

THE CAABA.

BY THE EDITOR.

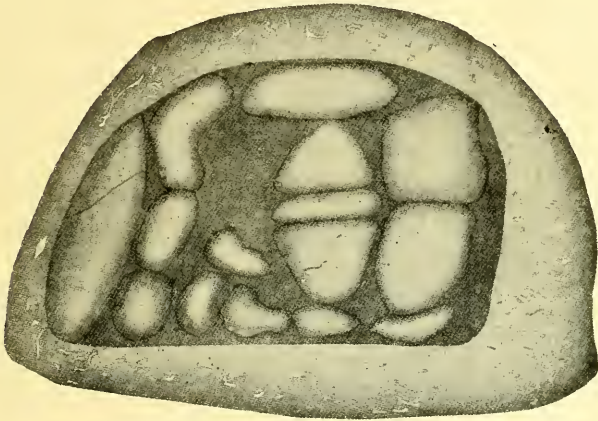
THE Caaba is well known in the Western world as the holiest object of Islam, but while this is true it originally had no intimate connection with this rigorous monotheistic faith. On the contrary it is a pre-Mohammedan relic of an earlier paganism. It was holy to the Arabians long before the time of Mohammed when the inhabitants of the desert still were given to the old pagan worship of Sabaism. In the pre-Islamic stage the Arabians worshiped several gods and even then Mecca was the holy city because it held the sacred "black stone" (*hadjura 'l-aswad*) that was regarded with superstitious awe for reasons which we no longer know. May it have been a meteorite which had fallen from heaven? This is not impossible, but we must remember that it is not one stone, but about a dozen small stones united by a dark cement into one and held together by a silver band.

This stone is kept hidden from the profane sight of infidels and so we must content ourselves with the description of those fortunate men who have been able to visit Mecca when the stone was greeted by the faithful. The size of the black stone is not large, but it is set in a brick building as large as a small house, which on account of its rectangular form has been called the "cube" or in Arabic, *Caaba*.

A description of the Caaba, the oblong structure built to contain the precious black stone, is given at some length in T. P. Hughes's *Dictionary of Islam* where we read (s. v. Ka'bah, Hajura 'l-aswad, and Kiswah): "The Ka'bah (Caaba) is, according to Burckhardt and Burton, an oblong massive structure, 18 paces in length, 14 in breadth, and about 35 feet in height. It is constructed of gray Makkan stone in large blocks of different sizes, joined together in a very rough manner with cement. (Burton says it is excellent mortar like Roman cement.) The Ka'bah stands upon a base two

feet in height, which presents a sharp inclined plane; its roof being flat, it has at a distance the appearance of a perfect cube. The only door which affords entrance, and which is opened but two or three times in the year (Burton says it can be entered by pilgrims, by paying the guardian a liberal fee), is on the east side and about seven feet above the ground. At the southeast corner of the Ka'bah near the door is the famous black stone (*Hajura 'l-aswad*) which forms a part of the sharp angle of the building, at four or five feet above the ground.

