon resolved however, by the judgement of Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

The historians mention this dispute that took place between the Hashimite clan and the Umayyah 'Abd Shams clan. Both these clans belonged to 'Abd Manāf. They further mention that the conflict between B. Hāshim and B. Umayyah after the rise of Islam was due to this first conflict. The first person to mention this conflict is Ibn Sa'd in his book *al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā* in which he mentions the story of Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf and Ibn al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 55-56.

Chapter IV

The ‘Abd Manāf Family and the *ilāf* Agreement

4.0.1 Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf

Hāshim²⁵⁰ took over the leadership of Quraysh after the death of his father ‘Abd. Manāf. He had distinct characteristics which helped him to attain the leadership. It appears that the most prominent of these was his understanding of commercial affairs in Mecca; various historians have mentioned this. The clearest account is that by Ya‘qūbī, a summary of which follows. Hāshim took the leadership after his father and he was honoured by this. Quraysh agreed to his leadership which included providing food (*rifādah*) and drink (*siqāyah*) to the pilgrims. In the pilgrimage season, he would deliver a sermon to Quraysh saying, ‘O Quraysh, you are the protégés of God and the people of this sacred house (*jirān Allāh wa-ahl Baytihi ‘l-Ḥarām*). In this season people would come to visit the House of God and praise its sanctity. They were God’s guests and those most worthy of honour. God has honoured you with such a task, so you should honour His guests and visitors. They come from everywhere, tired of travel, so look after their needs.’²⁵¹

Hāshim spent a lot of money and ordered the preparation of water with raisins which was put near Zamzam and was added to the other wells of Mecca, from which the pilgrims would drink. Hāshim fed them at Mecca, Minā, ‘Arafāt and

²⁵⁰ For more details about Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf, see Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 43; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 137, 162-164; Tha‘ālibī, *Thimār*, 89; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 201; Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, XVI, 33f., Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 251-253; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 6; Mu‘ins, *Quraysh*, 115f.; Ziriklī, *I‘lām*, IX, 48-49.

²⁵¹ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 200. See also Qālī, *Dhayl*, 199-200.

Jama'. He also prepared for them dishes of *tharīd* (meat, broth) and *suwayq* (a mush made of wheat and barley) until the pilgrims returned home.²⁵²

Hāshim was the first to start the two journeys, to Syria in summer and to Yemen in winter. This was because Meccan trade did not go beyond Mecca and had constraints placed upon it. Until Hāshim rode and came to Buṣrā, he used to slaughter a lamb every day and invite the people of the neighbourhood. He was the best and most handsome of them. He was mentioned to the Byzantine emperor who then sent for him. When he saw him and heard him speak, he was pleased with him and kept on sending for him. Hāshim told the king that his people were Arab merchants and then asked him to give him a document giving them and their trade security so that they could be able to bring the best leather and cloth from the Ḥijāz. He was undoubtedly referring to fine leather from al-Ṭā'if and from surrounding tribes. Cloth was also produced in great quantities in various cities in the Yemen, especially Najrān and Ṣan'ā'.²⁵³ The emperor agreed to this and Hāshim then left. Whenever he met an Arab tribe, he would make an *ilāf* with its notables, giving them (i.e. Quraysh) security on their land.²⁵⁴

Hāshim took a great deal of trade to Syria, passing by notable Arabs (*Ashrāf*) and carrying trade for them to Gaza, where he died.²⁵⁵

On the death of Hāshim, Quraysh thought that they might be overpowered by the rest of the Arabs. So 'Abd Shams, the brother of Hāshim, went to the ruler of Abyssinia to renew the contract between them and then came back. Later he died in Mecca and was buried at Ḥajūn.

²⁵² Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 201.

²⁵³ Ibrāhīm, 'Conditions', 345.

²⁵⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 201.

²⁵⁵ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 202.

Nawfal, another brother of Hāshim, went out to Iraq and took a contract from the Persian emperor. Then he died at a place called Salmān. Meccan affairs were then undertaken by al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Manāf.²⁵⁶

What concerns us here from Ya‘qūbī’s report is the period which tells us about Hāshim’s extension of Meccan trade and its development into an international trade, after it had been solely local. trade. This was because Quraysh trade before Hāshim was confined to the Meccan markets, but after making a treaty with the Byzantine emperor in Syria, Meccan trade was able to expand into new and wider markets. Hāshim must have gone to Syria before this and known about it. He must have also felt that there was a demand for specific goods which he and his people could supply to Syria. These goods were not restricted to the products of the Arabian Peninsula such as leather, dates and wool, which might have had a substitute in the Roman Empire, but included goods which, it appears, were sought after by the Romans. These goods included spices, perfumes musk, myrrh, frankincense and silk which the churches could not do without in their religious practices. Similarly royalty and the wealthy could not manage without items such as silk, cotton, precious stones, ivory, pearls and saffron. Some of these are found in the Arab countries themselves, particularly frankincense and myrrh in South Arabia. However silk, spices, sandalwood, ambergris and precious stones came from India and China, and ivory, various spices, ostrich feathers and untanned animal skins came from Asia and Africa.²⁵⁷

Some of these would come automatically to Mecca, whilst others could be obtained if required. This was the demand which Hāshim with his practical instinct

²⁵⁶ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 202.

²⁵⁷ Mu‘nis, *Quraysh*, 120.

for trade recognised in the markets of Syria and which he knew he could fulfil.

Circumstances must have encouraged Hāshim to take these opportunities, since most of these goods reached Syria and the Byzantine empire through Persia either by one of the trade routes in central Asia or by sea routes and the Gulf ports. The main reason preventing the arrival of these goods in Syria was the conflict between the Persians and the Byzantines, in Parthian times. This conflict was renewed in the days of the Sasanians and their Byzantine contemporaries, the *causus belli* being control over Armenia, a Christian land under the influence of the Byzantines. Conflict then spread to the north of Syria and Iraq and fighting escalated between the two empires. Opportunities for conflict grew because the Persians did not embrace Christianity, but opposed it, particularly after the Sasanians took control of Armenia and Mosul and persecuted the Christians during the reign of Shapur II (A.D. 310-370), Bahrām (A.D. 420-457) and the reign of Yazdigird II (A.D. 438-457). The conflict reached its height during the rule of Justinian, a powerful Byzantine ruler, who fought to protect the Christians and indeed spent most of his reign (A.D. 537-565) defending them.

Due to these wars, goods from the East stopped reaching the Byzantine empire from the time of Shapur II. During the reigns of Bahrām I and Yazdigird II the supply of goods declined drastically. The wars lasted 35 years during the time of these two rulers and the need for eastern goods must have become vital. This need was most apparent during the reign of Yazdigird II (A.D. 438-457). It is possible that Hāshim arrived in Syria after this time and started his wide range of activities designed to enhance Meccan trade. This age corresponded with the period of the Byzantine rulers, Theodosius II (A.D. 408-450) and then Marcianus (A.D. 450-457), and was in actual fact the period of major conflict between Byzantines and

Persians.²⁵⁸ It is important to mention also that by the middle of the fifth century the Yemen began to experience a series of internal political crises, especially in the north. This led to the disruption of production and trade destined for Byzantium. This situation encouraged the Meccans to fill the gap created by the decline of the Yemenis.²⁵⁹

It appears that this prolonged blockade of eastern goods destined for Byzantine markets took place in the beginning of the fifth century A.D. From this period we can trace the life of Hāshim and his activities. As we understand from Ya'qūbī's text, his offer of bringing in eastern goods was welcomed by the Byzantines and as a result he obtained from them, or more likely their representatives, a written guarantee allowing and securing his trade and providing for his protection ('aṣm).²⁶⁰ After obtaining this guarantee Hāshim returned home taking *īlāf* from all the tribes he came across. *Īlāf* stipulated two conditions;

1. passage through tribal territories without fear of attack (i.e. provide protection (*khafārah*) to the caravan of the Quraysh),
2. in return for safe passage and armed protection, Quraysh promised to carry and sell tribal products in the markets they visited. The Meccans would then return the investment and the profit to the tribal leader.²⁶¹

It is possible to conclude from all this that Hāshim's action in obtaining the guarantee and *īlāf* was an extremely shrewd move and formed the basis for the economic strength of the Quraysh. By this act Quraysh were transformed from

²⁵⁸ Mu'nis, *Quraysh*, 123.

²⁵⁹ Ibrāhīm, 'Conditions', 344.

²⁶⁰ See Balādhūrī, *Anṣāb*, I, 59; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, II, 59-60.

²⁶¹ Qālī, *Dhayl*, 200; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 219. Cf. Ibrāhīm, 'Conditions', 344; Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 113-163.

being a modestly well-off to a very wealthy tribe.

Looking after the affairs of Quraysh and providing services to pilgrims did not hinder Hāshim from undertaking his trade and travels, and he frequently led caravans of Quraysh to Syria. Just before his death his marriage took place on one of these journeys. Our information is based on Ibn Sa'd's narration, and concerns the caravan led by Hāshim and the involvement of Arab women in trade. Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Aslamī reports that Hāshim was a noble man and that it was he who obtained safe-conduct for Quraysh from the Byzantine emperor to travel and trade freely. So the Byzantine emperor guaranteed this for him.²⁶²

Hāshim also wrote to the Abyssinian ruler, asking him to allow Quraysh to trade in his land. Hāshim led a Quraysh caravan via Medina and stopped in al-Nabaṭ market to exchange goods. There Hāshim saw a woman trading who was of great beauty and so he asked about her. He was told that she had been married to Uḥayḥah b. al-Jūlah and had borne him 'Umar and Ma'bad but that she was now divorced; her name was Salmā bint 'Amr. Hāshim asked for her hand in marriage and after discovering his nobility she agreed. He invited all those with him to a party. There were Quraysh, B. 'Abd Manāf, Makhzūm and Sahm and he also invited some people from al-Khazraj. His new wife bore Hāshim a son, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Hāshim then went with his companions to Syria and died in Gaza.²⁶³ Yāqūt records that Hāshim's grave is in Gaza and that this place is therefore called Ghazzat Hāshim. He died at the age of twenty five. Maṭrūd b. Ka'b al-Khuzā'i lamented the death of Hāshim in the following verse:

مَاتَ النَّدَى بِالشَّامِ لَمَّا أَنْ تُوِيَ فِيهِ بَغْزَةٌ هَاشِمٌ لَا يُبْعَدُ

²⁶² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 45.

²⁶³ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 46.

‘Generosity died in al-Sham when Hashim was buried in Ghazzah;

he is not far away.’²⁶⁴

According to Ibn Sa’d, on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī, Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf, before his death, had instructed his brother, al-Muṭṭalib, to manage the affairs of Quraysh.²⁶⁵

4.0.2 al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Manāf

Traditions record that after Hāshim’s death his brother, al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Manāf²⁶⁶ took control of Meccan affairs.²⁶⁷ Although this statement is somewhat vague we can conclude that it means undertaking the duties which Hāshim had performed, i.e. the provision of food and drink. Although al-Muṭṭalib was the youngest of Hāshim’s brothers, he was the most eager of them to complete the works of his brother and he obtained a guarantee from the Yemen to permit Quraysh to trade and to get the *īlāf* from the tribes which were dwelling between Mecca and the Yemen.²⁶⁸

It is astonishing that Hāshim’s brother ‘Abd Shams did not have any interest in leadership despite the fact that his son Umayyah was envious of Hāshim’s position of nobility and leadership. His son was a wealthy man and maliciously strove to compete with the works of Hāshim, but was incapable of doing so. Some Quraysh

²⁶⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 202. See also Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 63.

²⁶⁵ Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 46.

²⁶⁶ For more details about al-Muṭṭalib see: Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 163, *Munammaq*, 44, 83-83; al-Zubairī, *Nasab*, 92-97; al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, I, 338; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, 65; al-‘Askarī, *Jamharah*, II, 133; Maydānī, *Majma‘*, II, 127, Qālī, *Dhayl*, 200; Mu’nis, *Quraysh*, 144-146; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 302-303.

²⁶⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 147; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 254.

²⁶⁸ See: Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 43; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 59; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 252; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 162-164, *Munammaq*, 44, Qālī, *Dhayl*, 200.

therefore began to talk malevolently about Umayyah which angered him and he asked Hāshim for a competition to prove their authority which Hāshim at first refused. However Quraysh insisted on a competition between the two. Hāshim agreed and said: 'I will compete with you in the slaughter of 50 camels and the loser will go into exile from Mecca for ten years.' Umayyah accepted. A priest (*kāhin*) from Khuzā'ah acted as judge between them and he decided in favour of Hāshim, who took the camels, slaughtered them and fed all those present. Umayyah thus went to Syria for ten years. This was the first dispute which took place between Hāshim and Umayyah.²⁶⁹

The truth of this report is uncertain but historians used it and made it the basis of the conflict which sprang up later between B. Hāshim and B. Umayyah. There is no doubt that the dispute between B. Hāshim and B. Umayyah took on a bloody form at Badr (2/623), when 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Ḥamzah b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib killed more than fifteen members of B. Umayyah and their allies.²⁷⁰

Ibn Sa'd mentions another conflict between 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Ḥarb b. Umayyah and reports that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Ḥarb b. Umayyah took their conflict to the ruler of Abyssinia. He refused to become involved and made Fuḍayl b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā an intermediary between them. He asked Ḥarb if he would dispute with a person taller than himself, more important, nobler and one who had more children. So he decided in favour of 'Abd Muṭṭalib. Ḥarb then told him that it was a mistake to appoint him judge.²⁷¹ This incident is reported by Ibn Sa'd, al-Balādhurī²⁷²,

²⁶⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 253. See also Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 46-47.

²⁷⁰ Mu'nis, *Quraysh*, 143.

²⁷¹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 47.

²⁷² Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 60.

al-Ṭabarī²⁷³ and Ibn al-Athīr.²⁷⁴ Al-Maqrīzī wrote a book about this matter called *al-Nizā' wa-'l-takhāsum bayn Banī Umayyah wa-Banī Hāshim*. In this book he traces the origin of the conflict to the events that occurred between 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān during the caliphate of the former.²⁷⁵

We do not want to enter into a discussion of the authenticity of these reports, but must point out that Ibn Ishāq, who is the earliest of the biographers, does not mention these two events (in fact he hardly mentions any conflict at all between B. Hāshim and B. Umayyah before Islam.) Therefore none of the later biographical editors such as Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Sayyid al-Nās mention or refer to these disputes.²⁷⁶

There is no doubt that al-Muṭṭalib, like his brothers, contributed to the growth of Quraysh trade. Most of his trade was with the Yemen, and in fact he died there on one of his journeys, as reported by Ibn Sa'd.²⁷⁷

4.0.3 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim

As mentioned in the story of Hāshim's marriage to the Medinese, Salmā bint 'Umar, his son, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib,²⁷⁸ (Shaybat al-Ḥamad) was born in Medina where Hāshim's wife remained after his death. He was born with some white hair on his head and was thus called Shaybat al-Ḥamad. His uncle, al-Muṭṭalib,

²⁷³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 253,

²⁷⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 9-10.

²⁷⁵ Maqrīzī, *Nizā'*, 3-17.

²⁷⁶ Aḥmad al-Sharīf discussed these disputes in detail, see Sharīf, *Mecca*, 130-134.

²⁷⁷ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 49. See also Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 254; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 149; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 44. For details of Radmān, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 40; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 649; *EI*², I, 52; Caetani, *Annali dell' Islām*, I, 110-120.

²⁷⁸ For more details of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim, see Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 62-65, 132, 173-174; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 246-251; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 4; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 202-205; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 15, 17, 400; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 153f.; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, II, 32-46; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 68; al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, I, 330-333; Mu'ins, *Quraysh*, 144-154; Ziriklī, *A'lām*, IV, 299.

brought him to Mecca when he was still young.²⁷⁹

After the death of his uncle, al-Muṭṭalib, he took control of providing food (*rifādah*) and drink (*siqāyah*) to the pilgrims.²⁸⁰ It is said that he dug the well of Zamzam, after being constantly instructed to do so in his dreams.²⁸¹ According to al-Azraqī, Quraysh were concerned at the prospect of such unauthorised action. They came to him while he was digging the well and refused to allow him to dig between their idols. But he disregarded them. When the well was dug, Quraysh also disputed over who should have authority and control over it. As a compromise, they agreed to hand over the authority of it to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.²⁸² He also bought the well called al-Ajbāb from the B. Naṣr b. Mu‘āwiyah, obviously in order to secure the water supply of Mecca, in addition to the well of Zamzam which he dug.

Some Islamic sources report that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib vowed that, if God granted him ten sons, he would sacrifice one of them to him in thanksgiving. The lot fell on his son ‘Abdullāh, his most beloved, so he cast the lot again each time increasing the number of camels by ten. At last the lot fell on the camels when the number had reached hundred and he then slaughtered the hundred camels between Ṣafā and Marwah and fed the people.²⁸³ This ‘Abdallāh is the father of the Prophet Muḥammad. Al-Azraqī reports that blood money in those days used to be ten camels and that ‘Abd-al-Muṭṭalib was the first to set it at one hundred.

²⁷⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 246-247; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 48.

²⁸⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 153; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 63.

²⁸¹ This well, unlike the other wells of Mecca, was dug in the sacred enclosure and consequently its water was believed to be sacred and like all sacred objects many legends were associated with its origin. For more details see: Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, I, 49; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, II, 30-46; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, 154f. Cf. Guillaume, *Muḥammad*, 45.

²⁸² Azraqī, *Akhbār*, II, 33. See also Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 49; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 155; Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 97-98.

²⁸³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 164f.; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, II, 37-38; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 50; Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 103.

It remained thus among Quraysh and the Arabs and the Prophet also left it as it was.²⁸⁴

In the time of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the raid on Mecca by Abrahah took place.²⁸⁵ Ibn Sa'd (on the authority of Muḥammad b. 'Umar) records that after the occupation of the Yemen by the Abyssinians and following Abrahah's taking control, he was annoyed at the people going on pilgrimage to Mecca. He decided therefore to build a similar place of worship so as to prevent people travelling there. After the construction was complete, an Arab threw some excrement in it, which infuriated Abrahah and he marched on Mecca intending to destroy it.²⁸⁶

What concerns us in dealing with Abrahah's expedition are two things, the importance of Mecca and the reasons for the expedition.

As previously mentioned, Meccan power rose after the Kindite and South Arabian powers had disintegrated and Mecca was able to maintain its independence from Abyssinia, Byzantium and Persia. The fall of South Arabia as an independent and powerful trading community, which had actively participated in shaping and controlling the destiny of the incense route, gave Mecca a new opportunity to flourish.²⁸⁷ The various opportunities which presented themselves through this

²⁸⁴ Azraqī, *Akhḍār*, II, 83.

²⁸⁵ Many scholars have discussed Abrahah's expedition against Mecca. They hold different opinions as to whether it was the expedition on which Abrahah set out towards the north of the Arabian Peninsula, which ended near Mecca (Caskel, *Entdeckung in Arabia*, 30), or whether it was the expedition that was recorded in the inscription RY 506 (Rychmans, 'Inscriptions, historiques...', *Le Muséon*, LXVI, 1953, 342), which is in fact the Expedition of the Elephant mentioned in the Qur'ān (Altheim and Stiehl, *Finanzgeschichte*, 145-148, 203, 209). Others reject this assumption, and assume that the Expedition of the Elephant took place about A.D. 563 (Lundine, 82-84). Kister accepts the Altheim and Stiehl's proposal, but does not agree with their identification of the year 662 of RY 506 with A.D. 547 (Kister, 'Hulubān', 427-428). Al-'Asālī devotes a comprehensive discussion to the various opinions related to Abrahah's expedition and he also discusses the conflicting traditions about the expedition and its date. See al-'Asālī, *South Arabia*, 316-354. Cf. Conrad, 'Abraha and Muḥammad', 225-240.

²⁸⁶ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 35.

²⁸⁷ 'Asālī, *South Arabia*, 323.

political and commercial vacuum were fully exploited by the Meccans,²⁸⁸ who were very sensitive and alert to the new situation which they could use for their own benefit. This factor, combined with the continuous war between the Persians and Byzantines, resulted in the growing importance of west Arabia. This importance was noticed by the competing states of the Byzantines and the Sasanids. Through their allies, the Abyssinians and the Lakhmids respectively, the two powers attempted to spread their control to Mecca.²⁸⁹

According to Arab tradition, Abrahah built a church (al-Qalīs)²⁹⁰ and tried to divert the pilgrimage usually made to Mecca to his church. The immediate cause for the expedition of Abrahah was his anger when he learned that Kinānah had come to al-Qalīs and had defiled it. Abrahah found out that the outrage had been perpetrated by an Arab who came from the temple in Mecca where the Arabs went on pilgrimage. Then Abrahah swore that he would go to that temple and destroy it.²⁹¹

We have conflicting reports about the troops which took part in the expedition of Abrahah in A.D. 570, known as *'ām al-fīl* after the elephant(s) which Abrahah took with him on his campaign. (It is also the year traditionally held to be that of the Prophet Muḥammad's birth). Ibn Ishāq mentions only the Abyssinians as the force of Abrahah, reporting that the Arabs went out against him.²⁹² Other

²⁸⁸ Cf. Ḥamīdullāh, *'Al-īlāf*, 293-311.

²⁸⁹ Cf. 'Asalī, *South Arabia*, 323-325; Musil, *Hegāz*, 259.

²⁹⁰ For the description of the church see: Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 394. The church was destroyed by al-'Abbās b. al-Rabī' b. 'Abdallāh al-'Āmirī, the governor of the Yemen in the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate al-Manṣūr. C.f. Serjeant who devoted a whole chapter on *al-Qalīs*, see *Ṣan'ā': an Arabian Islamic city*, 44-48.

²⁹¹ Guillaume, 21-22; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 131. There are other accounts in the traditions which give us a different interpretation of the reason for Abrahah's expedition against Mecca. See: Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 130 (citing Ibn Ishāq); Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 130; *Munammaq*, 70; Iṣfahānī, *Dalā'il*, 100-101; Suyuṭī, *Durr*, VI, 394; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 55; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 83f.

²⁹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 132 (citing Ibn Ishāq), Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 87-92; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 43. The

reports are recorded by al-Ṭabarsī²⁹³ and Majlisī²⁹⁴, which state that the majority of the followers in Abrahah's army were people from 'Akk, Ash'ar and Khath'am. Ibn Ḥabīb has an interesting report which differs from those mentioned above. He states that, when Abrahah decided to march against Mecca to destroy the Ka'bah, he gathered people of low extraction and profligate brigands (*fussāq*) and enlisted them in his army.²⁹⁵

Abrahah, leading his army, set out towards Mecca. On their way, his troops were attacked by the Azd, who defeated them.²⁹⁶ It is reported that when Abrahah arrived in al-Ṭā'if, he met there Mas'ūd b. Mu'attib b. Mālik b. Ka'b b. 'Āmir b. Sa'd b. 'Awf b. Thaqīf, with other men of Thaqīf. Mas'ūd explained to Abrahah that the sanctuary of al-Ṭā'if is small and that his aim should be the Ka'bah of Mecca, which should be destroyed in revenge for violating his church.²⁹⁷

When the army of Abrahah approached Mecca, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib asked the people to leave the city and seek refuge in the mountains; only 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and 'Amr b. 'Ā'idh al-Makhzūmī remained in the city, carrying out the duty of the *siqāyah* and Shaybah b. 'Uthmān b. 'Abd al-Dār carried out the duty of the *ḥijābah*.²⁹⁸

The sources also give us more details about the story of the meeting of Abrahah

two leaders who fought Abrahah, aided by their tribes, were Dhū Nafar al-Ḥamyarī and Nufayl b. Ḥabīb al-Khath'amī. They were defeated and captured. See: Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 132; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 47. Cf. Kister, 'Some reports', 67-70.

²⁹³ Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma'*, XXX, 234-237.

²⁹⁴ Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XV, 134-137.

²⁹⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 70.

²⁹⁶ Kister, 'Some reports', 71.

²⁹⁷ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 68. Cf. Kister, 'Some reports', 71.

²⁹⁸ Maqdisī, *al-Bad'*, III, 186; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 68; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 51. Al-Ṭabarī however mentions that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib went with Quraysh to the mountains (*wa-inṭalaqa huwa* (i.e. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib) *wa-man ma'ahu min Quraysh ilā sha'f al-jibāl*): *Tārīkh*, II, 135.

with 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and, according to Islamic tradition, the Miracle of the Birds that destroyed Abrahah's army.²⁹⁹ According to some accounts, the army of Abrahah was destroyed near al-Mughammis,³⁰⁰ near the ḥaram. Al-Mas'ūdī says that Abrahah reached the boundary markers of the sanctuary, where he stopped at the place called Janb al-Muḥaṣṣab, and there he met 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.³⁰¹ Ibn al-Mujāwir says that Katnah was the place where God destroyed Abrahah's army.³⁰² Al-Hamdānī says that Abrahah died in Dhāt 'Ushsh, after he had returned from his expedition against Mecca.³⁰³

It seems more likely that Abrahah did not die immediately after the expedition. It would be more reasonable to suppose that Abrahah's troops reached the environs of Mecca but that on account of the outbreak of disease, they never reached Mecca itself. The delegation of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to Abrahah is no more than legend.³⁰⁴

After the defeat of Abrahah, two questions concerning Mecca should be raised. First, did the expedition of Abrahah have any effect on the position of Quraysh in the eyes of the Arabs? Second, did the expedition have any influence on Meccan trade?

As for the position of Quraysh among the Arab tribes, Ibn Ishāq reports that, when Allāh turned back the Abyssinians from Mecca, and inflicted upon them His vengeance, the Arabs admired Quraysh and said, They are the people of Allāh.

²⁹⁹ See: Qur'ān, CV; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 50; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 134; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 88-89; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 56. Cf. Kister, 'Some reports', 71; Mu'nis, *Quraysh*, 154-150.

³⁰⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 49; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1248.

³⁰¹ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, I, 310. See also Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 54. According to Yāqūt, al-Muḥaṣṣab is the name of a place between Minā and Mecca, Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 62.

³⁰² Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Tārīkh*, I, 41-42.

³⁰³ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 944.

³⁰⁴ 'Asalī, *South Arabia*, 345. Lammens says that Abrahah captured Mecca. He also states that it probably took a period of time, but he does not fix that period. This hypothesis has no historical evidence to support it. Lammens, 'al-Aḥābīsh', *al-Mashriq* (1936), 78-79.

He has fought for them, and saved them from the trouble of their enemies.³⁰⁵ It is important to note that the defeat of Abrahah created the belief among the Arabs, that the Ka'bah and its custodians from Quraysh were under divine protection.³⁰⁶

It is of interest that, when the chapters of the Qur'ān were ordered, CVI was placed immediately after Sūrat al-Fīl,³⁰⁷ which, of course, deals with the defeat of Abrahah. The *li* of *li-īlāfi* was interpreted as 'in order to'. Ibn Qutaybah explains that Allāh destroyed the People of the Elephant in order to enable Quraysh to carry out their journeys habitually, and earn their own livelihood by it.³⁰⁸ According to tradition, the organisation of the *ḥums*³⁰⁹ was established after the Expedition of the Elephant. Some sources are doubtful about the date of the establishment of the *ḥums*. As far as the effect of the expedition in Meccan trade, it is of interest that Abrahah's expedition against Mecca did not effect, to any great extent, the trade relations between Mecca and Abyssinia, and South Arabia. The evidence is that 'the failure of the expedition helped to expand the trade of Mecca, to set up close relations with the tribes, to establish its influence and to strengthen the institutions already built up by Quraysh'.³¹⁰ As we will see later, the 'Ukāz market was established fifteen years after the expedition of the Elephant. The Meccans had good relations with the Abyssinians, before and after the expedition. Abrahah's expedition did not affect the trade relations between Meccan and Abyssinian, and the Abyssinian market remained a good one for Meccans.³¹¹

³⁰⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 59. Cf. Kister, 'Some reports', 75; Rubin, 'Īlāf', 176.

³⁰⁶ Rubin, 'Īlāf', 177.

³⁰⁷ Qur'ān, CV

³⁰⁸ Ibn Qutaybah, *Mushkil*, 414-415. Cf. Rubin, 'Īlāf', 177.

³⁰⁹ See below p. 152.

³¹⁰ Kister, 'Some reports', 75.

³¹¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 252.

Apparently deserters from Abrahah's army remained behind in Mecca and subsequently found work there or became shepherds.³¹² However these people are of little significance since they had no influence on the life of the Meccans. After the defeat of Abrahah's army, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib became more respected, not only in the eyes of his own tribe, but also in the eyes of other Arab tribes.

Ibn al-Kalbī reports that when 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was fully in control, some people from the tribe of Khuzā'ah came to him and said that, as they were neighbours, they wished to form an alliance with him. He agreed to their demand and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib with seven people from B. al-Muṭṭalib and al-Arqam b. Naflah b. Hāshim and al-Ḍaḥḥāk and 'Amr, sons of 'Abd Sayfī b. Hāshim travelled to Dār al-Nadwah to form this mutually beneficial treaty, which was then displayed in the Ka'bah. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib advised his son, al-Zubayr, to adhere to this treaty. No members of B. 'Abd Shams or of B. Nawfal attended this meeting.³¹³

Despite Abrahah's attack on Mecca, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib played a major role in Quraysh trade to the Yemen and to Syria. He used to stay in the Yemen with the important people of Ḥimyar.³¹⁴ Traditions mention a document which contains a debt owed to him by a man from Ṣan'ā'.³¹⁵ 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was one of the members of the delegation who came to Sayf b. Dhī Yazan to congratulate him on his victory against the Abyssinians.³¹⁶ 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib continued his duty in providing water (*siqāyah*) and food (*rifādah*) to the pilgrims, until he died. Ibn Sa'd, on the authority of Muḥammad b. 'Umar, al-Wāqidī reports that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib died at the age of eighty-two and was buried at al-Ḥajūn. In another

³¹² Azraqī, *Akḥbār*, I, 91. Cf. Guillaume, 28.

³¹³ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 51.

³¹⁴ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 51.

³¹⁵ Majlisī, *Biḥār*, XV, 160.

³¹⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, II, 178.

report from Ibn al-Kalbī, it is said that he died before the Fijār wars at the age of one hundred and twenty.³¹⁷ After his death his son, ‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, took control of providing food and drink for the pilgrims until the rise of Islam. He was the youngest of the brothers.³¹⁸

4.1 The *ilāf* and its effect on Meccan trade

Before talking about the origin of the covenants of security and safeguard enjoyed by Quraysh and their role in the Meccan rule, it would be better to explain the meaning of *ilāf*.

According to the standard orthography of the ‘Uthmānis of the Qur’ān *ilāf* is a verbal noun derived from the fourth form of the root *’lf*. Non-canonical recitations provide the following graphic variants: Ibn Mas‘ūd (d.32/652) and ‘Ikrimah (d.105/723) respectively had *li-yālafa* and *li-ya’lafa*.³¹⁹ Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765) and al-Rabī‘ b. Khuthaym (d.62/681) respectively had *li-ilāfi*, *lilāfi* and *li-ya’lāf ilfahum*.³²⁰ Even the seven canonical readings were divided as to the recitation of *ilāf*. Ibn ‘Āmir (d.118/736) used to pronounce a short vowel *kasrah* following the *hamzah* in *ilāf*. The other readers used to pronounce a long vowel *yā’* in *ilāfihim* without expressing it graphically.³²¹ The confusion was caused by the appearance of the *hamzah* in the recitation and in the script of the Qur’ān. From the examples we have it is difficult to say whether the spelling indicates the reading *li-ilāfi*, or *li-ilāfi*, or *lilāfi*. Therefore we must look in the sources commenting on the verses. According to al-Ṭabarī, the Arabs have two ways of expressing the idea of *ilāf*

³¹⁷ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 75. See also Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 180.

³¹⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 193; al-Diyār Bakrī, *Tārīkh*, I, 187.

³¹⁹ Jeffery, *Materials*, 112-275. C.f. Goldfeld, *Policy*, 5-6.

³²⁰ Jeffery, *Materials*, 179.

³²¹ Dānī, *Taysīr*, 225.

in verbal form, either by using the first form *alifa* or by using the verb *ālafa* the perfect tense of which al-Ṭabarī gives as *u'ālifu*, in the third form.³²² Thus the idea of *ilāf* is expressed by the first, third and fourth forms, which widens the range for eventual explanations.

Ibn Hishām in his own commentary of the *Sīrah* listed several renderings for *ilāf*, starting with the statement that *ilāf* means 'their going forth to Syria to trade'³²³ without mentioning their (i.e. Quraysh) journey to the south (the Yemen). He then goes on to discuss the interpretations of the phrase *li-'ilāfi Qurayshin* which means 'to get accustomed to, to keep to'. Al-Suhaylī in his commentary of the *Sīrah* does not accept Ibn Hishām's interpretation and says that *ilāf* means 'the making of treaties or agreements between Quraysh and foreign rulers (*mulūk al-'ajam*).³²⁴

Al-Zamakhsharī interprets *ilāf* in the sense of protection or security for the purpose of trade.³²⁵ The classical lexica gave some new meaning of the word *ilāf*. Al-Jawharī mentions it as 'the combining of the winter and summer journey'.³²⁶ Ibn Manẓūr has the same idea of the journeys being made continuous 'becoming familiar with'.³²⁷ Al-Zabīdī expresses the idea of protective treaties as the meaning of *ilāf* and defines the term as 'the treaties they made when going forth to trade, so that they were secure thereby'.³²⁸ To the historian, the latter interpretation is to be the most acceptable. According to Ibn Ishāq, Hāshim is said to have been

³²² Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 170.

³²³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 571. C.f. Jones, '*Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya*', 15.

³²⁴ al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 281.

³²⁵ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, IV, 801.

³²⁶ al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥḥ*, 1332.

³²⁷ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IV, 10-11.

³²⁸ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, VI, 44.

the first to institute the two journeys of Quraysh.³²⁹ Ibn Sa'd refers to him as the instigator of the *ilāf* (*Ṣāhib ilāf Quraysh*).³³⁰

Ilāf signifies written security, written by the ruler for people, that they may be secure in his territory, and is used by Musāwir b. Hind in the sense of alliance when he says, satirizing B. Asad:

زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّ أَخَوْتَكُمْ قُرَيْشٌ لَهُمْ إِيْلَفٌ وَلَيْسَ لَكُمْ إِيْلَفٌ

‘You asserted that your brothers are Quraysh (but how should you be like them?)

For they have an alliance; and you have no alliance?’³³¹

The different meanings of the word indicate the secure kind of life that Quraysh lived in Mecca and the peaceful relationships which they secured with the neighbouring tribes.

Before dealing with the *ilāf* agreement, a survey in some detail of *Sūrat Quraysh* (CVI) of the Qur’ān is necessary. This *Sūrah* is of great historical significance with respect to the position of Quraysh in Arabia. The message contained in the *sūrah* is clear: Quraysh are indebted to Allāh for the *ilāf* and Allāh provided Quraysh with a livelihood and guaranteed their safety. The *sūrah* states that ‘for the *ilāf* of the Quraysh, their *ilāf* during the journey of the winter and the summer, let them worship the Lord of this house who fed them against hunger and safeguarded them against fear’.³³²

³²⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 143.

³³⁰ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 75. C.f. Jones, ‘*Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya*’, 17.

³³¹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IX, 10.

³³² Qur’ān, CVI, 1-4.

Verse 1 opens with the preposition *li*. Birkeland's explanation of the meaning of this preposition is based upon a variant reading transmitted on the authority of 'Ikrimah (d.105/723) in which the phrase *li-īlāf* is rendered as a verbal form (*li-ya'laḥ*). Birkeland translates accordingly 'in order to protect the caravan'.³³³ But Rubin argues that 'the preposition *li* in the reading of 'Ikrimah is actually *lām al-amr*, so that the purpose of this reading, which at any rate, seems to be secondary and utterly different from that suggested by Birkeland'.³³⁴ According to all other reading, the preposition *li* is followed by a *maṣḍar* which is rendered either as *īlāf* or as *ilāf* or as *ilf*. Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d.170/786) and Sībawayh (d.180/796), as quoted by al-Razī and others, explain the *li* as follows:³³⁵ 'let them worship the Lord of this House, because of the *īlāf* of the Quraysh'. This explanation suggests that the *li* means 'because of' or 'thanks to' so that it is actually used to indicate the reason which, according to al-Khalīl and Sībawayh stands for the benevolence (*ni'mah*) of Allāh towards Quraysh. Because of this benevolence Quraysh are demanded, in verse 3, to manifest their gratitude in worshipping 'the Lord of this House'.³³⁶

Verse 2 specified the exact nature of Allāh's benevolence towards Quraysh and his protection of them. Mujāhid (d.104/722) interpreted verse 2 as follows: 'They were accustomed to it, so that any winter or summer journey was not hard for them'.³³⁷ Mujāhid's interpretation suggests that the first object is Quraysh, and

³³³ Birkeland, *Lord*, 108.

³³⁴ Birkeland, *Lord*, 108. He thoroughly analyzed *Sūrat Quraysh* and has come to the conclusion that it deals with 'the grants of security' which the sons of 'Abd Manāf, namely, Hāshim, al-Muṭṭalib, 'Abd Shams and Nawfal obtained from the kings of the neighbouring state. See Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 120-126. See also Brockett, *Studies*, 215-244.

³³⁵ Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, XXXII, 105; Ṭabarsī, *Majma'*, XXX, 119; Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Muḥīṭ*, VIII, 513; cf. Birkeland, *Lord*, 114-115.

³³⁶ Rubin, '*īlāf*', 166-167.

³³⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 198; See also Suyūṭī, *Durr*, VI, 397. Cf. Rubin, '*īlāf*', 168-169; Birkeland, *Lord*, 110.

the second is the journey, the whole paragraph conveys the idea of the habituating of Quraysh (by Allāh) to the winter and summer journey. The hardships of travelling were mainly connected with the risk of being attacked and plundered by the tribes. Therefore, the statement that Allāh enabled Quraysh to travel fearlessly can only mean that he protected them against such attacks. In pre-Islamic times, Quraysh enjoyed a divine protection which was based upon their sacred position as *aḥl al-Ḥaram*. Being the inhabitants of the *Ḥaram* of Mecca, and the custodians of the Ka'bah: thus any attack on them was regarded as a violation of a sacred taboo.³³⁸

Verse 3: The meaning of this verse simply is 'so let them worship the Lord of this House'. In pre-Islamic times, as Ibn Ḥabīb reports, Quraysh attributed their sacred position to the immunity of the deity of the Ka'bah to whom they used to refer as *Hubal*.³³⁹ Therefore the protection of Quraysh and its immunity had come from the deity of the Ka'bah, so they must turn this deity into their sole object for respect. This means that they must give up *shirk* i.e. abandon the worship of lesser idols which were attached to the High God.³⁴⁰

Verse 4 states 'He provided them with food against hunger'. It seems to indicate that thanks to the Ka'bah, or rather, the Lord of the Ka'bah, the inhabitants of Mecca were able to enjoy a constant supply of foodstuffs, because of the pilgrimage season and the trade activities which occurred in the markets such as 'Ukāz, Majannah and Dhū 'l-Majāz. Concerning the other part from verse 4, which states that 'He protected them against insecurity',³⁴¹ Quraysh could remain in Mecca not

³³⁸ Rubin, '*Īlāf*', 169-170; Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 120.

