

ORIENTAL PUBLICATIONS

1. **Tabaqat-e-Nasiri**, edited by *Aqa-ye Abd-ul-Haiy Habibi Afghani*, 1954, Vol. II, 300 pp., Rs. 10.00.

A general history of Asia by Minhaj-e-Siraj-e-Juzjani.

2. **Tazkareh-e-Makhzan-al-Gharaib**, by *Dr. Muhammad Baqir*, 1968, Vol. I, 894 pp., Rs. 50.00.

An unpublished biographical work on Persian poets by Shaikh Ahmad Ali Hashmi of Sandilah compiled in 1218 A.H. (1803 A.D.) and now reproduced from the oldest manuscript dated 1219 A.H. (1804 A.D.) with introduction and notes.

3. **Armaghan-e-Ilmi**, by *Dr. S. M. Abdullah*, 1955, 588 pp., Rs. 15.00.

The book represents a graceful tribute paid by scholars from many lands besides Pakistan to Dr. Maulvi Muhammad Shafi as a gesture of appreciation for his devoted services to the cause of Oriental learning and research (out of stock).

4. **Urdu Shairi Ka Siyasi Wa Samaji Pasmanzar**, by *Dr. Ghulam Husain Zulfiqar*, 1966, 521 pp., Rs. 16.00.

A valuable research of the Urdu poetry in the light of political and social trends of Indo-Pak history.

5. **Fahrist-i-Makhtutat-e-Shafi**, prepared by *Dr. Bashir Husain*, 1972, 650 pp., Rs. 40.00.

This is a descriptive catalogue of 469 manuscripts of Persian, Urdu and Punjabi in the Library of late Prof. Maulvi Muhammad Shafi. Efforts have been made to define the importance of each book, i.e. whether it is oldest, unique or contemporary etc. Various indexes and photos of rare and important manuscripts have also been added. The collection of original calligraphy pieces has also been introduced in this catalogue.

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30. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, The Modern Library Edition, New York, Vol. II, p. 688 (*Italics ours*)
31. C. Mills, *History of Mohammedanism*, London, 1817, p. 29 ; Arthur N. Wollaston, *Half-Hours with Muhammad*, London, 1956, p. 62 : "Muhammad now thought himself strong enough to measure sword with the Imperial troops of Rome ; so *taking advantage of the murder of a messenger*, who had been despatched to the Ghassanid Prince at Bostra, *he sent an army* of 3,000 men to invade the Syrian frontier."
32. al-Tabari, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 313 ; Ibn Hisham, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 621 ; al-Waqidi, op. cit., Vol. II., pp. 752-753 ; Ibn Sa'd, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 127-128.
33. Willim Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 1861 Edition, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 94-96 ; Idem, *The Life of Mohammed* T. H. Weir's Revised Edition), 1923, p. 393 ; Joseph Hell, *The Arab Civilization* (Translated from the German by S. Khuda Bukhsh). W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge, 1926, p. 3 : "*The murder of fifteen Muslims on the Syrian frontier sufficed to induce the Prophet to send an army of 3,000 to the North*. In the opinion of his community—in the judgement of later historian—it was merely a sense of the "duty of protection that led the Prophet to this venture" Clement Huart, *Histoire des Arabes* (Paul Geuthner), Paris, 1912, Vol. I, p. 162.
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35. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Brill, Leiden, 1936, Article 'Mu'tah' by Mr. Buhl, (*Italics ours*) Vol. III, p. 773 ; Ibid, Article 'Muhammad' by Frants Buhl, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. III, p. 654 : "His (i.e. the Prophet) forces suffered a serious reverse in the first considerable effort to extend his authority over the Arabs on Byzantine soil, at Muthah in Transjordan..."
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37. Carl BrockleMann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, (Translation for the German by Joel Carmichael and Moshe Pelmann), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1949, p. 49,

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he has not done. At all events, his "trusted authority". Ibn Ishaq, does make a mention of the expedition of Mu'tah with one detail or other missing i.e. the cause of the expedition. It makes no difference if he has omitted to mention this. Historians of olden times were not so punctilious about these petty details of 'why' and 'how', of giving 'cause and effect' of each and every incident or event. Failure of Ibn Ishaq to furnish one petty detail cannot, in equity, be held as valid ground for denying either the expedition itself, or the reasons given for it, when it is borne in mind that the conflict started with it as had grave repercussions lasting for eight centuries, as Bevan puts it.

