

CLAIM 2: MECCA WAS WELL ESTABLISHED BY 7TH CENTURY

- **Archaeological evidence reveals much about kingdoms of Northern Arabia/Southern Jordan and of South Arabia(Yemen).**
- **There is VERY LITTLE about what is in the middle ie where Mecca is located.**
- **Ancient written sources also document people of North and South Arabia but nothing for Mecca.**
- **We have records for Medina (Yathrib) dating back to 6th century BC but NOTHING for Mecca before AD741**

Overview

North Arabia

- Prior to 6th century B.C, there is no archaeological evidence of civilisation in Arabia and there is no evidence of settlement at oases such as Jawf, Tayma and Dedan.
- This is consistent with Assyrian texts that refer to the Arabs as 'nomads'. The stela of the Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III (737BC) mentions the tribe of Qedar, the name of one of the sons of Ishmael as listed in the Bible. They also mention Massaa and Tayma.
- Assyrian king Sargon II claims to have crushed the people of Thamud and deported them to Samaria.
- Ashurbanipal (668-627BC) claims to have defeated Iata who was 'king of Arabia'. This man then fled to the king of the Nabaiati (Nabateans). His records also mention the people of Qedar who appear to be a kingdom from the Sinai to the Negev.
- In 5th century, Herodotus talks of the 'Arabs' who inhabited the area from Gaza to Ienysus. Around the same time, we see an Aramaic inscription on a silver bowl from Egypt that mentions the king of Qedar who makes an offering to 'Ilat' or 'Allat' (the goddess in Arabic)
- The first mention of north Arabia in ancient written sources is from 312 BC when Diodorus refers to the Nabateans as a distinct people.
- By first century BC, Josephus says that the Nabateans lived in the area from the Euphrates to the Red Sea. According to him, they are descended from the tribes of Ishmael.

South Arabia

- From the earliest records, southern Arabia was known for its production of frankincense and myrrh. They formed the basis of the incense trade discussed above.
- The kingdoms of south Arabia produced the incense but the marketing and transport was done by the Nabateans as discussed above. They transported it to Gaza from South Arabia over a distance of 3400km. By Roman times, this market had grown to 3000 tons a year
- The earliest South Arabian kingdom we hear of is Saba (Sheba) with its capital in Ma'rib. Examination of sediments around this region suggests that irrigation there goes back to the 3rd millennium BC.
- From 6th century BC, they built a huge dam at Ma'rib to retain water that came down from seasonal rains in the mountains. It created a lake that serviced an irrigation system watering about 25,000 acres of land. Unfortunately, whenever the dam broke or failed, floods would occur, and people would need to flee the area.
- Like the Nabateans, the Sabeans also grew wealthy via the spice trade and they began to erect temples and fortified towns. By the 8th and 7th centuries BC, Assyrian records mention goods such as incense and precious stones from Saba

- By the 4th century BC, the kingdoms of the Minaeans, Qataban and the Hadramaut splintered off from Saba, and they also grew wealthy via the incense trade.
- 115 BC the Himyarite kingdom was founded and gradually annexed the surrounding kingdoms. They conquered Saba in 25BC, then Qataban in AD50 and Hadramaut in AD 100.
- From then until the 6th century AD, South Arabia was largely controlled by the Himyarites who continued to sell spices to the civilised world. This was such a lucrative business that the Romans called the Himyarite kingdom '*Arabia Felix*' or 'happy Arabia'
- The Nabateans allied themselves with the Himyarites to gain control of the incense trade. While the other kingdoms transported their goods by land, the Himyarites floated it to a nearby island and Nabatean boats picked it up to transport it up the Red Sea.
- Unfortunately for the Himyarites, the success of Christianity meant that the demand for incense plummeted and their prosperity declined.

Medina

- Medina was originally called Yathrib and was known as an oasis dating back to the 6th century BC. It is mentioned in the chronicles of Nabonidus.
- After the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 Jewish refugees fled Roman lands going as far south as Yemen. Some settled in Yathrib

Q.What does the Archaeology tell us?