³³⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, 315. See also Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣṇām*, 27- 28.

³⁴⁰ Rubin, '*Īlāf*', 173. See also Crone, *Trade*, 204-213.

³⁴¹ Qur'ān, CVI, 4.

only because of the constant flow of provisions but also because of the conditions of security which they enjoyed within the sacred vicinity of the *Haram*.

In conclusion, *Sūrat Quraysh* deals with the special prerogatives that this tribe had received from God. This had two main implications with respect to Quraysh. (a) Thanks to their position as *Ahl al-Haram*, Quraysh could carry out the winter and the summer journey regularly, under conditions of complete protection. (b) There is no need for Quraysh to travel at all, due to the position of Mecca as a centre for pilgrimage and trade.³⁴²

Ṣaliḥ Darādikah considers that the *ilāf* resulted from natural and historical factors. He says that since Mecca was in a desert area and thus could not rely on agriculture like Medina, it had to depend on trade. He argues that the very location of Mecca, originally built round Zamzam near the Ka‘bah – the first holy place, aroused the envy and rivalry of other tribes.³⁴³ Mecca was first inhabited by Jurhum who took fees from people in return for entrance into the city.³⁴⁴ After Jurhum, Khuzā‘ah ruled over Mecca until they were expelled by Quraysh under the leadership of Quṣayy b. Kilāb who provided the basis for the eventual domination of his grandson, Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf, the instigator of the *ilāf*. Some well known organizations were attributed to Quṣayy such as the custodianship of the Ka‘bah (*sidānah*), providing water for Mecca pilgrims (*siqāyah*) and providing food for the pilgrims (*rifādah*). Then the *ḥums* system followed so that all these organizations had their economic purposes.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Rubin, ‘*Ilāf*’, 175.

³⁴³ Darādikah, ‘*Ilāf*’, 95.

³⁴⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 112.

³⁴⁵ Aḏraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 84; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 126; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, Mecca. Cf. Peters, ‘Commerce’, 11-12.

The *ḥums* system had the great effect of strengthening the ties between Quraysh and other Arab tribes so that Quraysh gained a distinguished position amongst them.³⁴⁶ Jāḥiẓ attributed Quraysh's love of trade to their religious enthusiasm, and consequently they abandoned attacking other tribes to concentrate solely on trade.³⁴⁷ However, we cannot accept Jāḥiẓ's opinion alone since there are many other reasons that caused this.

The first factor is the rough desert area where Mecca was located and which was never used for agriculture.³⁴⁸

The second factor is the existence of the Ka'bah in Mecca itself. Many people from other tribes made the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah and Quraysh made good use of the pilgrimage season for selling and buying. The above mentioned factors helped Mecca to become the centre of trade in the area. As the years went by, Mecca became increasingly important as its traders replaced the Yemeni traders after the Yemen had been occupied by the Abyssinians. It also took advantage of the bad relations that prevailed between the Persians and the Byzantium empire which enabled it to trade with Iraq and Syria.³⁴⁹

Since Roman and Persian empires did not allow foreign traders to enter their empires. Meccan traders were only able to enter a few markets near the borders of these empires, such as al-Ḥīrah, Buṣrā and Gaza.³⁵⁰ Lammens reports that the Arab traders were allowed to engage in trade in the great empires of that time

³⁴⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, VI, 57-58 (Ḥums); Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 72; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 199; al-Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 119-123; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, 178.

³⁴⁷ Jāḥiẓ, *Buldān*, 469.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Qur'ān, XIV, 38.

³⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 31-32; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 213; Jāḥiẓ, *Buldān*, 470; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 104; cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 288.

³⁵⁰ Lammens, *La Mecque*, 438.

providing that they paid high taxes. In return, Mecca demanded similar taxes on traders.³⁵¹ The necessity forced Quraysh leaders to secure their trade caravans with Syria, Iraq, the Yemen and Abyssinia. The safeguarding of the caravans was achieved under the rule of Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf. Such an event was considered a turning point in the history of Mecca. The religious, social and economic prestige of Quraysh which had been achieved made Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf a figurehead and so stories mention in detail this famous figure.³⁵²

Regarding the activity of Hāshim and how he brought about the institution of *īlāf*, Arab sources mention that Mecca passed through drought years which forced Hāshim to travel to Syria to trade. We have a full report in the *Dhayl* of al-Amālī. According to Ibn al-Kalbī (d.204/819) Quraysh were merchants. Their commerce used not to go beyond Mecca, but foreigners used to bring the merchandise to them. They used to buy from them, trade with one another and sell to the Arabs around them. Their commerce was conducted thus until Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf went to al-Shām and camped near the emperor, the name of Hāshim being then ‘Amr. Ibn al-Kalbī tells us about how Hāshim got his nickname and established friendly terms with him.³⁵³

When Hāshim saw the respect which the Emperor showed towards him, he said, ‘O King, my people are the merchants of the Arabs. If you would give me a document (*kitāb*) in which you secure the safety of their caravans, they would bring you the best leather goods and clothing from Ḥijāz, and sell it among you. It would be cheaper for you.’ Accordingly the emperor drew up (*kataba*) a document for him

³⁵¹ Lammens, *La Mecque*, 438.

³⁵² Darādikah, ‘*Īlāf*’, 97-98.

³⁵³ As has been mentioned it is unlikely that Hāshim met the Byzantine emperor. Rather he met his representative or a local official, c.f. Serjeant, ‘Meccan trade’, 475.

granting security to those of them who should come. After Hāshim obtained the safe-conduct (*kitāb amān*) from the emperor (as narrated above), Hāshim started back to Mecca. Each time he passed by a tribe belonging to the Arabs on the Shām road, he obtained from their *ashrāf* an *ilāf*. The *ilāf* meant that they were safe in the territory of the tribes, even with those with whom he had no alliances. That is, *ilāf* meant security on the route.³⁵⁴ In return Quraysh brought them goods and transport from their merchandise, saving them its transportation, and returned to them their capital and profit (for their merchandise).³⁵⁵ Hāshim obtained the *ilāf* from those who were between Mecca and Syria until he reached Mecca. He brought them the most important thing that had ever been brought to them. Accordingly they set out with a vast quality of merchandise, and Hāshim set out leading them and exacting from them their *ilāf* which he had obtained for them from the Arabs. He went on exacting that for them and establishing contact between them and the *ashrāf* of the Arabs until he brought them to al-Shām and settled them in its settlements (*wa-aḥallahum qurāhā*). He died on that journey in Gaza.³⁵⁶ When Hāshim died al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Manāf went to the Yemen and obtained from their kings a pact (‘*ahd*’) for those of Quraysh who used to trade among them. Then he set out towards Mecca obtaining from the Arabs through whom he passed the *ilāf*, until he came to Mecca. This was on the same conditions on which Hāshim had obtained his *ilāf*. Al-Muṭṭalib was the eldest of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf and used to be called al-Fayḍ (the munificent). Al-Muṭṭalib died in Radmān in the Yemen.

‘Abd Shams b. ‘Abd Manāf set out to the king of al-Ḥabashah and obtained from him a document (*kitāb*) and a pact (‘*ahd*’) for those of Quraysh who used

³⁵⁴ *wa- ‘l-ilāf an ya’mānū ‘inda-hum fī arḍi-him bi-ghayri ḥilf wa-innamā huwa amānat al-ṭarīq.*

³⁵⁵ ‘*alā annā Quraysh taḥmila ilay-him baḍā’i’ fa-yakfūna-hum ḥumlāna-hā wa-yu’addūna ilay-him ru’ūsa amwālī-him wa-ribihim ha-hum.*

³⁵⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 199. Cf. Birkeland, *Lord*, 125-126; Rubin, ‘*Ilāf*’, 173.

to trade in his domain. Then he obtained the *ilāf* from those who were situated between him (the king) and the Arabs until he reached Mecca. ‘Abd Shams died in Mecca and he was buried in al-Ḥajūn. He was older than Hāshim.

Nawfal b. ‘Abd Manāf, who was the youngest of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf, set out to Iraq and obtained a pact (*‘ahd*) from the Sasanian emperor for the merchants of Quraysh. Then he went back to Mecca, obtaining the *ilāf* from the Arabs through whom he passed, until he came to Mecca. Afterwards he returned to Iraq and died in Salmān in Iraq.³⁵⁷

Before we discuss Ibn al-Kalbī’s reports, mention must be made in brief concerning what the other sources say about the *ilāf*. Al-Balādhurī called the pledges of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf *‘aṣm*, protection,³⁵⁸ while al-Ṭabarī offered different names, such as *ḥabl*, sing. *ḥabīl* (i.e. *‘ahd*, *dhimmah* and *amān*) which mean pact, protection and security.³⁵⁹

Ibn Ḥabīb in his book *al-Munammaq* relates, on the authority of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf, as follows: ‘Those sons of ‘Abd Manāf were the first by the help of whom God elevated Quraysh. The Arabs have never seen such people as they in their patience, intelligence and wisdom’. Maṭrūd al-Khuzā‘ī refers to the sons of ‘Abd Manāf as,

الأخذين العهد من آفاقها والراجلين برحلة الإيلاف

‘They who obtained the pact (*‘ahd*) from their far region.’

³⁵⁷ Qālī, *Dhayl al-Amālī*, 199. See further Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 43; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 162-163; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 6; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 179; Tha‘ālibī, *Thimār*, 89; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 201; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, III, 458; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, II, 56-60.

³⁵⁸ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 58-9.

³⁵⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 197.

they who went on the journey (*al-rāḥilūna*) of the *ilāf*.³⁶⁰

Some sources claim that 'Abd Manāf's sons took a guarantee from the rulers of Egypt and their trade reached even Ankara.³⁶¹

Ibn Sa'd on the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. Nawfal b. al-Ḥārith reports: 'Hāshim was a noble man who concluded an alliance (*ḥilf*) for Quraysh with the Byzantine emperor so that they (i.e. Quraysh) should travel in safety. As far as those concerned who were on the route (i.e. the bedouin tribes), he concluded an *ilāf* with them and in return Quraysh would transport their goods and there would be no transport charge for the people (i.e. the tribes) on the route. The emperor wrote him a letter and wrote to the Negus too that he should permit Quraysh to enter his territory.³⁶² Ibn al-Athīr quotes a tradition on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās (d.62/681) to the effect that Hāshim obtained the *ilāf*, that is to say a pact or safeguard (*'ahd*, *dhimām*) for Quraysh.³⁶³

Syria, the Yemen, Abyssinia and Iraq were countries in which Hāshim, al-Muṭṭalib, 'Abd Shams and Nawfal traded. Each of these used to be a leader, (*ra'īs*) of those who went with him to his destination, having obtained for them the *ilāf* from the kings and from the head of the tribes. So the sons of 'Abd Manāf were the leaders of Quraysh and were those who made them prosperous.³⁶⁴

Now, how much can we accept of the *ilāf* tradition and how can we interpret it in our analysis of the development of Meccan trade? The most important statements of the tradition can be outlined as follows:

³⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 36.

³⁶¹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 43.

³⁶² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 45.

³⁶³ al-Jāḥiẓ, *Buldān*, 470.

³⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 163.

1. The sons of ‘Abd Manāf Hāshim and his brothers changed Meccan trade, previously local, into an international trade.
2. They concluded trade agreements with rulers of the neighbouring countries (Byzan-tium, the Yemen, Abyssinia, Iraq).
3. They concluded *ilāf* agreements with the bedouin tribes dwelling along the trade route.³⁶⁵

Let us first consider the problem of the pacts signed with the rulers. As already highlighted by Lammens,³⁶⁶ the trade contracts were concluded at best with their local officials; ‘They were concluded not concurrently, but parallel with the drop out of the competitors, stretching over a few decades’.³⁶⁷ It appears further from Arabic sources outside the *ilāf* tradition that the conclusion of *ilāf* and the development of Meccan trade were the results of a prolonged process. These sources provide additional information for the reconstruction of the true process of *ilāf*. They proved that with the fall of the Yemen Quraysh could not directly take over. In the period following the Abyssinian conquest, Yemenite traders were still active for a few decades. We have information which proves that a large part of the trade through Mecca was still transacted by Yemenite merchants.³⁶⁸

Al-Balādhurī reports that when a group of traders of Abū Yaksūm (i.e. Abraham) went to Mecca in a Year of Drought, they were attacked by young men who robbed them of part of their goods. ‘Later they made peace after some nobles of Quraysh went to Abū Yaksūm and asked not to alienate the traders of his

³⁶⁵ Simon, *Trade*, 65.

³⁶⁶ Lammens, *La Mecque*, 32 (128). See also O’Leary, *Arabia*, 161-162.

³⁶⁷ Simon, *Trade*, 65-66.

³⁶⁸ Simon, *Trade*, 66; Kister, ‘Hulābān’, 432.

country from them (*wa-sa'alūhu allā yagṭa'a tujjāra ahli mamlakatihi 'anhum*).³⁶⁹ From this report we can deduce two things. First that at the time of Abrahah the Yemenite traders still played a major role in the trade with the north of Arabia; second, that in this period the main activity of Quraysh was still animal husbandry which a year of drought could easily affect. It is likely that with the growth of Lakhmid influence, the Yemenite participation in trade declined, but did not cease.³⁷⁰

The gradually decreasing activity of Yemenite traders and parallel to it, the development of Quraysh trade with the Yemen, can be best followed from the origin of *ḥilf al-fuḍūl*. The background of the federation was the cheating of a Yemenite trader in Mecca, an incident which seems to illustrate the new commercial role of the Quraysh and Mecca vis-à-vis the Yemen. After Quraysh had managed to quash the monopoly of the Yemeni traders, Meccan traders began to trade in Syria with merchandise they themselves had purchased in the Yemen.³⁷¹ But if we look carefully at the reason behind the formation of the *fuḍūl* alliance, we find that al-Zubayr b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was instrumental in establishing it.³⁷² The rivalry between the two parties which had formed out of the four branches of the 'Abd Manāf tribe was beginning to become evident at the end of the sixth century A.D.³⁷³

Ibn Ḥabib reports that the Qurashi tribes gathered in the house of the highly respected 'Abdallāh b. Jud'ān in order to make a treaty among themselves. Those

³⁶⁹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb* I, 59. For the word *'uṣum*, see al-A'sha, *Dīwān*, 29. Cf. Kister, 'Ḥulābān', 429-30.

³⁷⁰ Simon, *Trade*, 67.

³⁷¹ Simon, *Trade*, 67.

³⁷² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 82.

³⁷³ Goldfeld, *Policy*, 74.

present making a treaty were B. Hāshim, B. al-Muṭṭalib, Asad b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā, Zuhrah b. Kilāb and Taym b. Murrah. They made an agreement (*ta‘āqadū*) and a pact (*ta‘āhadū*) stipulating that they would stand by any one wronged (*mazlūm*) in Mecca, whether he be counted among its inhabitants or not, until what he had been deprived of (*mazlamah*) had been restored to him. This treaty was named by Quraysh *ḥilf al-fudūl*, the treaty of prominent people.³⁷⁴

Al-Zubayr b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib called the tribes to make this treaty when Muḥammad was twenty years old, at the end of the Fijār war,³⁷⁵ at the end of the eighties of the sixth century A.D. All the Muṭayyabūn group responded except B. al-Ḥārith b. Fihr and B. ‘Abd Shams and Nawfal of B. ‘Abd Manāf.³⁷⁶ Simon maintains that the establishment of the *fudūl* - alliance was to strengthen the position of the old alliance which was the al-Muṭayyabūn³⁷⁷ against the other group, the *aḥlāf*, who were handling the trade activities in Mecca, and the assistance given to the Yemenite trader by the *fudūl* group shows us that they were unhappy at the act of the *aḥlāf* in conducting Meccan trade. Following this period, the sources speak only about the Yemenite trade of the Quraysh, monopolized more and more by B. Makhzūm who had trade relations with the Yemen. It is also not surprising to find the Abyssinians dwelt in Dār al-‘Ulūj (the house of foreigners) in the

³⁷⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 180-187. For more details of *ḥilf al-fudūl*, see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 134; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbir*, 167; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, II, 12; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 82; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 86ff.; Mu‘nis, *Tārīkh*, 165-170; ‘Āqil, *Tārīkh*, 234.

³⁷⁵ The war of Fijār took place between Quraysh, who were supported by Kinānah, and Qays ‘Iylān. The cause of the war was due to the killing of ‘Urwah al-Raḥḥāl (the guard of a caravan sent by al-Nu‘man b. al-Mundhir of Ḥīrah to ‘Ukāz) by al-Barrād b. Qays who had an ally *ḥalīf* of Ḥarb b. Umayyah. It was called Fijār because it occurred in the sacred months, see Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XXII, 57; Balādhurī, *Anṣāb*, I, 101; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbir*, 195; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 160; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 126; cf. Crone, *Trade*, 145-148; Watt, *Muḥammad*, 11; Kister, ‘Ḥīrah’, 154; Afaghānī, *Aswāq*, 182f.

³⁷⁶ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 82.

³⁷⁷ See above, p.48. I contend that the *fudūl* treaty differs in its circumstances from that of the Muṭayyabūn alliance.

quarter of B. Makhzūm. The Makhzūm seem to have had financial relations with Najrān as well. For example, when al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah died, he mentioned to his sons that he owed the bishop of Najrān a hundred dinars. As far as the foundation of the *fudūl* - alliance, according to the tradition, the federation came into being in the last decade of the sixth century. Thus the beginning of the Yemenite *ilāf* can be set between the fifties and nineties of the sixth century.³⁷⁸

The *ilāf* of ‘Abd Shams with the Abyssinians can be seen more easily in this context. We know both from Arabic and non-Arabic sources that the trade to and from Abyssinia was carried out mainly by Abyssinian and Byzantine merchants. When describing trade and other contacts with Abyssinia, the sources never mention Arab ships.³⁷⁹ The population of northern Arabia had little access to the sea. Sailing and maritime trade were developed only during the era of the Umayyads. Arabia has never produced the kind of wood suitable for constructing strong seagoing ships. Also Arabia has no navigable rivers. Sailing on the Red Sea was dangerous with its rocky, reefy coastline. Immense coral reefs skirt both coasts and in places extend far out into the sea; great knowledge and skill were required to avoid being wrecked on them.³⁸⁰

Simon maintains that because of these circumstances Quraysh was unable to transact regular trade with Abyssinia. He argues that since they could, at best, only receive goods arriving from Abyssinia we therefore cannot speak about the Abyssinian *ilāf*.³⁸¹ We hesitate to accept the whole of Simon’s argument. It is a fact that the sources lack information about the sea trade of Quraysh. Although

³⁷⁸ Simon, *Trade*, 67.

³⁷⁹ Simon, *Trade*, 67.

³⁸⁰ Hourani, *Seafaring*, 5.

³⁸¹ Simon, *Trade*, 67

there are a number of references to sailing in the Qur'ān,³⁸² which mention the hazards of travelling by sea and do not indicate that sailing was practiced by Quraysh. If we go back to Simon's argument, it would be possible to speak about an Abyssinian *īlāf* since the people of Mecca had a direct contact with them through the port of al-Shu'aybah and the Abyssinians were in need of some goods which were provided by the Meccans even on a small scale. Also we can understand from the first migration of the Muslims from Mecca to Abyssinia that the Meccans were familiar with the land of Abyssinia. Ibn Sa'd reports that the Muslims left Mecca secretly until they arrived in al-Shu'aybah and then carried on to Abyssinia in two merchant ships.³⁸³ We can deduce from the above report that al-Shu'aybah was the port of Mecca in pre-Islamic times and was relatively busy because of trade between Mecca and Abyssinia. At the same time we have to bear in mind that Quraysh were mainly involved in carrying the commodities of Abyssinia and East Africa to the north (Syria) and the the east (Iraq).

Quraysh had the ability to deal with the tribes situated on the trade route. These tribes had once been attackers of trade caravans, but now they functioned as protectors.³⁸⁴ This security was not unconditional as some researchers have claimed.³⁸⁵ Quraysh, as we have indicated, made the heads of these tribes take part in trade and profits. So al-Jāhiz said that, 'residents would receive profits and travelling traders would be allowed to travel safely'³⁸⁶ (*fā-kāna 'l-muqīm rābiḥan wa-'l-musāfir mahfūzan*).

It seems that Meccan traders faced some difficulties from Byzantine officials

³⁸² Qur'ān, X, 20; XI, 43; XXIV, 40; XXXI, 32 etc.

³⁸³ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, I, 139.

³⁸⁴ Darādikah, *Īlāf*, 99.

³⁸⁵ al-Qāsimī, *Īlāf*, 243-255.

³⁸⁶ al-Jāhiz, *Rasā'il*, 71.

and this is why Hāshim asked for security from them. These traders dealt with the problems of tribesmen easily but it cost them dearly and the results were not secure.³⁸⁷ This continued to be the case until the sons of ‘Abd Manāf finally organized commercial relations with the tribal leaders. All this happened after Hāshim returned from Syria and some sources even say that Hāshim’s brothers had taken these promises and pledges after their brother’s death.³⁸⁸

That this great commercial change took place possibly at the beginning of the sixth century A.D. because Hāshim died during this period. Some sources state that Hāshim was a contemporary of Qubād the Persian king and al-Hārith b. ‘Amr al-Kindī who also lived during that time.³⁸⁹

Īlāf had been Quraysh’s creation and had made Meccan trade international. It also made them follow a clear and stable policy in international relations. This policy eventually succeeded in organizing relations in the north then in the Arabian Peninsula with the Arab tribes.³⁹⁰ Quraysh highly respected the organized relations between the Arab tribes more than they did the pledges of other countries which mainly concerned the tribes who dwelled along the commercial route. It has been reported that, when some of Quraysh tried to harm Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Ibn ‘Abbās admonished them, reminding them that his tribe lived on the commercial route to Syria. Quraysh then left him alone.³⁹¹

Quraysh struggled for a long time to get out of a purely local trade into an international one and soon became masters in the art of trade. This is evident

³⁸⁷ Darādikah, ‘*Īlāf*’, 102.

³⁸⁸ al-Jāhiz, *Rasā’il*, 70; Darādikah, ‘*Īlāf*’, 102.

³⁸⁹ al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, 327. Cf. Peters, ‘Commerce’, 13.

³⁹⁰ Baydūn, ‘*Īlāf*’, 28.

³⁹¹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh*, V, 59.

from the words of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf when he said ‘If I pick up a rock, I hope to find gold and silver under it’.³⁹²

Quraysh’s alliance with Tamīm, the biggest Arabian tribe to the north-east of Mecca, helped to guarantee the safety of the caravans of Quraysh.³⁹³ Its settlements extended eastwards from Wadi al-Rummah to Wadi al-Baṭḥā’ and to the north-west of the Arabian Gulf. Because of the importance of Tamīm, the tribes in the region sought their friendship and they established alliances with them.³⁹⁴ Tamīm was in alliance with Kalb, the most dangerous tribe, because its camp sites spread from the higher points of Ḥijāz to the desert of Syria.³⁹⁵ It seems that Kalb maintained strong relations with Quraysh since we find that they opposed the coming of Islam and tried to create economic difficulties for the Prophet by attacking the Nabataean traders who would carry flour and oil to Medina and harming them by preventing their goods from reaching it. This obliged the Prophet to prepare an army in 5/627 to punish them.³⁹⁶

Another alliance was between Tamīm and the two tribes of Asad and Ṭayyi’. This helped the trade of Quraysh as it was able to send its caravans safely from Mecca to al-Ḥaẓn³⁹⁷ and from Dūmat al-Jandal to Iraq.³⁹⁸ Quraysh had understood the importance of Tamīm amongst the tribes, so it gave them a role in Meccan administration and some other privileges as well.

³⁹² Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 126. See also Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣṭabāḥ*, IV, 176-178.

³⁹³ Levi della Vida, ‘Tamīm’, *ET*², 643-644. Kister examined in detail the relation between Mecca and Tamīm in his article ‘Mecca and Tamīm’, 113-163.

³⁹⁴ Darādikah, *Rifādah*, 57ff.

³⁹⁵ al-Sharīf, *Dawr al-Ḥijāz*, 10.

³⁹⁶ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 402-404; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 62-63; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣṇām*, 10; Ibn Kathir, *Bidāyah*, III, 22.

³⁹⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 254-255.

³⁹⁸ Marzūqī, *Aẓmīnah*, II, 162; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 487-489.

The prestige enjoyed by Tamīm in Mecca was based mainly on their strength and their services for the external trade of Mecca. Some Tamīm groups even had a political role in Mecca and this helped increase the influence and prestige of Mecca among the tribes.³⁹⁹ Quraysh allowed Tamīm to participate in supervising and controlling the market of 'Ukāẓ.⁴⁰⁰ Quraysh was an old ally of B. Kinānah and B. Bakr and it was on friendly terms with tribes which had settled and camped along the route to the north, such as Juhaynah, Muzaynah and Ghatafān. Ghatafān were allies of Asad (who were also allied to Ashja' Sulaym) and, as we have seen, Asad were allied to Tamīm who were, in turn, allied to Quraysh.⁴⁰¹

According to Ibn Ḥabīb, although the guardians of the religion of the Meccans and the trustees of their direction of prayer were Quraysh, and the authoritative interpreters of the religion were B. Mālīk b. Kinānah, the leaders and judges of the tribe, however, (after the time of 'Āmir b. al-Zurayb) in the market at 'Ukāẓ were the B. Tamīm.⁴⁰²

Ibn Ḥabīb gives us a list of chiefs of Tamīm who acted both as leaders of the market and as judges of 'Ukāẓ. They are

1. Sa'd b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm,
2. Ḥanzalah b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm,
3. Dhu'ayb b. Ka'b b. 'Amr b. Tamīm,
4. Māzin b. Mālīk b. 'Amr b. Tamīm,

³⁹⁹ Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 155. For the fact that Quraysh invested Tamīm with the two most important duties in their religious and economic life, the *ḥukūmah* and the *ijāzah*, see von Grunebaum, *Festivals*, 32-33.

⁴⁰⁰ Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 156.

⁴⁰¹ See Donner, *Islamic conquests*, 51.

⁴⁰² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 182.

5. Tha‘labah b. Yarbū‘ b. Ḥanẓalah b. Mālik b. Zayd Manāt,
6. Mu‘āwiyah b. Shurayf b. Jurwah b. Usayyid b. ‘Amr b. Tamīm,
7. al-Aḍbaṭ b. Quray‘ b. ‘Awf b. Ka‘b b. Sa‘d b. Zayd Manāt,
8. Ṣulṣul b. Aws b. Mukhāshin b. Mu‘āwiyah b. Shurayf b. Jurwah b. Usayyid,
9. Sufyān b. Mujāshi‘.

Sufyān was the last man who combined the two functions of judge and leader of the pilgrimage. After he died, these functions were carried out by two different persons. Muḥammad b. Sufyān carried out the duties of a judge at ‘Ukāẓ. At the appearance of Islam, the judge was al-Aqra‘ b. Ḥābis b. ‘Iqāl b. Muḥammad b. Sufyān b. Mujāshi‘.⁴⁰³ The list of the Tamīmī judges given by al-Balādhurī on the authority of Ibn Kunāsah is almost identical to the list of Ibn Ḥabīb.⁴⁰⁴

Ghaṭafān, Hawāzin and Hilāl had formed an alliance with the *ashrāf* of Quraysh based on the economic interest of the two sides.⁴⁰⁵ Also Thaqīf had strong ties with Quraysh. Al-Ṭā‘if, being Thaqīf’s town, was thus the summer resort for Quraysh; also they had a lot of property there. ‘Udhrah had a long established relationship with Quraysh since the time of Quṣayy. This relationship became stronger with the *ilāf* agreement, and ‘Udhrah had an alliance with Juhaynah so the latter respected Quraysh’s interests and permitted the Quraysh caravan to pass through their area. This seems to be the case for other tribes such as Balī, and the rest of the branch of Quḍā‘ah who were settling in the trade route between Mecca and Syria.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Ibn Ḥabīb, Muḥabbar, 182.

⁴⁰⁴ Kister, ‘Mecca and Tamīm’, 147.

⁴⁰⁵ Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, I, 345.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, 419-420.

In addition to the common economic interest between Quraysh and other tribes, Quraysh tried to reinforce its ties with the tribe, through marriage. This policy appears from the list of Tamīmī women who were married to the nobles of Quraysh; also other women from other tribes got married to Quraysh men. For example, Tumādir bint al-Asbagh of Kalb, the wife of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf was the first Kalbī married to a Qurayshī.⁴⁰⁷ As we have indicated, the chief of the tribes participated in trade, and so trade became a respected occupation in the eyes of the Arabs. As a result of the increase of wealth among the people of Mecca, they started to look after the poor and asked them to participate in the caravan. This policy appears very clear from the poetry of Maṭrūd al-Khuzā‘ī, who said:

والمخالطين فقيرهم بغنيهم حتى يكون فقيرهم كالكافي

‘Those who mixed the poor with the rich until the poor had an adequate amount.’⁴⁰⁸

We can see also a clear picture of this practice in a peculiar tradition, which seems to throw some light on Meccan society at the time of Hāshim. This tradition quoted by al-Suyūṭī from the *Muwaffaqiyyāt* of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār is told on the authority of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. According to this tradition, the nobles of Quraysh used to practice *i’tifād* in the Jahīliyyah. *I’tifād* means that when a family lost their property, they used to leave for the desert, where they pitched tents and patiently awaited death one after another (*tanāwabū*) till they all died, before people knew about their plight. So things went on till Hāshim grew up and became a man of influence among his people. He summoned Quraysh and said, ‘O Quraysh, might goes with abundance, and you have become the richest and

⁴⁰⁷ al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 267. For more details see Kister, ‘Mecca and Tamīm’, 158.

⁴⁰⁸ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 60; Azraqī, *Akhbar*, I, 68; al-Bakrī, *al-Khamīs*, I, 156. Cf. Crone, *Trade*, 208.

mightiest of the Arabs. *I'tifād* has ruined many of you.' His proposition, accepted by Quraysh, was that every rich Qurashī should have a poor man attached to him. The poor man would help the rich man in his journey with the caravan and 'live in his shade with the excess of his property'. That would be the means of stopping the custom of *i'tifād*. They agreed and Hāshim brought the people together (i.e. the rich and the poor).⁴⁰⁹

As settled traders, the Meccans found it necessary to live without aggression and to avoid creating problems, solving any such matter which arose by peaceable negotiation. The agreement made with neighbouring tribes was an attempt to appease them and bring them into alliance with Mecca. This policy greatly benefitted Quraysh who as a result acquired the status of leaders of the local tribes after the political, economic and religious collapse of the South Arabian kingdoms.

Because of Mecca's high degree of civilization, compared with the bedouin, its religious leadership, its contacts with the outside world and the presence of foreign communities, economic life there became highly developed. As a result all the neighbouring tribes recognised its superiority and by the eve of Islam Quraysh had become the leading tribe in the west of the Arabian Peninsula.

Finally we can prove the importance of trade for Quraysh (or for the people of Mecca) and the high standing of Quraysh among most of the Arab tribes in the Arabian Peninsula from the Qur'ān IX, 28. 'O ye who believe! The idolaters only are unclean. So let them not come near the Inviolable Place of Worship after this year. If ye fear poverty (from the loss of their merchandise) Allāh shall preserve you of His Bounty if He will.'⁴¹⁰ The verse was revealed in 9/631. The Muslims were

⁴⁰⁹ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr*, VI, 397; Cf. Kister, 'Reports', 77.

⁴¹⁰ Qur'ān, IX, 28.

afraid that the prohibition preventing the unbelievers from approaching the Ka‘bah might endanger their trade, as the unbelievers used to bring their merchandise to Mecca during the pilgrimage season. God promised the faithful to enrich them. It was evident that this crucial verse was revealed after Mecca had been conquered, when the trade routes were secured and controlled by chiefs and leaders, who had sworn loyalty to the Prophet. They changed in fact their former loyalty to Quraysh into a new loyalty to the Prophet and to the Muslim community.⁴¹¹ Unbelievers who returned from the pilgrimage would sadly remark ‘What can we do, as Quraysh have already embraced Islam?’⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Kister, ‘Reports’, 78-79.

⁴¹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 283.

Chapter V

Mecca's Relation with the Arabian Tribes and External Relations

5.1 The strength of Quraysh and relations with Arabian tribes

There was no formal, stable military organisation in Mecca since it was a tribal society. Therefore its army was formed from the men of the tribe and from those who were allied to them from other tribes. Since Mecca appears to have functioned for centuries as a typical *ḥaram*, a combination of pilgrimage and market place, its inhabitants were not inclined to resort to the use of force and were always keen to solve problems peacefully. This was because the security of its trade, to a great extent, depended on its good relations with the neighbouring tribes, or the tribes which had settled on the trade routes to the north, south and east and west, which the Mecca caravans used.⁴¹³

At the same time Quraysh were keen to have security at a local level, where the markets were held, in order that trade could be carried on there without disruption. However, they still needed military strength in order to feel secure if threatened or if their caravans came under attack. Despite this, they, particularly the wealthy, were always against the use of force and military campaigns. This does not mean that they were cowards, on the contrary it is a fact that they showed great courage and fought bravely when circumstances necessitated it, both before

⁴¹³ See Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 27; Müller, 'Survey of the History', 131.

and after Islam.⁴¹⁴

At the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century A.D. Quraysh exerted great influence and the Arab tribes, particularly those in central and western Arabia, respected their authority. The basis of this influence was the formation of trade alliances and Quraysh custodianship of the Ka'bah which involved providing food and drink for pilgrims.

The caravans which went north and south needed the services of the bedouins as guides and guards and they would pay tax to the heads of the tribes in exchange for these services as well as for water and other necessities. The tribes themselves participated in the Meccan trade, as noted in the *ilāf* agreements. The tribes on the trade routes therefore recognised that their interests were linked with those of Mecca. We can deduce from this that Quraysh were able to hire fighters for their protection.⁴¹⁵ This does not mean however that these soldiers were mercenaries, but rather they were allies on an equal basis. The most prominent of these allies were those known as the Aḥābīsh and this alliance was formed in the mid sixth century.⁴¹⁶ Quraysh used the strength of the Aḥābīsh in the wars that it undertook. For example, the Aḥābīsh showed considerable strength in the armed conflicts which took place before the *Hijrah* between the Prophet and Quraysh. The power of the Aḥābīsh on which the Quraysh depended so heavily was weakened by the Prophet by his attracting to his side other tribes which formed a confederacy with the Aḥābīsh.⁴¹⁷ In addition to the strength of the Aḥābīsh, Quraysh also had a great number of slaves and clients.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁴ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 142-143.

⁴¹⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 4-5.

⁴¹⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 358; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, III, 340.

⁴¹⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, III, 53, 394.

⁴¹⁸ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 145.

Quraysh were an old ally of B. Kinānah and B. Bakr. This allegiance goes back to the days of Quṣayy b. Kilāb when he joined forces with Quraysh to fight Khuzā‘ah. Quraysh were forced to fight on the side of Kinānah against Qays and the Hawāzin in the Fijār wars and due to this alliance Quraysh were also on good terms with the tribes that had settled along the trade routes: Juhaynah, Mazīnah, Ghaṭafān, Ashja‘, Sālim b. Sa‘d and B. Asad. Quraysh had formed alliances with people from these tribes who lived in Mecca and who considered themselves part of Quraysh according to the prevalent tribal system.⁴¹⁹ Similarly Quraysh had good relations with B. ‘Udhrah of Quḍā‘ah who settled on the outskirts of Syria in the days of Quṣayy b. Kilāb. They had helped Quṣayy gain control over Mecca. Quraysh also maintained good relations with tribes that had settled in the south, such as the Khath‘am tribe who lived in the mountains which extended from al-Ṭā‘if to Najrān on the Yemeni caravan route.⁴²⁰

Whilst Quraysh had the allegiance of bedouin tribes, they also maintained good relations with the other towns of the Ḥijāz. They had strong links with Thaqīf in al-Ṭā‘if,⁴²¹ which was in fact their summer resort, and all the wealthy inhabitants of Mecca had land there. The merchants of Mecca used to bring wine, raisins and leather from al-Ṭā‘if, since there was great demand for these commodities, as well as pomegranates, in Mecca. The people of al-Ṭā‘if also participated in Meccan trade caravans. We should also remember that the largest market of pre-Islamic

⁴¹⁹ al-Dhahabī, *A‘lām*, I, 221-223.

⁴²⁰ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 262; al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 146.

⁴²¹ Al-Ṭā‘if was the capital of the tribe of Thaqīf. The Qur’ānic (XLIII, 30) phrase al-Qaryatayn classes Mecca with al-Ṭā‘if and suggests a link of importance between them. It was regarded as the second city of western Arabia and ranked next to Mecca on the eve of Islam. It had an advantage over the latter in the possession of fertile lands. The special industry of al-Ṭā‘if was the manufacture of leather in its numerous tanneries. See: Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 8-12; Ibn Khurdādhbah, *Masālik*, 143; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 346, 349-353; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 17, 22, 31-32; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 19. Cf. Lammens, *Ṭā‘if*, viii, 115-327; *ET*², VIII, 621-622.