(5) It is quite reasonable to assume that something of a grave nature must have happened to force the Prophet's hand to despatch an armed force of 3000 men to the Byzantine frontier. To say the least, Bevan could have, like other Christian writers, alleged that the Prophet had aggressive designs against Byzantium. But this explanation is disowned by him when he states: "In any case it is difficult to believe that Mahomet contemplated an attack on the Byzantine Empire".

In face of this categorical refutation of the aggressive designs on the part of the Prophet against Byzantium we are left with only one possible explanation, mentioned by a majority of Arab historians and accepted by most of Western writers, sometimes openly, sometimes willy-nilly, that the Prophet's envoy was murdered by a Christian chieftain which led to the conflict, which Bevan is trying to side-track on flimsy grounds, without advancing any solid reasons for it, or giving an explanation of his own which could meet the requirements of the case on such grounds.

So we are done with another "objective" historical writing about the Prophet of Islam.

This is how the wind blows in the West against Islam and its Prophet, with exceptions here and there.

due to the following reasons :

(1) The gravamen of Bevan's discounting of the reasons given for the expedition of Mu'tah is that Ibn Ishak, the oldest writer who records the expedition does "*not allege any pretext for it.*"

If Bevan was "objective" enough in commenting upon this lack of information on the part of Ibn Ishaq he could have used the words "Ibn Ishaq does not give any reasons or explanation for launching of this expedition", or words like these. But he chooses to use the words "*allege,*" and "*pretext*" instead. His language betrays the trend of his thinking and points to his preconceived notions in the matter. To put it other way, it means that, even if Ibn Ishaq had given any reasons for it, these could have amounted to no more than "allegations" or "protext" for the expedition. With such an attitude of mind his "objectivity" in the matter is a foregone conclusion.

(2) Professor Bevan admits that "most of the historians" assign the reason for the expedition of Mu'tah as the assassination of the Prophet's envoy. In face of the overwhelming evidence of majority of Arab historians, the failure of one sole writer, Ibn Ishaq, to give the reasons of the expedition cannot, in fairness, be held as a valid justification for denying the whole incident, or, thus controverting the testimony of not only the majority of Arab historians but of most of Western writers who have accepted this explanation. Moreover, it is only the recension of Ibn Hisham which is being referred to by Bevan. The original Ibn Ishaq has yet to see the light of the day.

(3) Even Ibn Ishaq (in the recension of Ibn Hisham) as Bevan admits, records that the expedition did take place. After all there must have been one reason or the other—and particularly very strong ones — for launching of this expedition by the Prophet against "the great Christian Power" as Bevan correctly calls the Byzantine Empire. Things do not happen without any cause or reason.

(4) It would have been in the fitness of things if, like other Western writers, Prof. Bevan, too, would have advanced some explanation or theory of his own, howsoever new — fangled or fantastic it may have been, to make out the reasons for the expedition. This

peaceful victory. He could now, with no fear from the enemy at his back proceed to consolidate what he had, expand it, and extend his Pax Islamica. In the two years following he sent bands led by his lieutenants on more than a dozen expeditions against tribes and settlements in the North as far as Northern Palestine. *The furthest point reached was Mu'tah near the Southern end of the Dead Sea. We are not told what the objective was, but presumably it was to secure the full control of the trade route, which remained idle since the Badr episode, and to establish contact with Arabians long domiciled in Syria.*⁴¹

For ordinary mortals, however, it is very difficult to make out as to which of the three explanations of theories advanced by Prof. Hitti for the expedition of Mu'tah should be given credence to.

We come to another noted Western Scholar who has referred to the expedition of Mu'tah in a different light. Professor A.A. Bevan, writing in the *Cambridge Medieval History*, has gone one step further than others in totally denying the "correctness of the explanation" given for the expedition of Mu'tah—i.e. the murder of the Prophet's envoy by a Christian chief—on the sole plea that Ibn Ishaq, an earlier authority, does not "allege any pretext for it." His full version is as follows :