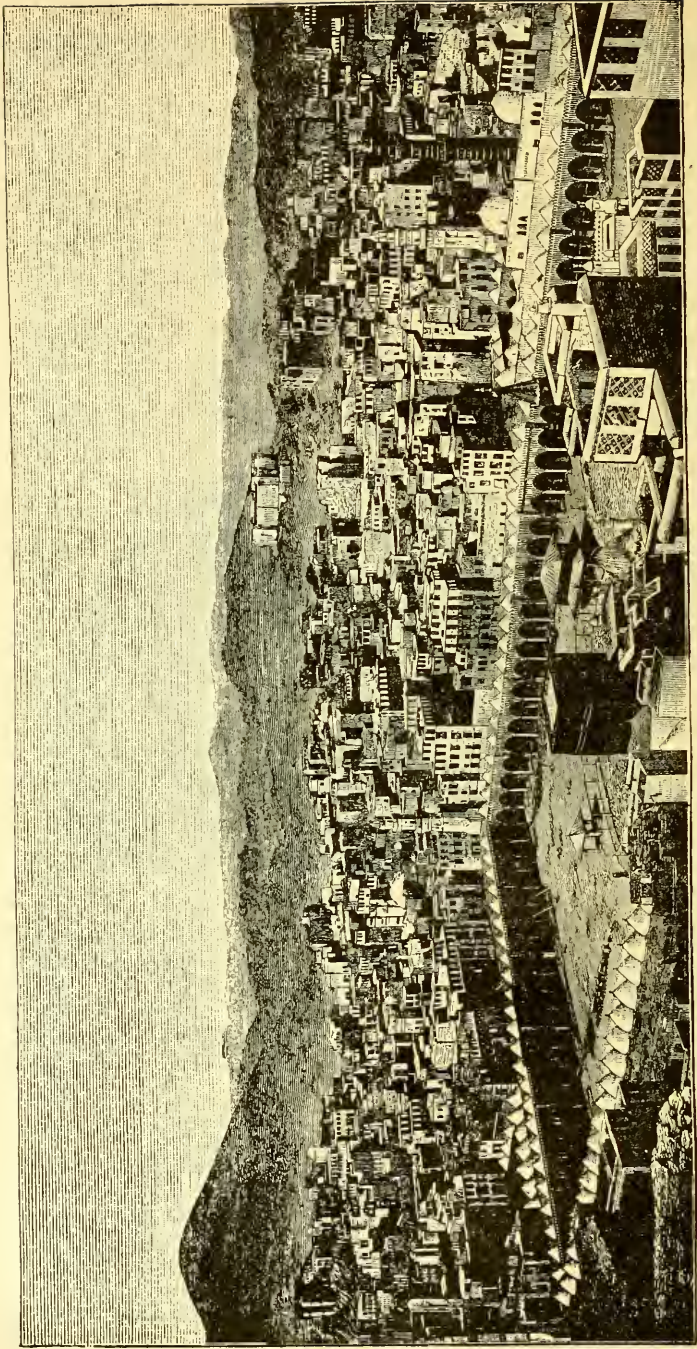
"The black stone, Mr. Burckhardt says, 'is an irregular oval, about seven inches in diameter, with an undulating surface, composed of about a dozen smaller stones of different sizes and shapes well joined together with a small quantity of cement and perfectly



THE BLACK STONE.

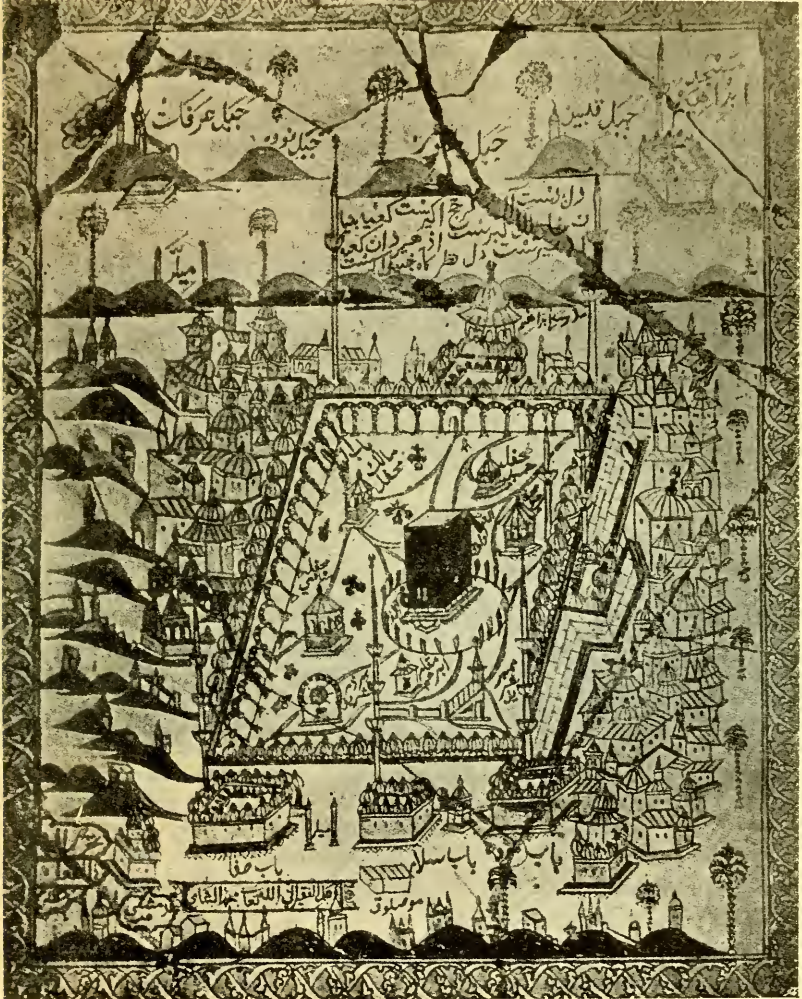
From T. Mann, *Der Islam einst und jetzt*.