Arabs, 'Ukāz, was held near al-Ṭā'if.⁴²² The Qur'ānic verse, 'They say, "Why was this Qur'ān not sent down upon some man of the moment in the two cities",⁴²³ points to the significance of people of al-Ṭā'if and to the fact that they were equal to the Meccans in terms of honour and power. This also points to ties between the Meccans and people of al-Ṭā'if and the fact that had the Qur'ān been revealed (as claimed by some commentators) to one of them, they would all have followed this person. Many in al-Ṭā'if were allies of Quraysh and some even reached positions of leadership in Quraysh, such as al-Akhnas b. Shurayq, an ally of B. Zuhrah who was obeyed and respected by Quraysh.⁴²⁴

The Meccan traders penetrated the Ṭā'if market by acquiring land, vineyards and orchards. They also had trade and capital there; for example, al-'Āṣ b. Wā'il al-Sahmī, father of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ had capital and agriculture at al-Ṭā'if. He died while he was living in one of the wādīs of al-Ṭā'if.⁴²⁵

Similarly Abū Uḥayḥah Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ b. Umayyah died at al-Ṭā'if while conducting trade.⁴²⁶ Abū Ṭālib also had vines there from which he got raisins which he mixed with water for the pilgrims.⁴²⁷ It can also be seen that Quraysh had influence over al-Ṭā'if through their granting loans to the leaders of the community and by their purchasing land and they also engaged in joint and private business-ventures there. This influence was exploited by the shrewd Meccan merchants to the extent that the people of al-Ṭā'if began to look to the heads of Quraysh for leadership.⁴²⁸

⁴²² Balāthūrī, *Futūḥ*, 68. Cf. al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 148.

⁴²³ Qur'ān, XLIII, 31.

⁴²⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 250.

⁴²⁵ al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 408.

⁴²⁶ Balādhūrī, *Ansāb*, I, 142.

⁴²⁷ Balādhūrī, *Futūḥ*, 68.

⁴²⁸ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 153. Cf. Donner, 'Mecca's food supplies', 252.

Quraysh also had good links with Yathrib, since Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf had married a woman from B. Najjār of al-Khazraj. His son, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, maintained strong links with his maternal kinsmen. Other leaders of Mecca also had friendships with the leaders of Yathrib: Umayyah b. Khalaf al-Jahmī was a friend of Sa’d b. Mu‘ādh, leader of al-Aws. People like al-‘Āṣ b. Wā’il al-Sahmī and ‘Utbah b. Rabī‘ah b. ‘Abd Shams also had strong links with Yathrib.⁴²⁹ Despite these relations however Quraysh did not form an alliance with them out of fear that this might lead to interference in an internal war between the Aws and Khazraj.

We must point out that, although Yathrib was an agricultural region, trade was conducted both internally and externally, particularly since it was located on the Syrian and Yemeni trade routes, which made it a stopping place and emporium for the caravans. The people of Yathrib could also be found conducting their trade in the Arab markets, particularly in ‘Ukāẓ, and Majannah and Dhū ‘l-Majāz, during the pilgrimage season. They specialised in jewellery and ornaments for which the Jewish tribe of B. Qaynuqā’ was famous.

The association between Mecca and Medina continued without any hostility or aggression until the migration of the Prophet to Medina and the establishment of the Islamic community. Quraysh sensed that their trade was under threat and considered the shelter of the Prophet and his companions as a challenge to them and threat to their welfare.⁴³⁰

We must point out that relations between Quraysh and the Jews of Yathrib, Khaybar and Taymā’ were very good. Quraysh respected the Jews and regarded

⁴²⁹ al-Dhahabī, *A‘lām*, I, 203.

⁴³⁰ al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 72.

them as learned people and recipients of the first Book.⁴³¹ The Jews in return honoured Quraysh and considered them to be the leaders of the Arabs.⁴³²

Because of these good relations Quraysh avoided creating enemies among the Arab tribes, which thus provided a degree of security for the Ḥijāzī towns. When Quraysh were able to protect the internal unity of the tribe and secure peace in Mecca, they gained the general respect of tribes from all over the Arabian Peninsula.

5.2 Mecca's Foreign Relations

The sixth century A.D. witnessed the climax of hostilities between the Byzantine and Persian empires. This conflict took place throughout the whole of the Middle East and the aim was to extend the influence of both parties to control international trade routes passing through this region.

It is possible that the origin of this conflict dated back to the age of the eighteenth Pharaonic family of 1580 B.C. who sent their ships into the Red Sea to the south of the Arabian Peninsula.⁴³³ At the time of the Greeks, Alexander the Great tried to extend his influence over the Arabs settled along the trade routes, but he was unable to achieve this.⁴³⁴ Then the successors of Alexander in Egypt succeeded in this aim and their ships arrived in the south, from where they were able to divert most of the eastern trade via the Red Sea and then Egypt. Later the Roman ships were able to cross the Red Sea in order to carry on this trade.

⁴³¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 330. Even later, during the Prophet's time, the Jews were a part of the confederation (*'ummah*) and they remained ever since under the protection guarantee (*dhimmah*) of the Islamic community. See Serjeant, 'Social Stratification', 127.

⁴³² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 330. Cf. Donner, 'Mecca's supplies', 253.

⁴³³ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 111, 115.

⁴³⁴ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, III, 19-20.

However the Roman aim was to take control of the land route which passed through the west of the Arabian Peninsula parallel to the Red Sea from south to the north. This then provides us with an explanation as to why the Romans undertook a campaign headed by Aelius Gallus in 24 B.C. in the reign of Augustus, a campaign which failed.

The Byzantines took the place of the Romans and the Sasanian empire was established in the east. The two empires however, became embroiled in a bitter conflict which lasted for a long time. The Middle Eastern countries were at the centre of this conflict and became the battlefield between the two empires. The northern and southern fringes of the Arabian Peninsula also became involved in this conflict. The main reason why the Byzantines and Sasanians attempted to seize this region was its strategic position on the eastern trade route. The northern part of the Arabian Peninsula witnessed fierce battles between these two empires, while the southern part witnessed political and religious conflicts. As for the central parts, they were not affected by the conflict until the sixth century A.D.,⁴³⁵ since trade was in the hands of the Yemenis who had undertaken its transportation from the early years of the reign of Minaeans and Sabaeans, possibly ca.1350 B.C. Furthermore there was no reason to conquer the central areas since those lands were unproductive and the terrain difficult. In addition the towns of the Ḥijāz were the only trade stations where the caravans could stop for rest and provisions. Despite the fact that the campaign of Aelius in 24 B.C. went through the western part of the Arabian Peninsula and reached the region of Ma'rib,⁴³⁶ there is no mention of its stopping at Mecca, Yathrib or al-Ṭā'if. Likewise there is no trace of the Roman or Persian armies coming to this region because of the great distance

⁴³⁵ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 152-153.

⁴³⁶ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, II, 384-397.

and the difficulty involved. Even in the sixth century the Byzantines refused to send their army to help the Christians when they were being persecuted by a Himyarite king, who had converted to Judaism.⁴³⁷ Likewise the Persians also hesitated before helping Sayf b. Dhī Yazan when the latter wished to expel the Abyssinians from the Yemen.⁴³⁸ The Byzantine empire formed an alliance with the Abyssinians close to the Arabian territories and used it as an instrument to spread their influence over the Yemen. The two empires also used religion as a means of increasing the number of territories over which they had influence; in fact the Byzantines tried to spread Christianity in the Yemen. The Persians in turn encouraged Judaism, which opposed Christianity, and as a result of this, internal disputes arose which led to the decline of the Himyarites, and subsequently to their downfall at the hands of the Abyssinians in A.D. 525 and later in A.D. 575 under the Persians.⁴³⁹ As a result of the downfall of the Yemen under the occupation of the Abyssinians and then the Persians and the rise of internal disputes, it lost its capability to take on any significant role, such as that which it had undertaken in transporting goods on an international basis for many centuries. In addition the conflict between the Persians and the Byzantines led to the closure of the eastern trade route from Iraq to Syria. Shipping in the Red Sea was disturbed because of the northern winds which confronted the ships going north, as well as the reefs and rocky coastline. As a result of all these factors, the land trade route across Tihāmah and Ḥijāz became the only route open for trade. After the collapse of Yemenite activity there had to be someone to fill the gap and act as a neutral mediator between the two conflicting parties in order to transport this trade.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 36.

⁴³⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 73.

⁴³⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 73.

⁴⁴⁰ Huzayyin, *Arabia*, 142-143.

The role of neutral mediator was thus taken up by Mecca, which had enjoyed some kind of organisation and stability through Quraysh since the mid-fifth century A.D. Therefore we notice that Quraysh used the opportunity which presented itself in order to transport goods. Similarly they took advantage of the conflict which had arisen between Byzantium and Persia and the vanishing power of the Yemen in order to strengthen their relations with the countries surrounding the Peninsula. All this was after having strengthened their relations with the tribes inside the Peninsula. We should note however that what helped them to adopt this position of neutrality was the desire of the two opposing sides to have such a neutral party on the one hand, and the inaccessibility of Mecca on the other. However, Mecca did not escape attempts to conquer it by force of arms, such as the campaign of Abrahah.⁴⁴¹

5.2.1 Mecca's Relationship with the Yemen

The relationship between the Ḥijāz and the Yemen goes back to the days of Minaeans and Sabaean whose influence extended to the north of the Ḥijāz where they had established settlements all the way along the trade route in Ma'ān and Dedan (al-'Ulā'), as is adequately proven by the inscriptions found in these regions. In the days of these states, Mecca was no more than a station through which the caravans passed. Its Ka'bah was the object of respect, especially amongst the Tubba's, and the traditions record that one, As'ad Abū Karib al-Ḥimyarī, was the first to cover the Ḥaram.⁴⁴² The southern tribes were the first to settle in Mecca, and the tribe of Khūzā'ah played a major role in its construction and pilgrimage activity to the Ḥaram.

⁴⁴¹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, I, 381; Gerald, *Rulers*, 24. See above p.60

⁴⁴² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 19-21; al-Azraqī, *Akhhār*, I, 165.

In the days of Quraysh, one al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Manāf, contacted the people of the Yemen and formed an agreement with them that Quraysh would undertake to trade with them.⁴⁴³ Quraysh trade reached the Yemen about the beginning of the sixth century A.D. and its caravans took complete control of transporting these goods.

Mecca and the Sacred House gained great respect among the northern Arabs and had a similar status among the southern Arabs, to the extent that they were furious when Abrahah, an Abyssinian general, prepared to attack Mecca from the Yemen. Indeed some of the Yemenite tribes even attacked him because of this. Relations between Mecca and the Yemeni leaders were established; the traditions mention the friendships formed between ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim and some influential and powerful Yemenis during his visits to the Yemen. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib was the head of the delegation which congratulated Sayf b. Dhī Yazan on his victory over the Abyssinians;⁴⁴⁴ this delegation was welcomed with great respect.

Also the sources mention individual Qurashīs as having had trading relations with the Yemen, such as ‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who went to the Yemen to trade in perfume.⁴⁴⁵ and Ibn ‘Abbās,⁴⁴⁶ but the trade of Quraysh with Yemen was monopolized more and more by B. Makhzūm, such as Abū Rabī‘ah al-Mughīrah,⁴⁴⁷ Walīd b. al-Mughīrah,⁴⁴⁸ Fākih b. al-Mughīrah,⁴⁴⁹ Hishām b. al-Mughīrah and his sons,⁴⁵⁰ as well as ‘Abdallāh b. Abī ‘l-Rabī‘ah, who traded with the Yemen and sent

⁴⁴³ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 1, 59; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 162.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, II, 329.

⁴⁴⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser I, part I, 162.

⁴⁴⁶ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, VI, 349.

⁴⁴⁷ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, 175.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 207.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 207.

⁴⁵⁰ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 209; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 301.

perfume to his mother, Asmā' bint Mukharribah,⁴⁵¹ and 'Umārah b. al-Walīd.⁴⁵²

5.2.2 Mecca's Relationship with Abyssinia

Mecca's links with Abyssinia started after its local trade was extended into outside markets by the sons of 'Abd Manāf. At the time when al-Muṭṭalib made contacts with the rulers of the Yemen, his brother, 'Abd Shams, formed links with the ruler of Abyssinia and drew up a similar agreement. From that time onwards as the sources indicate, Abyssinia became a trade centre for Quraysh (*wajhahā wa-matjarahā*).⁴⁵³ In addition Abyssinia was an important source of the eastern trade, producing incense, perfumes, ivory, leathers, spices and ostrich feathers; it was also the first source of the black slave trade. Quraysh undertook to transport these important commodities to its markets and from there to Syria, Iraq and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. They also took to Abyssinia what it needed in the way of products and goods from Syria and the Peninsula itself.⁴⁵⁴

When the Abyssinians took control of the Yemen they were unable to play a significant role in the maintenance of trade links which had been taken on by Meccan merchants, who had become mediators controlling the foreign caravans. Looking after the Sacred House, keeping to the truce of the sacred months and holding market in Mecca guaranteed their having control over the internal Arabian Peninsula. Abrahah, the Abyssinian ruler of the Yemen, thought of competing with Mecca in this prestige, so that he could take away some of its internal trade, and he also undertook to build a church in Ṣan'a'. He was very keen to make this construction particularly splendid and beautiful in order to attract the Arabs to

⁴⁵¹ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, I, 64.

⁴⁵² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 260. Cf. Crone, *Meccan trade*, 120-121.

⁴⁵³ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, VIII, 52.

⁴⁵⁴ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 157.

it for pilgrimage and trade.⁴⁵⁵ However he failed to achieve his goal because most of the Arabian tribes were pagans; Mecca was also a resting place for the idols of the Arabs. The Sacred House was a hallowed place for all Arabs. Since it was built by the ancestors of Abraham and Ismā'īl, turning to Mecca gave them both religious and nationalistic satisfaction.⁴⁵⁶ This failure of Abrahah led to his undertaking the famous attack on Mecca to destroy the Ka'bah in order to reduce its religious status. Hence he would have diminished its respect among the Arabs on the one hand and taken control of its trade on the other, thus providing the Abyssinians with land route links to its ally the Byzantines, who controlled Syria. Abrahah's attack failed and disease spread through the army while it was at the gates of Mecca after the tribes were unable to oppose this army.⁴⁵⁷ Mecca was also unable to gather sufficient forces for war. This incident increased Mecca's moral status and also confirmed its political and spiritual superiority. Despite this attack, relations between the two countries remained strong because of their mutual dependency and because Abyssinia never again thought of repeating such an act, particularly when circumstances changed and the Abyssinians were turned out of the Yemen. Quraysh re-established their position after the retreat of the Abyssinians from Mecca, who pulled out of the Arabian Peninsula after being defeated by the Persians. The Abyssinians had no choice but to accept Mecca as mediator to undertake trade, since it was inconceivable that they could have direct trade links with their Persian enemies, the enemies of their Byzantine ally.⁴⁵⁸ The Meccan relationship with Abyssinia continued up until and after the advent of Islam; this can be deduced from the first migration of Muslims to Abyssinia when

⁴⁵⁵ See above, p.61.

⁴⁵⁶ O'Leary, *Arabia*, 184.

⁴⁵⁷ Qur'ān, CVI, Sūrat al-Fīl.

⁴⁵⁸ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 158-159. See also Kobishchanov, *Arum*, 111-114.

they were forced out of Mecca.⁴⁵⁹

5.2.3 Mecca's Relationship with the North

Mecca's links with the north went back to the days of the Nabataeans who traded in North Arabia and whose control extended over the north of the Ḥijāz. The Meccans and the people of the Ḥijāz did a great deal to gain respect among the Nabataeans. They erected statues in Mecca which the Nabataeans worshipped. Ibn al-Kalbī, in his book *al-Aṣnām* reports the story of 'Umar b. Luḥayy who brought idols to Mecca. 'Umar was taken seriously ill. He was told that in al-Balqā' in Syria there was a spring of hot water and that if he went there he would be cured. He went and bathed and was cured. He found the inhabitants worshipping idols and he asked about them. They told him, "We ask them for rain and seek their help over our enemies." He asked them to give him one of these and brought it to Mecca where he placed it next to the Ka'bah.⁴⁶⁰ It has been suggested that the transporting of idols from the Nabataeans was only adopted by the Meccans as a means of gaining the respect of the northerners for the Ka'bah, and of narrowing the gap between them and the rituals of the Ka'bah.⁴⁶¹

As mentioned above, when Quṣayy wanted to take control of Mecca, he sought help from Quḍā'ah, one of the tribes that had settled in the Syrian desert. The Byzantines were keen to control the trade route across the Ḥijāz, since the route across Iraq was in the hands of their opponents, the Persians. Whilst it was difficult to achieve this aim, they tried to take the southern part of this route, the Yemen,

⁴⁵⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 243, 356-361. Cf. O'Leary, *Arabia*, 184; Crone, *Meccan trade*, 124-129; Kobishchanov, *Azum*, 111.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, 8. 'Umar brought with him the idol Hubal which was mentioned on the Nabataean inscriptions found in Madā'in Sālīh. See 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, V, 89-104.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 160.

which led them into direct contacts with oriental trade. Since it was difficult to send armies, the Byzantines asked their ally, Abyssinia, to undertake this role. When Abyssinia was able to take control of the Yemen, both allies made contact through this route, and they sought to take control of it and to remove Mecca as the trade mediator. It is very probable that Abrahah's attack was part of the design to be rid of Mecca and leave trade in Byzantine and Abyssinian hands.

The Meccans had a special interest in events in Syria and the Yemen since most of their trade was done with them. As such they made great efforts to maintain good relations with the rulers of these countries. Similarly, it was in the interest of the Byzantines to conciliate the western Arabian rulers, in order to protect their Red Sea trade, to ensure the arrival of goods from Africa, South Arabia and India. This was particularly important when the Persians were obstructing the passage of goods coming from India and China to be sold in the Byzantine empire. Ibn Qutaybah reported that Qusayy sought help from the Byzantine emperor in his dispute with Khuzā'ah. It is likely that the Byzantine emperor would have asked the Ghassanids, who were the allies of the Byzantines, to provide this assistance. It is also probable that B. 'Udhrah (Arab Christians who had settled in the Syrian desert) helped Qusayy at the request of the Byzantines. In the light of Mecca's commercial situation and Byzantine's trade benefits in this part of the world, as well as the problems of trade routes and Mecca's role in transporting Yemeni goods to Syria, we must bear in mind what all the sources say about the case of 'Uthmān b. al-Huwayrith and his coronation as king of Mecca on behalf of the Byzantines, which the Meccan leaders opposed. The summary of this is as reported by Ibn Hishām in the *Sīrah* and al-Suhaylī in *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*.⁴⁶² 'Uthmān was one of the

⁴⁶² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 222; al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 146. Cf. Watt, *Muḥammad*, 15-16.



four who refused to bow down to their people and disregard their religion. They sought a religion which satisfied their minds. Some converted to Christianity and others retained the true path of Abraham thus remaining *ḥunafā'*. 'Uthmān was among those who converted to Christianity. Contacts took place between him and the Byzantine emperor, and he agreed with him to tax Quraysh when they came to trade in Syria. Those who refused to pay would be prevented from entering Syria and detained.' 'Uthmān returned to Mecca and announced to his people that the Byzantine emperor had made him their ruler and put him in charge of Mecca. The Meccans refused to accept this, however, and opposition to 'Uthmān was led by a member of his own tribe, al-Aswad b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā. Al-Aswad, along with some Meccans and trade benefactors, was able to expel 'Uthmān and to thwart the Byzantine policy of imposing foreign control over Mecca, of making it a mediator serving the interests of Byzantium and of ending its role as a neutral city. What encouraged the Meccans to oppose this Byzantine plan was their confidence that Mecca was out of reach of Byzantium and their strong position with regard to the valuable goods which Mecca carried for the Byzantines. The rejection of this plan did not have any serious repercussions for Mecca, other than the temporary imprisonment of some of its men.⁴⁶³ 'Uthmān died of poison given to him by 'Amr b. Jafnah, which may indicate that a conflict of leadership took place between them. It appears that what the Byzantines intended to achieve in the negotiations with 'Uthmān was the establishment in Mecca of a system similar to that of the Ghassanids on the Syrian border, which would follow them and serve their goals. The fact that al-Aswad led the opposition to 'Uthmān is an indication that Quraysh were all united against this. They appointed in opposition a man who belonged to 'Uthmān's tribe, in order to avoid the problem of tribalism, and in order that

⁴⁶³ al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 146.

opposition to ‘Uthmān would spring up from the person closest to him.⁴⁶⁴ Trade relations still continued after this incident and indeed Meccan trade extended and expanded its activities until the migration of the Prophet to Yathrib, when the trade of Quraysh was threatened and almost came to a standstill for four years, as a result of conflict between Quraysh and Muḥammad that lasted from the Battle of Badr (2/624) until the truce of al-Ḥudaybiyah (6/628). We have already seen how Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf made contact with the Byzantines, or probably with the representative of their emperor in Syria, when he obtained an agreement to take trade to Syria. As a result of this, organised caravans of Quraysh started to carry various kinds of goods there. The Byzantines were in great need of these goods. It is a well known fact that trade relations lead societies to mix with each other and there is no doubt that Meccans learnt commercial practice through social and commercial intercourse with Byzantine and Syrian traders.

Ibn Ḥabīb reports the speech that ‘Uthmān made to his people, ‘O people, you know your position with the Byzantine emperor, and what you gain from trade with him. He has appointed me over you; I am one of you. I will take quantities of spices, clarified butter and leather. I will gather these and take them to him. I fear that if you refuse he will prevent you from entering Syria and trading with him. The advantage you receive from him will cease’.⁴⁶⁵

5.2.4 Mecca’s Relationship with Persia and al-Ḥīrah

We have an interesting record in Ibn Sa‘īd al-Andalusī of the efforts of Persia to gain control over the region of the Ḥijāz and their attempt to exercise its power over Mecca. When Qubād, the king of Persia, became a Magian, he asked al-Mundhir

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Āqil, *Tārīkh*, 257-258; Lammens, *al-Mashriq*, (1937), 270; Lammens, *La Mecque*, 270-279.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 171.

b. Mā' al-Samā', the king of al-Ḥīrah, to follow suit, but al-Mundhir refused. As a result, Qubādh discharged him and appointed al-Ḥārith al-Kindī as king of al-Ḥīrah because he accepted this faith. Qubād ordered al-Ḥārith to impose this faith on the Arabs of Najd and Tihāmah. When the news of this reached Mecca, some people became Magians and when Islam came there already existed a group of people who professed Magianism. Among them was 'Abd Manāf, who gathered his people together and declared that he would not abandon the religion of Ismā'īl and Abraham and follow a religion imposed by the sword. When al-Ḥārith got to know what 'Abd Manāf had said, he told Qubād. Qubād ordered him to march upon Mecca to destroy the Ka'bah, to kill 'Abd Manāf and to abolish the leadership of B. Quṣayy. Al-Ḥārith was not willing to comply with the order because of his partisanship on the side of the Arabs, so he prevented Qubād from carrying out the threat and was, in any case, distracted by other problems⁴⁶⁶. Considering this tradition to be perhaps spurious, Kister, however, sees in it an attempt to portray 'Abd Manāf as having remained faithful to the traditional religion of Quraysh, the *dīn Ismā'īl*, but suggests that, nevertheless, it indicates the contacts which apparently existed between al-Ḥīrah and Mecca.⁴⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb gives us the list of these Qurashī *Zanādiqah*: Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb, 'Uqbah b. Abī Hu'ayf, Abū Kalīf al-Jumhī, al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith b. Kildah, Munabbih and Nabīh, the sons of al-Ḥajjāj from Sahm, al-'Āṣ b. Wā'il al-Sahmī and al-Walīd b. al-Mughayrah al-Makhzūmī. He adds that they learned Magianism from the Christians of al-Ḥīrah (*ta'allamū al-Zandaqah min naṣārā al-Ḥīrah*).⁴⁶⁸ However we know that all the

⁴⁶⁶ al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, I, 245. Cf. Kisters, 'al-Ḥīrah', 145. This event continued until Anūshirwān b. Qubādh took over. He retained al-Mundhir b. Mā' al-Samā' as king of al-Ḥīrah and killed all who converted to the Magian faith. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī fled from al-Ḥīrah. See al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, I, 145.

⁴⁶⁷ Kister, 'al-Ḥīrah', 145.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 161.

above were assiduous in the worship of idols. We have further information in the traditions about the relations between al-Ḥīrah and Medina. Ibn Khurdādhbeh records a tradition according to which the Persian *marzubān* appointed an ‘*āmil*’ over Medina, who collected the taxes. From Qurayzah and Naḍīr the Persians appointed kings to rule over the Aws and the Khazraj tribes of Medina.⁴⁶⁹ The Anṣārī poet recites as follows:

تُؤَدِّي الخَرْجَ بَعْدَ خَرَجِ كَسْرَى وَخَرَجٍ مِنْ قَرِيطَةَ وَالنَّضِيرِ

‘You pay the tax after that of the Sasanian emperor,

and a tax of Qurayzah and al-Naḍīr.’⁴⁷⁰

Ibn Saʿīd gives important details about the continuing Sasanid control of Medina after Jewish domination had come to an end. He reports that battles often took place between the two fighting groups (i.e. the Jews, Aws and Khazraj) and no rule was imposed on them until ‘Amr b. Aṭnabah al-Khazrajī entered the court of al-Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir, king of al-Ḥīrah and was appointed by him over Medina.⁴⁷¹ The tradition about the appointment of ‘Amr as a ‘king’, which meant in fact that he was a representative of al-Ḥīrah and that he had been delegated by al-Nuʿmān to collect the taxes in Medina, seems authentic.⁴⁷²

We find some information in the traditions about the reaction between al-Ḥīrah and the tribes. We have also a report in al-Masʿūdī which states that the Khazraj had overcome the Aws just before Islam. They were in a position to crown ‘Abdallāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl al-Khazrajī as king of Medina, but this event

⁴⁶⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 128.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 128.

⁴⁷¹ al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, I, 188-189. See also Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XI, 115.

⁴⁷² Kister, ‘al-Ḥīrah’, 147.

coincided with the coming of the Prophet, thus the coronation did not take place.⁴⁷³ According to the classification of Abū 'l-Baqā', tribes could be divided into three groups:

1. The independent tribes (*liqāḥ*) who raided the territory of the rulers of al-Ḥīrah and were raided by them,
2. tribes who concluded pacts with the rulers of al-Ḥīrah on certain terms, and
3. tribes who pastured in the vicinity of al-Ḥīrah and were obedient to the rulers.⁴⁷⁴

The nearest neighbours of al-Ḥīrah were Rabī'ah and Tamīm. For the expression *liqāḥ*, Abū 'l-Baqā' quotes the verses of 'Amr b. Ḥawṭ al-Riyāḥī and the saying of Abū Zam'ah al-Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Asad, when he opposed the coronation of 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith as king of Mecca, on behalf of the Byzantine ruler. As examples of *liqāḥ*, the author mentions Asad b. Khuzaymah and Ghatafān. They were independent in their relations with the kings of al-Ḥīrah (*wa-kānū lā yadīnūna lī-mulūk al-Ḥīrah*).⁴⁷⁵ Also Quraysh and Kinānah were *liqāḥ*. They were not submissive to them and we have already seen the refusal of Abū Zam'ah al-Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib, when he opposed the crowning of 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith as king of Mecca. His famous reaction has been recorded. 'A king in Tihāmah? Quraysh are *liqāḥ*; they cannot be kings, nor can they be ruled over, (*amalīkun bi Tihāmah illa anna Quraysh liqāḥ lā tamliku wa-lā tumlaku*).⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, 237.

⁴⁷⁴ Abū 'l-Baqā', *Manāqib*, II, 433-434. Cf. Kister, 'al-Ḥīrah', 153; Darādikah, *Buḥūth*, 67.

⁴⁷⁵ Abū 'l-Baqā', *Manāqib*, II, 369. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 253.

⁴⁷⁶ Balādhūrī, *Ansāb*, IVA, 126; Abū 'l-Baqā', II, 369; Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharah*, 178-185; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, 118. Cf. Darādikah, *Buḥūth*, 68; Kister, 'al-Ḥīrah', 153-154.

أَمَّا بَتَهَامَةٌ إِلَّا أَنْ قَرِيشٌ لِقَاحٍ لَا تَمْلِكُ وَلَا تُمْلِكُ.

To the second group of tribes belonged Sulaym and Hawāzin. In this connection, Abū 'l-Baqā' reports that 'Sulaym and Hawāzin used to conclude pacts with the kings of al-Hīrah. They were nevertheless not submissive to them. They used to take their merchandise for them to sell it at 'Ukāẓ and at other markets. Thus they got [in these relations] profits with them. Sometimes an individual or a group of them came to the king (of al-Hīrah), took part in his raids and shared with him [i.e. with the king] some spoils. Then they departed. The caravans of the king, with their goods, could only enter Najd and go beyond Najd with the escort of men of the tribes.'⁴⁷⁷

In the third group were Rabī'ah and some branches of Tamīm.⁴⁷⁸ This classification was not stable, thus the tribe moved from loyalty and submission to being one of the *liqāḥ*. For example, the tribe of Shaybān and some branches from Bakr b. Wā'il fought against the Persians and the king of al-Hīrah in the war of Dhū Qār.⁴⁷⁹ Because of the constant raiding by the Arab tribes on the outskirts of Iraq, the rulers of al-Hīrah had no choice but to make a deal with some of those tribes. They made concessions and gave some of their privileges to the chiefs of strong tribes. Therefore the *ridāfah* was created. Abū 'Ubāydaḥ clarifies this by saying, 'No Arab made more raids against the people of their kingdom [i.e. al-Hīrah] than the B. Yarbū', so they made a deal with them, giving them *ridāfah*, so that the B. Yarbū' would stop their raids against the people of Iraq.'⁴⁸⁰ The first who

⁴⁷⁷ Abū 'l-Baqā', *Manāqib*, II, 375. Cf. Kister, *al-Hīrah*, 154.

⁴⁷⁸ Abū 'l-Baqā', *Manāqib*, II, 375. Although some branches of Tamīm were *liqāḥ*, it is reported that the poet Jarīr, who was from Yarbū', made a speech in front of the Prophet saying, 'We are the people of the Yellow and Red Gold (by which he meant wine), assertive and not afraid and we are *liqāḥ*'. See Abū 'Ubāydaḥ, *Naqā'id*, I, 128.

⁴⁷⁹ Abū 'l-Baqā', *Manāqib*, II, 521.

⁴⁸⁰ Abū 'Ubāydaḥ, *Naqā'id*, II, 7; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 253.

became the *radīf* from Tamīm was ‘Attāb b. Harmī b. Riyāḥ b. Yarbū‘, followed by his son, Yazīd, during the era of al-Mundhir b. Mā’ al-Samā’.⁴⁸¹ The *radīf* sat in the court of the king, on his right hand, rode with the king, got a fourth of the spoils and booty of the raids gained by the king and received some payment from the king’s subjects.⁴⁸² The traditions mention other tribes who were *ardāf* of the king. These tribes are Rabī‘ah, Ḍabbah, Shaybān and ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘ah from Hawāzin. The settlements of these tribes were in the territory extending between the Ḥijāz and al-Ḥīrah at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century A.D.⁴⁸³

At the same time as Mecca obtained agreements from the Byzantines, Abyssinians and Yemenis to trade in their countries, Nawfal, one of the sons of ‘Abd Manāf obtained a similar agreement from the Sasanian emperor to trade in his country.⁴⁸⁴ However, this was not as lucrative as that of the south or the north, because the Persians were directly connected with the Indian trade route since the northern trade route passed through their country. Indeed they monopolized the eastern trade, particularly the silk trade and levied extremely high taxes on it, only allowing it to enter Byzantium at a high price. This monopolization of eastern trade by the Persians, coupled with high taxation and rising prices, was among the reasons why Meccan trade was able to spread and strengthen its position among the Byzantines.

Furthermore Persian trade with the Arabian Peninsula was in the hands of

⁴⁸¹ Abū ‘Ubaydah, *Naqā’id*, I, 61; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamharah*, 154, although Ibn al-Kalbī mentions the era of al-Na‘mān b. al-Shaqīqah b. al-Mundhir.

⁴⁸² Abū ‘Ubaydah, *Naqā’id*, I, 61; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, II, 626. Cf. Kister, ‘al-Ḥīrah’, 149.

⁴⁸³ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma‘ārif*, 45. See also Labīd, *Dīwān*, 53; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 204; Abū ‘Ubaydah, *Naqā’id*, II, 7; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 221; al-Andalusī, *Nashwat*, I, 448; Abū ‘l-Baqā’, *Manāqib*, II, 433; al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, 1244. Cf. Darādikah, *Buḥūth*, 62-63.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 162, *Munammaq*, 41; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 59.

the Lakhmids who took goods and then passed them on to the Arabian market, in exchange for the price paid by the leaders of the tribes to protect this trade. Similarly the Lakhamids kings used to send their goods to the Meccan markets every year under the protection of Arabian tribal leaders. We notice that the factors which led to the Fijār wars was the murder of ‘Urwah al-Raḥḥāl by al-Barrād by B. Bakr b. ‘Abd Manāt b. Kinānah who agreed to protect the caravan sent to ‘Ukāz market by al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir. Al-Iṣfahānī reports the incident as follows. ‘It was the custom of al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir, king of the Lakhmids, to send a caravan carrying musk and perfumes every year to ‘Ukāz market, under the protection of a prominent Arab in ‘Ukāz, where it would be sold, and with the proceeds al-Ṭā’if leather would be bought for him. The only person who undertook the task of protection was one whose people were strong and respected. Normally this task was undertaken by the leader of the Madhān.’⁴⁸⁵ At the same time the Quraysh trade caravan arrived at al-Ḥīrah, where it is said that they learnt the art of writing. The level of Quraysh trade with al-Ḥīrah increased after the decline of the kings and the increased opposition by tribes to the Persian trade which passed through their land. It also increased after the death of al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir and the Persian defeat by the Arabs in the battle of Dhū Qār.

Quraysh tried to divert its trade activities towards Iraq, because they had lost control of the Medina route after the battle of Badr in 2/664. It sent a caravan carrying goods worth hundreds of thousands, but the Muslims attacked it and captured it; this was known as the raid of al-Qaradah.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XIX, 75. Cf. Watt, *Muḥammad*, 11.

⁴⁸⁶ Wāqīdī, *Maghāzī*, I, 197; Ibn Ḥishām, *Sīrah*, II, 429.

5.2.5 Raid of al-Qaradah

After the raid of as-Suwayq (2 A.H.)⁴⁸⁷ the attack on al-Qaradah took place. Al-Qaradah⁴⁸⁸ is on the road from Mecca to Iraq. The aim of this raid was to cut the Iraqi trade route of Quraysh.

Ṣafwān b. Umayyah thought of adopting this route and then diverting it to Syria after Khaybar in order to avoid Medinan control. It is worth recording Wāqidī's important statement here regarding this: 'On the authority of Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Usāmah b. Zayd, on the authority of his family (or his people): "Quraysh were unwilling to take the Syrian route since they feared the Prophet Muḥammad. They were a nation of merchants. Ṣafwān b. Umayyah records that Muḥammad and his companions disturbed their trade". "I see no way of dealing with his companions; they do not leave the coasts and the people of the coast have joined with him [the Prophet]. We do not know which path to take; if we remain in this state we will simply be living off our capital and have nowhere to do business. We lived on the trade to Syria in summer and to Abyssinia in winter." Aswad b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib told him to avoid the coast and take the Iraqi route. Ṣafwān said, "I am not aware of it", to which Aswad retorted, "We will introduce you to the best guide who will [then] lead you".'⁴⁸⁹ This guide was Furāt b. Ḥabbān al-'Ijlī and Ṣafwān agreed for him to guide the caravan to Syria, taking the Iraqi route until he was out of the region of Medina, then turning west to take up one of

⁴⁸⁷ The Suwayq raid was undertaken by the Prophet against the Quraysh headed by Abū Sufyān, who had himself previously mounted a minor raid against the Muslims, the purpose of which was to demonstrate Abū Sufyān's continuing leadership of the Quraysh. Abū Sufyān made a quick raid in which two farmers outside Medina were killed. He made such a rapid return that his companions threw him their provisions to enable them to return to Mecca before the people of Medina could capture them. See Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 181.

⁴⁸⁸ al-Qaradah is situated between al-Rabadhah and al-Ghamrah, in the land of Najd, next to Dhāt 'Irq. See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 322; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 24; cf. Sa'd al-Rāshid, *Darb Zubaydah*, Riyadh, 1980.

⁴⁸⁹ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 197-198. See also Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 429.

the routes to Syria.⁴⁹⁰ Safwān had prepared a caravan consisting of a large amount of silver and it took this Iraqi route. News of this reached the Prophet and he sent Zayd b. Ḥārithah with a hundred horsemen. They caught up with the caravan at Dhāt al-Qaradah on that route. The caravan was taken by surprise. Having taken two men prisoners, the Muslims brought the caravan back to the Prophet who then proceeded to divide the merchandise. After taking his share of one fifth (*khums*), he divided the rest among the people who took part in the raid. Among the captured men was the guide, Furāt b. Ḥabbān, who was brought to the Prophet. He was told that if he became a Muslim he would be set free, whereupon he adopted Islam and was released.⁴⁹¹

This raid led to Muslim control of the Meccan trade route to Syria and then to Iraq. The plan was not simply to stop the trade, but to win the coastal tribes over to the side of Medina and thus leave the Quraysh alliance. This led to restraint in the city of Mecca as is clear from the description of Safwān b. Umayyah. When the Quraysh decided to get to Syria via the Iraq route, the Prophet quickly put a stop to this. The raid on al-Qaradah and what took place there shows that the battle of Uḥud was inevitable. The Quraysh had only two choices; either to surrender (and the time had not yet come) or to plan another battle aimed at destroying the strength of Medina and thus opening up the trade route.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 198; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 430.

⁴⁹¹ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 198.

⁴⁹² Mu'nis, *Quraysh*, 365-366.

Chapter VI

Pre-Islamic Arab Markets

6.1 Introduction

Arab markets were in existence during the Jāhiliyyah and were held at different times during the year, the people moving from one market to another to buy and sell.⁴⁹³ These markets took place in different areas of the Arabian Peninsula. There were also other markets frequented by Arab traders outside the Arabian Peninsula in Iraq, Syria and Ethiopia.

Al-Ya‘qūbī mentions ten markets where people would gather and enjoy security of person and property.⁴⁹⁴ These places were considered *Ḥaram* and people felt safe during the whole of their stay there. There were in each market people to supervise the affairs of the market and to protect the welfare of those present in it. This was necessary as there were those who did not appreciate the sanctity and the importance of these places. Such people were called *muḥillūn*⁴⁹⁵ and belonged to the tribes of Asad, Ṭayyi’ B. Bakr b. ‘Abd Manāt b. Kinānah and a branch of B. ‘Amir b. Ṣa‘sa‘ah.⁴⁹⁶ In return, some people volunteered to defend the holy position of these markets and carried weapons in order to do so. Such people were called *muḥrimūn*⁴⁹⁷ and belonged to the tribes of B. ‘Amr b. Taym, Ḥanzalah

⁴⁹³ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 264; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 161; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 959; al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān*, III, 93; Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, V, 23, XI, 6, 82; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 121. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 193f.

