

The House of Quraysh

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It's Orgin and Development

Qusayy

Another of the most powerful Arab tribes of the Abrahamic descent was Quraysh; and about four hundred years after Christ, a man of Quraysh named Qusayy married a daughter of Hulayl who was then chief of Khuzd'ah.

Hulayl preferred his son-in-law to his own sons, for Qusayy was outstanding amongst all Arabs of his time, and on the death of Hulayl, after a fierce battle which ended in arbitration. It was agreed that Qusayy should rule over Mecca and be the guardian of the Holy Kabah.

Quraysh of the Hollow

Qusayy there upon brought those of Quraysh who were his nearest of kin and settled them in the valley of Becca, beside the Holy Sanctuary:

1.His brother Zuhrah

2.His uncle Taym

3.Makhzum, the son of another uncle

And one or two cousins who were less close.

These people and their posterity were known as Quraysh of the Hollow, whereas Qusayy's more remote kinsmen settled in the ravines neighbours, of the surrounding Becca hills and in the countryside beyond and were known as God's visitors, the pilgrims to Quraysh of the Outskirts.

Qusayy ruled over them all as a king, with undisputed power, and they paid him a tax every year on their flocks, so that he might feed those of the pilgrims who were too poor to provide for themselves. Until then the keepers of the Sanctuary had lived around the Kabah in tents. But Qusayy now told them to build themselves houses, having already built a house for himself.

A most spacious dwelling which was known as the House of Assembly.

All was harmonious, but seeds of discord were about to be sown. It was a marked characteristic of Qusayy's line that in each generation there would be one man who was altogether pre-eminent.

Amongst Qusayy's four sons, this man was Abd Mandaf, who was already honoured in his father's time. But Qusayy preferred his first born, Abd Ad-Dar although he was the least

capable of all; and shortly before his death he said to him: My son, I will set thee level with the others in despite of men's honouring them more than thee. None shall enter the Kabah except thou open it for him, and no hand but thine shall knot for Quraysh their ensign of war, nor shall any pilgrim draw water for drink in Mecca except thou give him the right thereto, nor shall he eat food except it be of thy providing, nor shall Quraysh resolve upon any matter except it be in thy house. Having thus invested him with all his rights and powers, he transferred to him the ownership of the House of Assembly.

Hashim

Out of filial piety Abd Manaf accepted without question his father's wishes; but in the next generation half of Quraysh gathered round Abd Mandaf's son Hashim, clearly the foremost man of his day, and demanded that the rights be transferred from the clan of Abd Ad-Dar to his clan.

Those who supported Hashim and his brothers were the descendants of Zuhrah and Taym, and all Qusayy's descendants except those of the eldest line. The descendants of Makhzdm and of the other remoter cousins maintained that the rights should remain in the family of Abd Ad-Dar.

The Scented Ones

Feelings rose so high that the women of the clan of Abd Mandaf brought a bowl of rich perfume and placed it beside the Kabah; and Hashim and his brothers and all their allies dipped their hands in it and swore a solemn oath that they would never abandon one another, rubbing their scented hands over the stones of the Kabah in confirmation of their pact.

Thus it was that this group of clans were known as the Scented Ones.

The allies of Abd Ad-Dar

likewise swore an oath of union of their own, and they were known as the Confederates. Violence was strictly forbidden not only in the Sanctuary itself but also within a wide circle round Mecca, several miles in diameter; and the two sides were about to leave this sacred precinct in order to fight a battle to the death when a compromise was suggested, It was agreed that:

1.The sons of Abd Mandaf

Should have the rights of levying the tax and providing the pilgrims with food and drink

2. Whereas the sons of Abd Ad-Dar

Should retain the keys of the Kabah and their other rights, and that their house should continue to be the House of Assembly.

3. Hashim's brothers

All agreed that he should have the sole responsibility of providing for the pilgrims. When the time of the Pilgrimage drew near Hashim himself would rise in the Assembly and say:

"O men of Quraysh, ye are God's neighbours, the people of His House; and at this feast there come unto you God's visitors, the pilgrims to His House. They are God's guests, and no guests have such claim on your generosity as His guests. If my own wealth could compass it, I would not lay this burden upon you."

Hashim was held in much honour, both at home and abroad. It was he who established the two great caravan journeys from Mecca:

1. The Caravan of the Winter To the south of Arabia, Yemen

2. The Caravan of the Summer To north-west of Arabia, and beyond it to Palestine and Syria

Palestine and Syria was then under Byzantine rule as part of the Roman Empire.