A few months later Islam for the first time came into conflict with the great Christian power against which it was destined to struggle, with scarcely an intermission, for a period of eight centuries. In the autumn of year 629 Mahomet despatched a force of 3,000 men, commanded by his adopted son, Zaid ibn Haritha, to the North-Western frontier of Arabia. *The reason which most of the historians assign for the expedition is that a messenger sent by the Prophet had been assigned, a year earlier, by an Arab chieftain named Shurahbil, who owed allegiance to the Byzantine Emperor. But since Ibn Ishaq, the oldest writer who records the expedition, does not allege any pretext for it, the correctness of the aforesaid explanation is at least doubtful. In any case it is difficult to believe that Mahomet contemplated an attack on the Byzantine Empire, for ignorant as he was of foreign countries he must have been aware that an army of 3000 men would be wholly inadequate for such a purpose.*⁴²

However, Bevan's contention and "objectivity" are untenable

for the Prophet's impending attack on Mecca. In his *History of the Arabs* he writes :

The ostensible object of the raid was to avenge the martyrdom of the Prophet's emissary sent to the Ghassanide prince of Busra : *the real one was to secure the coveted Mashrafiyah swords manufactured at Mu'tah and neighbouring towns with a view to using them in the impending attack on Makkah.* The event was naturally interpreted as one of the ordinary raids to which the settled peoples of the borderland had long been accustomed ; but actually *it was firing the first gun in a struggle* that was not to cease until the proud Byzantine capital had fallen (1453) to the latest champions of Islam and the name of Muhammad substituted for that of Christ on the walls of the most magnificent cathedrals of Christendom St. Sophia.³⁹

According to this new fangled theory Hitti has tried to kill two birds with one stone. He has not only cleverly side-tracked the reason of the Mu'tah expedition but has also imputed uncalled—for aggressive designs on the part of Prophet Muhammad towards Mecca.

Hitti has advanced yet another theory in his '*History of Syria*'. Now he tells us that the object of the expedition was to secure rich booty for the new converts (including the coveted Mashrafiyah swords). His actual wording is :

Meantime a band of 3000 Arabians was carrying a raid into a town East of the Southern end of the Dead Sea called Mu'tah. The leader was Zayd ibn-Harithah, adopted son of Muhammad. The object was ostensibly to avenge the murder by a Ghassanid, of an emissary sent by the Prophet to Busra, but *actually to gain for the new converts rich booty* including the Mashrafiyah swords manufactured in that neighbourhood.⁴⁰

However at another place, Hitti himself has given a categorical refutation to his two theories cited above in that he now avers that the object of Mu'tah expedition (among others) was to secure full control of the trade route and to establish contact with Arabians long domiciled in Syria. While referring to the events after the Peace of Hudabiyah he writes :

Muhammad returned to Medina after securing this significant

come to writing about the Prophet of Islam, throw off all their restraint and "objectivity" and revert to the age-old prejudices and antagonism towards the Prophet and indulge in, what may be called cheap historical "polemics" at his expense. Here are two cases in point of Carl Brockleemann and Philip K. Hitti.

The German scholar, Carl Brockleemann, has been acclaimed as one of the leading Western authorities on the Arabic Literature for his monumental *History of the Arabic Literature* (in German). However, while writing his *History of the Islamic Peoples* he had indulged in the familiar pastime of distorting Islamic History and trying to tarnish the fair name of Prophet Muhammad.

While referring to the expedition of Mu'tah at one place Brockleemann writes that the Prophet "over-estimating his own power and falsely evaluating international situation with respect to Byzantium attempted to attack Byzantium . . .".⁸⁷

For refutation of this uncalled for attack on the Prophet we need not go elsewhere but simply reproduce the very words of Brockleemann himself when at another place, he gives out the real cause of the expedition of Mu'ta, i.e., the murder of the Prophet's envoy and consequent action taken by him. Brockleemann says :

"He (i.e. the Prophet) soon came into contact with Byzantine frontier posts. In 629 a messenger he had sent to the commander of the forces of Bosra, Transjordan, had been intercepted and executed, To avenge this the Prophet sent an army of three thousand men under his foster son Zayd-ibn-Harithah Northward in September."⁸⁸

Another "nice" example of Christian "objective" historical writing !

We come to another Christian historian of modern era, the Christian Arab, Philip K. Hitti, who has a number of important works on Islamic History and Culture to credit.

Professor Hitti has yet other fantastic theories of his own to advance for the expedition of Mu'tah. In one version he begins by discounting the real cause of the expedition as that of avenging the martyrdom of the Prophet's envoy but avers that the real object was to secure the coveted Mashrafiyah swords manufactured at Mu'tah

by various Arab authors, particularly al-Waqidi, whose other versions of events connected with the Prophet Muhammad's life and mission are given to much credence by them, and, at times considered as gospel truth. They are fully aware of the fact that the murder of the Prophet's envoy led to the expedition of Mu'tah, yet this is how they have given twists and turns to the cause of this tragedy.