⁴⁹⁴ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226.

⁴⁹⁵ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227. See below p.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 206; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227.

⁴⁹⁷ See below p.150.

b. Zayd b. Manāt, a branch of Hudhayl, a branch of B. Shaybān, a branch of B. Kalb b. Wabrah.⁴⁹⁸

These markets were not confined to a specific place, but were held in different places in the Arabian Peninsula. They were also a meeting place for poets to defend their respective tribes and to engage in discussion and disputation. Missionaries also came to contact the tribes in the hope of influencing some of its members to embrace their particular religion. The Prophet himself, as mentioned in some traditions, used to go out to these markets to guide people to the new faith.⁴⁹⁹

The most famous of these markets at the advent of Islam were, Dūmat al-Jandal, Hajar, Ṣuḥār, Dabā, al-Shiḥr, Aden, Ṣan‘ā’, Dhū ‘l-Majāz, Majannah and ‘Ukāz.⁵⁰⁰ Some Islamic sources mention that there were thirteen pre-Islamic markets in all. The first of these was at of Dūmat al-Jandal.⁵⁰¹

We shall not discuss all these markets in detail, as what concerns us are the three principal markets, those of ‘Ukāz, Majannah and Dhū ‘l-Majāz, because the greatest influence in them was that of Quraysh and they were held during the pilgrimage season and the sacred months. Thus many Arabs would gather there feeling secure personally and for their trade. The most important of these was the market of ‘Ukāz.

6.1.1 Dūmat al-Jandal

The Arab tribes came to this market⁵⁰² on the first day of Rabī‘ I and gathered

⁴⁹⁸ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227.

⁴⁹⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 276.

⁵⁰⁰ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, II, 276.

⁵⁰¹ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 161.

⁵⁰² For more details about Dūmat al-Jandal see Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 564-565; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 487-489; Ibn Kurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 129, 248; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 564; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 402-404; Ibn

there for trade, remaining until the middle of the month.⁵⁰³ Ibn Ḥabīb reports that Ukaydir was the supervisor of the market and looked after the needs and affairs of the people.⁵⁰⁴ His authority was absolute, no one could buy or sell without his permission, or without paying the requisite tax to him.⁵⁰⁵ The method of trade here was by throwing the stone.⁵⁰⁶

This market was frequented by two Arab tribes, Kalb and the Jadīl Ṭayyi'.⁵⁰⁷ Kalb possessed many slaves and would erect tents in the markets and exhibit their slaves there. The timing of these markets was decided by the heads of the Arab tribes, mostly from Kalb or Ghassān. The taxes collected from these markets were paid to those who supervised them.⁵⁰⁸

Al-Ālūsī reports that Ukaydir was the supervisor of the Dūmat al-Jandal market, catering for people's needs and affairs. The market lasted until the middle of the month. After this period it is probable that B. Kalb took control of the market and took the taxes. The affairs were controlled from that day by B. Kalb chiefs. They continued the market until the end of the month.⁵⁰⁹

The trade activities in Dūmat al-Jandal was not confined to this particular season, but it continued for most of the year since Dūmat al-Jandal is located at the crossroads of the Arabian caravan trade coming from the south and going to

Manzūr, *Lisān*, XII, 218. Cf. Crone, *Trade*, 131, 140, 144, 151.

⁵⁰³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 488; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, I, 411.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 264; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, 248.

⁵⁰⁵ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 161.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 264. See below, p.136.

⁵⁰⁷ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 264.

⁵⁰⁹ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 265. See also Marzūqī, *Azminah*, I, 161; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 264.

Iraq or Syria and vice-versa.⁵¹⁰ This place today is situated in the Jawf region of Saudi Arabia.

6.1.2 Al-Mushaqqar Market

Al-Mushaqqar is a fortress belonging to ‘Abd al-Qays⁵¹¹ and it is close to Hajar. Its inhabitants are from Azd.⁵¹² The market commenced at the beginning of Jumādā II and continued till the end of the month.⁵¹³ Persian merchants attended this market by sea and traded with the bedouins and settlers who come to it.⁵¹⁴ The supervisors of this market were the heads of Tamīm from the tribe of B. ‘Abdallāh b. Zayd. They also collected the taxes.⁵¹⁵ The Quraysh merchants also attended and other traders came under their protection. The method used for sale was that of touching.⁵¹⁶

6.1.3 Hajar Market

This market was held in Rabī‘ II.⁵¹⁷ Al-Mundhir b. Sāwah, king of Bahrain, was responsible for the taxation of the traders there (*ta‘shīr al-tujjār*).⁵¹⁸ It is possible that Sūq Hajar was more important than Dūmat al-Jandal, due to the fact that Indian and Persian traders brought goods there which were not available in Dūmat al-Jandal. It is reported that B. Tamīm attacked the Persian emperor’s caravan

⁵¹⁰ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 373; Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 232-239.

⁵¹¹ See Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 134-135; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1232-1233; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147, 153, 247; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 28, 30, 245, 255. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 240; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 373.

⁵¹² Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 162.

⁵¹³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 226; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 134; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 162.

⁵¹⁴ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 373; Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 242-243.

⁵¹⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265. Cf. ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 373.

⁵¹⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 244. See below, p.137.

⁵¹⁷ For more details of Hajar see Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1346; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 393; Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbih*, 393, 395; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 30, 57, 114; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60, 152, 193.

⁵¹⁸ Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, I, 411; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 374.

which was carrying musk, ambergris and jewels. In retaliation he sent an army which defeated B. Tamīm, seized their money and abducted their womenfolk.⁵¹⁹ This would seem to indicate that the Persians considered the Hajar market to be of considerable importance. The area of Hajar was also famed for its dates.⁵²⁰

6.1.4 Markets of Oman

Arab traders would move on to the markets of Oman after Sūq Hajar.⁵²¹ Because of Oman's location, which was central to Persia, India and Ethiopia, goods from all these areas were brought to that country to be exchanged for goods from the Yemen, Ḥijāz and Syria. The two most important markets in Oman were (a) Ṣuḥār and (b) Dibā.

a. Ṣuḥār

Ṣuḥār was one of the pre-Islamic markets located on the east coast of Oman.⁵²² For the Arabs, Ṣuḥār constituted one of the principal markets which supplied them with products imported from the eastern world.⁵²³ The market opened from 1-5 Rajab.⁵²⁴ It seems to have continued trading until 20 Rajab.⁵²⁵ Because it was held during a sacred month, the people could come to it without protection. Al-Julandā b. al-Mustakbar was responsible for taxation in this market and trade was

⁵¹⁹ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *'Iqd*, III, 354.

⁵²⁰ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, III, 613.

⁵²¹ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 254.

⁵²² For more details about Ṣuḥār see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 393-394; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 825; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 25; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat*, 38; Maqdīsī, *Taqāsīm*, 70; Hamadhanī, *Buldān*, 11, Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, 92; Idrīsī, *Mushtāq*, 156-157; Jawharī, *Ṣiḥāḥ*, II, 729; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IV, 440; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 266.

⁵²³ Al-Naboodah, *Eastern Arabia*, 37-38.

⁵²⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265.

⁵²⁵ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163.

carried out by throwing stones.⁵²⁶

b. Dibā

Dibā⁵²⁷ was one of the pre-Islamic markets mentioned by al-Marzūqī, who set its opening date between that of Ṣuḥār and al-Shiḥr.⁵²⁸ Because of its important location on the east coast of Oman it was frequented by traders from the Far East and Persia as well as from the Arabian Peninsula.⁵²⁹ Dibā market was held at the end of Rajab.⁵³⁰ Al-Julandā b. al-Mustakbar was also responsible for taxation matters and trade took place according to a barter system.⁵³¹

6.1.5 Ḥubāshah Market

This is considered one of the most important pre-Islamic markets in Western Arabia.⁵³² It was held in Tihāmah during Rajab and the people of Ḥijāz and the Yemen would trade there.⁵³³

6.1.6 al-Shiḥr Market

Al-Shiḥr is the name given to the area of the southern coast of the Arabian

⁵²⁶ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 376; Afghānī, *Aṣwāq*, 261-263; *El*², VII, 504-506.

⁵²⁷ For more details see Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 539; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 435-436; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān*, II, 249.

⁵²⁸ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163.

⁵²⁹ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265. Cf. Afghānī, *Aṣwāq*, 265.

⁵³⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 376; Afghānī, *Aṣwāq*, 265.

⁵³¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163.

⁵³² See Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 418; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 210. This place in fact was behind the motive which made Yāqūt write his book *Mu'jam al-Buldān*. See the introduction of the book. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 375.

⁵³³ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 418; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 210. Cf. Afghānī, *Aṣwāq*, 258-259.

Peninsula between Aden and Oman which was known as Shiḥr Mahrah,⁵³⁴ According to al-Marzūqī, after Dibā market the traders would come to al-Shiḥr, 'They would travel with all the merchants of sea and land there to al-Shiḥr, al-Shiḥr of Mahrah and their fair used to be set up under the shade of the mountain upon which is the tomb of Hūd, on him be peace'.⁵³⁵ Al-Iṣṭakhrī, describes its inhabitants as being *ghayr fusaḥā'* (not pure Arabic speakers), (noticing the difference between their speech and that of the people of the Ḥijāz,) this being, he says, due to their having intermingled with the peoples of Abyssinia, India and Persia.⁵³⁶ The market started in the middle of Sha'bān after Dibā market had ended. Goods traded here were cloth (*bazz*), leather (*adam*), frankincense, incense, for which the area was well-known, myrrh, aloes (*ṣabir*) and millet (*dukhn*).⁵³⁷ At this market traders have to organize their own protection due to its isolated location, although sometimes the people of Mahrah would extend their protection. There was no taxation at this market because it is not proprietary ground (*arḍ mamlakah*) and trade was carried out by the throwing of stones.⁵³⁸

6.1.7 Aden Market

This market started on the first day of Ramaḍān after the traders had moved on from al-Shiḥr and continued for ten days.⁵³⁹ The Abnā'⁵⁴⁰ were responsible for tax

⁵³⁴ For more details, Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 327; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, 183; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Surat*, 38; Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 70; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60, 147, 148, 192, 249; *ET*², VII, 369-370.

⁵³⁵ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163; cf. Serjeant, 'Pre-Islamic prophets', 4-5.

⁵³⁶ Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 25. Cf. Afghānī, *Aṣwāq*, 266. Perhaps a more probable reason is that they spoke Mehri, see Serjeant, 'Hud', 123.

⁵³⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226. Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163-164; See Crone, *Trade*, 12-29, 51-53; Van Beek, 'Frankincense', *JOAS*, 141-151; Hepper, 'Frankincense', 66-72; Afghānī, *Aṣwāq*, 267.

⁵³⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266.

⁵³⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 226.

⁵⁴⁰ The Abnā' were the descendants of the Persian immigrants born in the Yemen. According to the usual account, Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, a descendant of the old Ḥimyarite royal family, succeeded in

collection from the traders.⁵⁴¹ Protection was unnecessary in this market because of the existence of an organized government.⁵⁴² The most important commodity was perfume.⁵⁴³ Possibly a higher volume of trade took place in this market because of the greater degree of freedom which traders enjoyed there. The latter was due to the fact that those who had control over the market (Ḥimyar and the Persians) did not themselves take part in trade and therefore had no vested interests in the market in the way Ukaydir had in Dūmat al-Jandal and al-Julandā had in Ṣuḥār did.⁵⁴⁴

6.1.8 Ṣan‘ā’ Market

Sūq Ṣan‘ā’⁵⁴⁵ started in the middle of Ramaḍān and continued until the end of the month.⁵⁴⁶ The most frequently traded goods were beads and leather, cotton, linen, kohl, dyes and saffron.⁵⁴⁷ The Abnā’ collected taxes from the traders and trade took place by the touching of hands.⁵⁴⁸

inducing the king of the Persians, Anūshirwān (A.D. 531-579), to undertake a campaign against South Arabia in order to drive away the Ethiopians from the Yemen. Through the united forces of the South Arabians and the Persians, under the command of Wahriz, the Ethiopians were driven back and Sayf made king. After the withdrawal of the foreign auxiliary forces, Sayf was, however, murdered and his country again subjugated, causing Wahriz to return with a stronger army. As a result, the Yemen was transformed into a Persian vassal state. Later on, the Persian governor Bādhān and his family converted to Islam and by doing so recognized Muḥammad’s sovereignty. See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 136; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, II, 55; Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma‘ārif*, 278; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 66f. Cf. *EI*¹, 72; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, III, 520f.

⁵⁴¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266.

⁵⁴² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266.

⁵⁴³ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 163.

⁵⁴⁴ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 269.

⁵⁴⁵ For more details about Ṣan‘ā’ see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 425-431; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 843; Iṣṭakhri, *Masālik*, 14; Ibn Rustah, *I‘lāq*, 109-113; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 139-144; Hamadhanī, *Buldān*, 32-37; Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 86; Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, VIII, 10-22; *EI*¹, VII, 143-146; Serjeant, *San‘ā’, an Arabian Islamic city*, 1983.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266.

⁵⁴⁷ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 164; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 271-274. See below, p.137.

6.1.9 Ḥaḍramawt Market

This *sūq* was held in al-Rābiyah in Ḥaḍramawt and was also known as Sūq al-Rābiyah.⁵⁴⁹ It began in the middle of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah and continued until the end of the month.⁵⁵⁰ It is possible that both it and Sūq 'Ukāz were held on the same day, and in general Sūq Ḥaḍramawt was visited by the inhabitants of the surrounding areas, although some traders came from greater distances in order to visit it and Quraysh usually sent a caravan there. Marzūqī says of this market, 'Nobody comes to al-Rābiyah without protection because it is not the territory of any authority. Quraysh were protected by 'Ākil al-Murar, a branch of Kindah. Others were protected by Al Mazrūq b. Wā'il al-Ḥaḍramī. Giving this protection was considered an honour for the tribes.'⁵⁵¹

6.1.10 'Ukāz Market

The 'Ukāz market was considered to be the most famous of pre-Islamic Arabian markets. It was not merely a market for trading but also a meeting place for poets and men of letters.

Before mentioning what went on in the market, we ought to point out the different opinions of ancient and contemporary historians regarding its location.

(1) Ibn Ishāq (d.151/768) said that 'Ukāz was between Nakhlah and al-Ṭā'if.⁵⁵²

(2) al-Wāqidī (d.207/822) gave the same opinion.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266. Al-Rābiyah is situated in N.W. Ḥaḍramawt, and it must have been reached by land from Ṣan'ā'. Cf. Serjeant, 'Hūd', 126.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267. Cf. Afghānī, *Iswāq*, 276.

⁵⁵¹ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 165. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 287; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226.

⁵⁵² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 148-149.

⁵⁵³ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 63.

- (3) Abū 'Ubaydah (d.209/824) gives the precise location of 'Ukāẓ as being at al-Fataq between al-Ṭā'if and Nakhlah, at a distance of ten miles from al-Ṭā'if. According to him, an enormous volume of trade took place here and it was particularly frequented by Thaḳīf.⁵⁵⁴
- (4) al-Aṣma'ī (d.216/831) states, 'Ukāẓ is situated in a wadi full of palm trees. Between it and al-Ṭā'if is one night's journey, and three night's journey between it and Mecca".⁵⁵⁵ He added that Arab markets were held there.
- (5) al-Azraqī (d.244/858) says 'Ukāẓ lies behind Qarn al-Manāzil, one stage (*marḥalah*) on the road to Ṣan'ā' in the province of al-Ṭā'if. It is a market for Qays 'Aylān and Thaḳīf'.⁵⁵⁶
- (6) Ibn Ḥabīb (d.245/854) says the 'Ukāẓ market was in upper Najd.⁵⁵⁷
- (7) al-Ya'qūbī (d.292/904) gave the same opinion.⁵⁵⁸
- (8) al-Hamdānī (d.334/945), after mentioning 'Īsā b. Aḥmad al-Radā'ī's description of the pilgrimage road between Ṣan'ā' and Mecca in his poem, says that 'Ukāẓ was in the territory of Hawāzin. It was an ancient market of the Arabs.⁵⁵⁹
- (9) Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī (d.487/1094) says that 'Ukāẓ, Majannah and Dhū 'l-Majāz were pre-Islamic Meccan markets. 'Ukāẓ was beside a spring called Naq'ā'. 'Ukāẓ became a market fifteen years after the Year of the Elephant, the year when Abrahah invaded Mecca.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁴ Abū 'Ubaydah, *Naqā'id*, II, 29.

⁵⁵⁵ al-Aṣma'ī, *Aṣma'iyyāt*, 39.

⁵⁵⁶ Izraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 123-124.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267.

⁵⁵⁸ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227.

⁵⁵⁹ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, I, 263.

⁵⁶⁰ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 959.

- (10) Yāqūt (d.626/1228) says that ‘Ukāẓ is the name of the market of the pre-Islamic Arabs.⁵⁶¹ There is a night’s journey between it and al-Ṭā’if and three nights’ journey between it and Mecca. The market was held in a place called al-’Uthaydā’. The war of al-Fijār took place in ‘Ukāẓ.
- (11) According to Ibn Khaldūn (d.808/1405) ‘Ukāẓ was one of the provinces of al-Ṭā’if.⁵⁶²

It can be deduced from the various opinions of the historians that ‘Ukāẓ is situated in upper Najd. It is not in Tihāmah, nor in al-Ḥijāz nor in the Yemen, but is rather in the territory of Qays ‘Aylān, the descendants of Muḍar, later at the beginning of Islam to be a territory of B. Naṣr b. Mu‘āwiyah b. Bakr b. Hawāzin. The camp sites of Naṣr b. Mu‘āwiyah were at that time in valleys descending from the mountain chains of al-Ṭā’if north-east toward Najd. It is evident that the distance between ‘Ukāẓ and al-Ṭā’if is in dispute among the historians: ten miles distance between them or one day’s journey. But this dispute is not of great importance, since we notice that al-Ṭā’if is not only the town itself but is also the name of the surrounding area and villages under its domain. Also ‘Ukāẓ is on the road to the Yemen from Mecca between al-Manāqib and Kallākh – there are two roads to the Yemen: the Tihāmī, running alongside the coast, and another taking the route along the Sarāt passing through ‘Asīr. It is on the latter road that ‘Ukāẓ is located. Finally it can be concluded from what has been said previously and from the descriptions of the geographers that ‘Ukāẓ included the vast land east of al-Ṭā’if slightly to the north. This area is about 35 km from al-Ṭā’if town. As has been mentioned above, ‘Ukāẓ was a large market place and assembly for the

⁵⁶¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 142.

⁵⁶² Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, II, 641-642.

Arabs of pre-Islamic times. It was the largest trade market for all the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula. Every region brought its trade and produce to it.⁵⁶³ It was also frequented by poets who would recite their work there. Wine was brought to it from Hajar, Iraq, Gaza and Buṣrā, butter from the countryside round about. From the Yemen embroidered garments and leather were brought. The Quraysh would bring raisins, oil, and guns on their return to Mecca from Syria. Slaves captured during raids were also sold.⁵⁶⁴ Because of the fame of ‘Ukāẓ, Persian trade also reached there. For example, al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir, king of al-Ḥīrah, used to send to ‘Ukāẓ every year a caravan carrying musk (*latīmah*), entrusting it to an Arab nobleman to protect it for him against any aggression until it reached ‘Ukāẓ. It would be sold there and the profits would be used to buy commodities such as al-Ṭā’if leather and silk.⁵⁶⁵ The leather of ‘Ukāẓ was so famous that it became known among leather traders as ‘Ukāẓī leather, although it was not the product of ‘Ukāẓ, but rather was imported to it from various areas.⁵⁶⁶

‘Ukāẓ became a very cosmopolitan place and different social customs were evident there. We find Qays b. Sā‘idah delivering a speech to the people, telling them about their creator and their forefathers and enjoining them to righteousness.⁵⁶⁷ There were others who would bring their daughters in the hope of finding a husband for them. Marzūqī describes ‘Ukāẓ market in the following way, ‘There were in ‘Ukāẓ things which were not in any other Arab market. A Yemeni king would send a good sword and the finest clothes and holding these up in ‘Ukāẓ would say, “Let the noblest of the Arabs take these”, to find out who were the most

⁵⁶³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, I, 63.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, I, 63. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 278.

⁵⁶⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 143; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 391. Cf. Kister, ‘al-Ḥīrah’, 143-171.

⁵⁶⁶ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, V, 254.

⁵⁶⁷ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 279.

notable and noble among the Arabs and to invite them to take the reward and establish good relations with them'.⁵⁶⁸ The Persian king also sent sharp swords, the finest horses and luxurious clothes. These were displayed in 'Ukāz. It would be announced that these were from the king to the most notable of the Arabs. They could only be taken by a man accepted as leader by the Arabs. The last person to take them from 'Ukāz was Ḥarb b. Umayyah. The Persian king, by this method, wanted to find out who the nobles among the Arabs were in order to be able to rely on them when involved in their affairs and to obtain their help in strengthening and protecting his kingdom.⁵⁶⁹ 'Ukāz was a free market; no tax ('*ushūr*) was taken and no money was paid to safeguard trade.⁵⁷⁰ In this sense it differed from those markets which were under the rule of a king or tribal chief and where tax would be taken. Even though the Tamīm notables supervised and organised 'Ukāz, they took no tax from the traders. This was probably because of the influence Quraysh had over them. The Quraysh traders had a tremendous role in this market and it appears that they would encourage tribes and the traders to attend, so they made an agreement with Tamīm to leave this market free. Therefore any traders could come to it without having to pay any tax or security for his goods, and he would not be attacked or humiliated.⁵⁷¹ This was, of course, in the sacred month. By this policy Quraysh aimed to entice many traders to come to Mecca from far away places, so that they could benefit from them in the pilgrimage season and build good relations with them in order to secure safety for their caravans going to different regions. The market was held from the 1-20 Dhū 'l-Qa'dah.⁵⁷² As is

⁵⁶⁸ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 66.

⁵⁶⁹ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 281.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267.

⁵⁷¹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 379.

⁵⁷² Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 121; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227.

known Dhū 'l-Qa'dah is one of the sacred months. The wars which took place in 'Ukāz between Hawāzin on one side and Quraysh and Kinānah on the other, were known as Harb al-Fijār for the simple reason that they took place in the sacred month.⁵⁷³

6.1.11 Majannah market

Majannah is near Mecca⁵⁷⁴ situated at the Marr al-Zahrān near Mount al-Asfal. The market was held during the last ten days of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah.⁵⁷⁵ People would come here after the end of 'Ukāz market and stay for ten days continuing their trade and other activities as they had done at 'Ukāz. Wine was brought to Majannah from Syria, Buṣrā and Gaza, which led some of the pre-Islamic poets to mention it in their poetry. For example Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī,⁵⁷⁶ said;

سُقَيْرَةٌ رَدَتْ لَأْخِرَةَ الرَّحْلِ	سُلَافَةٌ رَاحَ ضَمْنَتَهَا إِدَاوَةً
عَلَى جَسْرَةٍ مَرْفُوعَةٍ الذَّيْلِ وَالْكَفْلِ	تَزَوَّدَهَا مِنْ أَهْلِ بَصْرَى وَغَزَّةٍ
مَجَنَّةً تَصْفُو فِي الْقِلَالِ وَلَا تَغْلِي	فَوَافِي بِهَا عُسْفَانٌ ثُمَّ أَتَى بِهَا

'A choice wine entrusted to a tarred (wine) skin riding on the the cruppers at the back of the saddle.'

⁵⁷³ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 66; Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, IX, 176; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, III, 953; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227.

⁵⁷⁴ Hamdānī, *Ṣifāh*, 180; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1187; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 58-59; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 170.

⁵⁷⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 59; Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 170. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 345.

⁵⁷⁶ Hudhaliyyīn, *Dīwān*, I, 40. See also Huwaysh, 'Aswāq', 405.

‘Amplly provided by the folk of Buṣrā and Gaza on a strong stout

she-camel high of head and crupper.’

‘Its arrival at ‘Uṣfān⁵⁷⁷ and then to Majannah staying clear in

the pots and not bubbling up.’

Majannah, ‘Ukāẓ and Dhū ’l-Majāz are all equal in the eyes of Arab (*muḥrimīn*). They all enjoy the same respect which is such that some of them approach it in the state of *iḥrām*.’ Al-Azraqī said, ‘The Quraysh and other Arabs say do not attend the markets of ‘Ukāẓ, Majannah and Dhū ’l-Majāz unless they are in state of *iḥrām*’.⁵⁷⁸

6.1.12 Dhū ’l-Majāz Market

Dhū ’l-Majāz is situated at Minā between Mecca and ‘Arafāt.⁵⁷⁹ It was called by this name because permission to make the pilgrimage was granted from here.⁵⁸⁰ Dhū ’l-Majāz was in the territory of Hudhayl. The Arabs used to come to it when they saw the moon for Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah. They would stay there for eight days buying and selling.⁵⁸¹

They would go to ‘Arafah on the day of *tarwiyah*. The day was called by this name because they would drink to the full (*tarrawwū*), and call others to

⁵⁷⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 121-122; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 943-943; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 129, 131, 187; Ibn Manẓūr, *Misān*, IX, 246.

⁵⁷⁸ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 129.

⁵⁷⁹ Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1185; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 55; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 227.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, V, 330.

⁵⁸¹ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 129.

do likewise because there was no water at 'Arafah. This day was considered the last day of their markets. The Arabs did not carry on their trade on the day of 'Arafah, nor during the days of Minā. However, with the coming of Islam, trade was permitted on these days.⁵⁸² Arabs, who did not attend other markets, came to this place.⁵⁸³ Dhū 'l-Majāz is mentioned in Arabic poetry, especially by the poet Hudhayl, because it was one of their great markets.⁵⁸⁴ Dhū 'l-Majāz became famous because of the fact that it took place in the *ḥajj* season and many Arab traders and notables would gather there. It was second to 'Ukāz in fame and all the activities of 'Ukāz (i.e. trade, literary contest, revenge ... etc.) also went on at Dhū 'l-Majāz.⁵⁸⁵

6.1.13 Naṭāt Khaybar Market

Khaybar is situated to the north of Medina.⁵⁸⁶ It was inhabited by Jews who had made the Ḥijāz their homeland at some time in the past. They were engaged in trade and agriculture, especially the former. A well-known Jewish trader was Abū Rāfi' al-Khaybarī who traded with Syria from where he imported various kinds of garments. It seems that the Jews monopolised the trade of dates, barley and wheat in the north of the Ḥijāz.

Due to the situation of this town on the main trade route between Syria and the Yemen, its inhabitants participated in the trade of the Arabian Peninsula. It was one of the stations of the trade caravans to Syria. Its people succeeded in their

⁵⁸² Azraqī, *Akḥbār*, I, 129. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 348.

⁵⁸³ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 166; Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 180; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 55; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1185.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, V, 330.

⁵⁸⁵ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 348; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 375; Kubaysī, 'Aswāq', 99.

⁵⁸⁶ For further details of Khaybar, see Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 521-524, IV, 1312-1313; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 409-411, V, 291; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 129-248; Maqdisī, *Taqāsim*, 83; Hamadhanī, *Buldān*, 26, 118, 253; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, 247, 252, 258-259.

trade and benefitted a great deal from it, accumulating great wealth. The vastness of this wealth could be seen when the Muslims conquered it and found among the spoils large quantities of gold and silver.⁵⁸⁷ Jewish trade expanded in Khaybar and other places to the extent that a single person like Abū Rāfi' al-Khaybarī was capable of conducting his own trade caravans to Syria.

The Quraysh caravan ('*ayr*) used to pass through Khaybar and trade in this market, as did the caravan of al-Nu'mān.⁵⁸⁸ As for the timing of this market, al-Marzūqī states that it started after the Dhū 'l-Majāz market i.e. sometime after the pilgrimage season, before the start of the Ḥajr market in al-Yamāmah.⁵⁸⁹

6.1.14 Adhru'āt Market

Among other markets was Adhru'āt.⁵⁹⁰ It was a town in southern Syria (known today as Dir'ā) and was considered to be second only to Buṣrā in importance.⁵⁹¹ The Arabs used to trade there and Arab poets also mentioned it. For example Imru' al-Qays says,⁵⁹² 'It was famous for its wine' and Abū Dhu'ayb mentions this in the following poem⁵⁹³

فَمَا فَضْلَةٌ مِنْ (أَذْرِعَاتٍ) هَوَتْ بِهَا مَذْكَرَةٌ عَنْسٌ كَهَادِيَةِ الضَّحْلِ

'The best wine from Adhuru'āt carried by

strong she camel like a rock over which a trickle of water runs.'

⁵⁸⁷ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 357.

⁵⁸⁸ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 357.

⁵⁸⁹ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 167. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 268.

⁵⁹⁰ See Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, I, 131-132; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 130-131; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, 265, 277.

⁵⁹¹ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 372.

⁵⁹² Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, .

⁵⁹³ Hudhaliyyīn, *Dīwān*, I, 39.

Adhru‘āt market was managed by Roman employees in pre-Islamic times and was situated about one night's journey from Buṣrā. It remained long after Islam and al-Marzūqī, who attended this bustling market, describes its long survival as follows, ‘Suq Adhru‘āt today goes on longest and sometimes I met people leaving it as I entered’.⁵⁹⁴

6.1.15 Al-Ḥīrah Market

This market is not generally mentioned by those historians who wrote on the subject of Arab markets, despite its great fame and the fact that it was a centre for many Arab traders.⁵⁹⁵ However, there is a brief mention of it in the Aghānī: ‘Al-Ḥakam b. al-‘Āṣ b. Umayyah b. Shams left, heading for al-Ḥīrah, carrying with him perfume. There was a market in al-Ḥīrah attended by people every year’.⁵⁹⁶

We know that Quraysh had trade links with Persia. This makes no sense if they did not have seasonal markets in Iraq too, particularly since al-Ḥīrah was on their route and its inhabitants were Arabs. Al-Ḥīrah was a town of great fame, situated north of Kufa.⁵⁹⁷ It was connected with Persia and its Arab rulers eventually surrendered to the Persians. As a result of its links with Persia, its trade activities expanded and it increased in wealth and luxury. It became a centre of cultural activities to the extent that, as has been noted above, it is claimed that Quraysh learned writing from the people of al-Ḥīrah.⁵⁹⁸

Al-Ḥīrah will be dealt with below in detail in the chapter on Meccan foreign

⁵⁹⁴ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 170.

⁵⁹⁵ For more details of al-Ḥīrah, see Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 478-479; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 328-331; Hamad-hanī, *Buldān*, 62, 163, 183, 210; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 566-567. Cf. Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 375.

⁵⁹⁶ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XVI, 95.

⁵⁹⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 328; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 478.

⁵⁹⁸ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 376.

relations.

Ṭabarī says that al-Ḥīrah was of great importance in trade and that it was an old custom of the Arabs to trade there. Large caravans came to it by land carrying Indian commodities from Oman to Syria, as al-Ḥīrah was a large station for these caravans.⁵⁹⁹

Al-Iṣfahānī mentions that al-A‘shā sold, in the market of al-Ḥīrah, ‘A large leather bag full of ambergris for three hundred red she-camels’.⁶⁰⁰ Leather, perfume, clothes, jewels, horses ... etc, were displayed at this market as were the commodities normally displayed in other Arabian markets. These were brought from Syria, the Yemen, Oman, Ḥijāz, Bahrain, India and Persia, and in addition the bedouins would bring camels, sheep and all their other products.⁶⁰¹

At the same time al-Ḥīrah was a meeting place for poets, men of letters and preachers. Debates and contests were held between poets as in the rest of the markets. We do not know the exact time this market was held. As it was situated under the domain of the Lakhmids, its taxes were paid to them.⁶⁰²

It is important to note that there also existed other markets, some within the Arabian Peninsula and some outside, which were just as famous as the markets mentioned above. Among the markets within the Arabian Peninsula was the Ḥajr market at al-Yamāmah.⁶⁰³ It was a medium sized market where Arab traders came in order to buy and sell and attend poetry contests, when the market would be

⁵⁹⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 492.

⁶⁰⁰ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, IX, 125.

⁶⁰¹ Qālī, *Amālī*, II, 44. See also A‘zamī, *Tārīkh*, 136.

⁶⁰² Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 382.

⁶⁰³ See Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 221-222; Hamadhanī, *Buldān*, 27-30; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 151; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 403. Cf. Crone, *Trade*, 140, 152, 155; Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 359.

praised and glorified in the same way as 'Ukāz.⁶⁰⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb reports that some Qurayshīs traded there. For example, Bujayr b. al-'Awwām is said to have gone to the Yamāmah as a trader and to have been killed there by an Azdī called Sa'īd b. Saqī' al-Dūsī in revenge for his grandfather Abū Uzayhir.⁶⁰⁵ There was also Buṣrā market situated on the outskirts of Syria in the south. This town was very famous before Islam. The people of Syria were generally in close contact with the inhabitants of the Ḥijāz and the Arabian Peninsula.

The Nabataeans often carried out their trade between the Ḥijāz and Syria. Buṣrā was at the height of its glory and fame in Roman days. It produced one of the Roman emperors (Philipes) who was crowned in A.D. 244.⁶⁰⁶ Because of its important trade centre and its being a public market for the caravans coming from the Arabian Peninsula, the Romans paid special attention to it. They established strong fortresses to watch over movements of the desert tribes. Quraysh had a great role in the trade at Buṣrā and made frequent journeys to it. It appears that most Meccan traders went and traded with the rest of Syrian cities. The *Sīrah* literature indicates that the Prophet Muḥammad travelled there on two occasions, the first as a boy and the second as a merchant at the age of twenty-five. It is claimed that he met a monk there in a monastery.⁶⁰⁷ Buṣrā was famous for two types of commodities. One of these was wine, of which the Arabian poets constantly boasted in their poems.⁶⁰⁸ The second was swords. Buṣrā was famous for the manufacturing of swords, as were other towns in the countryside of Syria. The Buṣran sword was called *mashrafi*, linking it to the *mashārif* lands surround-

⁶⁰⁴ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 359.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 210.

⁶⁰⁶ 'Alī, *Khīṭaṭ*, V, 258.

⁶⁰⁷ See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 203; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 280; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 102. Cf. Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 30.

⁶⁰⁸ See above p.126.

ing Syria. Those who oversaw the market and collected tax, were often Roman employees and were not Arabs from Ghassān.⁶⁰⁹

6.1.16 Conclusion

From the previous study of the markets of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times, it becomes clear that some markets moved from north to east, and south to west in the Arabian Peninsula. This trading movement brought various kinds of luxuries to the Arabs to which they had not previously been accustomed. The notables and wealthy among them rushed to buy expensive cloths and garments, perfumes, weapons and so on.

Since the Arabs crowded into these markets, the Prophet used to proclaim his message in such places.⁶¹⁰ The holding of these markets during the sacred months encouraged the Arabs to trade there. As markets like 'Ukāz, Majannah and Dhū 'l-Majāz were held in the pilgrimage season, they were the most active of the Arab markets and different tribes would come from every part of the Arabian Peninsula, bringing with them the products of their towns. Hence Mecca and the Quraysh benefitted from a volume and variety of trade enjoyed by no other town or tribe. These markets were frequented both by those wanting profit from trade and those seeking peace and provisions.⁶¹¹ Also those people living in fear of their lives or under threat would come seeking protection and slaves came to look for someone who was prepared to liberate them.⁶¹²

Another aspect of these markets was that they were places where poetry was

⁶⁰⁹ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 205; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 383.

⁶¹⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 65.

⁶¹¹ Tawhīdī, *Imtā'*, I, 85. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 384.

⁶¹² Tawhīdī, *Imtā'*, I, 85.

recited and vainglorious contests (*mufākharāt*) between the tribes took place: some tribes would win and others lose. Since different preachers would also come to give their message to the crowds, it is clear that people went to the old Arab markets with different aims and goals in mind. Therefore the greatest achievement of these markets was the unification of the customs and habits of the Arabian tribes. This in turn led to a consensus of opinion concerning social standards and moral values. Similarly the flourishing of pre-Islamic poetry was directly linked to the holding of these markets, particularly the 'Ukāz market.⁶¹³

If one analyses the nature of pre-Islamic Arab markets, one can discern three distinct characteristics:

(1) Those markets under foreign influence operated under a particular system, thereby reducing the Arab identity: as was the case in al-Ḥīrah, Hajar, Oman, Buṣrā , Adhru'āt and Gaza. These markets were run by foreign administrators despite the fact that the workers there were Arabs and the taxes went to them.

(2) Markets that were set up by the Arabs themselves through necessity and with the passage of time incorporated Arabian customs, systems of buying and selling, and even their feuds (e.g. 'Ukāz).

(3) Mixed markets, which tended to be located in coastal areas such as Aden, Ṣuḥār and Dībā. Abyssinians, Indians, Chinese and Persians gathered at these markets to trade.⁶¹⁴

It is certain that other markets were also held, but are not mentioned by historians because they restricted themselves to the famous seasonal markets. It

⁶¹³ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 206-207. See also Kubaysī, *Aswāq*, 103.

⁶¹⁴ Cf. Kubaysī, 'Aswāq', 408f.

is probable that there was a local market for every tribe at a specific time near a well where the inhabitants would gather. It is a fact that Islam appeared at Mecca which was an active trade centre and the Prophet participated in that trade, as did most of the early Muslims.⁶¹⁵ Bukhārī reports a tradition on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that ‘Ukāz, Majannah and Dhū ‘l-Majāz were markets in pre-Islamic times, but when Islam came the Muslims began to consider it a sin to engage in trade. So God revealed the verse⁶¹⁶

‘There is no blame on you in seeking bounty from your Lord. So when you hasten from ‘Arafāt, then remember Allāh near the holy monument.’

After this revelation, trade activity continued in these markets and probably increased, since many Muslims came to the Ḥijāz during the pilgrimage season. The Prophet used to encourage his Companions to engage in trade;⁶¹⁷ ‘You should trade because nine tenths of provisions come from it’. He also said, concerning the trader, ‘An honest trader will be raised up in the Hereafter with the truthful and the martyred’.⁶¹⁸

Therefore we can see that Islam did not undermine the Arab inclination towards trade, and in fact the Islamic *sharī‘ah* organised and encouraged financial and commercial dealings. There are many Qur’anic verses and traditions emphasising the need for just dealing between the tradesmen.⁶¹⁹ There are indications

⁶¹⁵ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā‘il*, 157; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 277-278; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, II, 24-25; Tha‘ālibī, *Laṭā‘if*, 127-129.

