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Mount ‘Arafāt (‘Arafa) is a venerated site in Islam, approximately 70 metres high, located about 21 kilometres east of Mecca, on the road to al-Ṭāʾif. The small mountain and the plain on which it is situated serve as one of the main stations of the pilgrimage (hājj) to Mecca. The plain is some 6 kilometres from east to west and approximately 12 kilometres from north to south; it is surrounded by several mountains to the east, north, and south. Mount ‘Arafāt is isolated from the other mountains and located at the northeast end of the plain. It is also known as Jabal al-Rahma (“Mount of Mercy”), and was also called Alāl, or Ilāl (cf. Yāqūt, 1:242–3), perhaps after a pre-Islamic deity worshipped at this location (Wellhausen, 82–3).

The form ‘Arafāt is often used interchangeably with the form ‘Arafa, usually when not referring to the mount proper. The traditional etymologies of the name stem from the Arabic root ‘a-r-f (“to know”), and are contained in traditions that base its sacredness on the figure of Abraham. The angel Gabriel is said to have taught him the sequence of the rites at each station of the hājj, until they arrived at ‘Arafāt. There Gabriel asked Abraham: “Do you know (hal ‘arafta) your ritual stations?” and from this phrase came the name. According to other traditions, Gabriel taught the rites to Adam, and ‘Arafāt was called thus because, after having been expelled from Paradise, Adam and Eve met and recognised each other (taʿārafā) there. Another explanation for the name is that pilgrims confess
their sins there. Still other explanations suggest that the name was derived from 'īrf ("patience"), because pilgrims endure suffering on their way there.

On the summit of Mount ‘Arafāt there stood formerly a domed shrine (qubba), named after Umm Salama (Muḥammad’s wife). Al-Fāsī (d. 832/1428), a historian of Mecca, reports that it was renovated in 799/1397. It was destroyed by the Wahhābis. The sources also mention a site called Jabal al-Duʿāʾ ("Mount of Supplication"), which is said to have been the place where all the prophets used to assemble on the Day of ‘Arafāt. The sources mention a mosque named Masjid ‘Arafa, situated on the border between ‘Arafa and the haram of Mecca, but some of the sources read “Urana”; this mosque is also called Masjid İbrâhîm, and according to al-Fāsī, it was built some time after the rise of the ‘Abbāsids (132/750–656/1258). There was also a square building to the left of Jabal al-Rahma, called “the house of Adam,” which served as a watering place for pilgrims. A cave (ghār) is mentioned that was reportedly situated in a nearby site called Namira, in which the Prophet, and later the caliphs, stayed before commencing the rites of ‘Arafāt. There was a minbar on ‘Arafāt that was considered to date back to Muḥammad’s time. The Prophet is said to have delivered his farewell sermon there, in 10/632.

Some poetic verses attributed to Abū Ṭālib, Muḥammad’s paternal uncle, contain a list of several holy places in the vicinity of Mecca, one of them being “the farthest place of worship” (al-mashʿar al-aqṣā). This is usually explained as referring to ‘Arafāt (Suhaylī, Rawd), as ‘Arafāt is indeed situated outside the haram of Mecca, at the eastern end of the pilgrimage route.

During the pilgrimage, the hosts of pilgrims gather on the plain on the ninth day of Dhū l-Hijja (called the “Day of ‘Arafāt”) and perform the wuqūf ("standing [before God]") from just past noon until shortly after sunset; then they begin to make their way back to Minā and Mecca, going by way of al-Muzdalifa. The wuqūf itself is preceded by a sermon (khutba) delivered by the leader of the ḥajj, followed by the noon prayer and afternoon prayer combined. During the wuqūf,
individuals make supplications on the pattern of those in the traditions of the Prophet and his Companions. Formerly pilgrims climbed Mount ʿArafāt, but scholars (mainly of the Mālikī school) maintain that this act is not an official element of the ritual *wuqūf*.

The *wuqūf* on the Day of ʿArafāt is considered one of the pillars of the *hajj*, without which the *hajj* is not considered legally fulfilled. The day itself was identified by some Qurʿān exegetes with the “day of the great pilgrimage” mentioned in the Qurʿān (9:3). Islamic traditions elaborate on the virtues of this day and focus on the belief that the sins of the pilgrims who stand there are forgiven. God, it is related, descends to the first Heaven and tells the angels that He is proud of the pilgrims. Fasting on this day (for those not on the pilgrimage) is regarded by some scholars as permissible and is said to ensure atonement for two years’ sins. Special blessings are attached to the Day of ʿArafāt when it falls on a Friday. On the Day of ʿArafāt, Muslims outside Mecca and beyond Arabia used to gather in mosques and celebrate the day, which in Arabic is referred to as *al-ta’rīf fī l-ḥamār*. In general scholars have not objected to this practice, although some have considered it an undesirable innovation (*bidʿa*).

It is related that pre-Islamic Arabs, unlike the Muslims, performed the *wuqūf* in ʿArafāt and proceeded to al-Muzdalifa before (and not after) sunset, but the Quraysh never went to ʿArafāt, claiming that since it was situated outside the ʿharam, they, being members of the Ḥums, were not allowed to perform the rites there, as their observance of strict religious taboos prohibited them from leaving the ʿharam during the period of sanctification. Qurʿān exegetes say that God decreed that everyone must go to ʿArafāt; in Q 2:198, ʿArafāt is declared a ritual site for all pilgrims. Muhammad himself, although a member of the Ḥums, is said to have participated in the rites there already in pre-Islamic times.

[words 972 cevt ]
Bibliography:


Comment [VJT8]: Au: Please confirm the details of the edition you used. We were able to find a Beirut reprint dated 1964, published by Maktabat Khayyāṭ. But the Wustenfeld edition on which it is based is listed as published by Leipzig 1857–61.

Comment [VJT9]: Au: please confirm these page numbers, as they are already included in the page numbers for the article—are these the pages that discuss 'Arafāt?