For Gibbon, the object of the expedition is one of "decent pretence for invading Palestine"; for Mills, it is one of "ambition or revenge"; for Muir, the expedition of Dhat Atlah and Mu'tah seem to be inter-connected, the former was some sort of "spying out" mission, or arose out of the desire of the Prophet to "revenge the death of his followers" and the murder of the alleged ambassador and the tragedy of Dhat Atlah are one and the same thing; for Caetani, the likely hypothesis is that of Muir's, but he makes out the Muslim army march out "full of hopes of booty"; for Duhl, it is one of "bringing Christian or Arab tribes under the Prophet's control"; for Saunders, in the first instance, the object of the expedition is "obscure", then it dawns on him that it was "perhaps designed to secure the submission of local Arab tribes" but, at all events, it was "an opening shot" by the Prophet in the conflict between Christendom and Islam which was to rage for centuries.

It will be seen that all these Christian writers have put on different constructions for their own on this expedition and made all sorts of open or subtle allegations against the Prophet of Islam and laid the blame at his door for starting the conflict, quietly ignoring the heinous crime of the Christian chief, Shurahbil, in getting a peaceful envoy murdered in cold blood against all canons of international law recognised throughout the centuries by all civilised nations, or by disowning the clear responsibility of other Christian tribes for killing a party of fifteen Muslims who were wholly on peaceful proselytising mission on the borders of Syria.

This is how noted Western scholars write "objectively" when dealing with Islam, and particularly the Prophet of Islam!

While on the subject one is pained to point out that some of the Christian writers, who are otherwise quite "objective" in dealing with the various facets of Islamic Culture and Civilization, when they

despatched by Mahomet to the Ghassanide Prince at Bostra. It was, tradition tells us, immediately resolved to attack and punish the offending chief.

In the foot note to this Muir states :

I am much *inclined to identify the expedition to Dhat Atlah with the embassy*, and to regard its disastrous issue as the cause of the invasion of Muta.³³

Leone Caetani, after casting doubts on the reasons given by Waqidi and other Arab historians for this expedition, says that "the most likely hypothesis is Muir's IV, 95 . . . that *Mohammed wanted to avenge the murder of Dhat Atlah and the the murder of the alleged ambassador is the same event as the preceeding massacre*". However, he ends by saying that the "army moved towards the North full of hopes of booty."³⁴

Frants Buhl, another biographer of the Prophet, has yet another explanation to advance for this expedition. In his article "Muta" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, after casting doubts on the version of Arab authors, Duhl remarks that the real reason seems to have been that the Prophet wished to bring the Christian and pagan Arabs living there under his control. His actual words are.

According to the Arabic account, the reason why Muhammad sent 3,000 men to this region was that *an envoy whom he* (i.e. the Prophet) *had sent to the King* (presumably the imperial commandant) *of Basra had been murdered by a Ghassanid*, but the real reason *seems to have been that he wishing to bring the (Christian or pagan) Arabs under his control*.³⁵

Another Christian author, J. J. Saunders, has put forth the following theory to explain the expedition of Mutha :

The object of the raid is obscure ; perhaps it was designed to secure the submission of the local Arab tribes and unexpectedly ran into a Roman border patrol. At all events, *it was the opening shot in the conflict between Christendom and Islam which was to rage throughout the centuries*.³⁶

It is pertinent to note here that all these Christian writers have invariably cast doubts on the cause of the expedition of Mu'tah given

explain it away, though some have accepted the reason tacitly.

The famous historian, Edward Gibbon, cleverly remarks in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that the *murder of an envoy afforded a decent pretext* for invading, with three thousand soldiers, the territory of Palestine.³⁰

According to Charles Mills *feelings of ambition or revenge* prompted Mohammad in the full possession of power to carry his ravages into the rich and fertile land of Syria.³¹

Sir William Muir, true to his anti-Prophet and anti-Muslim stance, has more than one explanation to advance to confuse the issues and connects this expedition with the tragedy of Dhat Atlah where a party of fifteen Muslims, who were on a preaching mission, were done to death. This tragedy has been narrated by Ibn Hisham Tabari, Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd.³²

Speaking about the tragedy of Dhat Atlah Muir writes :

Soon after this, a party of fifteen men was sent to Dhat Atlah, a place on the borders of Syria. There *they found a great assemblage of people, who were called upon to embrace Islam. A shower of arrows was the decisive answer. The Mussulmans fought desperately ; one man alone survived to tell the tale. Mahomet* was much afflicted by this calamity, and *planned an expedition to revenge the death of his followers.* But tidings reached him that the place had been deserted, and he relinquished the idea for the moment.