⁶¹⁶ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 5, 16; al-‘Aynī, *Sharḥ*, V, 452; Qur’ān, II, 198.

⁶¹⁷ Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, II, 62f.

⁶¹⁸ Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, II, 52.

⁶¹⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs*, 192; Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 465; Tawḥīdī, *Imtā’*, II, 93.

of capital being involved in trade,⁶²⁰ usury,⁶²¹ mortgage,⁶²² renting, letting and deposits,⁶²³ and salaries.⁶²⁴ All these were organised according to Islamic principles and became the basic structure for trading and wealth creation in the new state.

6.2 Methods of trade in pre-Islamic Arabia

There were several different methods of buying and selling among the Arabs in pre-Islamic times which to some extent are both surprising and perplexing, with levels of fraud and injustice that often led to feuds and conflicts between customers and salesmen.

The following are some of the methods of selling in pre-Islamic times:-

(1) By throwing stones (*al-ramy bi-'l-haṣāh*).

Historians have mentioned various kinds of selling, which can be placed under this heading and which took place in the Dūmat al-Jandal market. Among these were:-

3. The salesman would say to the customer, 'Throw this stone and on whatever cloth it lands, that is yours for a dirham'.⁶²⁵
4. The salesman would cast a stone into a flock of sheep, for instance, and the animal on which it landed would go to the purchaser for the agreed price.⁶²⁶
5. The salesman says, 'I'll sell the commodity on which your stone lands', or, 'I'll

⁶²⁰ See Qur'ān, II, 282, IX, 24, LXIII, 11; IV, 29, XXIV, 37, XXXV, 29.

⁶²¹ Qur'ān, II, 265, 276, 278, III, 130, IV, 161.

⁶²² Qur'ān, II, 245.

⁶²³ Qur'ān, II, 283, VI, 98.

⁶²⁴ Qur'ān, II, 112, XXXIII, 31, III, 185, IV, 152, 173, XXXV, 30, LXVI, 6.

⁶²⁵ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 261. Cf. Afghānī, *Aṣqāq*, 46; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 387.

⁶²⁶ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 164.

sell the distance of land your stone covers'.⁶²⁷

6. The salesman would take a handful of pebbles which he then counted. Calling each pebble one dirham, the total would be considered the price of the commodity.⁶²⁸
7. A party of people would gather around a commodity, bargaining with the owner and whoever accepted the owner's price would throw his stone.⁶²⁹

(2) Sale by throwing (*munābadhah*).⁶³⁰

That is to say, 'Throw me a garment or I throw it to you and the sale will be fixed for so much'.⁶³¹ This means that the buyer would throw a garment and the salesman would do likewise. It is also said that it meant that if you throw an article, you are obliged to buy it.⁶³²

(3) Touching by hand (*mulāmasah*).

Sale by touching was the practice of buying an item by feeling it, but not seeing it.⁶³³ It is said that it means that the salesman would bring a folded garment, ask the buyer to touch it and then say to him, 'I'll sell this to you for so much, provided you just touch it instead of seeing it unfolded'. He might say, 'If you touch this thing, it is sold to you'.⁶³⁴

⁶²⁷ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XIV, 183; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, X, 92.

⁶²⁸ Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 261.

⁶²⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 264.

⁶³⁰ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, II, 581; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 264; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 87.

⁶³¹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, III, 512.

⁶³² Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 3; Shawkānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 2f.; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, IV, 340.

⁶³³ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, VI, 2109.

⁶³⁴ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 87; Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 265; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 265.

(4) Sale over a number of years (*mu'āwamah*).⁶³⁵

This was to sell the fruit of a particular tree for two, three or more years. However, because of the injustice and risk involved in this form of selling, Islam considered it void.⁶³⁶

(5) Sale of unripe fruit (*mukhāḍarah*).

A practice of selling green fruit.⁶³⁷

(6) Sale of unripe dates (*muzābanah*).

This was to sell unripe dates while still on the tree for a specified weight of ripe dates, or to sell the dates on trees for dirhams and dinars. Islam prohibited this kind of sale because of the level of fraud, ignorance and injustice involved.⁶³⁸

(7) Sale of unborn animals (*bay' ḥabl al-ḥablah*)

This kind of sale was current in pre-Islamic times and involved, for example, the sale of pregnant she-camels or trees which had not yet yielded fruit.⁶³⁹

(8) Taṣriyah.

It was a custom among some Arabs that, when they wanted to sell a sheep or she-camel, they would not milk the animal for several days, so that milk would gather in its udders. They would then exhibit it and the customer, believing the animal to be a good milk producer, would be tricked into buying it.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XII, 431.

⁶³⁶ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 9.

⁶³⁷ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 11; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IV, 248; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, III, 180.

⁶³⁸ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 64; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 13.

⁶³⁹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 87; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XI, 139. Cf. ʿAlī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 392; Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 52.

⁶⁴⁰ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 87; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XII, 458; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, X, 209.

(9) **Sirār.**

This type of selling is only mentioned by Ibn Ḥabīb in his book *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*. He describes the method of selling in 'Ukāẓ market; 'Selling in 'Ukāẓ was by *sirār*. If the sale had taken place and there were a thousand men who wanted to buy, the salesman would refuse to go ahead with the sale unless the buyer gave him some of the profit from a later sale'.⁶⁴¹

(10) **Touch (*jass*)**.⁶⁴²

This type of sale was found in Ṣan'ā' market.⁶⁴³ If two persons agreed on the sale of a commodity, one of them would touch the other's hand, indicating the validity of the sale. Perhaps this was another form of sale by touching, mentioned above.

Although there were doubtless other methods of sale, those were the main ones found in pre-Islamic days. We notice from our findings that these kind of sale methods exposed one party to fraud and loss because the characteristics of the sale were not clear. Therefore, when Islam came, it prohibited all kinds of forms of potentially fraudulent sale, and allowed in its place clear and open sales which took place with complete satisfaction between the participating parties in the operation of the sale.⁶⁴⁴

Although the above mentioned methods of sale were based in fact on the acceptance, agreement and the satisfaction of both the seller and buyer, sometimes

⁶⁴¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 267.

⁶⁴² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, VI, 38.

⁶⁴³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266. For more detail of the market of Ṣan'ā' during later times, see Serjeant, 'The market, business life, occupations, the legality and sale of stimulants', in *San'ā', an Arabian Islamic city*, 161- 178.

⁶⁴⁴ Afghānī, *Asqāq*, 57.

conflicts were created between both sides. Therefore Islam prohibited them.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁵ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 399.

Chapter VII

The Ka'bah and the sacred months - their effects in Meccan trade

7.1 The Ka'bah

Our knowledge of the history of the Ka'bah is very meagre, due mostly to the fact that the sources are mostly anecdotal or composed of often contradictory stories; even the history of the period close to Islam is full of contradictions. Until now no pre-Islamic inscription has been discovered which even mentions the history of the Ka'bah. However, we do find it mentioned in pre-Islamic poetry, such as that written by Zuhayr b. Abī Salamah.

فَأَقْسَمْتُ بِالْبَيْتِ الَّذِي طَافَ حَوْلَهُ رِجَالُ بَنِي قُرَيْشٍ وَجُرْهُمِ

'I swear by the house which is circumambulated by the

men of Quraysh and Jurhum who built it.'⁶⁴⁶

Al-Nabighah also mentions it in one of his poems.⁶⁴⁷

فَلَا تُغْمَرُ الَّذِي مَسَّحَتْ كَعْبَتَهُ وَمَا هَرِيقٌ عَلَى الْأَنْصَابِ مِنْ جَسَدِ

'I swear the life of Him whose Ka'bah I touched and by

the blood which was shed on the stone pillars.'

⁶⁴⁶ Zuhayr, *Dīwān*, 14; Tha'ālibī, *Thimār*, 13.

⁶⁴⁷ al-Nābigah, *Diwān*, 45; Tha'ālibī, *Thimār*, 17.

Also the origins of the Ka‘bah are obscure. Different legends are associated with its origin.⁶⁴⁸ Some of these legends trace back the origin of the Ka‘bah to Adam but,⁶⁴⁹ more frequently, its origin is associated in Islamic sources with Abraham and Ishmael. These have undoubtedly been influenced by the numerous verses in the Qur‘ān in which the names of Abraham and Ishmael are connected with the Ka‘bah.⁶⁵⁰

The Qur‘ān stipulates that it was Abraham and Ishmael who built the house, as mentioned in II, 127.

‘And when Abraham and Ishmael with him raised up the foundation of the house: “Our Lord, receive this from us; Thou art the Hearing and the Knowing, and Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee and of our seed a nation submissive to Thee, and show us our holy rites, and turn towards us; surely Those turnest, and art all compassionate”.’⁶⁵¹

‘And when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary, and: “take to yourselves Abraham’s station for a place of prayer”. And We made covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: “Purify My House for those that shall go about it and those that cleave to it, to those who bow and prostrate themselves”.’⁶⁵²

‘And when Abraham prayed: My Lord: Make this a region of security and bestow upon its people fruits, such of them as believe in Allāh and the last day, he answered: As for him who disbelieveth, I shall leave him in contentment for a

⁶⁴⁸ Rubin, ‘The Ka‘bah’, 97ff; Hawting, ‘Origins’, 23ff; *ET*², IV, 318.

⁶⁴⁹ Bukhārī, *Manāyih al-karm*, 29.

⁶⁵⁰ See Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 357. Cf. al-Shoush, *Authority*, 345.

⁶⁵¹ Qur‘ān, II, 127.

⁶⁵² Qur‘ān, II, 125.

while, then I shall compel him to the doom of fire - a hopeless journey's end!'⁶⁵³

All these verses indicate that the region of the Ka'bah was connected with Abraham and Ishmael and that perhaps the Ka'bah stood over the ruins of an ancient temple. Probably with the passage of time, the nature of the place was changed and this temple fell into neglect, until the time came for Abraham to build the foundations anew. The Ka'bah was a place of worship from early times.⁶⁵⁴ When Quraysh took control of Mecca they allowed all people, regardless of their nationalities, to circumambulate it, as it was considered to be the house of God.⁶⁵⁵

The basis for the sanctity of the Ka'bah was that the house itself was intended to be holy, without any attention being paid to the idols which it contained. It may, for example, contain an idol worshipped by one tribe and disregarded by another. This however did not reduce the sanctity of the house in the eyes of them both.

Quraysh had benefited from the position which the Ka'bah held in the eyes of the Arabs. They took responsibility for looking after it in order to strengthen their moral position among the Arabian tribes and to enhance their internal trade. Therefore they undertook various measures to meet their ends such as holding the key of the Ka'bah (*ḥijābah*), providing water (*siqāyah*) and food (*rifādah*) to the pilgrims.⁶⁵⁶ As is well-known, Mecca is situated in a barren land and short of water and in order to welcome a large number of pilgrims, it has to be able to provide water. Quraysh therefore made the post of providing water to the pilgrims one of their most important offices. Quṣayy b. Kilāb made it a permanent office

⁶⁵³ Qur'ān, II, 126.

⁶⁵⁴ Tha'ālibī, *Thimār*, 13. Cf. Michon, 'Religious institutions', 29.

⁶⁵⁵ Batnūnī, *Rihlah*, 150; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VI, 430.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 141. Cf. *ET*², IV, 320; Serjeant, 'Ḥaram', 53.

and assigned it to himself, undertaking to dig wells in the region of Mecca.⁶⁵⁷ Other factions of Quraysh were also to dig many wells to provide for the increasing number of pilgrims who came to Mecca.⁶⁵⁸

The post of providing water thus became one of the most privileged offices. It was regarded as the most honourable next to the building of the house and its maintenance to the extent that it is mentioned in the Qur'ān as follows: 'Do ye liken the giving of water to the pilgrimage, and the management of the Sacred Mosque to (the conduct) of him who has believed in Allāh and the Last Day.'⁶⁵⁹

Quṣayy also made the providing of food to pilgrims an important office. He imposed upon Quraysh a tax which they paid to him in order to cook food for the pilgrims. This was an important matter in a poor environment like the desert. Many pilgrims came from far off places and were faced with long journeys which made it difficult for them to carry sufficient provisions with them. Quraysh maintained this office and assigned it to the richest factions, since the holder of this office had to finance it from his own private means.⁶⁶⁰

The second goal towards which Quraysh worked was the securing of peace in the region around Mecca. The boundaries of the sanctity were increased so as to include the whole of Mecca, and it became a secure sanctuary thus preventing bloodshed within its boundaries. Eventually the sanctuary was extended to cover everything, even the animals, birds and vegetation.⁶⁶¹ The sacred months were established in the pilgrimage season to enable the Arabs to come to Mecca for

⁶⁵⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 159.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 160-161.

⁶⁵⁹ Qur'ān, XVI, 19.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 141; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 58.

⁶⁶¹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, III, 14-15; Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, I, 255.

that reason and for trade. Thus the largest Arab markets were held in and around Mecca, such as 'Ukāz, Majannah and Dhū 'l-Majāz.

The Ka'bah remained as the *ḥaram* of the Muslim world and the House of God (Bayt Allāh). The Prophet said of the conquest of Mecca, 'God made Mecca holy the day He created heaven and earth and it is the Holy of Holies until the resurrection day. It is not lawful for anyone who believes in God and the last day to shed blood therein nor to cut down trees therein. It was not lawful to anyone before me and it will not be lawful to anyone after me. Indeed, it is not lawful for me except at this time because of God's anger against its people. Now it has regained its former holiness.'⁶⁶²

The Ka'bah occupied an exceptional position as a place of refuge so that no one risked violating its sanctity. Al-Marzūqī expressed this view in the following words, 'God made the Ka'bah a safe *ḥaram* and a place of refuge for the frightened, whether it be a human being or a wild animal. Its position is great and he who takes protection in it will be safe and unharmed. Those who live in it will forever be free from humiliation and defeat.'⁶⁶³ When Abrahah decided to destroy the Ka'bah during 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's time, the latter told him that none of the Quraysh would fight him and the Lord of the Sacred House would protect it.⁶⁶⁴

7.1.1 The Social and economic effects of the pilgrimage

The pilgrimage had far-reaching effects particularly with regard to the social and economic life of the Arabs in general and of Mecca in particular. In the pilgrimage season general markets were held, the most important being the 'Ukāz,

⁶⁶² Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 55. Cf. Guillaume, *Muḥammad*, 555.

⁶⁶³ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, I, 9. Cf. al-Shoush, *Authority*, 286.

⁶⁶⁴ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 88; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 51.

Majannah and Dhū 'l-Majāz; the holding of these markets was a custom of the pilgrimage, since they were held on prescribed days and in permanent places. Whilst these markets were centres of trade for the people of Mecca, they were at the same time a great custom which benefitted the Arabs in general. People travelled for the pilgrimage and its markets from the outskirts of al-Shām, Iraq, the Yemen, Tihāmah and Bahrain; they were of every tribe, dialect and ideology. They would meet in these markets and exchange goods and also had opportunity to hold meetings in which the tribes competed together to boast of their achievements in both poetry and formal speeches (*mufākharāt*), and councils to solve all problems. It was an opportunity for the poets, leaders and preachers to get to know each other.⁶⁶⁵ The Prophet would proclaim his *da'wah* in these markets, and explain to the tribes his mission. Among these tribes were B. 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah, B. Muḥārib b. Khaṣafah, B. Fazārah, Ghassān, B. Murrah, B. Ḥanīfah, Sulaym, 'Abs, B. Naḍr, Kindah, Kalb, al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b, 'Udhrah and al-Ḥaḍārimah.⁶⁶⁶ It is recorded that there he met leaders of the Yathrib tribes and that he planned with them his eventual *hijrah* to their city.⁶⁶⁷ It appears most likely that those who attended these markets were not all Arab pagans but that there were also Arab Christians and Jews from Yathrib who attended for missionary and trading purposes. For example, Qiss b. Sā'idah al-Iyādī was a Christian Arab and his famous speech at the pilgrimage season is recorded in the Arabian traditions.⁶⁶⁸

As Mecca was in a barren valley and depended for its life on trade, it was essential to establish law and order so as to provide protection and security for those coming to it. The Ka'bah is the house of God situated on sacred land where

⁶⁶⁵ Batnūnī, *Riḥlah*, 119-120; al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 185.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 145.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 146.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, II, 232-234.

the committing of any transgression is expressly forbidden; this principle was well established even before the time of Quraysh. Sources mention that Madād b. ‘Amr al-Jurhumī thought of protecting the trade and foreigners so as to encourage them to come to Mecca. In one of his speeches, he said: ‘Respect the House of God and do not ill-treat anyone who enters it and comes to honour its sanctity and to sell their goods, or seek your protection’.⁶⁶⁹

As we mentioned previously ‘Amr b. Luḥayy the leader of Khuzā‘ah, took measures which encouraged the Arabs to come to Mecca. So, for example, he brought idols and put them in the Ka‘bah and he also provided massive feasts for the pilgrims. Some traditions mention that he used to slaughter ten thousand mountain goats.⁶⁷⁰ When Quraysh took the leadership of Mecca from the hands of Qusayy b. Kilāb, he undertook, as mentioned before, to organise both civil and religious offices in Mecca. All this meant that Quraysh organised the pilgrimage and travel to Mecca in accordance with their moral and material needs.

The pilgrimage and its markets were incentives for the trade activity of Quraysh. The rules which they imposed on all the Arabs were in fact connected with their own trade activities. So when people came to Mecca, they had to leave their food before entering the city in order that they would then have to buy it from the people of Mecca. It is also recorded in the organisation of the *ḥums*⁶⁷¹ that pilgrims were not allowed to wear any garments during circumambulation, but instead they had to wear special waist-wrappers (*ma‘āzir aḥmasiyyah*). Hence the markets in Mecca were active during pilgrimage, some traders specialising in the sale of cloth

⁶⁶⁹ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XIII, 105.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, II, 187.

⁶⁷¹ See below, p.154.

and others in food.⁶⁷² In addition to this Quraysh had imposed a tax called *ḥarīm* on anyone who came to the city. This was levied in the form of either cloth or animals.⁶⁷³

7.2 The Sacred months and their importance

The other important institution connected with the *ḥaram* was that of the sacred months. During these months, a truce of God was declared throughout the Arabian Peninsula and was observed by a great number of tribes. It is evident from the many Quranic verses dealing with sacred months and from the traditions, that these sacred months had a great effect on the lives of the Arabs and particularly on the Meccan environment before the rise of Islam. It is a well-known fact that raids and battles were continuous between the Arab tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. Such conflicts would stop with the advent of these months out of respect and honour for them; the people would abide by a comprehensive truce.

These months are not however specified by name in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān simply tells us that they are four months,⁶⁷⁴ although the traditions define them thus: Rajab, Dhū 'l-Qa'dah, Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah and Muḥarram,⁶⁷⁵ the latter three being the pilgrimage months, at least before Islam. As for Rajab, it was called the dumb month (*Rajab al-Aṣamm*) and is connected with *tarjīb*, honour. It was also known as *Munaṣṣil al-'All*, or the month during which arrow-heads and spear-heads were taken off, as an indication that no fighting should take place.⁶⁷⁶ Ibn Sa'd mentions

⁶⁷² al-Dhahabī, *A'lām*, II, 29.

⁶⁷³ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 318; Dayf, *al-'Aṣr al-Jāhilī*, 50.

⁶⁷⁴ Qur'ān, II, 197, IX, 36.

⁶⁷⁵ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VI, 66; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 299; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 27; Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, II, 60; Ya'qubī, *Tārīkh*, II, 91.

⁶⁷⁶ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XI, 128; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, IV, 229. Cf. al-Shoush, *Authority*, 293.

that the people of Mecca used to gather for their religious festival in Rajab. It is probable that this festival was peculiar to the Muḍar tribes or some of the tribes of the Ḥijāz.⁶⁷⁷ This was probably the real reason for its sacredness to enable them to go to and forth and perform their rites under the sacred truce. It was not long, although we do not know precisely, before Rajab joined the list of the sacred months.⁶⁷⁸

The sacred months had great importance in relation to Arab society. There was no government to ensure peace and security, while the raids were continuous between the tribes, since there was such strong tribalism (*‘aṣabiyyah*). At the same time it was important to create an environment conducive to peace. This was due to the need of the inhabitants of these regions to have commercial links among themselves and to engage in other activities, such as cultivating the land and selling their produce. The bedouin had to purchase the necessities of food and clothing and to sell their products of the desert. What would their living conditions have been like, had they not had time to move freely and to make contacts and carry on their business in a peaceful and secure atmosphere? Similarly, what would they have done if it had not been possible for them to hold and attend their general markets without fear? Therefore the value of this truce imposed by the sacred months was of great importance.⁶⁷⁹ The Qur’ān expresses it in the following verse:

‘Allāh hath appointed the Ka‘bah, the sacred house, as a standing (institution) for the people, likewise the sacred month, and the offering and the garlands.’⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁷ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 27.

⁶⁷⁸ Drwazīh, *‘Aṣr*, 210-211; al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 192.

⁶⁷⁹ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 193.

⁶⁸⁰ Qur’ān, V, 197.

For this reason the Arabs gave a religious connotation to this truce; they believed that anyone who violated its sanctity would have an evil curse cast upon him. The Arabs of pre-Islamic Arabia were divided into three groups with regard to the institution of the sacred months:-

- a. Some of the tribes did not recognise the sanctity of these months and thus permitted fighting and bloodshed during this time.
- b. The majority observed the truce and refrained from bloodshed and hostilities during these months.
- c. The third group recognised the sanctity of the sacred months, but at the same time permitted fighting against those who did not recognise their sanctity.⁶⁸¹

The Qur'ān approved of the latter attitude, as is shown in the following verse:

'The sacred month for the sacred month; and all sacred things demand retaliation: whoever commits aggression against you, inflict injury on him according to the injury he has inflicted on you.'⁶⁸² Al-Marzūqī, in his comment on the above verse, says that a man must observe the sanctity of the sacred months and refrain from fighting during them but only with regard to those who observe them. If an infidel attacks a believer, the latter must defend himself.⁶⁸³

The violation of the sacred months was regarded as an act of perfidy. Thus it was obligatory on the tribes to punish or boycott any tribe which committed such a sacriligious act. Ibn Ḥabīb tells us that when two members from the tribe of

⁶⁸¹ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, II, 166. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 319, where he mentioned those tribes who did not recognise the sacred month. Among them were Ṭayyi', Kath'am and Ghāfir. Cf. al-Shoush, *Authority*, 293.

⁶⁸² Qur'ān, II, 194.

⁶⁸³ Marzūqī, *Azminah*, I, 228.

Tamīm, Awas and Ḥaṣbah, the sons of Aznam b. 'Ubayd b. Tha'labah b. Yarbū' b. Ḥanḏalah b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm, violated the sanctity of the sacred months and committed a murder, the tribes took joint action against them. The year in which this event took place was known as the Year of Perfidy (*'Ām al-ghadr*).⁶⁸⁴

It is not easy to specify the origin of the sacred months. The Qur'ānic verses indicate that they are of ancient origin, long before the advent of Islam.⁶⁸⁵ It is possible that this sacredness was established after the existence of a pilgrimage season together with its customs and markets. It is probable that these months were instituted after Quraysh seized control of Mecca and organised the pilgrimage. This was after the rule of Quṣayy b. Kilāb in the middle of the fifth century A.D.⁶⁸⁶

7.3 Muḥillūn, Muḥrimūn and Ḥums

The Arabs honoured some particular places and specific months by not shedding blood nor fighting against each other, until they were out of this sacred place or after the end of this sacred month. Because of their farsightedness they held their largest markets during these sacred months. Therefore the market of Ḥūbashah and Ṣuḥār were held in the month of Rajab and the market of Ḥaḍramawt in Dhū al-Qa'dah and Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah. The markets of 'Ukāz, Majjanah and Dhū 'l-Majāz were in the month of Dhū al-Qa'dah and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. It is a well established fact that there are four sacred months i.e. Rajab, Dhū 'l-Qa'dah, Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah and Muḥarram. The Arabs would lay down their arms during these months. It was considered a great sin if one should contravene the sanctuary of sacred months or sacred places, including Mecca. For this reason the Arabs name the war between

⁶⁸⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 7. Although Ibn Ḥabīb did not define the tribes who took joint action against Tamīm, he mentioned the 'Arab instead.

⁶⁸⁵ Qur'ān, IX, 36.

⁶⁸⁶ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 193.

Quraysh and Hawāzin which took place in 'Ukāẓ in the sacred months as the Fijār wars. We know that when the army of 'Abdallāh b. Jaḥsh was on the watch for the Quraysh caravan headed by 'Amr b. al-Ḥaḍramī between Mecca and Nakhlah, they took control of the caravan and killed its leader. This took place on the last day of Rajab. When they came to the Prophet with the caravan and two captives, he refused to take the fifth and said he did not order them to kill in the sacred month.⁶⁸⁷ They were severely criticised by some Muslims also. The Quranic verse was revealed after this incident.

'They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter; and hindering (men) from Allāh's way and denying Him, and hindering men from the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it, are still graver with Allāh.'⁶⁸⁸

There is no doubt that security is the most important factor in this system of conducting trade. For this reason Quraysh occupied a leading role in the commercial field because they resided in the sanctity of the *ḥaram*, where there was peace and security. Quraysh also took care of the pilgrims' affairs, such as providing water and food. Therefore it had a prominent place among most Arabian tribes, particularly those on its trade route. For example the caravans travelled from Mecca to Dūmat al-Jandal without any protection, because the Muḍar tribes residing on the route to Dūmat al-Jandal did not attack caravans of Quraysh, nor any allies of Muḍar because Muḍar respected Quraysh highly because of their position in relation to the Ka'bah. The Muḍar maintained that Quraysh had ful-

⁶⁸⁷ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 13. See also Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 238-242. al-Wāqidī mentioned some of the people who were with al-Ḥaḍramī, mainly from Makhzūm's family, among them al-Ḥakam b. Kaysān al-Makhzūmī, 'Uthmān b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī and Nawfal b. 'Abdallāh al-Mukhzūmī. Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 14.

⁶⁸⁸ Qur'ān, II, 207.

filled the responsibility regarding the religion they had inherited from our father Ismael'.⁶⁸⁹ It appears that Quraysh was not satisfied solely with the influence it had over Arabian tribes, rather it wanted to distinguish itself from others by religion as the only group of people who had exclusive rights. This is what is called *ḥums* by the biographers or the sources.

Ḥums, the plural of *aḥmās*, means 'strictness in religion'. The *Lisān al-ʿArab* defines *ḥums* as follows: 'Quraysh were called *ḥums* because they were strict (*mutashaddidīn*) in their religion.'⁶⁹⁰ The *ḥums* were in fact formed by the Quraysh and by a certain number of tribal groups of whom only some resided in the Mecca area. Large numbers of the *ḥums* were in fact scattered all over the Peninsula especially in places where the Meccan merchant had interests in the caravan traffic.⁶⁹¹

Some early Islamic sources mention the tribes who were *ḥums*. Ibn Sa'd counts as *ḥums* Quraysh, Khuzā'ah and people of the Arabs born by Quraysh (i.e. descendants of men or women from Quraysh) and, according to another version of Ibn Sa'd, 'the allies of Quraysh'.⁶⁹² Ibn Ishāq records *ḥums* as: Quraysh, Khuzā'ah and Kinānah. Ibn Hishām adds, on the authority of Abū 'Ubaydah, al-Naḥwī, the tribe of 'Āmir b. Ṣa'sa'ah.⁶⁹³ Ibn Qutaybah mentions as *ḥums* Quraysh and people from Kinānah.⁶⁹⁴ Al-Anbārī⁶⁹⁵ and al-Marzūqī⁶⁹⁶ listed Quraysh, Kinānah, Khuzā'ah and 'Āmir b. Ṣa'sa'ah.

⁶⁸⁹ Mazrūqī, *Azminah*, II, 162. Cf. Serjeant, 'Ḥaram', 55.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, VI, 57.

⁶⁹¹ Afghānī, *Aswāq*, 74.

⁶⁹² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 41.

⁶⁹³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 216.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 269.

⁶⁹⁵ al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, XXXIV, 14.

⁶⁹⁶ al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ al-Ḥamāsah*, 31.

These lists of the *ḥums* mentioned above are contradictory. This shows that the *ḥums* included Quraysh, the inhabitants of Mecca, and people outside Mecca.⁶⁹⁷ Van Arendonk explains that the Meccans at the time of the appearance of Muḥammad were called the *ḥums* as opposed to the other tribes who were called *al-ḥillah*. The Meccans maintained customs during the *iḥrām* peculiar to themselves.⁶⁹⁸

Ibn Ḥabīb gives us a detailed list of the tribes who belonged to the *ḥums*. He states the '*ḥums* consisted of Quraysh, Khuzā'ah, because they had dwelt in Mecca and were neighbours of Quraysh, people being descendants of Quraysh (born by men or women from Quraysh), clans dwelling in Mecca. Descendants of Quraysh were: Kilāb, Ka'b, 'Āmir and Kalb, i.e. B. Rabī'ah b. 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah and al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kinānah and Midlij b. Murrah b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kinānah due to their dwelling near Mecca; 'Āmir b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kinānah, Mālik and Milkān b. Kinānah, Thaḳīf, 'Adwān, Yarbū' b. Ḥanḏalah and Māzin b. Mālik b. 'Amr b. Tamīm.⁶⁹⁹

The list of Ibn Ḥabīb shows that the tribes allied in the organization of the *ḥums* are of different origins and belong to various tribal divisions.⁷⁰⁰ For example, 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah are Mudarites, Kalb belonged to Quḏā'ah, 'Adwān belonged to Qays 'Aylān and Khuzā'ah were of South Arabian origin.⁷⁰¹

Another important fact is that these tribes lived in different areas of the Peninsula: Thaḳīf dwelt in al-Ṭā'if to the south-east of Mecca; Kinānah to the south controlled the route between Mecca and the Yemen; the 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah lived

⁶⁹⁷ Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 132.

⁶⁹⁸ *EI*², 'Ḥums'.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 178-179.

⁷⁰⁰ Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 134.

⁷⁰¹ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 468. Cf. Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm', 134.

to the north-east of Mecca; the Qudā‘ah (Kalb) in the north, controlled the trade route to Syria; Yarbū‘ and Māzin controlled the route to al-Ḥīrah and Persia.

Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Ḥabīb and Ibn al-Kalbī give details of the rites of the *ḥums* and of the imposed hardships. The most explicit of these texts is that of Ibn Ishāq under the heading *Ḥadīth al-Ḥums*,⁷⁰² from which the following can be deduced.

1. The Quraysh created the *ḥums*, saying that, we are from the family of Ibrāhīm and the people of the *ḥaram* and the guardians of the Ka‘bah in Mecca. Therefore no Arab has rights like us, nor a position such as ours.
2. They refused the stand (*wuqūf*) at ‘Arafah and the Ifāḍah from it; instead they performed the *wuqūf* at al-Muzdalifah, and they were convinced that this was part of the pilgrimage ceremonies.
3. They maintained that they were the people of the *ḥaram*, and that they should not go out of the *ḥaram*. Neither should they glorify anything else as they glorified the *ḥaram*. They were the *ḥums* and the *ḥums* are the people of the *ḥaram*.
4. They specified other conditions: while in *iḥram* the *ḥums* should not prepare curd, nor cook clarified butter, they should not stay in the shade of a house nor enter their homes by the door.
5. They said that the *muḥillūn* should not eat the food they brought with them if they came to perform the pilgrimage.
6. They should not perform their first circumambulation in any dress other than

⁷⁰² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 216-220. See also, Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 41; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 178-179; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 127; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 116.

that of the *ḥums*; otherwise they should perform it naked.

It is evident that by the hardship they imposed on themselves, they wanted to express their respect for the Ka‘bah and the *ḥaram*. They called themselves Ahl Allāh. Their distinct position of sanctity was due to their dwelling in the *ḥaram*. The Ka‘bah was known as al-Ḥamsā’ and this clearly indicates that the idea of the *ḥums* was closely connected with the cult of the Ka‘bah.⁷⁰³

It is evident also that this link between Quraysh and the tribes belonging to the *ḥums* influenced their relations with each other. Caskel remarks that ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘ah, being one of the *ḥums*, was on good terms with the inhabitants of Mecca.⁷⁰⁴ An ‘Āmiri poet and chief, ‘Awf b. al-Aḥwaṣ b. Ja‘jar b. Kilāb, swears on the sacred places of Quraysh.⁷⁰⁵ Khālīd b. Ja‘far, the uncle of ‘Awf, is said to have been the first who covered the Ka‘bah with brocade (*dībāj*) which he got from a caravan looted by him.⁷⁰⁶ Quraysh, by establishing the organization of the *ḥums* wanted to distinguish themselves from the other Arab tribes and also strengthen their positions at Mecca and beyond.

But we should also consider other economic factors which lie behind this organization. They wanted to exploit the pilgrims and visitors to Mecca to the extreme and to obtain the highest financial gain from them.

As mentioned before, they would prohibit the use of curd for themselves so that they could sell it to the pilgrims. They did not clarify the butter, but sold it with all its impurities (and thus greater weight) in order to gain larger profit.

⁷⁰³ al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs*, II, 208; Kister, ‘Mecca and Tamīm’, 138-139.

⁷⁰⁴ *EF*², s.v. ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘ah.

⁷⁰⁵ al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, XXXV, 4-5.

⁷⁰⁶ al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, I, 77; al-Ālūsī, *Bulūgh*, I, 234.

We also find them prohibiting the *muḥillūn* from entering Mecca with any food supplies. They permitted them to circumambulate only in a dress purchased from Meccans.

Therefore we notice that, with the advent of Islam, many of these proscriptions were done away with since the Qur'ān⁷⁰⁷ abolished the conditions laid down by Quraysh and gave people a free choice of drink and food without conditions. Thus it is clear that the *ḥums* were of Quraysh's making, established because of their greed and desire to obtain wealth.

Contrasting with the *ḥums* category is that of the *ḥillah*. The *ḥillah* included, according to the report of Ibn Ḥabīb, all Tamīm (except Yarbū', Māzir, Ḍabbah, Ḥumays, Zā'inah, al-Ghawth b. Murr), all Qays 'Aylān (except Thaqīf, 'Adwān and 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah), all Rabī'ah b. Nizār, all Quḍā'ah (except 'Ilāf and Janāb), the Anṣār, Khath'am, Bajīlah, Bakr b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kinānah, Ḥudhayl, Asad, Ṭayyi' and Bāriq.⁷⁰⁸ These *ḥillah* observed ritual rules and restrictions which differed from those followed by members of the *ḥums*. During the visit to places within the vicinity of the *ḥaram*, the *ḥillah* had to follow a different route from that of the *ḥums*.⁷⁰⁹ The *ḥillah* had to buy food and water for themselves and for their animals from Quraysh, who prevented them from bringing these provisions with them into the *ḥaram* since it was Quraysh who controlled the institutions of the *rifādah* and *siqāyah*. The *ḥillah* therefore were those groups which although they recognized the sanctity of the *ḥaram* at Mecca and kept the rules regarding the frequentation of Mecca and its markets, nevertheless did not perform the same

⁷⁰⁷ Qur'ān, II, 189, II, 199.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 179.

⁷⁰⁹ Fabietti, 'The organisation of the *ḥums*', 29. Cf. Wolf, 'Social and economic conditions', 335.

ritual as the *ḥums* when visiting the sanctuary during the holy months.⁷¹⁰

Finally, a third group mentioned by Ibn Ḥabīb were the *ṭuls* (plural of *aṭlās*), including tribes from the Yemen and Ḥaḍramawt, 'Akk, 'Ujayb and Iyād.⁷¹¹ According to Ibn Ḥabīb, the *ṭuls* were between the *ḥillah* and the *ḥums*. They performed in their *iḥrām* what the *ḥillah* did, and they followed the *ḥums* with regard to their clothing but were *never* allowed to circumambulate naked.⁷¹²

We must now look to an important matter linked with *ḥums*. It is what is called postponing or changing round the sacred months (*nas'*).⁷¹³ People argued about whether to prolong or to bring forward the pilgrimage season, as they desired. al-Tha'ālibī mentions this as follows: 'When the people left Minā, a man from Kinānah called Na'īm b. Tha'labah got up and said, "I cannot be criticised and my judgement cannot be refused".' They would say to him, Prolong or postpone one month, i.e. delay the sacred month of Muḥarram and turn it into Ṣafar, because they disliked having three consecutive months (Dhū 'l-Qa'dah, Dhū 'l-Hijjah and Muḥarram) in which they could not make any raid for provisions. So Na'īm b. Tha'labah would permit them to raid in the month of Muḥarram and forbid them in Ṣafar. In the following year he would do the opposite⁷¹⁴ until the Quranic verse was revealed stating, 'Postponing of the sacred month is only an addition in unbelief, wherewith those who disbelieve are led astray, violating it one

⁷¹⁰ Fabietti, 'The organisation of the *ḥums*', 29.

⁷¹¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 179.

⁷¹² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 179.

⁷¹³ See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 43-45; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 118. Ibn al-Kalbī reports that the first from Muḍar who postponed the month from Maḍar was Mālik b. Kinānah. He added that *nas'* was previously incumbent on Kindah because they were the kings of the Arabs from Rabī'ah and Muḍar. Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 118. While Ibn Ishāq reported that the first who postponed the months was Ḥudhayfah b. 'Abd b. Fuqaym b. 'Udayy b. 'Āmir b. Tha'labah b. Mālik b. Kinānah. Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 45. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 157.

⁷¹⁴ Qālī, *al-Amālī*, I, 4.

year and keeping it sacred another, that they may agree in the number of months that Allāh has made sacred, and thus violate what Allāh has made sacred.’⁷¹⁵

From the incidents related in the study we notice that the Arabs regarded the sanctity of the *ḥaram* more highly than that of the months. This can be proved by the following:

1. The sanctity of the *ḥaram* only applied to particular places, which were visited for only short periods. This was not the case however with respect to the sanctity of the months which extended to about one third of the year. They had to refrain from raiding and acts of aggression for four months wherever they might be. This was too much for the Arabs to bear.
2. Many of the tribes violated the sanctity of the months, but did not dare to violate the sanctity of the *ḥaram*. Among these tribes was Quraysh itself in the Fijār War. We notice that when Quraysh learned of the aggression of one of its allies against an Hawzanī they left ‘Ukāẓ market fearing the Hawāzin. When the news reached the Hawāzin regarding Quraysh, they followed them and fought until nightfall. Then the Quraysh entered the *ḥaram* and Hawāzin refrained from attacking them out of respect for the sanctity of *ḥaram*.
3. Lastly there is *nas’* which is the open violation of the the holy months.

