



E-ISSN: 2706-9117
 P-ISSN: 2706-9109
 Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.63
www.historyjournal.net
 IJH 2025; 7(8): 97-103
 Received: 12-06-2025
 Accepted: 05-07-2025

Dr. Anwar Kareem Najim Al-Tae
 Tae
 Al-Muthanna University,
 College of Engineering, Iraq

Ilaf Quraysh: An orientalist reading of the economic and political structure of mecca before Islam

Anwar Kareem Najim Al-Tae

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27069109.2025.v7.i8b.497>

Abstract

As a result of the activity carried out by Mecca, at the beginning of the sixth century AD, it became a serious commercial and financial center that played a fundamental role in commercial relations in the region, and how it held the reins of trade in the Arab countries, and the greatest commercial and literary markets of the Arabs were held in and around it during the Hajj season, and its caravans roamed the outskirts of The Arabian Peninsula and outside it, and as a result of the organizations and arrangements they created, they achieved great success in the commercial field, and gained from this great wealth that made them occupy the leadership position in the entire Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of the seventh century AD, as the merchants of Mecca were intelligent and influential and became the most knowledgeable of the Arabs in matters of trade. As for the Elaf, it gave the Quraysh a distinguished position among the rulers who contracted with them, so they granted them special treatment and protection in their lands. They also had some facilities in taxes and transportation, in addition to the preference of the Quraysh merchants over the rest of the merchants who came to them, and these privileges increased in strength and effectiveness when integrated with work. The second is for the EYLAF, which is what was concluded with the chiefs and chiefs of the tribes through whose lands trade passes. If it were not for these contracts, covenants, ropes or bonds that were made with them, the Quraysh trade would have remained exposed to plunder, or it might not have reached the places whose rulers they had agreed upon. The Quraysh tribe would have remained neutral in the matter. The ongoing conflict between the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanian Empire made it a safe center for trade exchange, so commercial caravans traveled to it in various places and thus it became the first and strongest economic center in the region. The Arabian Peninsula also enjoyed a wide network of transportation routes that played the most prominent role in the process of trade exchange, and that Mecca It has formed an important religious and economic center among these roads due to its distinguished location in addition to the religious holiness it enjoys, which made it a destination for the Arabs, and this is of course one of the factors that help in the process of prosperity and economic progress.

Keywords: Byzantine, Quraysh, Islam, Ilaf Quraysh, Peninsula, economic progress

Introduction

Orientalist studies occupy a large space in the field of Islamic studies, especially the study of the Arab economy in the Hijaz before Islam. This study has its importance and scholarly weight in academic circles. The geographical location of the Arabian Peninsula has given it significant importance, given its location on the ancient world's land and sea trade route, which connected the Far East and India to the Near East via the Arabian Peninsula. Trade in the Arabian Peninsula dates back to even earlier times than the aforementioned states. It began with the time of Ishmael, son of Abraham (peace be upon him), and the caravans of the people of Mecca (the Ismailis) dominated the Hijaz and Egypt via the lands of Palestine. There are numerous Orientalist studies that have addressed the role of the Quraysh, their importance, and the role they played. The economic development of Mecca is represented by the fact that its inhabitants were initially nomads who raided the caravans passing nearby. They later became intermediaries, and finally, they moved to the Middle East. The stage of mediation to global trade and Mecca became a central city in trade, and as a result of it being a country without crops or livestock, it was natural for them to practice trade, especially since the international circumstances were in their favor, as the two Sassanian and Byzantine states were in conflict and wars that affected the trade routes that Mecca rose to dominate.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Anwar Kareem Najim Al-Tae
 Tae
 Al-Muthanna University,
 College of Engineering, Iraq

Mecca played the role of a mediator to dominate it, between two worlds, similar to that of Palmyra for the Parthians and the Romans, despite the difference in visions of Orientalist studies and the diversity of Western viewpoints, as the majority emphasized the importance of Mecca and its geographical location on the one hand, and then the neutrality of the Quraysh on the other hand, which gave them the opportunity to achieve widespread success in this field. The role played by the Quraysh tribe, especially the issue of its exit to many regions of countries and places, through which they obtained huge sums of money as a result of the high profits they achieved. As for the Quraysh ilaf, Custer indicates that the ilaf was established on the basis of the hams, and the hams are the elite who are distinguished by their close ties with the Meccans, through their rituals and customs. Both the hams and ilaf systems had an economic significance. Mahmoud Al-Hut links the phenomenon of the hams to the desire of the Quraysh to sell their goods, saying: "It is not far-fetched that behind their conditions, and I mean their prohibition of people from eating the food they brought from the permissible to the sanctuary, and their circumambulation except in the clothes of the hams, there is another reason besides the prohibition and permission, which is the popularity of the food and clothing they have during the Hajj seasons".