Holding that perhaps this was the cause of the attack on Muta Muir continues :

A reverse generally described by tradition with enigmatical brevity ; and, from the few details, it is difficult to determine what was the object for which this little band was sent forth. *It may have been an embassy to certain tribes ; or a secret mission to spy out the cause of the rumoured gathering and uneasiness on the Syrian Frontier.* However this may be, *I cannot but connect the above disaster with the great inroad directed by Mahomet about two months afterwards upon the border-districts of Syria.*

The cause ordinarily assigned for this invasion of the Roman territory was the murder by Sharahbil, chief of Maab or Muta, of a messenger

effort beyond any he had yet made ; and he gathered three thousand raiders, who *were bidden take satisfaction from Bostra for the murder of one of the bearers of his letter in the previous year . . .* In the end they had to take a lesson, not lost on Khalid.²⁶

Wilmot Buxton states in his book '*The Story of the Crusades*' :

*One of the Prophet's envoys had been put to death by the Christian chieftain of a Syrian tribe, which was under Roman rule ; and the little Moslem army at once set out from Medina to avenge him*²⁷

Two other writers, Bertram Thomas and Reuben Levy, also admit the killing of the Prophet's messenger but they mistakenly ascribe the killing of some envoys rather than one messenger.

Reuben Levy, in the characteristic manner of some bigoted Orientalists, tries, to confuse the issue of the purpose of the embassy but admits the killing nevertheless. He writes in his work '*The Social Structure of Islam*'.

The historians speak of envoys sent by him (i.e. the Prophet) to Syria in the year 8/629 . . . but what their purpose was is not clear, though it has been precariously assumed that they were instructed to summon on the Emperor Heraclius to adopt Islam. The envoys were killed, and an *expedition directed against the emperor's Arab subjects to avenge the murder was routed at the battle of Muta*.²⁸

Bertram Thomas admits the heinousness of the crime committed in the murder of the Prophet's envoy and states :

A tragedy, to which momentous consequences are attached by Arab authorities, attended the return of his mission. Mohammed's messengers killed on the Syrian border. *It was a contravention of the laws of tribal morality, an act of war.* A force of 3,000 men was hastily got together in Medina and marched North, it encountered an unexpectedly large opposing forces of the Byzantium at Muta . . . and after suffering the loss of three commanders was driven to retire an Medina.²⁹

Now we come to some other Western historians and biographers of the Prophet Mohammad who have cast doubts on the real cause of the expedition, i.e. the murder of the Prophet's envoy, and put forward theories and hypothesis, often conflicting and contradictory to each other, and sometimes most fantastic and far-fetched real, to

like fate. Indignant over the outrage the Prophet dispatched an army of three thousand men under Zaid b. Harith against Muta.²⁰

The *Encyclopaedia Americana*, records the following :

'Amr (the Ghassanide) had the Ambassador from Mohammed executed. *This caused the first war between the Moslems and Christian ; the Moslems were beaten with great loss.*²¹

Chamber's Encyclopaedia has the following version of the tragedy at Muta :

Some received the new gospel, but Chosroes II, the King of Persia, and Amru the Ghassanide rejected his proposal with scorn, and *the latter had the messenger executed in Mo'ib. This was the cause of the first war between the Christians and the Moslems.*²²

Edith Holland writes in his work '*The Story of Mohammed*' :

When the Prophet summoned the nations of the earth to join the Faith of Islam, one of his letters was addressed to the Governor of Ghassan, a dependency of the Roman Empire on the borders of Syria. *The messenger carrying this letter was murdered at a place called Mutah. To avenge his death Mohammed sent an army of three thousand men under the command of Zaid.*²³

J. D. Mac-Bride states in his book '*The Mohammedan Religion Explained.*' :

*... an ambassador whom he (i.e. the Prophet) had sent to the governor of Bosra had been assassinated by an Arab of the tribe of Gassan who commanded for the Emperor at Muta . . . He (i.e. the Prophet) resolved to be revenged, and assembled a force of 3000 chosen men.*²⁴