well smoothed. It looks as if the whole had been broken into as many pieces by a violent blow, and then united again. It is very difficult to determine accurately the quality of this stone, which has been worn to its present surface by the millions of touches and kisses it has received. It appeared to me like a lava, containing several small extraneous particles of a whitish and of a yellow substance. Its color is now a deep reddish brown approaching to black. It is surrounded on all sides by a border composed of a substance which I took to be a close cement of pitch and gravel of a similar, but not quite the same, brownish color. This border serves to support its detached pieces; it is two or three inches in breadth, and rises a little above the surface of the stone. Both the border and the stone itself are encircled by a silver band, broader



MECCA, SHOWING THE SURROUNDING HILLS.

below than above, and on the two sides, with a considerable swelling below, as if a part of the stone were hidden under it. The lower part of the border is studded with silver nails.'



SYRIAN TILE REPRESENTING THE MOSQUE OF MECCA WITH THE CAABA.

1726. Original in the Arabian Museum at Cairo.

"Captain Burton remarks, 'The color appeared to me black and metallic, and the center of the stone was sunk about two inches below the metallic circle. Round the sides was a reddish brown

cement almost level with the metal and sloping down to the middle of the stone. The band is now a massive arch of gold and silver gilt. I found the aperture in which the stone is, one span and three fingers broad.'

"According to Ibn 'Abbas, Muhammad said the black stone came down from Paradise and at the time of its descent was whiter than milk (but that the sins of the children of Adam have caused it to be black by their touching it; that on the day of resurrection, when it will have two eyes, by which it will see and know all those who touched it and kissed it, and when it will have a tongue to speak, it will give evidence in favor of those who touched and kissed it.



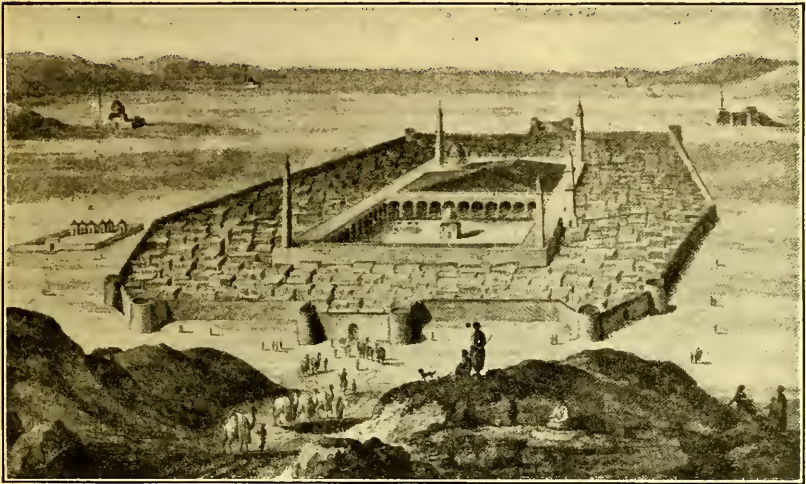
WORSHIPING PILGRIMS IN THE COURT-YARD OF THE MOSQUE
AT MECCA.