A.Extensive surveys of the Hijaz and Northern Arabian peninsula by Arab and Western Archaeologists have found NO EVIDENCE to corroborate the SIN. Even though sites from Nabatean, Roman and Byzantine periods were found, there were no 6th century or 7th century sites found. There were no signs of pagan cult centres or Jewish settlement in Medina or Khaybar. [Nevo and Cohen, Crossroads to Islam]

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Even though no excavations have been carried out in Mecca and Medina, '*this in no way affects the argument. The remains of a whole period will be found in any site which was occupied during the period in question. For example, the Biblical period in Palestine was well attested archaeologically, long before excavations were carried out in Jerusalem; many other sites yielded archaeological evidence of it. This is not the case in the Hijaz and Trans-Jordan where the phenomena, pagan and Jewish, described in the Muslim sources as characterising the Jahiliyyah simply do not appear in the archaeological record*' [p13]

'The Muslim traditions depict the Arabian Peninsula as filled with roaming nomadic tribes who, after conversion to Islam, supplied thousands of warriors for the conquest of al-Sham, Iraq and Egypt. This view does not bear close scrutiny. Most of the peninsula (excluding of course its southern coastal region) is a parched desert which, judging from the material remains so far discovered, was never densely inhabited and whose population was only sparse but extremely poor by any standard at any historical time. It is true that we have few hard facts about the peninsula's pre-Islamic societies and political groupings...But even the little information discovered so far cannot be reconciled with the

traditional Muslim account of peninsular society and, within it, the relative importance of the Hijaz. [p67]

We know that there were settlements in South Arabia eg Yemen and Hadramat from 400 BC. These people known as Sabaeans were involved in spice trade (mainly Frankincense). Originally there was a trade route that went up the eastern side, along the Persian gulf to Southern Iraq and Babylon. Later, there was a route beginning in Najran and running up to Dedan. This was then bypassed by the Red Sea trade route. The South Arabian people did not colonise the inner peninsula. The inner peninsula was inhabited by Bedouin type cultures. *'Their presence is revealed by thousands of rock inscriptions in various epigraphic peninsular languages (EPL); the northern and central peninsular dialects known as Tamudian, Safaitic and Lihyanite. These inscriptions occur all over the peninsula and in its extensions towards the Fertile Crescent'* [p68]

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 - 822 and 823 we have first known coins from Mecca itself. These were during the reign of Al-Mamun (813-833). They actually mention the name Mecca as the mint and this means that at that time, Mecca was a culturally significant place. But this begs the following question as stated by Volker Popp:
'How then did it come that this location suddenly emerged from out of nowhere'
[*'Early Islam, 2013 p167*]

Archaeologist Dan Gibson discusses his interactions with Arabic speaking Archaeologists in his 2017 book "Early Islamic Qiblas". The following quote is both informative and reveals the dearth of evidence for the SIN:

'In 2002, I had the opportunity to visit the Second Conference on Nabataean studies held in Petra, Jordan, and organised by the Al-Hussein Bin Talal University. During the conference I had occasion to speak with several leading Jordanian and Saudi Archaeologists. I asked them specifically about the archaeological record in and around Mecca. While not wishing to be quoted or named publicly, they admitted that the archaeological record at Mecca was basically non-existent before 900 CE. I had expected them to defend the opinion that ancient Mecca was a walled city with houses, gardens, public buildings, and temples. They shook their heads and said, "there was nothing like that there". When construction began on the Abraj Al-Bait complex of seven skyscrapers in Mecca in 2004, there was a stir of interest in the archaeological community, wondering what the construction might reveal about the ruins under Mecca. In the end, the only ruins that were disturbed was that of the 18th century Ottoman Ajyad Fortress. Truly there was no great city under Mecca'



Above: Observation of construction near the Ka'ba failed to uncover any ancient large foundation stones.

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