The Quraysh ilaf in orientalist studies

The ilaf is considered the key to the great transformation that brought Mecca's trade to its global launch, and the accompanying emergence of the two monthly winter and summer journeys. The ilaf was one of the innovative phenomena of balance, representing a unionist trend in political and economic relations among the Arabs of the north, before developing more comprehensively to include the Arabs of the south, or some of them, in addition to a number of tribes settled along the Meccan trade routes within the Arabian Peninsula ^[1].

This system, whose achievement is attributed to Qusayy's grandson (Hashim ibn Abd Manaf), was a result of the turbulent events of the time, including the abolition of the rule of the Lakhmid dynasty, which facilitated the Arab tribes' raids on the possessions of al-Hirah. Brockelmann also considers the defeat of the Persian forces in Dhi Qar to have been a result of the abolition of this dynasty's rule ^[2].

As for Levi della Vida's opinion, he assumes that: "With the fall of the state that was a barrier between the Arabs and the Persians, the door became open to Arab raids" ^[3].

But in reality, the door was open to Arab raids because of the decline of the Persian Empire and the rise in the power of the Arab tribes. The Persian garrisons were not able to prevent the attacks of the tribes.

The Persian armies were defeated by the armies of the Arab tribes ^[4].

All these events necessitated that the Arab tribes, due to their disappointment with the policy of Al-Hirah and the policy of Persia, in addition to their awareness of the weakness of the loyal state (Al-Hirah), felt the weakness of loyalty to this state, and began to look forward to a political entity with its own competent leadership. This created the

idea of a political alliance based on equality and common interests, that is the unified political alliance of Mecca ^[5], which was represented by the ilaf contract to protect Meccan trade and secure its transportation, and an alliance with the tribes to become the organizing tool and sponsor of its covenants and obligations with Mecca, and since the latter had occupied, in addition to its economic position, a distinguished religious position as a center for the worship of the tribes and their idols, the Ilaf gained for Mecca what it had of moral authority, so it represented the decentralized image in Mecca, which aspired to contain these tribes, under a minimum level of "political unity." It reached such importance for Mecca that any tampering with it or breaking its covenants, it saw it as a blow to its influence and an affront to the sanctity of the "ilaf" that it led ^[6].

Here, Lammens relies on a narration by Muhammad ibn Salam, who mentions that the Quraysh were merchants, and their trade never exceeded the borders of Mecca. Foreign merchants brought their trade to Mecca, selling their goods to the inhabitants of the city and the neighboring tribes. Here, he mentions that their trade was internal ^[7].

As for Birkeland, he reached the conclusion that the Banu Abd Manaf, Hashim, al-Muttalib, Abd Shams, and Nawfal, obtained it from the kings of neighboring countries, about a hundred years before Muhammad. During these times, the Quraysh merchants were accustomed to traveling with their caravans without being attacked, and thus they became "the masters of the economy in western Arabia" ^[8].

As for Lammens, he mentioned-as we have previously explained-that trade was internal and limited, until Hashim bin Abd Manaf went to the Levant and set foot in Caesar's land. Hashim began to slaughter a sheep every day, and put out a bowl of tharid, and fed his neighbors. Thus, he was called Hashim because he broke the bread and made it porridge ^[9] "and his name was Omar." The Roman Caesar would invite him to his court, and Hashim would visit him frequently. When he realized that he had won his approval, he asked him to give the merchants of Mecca a letter in which he would guarantee their trade. The emperor responded to his request, and guaranteed the merchants of Mecca a "deed of security" when they visited Syria. The merchants of Mecca would bring clothes and leather from the Hijaz, as they were cheaper for the people of the Levant. When Hashim returned on his way to Mecca, he met the chiefs of the tribes he had passed through, and took a covenant of security (ilaf), without concluding an alliance with them, as the merchants of Mecca would carry goods to the Levant.

They participate with the Arabs in trade, by taking with them, they trade with them and then give them profits with their capital ^[10].