Both journeys lay along the ancient incense route; and one of the first main halts of the summer caravans was the oasis of Yathrib (later to be named Al-Madinah by The Prophet), eleven camel days north of Mecca.

This oasis had at one time been chiefly inhabited by Jews, but an Arab tribe from South Arabia was now in control of it. The Jews none the less continued to live there in considerable prosperity and peace, taking part in the general life of the community while maintaining their own religion.

As to the Arabs of Yathrib, they had certain matriarchal traditions and were collectively known as the children of Qaylah after one of their ancestresses. But they had now branched into two tribes which were named Aws and Khazraj after Qaylah's two sons.

Salma the daughter of Amr

One of the most influential women of Khazra was Salma the daughter of Amr, of the clan of Najjd, and Hashim asked her to marry him. She consented on condition that the control of her affairs should remain entirely in her own hands; and when she bore him a son she kept the boy with her in Yathrib until he was fourteen years old or more.

Hashim was not averse to this, for despite the oasis fever, which was more of a danger to newcomers than to the inhabitants, the climate was healthier than that of Mecca.

Moreover he often went to Syria and would stay with Salma and his son on the way there and on his return. But Hashim life was not destined to be a long one, and during one of his Journeys he fell gravely ill at Gaza in Palestine and died there.

Al-Muttaleb

Hashim had two full brothers,

1. Abdu Shams

2. Muttalib

3. Nawfal (half-brother)

But Abdu Shams was exceedingly busied with trade in Yemen, and later also in Syria, where as Nawfal was no less busied with trade in Iraq, and both would be absent from Mecca for long periods.

For these and perhaps for other reasons also, Hashim's younger brother Muttalib took over the rights of watering the pilgrims tax to feed them; and he now felt it his duty to give those of his own successor.

Hashim had had three sons by Salma. But if all that was said were true, none of these - and for that matter none of Muttalib's own sons - could be compared with Salma's son.

Shaybah

Better known as Abd Al-Muttalib

Despite his youth, Shaybah - for so his mother had named him. Already showed distinct promise of gifts for leadership, and excellent reports of him were continually brought to Mecca by travellers who passed through the oasis.

Finally Muttalib went to see for himself, and what he saw of the lad he liked and this prompted him to ask Salma to entrust his nephew to his care. However, Salma was most unwilling to let her son go, and the boy refused to leave his mother without her prior consent.

But Muttalib was not to be discouraged, and he pointed out to both mother and son that the possibilities which Yathrib had to offer compared with those of Mecca.

As guardians of the Holy House, the great centre of pilgrimage for all Arabia, Quraysh ranked higher in dignity than any other Arab tribe; and there was a strong likelihood that Shaybah would one day hold the office which his father had held and so become one of the clan chiefs of Quraysh.

But for this he must first be integrated into his people. No mere exile from outside could hope to attain to such honour. Salma was impressed by his arguments, and if her son it would be

easy for her to visit him there and for him to visit her, so she agreed to let him go.

Shaybah arrives in Mecca and is re-named mistakenly as Abd Al- Muttalib

Muttalib took his young nephew with him to Mecca. His nephew was riding behind him on another camel; and as they rode into Mecca he heard some of the bystanders say as they

looked at the young stranger:

"Abd Al-Muttalib."

For the Arabic word: 'Abd'

Meaning: Slave

Hence:

Abd Al-Muttalib

That is to mean:

Al-Muttalib's Slave

Al-Muttalib snapped angrily at them!

Wo, upon thee! He is no less than the son of my brother Hachim

The laughter with which his words were greeted with was but a prelude to the merriment that was caused throughout the whole ancient city as the story of the blunder ran from mouth to mouth; and from that day the youth was affectionately known as Abd Al-Muttalib.

Not long after his arrival he was involved in a dispute about his father's estate with his uncle Nawfal: but with the help of his guardian uncle, and pressure brought to bear from Yathrib, Abd Al-Muttalib was able to secure his rights. Nor did he disappoint the hopes that aged by his early promise; and when, after several years,

When Muttalib died, no one disputed his nephew's qualifications to succeed to the heavy responsibility of feeding and watering the pilgrims. It was even said that he surpassed both his father and his uncle in his fulfilment of this task.

The Clan Chief of Bani Hashim was now Abd Al-Muttalib, who in turn was the grandfather of .(The Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh