

**THE LIFE OF
MOHAMMAD, FROM
ORIGINAL SOURCES**

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The Life of Mohammad, From Original Sources by A. Sprenger

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copy

BY A. SPRENGER, M. D.

Part 1.

ALLAHABAD:

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FIRST BOOK.

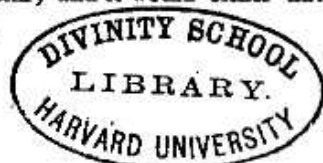
GENERAL REMARKS;

Division of the Subject.

“ Now learn a parable of the fig tree ; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.”

It seems to be the first duty of a historian to investigate the causes of great revolutions; for an event which happens at any other, but its due season, is a miracle: we should consider it as a wonder, if the sun should rise one second before, or after its appointed hour; or if any one were to accomplish, in his childhood, what is expected of him in his riper age. In like manner, had the illiterate prophet *produced* the revolutions which he headed, the ontological argument for his faith, which he constantly urged, would be irrefutable: we should be obliged to acknowledge his doctrine as absolute truth, because it was victorious. In investigating, however, the origin of that extraordinary phenomenon, the victory of a false religion, we must separate the causes of its rise in Arabia from those of its propagation beyond the limits of that country. The former we find in the awaking of healthy minds from the dreams of the ancient world to the knowledge of one immaterial God. This sublime truth, when it was pronounced in the Qorán, in the most forcible language, filled the ever-young Arabs with irresistible enthusiasm; and it would either have

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led them to the Christian religion, and united them with their more advanced neighbours, or it would have ended in barren deism, and thus become altogether abortive, had it not been checked, in its development, by the superstitions of its undaunted advocate and the municipal interests of the Makians.¹ The better knowledge of the Creator of all things was resolved, in its transit through the minds of the worshippers of the black stone, into the dazzling colours of a local mythology, the growing deism of the contemporaries of Moḥammad received a body, the idea became incarnate, and their philosophical speculations were converted into a faith and religion, distinct from other creeds, palpable, and national.

The causes of the diffusion of the Islām over the greater part of the then civilized world, must be sought in the condition of the respective countries, and in the relation of Arabia to them: these will be explained after the history of the origin of Moḥammadanism has been related. But the enquiry into the circumstances, which forboded the rise of a new religion in Arabia, and which gave it shape, are so important, that the author may be justified if he devotes to it the whole of the first book, the first chapter of which will contain the history of Makkah, from the foundation of that city to the time of Moḥammad, with particular reference to its constitution, which, up to this moment, is the groundwork of the constitution of Moḥammadan states. In the second chapter the legendary history of Makkah and of the ancestors of Moḥammad will be related, in order to relieve the picture of stubborn reality by the charms of pious fictions, to acquaint the reader with the

(1.) "When Moḥammad first preached, the Qorayshites did not disbelieve him; but they did not like to give up their former religion. As soon, however, as he condemned their idols, they opposed him." Zohry apud Wāqidy, 47. 3.

"Abū Jahl said: Mok. speaks truth, and he never said a falsehood, but, if the banū Qoḥayy, who enjoy already the offices of bearing the standard, of providing the pilgrims with water, and of keeping the keys of the Ka'bah, should also obtain the prophethip, what would remain for the other Qorayshites?" *Kashsháf*, to Súra 8, 33.

bias of Mohammadan writers, and to initiate him into the details of the doctrine of the Arabic prophet. The sources of the biography of Mohammad will be passed in review in the third chapter.

FIRST CHAPTER.

History of Makkah, and of the Ancestors of Mohammad.

IN antiquity the commerce of the southeast coast of Africa, India, and the south sea with Egypt, Syria, and the neighbouring countries, went through Arabia; in those times to transport merchandize by land was safer and even cheaper than to expose it to the dangers of the sea longer than was indispensable. The principals of this commerce were the Sabæans. Their wealth is described in the most glowing colours by Agatharchides (flourished 177 B. C.),¹ and it was proverbial with the Romans.² The few glimpses which we obtain respecting Sheba and the Arabic commerce from Scripture, tend not only to confirm the statements of classical authors; but they give to it a very high antiquity. About the time of Christ the inhabitants of Petra seem to have suc-

(1.) "There is no nation on earth so wealthy as the Gerrhei and Sabei, as being the centre of all the commerce which passes between Asia and Europe. These are the nations which have enriched the Syria of Ptolemy; these are the nations that furnish the most profitable agencies to the industry of the Phœnicians, and a variety of advantages which are incalculable. They possess themselves of every profusion of luxury in articles of plate and sculpture, in furniture of beds (carpets?), tripods, and other household embellishments, far superior to any thing that is seen in Europe. Their expense of living rivals the magnificence of princes," &c. See Vincent, *Periplus* p. 32.