As for Birkeland's opinion, he says: "The Quraysh used to trust in treaties, that is, in individuals with a special character or letters of protection for their caravans, but Muhammad now ordered them to worship the heavenly Lord, because He is the last source of their food and

¹ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 17

² Kister, M. J, Mecca and Tamim, p: 154.

³ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 18.

⁴ IBN Habib: Al-Munammaq, p. 275.

⁵ Baydoun, Ibrahim: The Hijaz and the Islamic State, p. 90.

⁶ IBN Habib: Al-Munammaq, p. 275.

⁷ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 20.

⁸ The same source, p. 20.

⁹ H. Birkeland, the lord Guideth, p: 110

¹⁰ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 170.

security”^[11].

Birkeland, after an extensive study of the Islamic change, which he sees as a reliable source for understanding the Holy Qur'an, and Birkeland's awareness of the value of Islamic interpretation is still appropriate despite the many criticisms directed at his historical approach, he emphasizes the need to reconsider Islamic interpretation, as Birkeland gives us a better view of the historical background and the meaning of this surah, as God Almighty says: {For the mutual security of the Quraysh (1) their mutual security for winter and summer journeys (2) so let them worship the Lord of the Worlds. (3) This house which fed them from hunger and made them safe from fear (4)}^[12], as Birkeland mentions that the verse begins with the preposition lam, and Birkeland's interpretation of the meaning of this preposition is based on a different reading^[13].

As he quotes Ikrimah (d. 105 AH/723 CE) where this phrase “li-ilaf” was presented as a verbal form: (li-aluf), so Birkeland mentions “for the protection of the caravan,” but as will become clear, the preposition in Ikrimah's version is the lam of command, so that the intended meaning of this reading, which in any case seems secondary, is completely different from what Birkeland suggested^[14]. So according to all other readings, the preposition (l) is followed by a source where it was presented, either (ilaf) or alif (ilf), it really seems that the letter (l) was originally followed by a source of some kind, which is consistent with the fact that Verse 2, “Their mutual assistance in the winter and summer journey” also has a source from the same root^[15].

Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad (d. 107 AH/786 CE) and Sibawayh (d. 180 AH/796 CE), as quoted by al-Razi and others (l) explain it as follows: “So let them worship the Lord of this House, for the mutual assistance of the Quraysh,” that is, let them make their worship a thank you and recognition for this blessing^[16].

This means that the interpretation of the meaning of (l) is because of or by virtue of, so that it is actually used for the reason and refers to the House or the cause. The same reason is found in the term “ilaf,” which, according to al-Khalil and Sibawayh, means the goodness (blessing) of God towards the Quraysh. Because of this information, the Quraysh were required to show their gratitude in worshipping “the Lord of this House”^[17].

Ibn Qutaybah then shares the view that the Quraysh were required to worship (the Lord of this House) as a token of gratitude for His goodness. This interpretation seems plausible, as it presents the surah in line with many Qur'anic verses, where God's power, grace, and goodness are usually on a comprehensive scale^[18].

However, the current surah is unique in that it confines divine goodness to specific worldly circumstances, associated with a specific group (the Quraysh). It was also confirmed by early Muslim commentators that the phrase “for the security of the Quraysh” means God's goodness towards the Quraysh. Mujahid (d. 104 AH/722 CE) considers this phrase to mean “My favor upon the Quraysh.”

The same interpretation was also given by Sa'id ibn Jubayr (d. 95 AH/811 CE), quoting Ibn Abbas^[19].

So, the fact that “for the security of the Quraysh” is synonymous with “for my favor upon the Quraysh” means that the word Quraysh is the object of the previous source attached to it. Thus, the subject of the source of verses 1-2 as a whole is God, but God is not mentioned explicitly, which indicates that it is in fact self-evident. In other words, the Quraysh themselves, to whom this surah is addressed, were aware of the fact that they were the subject of divine goodness, and this awareness is reflected, for example, in the title (Ahl Allah), meaning (the people of God), which the Quraysh were known by since pre-Islamic times, the term “ilaf” is often closely associated with God, as in the phrase “ilaf Allah,” which was common in ancient Arabic poetry^[20].

Thus, ilaf means guarantee, security, and protection from God, as well as specifying the nature of God's goodness towards the Quraysh and His protection of them in (verse 2) “their ilaf for the winter and summer journeys.” Mujahid, who interpreted the phrase “for the ilaf of the Quraysh” as God's goodness towards the Quraysh, goes on to interpret verse 2 as follows: Their ilaf is such that neither a winter journey nor a summer journey^[21].