⁷¹⁵ Qur’ān, IX, 37.

Chapter VIII

The Trade Routes and Caravans

8.1 Trade Routes

8.1.1 Introduction

Mecca is located at the crossroad of the international land trade route. The trade activities were transferred from one route to another, according to the political developments in the area dominated by the Persian and Byzantine conflict in order to increase their share of influence over Arabian Peninsula. Hence attempts were made to control the centres of international communication, to ensure the arrival of goods. The conflict became fierce when the Persians imposed heavy taxes on the goods passing through their country. As a result, the Byzantines had to purchase these goods at high prices.

The Byzantines tried to confine the trade routes to two only; firstly the Euphrates where the incoming vessels from the east crossed the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf and unloaded. Then the goods were taken by land through Syria, and thence to the Mediterranean Sea. Many stations were set up along those routes. These halting places became flourishing cities, such as al-Ḥīrah, Petra and Palmyra. This route flourished before the development of Meccan trade at the beginning of the sixth century A.D. The importance of this route became less after the eruption of the conflict between the Sasanids and the Byzantines. So the Byzantines began to look for an alternative route. They co-operated with the

Abyssinians in order to achieve this goal. As the result of increasing conflicts between the Persian and Byzantines, and between the Abyssinians and the Yemen, a second route by land was found from the Yemen to al-Shām across the Ḥijāz. This route became the main artery for trade between the two largest markets in the area; the Yemen and countries having trade contact with it (i.e. India and the Far East) and Syria and the countries connected to it through trade.⁷¹⁶ Ibn Ḥawqal states that this route divided into two, one went along the Tihāmah and the other across the desert (*bawādī*) until they converged at Mecca. As for the route to the north, to al-Shām from Mecca, it consisted of two stages; one through Ḥijāz terminating at Yathrib, which came after Mecca in economic importance. The second stage extended from Yathrib to Buṣrā.

There is a third important route connecting Mecca to the Arabian Gulf across al-Yamāmah and reaching the ports of the Gulf, Bahrain and Gerrha.⁷¹⁷

In the following pages we will mention the most important routes which linked Mecca with the north, Bilād al-Shām with the east (Iraq and the east of the Arabian Peninsula) and with the south and south-east of Arabia, the Yemen and Oman.

8.1.2 Al-Ḥīrah – Mecca route

The route started at Kūfa and passed through al-Qādisiyyah,⁷¹⁸ and al-‘Udhayb.⁷¹⁹ From al-‘Udhayb the route carried on to al-Mughīthah,⁷²⁰ and from there

⁷¹⁶ See Bowen, ‘Ancient trade route’, 35-42.

⁷¹⁷ See Brice, ‘The classical trade- route’, 177-181

⁷¹⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 291; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 526, 527, 547, 563, 572. Cf. Nāji, ‘Ṭarīq al-Ḥīrah’, 27-39.

⁷¹⁹ Iṣfahānī, *Bilād al-‘Arab*, 327-330; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, I, 370.

⁷²⁰ Iṣfahānī, *Bilād al-‘Arab*, 327-330; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, I, 370.

towards Wadi al-Sibā', al-Qar'ā',⁷²¹ Wāqīṣah,⁷²² al-'Aqabah,⁷²³ al-Qā', Zubālah, al-Shuqūq, al-Biṭān,⁷²⁴ al-Tha'labiyyah.⁷²⁵ This was a third of the route and then to al-Khuzaymiyyah,⁷²⁶ al-Ajfar⁷²⁷ and Fayd. This was the half-way point of the route near to Ajā' and Salmā, mountains of Ṭayyi'.⁷²⁸ The route then proceeded to Tūz⁷²⁹, then Samīrā',⁷³⁰ al-Ḥājir⁷³¹ and ending at Ma'din al-Qurashī, which is also called Ma'din al-Naqrah.⁷³² At this point the route divides in two; that heading for Mecca would take al-Mughīthah and that heading for Medina would take the route towards al-'Usaylah,⁷³³ which was a halting place (*mīqāt*) for pilgrims from Iraq between Aḍākh and Māwān.⁷³⁴ The route to Medina from al-'Usaylah went through Baṭn Nakhl and al-Ṭaraf to Medina.⁷³⁵ These going to Mecca would take the following route from Mughīthah al-Māwān⁷³⁶ and follow it through al-Rabadhah⁷³⁷ and then on to Ma'din B. Sulaym,⁷³⁸ al-Salīlah, al-'Umq,

⁷²¹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 125-128; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186.

⁷²² Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 126; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186; Iṣfahānī, *Bilād al-'Arab*, 296.

⁷²³ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 126; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186.

⁷²⁴ Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, 175; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 126.

⁷²⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 127; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186.

⁷²⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 127; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186.

⁷²⁷ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 127; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, III, 106.

⁷²⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 94, III, 238; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 127; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, I, 109.

⁷²⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 58; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 127.

⁷³⁰ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 757; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, III, 278.

⁷³¹ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 416; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 204.

⁷³² Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 127; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 323.

⁷³³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 125.

⁷³⁴ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, I, 164, IV, 1177; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 213, V, 45; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, III, 582.

⁷³⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 128; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 187.

⁷³⁶ Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 186; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, I, 637; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 325.

⁷³⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 24; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 633; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 326; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, II, 562. See also Sa'd al-Rāshid, *al-Rabadhah, a portrait of early Islamic civilisation in Saudi Arabia*, Riyadh, 1986.

⁷³⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 154; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 333.

al-Ufay‘iyyah,⁷³⁹ al-Ghamrah, Dhāt ‘Irq⁷⁴⁰ and finally Bustān B. ‘Āmir.⁷⁴¹

It can be seen that this route was the shortest one leading from al-Ḥīrah to Medina. It passed by Mount Ṭayyi’, which has been renamed as Shammar in modern times. It also passed by Ḥā’il⁷⁴² which is the city in modern Saudi Arabia.

If we follow the route from Medina to Mecca we find that it passed through al-Sayālah, al-Rawḥā’, al-Ruwaythah, al-‘Arj, al-Saqqā’, al-Abwā’, al-Juḥfah, Qudayd, ‘Ufān, and Marr al-Zahrān before arriving at Mecca.⁷⁴³

This was the route which the people of Mecca in pre-Islamic times took to Iraq. It has already been seen that, when Quraysh feared for their trade after the attempt to seize the caravan of Abū Sufyān, they decided to adopt the route to Iraq outlined above. They also hired a guide, Furāt b. Ḥayyān, who took them by the route of Dhāt ‘Irq and then diverted towards al-Ghamarah.⁷⁴⁴ When the Prophet was informed about the caravan, he sent Zayd b. Ḥārithah to seize it and it was attacked at al-Qaradah. They took the booty and after it had been divided out the fifth amounted to 20,000 dirhams. From this it can be estimated that the total value of the caravan was around 100,000 dirhams.⁷⁴⁵ Hamdānī lists the names of the halting places on the Kufa – Yathrib, Kufa – Mecca route as follows:- Kūfa, al-Qādisiyyah, al-Mughīthah, al-Qar‘ā’, Wāqīṣah, al-‘Aqabah, al-Qā’, Zubālah, al-Shuqūq, al-Biṭān, al-Khuzaymiyyah, al-Ajfar, Fayd, Tūz, Samīrā’, al-Ḥājir, Ma‘dīn

⁷³⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, I, 233; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, II, 562; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 344.

⁷⁴⁰ Al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 347.

⁷⁴¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, 414; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 603.

⁷⁴² Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, 414; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 210; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 299, 314, 619; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, VII, 295.

⁷⁴³ Hamdānī, *Ṣifāh*, 184; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 420-468.

⁷⁴⁴ Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 1003-1004; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 212; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 136, 334-347.

⁷⁴⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 492; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 121.

al-Naqrah, al-‘Usaylah, Baṭn Nakhl, al-Ṭaraf and Medina.

From al-Ṭaraf the route led towards Mecca passing through al-Sayālah, al-Rawḥā’, al-Ruwaythah, al-‘Arj, al-Suqyā’, al-Abwā’, al-Juḥfah, Qudayd, ‘Usfān, and finally Marr al-Ẓahrān.⁷⁴⁶

Those who took the route from Mecca to Ma‘din al-Naqrah would pass through the following:- al-Bustān, Dhāt ‘Irq, al-Ghamrah, al-Mushāsh, al-Ufay‘iyyah, Ḥarrat B. Sulaym, al-‘Umq, al-Salīlah, al-Rabadhah, Māwān, before arriving at Ma‘din al-Naqrah which was the meeting place of the two roads.⁷⁴⁷

The people of al-Yamāmah had many routes to the Yemen, among them the route leading to al-Kharj⁷⁴⁸ via Nab‘ah,⁷⁴⁹ al-Majāzah, al-Ma‘din, al-Shafaq, al-Thawr, al-Falaj, al-Ṣafā, Bir al-Abār, Najrān,⁷⁵⁰ al-Ḥimā, Barānis, Marya‘, al-Mahjarah.⁷⁵¹ They could then take the Mahjarah route leading to Ṣan‘ā’.⁷⁵²

Hamdānī also mentions a route which reached Najrān through al-Yamāmah and ended at Basra; this means that the route reached Basra through the Yemen, and therefore Najrān was one of the most important routes leading to the Yemen. The route started at Najrān and then went via al-Kawkab, al-Ḥafr, al-‘Aqīq, al-Muqtarib, al-Falaj, al-Kharj, al-Khiḍramah, al-Faqī then to Basra.⁷⁵³

As for the western Arabian routes, the most important of these were the routes extending from Bilād al-Shām to the Yemen. The Arabs in pre-Islamic time used

⁷⁴⁶ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 183-184.

⁷⁴⁷ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 185.

⁷⁴⁸ Iṣfahānī, *Bilād al-‘Arab*, 233; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 589, 617.

⁷⁴⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 258; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 510.

⁷⁵⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 265; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1298; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 348, 351, 573, 647.

⁷⁵¹ Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 193.

⁷⁵² Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 152.

⁷⁵³ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 166.

to go to Damascus for trade, although some of them would stop at Buṣra and then return. Others would go on to Gaza and we have seen earlier that Hāshim died at Gaza during one of his commercial journeys there. The Damascus route started at al-Kiswah and then went via Jāsim⁷⁵⁴ to Fīq in the provinces of Ḥawrān⁷⁵⁵ and from there to Zarqā' (the second largest city in Jordan in the present day), and then to al-Qaṣṭal,⁷⁵⁶ Ma'ān,⁷⁵⁷ Dhāt al-Mathīr,⁷⁵⁸ al-Mughīthah,⁷⁵⁹ Sarqh⁷⁶⁰ and Tabūk.⁷⁶¹ From Tabūk, the route went via al-Muḥdathah,⁷⁶² al-Aqra',⁷⁶³ al-Junaynah,⁷⁶⁴ on to al-Ḥijr, present day Madā'in Ṣāliḥ⁷⁶⁵ which, according to tradition, is the site of the ruins of the people of Thamūd. The Qurān alludes to this in Sūrah XV, 80. The route then proceeded through Wadi al-Qurā,⁷⁶⁶ al-Ruḥaybah,⁷⁶⁷ Dhī al-Marwah, Murr, al-Suwaydā' and Dhū Khushub,⁷⁶⁸ which is a wadi a night's journey away from Medina. An alternative route extended from Aylah⁷⁶⁹ to Ḥaql⁷⁷⁰ via

⁷⁵⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 78; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, VIII, 228.

⁷⁵⁵ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 317; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, II, 474; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 206.

⁷⁵⁶ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, IV, 347; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, III, 1074, IV, 1280.

⁷⁵⁷ Al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653.

⁷⁵⁸ Al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653.

⁷⁵⁹ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, V, 162; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, IV, 1248, III, 1016; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, ?, 211-212; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, III, 735.

⁷⁶¹ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 14-15; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, I, 303; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 130-131; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 20.

⁷⁶² Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, V, 60; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653.

⁷⁶³ Al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 173.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 220; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, II, 426; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 189.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 19; Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 83. Cf. al-Jāsir, *al-Jazīrah*, 150, 192, 210, 261, 388, 435.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; Ibn Rustah, *Aʿlāq*, 183.

⁷⁶⁸ Al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 650, 656; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; Ibn Rustah, *Aʿlāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁶⁹ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, I, 292; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, I, 216; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 532, 535, 649, 651; Ibn Rustah, *Aʿlāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷⁰ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, V, 162, 278. Cf. al-Jāsir, *al-Jazīrah*, 47, 52, 54, 428, 449 etc.

Madyan,⁷⁷¹ al-Ughrā',⁷⁷² al-Kilābah⁷⁷³ Shaghab,⁷⁷⁴ Badā⁷⁷⁵ and from Badā the route continued towards al-Sarḥatayn,⁷⁷⁶ al-Bayḍā',⁷⁷⁷ Wadi al-Qurā, al-Ruḥaybah, Dhū al-Marwah,⁷⁷⁸ al-Murr,⁷⁷⁹ al-Suwaydā',⁷⁸⁰ Dhū Khushub, Medina, and thence to Mecca.

The Egyptian pilgrims would have taken this route had they come by land.⁷⁸¹ There was also a coastal route which the Egyptian pilgrims took, starting at Sharf al-Ba'ī⁷⁸² and then going via al-Ṣalā,⁷⁸³ al-Nabk,⁷⁸⁴ Ḍubah,⁷⁸⁵ 'Unayd,⁷⁸⁶ al-Wajh, Mankhūs, al-Baḥrah, al-Iḥsā',⁷⁸⁷ Yanbu',⁷⁸⁸ Mas'ūlān,⁷⁸⁹ al-Jār⁷⁹⁰ (which is a port of Medina on the Red Sea) and from al-Jār to Medina. As for the Mecca – al-Ṭā'if

⁷⁷¹ Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1201; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 77-78; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 20; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷² Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷³ Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 356; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, I, 230; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 650, 652; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 650; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 529-530; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 464, 465; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 183; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, 190.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 150; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, 183; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 286; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, 767; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 651.

⁷⁸¹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 149; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, 190.

⁷⁸² al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 649; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 190-191.

⁷⁸³ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 191.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 191; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 651.

⁷⁸⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 452.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 191; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 652.

⁷⁸⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 111-112; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 652.

⁷⁸⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 449-450; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 191; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 338, 406, 413; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1402.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 191.

⁷⁹⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 92-93; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 355-356; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 191; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 83; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 419, 420, 458; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 78. Cf. al-Jāsir, *al-Jazīrah*, 167f.

route,⁷⁹¹ this began at Mecca and then went on to Bi'r Ibn al-Murtafi', Qarn al-Manāzil,⁷⁹² a halting point for pilgrims from the Yemen and al-Ṭā'if, and then to al-Ṭā'if. Between Mecca and al-Ṭā'if was a place called Nakhlah⁷⁹³ to which the Prophet sent a military detachment headed by 'Abdallāh b. Jahsh to observe the Quraysh caravan, which passed by this place carrying raisins, leather, alcohol and other items. The detachment captured the caravan and returned to Medina taking two captives who were guarding the caravan. This was known in the traditions as the Nakhlah raid which took place in 2/634.⁷⁹⁴

8.1.3 The route to the Yemen

The people of Mecca on their return journey to the Yemen took many routes. Some of these followed the line of the coast and some passed inland. Among these routes was one which started at Mecca and then went via Bi'r b. al-Murtafi', Qarn al-Manāzil, al-Futuq,⁷⁹⁵ Ṣafn,⁷⁹⁶ Turbah,⁷⁹⁷ Karā,⁷⁹⁸ Ranyah,⁷⁹⁹ Tabālah,⁸⁰⁰ Bīshat

⁷⁹¹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 8-12; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 143; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 346, 349, 350-353; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 17, 22, 31-32; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 19.

⁷⁹² Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 1077; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 353, 614, 640, 654; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 143.

⁷⁹³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 277; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1304; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 143; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 654; Ibn Rustah, *A'lāq*, VII, 316; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 576.

⁷⁹⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 410; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 59; Wāqidī, *Maqḥāzī*, I, 13.

⁷⁹⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 235; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 645; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 645, 649.

⁷⁹⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 21; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 653; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 308.

⁷⁹⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 442; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 509, 644-645.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134.

⁸⁰⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 9; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, I, 301; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 284, 644, 648; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134.

Bu‘ṭān,⁸⁰¹ Jusadā’,⁸⁰² Banāt Ḥarb,⁸⁰³ Yabambam,⁸⁰⁴ Kutnah,⁸⁰⁵ al-Thujjah,⁸⁰⁶ Sarūm Rāḥ,⁸⁰⁷ al-Mahjarah,⁸⁰⁸ ‘Arīqah,⁸⁰⁹ Ṣa‘dah,⁸¹⁰ al-A‘mashiyyah,⁸¹¹ Khaywān,⁸¹² Raydah⁸¹³ and from Raydah to Uthāfit,⁸¹⁴ and from Uthāfit to Ṣan‘ā’.⁸¹⁵ Some sources⁸¹⁶ mention that the people of Ṣan‘ā’, when travelling to Mecca, would take the following route: al-Riḥābah,⁸¹⁷ Rāfidah,⁸¹⁸ Khaywān, Ṣa‘dah, al-Naḍḥ,⁸¹⁹ al-Qaṣabah,⁸²⁰ al-Thujjah, Kutnah, Banāt Ḥarb, Jusadā’, Bīshah, Tabālah, Ranyah, al-Za‘rā’, Ṣafn, al-Futuq, Bustān B. ‘Āmir from there to Mecca.⁸²¹

8.1.4 The coastal route between the Yemen and Mecca

Al-Hamdānī⁸²² mentions another route linking Ṣan‘ā’ with Mecca. From Ṣan‘ā’

⁸⁰¹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 134; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644.

⁸⁰² Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 140.

⁸⁰³ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644, 648.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 427; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644 (Yabanbam).

⁸⁰⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 74; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 229.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135.

⁸¹⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 406; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 832; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 135; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 643; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 360; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 24.

⁸¹¹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 136.

⁸¹² Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 415; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 528; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 643; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 136.

⁸¹³ See Eagle, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 107, 149.

⁸¹⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 136; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 643; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 189; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, V, 44. Cf. Eagle, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 60, 108.

⁸¹⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 136.

⁸¹⁶ See, for example, Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 186; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 192.

⁸¹⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 32; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 643; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 643, 646.

⁸¹⁸ Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 192; Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 186.

⁸¹⁹ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 186.

⁸²⁰ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 186; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 192.

⁸²¹ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 186; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, 192.

⁸²² Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

the traveller passes through al-Bawn,⁸²³ al-Mawbad,⁸²⁴ the town Asfal of al-Qarqah, Akhraf, al-Ṣarjah,⁸²⁵ Ra's al-Shaqīqah,⁸²⁶ Ḥarad,⁸²⁷ al-Khaṣūf,⁸²⁸ al-Hajar,⁸²⁹ 'Ath-ar,⁸³⁰ Bayḍ,⁸³¹ Zanīf,⁸³² Ḍankān,⁸³³ al-Mu'ammad,⁸³⁴ Ḥaly,⁸³⁵ al-Jaww,⁸³⁶ al-Juwayniyyah,⁸³⁷ Dawqah,⁸³⁸ al-Sirrayn,⁸³⁹ al-Mu'jiz,⁸⁴⁰ al-Khayāl,⁸⁴¹ Yalamlam,⁸⁴² Malikān⁸⁴³ and finally Mecca. Al-Hamdānī adds that this was the coastal route (*ṭarīq al-ṣāhil*).⁸⁴⁴

Ibn Khurdādhbeh mentions a coastal route linking Oman with Mecca; this was the route taken by Muslims to reach Oman.⁸⁴⁵ The route started in Oman, passed through Farq and then went via 'Awkalān,⁸⁴⁶ to the coast of Hubah⁸⁴⁷ passing

⁸²³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 511; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, 285; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646; Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸²⁴ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸²⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 207.

⁸²⁶ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸²⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 243; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, II, 439; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 422, 646.

⁸²⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 376; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸²⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 393.

⁸³⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 84; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 921; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸³¹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 531; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸³² Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸³³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 464; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, III, 882; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸³⁴ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸³⁵ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸³⁶ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸³⁷ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸³⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 485; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸³⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 219; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸⁴⁰ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸⁴¹ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸⁴² Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 441; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1398; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 149, 192.

⁸⁴³ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 149; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, V, 194; Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, IV, 1256; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 646.

⁸⁴⁴ Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, 188.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147. See also Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 28.

⁸⁴⁶ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 169.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

through al-Shiḥr,⁸⁴⁸ Mikhlāf Kindah,⁸⁴⁹ Mikhlāf ‘Abdallāh b. Madhḥij,⁸⁵⁰ Mikhlāf Laḥj,⁸⁵¹ ‘Adan Abyan,⁸⁵² Maqhaḍ (or Maqhaṣ),⁸⁵³ al-Lu’lu’,⁸⁵⁴ Mikhlāf B. Majīd,⁸⁵⁵ al-Manjalah,⁸⁵⁶ Mikhlāf al-Rakb,⁸⁵⁷ al-Mandab,⁸⁵⁸ Mikhlāf Zabīd,⁸⁵⁹ Ghulāfiqah,⁸⁶⁰ Mikhlāf ‘Akk,⁸⁶¹ al-Ḥardah,⁸⁶² Mikhlāf Ḥakam,⁸⁶³ ‘Atr, Marsā Ḍankān, Marsa Ḥaly, al-Sirrayn,⁸⁶⁴ Aghār,⁸⁶⁵ al-Hirjāb,⁸⁶⁶ al-Shu‘aybah⁸⁶⁷ and finally Mecca. Ibn Khurdādhbeh⁸⁶⁸ also describes the coastal route from Basra to Oman, starting at Basra and then going through ‘Abādān,⁸⁶⁹ al-Ḥudūthah,⁸⁷⁰ ‘Arfajā,⁸⁷¹ al-Zāb-

⁸⁴⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 327; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 783; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 78; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 532, 534, 536; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 338.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 67.

⁸⁵² Also called Mikhlāf Abyan, see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 67.; Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 70.

⁸⁵³ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁵⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 209; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1269.

⁸⁵⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 70.

⁸⁶⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 208.

⁸⁶¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, 142; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 962.

⁸⁶² Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 240.

⁸⁶³ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 147.

⁸⁶⁶ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 397; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1350; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 644.

⁸⁶⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 350; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 802; al-Ḥarbī, *Manāsik*, 487, cf. al-Jāsir, *al-Jazīrah*, 172-177.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 59-60.

⁸⁶⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 74; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 916.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60.

⁸⁷¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 105; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 933.

ūqah,⁸⁷² al-Miqarr,⁸⁷³ ‘Aṣā,⁸⁷⁴ al-Mu‘arras,⁸⁷⁵ Khulayjah,⁸⁷⁶ Ḥiṣān,⁸⁷⁷ al-Qurā,⁸⁷⁸ Musayliḥah,⁸⁷⁹ Ḥamaḍ,⁸⁸⁰ the coast of Hajar,⁸⁸¹ al-‘Uqayr,⁸⁸² Qaṭar,⁸⁸³ al-Sabkhah,⁸⁸⁴ and finally Oman. Ibn Khurdādhbeh adds Oman is Ṣuḥār⁸⁸⁵ and Dibā.⁸⁸⁶

8.2 The Caravans

Apart from the sea trade, there was also a need to transport goods by land. This was by caravan (*qāfilah*) which was also referred to by the name of ‘*iyr*. The sources use this latter name for the Quraysh caravan headed by Abū Sufyān.⁸⁸⁷ The historical and *sīrah* sources use this word for the Quraysh caravan, without confining it to the trade caravan. When they mention the squadron of Ḥamzah b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib to al-‘Īṣ they use this word for the caravan of Quraysh.⁸⁸⁸ They also use the expression on other occasions, which indicates that they meant by it a caravan, i.e. a travelling convoy, whatever its load might be.

⁸⁷² Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 125; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 691.

⁸⁷³ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 175.

⁸⁷⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 128.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60.

⁸⁷⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 258.

⁸⁷⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 258.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Masālik*, 60.

⁸⁸⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 305; Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 468.

⁸⁸¹ Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 1346; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, V, 393.

⁸⁸² Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 138.

⁸⁸³ Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 1082; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, IV, 372; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 465; al-Andalusī, *BSt*, 36.

⁸⁸⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, III, 183.

⁸⁸⁵ Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, III, 825; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, 393; Hamadhānī, *Buldān*, 11; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 354; Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 70.

⁸⁸⁶ Bakrī, *Mu‘jam*, II, 539; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, II, 435; al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ*, 232; Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 71.

⁸⁸⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 421; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 198; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 244; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 6f.

⁸⁸⁸ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 9.

The caravan which carried perfumes was called *laṭīmah*.⁸⁸⁹ As mentioned earlier, the kings of al-Ḥīrah used to send caravans of perfumes to some of the pre-Islamic markets. Among them was al-Nu‘mān b. Mundhir, who used to send his perfume caravans to the market of ‘Ukāz.⁸⁹⁰

It was not easy in those days for the merchants to extend their trade and seek commercial opportunities in far-off lands. This was because of the fear of pirates and thieves who lived off looting. Therefore a merchant needed protection for his life and wealth and this was only possible under a strong civil government which protected its own citizens and outsiders alike from aggression. For this reason it became necessary for the traders to organise the caravan system. No doubt the large strong caravans were at first dependent on their own devices for protection, and so traders aimed to please tribal leaders in order to secure their protection in the region through which the caravan passed. The tribal leaders levied taxes in exchange for this protection.⁸⁹¹ Meccan traders, as mentioned earlier, adopted various methods of pleasing tribal leaders through whose region their caravans passed. Among such methods were the giving of money, offering tribal leaders a share in the capital, carrying tribal goods, doing business on their behalf, as well as giving them gifts and inviting them to visit Mecca. All this was known in Arabic as *ilāf*.⁸⁹²

Ibn Ḥabīb provides some insight into those securing protection in the following text: ‘Any trader going from the Yemen or the Ḥijāz was protected by Quraysh, as long as he was travelling in the region of Muḍar; for Muḍar did not harass

⁸⁸⁹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, XII, 543; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, IX, 60.

⁸⁹⁰ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 19, 75; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 359.

⁸⁹¹ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 319.

⁸⁹² See above pp.000

Muḍarī merchants, nor were the latter troubled by an ally of Muḍar. This was an agreement between them, so Kalb did not frighten them because of their allegiance with B. Tamīm. Ṭayy' also did not harass traders because of its alliance with B. Asad. Muḍar would say "Quraysh have provided protection for us because of what we inherited from Ismā'īl, [i.e. religion]". When they went to Iraq they sought the protection of B. 'Amr b. Murthid from B. Qays b. Tha'labah. All this was taken care of by Rabī'ah.⁸⁹³

Camels were the only means of transport in the Arabian Peninsula. No other animal is able to tolerate the rigours, travelling long distances in sparsely populated areas where water and vegetation were scarce. There is mention in the Torah about the large camel caravans which came to Bilād al-Shām from the Arabian Peninsula carrying precious and rare commodities; because these caravans were of great importance, and a significant source of wealth,⁸⁹⁴ its owners would put them under the protection of their own gods; some adopted a special god for the sole purpose of protecting the caravan and its safe arrival at its destiny. This god was known to the people as *shī'at al-qawm*, because it was the god of caravans. The caravan owners would offer vows and immolations at the end of the journey. They also visited temples to circumambulate them, offering thanks to their idols because of their belief that they had blessed them with great profit in their trade. What the traditions relate about the heads of the Meccan caravans and their circumambulation of the Ka'bah at the beginning and the end of their journey, is the best indication of the importance of these commercial journeys.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 264-265

⁸⁹⁴ *I Kings*, Chapter X, 2; *Isaiah*, Chapter LV, 6.

⁸⁹⁵ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 320.

8.2.1 Guarding the Caravans

Guarding of the caravans would mostly be entrusted from the day of departure to strong guards carrying their own weapons to counter aggression. The leadership of the caravans was only given to people known for their bravery and strength and their knowledge of the routes and to those with nobility and a good reputation among the tribes. Because of the importance of the leaders of the caravans, statues were erected in their memory, a number of which have been found in Palmyra. In some inscriptions the head of the caravan was referred to either as chief of the caravan or leader of the market (*za'īm al-sūq*).⁸⁹⁶ We also find that even government leaders such as the emperor of Persia and the kings of al-Ḥīrah only entrusted the leadership of their caravans to the strongest people. They traded in local markets and those under their domain, until the season for the Arab markets arrived when they would send forth their caravan under a person famed for his bravery, to take it safely to the intended market.⁸⁹⁷ The caravans depended on guides knowledgeable of the routes needed to reach the destination in the shortest time avoiding the danger of being attacked and the perils of highway robbers. This was due mainly to the fact that, if they took the normal route, they would be attacked. We know how Abū Sufyān changed his route when he heard that the Muslims wanted to attack his caravan. He sought help from the guides and took the coastal route, avoiding Badr and thus succeeding in his plan.⁸⁹⁸

The caravan needed a place to rest and to take water and provisions. Bearing in mind that the animals travelled slowly and their inability to continue for long periods, the stopping places (*manāzil*) in those days were not far apart. This

⁸⁹⁶ Cooke, *Inscriptions*, 273-274.

⁸⁹⁷ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 323.

⁸⁹⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, III, 405.

expression was well known in Islam. It was applied to a resting place specifically for travellers on the road and in villages and towns. In the pre-Islamic era these resting places were not exactly built, but rather travellers put up their tents or rested in the shade of trees to avoid the heat of the sun. All that mattered about the resting place was that it should have water. Kings and tribal leaders, through whose region of influence the caravans passed, or those in whose land the markets were held, levied taxes, which were on the whole high. These were either taken in the markets when they were held, or whenever the caravan passed through tribal land. This led the traders in turn to raise their prices. In the pre-Islamic era people marked the route with stones. This method was called *ṣuwwah* or *thawwah*. This was done by putting down stones in the desert to indicate the route.⁸⁹⁹

The leaders of the caravans knew the distances and the places where they could stop and get food supplies. Traditions tell us about the names and distances between these resting places. We also find that the bedouins had an amazing knowledge of the places where water could be found and of the routes. This was due to experience accumulated during many journeys.⁹⁰⁰

The routes became a source of income and livelihood for the beggars (*ṣa'ālīk*).⁹⁰¹ These people were those turned away by the tribes, or who had been expelled by their families. They formed guerilla units waiting to attack passing caravans and they took what they looted off to far and isolated places. They were known as highwaymen (*luṣūṣ al-ṭuruq*) and, when Islam came, some of these people remained, mostly from Kinānah, Mazīnah, al-Ḥakam and al-Qārah and those slaves who followed them. They took refuge on Mount Tihāmah and harrassed people passing

⁸⁹⁹ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, X, 215.

⁹⁰⁰ ʿAlī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 328.

⁹⁰¹ Thaʿālibī, *Thimār*, 89.

through. The Prophet wrote to them telling them that, if they were to become Muslims, their slaves would be freed but what they had taken would not be taken away from them.⁹⁰²

⁹⁰² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 287.

Chapter IX

Meccan trade and commercial practices

9.1 Commercial Practices

We must now look at some of the commercial practices practised by Arab merchants in pre-Islamic days. These practices have continued to be associated with trade throughout the ages.

9.1.1 Monopolisation

Among these practices was 'monopolisation', whereby the capitalist would go down to the market and buy everything which he saw as being potentially profitable. He would consequently store it and sell it, profiteering in time of famine or disease when he would obtain a higher price.

Rich merchants would buy the whole of the caravan and monopolize it to sell it at a time of great need, or store it up and sell it in parts, for profit. Also there were merchants who would meet the caravans, before they reached the market, and buy all that they had so that no one could compete for the profit,⁹⁰³ thereby harming the merchants and the consumers.

One way of monopolization was by urban merchants going out and meeting the bedouin merchants before they reached the market. The urban merchants would then buy the bedouins' goods at a lower price than would have been realised at

⁹⁰³ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IV, 624; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 399.

the market, then sell them at a higher price in the markets themselves.⁹⁰⁴

9.1.2 Debt

Amongst the practices which were connected with trade in different ages was debt. Debt played an important role in general life and in the economy, particularly because of the necessity of dealing by debt. Capitalists borrowed from each other to run their financial affairs and to increase their capital by loans. These amounts were then invested to gain greater profit. It was difficult to pay back the loan or to recover it, due to the bad economic situation which surrounded the debtor.⁹⁰⁵ The Qur'ān mentions debt in the following verse:

'O Ye who believe, when you contract a debt one upon another for a stated term, write it down; let someone who is able to write, write it down justly between you.'⁹⁰⁶

9.1.3 Partnership

Another practice connected with trade known to people in the pre-Islamic era, was partnership. The people participated by capitals of partnership in sale by shares of half or a specified amount. It is known that most Meccan people had a share in the trade with the Yemen and Syria. Thus the caravan that they despatched was enormous, reaching about one thousand camels. We have seen that every man of Quraysh had participated in the caravan led by Abū Sufyān to Syria. 50,000 dinars are said to have been invested in it; most of it belonging to the family of Sa'īd B. al-'Āṣ. The Makhzūm are said to have had 200 camels

⁹⁰⁴ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 400.

⁹⁰⁵ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 405.

⁹⁰⁶ Qur'ān, II, 283.

and 4000 to 5000 *mithqāl* of gold invested in it, al-Ḥārith b. ‘Āmir b. Nawfal had 1000 *mithqāl*, Umayyah b. Khalīf had 2000 *mithqāl* and B. ‘Abd Manāf 10,000 *mithqāl*. The market destination of this caravan was Gaza.⁹⁰⁷ We find, in various sources, some examples of partnership to undertake trade activities in different parts of the Arabian Peninsula.⁹⁰⁸ We get some names of partnerships from these sources, including Nawfal b. al-Ḥārith b. Hāshim, who had a partnership with al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib; al-Sā’ib b. Sayfī had a partnership with the Prophet to trade with the Yemen.⁹⁰⁹ Mirdās b. Abī ‘Āmir had a partnership with Ḥarb b. Umayyah⁹¹⁰ and al-‘Abbās b. Anas had a partnership with ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.⁹¹¹ Also al-Birā’ b. ‘Āzib had a partnership in the exchange *ṣayrafah* which involved exchanging gold for gold and silver for silver.⁹¹²

The Meccan people agreed among themselves to set up companies. They also participated with others to set up companies. Branches were set up in places undertaken by non-Meccan participants and they participated with Yemenis. They also set up branches in the localities of the participants where they bought, sold and divided the profit or the loss according to pre-arranged agreement.⁹¹³ They also participated with the people of al-Ḥīrah, as they used to send their trade to be sold in the Ḥīrah markets and the people of al-Ḥīrah did the same with their trade in return. The profit or loss was then divided accordingly. For example Ka’b b. ‘Adī al-Tanūkhī al-Ḥīrī was in partnership with ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. They

⁹⁰⁷ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, 27-28. Cf. Sprenger, *Mehammed*, 96; Wolf, ‘The social organization’, 333.

⁹⁰⁸ Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, IX, 18.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, II, 10.

⁹¹⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, II, 263.

⁹¹¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, II, 262.

⁹¹² ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 407.

⁹¹³ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 408.

traded in cloth (*bazz*).⁹¹⁴

Quraysh, as mentioned above in the *ilāf* section,⁹¹⁵ involved the tribal leaders in their trade to gain their support and to protect their trade caravan from being looted. They also gave them their share of the profit. This was a wise decision by Quraysh which encouraged the leaders of the tribes to come to Mecca and make contracts with traders. This boosted Meccan trade and increased their capital.

9.1.4 Types of Partnerships

The *fuqahā'* have divided partnership in trade into two categories: limited partnership (*sharikat al-'inān*) and unlimited partnership of trust (*sharikat al-tafwīd*).⁹¹⁶

Limited partnership is where both parties put some capital together and each one is permitted to trade from that capital. If there is profit it will be shared between them and the loss will be adjusted according to the level of capital each one of them has invested. It is called thus because of the equal amount of both their capital, and the role of each one in selling and buying. This kind of partnership has been referred to in a verse ascribed to al-Nābighah al-Ja'dī:

وشاركنا قريش في ثقاتها وفي أحسابها شرك العنان

'We entered into a limited partnership with Quraysh

in their devotions and and their accounts.'⁹¹⁷

⁹¹⁴ Ibn Hajar, *Iṣābah*, III, 282.

⁹¹⁵ See above p.74.

⁹¹⁶ Qaṣṭalānī, *Irshād al-Sārī*, IV, 281; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, III, 111.

⁹¹⁷ al-Nabighah, *Shi'r*, 164. In principle, Muslim *fuqahā'* and economists in the present day argue that Islamic banking can be established on the principles of the *'inān* partnership (based on capital). Under this form of business, two or more persons participate in an enterprise with a fixed amount

Unlimited partnership is where the parties share all their holdings. Therefore unlimited partnership is general, including all possessions, whereas limited partnership is a sharing of one thing only. Unlimited partnership also means equality amongst the participants, i.e. in all their possessions. A participant is also called an associate or partner. The Qur'ān refers to this meaning as follows:-

He said, 'Surely he has been unjust to you in demanding your ewe [to add] to his own ewes; and most surely most partners act wrongfully towards one another'.⁹¹⁸

'Partners' here mean those who have mixed their capitals.⁹¹⁹ It has already been mentioned that the sources indicate that Quraysh merchants all practised this type of trade.⁹²⁰

9.1.5 Proxy

Along with partnership, the Arabs, in pre-Islamic days, also had proxy dealings. Proxy is known thus because a merchant chooses someone to act on his behalf. This person then has the authority to conduct trade as the owner of the capital,⁹²¹ and whatever contracts are made by him, the original owner⁹²² is also bound. Proxy may be in things other than trade, such as looking after the family or protecting the house during the owners' absence, also protecting capital or dealing in it. For example 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf wrote to Umayyah b. Khalaf to ask him to look after his properties in Mecca, as he would look after Umayyah's property

of capital, agreeing that they will work jointly and share in the profit or loss proportionately. Cf. Shallāḥ, *Islamic banking*, 120.

⁹¹⁸ Qur'ān, XXXVIII, 24.

⁹¹⁹ See Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXIII, 92; Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, XV, 179.