(2.) Horace says:—*nec otia divitiis Arabum liberissima muto. Ep. I. 7. 36.*
Plenas autem Arabum domus. Od. II. 12, 24.
Ieci beatis nunc Arabum gazis. Od. I. 29. 1.
 See also *Od. III. 24, 2. Ep. I. 6, 6.*

cessfully rivalled the Sabæans, and their influence extended far to the south.

In Yaman the inhabitants were settled, and wealth and hereditary rights had their legitimate scope. Commerce could purchase its safety, and Government could enforce it. The same was the case in Arabia Petrea: the inhabitants lived on agriculture, and the merchants were the rulers; but in the *Hijás* the nature of the soil gave to the nomades the upper hand,¹ and the small forts,² which were erected along the mercantile road for the comfort of the caravans, would have been insufficient to guarantee their safety, had not means been devised to reconcile the indomitable sons of the desert to their own interests.

An Arabic historian³ shows that the Bedouins can only be ruled by prophets; and it appears that the merchants of antiquity tamed their savage neighbours in Arabia, as elsewhere, by religion: by making their fairs places of pilgrimage. The valley in which Makkah now stands, was, in the fourth century after Christ, a sacred forest:⁴ it was called the *Haram*,⁵ and was about thirty seven miles in circumference.⁶ The weak found an asylum in it, though they might be loaded with guilt, but it was not lawful to inhabit it,⁷ or to carry on commerce within its limits.⁸ The religious cere-

(1.) "Incolunt eam (Arabiam) primi post Syros Iudæos homines agricultores; post hos regio est arenosa et sterilis eam Arabes scenitas camelorum postores habitant." Eratosth. apud Strab. p. 728. Burckhardt says, that the steppes, south of Syria, bear to this day traces of former cultivation.

(2.) They are mentioned by Strabo; and it is said in the *Qorán* of the 'Adites, "Do you build on every eminence a strong place?"

(3.) Ibn Khaldún devotes a separate chapter of his *Prolegomena* to this subject.

(4.) The chronology is approximative. The fact that Makkah is of so recent a date is established by some passages in the appendix and by the sequel of the story. Wáqidy says, the valley in which Makkah now stands was, previous to *Qocayy*, covered with salam and thorn trees.

(5.) Pliny 6, 82, calls it *Charasmá*.

(6.) Ibn Khordádhah; but Fásy doubts the exactness of this computation.

(7.) This prohibition was in order that the sacred territory might not be desecrated by janábah (emissio seminis). Fásy.

(8.) Fásy—Moáammed gave permission to trade even during the pilgrimage. *Qorán* 2, 194.

monies, performed in the *Haram*, were a link between several tribes of the *Hijáz*, whom we will for the present call collectively the *Haramites*. The Barbarians, whom in the fastnesses of their deserts no human law could have restricted, submitted to religion: they abstained from war during four months of the year: the two last and the first and the seventh month. On the first day of the seventh month they assembled peaceably at the fair of 'Okátz,¹ the Olympus of the *Hijáz*; where they met several tribes not belonging to their confederation; they exchanged or ransomed their prisoners, they submitted their disputes to arbitration, recited their poems, extolled the nobility of their tribes, and vaunted the valour of their heroes. It was in this fair that Qoss preached the unity of God, before *Mohammad* assumed his prophetic office, and made a great impression on his juvenile mind. About the twentieth of the same month they proceeded to another fair which was held at *Majannah*,² and on the first of the following month they assembled at the fair of *Majáz*,³ from which they went, after ten days, into the sacred territory to perform the rites of religion.⁴ The ceremonies performed on this occasion

(1.) 'Okátz is one day's journey beyond *Qaran al Manásil* (the ancient *Carana*) on the road to *Çan'á* in the district of *Táyif*, and one post from that city. It was the market place of the *Qays 'Aylán* and the *Thaqyf* tribes, and it was situated in the territory of the *Naçr* tribe. These fairs were discontinued during the second century of the *Hijrah*. *Azraqy* apud *Pázy* cap. 40.—Other authors give to 'Okátz a somewhat different position. *Conf. Mas'údy* I. p. 138.