Will be difficult for them. Here the basic idea of verses 1-2 is understood correctly by Ibn Qutaybah, who explains: (You say, “I became accustomed to such-and-such a place,” when you habitually go there, and you say, “I became accustomed to it for the sake of God,” just as if you were saying, “I usually go to a place, and God caused me to usually go to it.”) Or as stated in a hadith narrated by Abu Malik: “They became accustomed to trading in the winter and summer, and I, meaning God, made them accustomed to it”^[22].

Here, God's benevolence toward the Quraysh, referred to in verses 1-2, includes sparing them the hardships of the winter and summer journeys so that they could practice it normally. In the immediate Arab context, the difficulties of travel were primarily related to the risk of being attacked and plundered by hostile Bedouins, so the statement that God enabled the Quraysh to travel normally can only mean that He protected them from these attacks. Likewise, the Quraysh, in times past, enjoyed

Islam actually accepted divine protection based on their sacred status as “the people of the sanctuary,” i.e., the people of the holy land surrounding Mecca and the Kaaba. As the inhabitants of the sanctuary of Mecca and the guardians of the Kaaba, any attack on them was considered a violation of the sacred sanctity^[23].

According to Surah Quraysh, this refers to the sacred status of the Quraysh as the people of the sanctuary, and this is supported in early exegetical narratives. Qatada (d. 118 CE) states: “The Arabs used to attack each other, so travel was unsafe. But if a (haram) from the holy lands of Mecca was captured, he and his property would be released, as soon as his origin was discovered. This was due to the reverence and respect that the Arabs had for the protection that God had bestowed upon them.” The issue of dealing with ilaf in

¹¹ H. Birkeland, the lord Guideth, p: 110.

¹² Surah Quraysh, verse: 4.

¹³ H. Birkeland, the lord Guideth, p: 111.

¹⁴ The same source, p: 112.

¹⁵ Mecca before Islam, p. 213.

¹⁶ The same source, p. 113.

¹⁷ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p: 12.

¹⁸ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p: 13.

¹⁹ Al-Tabari: Tafsir al-Tabari, p. 198

²⁰ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p: 16.

²¹ Mecca before Islam, p. 214.

²² Al-Tabari: Tafsir al-Tabari, p. 198.

²³ Mecca before Islam, p. 216.

Orientalist studies was that most of these opinions and ideas were taken from Islamic sources and authentic interpretations. We rarely find an Orientalist relying on his own opinion in interpreting a particular issue rather than a Quranic verse or surah. Therefore, the main idea of the surah that is, Surah Quraysh-is the protection that Quraysh enjoyed as the people of the sanctuary, and it is very clear in Ibn Qutaybah: The Quraysh were in the sanctuary, safe from enemies attacking them there, and from anyone harming them, if they left it for their trade. They say: "They are the people of the House of God Almighty ^[24].

The Quraysh lived only by trade and they had two journeys every year, a journey in the winter to Yemen, and a journey in the summer to the Levant. Without these two journeys, there would have been no place for them, and without the security of their proximity to the House, they would not have been able to act ^[25].

Indeed, verses 1-2 refer primarily to the divine protection enjoyed by the Quraysh during their travels, in addition to the importance of the Qur'anic source, ilaf. Regardless of personal habit, this source seems to have had a more specific meaning in enabling a person to take refuge normally in a place under complete protection ^[26].

As for al-Azhari (d. 370 CE), who says: "ilaf " is something like a permit to pass, under protective conditions of guarding," someone says: "A thousand composes when a person passes, carrying loads under conditions of protection." Al-Azhari goes on to explain that the Quraysh lived in the sanctuary and did not produce seeds or milk, but rather were accustomed to producing their provisions from other parts, safely in winter and summer, while the property of the people around them was confiscated. Whenever someone bothered them, they would say: "We are the people of the sanctuary," and then no one bothered them ^[27]. Hashim was the first to go abroad to the Levant, and he visited the kings and made long journeys, and he crossed the enemies (i.e. the hostile tribes) and took the ilaf from them ^[28]. As for the Quraysh journeys, according to what was mentioned, the winter journey was usually to Yemen, and the summer journey was to Syria ^[29].