⁹²⁰ Tha'ālibī, *Thimār*, 9-10.

⁹²¹ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, VIII, 159. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, 412.

⁹²² Qaṣṭalānī, *Irshād al-Sārī*, IV, 155.

in Medina.⁹²³

The representatives would be entrusted to sign contracts, treaties and peace conditions on their behalf. When a Hawāzin delegation came to the Prophet to ask him to return their children and possessions captured, the Prophet asked those Companions who had taken part in the fighting about the return of the captives. They also gave him their permission to deal as he pleased. But he said that there may be those among them who were representatives of others. So he asked them to go and enquire from them about it. They went and asked those who had made them representatives. They, in turn, agreed and left the matter regarding the captives in the Prophet's hands.⁹²⁴

9.1.6 Brokerage (*samsarah*)

As known in the pre-Islamic days these are the agents or the middle men who act among the merchants.⁹²⁵ They were also known by the term *dallāl*, because they would show (*dalla*) the buyer the commodity and the seller the price. Among the ways of dealing through these brokers were that the owners would, say, sell such and such a commodity for so much and offer whatever the broker could raise above that to him. They might also leave the price up to the agent, to sell according to his expertise and persuasive ability. After the sale, the owner would pay him his dues.⁹²⁶ Most of these brokers made a good profit. Those who looked after affairs of the bedouins and sold goods on their behalf as their representatives would no doubt deprive them of their rights and would take more than their rightful share of the profit, knowing the ignorance of the bedouins of market dealings and trade

⁹²³ Qaṣṭalānī, *Irshād al-Sārī*, IV, 156.

⁹²⁴ Qaṣṭalānī, *Irshād al-Sārī*, IV, 161.

⁹²⁵ See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IV, 380.

⁹²⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, IV, 380; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, III, 280.

in general.⁹²⁷

9.1.7 Usury (*ribā*)

Amongst the means of investing wealth in pre-Islamic era was that for interest. The practice was called *ribā*. This literally means 'increase' (*ziyādah*) and 'growth' (*namā*).⁹²⁸ In the *sharī'ah* there is no agreement among the ulema of the different schools of *fiqh* (*madhāhib*) on a single definition of *ribā*. Nevertheless, *ribā* technically refers to 'the premium that must be paid by the borrower to the tenderer, along with the original amount, as a condition for the loan or for an extension in its maturity.'⁹²⁹ In this sense *ribā* contains three elements; an increase over the principle amount of a loan, determination of this increase in relation to time, and stipulation of this increase in the loan agreement.⁹³⁰

People in pre-Islamic times used to add to the debt and let the debtor pay after the agreed term in return for an increase on the capital. It was customary amongst these people to calculate the interest at the end of the year. If the creditor was not paid part of the original debt, then the interest was carried to the following year on the basis of the original capital along with the first year's interest. If the debtor was unable to pay and wanted to delay for another year he would be charged interest on the new sum comprising of the original sum and the first year's interest. Usury also encompassed food or grain and was prevalent among the bedouins, because of the lack of cash.⁹³¹ They would lend a measure (*ṣā'*) of grain and get back one and half. As for people with capital in cash, they charged twice the original

⁹²⁷ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 412.

⁹²⁸ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 304-307. Cf. Aḥmad, 'The Qur'ānic theory', 3-4.

⁹²⁹ Chapra, *Monetary system*, 56-57.

⁹³⁰ Shallāh, *Islamic banking*, 61.

⁹³¹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 424.

amount. This also occurred with gold and silver.⁹³² This whole form of lending was extremely unjust and in it the creditor exploited the need of the debtor for cash.⁹³³

Creditors saw usury as a type of trade, because it involved acceptance (*ijāb wa-qubūl*) from both sides. When the Qur'ān prohibited usury, the users were amazed as they considered it a permissible trade. Their analogy is apparent from the following verse:-

‘Those who swallow usury cannot rise up, save as he ariseth whom the devil hath prostrated by [his] touch. That is because they say: Trade is just usury; whereas Allāh permitteth trading and forbiddeth usury.’⁹³⁴

The Jews were notorious for usury, to which the Qur'ān again refers in the following verses:-

‘And their taking usury, though indeed they were forbidden it, and their devouring the property of people falsely.’⁹³⁵

Mecca was a commercial city and had dealings in usury on a large scale, but when it was prohibited by the Qur'ān, the Meccans furiously rose against it. The people of al-Ṭā'if and Najrān had similar dealings. Anyone wanting to invest and increase his capital practised usury. This was due mainly to the lack of any industry in which to invest. Poor economic circumstances, the nature of desert land, and the shortage of rain did not help people with agricultural projects to invest their capital in them. All this led the people with capital to lend it out and

⁹³² Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 42.

⁹³³ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 42; c.f. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 425.

⁹³⁴ Qur'ān, II, 275.

⁹³⁵ Qur'ān, IV, 161.

benefit from the interest gained. The prohibition of usury by the Qur'ān thus fell particularly hard on the rich. The commentators of the Qur'ān mention that the following verse 'O Ye Who have believed, show piety towards Allāh, and abandon the usury which remains (unpaid), if you are believers',⁹³⁶ was revealed concerning 'Abbās b. Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his partner from B. al-Mughīrah. They lent on the basis of usury to B. 'Amr of Thaqīf and they gained much wealth through it.⁹³⁷ The widespread practice of usury in the life of pre-Islamic people and its role in wealth creation can be estimated from the following incident. When a delegation of Thaqīf came to the Prophet to discuss the possibility of their embracing Islam, their spokesman said to the Prophet, 'What do you say about usury?' The Prophet replied that it was prohibited. They said, 'But all our wealth is based on usury', whereupon the Prophet said, 'You have the capital'.⁹³⁸ Thaqīf then agreed with the Prophet that all money that they owed or that people owed them would be written off.⁹³⁹ Thaqīf and anyone else having dealings with usury were compelled to abandon it and just take their capital. This resulted in great loss for them. In place of usury, the Qur'ān introduced an interest free loan (*qard ḥasan*), the date of repayment of which was unstipulated.⁹⁴⁰

Abū Lahab was among the most wealthy usurers of Mecca. It is reported that he lent 4,000 dirhams to al-'Āṣī b. Hishām, when the battle of Badr took place; Abū Lahab was not among the Quraysh who went to war. Al-'Āṣī became bankrupt and was unable to pay back the debt, including the interest. He renounced his

⁹³⁶ Qur'ān, II, 278.

⁹³⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, III, 71.

⁹³⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 492.

⁹³⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, III, 71.

⁹⁴⁰ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 430.

debt on condition that al-‘Āṣī went to Badr on his behalf.⁹⁴¹

The people of Yathrib borrowed from the Jews at high rates of interest. It is reported that an Anṣārī borrowed 80 dinars from a Jew and in return paid interest amounting to 50 per cent of the borrowed sum for one year.⁹⁴² The Qur’ān reprimanded them for taking usury and taking people’s wealth wrongfully.⁹⁴³

9.1.8 Commercial commodities

It is well known that Mecca was a barren place with no products of its own. Therefore it imported or transferred commodities from the Yemen which means that they brought into Mecca not only Yemeni goods, but also those of India and the Far East. It is probable that the famous summer and winter journeys of Quraysh, to which the Qur’ān alludes, would have been timed to coincide with the arrival of the India trade fleet in the south. We do not know at which points, or even whether, the Quraysh caravan route ran along the Tihāmah coast or by the interior east of the mountains. Goods travelling such distances overland would surely be light in weight, high in value, to ensure a profit. Tribal insecurity or piracy at sea could affect the commercial viability of land or sea routes.⁹⁴⁴ The Meccans then took these commodities to Syria and transported Syrian commodities to the Yemen and Abyssinia. They also imported and exported the commodities of surrounding areas.

We will now look at the most important commodities. Silk was imported from China via the Yemen.⁹⁴⁵ This was then transported to Syria and Iraq. It is likely

⁹⁴¹ Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ*, II, 62.

⁹⁴² Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 50.

⁹⁴³ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 17f.

⁹⁴⁴ See Simon, *Trade*, 91.

⁹⁴⁵ Maqdisī, *Taqāsīm*, 97.

that silk was also produced in the Yemen. We have already seen that al-Nu'mān of al-Ḥīrah would send goods to 'Ukāz and buy Yemeni products in return. The report of the *Aghānī* states that al-Nu'mān bought silk (*ḥarīr*) and striped material (*burūd*) of 'aṣb-cloth, watered silk and striped cloth of Aden (*musayyar 'Adanī*).⁹⁴⁶

India exported spices. The transportation of these goods of course meant a rise in prices, but did not result in these goods losing their importance even up to the end of the seventh century. Gold, precious stones and ivory were also imported from East Africa.⁹⁴⁷ These commodities came first to the Yemeni ports before being transported to Mecca, or probably directly to al-Shu'aybah, the port of Mecca in pre-Islamic times.⁹⁴⁸ Some were sold in Mecca and the rest further transported to Syria. From Persia came the perfumes of musk, ambergris and jewels.⁹⁴⁹

The local commodity of the Arabian Peninsula with which the Meccan merchants traded was firstly leather (*udm*), which was the product of al-Ṭā'if and the Yemen, from Ṣa'dah in particular.⁹⁵⁰ We have seen in the *īlāf* section⁹⁵¹ the account of Hāshim's meeting with the Byzantine emperor (or perhaps a representative, a local official). Hāshim asked for a document guaranteeing security to them and their merchandise so that they could bring him 'what is deemed choice/rare of the leather and cloth (*thiyāb*) of the Ḥijāz so that they will be selling it in your country and it will be cheaper for you.'⁹⁵² The Meccan merchants transported it to Syria and Iraq. These leathers were the premier gifts that the Quraysh pre-

⁹⁴⁶ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XIX, 75. See further, Serjeant, 'Meccan trade', 474. See also Serjeant, 'Islamic textiles', *Ars Islamica*, IX, 54-92; X, 71-104; XI, 98-135; XIII-XIV, 75-117.

⁹⁴⁷ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 292; Baydūn, *Īlāf*, 33.

⁹⁴⁸ Ṣālihī, *Subul al-Hudā*, II, 486. Cf. al-Rashīd, 'Ta'āmul al-'Arab', I, 227.

⁹⁴⁹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 292.

⁹⁵⁰ Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 24; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurah*, 36.

⁹⁵¹ See above p.73.

⁹⁵² Qālī, *Dhayl*, 99. See also Serjeant, 'Meccan trade', 475.

sented to kings and tribal leaders. For example, when Abū Sufyān went to Iraq, he presented to the Persian emperor leather and horses.⁹⁵³ Secondly, there were perfumes for which the Yemen was famous and South Arabian frankincense and myrrh.⁹⁵⁴ Among other local products were raisins from al-Ṭāʾif and laudanum and carnelian from the Yemen. It is reported by al-Wāqidī that ʿAbdallāh b. Rabīʿah used to send perfumes to his mother from the Yemen. She used to preserve them in containers and sell them at cash price or credit.⁹⁵⁵ Pearls came from Bahrain. The main commodity that Meccans brought back from Syria was olive oil, in particular from Palestine. It is reported that among the people who used to trade in oil from Syria was Dihyah b. Khalīfah al-Kalbī. In one of his journeys back from Syria to Mecca, his arrival coincided with the time of Friday prayer led by the Prophet himself. While the Prophet was delivering his Friday sermon, the worshippers heard the ringing of the camel bells of the caravan approaching the place. They started to leave the praying place silently to buy their necessities, lest the goods be sold out. Only twelve men and women remained with the Prophet. Hence, the revelation of the following verse to scold them: 'O ye who have believed, when proclamation is made for the prayer on the day of the assembly, endeavour [to come] to the remembrance of Allāh, and leave off bargaining; that is better for you, if ye have knowledge.'⁹⁵⁶ This oil was known as *al-zayt al-rikābī* because it was carried by a camel convoy.⁹⁵⁷ Wheat came from Ḥawran and al-Balqā'. They also brought back wine, slaves, weapons and cloth.⁹⁵⁸ There were various markets in

⁹⁵³ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XII, 46; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, II, 21.

⁹⁵⁴ For the use of these commodities see, Haran, 'Uses of incense', 113-129.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, VIII, 220.

⁹⁵⁶ Qurʾān, LXII, 9. See also Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXVIII, 66ff.; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, IV, 366ff.; Wāḥidī, *Aṣṣāb*, 320.

⁹⁵⁷ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, I, 277; Thaʿālibī, *Thimār*, 422.

⁹⁵⁸ al-Sharīf, *Mecca*, 286.

Syria which attracted goods from Mecca, Egypt and al-Ḥīrah. Buṣrā was the main market for exchanging goods with al-Ḥīrah. Gaza exchanged goods with Egypt.

Now we shall look at the means of transportation of all these commodities. The basic means of travel was by camel. The Meccan and Ḥijāz trade was generally by land. This was because the Arabian people did not have any maritime experience and because of the dangers of passage through the Red Sea. We should also take into account the political situation which caused Meccans to avoid trading by a sea which was an area of conflict between the dominating powers of the west coast. Trade began to decline in the Red Sea from the end of the third century A.D. because of the political fragmentation of the Roman empire and the influence of the nearby Byzantines. Therefore we find that trade was limited to Abyssinian merchants, who had not developed the same navigational skills as the Greeks and Romans. We can see that the Abyssinians were the major merchants during the period of Meccan trade, since they secured communication links between the east and west coasts of the Red Sea. From this resulted the development of several sea ports in western Arabia namely al-Shu‘aybah, Jeddah and al-Jār. The port of al-Shu‘aybah was used to transport goods to Mecca from East Africa. Traditions mention that early Muslims migrated to Abyssinia from al-Shu‘aybah.

9.2 Manifestation of Meccan Trade

9.2.1 Investment of wealth

Meccan traders were able to use investment and capital to their advantage. Therefore we see that they developed and increased. In addition to investing their money in trade they also invested it in other ways, such as lending it to the needy in return for profit, or in silent-partnership (*muḍārabah*) or in credit or loan

(*musālafah*). They also invested in agriculture or manufacturing projects. Some of them had shares in a number of projects, so that if they lost in one project they could compensate for this from the other.⁹⁵⁹

The Meccan trader not only traded with his own wealth, but shared with other Meccans to form the capital for the caravans. So the caravan became a general company in which the wealthy could invest. For example Abū Sufyān used to participate with other traders and also carried out his own private trade. He used to supervise his caravan to al-Ḥīrah. ‘Abbās also distributed his wealth among traders for investment.⁹⁶⁰ The Quraysh traders had dealings with other traders, lending to them and borrowing from them. We find in the traditions names of people from al-Ṭā’if, al-Ḥīrah and the Yemen who invested with Meccan traders. So Meccan traders mixed their capital with these foreigners.⁹⁶¹ They also invested among themselves and with others. This led Tha‘ālibī to describe them as follows, ‘They have all become traders mixed together’. (*wa-ṣārū bi-ajma‘ihim tujjāran khulaṭā*).⁹⁶²

9.2.2 Capitalists

In pre-Islamic time the capitalists were classified as those who engaged in trade and who accumulated wealth from it, or those engaged in agriculture, or those who had camels. The camel was considered capital among the Arabs. It was a standard of wealth among them, or at least among those who had prominent positions. The traditions point to men of the pre-Islamic era and those whose life-span bridged the Jāhiliyyah and Islam (*mukhaḍrams*), whose wealth ran into thousands in cash in

⁹⁵⁹ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 420-421.

⁹⁶⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 17.

⁹⁶¹ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, V, 132.

⁹⁶² Tha‘ālibī, *Thimār*, 9.

addition to camels, farms and property. Among these was ‘Abdallāh b. Jud‘ān.⁹⁶³ It appears that he was extremely wealthy, to the extent that it is stated that he ate from gold plates and drank from silver pots. The use of gold and silver dishes was well known in Mecca. This naturally had a deep psychological effect on the poor who did not even have food to eat. It is understood from the Qur‘ān that among the pagans were people who accumulated gold and silver.

(1) ‘They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it, not in the way of Allāh, unto them give tidings [O Muḥammad] of a painful doom announce to them a painful chastisements.’⁹⁶⁴

(2) ‘The love of the desires, women, sons, hoarded treasures of gold and silver, well-bred horses, cattle and land, is made to seem fair to men; this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allāh is He with whom is the good goal.’⁹⁶⁵

‘Uthmān b. ‘Amr b. Ka‘b from B. Taym b. Murrah⁹⁶⁶ was known as a drinker [from cups] of gold (*shārib al-dhahab*) and was reckoned among the most noble of Quraysh.⁹⁶⁷ The Qur‘ān CXI indicates that Abū Lahab was a wealthy man.⁹⁶⁸ He was the uncle of the Prophet. His name was ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā. Because of his wealth and the number of his children, he was himself amongst the leaders of Quraysh. Therefore it did not befit him to follow his brother’s son, the Prophet, who was younger and less wealthy than him.⁹⁶⁹ Abū Sufyān, as seen earlier, was one of the

⁹⁶³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 138; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 291-293; Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyūn*, I, 335. See below p.192.

⁹⁶⁴ Qur‘ān IX, 34.

⁹⁶⁵ Qur‘ān, III, 14.

⁹⁶⁶ For more details about Taym b. Murrah see Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, 126-131.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 137.

⁹⁶⁸ Qur‘ān, CXI, 1-5.

⁹⁶⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 219.

richest people of Mecca. Quraysh had given him the leadership of its caravan to al-Shām. He traded in silver and leather. It appears that he bought leather from al-Ṭā'if and the Yemen and then transported it to Bilād al-Shām.⁹⁷⁰

‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib likewise was a rich Qurashī. He had large amounts of cash and gold and silver. He invested his wealth in trade and lent for profit or interest. Ṭabarī reports that, after being taken captive at the battle of Badr, he paid a ransom for himself and ‘Aqīl b. Abī Ṭālib and Nawfal b. al-Ḥārith, nephews, and his ally ‘Urwah b. ‘Amr b. Jahdam. The ransom came to twenty pieces (*ūqiyyah*) of gold.⁹⁷¹ His mother also appears to have been very rich. It is mentioned that he was lost in childhood and she vowed to cover the Ka‘bah with silk if he be found. She fulfilled her vow when he was recovered.⁹⁷² Al-Ḥakam b. Abī al-‘Āṣ b. Umayyah b. ‘Abd Shāms was a Meccan trader. He used to take his trade outside Mecca and go to al-Ḥīrah.⁹⁷³

There is an interesting report in *al-Ma‘ārif* entitled ‘The occupation of the noble amongst Quraysh (*Ṣinā‘āt al-Ashrāf*). Most of them were merchants dealing with different commodities. Abū Ṭālib was a merchant of perfumes and wheat; Abū Bakr, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, Ṭalhah and ‘Abdu’l Raḥmān b. ‘Awf were dealers in cloth (sing. *bazzāz*). Umayyah b. Khalaf, the *sayyid* of B. Sahm, was a dealer in stone pots, while the wealthy ‘Abdullāh b. Jud‘ān, the *sayyid* of B. Taym, was a slave trader. Some of these *sayyids* were said to be arrow-makers, tailors, butchers, blacksmiths and carpenters.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁷⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, III, 237-238; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahthīb*, IV, 411.

⁹⁷¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 466.

⁹⁷² Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, II, 263.

⁹⁷³ ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 442.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma‘ārif*, 249-250.

There is no available information to calculate how much the rich people in the pre-Islamic era actually owned. Although the Islamic sources mention what some people gave 'in the way of God' and what they spent for their defence, it also points to other matters containing some figures which give us a picture of the wealth of some people at the advent of Islam. Some traditions report that the Prophet borrowed 40,000 dirhams from 'Abdallāh b. Abī Rabī'ah, 50,000 from Sufwān b. Umayyah and 40,000 from Ḥuwayṭib b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā – making the grand total of 130,000, which he distributed among the poor.⁹⁷⁵ Al- Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā'ah is reported to have paid 4,000 dirhams in ransom for his father at Badr.⁹⁷⁶

The Meccan rich sought the assistance of accountants who could look after their wealth. For example Ṭalḥah b. 'Ubaydallāh had an accountant who looked after his wealth and supervised his property and farm.⁹⁷⁷ A trader must have an accountant to keep record of the capital and expenditure and calculate losses and gains. So we see Meccans taking accountants to keep a record of their financial and commercial affairs.⁹⁷⁸

9.2.3 The wealthy of Mecca

1. 'Abdullah b. Jud'ān.

'Abdullah b. Jud'ān was one of the well known eminent nobles of Mecca. He was exceedingly rich.⁹⁷⁹ He was 'Abdullah b. Jud'ān b. 'Umar b. Ka'b b. Sa'd

⁹⁷⁵ Tawḥīdī, *Imtā'*, I, 390.

⁹⁷⁶ al- Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 406.

⁹⁷⁷ Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād al-Sārī*, IV, 76.

⁹⁷⁸ Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, VIII, 192.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 137; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 291-293; Ibn Qutaybah, *Akhbār*, I, 335; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 76, 77. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 438.

b. Taym b. Murrah.⁹⁸⁰ He was known for his generosity towards the people of Mecca. It is reported that the *fuḍūl* alliance was held at his house, due to his high standing among the people of Mecca and his vast wealth.⁹⁸¹ The Prophet witnessed this alliance, but Ibn Jud‘ān died before the Prophet proclaimed the *da‘wah*.⁹⁸² He was buried in Mecca.⁹⁸³

2. Al-Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib (known as Abū Zam‘ah).⁹⁸⁴

Abū Zam‘ah was one of the richest people of Mecca. He lived during Muḥammad’s lifetime, but he opposed the new religion. Ibn Ḥabīb considered him to be among those members of Quraysh who mocked the Prophet.⁹⁸⁵ His son, Zam‘ah, was a merchant who used to trade with Syria, and was well known for his business acumen.⁹⁸⁶

3. Among the nobles and leaders of Quraysh was Yazīd b. Zam‘ah b. al-Aswad who used to be consulted in many affairs. This was known because the leaders of Quraysh would never make any decision without first consulting him.⁹⁸⁷

4. Ḥarb b. Umayyah is regarded as one of the noble leaders of Mecca and B. Kinānah. He was one of the richest people of Mecca.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 145; Nuwayrī, *Niyāyah*, VI, 267; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Nahj*, XV, 203; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 126; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, IV, 122; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, III, 403.

⁹⁸¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, II, 279; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, II, 218. Cf. above, p.47.

⁹⁸² Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 202.

⁹⁸³ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma‘ārif*, 175.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 137; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 369; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 218; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 53; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 58.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 137.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 158; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 387.

⁹⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 102; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 221; Ālūsī, *Bulūq*, I, 249. Cf. ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 104.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 132, 165; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 90, 139-141; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 157; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 30; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 201. Cf. Mu‘nis, *Quraysh*, 184, 254, 283.

5. Hishām b. al-Mughīrah b. ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar b. Makhzūm was one of the leaders of Mecca. He and his sons were highly regarded.⁹⁸⁹
6. Abū Jahl and al-Ḥārith were both sons of Hishām b. al-Mughīrah.⁹⁹⁰ Al-Ḥārith was known for his generosity⁹⁹¹ but his brother Abū Jahl⁹⁹² was one of the eminent men of B. Makhzūm⁹⁹³ who opposed Islam and was one of the greatest enemies of the Prophet.⁹⁹⁴
7. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah b. ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar b. Makhzūm was one of the noble leaders of Mecca. He was so rich that he was able to buy the covering (*kiswah*) of the Ka‘bah from his own funds. He was numbered as one of the greatest opponenets of Islam. He refused to follow a man who had less money and who was unknown to him.⁹⁹⁵
8. Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ b. Umayyah b. ‘Abd Shams was one of the nobles and leaders of Quraysh.⁹⁹⁶ He was one of the well known traders of Mecca. This is indicated by his contribution of 30,000 dinars to the capital of the caravan led by Abū Sufyān to Syria.⁹⁹⁷ This sum was very large, given the economic climate of the time.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 342, II, 18, IV, 142; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 139, 170; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 113, 115, 117-118; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 300-301; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 66.

⁹⁹⁰ al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 301-302.

⁹⁹¹ See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 57, 85, 370, III, 6, 23, IV, 31, 140; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 301-302; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 195, 342, 358, 366, 420; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 139, 176, 453, 473, 501-502. Cf. Mu‘nis, *Quraysh*, 591, 615.

⁹⁹² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 277, 312, 315, II, 26, 79, 240, 245; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 107, 271, 339-341; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 139, 140, 160-161, 176; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 302; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 27, 68.

⁹⁹³ al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 302.

⁹⁹⁴ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 125.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 210, 277, 315, 383, 385; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 108, 159, 160, 161, 337; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 191-199; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 300-301; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 68. Cf. Mu‘nis, *Quraysh*, 505; ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 108.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 118; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, III, 97; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, II, 278, III, 415; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 176-177.

⁹⁹⁷ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 141; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 165. Cf. ‘Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 108-109.

9. Qays b. 'Udī b. Sa'd b. Sahm,⁹⁹⁸ and 'Utbah b. Rabī'ah b. 'Abd Shams⁹⁹⁹ were among the nobles and leaders of Quraysh.
10. Abū Sufyān Ṣakhr b. Ḥarb b. Umayyah b. 'Abd Shams b. Manāf was a travelling trader. He amassed much money from his trade. He was entrusted with the leadership of the caravan and was an expert in the trade routes. All his travels were successful, taking the trade of Mecca safely to its destination.¹⁰⁰⁰ He was the commander of Quraysh in the battle of Uḥud and al-Khandaq. He inherited his post from his father.¹⁰⁰¹
11. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was considered one of the nobles and leaders of Mecca who fought against the Prophet Muḥammad.¹⁰⁰² He was wealthy and amassed large amounts of money. This is understood from the Qur'ān CXI, which says, 'What would he gain from all his money and wealth?' He was a trader who used to deal with Syria. He was an uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad. In spite of this, he was one of those who despised the Prophet.¹⁰⁰³ His wife used to encourage him in this, as the Qur'ān CXII confirms.¹⁰⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that women also engaged in trade. For example Khadījah b. Khuwaylid conducted business of her own and she is referred to as

⁹⁹⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 177-178; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 367-368; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiḡāq*, 67.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 276, 299; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 109; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Nahj*, I, 111; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 160, 162, 175; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 152; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 25, 39, 86; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, I, 398.

¹⁰⁰⁰ See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 276, 315, II, 22, 26, 117, III, 21, 44, 54; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 200-203; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 123-138; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, 71; al-Sadūsī, *Nasab*, 30; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 131. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 110-111.

¹⁰⁰¹ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 66; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 246; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, II, 35.

¹⁰⁰² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 119, 372, II, 25, 274; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 61, 69, 218; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 65, 157, 158; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 18.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 157; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Nahj*, I, 89; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 131. Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, IV, 112.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Qur'ān, CXI, 1-4.

being one of the wealthiest of the Quraysh.¹⁰⁰⁵ The mother of Abū Jahl used to sell perfumes in Mecca¹⁰⁰⁶ and Salmā b. ‘Amr of the B. al-Najjār attended the fair of al- Nabaṭ in person to supervise her own business. it is reported that at this fair she met Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf who married her.¹⁰⁰⁷

9.3 Currency of pre-Islamic Arabia

Throughout our study of the Islamic sources we have seen that they mention the exchange of currency in Ḥijāz at the advent of Islam. Archaeologists have found some samples of pre-Islamic currency belonging to various times, in a variety of different places in the Arabian Peninsula. This currency gives some information about its origin. We also find some inscriptions which mention coins.

It is quite clear that the existence of various coins in the Arabian Peninsula was due to its location on the trade route between east and west, the wealth of the Sabaeans and Minaeans, gold and copper mining activities in south-west Arabia, trade activities connected with the exchange of Arabian spices and precious stones for gold and silver, the markets which were scattered in the Arabian Peninsula and the position of Mecca as being located at a cross trade route and holy place in both pre-Islamic and Islamic times.¹⁰⁰⁸

The people of south-west Arabia used some coins in their dealings minted from gold, silver, brass and other metals. Samples of all these coins have been discovered. They also used foreign coins such as Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Abyssinian and Persian. Again types of these coins were discovered in various places in the Yemen,

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 113.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 65.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 49.

¹⁰⁰⁸ al-Zahrānī, "Umayyad coins", 5.

Ḥaḍramawt and elsewhere.¹⁰⁰⁹

The author of the *Periplus* mentions in chapters 49¹⁰¹⁰ and 56¹⁰¹¹ that Roman gold and silver had by the first century A.D., reached the South Arabian markets. Other coins in use in South Arabia were called 'BLṬ', a 'coin'¹⁰¹² or 'kind of minted coin',¹⁰¹³ or money in general.¹⁰¹⁴ 'SL' in Sabaic is a *shekel*,¹⁰¹⁵ originally a Near Eastern weight for gold and silver and, later a coin,¹⁰¹⁶ and 'SL'YN', a weight of silver, *drachma* in Nabataean.¹⁰¹⁷ Moreover 'ḤRTY' is a kind of coin related to the Nabataean King Areta IV.¹⁰¹⁸

The people in pre-Islamic Arabia had three ways of commercial dealing.

4. Barter (*mubāḍalah*) in which one commodity is exchanged for another;
5. By the weight of gold or silver; when one wanted to buy something its owner measured it by the known established weight of gold or silver;
6. By coins.

At the rise of Islam these types of commercial dealing were still in use. So, they used to exchange dates for dates etc. ... Or if they sold flour or something else, they weighed it against the weight of gold. al-Māwardī reports, 'They used

¹⁰⁰⁹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 487. For more details about the Abyssinian coins see Munro-Hay, *The coinage of Aksum*, 25-35.

¹⁰¹⁰ Schoff, *Periplus*, 219.

¹⁰¹¹ Schoff *Periplus*, 219.

¹⁰¹² Irvine, 'Some Notes', 24; 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 491.

¹⁰¹³ Beeston, *SD*, 29.

¹⁰¹⁴ Biella, *Dictionary*, 43.

¹⁰¹⁵ Beeston, *SD*, 125; Biella, *Dictionary*, 336.

¹⁰¹⁶ Doty, *Encyclopaedic dictionary*, 298.

¹⁰¹⁷ Irvine, 'Some notes', 30.

¹⁰¹⁸ Meshorer, 'Nabataean coins', 3; Irvine, 'Some notes', 31.

to sell by weights which they had agreed upon between themselves, such as *ratl*, which is equal to twelve *ūqiyyah*, which is forty dirhams'.¹⁰¹⁹

Abū Ḥanīfah relates that the first one to mint the dinar was Tubba' As'ad b. Karib, and the first one to mint coins and distribute them among the people was Nimrod Canaan.¹⁰²⁰ There is evidence in the inscriptions of the Sabaeans and Qatabanians of the currency used by these two nations in those times. Some scholars believe that the date of these goes back to 500 B.C. Some of these coins have been mentioned along with the names of kings of Saba' and Qatabān mostly when recording revenues and taxes. Jawād 'Alī thinks that the appearance of these names on the coins and the instructions of the kings does not necessarily indicate that they were minted in their times, but it is possible that they were minted before their rule and were in circulation before and during their rule and therefore they were mentioned in the inscriptions.¹⁰²¹

Those kings in whose reign some coins were minted were only mentioned by their title, such as Yanāf without the first name by which he was known. It is well known that a number of kings were known by this title and therefore it is difficult for us to be precise about which particular king was intended on these coins.¹⁰²² However there was one king who was mentioned by his first name of ŠMR. It is probable that he is Shamr Yahra'sh, king of Saba' and Dhū Raydān.¹⁰²³

The term 'BLT' appears in a Sabaean inscription and can be translated as

¹⁰¹⁹ al-Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 159.

¹⁰²⁰ *Musnad Abī Ḥanīfah*, 163.

¹⁰²¹ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 490.

¹⁰²² Hill, *Catalogue*, LVII.

¹⁰²³ *Catalogue*, LX.

coin.¹⁰²⁴ Nazīh Mu'ayyid al-'Azm says that the Yemenis called their coins *ḡalat*¹⁰²⁵ and may be that this word has a link with the name of some Yemenī coins before Islam. There is another term used in the inscription as KBST. Rhodakanakis thinks that this term is the name of a coin weaker in value than the gold coin, and that it was neither made from gold nor from silver but from other metals.¹⁰²⁶

We notice the influence of Greek coins on Arabian coins. Some resemblance between South Arabian coins and Persian coins can also be seen. Bearing in mind the trade links between Greeks, Persians and the South Arabian, it is not surprising that some coins of the Yemen minted in Ḥaḍramawt resembled those of the Greeks and Persians,¹⁰²⁷ We find evidence of such Greek influence in the picture of the owl which is the symbol of Athens, printed on the South Arabian coins, hence making it difficult to differentiate between them,¹⁰²⁸ Some Greek and Roman coins were found in Buṣrā and in the regions of Arabia Provincia. Likewise Nabataean coins have been found. Some numismatists suggest that King al-Ḥārith (97-62 B.C.) was the first to order the minting of the coins. They greatly resembled the coin minted by Demetrius Eukairus III (95-84 B.C.) at Damascus.¹⁰²⁹ In the reign of Ubadah III (30-9 B.C.) a coin appeared showing the king on one side and with him a picture of a lady, probably that of his mother. It shows that at the beginning of his rule he was incapable of rule and his mother managed the affairs of state on his behalf. As for the coins minted later, there appeared along with him the picture of his wife who assisted him.¹⁰³⁰ The coins minted in the era of al-Ḥārith IV (9

¹⁰²⁴ *Catalogue*, LXVIII. Cf. Biella, *Dictionary*, 43; Beeston, *SD*, 29.

¹⁰²⁵ al-'Azm, *Rihlah*, 85.

¹⁰²⁶ Rhodakanakis, *Texte*, II, S.26.

¹⁰²⁷ Rossini, 'Monete', 239.

¹⁰²⁸ 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 493.

¹⁰²⁹ Hill, *Catalogue*, XI.

¹⁰³⁰ *Catalogue*, XIV, XV, XVI; Meshorer, 'Nabataean coins', 42.

B.C.-A.D. 40) are considered to be the best in the reign of the Nabataeans. Some were minted in his name and others in the name of his first wife, Ḥuldu (until A.D. 16). His wife's picture was engraved on the coins. Some coins were minted in his other wife's name, Shugailat.¹⁰³¹ Accordingly, from the days of al-Ḥārith IV until the end of the Nabataean kingdom (9 B.C.-A.D. 106) coins were used in large quantities, reflecting their clear economic function at that time. Nabataean coinage dominated the local market and replaced the foreign coins which had been the principal currency in the Nabataean market during the preceding period.¹⁰³²

Also some Greek coins were discovered on the island of Faylakā, among them was the dirham minted in the time of King Antigonos III, one of the kings of the Selucids. The date of this dirham goes back to 212 B.C. It is also clear that some coins were minted at Gerrha and Bahrain.¹⁰³³

Therefore we can divide the coins of Arabia before the time of Muḥammad into three main categories. 1) Coins of the Yemen. 2) Coins of the Nabataean kings. 3) Coins of various Arabian cities under the Roman empire.¹⁰³⁴

With regard to the regions of Ḥijāz including Mecca in particular and Arabia in general, according to most Arab historians, the coins in circulation during pre-Islamic times were the Byzantine gold dinar, the Persian silver dirham,¹⁰³⁵ the Heracleian dinar,¹⁰³⁶ the southern Himyarite dirham (*yamaniyyah*),¹⁰³⁷ the Maghribiyyah

¹⁰³¹ *Catalogue*, XVII; Meshorer, 'Nabataean coins', 48.

¹⁰³² Meshorer, 'Nabataean coins', 3; cf. al-Zahrānī, 'Some Umayyad coins', 5-6.

¹⁰³³ Hill, *Catalogue*, XXX. See also al-Karmalī, *al-Nuqūd*, 88.

¹⁰³⁴ Meshorer, 'Nabataean coins', 1.

¹⁰³⁵ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 471.

¹⁰³⁶ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 477.

¹⁰³⁷ Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 154.

dirhams,¹⁰³⁸, the 'Black Perfect' (*al-ṣūd al-wāfiyah*) dirhams, the old *Ṭabariyyah* (*Ṭabariyyah al-ʿUttāq*) dirhams,¹⁰³⁹ and the *Jawāriqiyyah* dirham,¹⁰⁴⁰ which may be derived from the root letters *jwrq* which means 'the dark thing'.¹⁰⁴¹

The people of Mecca did not have their own coins so they used those of Rome and Persia using dinars and dirhams respectively. They used also the coins of the Yemen and probably also those of Abyssinia. Since the Meccans traded in particular with Iraq, Syria and Abyssinia they were obliged to use the various coins of those countries too.

It is worth mentioning that al-Damīrī¹⁰⁴² records two kinds of coin; the 'Black Perfect', which comes from Sasanian Persia and the old *Ṭabariyyah* from *Ṭabar-istān*.¹⁰⁴³

The Qur'ān mentions the dinar,¹⁰⁴⁴ the dirham,¹⁰⁴⁵ and the *warq*.¹⁰⁴⁶ al-Māwardī states that the silver coins were called *warq*.¹⁰⁴⁷ However, the word occurs

¹⁰³⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 469.

¹⁰³⁹ Maqrīzī, *Shudhūr*, 2.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Maqrīzī, *Shudhūr*, 2.

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān*, X, 35, IX, 28; Bustānī, *Muḥīt*, 240-241. Al-Kirmilī states that Jūrqn was a suburb of Hamadhān. On the other hand we have not been able to trace a place called Jūrqn in the geographical dictionaries such as Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*. There does, however, exist a suburb of Hamadhān called Jūrān. According to some manuscripts, it might be read as Jarāriqah, plural of Jarīqī which means Greek. See al-Kirmilī, *al-Nuqūd*, 122. cf. Ḥakīm, 'Early Arabian coins', 22.

¹⁰⁴² Damīrī, *Ḥayāt*, I, 64.

¹⁰⁴³ Apart from al-Damīrī other traditions have discussed the *dirham baghlī*, but give different forms of the term, *bughallī*. For example, the author of *Baḥr al-ʿUlūm* suggests that *baghlī* was the name of the Jewish chief who built the temple of the Maqī and minted the dirhams ascribed to him in the city of Armyia in Persia. On the other hand, Ṣ. Baḥr al-ʿUlūm adds that the *baghlī* dirhams can be attributed to an ancient city called Baghl in Babylon. In addition to that the author of *Baḥr al-ʿUlūm* on the authority of al-Ṭurayḥī thinks that the word *baghlī* written with no *fathah* on the *ghayn*, and a doubling of the last letter, *yāʾ* refers to the name of a city in Iraq, see Ṣ. Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, *al-Nuqūd*, 49-50. Cf. Ḥakīm, 'Early Arabian coins', 21; 'Dirham', *ET*².