(2.) *Majannah* was the market place of the *Kinánah*, it was situated in their territory one post below *Makkah*. *Azraqy* apud *Pázy*.

(3.) *Majáz* was the market place of the *Hodzayl* tribe, one *farsang* south of mount 'Arafat near *Kabkab*. (*Azraqy* *ibid.*)

(4.) *Qalqashandy* mentions several other markets: "On the first of *Raby' í* the Arabs from near and far assembled at *Dúmat al Jandal* (*Dawmat*, it is said in a gloss to *Wáqidy*, is a different place). *Okaydar* took the customs from them, but sometimes the *Kalbites* made themselves masters of the market. It lasted to the end of the month. Then they went to *Hajar* (in *Yamámah*) where they paid the customs to *Mondzir* or the *Shaykh* of the *banú 'abd Allah b. Dárim*; then they went to 'Omán in *Babrayn* (*sic*), then to *Iram* and the towns of *Shiár*, then to 'Aden, where they bought perfume, and from thence to *Rábyyah* in *Hádhramawt*; some omitted this fair, and proceeded at once to *Çan'á*, where they bought arms, striped cloths and leather. These articles were brought into market by the *banú Ma' áfir*. (The *ma' áfir* cloths are celebrated). Then they went to 'Okátz." This is an excellent outline of the mercantile roads.

were nearly the same as those through which now the Musulman pilgrims go. To us they appear unmeaning and dull; but they have afforded amusement and edification so many centuries to so many millions of men that we should not be justified in passing an opinion. Shahrastány informs us that there was an opinion prevalent among the Arabs, that the walking round the Ka'bah and other ceremonies were symbolic of the motion of the planets and of other astronomical facts.¹

Ambition is the most powerful spring of action in the Bedouin. To keep up the interest of the *Haramites* in their religion various offices² were devised, and divided amongst the Shaykhs of the confederate tribes, to flatter their vanity, and to make the ceremonies more imposing. And every tribe had some of its tutelary deities in the *Haram* as its representatives. This tends to show that this federative religion was an amalgamation of the superstitions of various clans made for political purposes. The most powerful of the confederates were the *Kinánah* tribes. They were

(1.) *Waṭwát*, *Mabáḥij al-ǧár* Lib. I. c. 2. says that most Arabic tribes were originally star-worshippers (Sabeans). "The people of *Sabá* worshipped the sun as mentioned in the *Qurʾán*; the tribe of *Asad* and *Kinánah* worshipped the Moon, and subsequently they embraced the Jewish religion. The *Lakhmites* and *Jodzámites* worshipped Jupiter; the *Asdites* worshipped Mercury; the *banú Minqar* (?) worshipped the *Hyades*; the *Qays* tribes worshipped *Sirius* (calls *Major*); the *Tayy* tribe worshipped *Canopus*. At a later period they sunk into idolatry."

(2.) These offices were, at least at a later time, 1. the *sidánah* (priesthood), or *Ajjábah* (portership); this implied the superintendance over the *Haram* and the keeping and drawing of the lot (arrows) used as the oracles of fate; 2. *rifáḍah* or stewardship at the public entertainment of the pilgrims; 3. *siqáyah*, i. e. providing the pilgrims with water; 4. *ḥiwá* (standard), which with some, implies the leadership and the right of appointing leaders for confederate tribes: this was done by tying a kerchief to the spear of the man appointed; 5. *dár al nadwah*, i. e. the proprietorship of the townhall; 6. *ayám Miná*, the right of heading the pilgrims in the ceremonies which were performed in *Miná*; 7. *iná*, or the right of postponing the sacred months; 8. *qiyáḍah*, leadership in war; 9. *khasánah*, or the charge of the treasury of the *Ka'bah*: this office is mentioned under the *Jorhomites*, but no mention occurs during the *Qoraysbite* period; 10. *ifáḍah*, the privilege of heading the procession from *Mazdalifah*. This privilege was since time immemorial held by the *banú 'adwán b. Qays 'Aylán*, who first resided at *Táyif*, and, being expelled from thence, went into the *Tabámsh*. The last who exercised this privilege was *Abú al-Sayyárah*, on whom see *Freytag Prover. arab.* I. p. 739.