After Snouck-Hurzronje, *Bilder aus Mekka*.

"Maximus Tyrius, who wrote in the second century, says: 'The Arabians pay homage to I know not what god, which they represent by a quadrangular stone,' alluding to the Ka'bah or temple which contains the black stone. The Guebars or ancient Persians assert that the black stone was among the the images and relics left by Mahabad and his successors in the Ka'bah, and that it was an emblem of Saturn. It is probably an aerolite and owes its reputation, like many others, to its fall from the sky. Its existence as an object of adoration in an iconoclastic religious system can only be accounted for by Muhammad's attempt to conciliate the idolators of Arabia.

"In the corner of the Ka'bah facing the south, there is another

stone about five feet from the ground. It is one foot and a half in length, and two inches in breadth, placed upright, and of common Makkan stone. According to the rites of the pilgrimage, this stone, which is called *ar-Ruknu 'IYamānī*, or Yaman pillar, should only be touched with the right hand as the pilgrim passes it, but Captain Burton says he frequently saw it kissed by the pilgrims. Just by the door of the Ka'bah and close to the wall is a slight hollow in the ground, lined with marble and sufficiently large to admit of three persons sitting, which is called *al-Mi'jan*, and is supposed to be the place where Abraham and his son Ishmael kneaded the chalk and mud which they used to build the Ka'bah. Here it is thought meritorious to pray. On the base of the Ka'bah, just above the



MEDINA, SHOWING THE PROPHET'S GRAVE.

From d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire ottoman*, Paris, 1790.

Mi'jan, is an ancient Kufic inscription, which neither Burckhardt nor Burton were able to decipher or to copy. On the northwest side of the Ka'bah, about two feet below its summit, is the water-spout called the *Mi'zābu'r-Rahma*, or the water-spout of mercy. This spout is of gold, and was sent hither from Constantinople in A. H. 981 (A. D. 1573). It carries rain from the roof and discharges it upon Ishmael's grave. There are two large green marble slabs, which are said to have been presents from Cairo, A. H. 241 (A. D. 855), which are supposed to mark the graves of Hagar and Ishmael. The pavement round the Ka'bah consists of a very handsome mosaic of various colored stones, and is said to have been

laid down A. H. 826 (A. D. 1423). On one side of the Ka'bah is a semicircular wall, the extremities of which are in a line with the sides of the Ka'bah, and distant about six feet leaving an opening which leads to the grave of Ishmael. The wall is called *al-Hatim*, 'the broken,' and the enclosed area *al-Hijr*, 'the enclosure.' The Ka'bah is covered with a cloth, which when Captain Burton visited Makkah in 1853, he found to be a coarse tissue of mixed silk and cotton, and of eight pieces, two for each face of the building, the seams being concealed by the broad gilt band called the *hizām*. It is lined with white calico, and has cotton ropes to secure the covering to metal rings at the basement. But on the occasion of Captain Burton's visit the *kiswah* was tucked up by ropes from the roof. The whole is of a brilliant black, with the gold band running round it.

"The *burqa'*, or veil, is a curtain hung before the door of the Ka'bah, also of black brocade, embroidered with inscriptions, in letters of gold, of verses from the Qur'an, and lined with green silk.

"According to Burton, the inscription on the gold band of the *kiswah* is the ninetieth verse of the third Sūrah of the Qur'an: 'Verily, the first House founded for mankind was surely that at Bakkah, for a blessing and a guidance to the worlds.' The whole is covered with seven Sūrahs of the Qur'an.