Ibn Saad records the story of Hashim who obtained the ilaf and the concessions of security from the rulers. He called those concessions (ahd) or (aman). Muhammad ibn Habib uses the word (ilaf) in the chapter on ilaf for concessions and agreements with the tribal chiefs ^[30].

As for al-Baladhuri, in his mention of ilaf, he uses the expression (ISAM) for the concessions of the rulers. It was said that Nawfal ibn Abd Manaf had obtained (ISAM) from the kings of Iraq ^[31]. Here, Lammens relies on al-Tabari, who uses the words (ISAM) and (HABL) and (habl) to indicate concession, as he said: Nawfal obtained (the rope) from the Sassanids, and they that is, the Quraysh merchants-used to frequent Iraq and Persia ^[32].

Lammens mentions, according to al-Tha'alibi's account, that Hashim took the ilaf from the enemies ^[33].

Here, Robin shows through His research and reliance on Islamic sources show that Hashim ibn Abd Manaf was the first to set out on the winter and summer journeys ^[34].

Lammens mentions that Mecca's merchants also carried goods to Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. This trade, based on the ilaf alliances, was a joint operation between the Quraysh families, led by the Abd Manaf family. Alliances concluded with tribes on the principle of commercial profit were not known until that time, as they were not alliances with obligations of mutual assistance and protection, and did not oblige the tribes to protect the Quraysh caravans, as was the case with the tribes in their relationship with the Hira caravans ^[35].

As for Robin, he mentions that Hashim was able to secure reliable sources for Mecca of food supplies from Yemen and Abyssinia on the winter journey, as well as from Syria on the summer journey. Robin then relies on authentic Arab accounts in mentioning each incident, saying: "All of the sons of Abd Manaf, namely Hashim, Abd al-Muttalib, Abd Shams, and Nawfal, were accustomed to performing the same seasonal journeys (in the winter to Yemen, Abyssinia, and Iraq, and in the summer to Syria)" ^[36].

He relies on other accounts that mention that each brother made a separate journey to a different destination. Rubin notes that political bias, aimed at giving equal reputation to all the sons of Abd Manaf, since all the credit goes to the person of Hashim alone, is likely the result of a similar political bias. Rubin notes that Ibn Ishaq remained faithful to the idea that the winter and summer journeys foretell blessings.

The divine, and he did not hesitate to credit Hashim with this merit, so that he-that is, Ibn Ishaq-was able to discern this double virtue from Hashim in some poetic verses in which he praises Amr (Hashim) for being the first to provide the hungry Meccan with tharid (crumbled bread in broth) and also attributes to him the credit for starting both seasonal journeys, especially the idea that the prosperity and well-being of the Quraysh-as mentioned in Surat Quraysh-did not arise only in the external scope of the winter and summer journey ^[37].

As for verse 3 (So let them worship the Lord of this House), it seems somewhat clear. It is clear that (the Lord) is (God), while (the House) is clearly (the Kaaba). But the fact that God should be referred to as (the Lord of the Kaaba) and not simply as God, and this should have a special significance, which must be clarified. It seems that the Qur'an deliberately mentions (the House) in order to hint at the origin of the status of the Quraysh among the Arabs. In pre-Islamic times, the Quraysh were attributed Its sacred status was attributed to the god of the Kaaba, and they referred to it as (Hubal) because there was a statue located inside the Kaaba and the Quraysh would recite the Talbiyah: Here I am, O God, here I am, we are pregnant, our women are on the tips of spears, they envy us for our success ^[38].

²⁴ The same source, p. 217.

²⁵ The same source, p. 218.

²⁶ IBN Qutaybah: Interpretation of the Problematic Verses of the Qur'an, p. 413.

²⁷ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 16.

²⁸ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 17.

²⁹ Mecca before Islam, p. 24.

³⁰ Custer, M.J.: Al-Hirah and Mecca and their connection to the Arab tribes, p. 48.

³¹ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 16.

³² Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 172.

³³ Custer, M.J.: Al-Hirah and Mecca and their connection to the Arab tribes, p. 48.

³⁴ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 16.

³⁵ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 172.

³⁶ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 17.

³⁷ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 16.

³⁸ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 178.

rubin believes that from the Qur'anic point of view, of course, the god of the Kaaba is (Allah) and not (Hubal), but the term Allah itself is also of pre-Islamic origin, since (Allah) was worshipped by the Arabs before Islam as the Most High God, and the Kaaba itself was known as (the House of God), so that the titles (Hubal) and (Allah) can be considered contradictory^[39].

