

A BIT OF PRE-ISLAMIC HISTORY: 7th Century C.E.

I. How did they make a living?

- A. Bedouin nomads in the desert
- B. Merchants and agriculturalists around oasis
- C. Deals made between the nomads and the agriculturalists: food for protection

II. The Clan or Tribe

- A. “no man or woman stands alone” – too harsh; tough competition; blood basis
- B. clan is more important than individual
- C. every injury must be avenged – blood vendetta
- D. “ghazu” or raid – common way of equalizing power;
- E. chiefs handed down authority to best in tribe, not his son
- F. infanticide – baby girls

III. Desert Faith

- A. gods and goddesses for protection
- B. spirits associated with rocks, trees, springs and wells
- C. Mecca was central shrine of gods: “kaba”
 - 1. cubed shaped building holding 360 gods of tribal patronage
 - 2. black stone in the eastern corner – meteorite symbolizes connection
- D. held common idea of a high god – al-Lah
- E. hajj- pilgrimage to Mecca for circumambulation “your end is your beginning”
- F. there is no judgment except within the tribe; no life after death

IV. Socio-economic power

- A. the Quraysh settled in Mecca around the latter part of 5th century
- B. trading; livestock breeding
- C. military aid from Bedouin nomads in return for shares
- D. Sura 105: “They are the people of God; God fought for them and thwarted the attack of the enemy.”
- E. “Mecca had an atmosphere of cut-throat capitalism and high finance.” Karen Armstrong
- F. God had saved them for wealth = rampant greed; personal fortune; ignored the poor, widowed, orphan; tradition had always protected these groups