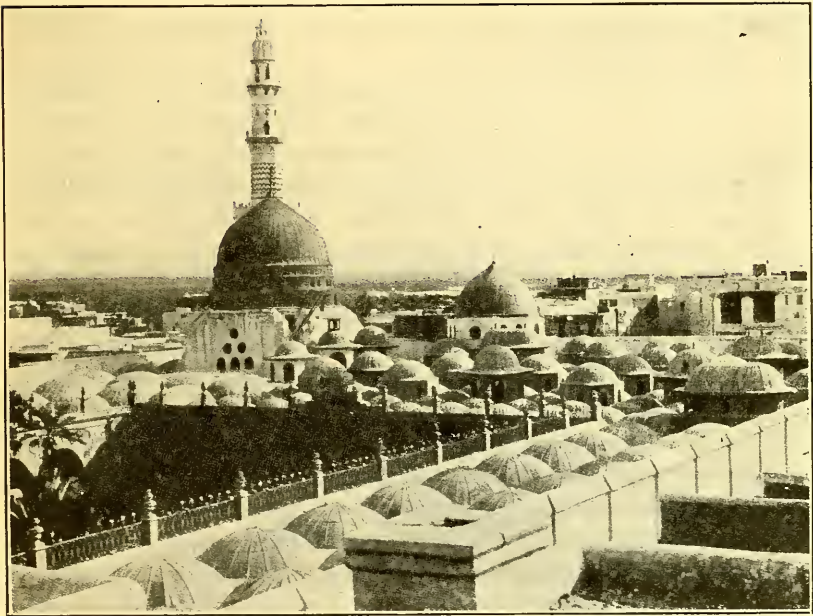
"According to the traditions and the inventive genius of Muslim writers, the Ka'bah was first constructed in heaven (where a model of it still remains, called the *Baitu'l-Ma'mūr*) two thousand years before the creation of the world. Adam erected the Ka'bah on earth exactly below the spot its perfect model occupies in heaven, and selected the stones from the five sacred mountains, Sinai, al-Jūdi, Hirā', Olivet, and Lebanon. Ten thousand angels were appointed to guard the structure, but, as Burckhardt remarks, they appear to have been often most remiss in their duty! At the Deluge the sacred house was destroyed. But the Almighty is said to have instructed Abraham to rebuild it. In its construction Abraham was assisted by his son Ishmael, who with his mother Hagar were at the time residents of Makkah, Abraham having journeyed from Syria in order to obey the commands of God.

"Upon digging they found the original foundations of the building. But wanting a stone to mark the corner of the building, Ishmael started in search of one, and as he was going in the direction of Jabal Qubais, the angel Gabriel met him and gave him the famous black stone.

"Upon the death of Ishmael, the Ka'bah fell into possession of the Banū Jurhum, and remained in their hands for a thousand years.

It then became the property of the Banū Khuzā'ah, who held it for three hundred years. But being constantly exposed to torrents, it was destroyed, and was rebuilt by Qusaïy ibn Kilāb, who put a top to it. Up to this time it is said to have been open at the roof.

"It is said; by Muhammadan historians, that 'Amr ibn Luhaïy was the first who introduced idolatry into Arabia, and that he brought the great idol Hubal from Hait in Mesopotamia and placed it in the sacred house. It then became a Pantheon common to all the tribes. The tribe of Qusaïy were the first who built dwelling-houses round the Ka'bah. The successors of the Banū Qusaïy were



THE GREAT MOSQUE AT MEDINA WITH THE PROPHET'S GRAVE.

From a photograph.

the Quraish. Soon after they came into possession, the Ka'bah was destroyed by fire, and they rebuilt it of wood and of a smaller size than it had been in the time of the Banū Qusaïy. The roof was supported within by six pillars, and the statue of Hubal was placed over a wall then existing within the Ka'bah. This took place during the youth of Muhammad. Al-Azraqī, quoted by Burckhardt, says that the figure of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus was sculptured as a deity upon one of the six pillars nearest the gate.

"The grandfather of Muhammad, 'Abdu 'l-Muttalib, the son

of Hāshim, became the custodian of the sacred house; and during his time, the Ka'bah being considered too low in its structure, the Quraish wished to raise it; so they demolished it and then they rebuilt it till the work reached the place of the black stone. Each tribe wishing to have the honor of raising the black stone into its place, they quarreled among themselves. But they at last agreed that the first man who should enter the gate of the enclosure should be umpire. Muhammad was the first to enter, and he was appointed umpire. He thereupon ordered them to place the stone upon a cloth and each tribe by its representative to take hold of the cloth and lift it into its place. The dispute was thus ended, and when the stone had reached its proper place, Muhammad fixed it in its situation with his own hand.