Whatever the case, the Quraysh in the surah were called to the inevitable conclusion from their own awareness of the fact that the source of their protection and immunity is the god of the Kaaba, and they must transform this deity into the only being of veneration, which requires them to abandon polytheism, that is, abandon the worship of the lower idols, which were associated with the Most High God, and the Quraysh themselves are asked exclusively to worship the Lord of the Kaaba, the sole source of their immunity, well-being and prosperity, that is, to dedicate their worship exclusively to (Allah)^[40].

As for the last verse number 4, as in the Almighty's saying: Who fed them when they were hungry {And He made them safe from fear} The verse refers to the divine benevolence towards the Quraysh with which the surah begins, i.e. the sacred place as the people of the sanctuary, but since it is a descriptive phrase accompanied by "by the Lord of this House" it is clear that it relates to the direct context of Mecca and the Kaaba, and not to the Quraysh's journeys as in verses 1-2 "He fed them against hunger" i.e. He provided them with food against hunger is an indication that it is thanks to the Kaaba, or rather the Lord of the Kaaba^[41], Robin mentioned that the aforementioned verse relates to Mecca and the Kaaba and not to the Quraysh's journeys, so Robin through his research.

He states that the journey can only be mentioned with a tone of disapproval, due to the disapproval of the Quraysh, whose winter and summer journeys became their main concern, while ignoring the generosity of the Master of the Kaaba, who provided for them in all their special needs. He explains that the repeated winter and summer journeys, in the eyes of the Holy Qur'an, were excessive and marked the compulsory engagement of the Quraysh in an indecent custom stemming from their various pursuits of worldly advantages outside Mecca, which would contradict their religious promises. He explains that this is the reason for the repetition of the name (ilaf) twice, so that the sense of compulsive repetition is intensified. In this way, Surah 106 appears as another advice denouncing the disbelief of the Meccans, which stems from their dissatisfaction with the benefits of the sanctuary in which they live. Instead of being grateful to God for the prosperity and security derived from Mecca's position as a center of pilgrimage, the Quraysh indulge in commercial journeys outside the city, while the Kaaba and its Master are not their primary concern. In practical terms, this means that they should engage in prayer and religious duties. Others, more than engaging in worldly matters, such as long, tiring journeys in pursuit of worldly gains^[42]. The Ilaf or commercial treaties concluded by Hashim and his brothers Abdul Muttalib, Abd Shams and Nawfal with the Arabs, the Romans, Abyssinia and Persia,

which took the Quraysh trade out of its local character and limited horizon to foreign horizons, so that the Quraysh had external relations with the countries known at that time, and these relations greatly affected their social conditions^[43]. Then the author turns and mentions that the inhabitants of Mecca were able to enjoy a steady supply of food, as this is apparently linked to the fact that thanks to the Kaaba, Mecca played the leading role of pilgrimage in the Arab region, so that provisions flowed to this city with pilgrims and merchants. Then he points to the close connection with Mecca's position as a center of pilgrimage in the Qur'an in Surat Ibrahim: "Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish {Prayer, then, make hearts among the people incline toward them and provide them with fruits that they may be grateful.}^[44], then Abraham says: Mecca was located in a barren land, and therefore he asks God Almighty to make the hearts of the people look toward Mecca, and to provide fruits for its people, in this verse, as Abraham actually asks God to turn Mecca into a center for Hajj, and thus to secure food supplies for the people of Mecca^[45], and Mecca obtained a lot of food supplies during the Hajj, as God Almighty says: {O you who have believed, the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach the mosque.

{The sacred precincts after this year of theirs. And if you fear poverty, then Allah will enrich you from His bounty, if He wills. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise.}^[46].

After the announcement that non-Muslim pilgrims should not enter Mecca, the Meccans lived in poverty because the Meccans used to obtain food supplies mainly from non-Meccan pilgrims who frequented the Kaaba^[47].

As for Lammens, he mentions that the narratives that were reported about the Ilaf carry the basic phenomena of the changes in Mecca, which had been a small center for distributing goods to the Bedouin tribes neighboring the city, Mecca had acquired an excellent position as a center for transit trade (Transit)^[48].