Sir Mark Sykes records in his '*The Caliph's Last Heritage*' :

The Ghassanid Arabs near Bostra must have felt that a new power was rising with which they could not cope with. *A messenger from Medina was murdered, and a war of battle and death, not of plunder and flight was proclaimed against the Moslems. The warrior missionaries of Islam set out to avenge the crime ; but at Muta they met, not the border Arabs, whose blood they desired, but the disciplined legions of the Emperor.*²⁵

D.G. Hogarth depicts the incident in his characteristic language in these words :

To harry Ghassan, even in its day of decline, called for a military

The same year Mohammed, having sent a letter to the governor of Bostra in Syria, as he had to others, and *his messenger being slain there*, sent Zeid, son of Hareth with three thousand men to Muta in Syria, against the Roman army, which, with their allies, made a body of nearly one hundred thousand men.¹⁵

In his article on "*Mohammedanism*" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the great German scholar, Wetlhausen, wrote :

*On of these envoys (i.e. of the Prophet) was seized and beheaded in the Belka (the ancient Moab). Hence sprang the first campaign against the Greeks.....*The army directed against them was, however, entirely defeated at Muta (629) and Khalid succeeded with difficulty in rallying and leading back the broken remnant of the host.¹⁶

Another German historian, Gustav Weil, recorded in his *Geschichte der Islamitischen Volker* that the Prophet had sent an embassy to a Christian chief of the Arabs on the Syrian border *The chief ordered the execution of one of Muhamed's messengers. This execution led to the first war between the Byzantines and the Muslims* which ended disastrously for the Muslims at Muta (629 AD.)¹⁷

D.S. Margoliouth, a hostile critic of Prophet Muhammad, admits in his work '*Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*' that the *Prophet's envoy, Al Harith, had been slain* by Shurahbil, Byzantine official *which led the Prophet to avenge the foul murder* and hostilities with Byzantium were started. He also admits that the *expedition "does not appear to have been deliberately planned by the Prophet"* but the Prophet never allowed such an outrage to remain unavenged.¹⁸

The French biographer of the Prophet, Emile Dermengham, writes in his '*Life of Mahomet*' :

The emissary sent to the governor of Bosra in the confines of Syria was killed at Mu'ta by an Arab of the Ghassanides, Christian vassals of Heraclius. To avenge his death Mahomet sent Zaid ben Harith with three thousand men.....¹⁹

Adolph L. Wismar says in his work '*A study in Toleration*' :

The occasion of the expedition against Muta, A.H. 8, was *the wanton murder of a messenger Muhammed sent to the King of Bostra.....* Shurahbil b. 'Amr, the Ghassanide, seized and slew the Prophet's envoy at Muta. No other messenger of Muhammad had ever met a

3,000 men under the command of his manumitted slave, Zayed Ibn Haritha.¹¹

The Muslims were confronted by a formidable force of Byzantine troops and their Arab auxiliaries. The expedition in the martyrdom of Zayd, and other commanders, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and Abdullah ibn Rawaha, named by the Prophet in succession, and the position was retrieved with great difficulty by Khalid ibn Walid 'the sword of Allah' who took over the command after their martyrdom.¹²

In regard to this expedition conflicting viewpoints have been expressed by Western writers. While most of the historians of 19th century and twentieth century admit that the cause of the conflict was the murder of the envoy of Prophet Muhammad by Christian chief, other writers and some Orientalists, particularly some biographers of the Prophet, have tried to cover up the real cause of the expedition by putting forth one subtle excuse or the other, or by advancing some new-fangled theory of the other, so as to confuse the issue and lay the blame on the Prophet himself. Some writers have gone to the extent of accusing the Prophet of "firing the first shot" in the conflict between Christendom and Islam, which is devoid of all historical truth.

Washington Irving says in his work '*Mahomet and His Successors*'.

The envoy of Mahomet was slain at MutaThe one who slew him was an Arab of the Christian tribe of Ghassan an emir, who governed Muta in the name of Heraclius.