“At the commencement of Muhammad's mission, it is remarkable that there is scarcely an allusion to the Ka'bah, and this fact, taken with the circumstance that the earliest *Qiblah* or direction for prayer, was Jerusalem, and not the Ka'bah, seems to imply that Muhammad's strong iconoclastic tendencies did not incline his sympathies to this ancient idol temple with its superstitious ceremonies. Had the Jews favorably received the new prophet as one who taught the religion of Abraham, to the abrogation of that of Moses and Jesus, Jerusalem and not Makkah would have been the sacred city, and the ancient rock and not the Ka'bah would have been the object of superstitious reverence.

“When Muhammad found himself established in al-Madīnah, with a very good prospect of obtaining possession of Makkah and its historic associations, he seems to have withdrawn his thoughts from Jerusalem and its sacred rock and to fix them on the house at Bakkah as the home founded for mankind,—Blessed, and a guidance to all creatures (Sūrah iii. 90). The Jews proving obdurate and there being little chance of his succeeding in establishing his claim as their prophet spoken of by Moses, he changes the *Qiblah*, or direction for prayer, from Jerusalem to Makkah. The house at Makkah is made a place of resort unto men and a sanctuary (Sūrah ii. 119).

“The *Qiblah* is changed by an express command of the Almighty, and the whole passage is remarkable as exhibiting a decided concession on the part of Muhammad to the claims of the Ka'bah as a central object of adoration (Sūrah iii. 138-145):

“We appointed the *Qiblah* which thou formerly hadst, only that we might know him who followeth the apostle from him who turneth on his heels. The change is a difficulty, but not to those whom God hath guided. But God will not let your faith be fruit-

less; for unto man is God merciful, gracious. We have seen thee turning thy face toward every part of heaven; but we will have thee turn to a Qiblah which shall please thee. Turn then thy face toward the sacred mosque, and wherever ye be, turn your faces toward that part. They, verily, to whom the Book hath been given, know this to be the truth from their Lord: and God is not regardless of what ye do. Even though thou shouldst bring every kind of sign to those who have received the Scriptures, yet thy Qiblah they will not adopt; nor shalt thou adopt their Qiblah; nor will one part of them adopt the Qiblah of the other. And if, after the knowledge which hath come to thee, thou follow their wishes, verily then wilt thou become of the unrighteous. They to whom we have given the Scriptures know him—the *apostle*—even as they know their own children; but truly a part of them do conceal the truth, though acquainted with it. The truth is from thy Lord. Be not then of those who doubt. All have a quarter of the heavens to which they turn them; but wherever ye be, hasten emulously after good. God will one day bring you all together; verily, God is all-powerful. And from whatever place thou comest forth, turn thy face toward the sacred mosque; for this is the truth from thy Lord, and God is not inattentive to your doings. And from whatever place thou comest forth, turn thy face toward the sacred mosque; and wherever ye be, to that part turn your faces, lest men have cause of dispute against you. But as for the impious among them, fear them not; but fear me, that I may perfect my favors on you, and that ye may be guided aright.’

“In the seventh year of the Hijrah, Muhammad was, according to the treaty with the Quraish at al-Hudaibiyah in the previous year, allowed to enter Makkah and perform the circuit of the Ka’bah. Hubal and the other idols of the Arabian pantheon were still within the sacred building, but, as Muhammad’s visit was limited to three days, he confined himself to the ordinary rites of the *‘Umrah*, or visitation, without interfering with the idolatrous arrangement of the Ka’bah itself. Before he left, at the hour of midday prayer, Bilāl ascended the holy house, and from its summit gave the first call to Muslim prayers, which were afterwards led by the Prophet in the usual form.

The following year Muhammad occupied Makkah by force of arms. The idols in the Ka’bah were destroyed, and the rites of the pilgrimage were established as by divine enactment. From this time the history of the Ka’bah becomes part of the history of Islām.”