Lammens also looks at the ilaf agreements that were established on the basis of sharing profits with the tribal chiefs, and using the tribesmen as guards for the caravans. So, ilaf, as Lammens mentions, actually meant acceptance of the "Meccan Peace System" (Pax Meccana) by the tribes, recognition of the status of the Meccans and Meccan trade, and the establishment of economic cooperation based on the public interest^[49]. Birkeland's opinion, which confirms the true importance of the ilaf agreements, states that the financial prowess of the Quraysh and their possession of the holy places made them masters of the economy in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula about a hundred years before the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace). Therefore, Birkeland's view is broader in terms of his complete belief that the volume of Quraysh trade had become very large, even including eastern Arabia at that time. Then Rubin prefers and says that the location of Mecca as a center for pilgrimage and trade enabled the

³⁹ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 178.

⁴¹ Kadr, George: Dictionary of Arab Gods before Islam, p. 243.

⁴² Al-Afghani, Saeed: Arab Markets in Pre-Islamic and Islamic Times, p. 97.

⁴³ Surah Ibrahim, verse: 37; Robin, Yuri: Ilaf Quraysh, p. 226.

⁴⁴ Al-Tabari: Tafsir al-Tabari, p. 199.97.

⁴⁵ Surah At-Tawbah, Verse: 28.

⁴⁶ Robin, Yuri: Ilaf Quraish, p. 227.

⁴⁷ Robin, Yuri: Ilaf Quraish, p. 227.

⁴⁸ The same source, p. 181.

⁴⁹ H, Birkeland, The Guide, p. 122.

Quraysh to be less dependent on the winter and summer journeys to earn their living. This is from the side of God's goodness towards them, and this is what Ibn Abbas and al-Tabari mentioned ^[50]. So the tribal chiefs preferred to participate in trade with the merchants of Mecca, as their profits were more stable in their cooperation with the Quraysh, and they were able to establish close relations with them, and they really did that, as they were welcomed in Mecca, and they could enter it without fear, unlike their position in al-Hirah, which was the position of humiliation and submission. In Mecca, they were equals who could negotiate on an equal footing ^[51].

Rubin also narrates, quoting Islamic sources that the Quraysh used to practice *itfād* (*iḥtīdāf*), that is, when they were suffering from poverty and hunger, they would withdraw to a certain place and wait inside their tents until they all met their death. This was their custom until the days of Hashim. Who urged them to put an end to this practice, saying:

"And you are the people of the sanctuary of God, the Almighty, the most honorable of the children of Adam, and people follow you, and this self-sufficiency is almost upon you." Then he organized the winter and summer journeys for them, then he spread out his head for them, which the Quraysh had accepted, so that every rich man would be joined by a poor man, so the poor would help the rich in his journeys with the caravans, and (live by his bounty and money), and that was the end of self-sufficiency, so Hashim united the people by his bounty ^[52].

It is not forgotten that whenever the matter of the elephant and its companions happened, God revealed what He revealed, and that was the key to prophethood, and the first glory of the Quraysh, until people feared them, and said, "The people of God, and God is with them." The birth of the Prophet was in that year, and when God sent the Prophet, among what was revealed to him, he knew his people and what He did for them and what He gave them victory from the elephant and its companions: {Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?} ^[53].

then he said: Why did you do that, O Muhammad, to your people, when they were at that time the people of The narration tends to interpret "for the mutual protection of the Quraysh" as meaning "for the mutual protection of the Quraysh and their mutual protection." However, this story is somewhat unrelated to the interpretation of the verse. It actually seems to reflect the situation before the *ilāf* (i.e., the mutual protection of the Quraysh). Lammens also mentions the narration of Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar and how he had clear information about the social and economic situation in Mecca in the pre-Islamic era. His narration contains a good amount of coincidences, indicating that the caravans, which Hashim had established for the *ilāf*, were sent by individuals. This was a great risk, as merchants were exposed to losing everything in the event of an attack by bandits or hostile tribes, and a merchant who had invested all his capital might lose everything. The *ilāf* was what made the journeys safe. Hashim's opinion in including the poor in the caravan project was a bold opinion. He wanted to give the poor some Shares in profits were a reward for his

work, or more likely in exchange for the allocation ^[54] of small sums to poor relatives. This was echoed in the verses of Matrud ibn Ka'b, who recited: And those who mix their poor with their rich until their poor become like the rich ^[55]. Then the idea of mixing the poor (or those of lower status) with the rich was the ideal in pre-Islamic society, which is why it was mentioned in the poem above. Thus, the Hashimites' consolidation of the *ilāf* was able to successfully expand trade and allow the rich and poor to participate in the caravans. The caravans became a joint project. If a merchant took a risk and sent a private caravan, so the other merchants joined him in investing their money in his caravan ^[56].