To avenge the death of his legate, and to insure respect of his envoys in future, Mahomet prepared to send an army of three thousand men against the offending city.¹³

The french historian, L. A. Sedillot, is of the view that the Ghassanide chief, tributary to Heraclius, Courabhil, had Muhammad's envoy to Bostra (Buarah) murdered. *which provoked the bloody conflict between the Arabs and the Greeks*. His actual wording is :

Unichef ghassanide, tributaire'd Heraclius, Chouravhil, ayant mis a mort un envoye de Mahomet qui se rendait a Bostra, *provaque une sanglante collision centre less Arabes et les Grecs*.¹⁴

Simon Ockley writes in his '*History of the Saracens*' :

the leading lights of the thinking of the West, of whom Montgomery Watt himself is one of the most conspicuous of modern times.

Conflicts in Pre-Islamic and Prophetic Times.

Starting from the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) we may say that it was, perhaps, just a coincidence that the Prophet was born in 570 BC.—the “*Year of the Elephant*”, as it is called in the Arab annals—when Abrahah, the Christian Viceroy of Abyssinia, had attacked Mecca with the design of razing the Holy Ka’bah to the ground.⁷ His expedition ended in failure to which a reference has been made in the Holy Qur’an in the Surah “*The Elephant*” beginning with the word’s “Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the owners of the Elephant”

Bringing out the importance and repercussions on the invasion of Abrahah, Thomas Wright says in his work ‘*Early Christianity in Arabia*’ :

The same year which had witnessed the defeat of the Christian power in Arabia by the idolaters of Mecca, about two months after that event, whilst Abrahah still occupied the throne of Yemen, gave birth to one of the greatest enemies the church has ever experienced.⁹

In his ‘*History of Medieval Islam*’, J. J. Saunders writes in the same strain, lamenting over the Christian designs which were blasted by the defeat of Abrahah.

The invasion failed.....and *Christian hopes of converting all Arabia were blasted*. Had Abrahah taken Mecca, the whole peninsula would have been thrown open to Christian and Byzantine penetration ; the Cross would have been raised on the Kaaba, and Muhammad might have died a priest or monk.¹⁰

We come to the Holy Prophet’s own time when the occasion for the first military clash between Christianity and Islam took place. Al-Waqidi and a host of other Arab writers have started that Harith Ibn ‘Umar, the Prophet’s envoy, while he was on his way to the governor of Busra carrying his letter, inviting the latter to embrace Islam, was intercepted and murdered by a Christian chief, Shurahbil ibn ‘Amr, who owed allegiance to the Byzantine Emperor. With a view to avenge this foul murder the Prophet despatched a force of

History has been such that the West's relations with Islamic world have from the first been radically different from those with any other civilization. These two have throughout shared a common frontier—which has meant that they have been constantly in contact and often in open conflict . . . *Europe has known Islam for thirteen centuries mostly as an enemy and a threat.* It is no wonder that Mohammed more than any other of the world's religious leaders has had "a poor press" in the West, and that Islam is the least appreciated there of any of the world's outside faiths.⁴

In his '*History of the Moorish Empire in Europe*, S.P. Scott boldly remarks :

As a result of inherited prejudice the principles of every religion always appear heterodox, false and absurd to sincere believers in other forms of faith. *Of all theological dogmas, none have suffered more from the effects of ignorance and injustice than those of Islamism.* The name of its founder has for thirteen centuries been a synonym of imposture. *His motives have been impugned, his sincerity denied. His character has been branded with every vice which degrades or afflicts mankind. The greatest absurdities, the grossest inhumanity, have been attributed to his teaching. Ecclesiastical malice has exhausted its resources in efforts to blacken his memory.*⁵

W. Montgomery Watt writes in his article on the Prophet Muhammad in *The Cambridge History of Islam*.

Another difficulty is that some occidental readers are still not completely free from the prejudices inherited from their medieval ancestors. In the bitterness of the Crusades and other wars against the Saracens, they came to regard the Muslims and in particular Muhammad, as the incarnation of all that was evil, and the continuing effect of the propaganda of that period has not yet been completely removed from occidental thinking about Islam. It is still much commoner to find good spoken about Buddhism than about Islam.⁶

It would have been better, if instead of blaming some occidental "readers" for suffering from inherited prejudice against Islam and its Prophet, Montgomery Watt would have used the words "writers" in its place, because it is the writers who give the twists and turns are

*Zafar Ali Qureshi**

Christian - Muslim Confrontation : Background and Perspective of History. A Critique of Orientalist's Views on The Battle of Mut'ah.

