



















## PREFACE.

THE object of the present volume is to collect and discuss the available evidence as to the genesis of the system of male kinship, with the corresponding laws of marriage and tribal organisation, which prevailed in Arabia at the time of Mohammed; the general result is that male kinship had been preceded by kinship through women only, and that all that can still be gathered as to the steps of the social evolution in which the change of kinship law is the central feature corresponds in the most striking manner with the general theory propounded, mainly on the basis of a study of modern rude societies, in the late J. F. McLennan's book on *Primitive Marriage*. The correspondence of the Arabian facts with this general theory is indeed so close that all the evidence might easily have been disposed under heads

borrowed from his exposition; and for those who are engaged in the comparative study of early institutions this would probably have been the most convenient arrangement. But the views of my lamented friend are not so widely known as they deserve to be, and several of the *Essays* in which they are expressed are not very accessible. Moreover I wished to speak not only to general students of early society but to all who are interested in old Arabia; for if my results are sound they have a very important bearing on the most fundamental problems of Arabian history and on the genesis of Islam itself. I have therefore thought it best to attempt to build a self-contained argument on the Arabian facts alone, following a retrogressive order from the known to the unknown past, and not calling in the aid of hypotheses derived from the comparative method until, in working backwards on the Arabian evidence, I came to a point where the facts could not be interpreted without the aid of analogies drawn from other rude societies. This mode of exposition has its disadvantages, the most serious of these being that

the changes in the tribal system which went hand in hand with the change in the rule of kinship do not come into view at all till near the close of the argument. In the earlier chapters therefore I am forced to argue on the supposition that a local group was also a stock-group, as it was in the time of the prophet; while in the two last chapters it appears that this cannot always have been the case. But I trust that the reader, if he looks back upon the earlier chapters after reaching the end of the book, will see that this result has been tacitly kept in view throughout, and that the substance of the argument involves nothing inconsistent with it.

The first chapters of the book do not, I think, borrow any principle from the comparative method which cannot be completely verified by Arabian evidence. These chapters are rewritten and expanded from a course of public University lectures delivered in the Easter Term of the current year, and my original idea was to confine the present volume to the ground which they cover. I found however that to break off the argument