Lammens mentions Ibn Habib's account of the men of the *Ilaf*, saying: "Because of them, God raised the Quraysh and made their poor rich: 'The companions of the *Ilaf* from the Quraysh, by whom God raised the Quraysh and made their poor rich' ^[57]."

It may seem to one that there is a similarity between the mixing of the poor and the rich (mixing) and brotherhood ^[58].

The conclusion of the *Ilaf* agreements was accompanied by the improvement of the internal situation in Mecca and the provision of comforts for the pilgrims. Lammens mentions al-Qummi's text about the social care of the Meccans and their care for the poor (and the Quraysh used to examine the condition of the poor and strengthen the needy's condition) ^[59].

It seems that Hashim expanded the trend of caring for the needy until it became a social principle. According to Ibn Abbas's account, which Lammens mentions: The people of Mecca were in a state of poverty until Hashim gathered them by sending caravans to Syria and Yemen. They used to divide their profits between the rich and the poor, until the poor became like the rich.

References

1. Hawting G. The Idea of Paganism and the Rise of Islam: From Controversy to History. Trans. Hisham Shamieh. Amman: Academic Research Center; 2021.
2. Kubishanov YM. Northeast Africa in the Early Middle Ages and its Relations with the Arabian Peninsula (from the sixth century to the middle of the seventh century). Trans. Salah al-Din Uthman Hashim. Amman; 1988.
3. Sedillo L. A Brief History of the Arabs. Cairo: Hindawi Foundation; 2017.
4. Durant WJ. Islamic Civilization: The Rise and Rise. Trans. Muhammad Badran. Reviewed by Mutaz Abu Qasim. Amman: Dar Al-Ahlia; 2018.
5. Fisher G. Rome and the Arabs before the Rise of Islam. Trans. Fahd Mutlaq Al-Otaibi. Riyadh: King Saud University Press; 2020.
6. Krohn P. Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam. Trans. Amal Muhammad al-Ruby. Reviewed by Muhammad Ibrahim Bakr. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture; 2005.

⁵⁰ Al-Tabari: Tafsir al-Tabari, p. 198.

⁵¹ Al-Tabari: Tafsir al-Tabari, p. 198.

⁵² Surah Al-Fil, verse: 1.

⁵³ Surah Al-Fil, verse: 1.

⁵⁴ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p 18.

⁵⁵ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 183.

⁵⁶ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 186.

⁵⁷ Robin, Yuri: Mecca before Islam (*Ilaf* Quraysh), p. 241.

⁵⁸ Lammens, Henry: Mecca in Oriental Studies, p. 188.

⁵⁹ Rubin, Uri, Muhammad the prophet and Arabia, p 19.

7. O'Leary DL. Arabia Before the Mission. Trans. Musa Ali Al-Ghoul. Amman: Ministry of Culture; 1990.
8. Donner FM. The Early Islamic Conquests. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1981.
9. Bulliet RW. The Camel and the Wheel. New York: Columbia University Press; 1975.
10. McLaughlin R. Rome and the Distant East: Trade Routes to the Ancient Lands of Arabia, India and China. London: Continuum; 2010.
11. Kister MJ. Macca and Tamim (Aspects of their relations). *J Econ Soc Hist Orient*. 1965;8(2):113–63.
12. Rubin U. Muhammad the Prophet and Arabia. Leiden: Brill; 1965.
13. Birkeland H. The Lord Guideth. Austin: University of Texas Press; 1990.
14. Ibrahim M. Merchant Capital and Islam. Austin: University of Texas Press; 1990.
15. Fisher G. Rome, Persia and Arabia: Shaping the Middle East from Pompey to Muhammad. London: Routledge; 2019.
16. Simon R. Mecca Trade and Islam: Problems of Origin. Leiden: Brill; 1966.
17. Al-Sharif AI. Mecca and Medina in the Pre-Islamic Era and the Era of the Prophet. Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi; 1965.
18. Retsö J. The Arabs in Ancient Times: From the Assyrians to the Umayyads. Trans. Abdullah Abdul Rahman Al-Abd Al-Jabbar, Sayed Muhammad Jad. Riyadh: King Saud University Publishing House; 2016.