¹⁰⁴⁴ Qur'ān, III, 75.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Qur'ān, XII, 20.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Qur'ān, XVIII, 19.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 148. See also al-Rayyis, *al-Kharāj*, 370.

in several South Arabian inscriptions, in such phrases as *hmsy wrqm* and *šry wrqm*, which presumably refer to weights or some kind of gold coin.¹⁰⁴⁸ Also al-Hamdānī states; 'As for silver, it is *luḥayn*, in the language of Ḥimyar, meaning *warq* (silver); and *warq* is the name given to dirhams.¹⁰⁴⁹

Turning now to specific points relevant to the circulation of coins in Mecca on the eve of Islam, according to al-Maqrizī they used the gold dinar and the silver dirham as ingots according to the local weight, which they fixed.¹⁰⁵⁰

The dinar is a coin made of gold. The lexicographers say that it is an Arabised word, but they do not confirm its origin and claim it to be Persian.¹⁰⁵¹ The truth is that it is Arabicized from the Greek word *dinarius*.¹⁰⁵² It is probable that the Arabs used the name in Syria from the reform era of Constantine I (A.D. 309-319), so they used the term dinar on the gold coin. The people of Syria were confined to using the term *dinarius* from that time.¹⁰⁵³

As for the dirham, the lexicographers say that it is an arabicized word from the Persian. The derivation of the legal weight of the dirham is more difficult than that of the dinar, as the dirhams were not struck very accurately. The weight of the Islamic dirham is six *dāniqs*,¹⁰⁵⁴ but in pre-Islamic times some dirhams were light, being four *dāniqs*, and these were called *Ṭabariyyah*, and some were heavy being eight *dāniqs*; and these were called *ʿabdiyyah* or *baghliyyah*.¹⁰⁵⁵

¹⁰⁴⁸ Beeston, *SD*, 162; Biella, *Dictionary*, 149-150; ʿAlī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 501.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Dunlop, 'Sources', 36.

¹⁰⁵⁰ al-Maqrizī, *Shudhūr*, 4.

¹⁰⁵¹ al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, III, 211.

¹⁰⁵² Pliny, *History*, XXXIII, 13.

¹⁰⁵³ *Er*², II, 297-298. See also Walker, *Catalogue*, II.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Dāniq* is a weight = 0.425 grams. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, II, 394.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Lane, *Lexicon*, III, 876.

Al-Maqrīzī states that in the Jāhiliyyah the silver *mithqāl* was called a dirham, while the gold *mithqāl* was called a dinar,¹⁰⁵⁶ and the relationship of the dinar to the dirham was 10 to 7.¹⁰⁵⁷ The dirhams that the people of Mecca used in the pre-Islamic era are divided into two kinds: the 'Black Perfect' (*al-ṣūd al-wāfiyah*) dirhams and the old *Ṭabariyyah* (*al-Ṭabariyyah al-ʿUttāq*) dirhams, Ibn Yaʿlā states that there were other dirhams used by the people of Mecca before Islam called *dirham Jawāriqīs* which were equal to four and a half *dāniqs*.¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibn Yaʿlā also states that there were small dirhams used in the Yemen, each weighing two and a half *dāniqs*. But al-Māwardī mentions that the standard weight of the Yemeni dirham during pre-Islamic times was one *dāniq* and he comments on its rarity.¹⁰⁵⁹

We can conclude from what has been mentioned that the people of Mecca in pre-Islamic days used Yemeni, Persian and Roman currency. Traditions mention that Quraysh used weights and these were retained in Islam. What they weighed with silver they named a dirham and what they weighed with gold they called a dinar. So every ten weights of dirham equals seven weights of dinar. They also had the *ūqiyyahs* weighing forty dirhams and the half weighing twenty dirhams. They bought and sold raw metal on these weights and the Prophet approved of this.¹⁰⁶⁰ They used to blunt or make the edges of the dinars jagged or cut them into pieces and use these pieces according to their weight. They also cut into the currency to be sure it was genuine or to change dinars into *tibr*.¹⁰⁶¹ The *mithqāl* with them

¹⁰⁵⁶ Maqrīzī, *Shudhūr*, 2.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 471.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 158; ʿAlī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 499.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, 154.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 472.

¹⁰⁶¹ Tibr is native gold, in the form of dust or of nuggets. This is the sense in which the word is generally used in the present day (Lane, *Lexicon*, VIII, 293)

was a recognised weight, equal to twenty-two carats, less a fraction. The *ratl* was twelve ounces, and every ounce was forty dirhams. The Prophet confirmed these, and so did Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī. When Mu'āwiyah became ruler, he confirmed them likewise.¹⁰⁶²

Al-Maqrīzī provides us with information which suggests that silver coins were used as ingots during the few years preceding the Hijrah in A.D. 622. When the Prophet married Khadījah he paid her as a nuptial gift 'twelve and a half *ūqiyyahs* and the *ūqiyyah* was forty dirhams'.¹⁰⁶³ In the other example, reference to the use of the coins by Quraysh according to local weights is made in the episode of the finding of Bilāl al-Ḥabashī by Abū Bakr (when both became Muslims); ill-treated by his master, Umayyah b. Khalaf, in Mecca, Bilāl wanted to abandon Islam, until Abū Bakr paid five *ūqiyyahs* and freed him.¹⁰⁶⁴ The above two examples do not mean that Quraysh in all their dealing used coins only by weight; they also used silver dirhams according to their value. For instance, the she-camel which Abū Bakr purchased to take himself and the Prophet from Mecca to Medina is mentioned as being bought from Nu'aym b. Qushayr for 800 dirhams.¹⁰⁶⁵

It is not clear which coinage was employed by the merchants of Quraysh when dealing with people of other areas, such as Syria or South Arabia. But in all probability Byzantine coins were used in Syria and South Arabian and Sasanian coins were used in the Yemen. 'Ultimately, however, it makes little difference what coins were used in which area, for the simple reason that they were all agreed on a fixed weight and, furthermore, barter was carried out alongside the use of gold

¹⁰⁶² *Lexicon*, I, 471.

¹⁰⁶³ Maqrīzī, *Shudhūr*, 2. Cf. Ḥakiem, 'Early Arabian coins', 24.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd*, I, 206. For details of Umayyah b. Khalaf see Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 97.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma'ārif*, 88. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd*, III, 230.

and silver coinage.¹⁰⁶⁶

9.4 Taxes

We do not have much information about the taxes in Mecca, nor about the tithe.

When Quṣayy took control of the affairs of Mecca, he is said to have found a very good pretext for imposing an annual tax on the people by explaining to them the necessity of feeding the poor pilgrims and inviting others to a feast called *ṣanīʿah*, on behalf of the city. This tax was called *rifādah*.¹⁰⁶⁷

We have an interesting report from Azraqī, concerning a tax in Mecca. When Quraysh tried to make a permanent roofed structure for the Kaʿbah, after it had been burnt and subsequently demolished by a flood, they searched for timber. It is related that the timber for it was taken from a Byzantine ship sailing towards the Yemen which was shipwrecked at al-Shuʿaybah, the port of Mecca.¹⁰⁶⁸ When Quraysh heard about the shipwreck, they bought the wood of the ship and allowed the passengers to enter Mecca and to sell the merchandise they were carrying, without a tithe being levied. This contrasts with the normal situation, which is described by Azraqī in the following way. ‘They used to levy a tithe on those Byzantine traders who entered their country, just as Byzantium levied a tithe on those who among them entered their country.’¹⁰⁶⁹ Other reports state that the ship was carrying marble, timber and iron from Byzantium for the restoration of

¹⁰⁶⁶ al-Zahrānī, ‘Umayyad coins’, 8.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, I, 83; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 1099; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 41. Cf. Ḥamīdullāh, ‘The city-state’, 270-271.

¹⁰⁶⁸ See Hawting, ‘The origin of Jedda’, 318-316.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Azraqī, *Akhbār*, I, 101. Cf. Simon, *Trade*, 68.

a church in the Yemen, which had been burnt by the Persians.¹⁰⁷⁰

This important passage indicates that Quraysh normally used to impose a tax on the foreign traders who entered their city. There is no information available concerning the method that Mecca utilized to collect this tax, nor the size of the tax.

It is reported that Zinbā' b. Rawḥ al-Judhāmī took tithes from anyone passing the outskirts of Syria.¹⁰⁷¹ He worked for al-Ḥārīth b. Abī Shamir al-Ghassānī. Ibn Ḥajar, says that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb went to trade with a group of Quraysh in the Jāhiliyyah. When they approached Palestine, they were told that Zinbā' b. Rawḥ al-Judhāmī took a tithe from anyone passing by, so they began hiding what they had in the way of gold, but Zinbā' discovered it and increased the tithe. He also abused 'Umar.¹⁰⁷²

We have already seen the tax which was imposed on the pre-Islamic markets, namely the markets which were under the protection of the Persian or South Arabian kings and were known as *ard mamlakah*. The kings or their vassals exacted from all those who attended the fair to buy and sell, a tax equal to one tenth '*ushr*' of their produce in return for this protection. For example, at Dumat al-Jandāl the people paid their '*ushūr*' to its king, al-Ukaydir b. 'Abd al-Malik.¹⁰⁷³ The markets of Dibā, Ṣuḥār and al-Mushaqqar were under the protection of the Persian king who entrusted the affairs of the market of al-Mushaqqar and the collection of the '*ushūr*' to B. 'Abdullah b. Zayd,¹⁰⁷⁴ whereas the responsibility of Diba and Ṣuḥār

¹⁰⁷⁰ 'Adawī, *Aḥwāl*, 61a.

¹⁰⁷¹ Abū 'l-Baqā'. *Manāqib*, I, 67-68.

¹⁰⁷² Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, I, 533. See also Ibn Bakkār, *al-Muwaffaqiyyāt*, 625; Cf. Khirīsāt, '*Ushūr al-tijārah*', 23-24.

¹⁰⁷³ Marzuqī, *Azminah*, II, 161; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Marzuqī, *Azminah*, II, 161; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263.

was in the hands of al-Julandā b. al- Mustakbir.¹⁰⁷⁵ In South Arabia, the market of Aden was under the protection of the Abnā', who extracted the 'ushūr in return for traders' protection.¹⁰⁷⁶

The pre-Islamic South Arabian kingdoms charged a tithe on a sale. The Qatabān government expanded tithe collecting to the extent that it became a tax on income or profit on what one sells, or from rent and agriculture.¹⁰⁷⁷ It is probable that the tithe was also charged on agriculture in the governments of Saba' Dhū Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt and YMNT. The word 'ushr actually appears in the South Arabian inscriptions.¹⁰⁷⁸

Pliny mentions to the tithe and that the South Arabian people used to take it on the raw products of incense, such as frankincense. It was taken by their religious leaders in the name of the God.¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 263; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, I, 226.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 266.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Rhodokanakis, *Katab Texte*, I, 5.7; Cf. 'Alī, *Mufaṣṣal*, VII, 477.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See Beeston, *SD*, 21; Biella, *Dictionary*, 386-387.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Pliny, XII, 65

Conclusion

The importance of Mecca was derived from its distinct geographical location on the trade route of caravans coming from the South (the Yemen) and proceeding to the North (Syria) or vice-versa. Since the nature of Meccan land was primarily arid and unsuitable for agriculture, its inhabitants resorted to trade. It appears that its geographical importance was a commercial cross-roads attracted to it the attention of the neighbouring countries, particularly the Byzantines. Since it was difficult for them to have direct control over Mecca, they tried to spread their influence through some of their allies by encouraging them to occupy it. We see this clearly in their attempts to encourage Abrahah the Abyssinian to raid Mecca, and in the appointment of 'Uthmān b. al-Huwayrith as King of Mecca. However, as is (now) well known, both these attempts failed.

The importance of Mecca began to increase from the beginning of the sixth century A.D. onwards, when Ḥimyar fell into the hands of the Abyssinians and when bloody wars broke out between Persia and Byzantium. This restricted the international trade which could pass through Iraq, and led the Byzantians to be interested in the Red Sea route which was not under the influence of the Sasanids. No doubt the people of Mecca benefited from the poor situation that developed in the Yemen, after the Abyssinian invasion. Consequently the political situation

deteriorated and lead in turn to the loss of Yemeni influence over al-Hijaz and some tribes.

Quraysh maintained its neutral stance in relation to the almost continual conflict between Byzantians and Persians. This was important since it was involved in the transportation of commodities from the Yemen and also those commodities which reached from the East to the markets of Palestine and Syria, and in turn it transported commodities from these countries to al-Hijaz and the Yemen.

In addition to the geographical location of Mecca and its neutrality in the recurring conflict between Persia and Byzantium, the existence of the Ka'bah there helped to increase the importance of it in the eyes of the Arabs. To this is linked the organisation with which Mecca was honoured at the hands of Quṣayy b. Kilāb and his grandsons. They set up specific offices to serve the pilgrims to al-Ka'bah; these offices were materialised in al-Sidāyah, al-Rifādah and al-Hijābah. This consideration encouraged an increase in the number of pilgrims coming to Mecca. They made the pilgrimage during the season in which markets were held, particularly the 'Ukāẓ market which was considered to be the most important of the Arab markets in the pre-Islamic era. It surpassed the other markets in two aspects;-

1. Its proximity to Mecca, the active commercial crossroads of the west of the Arabian Peninsula.

2. Confidence of the traders in both their own safety and that of their trade from looting, out of respect for sacred months, if the market was held at the beginning of Dhū al-Qa'dah and continued to the twentieth of that month.

'Ukāẓ was not just a market for trade but also a venue for orators and poets. It

was also a place where slaves were freed, blood money was paid and disagreements looked into, as well as other affairs that concerned the Arabian tribes.

Another important issue was the honest dealing of Quraysh with the Arabian tribes, particularly those settled on the trade routes in the south, north and east. This dealing was built upon the treaty of agreement with the leaders of the tribes, which became known as the *ilāf*. No doubt this was a clever ploy by the Quraysh, as it protected many of its caravans from the dangers that it encountered from these tribes. These tribes used to attack and loot these caravans (of Quraysh) which led to considerable losses. However, Quraysh did not stop at the treaty of *ilāf* but also formed alliances with some of the tribes. It went even further in allowing some tribes to share some of the administrative affairs of Mecca, such as Tamīm, which also had supervision over 'Ukāẓ market. Quraysh also tried to strengthen their links with the tribes by way of intermarriage.

In addition to what it offered Quraysh was able to gain the agreement of the leaders of the neighbouring countries (Byzantium, Persia, Yemen, Abyssinia), or more likely the representatives of these governments, to allow Qurayshi merchants to enter their countries for trade purposes. Thus Meccan trade expanded from being simply local to a trade which involved neighbouring regions, such as Syria, the Yemen, Abyssinia and Iraq. As for Iraq, their trade was particularly with al-Ḥīrah. In fact the al-Manāzirah were able to extend their commercial influence into the middle and south-western regions of the Arabian Peninsula. They used to send trade caravans to major markets such as 'Ukāẓ. On the other hand the Meccan merchants themselves went to al-Ḥīrah in order to trade. We have the names of some of the people who went, such as Abū Sufyān, 'Abd Allāh b. Jud'ān, al-Mughīrah b. Shu'bah and others.

Their relations with Syria were also stable and they were involved in the export of Syrian goods to the Far East, and the Yemen, as well as importing from it oil, grain and liquor etc. Their large trade caravans went out in the summer, reaching Ghazzah, Aylah and Buṣra.

Mecca also had trade links with Abyssinia and these were not affected by Abrahah's attack on Mecca. The migration of earlier Muslims to Abyssinia indicates that the Meccas knew of this country. This trade was no doubt conducted by sea routes from the port of Medina, al-Jār and the port of Mecca, al-Shu'aybah. Meccan trade was also flourishing with the Yemen, especially during the winter. Most of it consisted of perfumes, leather, cloth and swords.

As is well-known Mecca possessed both a sacred house and trade and therefore did not need to conduct raids, nor was it happy to have anyone provoking disturbances or raids from within, since these would be damaging to them and confer no benefits. It therefore was in their own interests to ensure security and resolve all disagreements among themselves or with others by peaceful means. Similarly they strove for justice for strangers who might have grievances. They also made efforts to ensure that no stranger was harmed since this might provoke an attack on them by his tribe, particularly if that stranger happened to be from a tribe through which the Quraysh needed to pass for trade purposes. Once again a quote from the story of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī provides the best evidence for this. Quraysh used to torture him for accepting Islam. Once al-'Abbas passed by while they were torturing Abū Dharr, and on seeing this he remarked, 'Woe unto you. Do you not know that he is from the tribe Ghifār which is on your trade route to Syria'. On hearing this they [Quraysh] freed him.

Abstinence and refraining from aggression were not motivated by religious sentiments, as al-Jahīz sees it, but rather by greed for wealth and a desire to gain the profits of trade by means that must be secure.

It is clear from the study of books of *ḥadīth tafsīr*, literature and biographies that Mecca had legal practices which they adopted for the purposes of trade, and it is possible to refer to these as trade laws. These laws were created during their commercial dealings with each other and with the outside world, such as their dealings with Persia, Byzantium, Abyssinia and the Yemen, from whom they adopted some commercial rules and systems. Meccan trade was successful in laying down certain rules for commercial dealings among themselves. They made specific laws for themselves, since they had no government to regulate dealings or to implement regulations as was the case in the Yemen, Persia and Byzantium.

It is also clear to us that Meccas were expert in the ways of making money grow and exploiting it to its full advantage through prudent investment. They had company dealings and correspondence with people with capital, in various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. They also practiced usury which produced a class of rich people. To illustrate the professionalism of the Meccans in trade we cite the following story:-

When the Prophet Muḥammad made a bond of brotherhood between the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, he joined ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf who was a Muhājir and Sa’d b. al-Rabī’ who was from the rich Anṣār. Sa’d said to Ibn ‘Awf, ‘I share half my wealth with you.’ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān answered ‘God bless your wealth. What I ask of you is to guide me to the market.’ So he did. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān frequented the market until he was able to amass a sizeable fortune.

It appears from the chapter 'Quraysh' of the Qur'ān that Quraysh undertook two journeys a year, a journey in winter to the Yemen and one in summer to Syria. Quraysh did not import goods to store in Mecca or to put them on the markets of Mecca alone. Mecca was small and its markets could not assimilate all this trade, so they undertook to transport goods from south to north and vice-versa.

The sources do not refer to the journey to Iraq as they do the journeys of winter and summer, but they do indicate that Quraysh merchants traded with al-Hīrah. This means that small caravans would have gone to Iraq, rather than large caravans as were sent to Syria or the Yemen. It should also be mentioned that Quraysh did not rely just on these journeys to Syria and the Yemen, but rather there were small caravans, particularly for wealthy merchants, throughout the year.

The importance of trade in the lives of the Meccan population is illustrated in the departure and arrival of caravans which were among the most significant for the Meccans, and a time when most inhabitants would come out to bid farewell to the caravan wishing it success, and calling upon their gods to bless the caravan so that it might return safely with a large profit. Similarly the caravan itself on its return met with the same enthusiasm and warm welcome. After this reception, its leaders and people would go to the Ka'bah to thank the Lord of the House for having blessed this caravan with security and safety and for having ensured its profitability.

We should also note that the importance that Meccan trade had acquired towards the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century A.D. gradually began to decline after the migration of the Prophet to Medina.

As is well known, once he had established himself and the community in Medina, the Prophet sent out small army detachments and undertook raids to attack and block the caravans which Quraysh were sending northwards to Syria. The effect of these raids on their trade is clear: 'Muḥammad has impeded our trade. That is our route.' Abū Sufyan and Ṣafwān b. Umayyah said, 'if we stay in Mecca our capital will be eaten away'.¹⁰⁸⁰ Their anger is also clear from their description of the Prophet and his Companions as 'highwaymen' (*quṭṭā'*) since they cut Quraysh trade and threatened the routes they took to reach Iraqi and Syrian markets.

It is clear that the view taken by Lammens that Mecca had developed a level of organisation sufficient for it to be described as a republic is not sustainable. Crone, too, is mistaken in her views that,

1. Mecca did not lie on a major trade route,
2. The Meccan sanctuary was of minor importance,
3. There was no pilgrim fair there in pre-Islamic times.

However, I would conclude that Mecca's geographical location on one of the major trade routes to the north and the singularly arid conditions which rendered it unsuitable for agriculture, led its people to become involved in trade. This, combined with the existence of a place of worship and the development by the Quraysh tribe of a relatively high level of socio-economic and political organisation, had helped Mecca to play a prominent role in the political, social and economic life of the Arabian Peninsula, or more precisely in the west of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam. In this manner I believe that it led to the development of a uniquely fertile environment which was the necessary precursor for the rise of a new religion,

¹⁰⁸⁰ See Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, I, 197. Cf. Jones, 'al-Sīra al-Nabawīyyah', 19.

namely Islam.

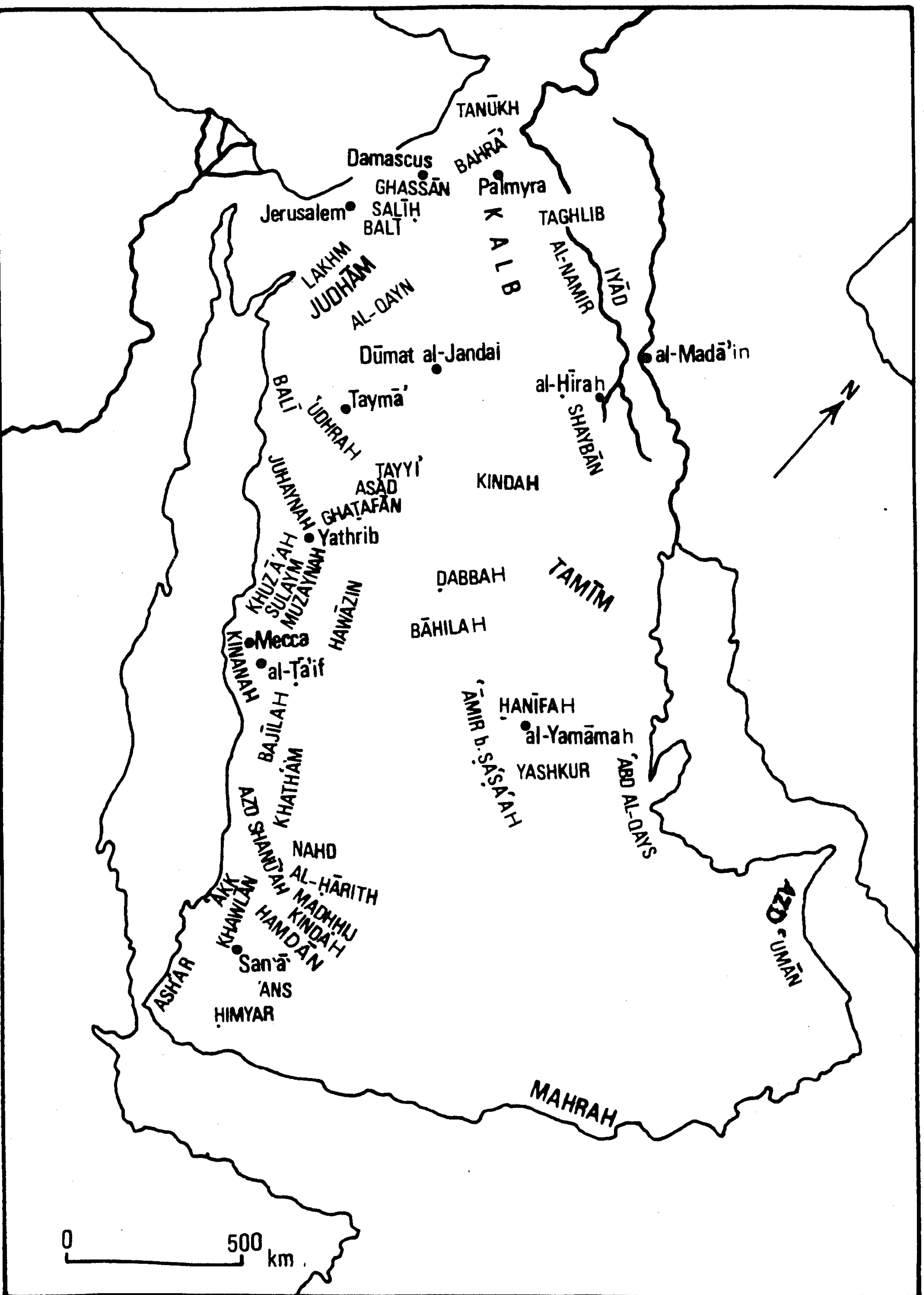
List of illustrations

A. maps

B. Genealogical tree - Quraysh

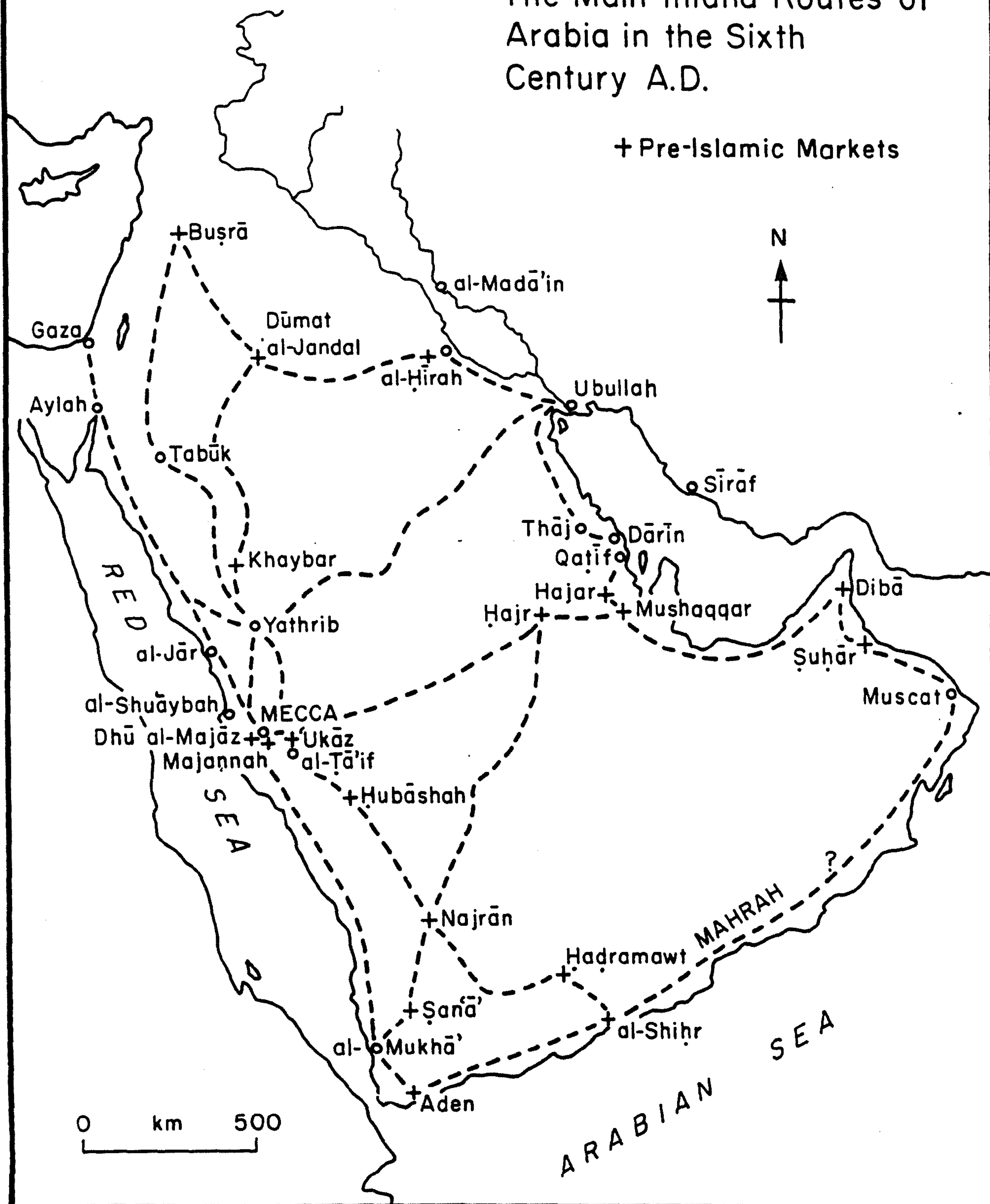
C. Tables - Pre-Islamic markets

TRIBES OF ARABIA

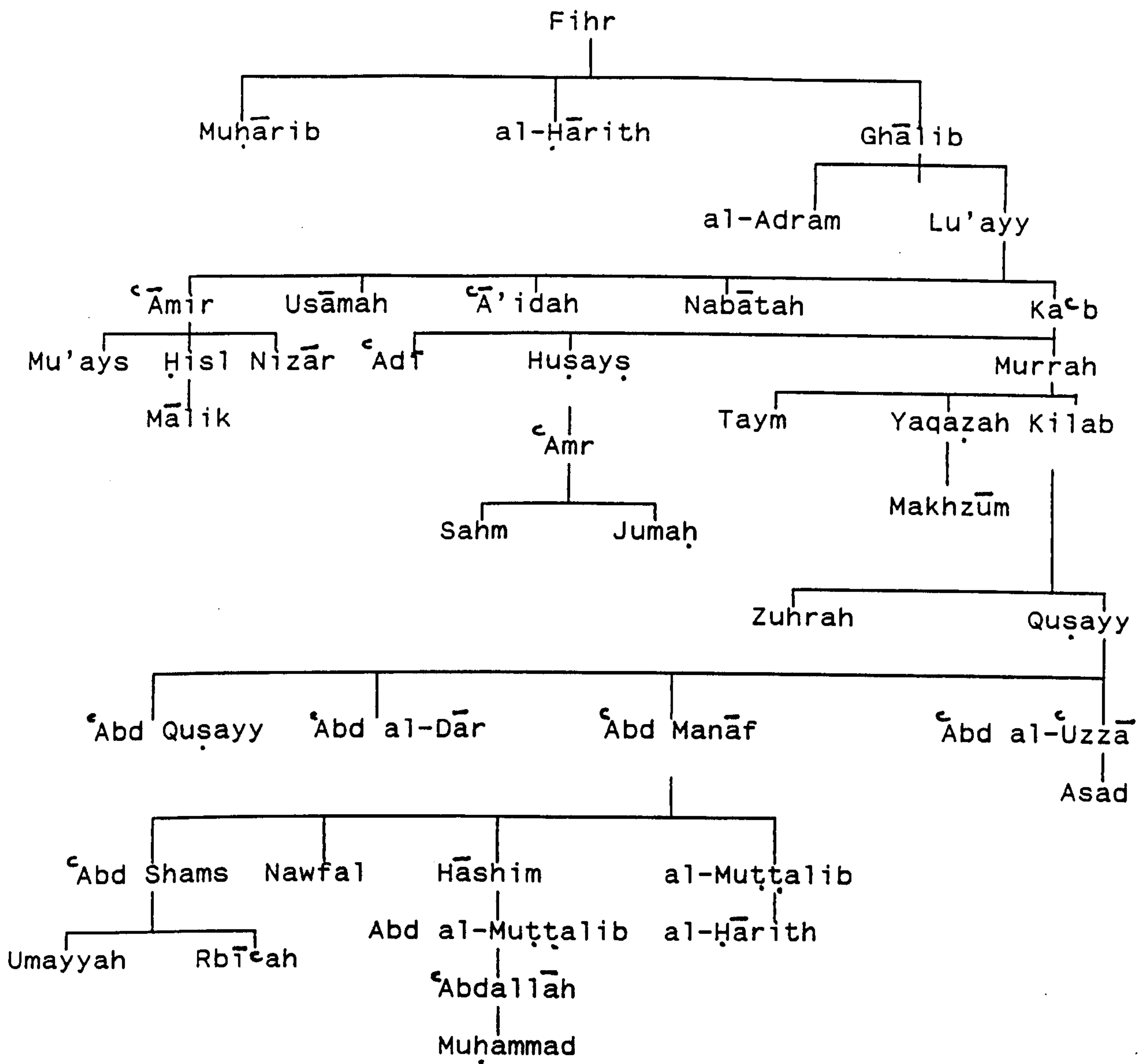


The Main Inland Routes of Arabia in the Sixth Century A.D.

+ Pre-Islamic Markets



The Clans of Quraysh



1.1: Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb (d.245/859) Kitāb al-Muḥabbar (263-268)

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	1-15 Rabī' I	Ukaydir + B. Kalb
2. al-Mushaqqar	Jumādā II	B. 'Abd Allāh b. Zayd, from Tamīm
3. Ṣuḥār	1-5 Rajab	al-Julandā b. al-Mustakbir
4. Dibā	1 Last of Rajab	al-Julandā b. al-Mustakbir
5. al-Shiḥr	Mid-Sha'bān	
6. Aden	1-10 Ramaḍān	al-Abnā'
7. Ṣan'ā'	15-end of Ramaḍān	al-Abnā'
8. al-Rābiyah (Ḥaḍramawt)	15-end of Dhū-'l-Qa'dah	—
9. 'Ukāz	15-end of Dhū-'l-Qa'dah	—
10. Dhū-'l-Majāz	1-8 Dhū-'l-Hijjah	—
11. Naṭāt Khaybar	10-Last Muḥarram	—
12. Hajr al-Yamāmah	10-Last Muḥarram	—

Table 1.2: al-Ya‘qūbī (d.284/897) Tārīkh, I,226-227

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	Rabī‘ I	Ghassān or Kalb
2. al-Mushaqqar	Jumādā I	B. Taym
3. Ṣuḥār	1 Rajab	—
4. Dibā	—	al-Julandā b. al-Mustakbir
5. al-Shiḥr	—	Mahrah
6. Aden	1 Ramaḍān	al-Abnā’
7. San‘ā’	Mid Ramaḍān	al-Abnā’
8. al-Rābiyah (Ḥaḍramawt)	—	
9. ‘Ukāz	Dhū-’l-Qa‘dah	—
10. Dhū-’l-Majāz	—	—

Table 1.3: al-Hamdānī (d.334/945)
 Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab, I, 179-180

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Aden		
2. Mecca		
3. al-Janad		
4. Najrān		
5. Dhū-'l-Majaz		
6. ʿUkāz		
7. Badr		
8. Majannah		
9. Minā		
10. Hajr al-Yamāmah		
11. Hajar (al-Baḥrayin)		

Table 1.4: Abu Hayyān n al-Tawḥīdī (d400/1009) al-Imtāʿ wa-ʿl-Muʿānasah, I,83-85

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	Whole of Rabīʿ I	Ukaydir + B. Kalb
2. al-Mushaqqar	Rabīʿ II	al-Mundhir b. Sāwā
3. Dibā		
4. Ṣuḥār		
5. Iram		
6. al-Shiḥr		
7. Aden Abyan		
8. al-Rābiyah (Ḥaḍramawt)		
9. Ṣanʿāʾ		
10. ʿUkāz		
11. Dhū-ʿl-Majāz		

Table 1.5: al-Marzūqī (d.421/1030) Kitāb al-Azminah Wa al-Amkinah II, 161-171

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	1-Last Rabī ^ʿ I	Ukaydir + B. Kalb
2. al-Mushaqqar	1-Last Jumādā II	B. Abd Allah b. Zayd
3. Ṣuhār	1-20 Rajab	al-Julandā
4. Dibā	Last of Rajab	al-Julandā
5. al-Shiḥr	Mid-Sha ^ʿ bān	
6. Aden	1-20 Ramaḍān	al-Abnā'
7. Ṣan ^ʿ ā'	15-end of Ramadan	al-Abnā'
8. al-Rābiyah (Ḥaḍramawt)	15 Dhū-'l-Qa ^ʿ dah	
9. Ukaz	15 Dhū-'l-Qa ^ʿ dah	
10. Dhū-'l-Majāz	1-8 Dhū-'l-Ḥijjah	
11. Majannah		
12. Naṭāt Khaybar		
13. Ḥajr al-Yamāmah		
14. Buṣra	After the Pilgrimage	
15. Adhru ^ʿ āt		
16. al-Asqā		

Table 1.6: Qalqashandī, Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad (d.821/1418)
Subh al-Aʿshā, I,411

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	Rabīʿ I	Ukaydir + B. Kalb
2. Hajar	Rabīʿ II	al-Mundhir b. Sāwā
3. Oman	—	—
4. Iram and villages of al-Shiḥr	—	—
5. Aden	—	—
6. Ḥaḍramawt	—	—
7. Sanʿāʾ	—	—
8. Ukāz	—	—

Table 1.7: al-Baghdādī (d.1093/1682) Khizānat al-Adab

iv, 360

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	1-15 Rabīʿ I	
2. al-Mushaqqar	1 Jumādā II	
3. Ṣuhār	10-15 Rajab	
4. al-Shihr	Mid Shaʿbān	
5. Sanʿāʾ	Mid Ramaḍān	
6. Ḥaḍramawt	Mid Dhū-ʾl-Qaʿdah	
7. ʿUkāz	15-end of Dhū-ʾl-Qaʿdah	
8. Dhū-ʾl-Majāz	1-8 Dhū-ʾl-Ḥijjah	
9. Naṭāt Khaybar		
10. Ḥajr al-Yamāmah	10-end of Muḥarram	

Table 1.8: al-Alusi (d.1342/1923) Bulug al-Arab
I,264-265

Name of Market	Time	Tax Collectors
1. Dūmat al-Jandal	Rabīʿ I	
2. Hajar	Rabīʿ II	
3. Oman	Jumādā I	
4. al-Mushaqqar	Jumādā II	
5. Ḥubāshah	Rajab	
6. Ṣuḥār	10-15th of Rajab	
7. al-Shiḥr	Shaʿbān	
8. Aden	1-15 Ramaḍān	
9. Ṣanʿāʾ	15-end of Ramaḍān	
10. ʿUkāẓ	1-20 Dhū-ʾl-Qaʿdah	
11. Ḥaḍramawt	Dhū-ʾl-Qaʿdah	
12. Majannah	20-end of Dhū-ʾl-Qaʿdah	
13. Dhū-ʾl-Majāz	1 Dhū-ʾl-Ḥijjah	

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