Christendom and the world of Islam have been crossing swords with each other for more than thirteen centuries, echoes of which have been resounding and reverberating in the air ever since. The ghosts of the Crusades seem to be stalking the earth and casting their spell not only on the Ghanceries and Conference Halls of the West but on the Universities, Academies and Seminaries of Christendom as well. And this is no mere flight of imagination, no mere figment of the brain, but a plain statement of hard facts writ large on the pages of history, witnessed today in broad daylight and engraved on the tablets of hearts of countless million—for those who have eyes to see, hearts to feel and brains to understand !

The antagonistic spirit of relations between Christendom and the world of Islam has been admitted in so many words by more than one Western writer in his own way.

R.C. Zaehner, writing in his book *At Sundry Times*, has stated that the history of the relations between Christianity and Islam has been one of increasing misunderstanding and estrangement.

Another writer, Looft Levoni, writes as under :

It is extremely regrettable that the relations throughout the past countries have been dominated by an attitude of antagonism and controversy in both the political and religious spheres.

H.G. Wells, dwelling on the relation between Christendom and Islam, calls it "*quite insane intolerance between these great systems down to the present time*"³

Wilfred Cantwell Smith writes rather more explicitly on the subject :

*Retired Professor, Islamia College, Lahore.

THE "ORIENTAL UNIVERSITY"

Is, as a National Indian Institution

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| I. A supreme literary body | } For oriental literature and
Western science. |
| II. A supreme examining body | |
| III. A supreme teaching body | |

Its objects will be :

- To restore ancient learning.
- To create a good vernacular literature.
- To introduce European science through the medium of the vernaculars.

Its principles are :

That sound education cannot be prescribed, but must be developed. Much must be left to private co-operation, and responsibility. That, therefore, the *existing* educational elements in this country must be made use of and developed in the right direction.

That for india the oriental languages are the natural basis for the superstructure of European science, and that their study alone can give to the natives of this country, that mental discipline without which the asquisition of mere "knowledge" is unsound and delusive.

That every class of the population be made to feel an interest in the success of the movement, and that literary merit of any kind be appreciated and rewarded.

Government will always doubt that the people are fit for high posts as long as we do not show that we are men, not children.

Therefore we must act for ourselves and gain by overwhelming merit, the position to which we aspire. Then the people of England will bountifully bestow its marks of appreciation on a deserving people.

Let us work together, without jealousy of each other's goodness, but for one common object.

On me you can always depend here or in England, in public or private, I shall in my humble way always serve your cause.

But if you act in concert for a great, good and noble common object, with implicit reliance on yourselves and each other, you will succeed. Praise will be given to all, where all support and praise each other, and friendship will sanctify the bounds, which have been drawn together by a necessity of common action.



A month after this memorable speech, a rough draft of scheme for the establishment of an Oriental University for upper India was prepared by Dr. Leitner, and submitted for approval by the Anjuman, on the 11th september 1865. Aims and objects of this University were given as below

"The people's own department of public instruction."

This is preferable to instituting a mere literary committee, and *this* is the course which will best meet the objects, of the Lieutenant-Governor.

This department will encourage all the teaching Moulvies and Pandits all over the country. It will endeavour to raise voluntary subscriptions and to ask Government for grants-in-aid ; it will reward original compositions and translations, it will do everything that the Circular wants us to do, and more, because it will shed lustre and renown on those who take part in it.

But the first thing that the department will do, will be to establish an University at Lahore for the Punjab.

That University will have for its Patron the Lieutenant-Governor, and for its Governors the native rajahs of the Punjab, and for its senate, the nobles of Lahore. It will have a committee for preservation and cultivation of the Muhammadan, Hindu, Sikh and other learning.

What will distinguish it from the official instruction will be its complete avowal of the principal of "absolute liberty in giving and receiving instruction."

In other words we shall have examining committees all over the country at certain periods of the year, in all branches of knowledge and in all the oriental languages.

At the chief cities we shall have competent lecturers some of whom will give their services gratuitously.

These lecturers will teach with the view to the examination but *there will be no compulsion of any sort or shape viz :*

Any body of ability may teach under our auspices.

Any body may be taught.

For as short or as long a time as he may like.

Any body may be admitted to the examination and if competent receive degrees and titles. In short, if this country is ever to be what we wish it to be, there must, in this our educational measure, be encouragement everywhere and restriction no where.

Unless the *voluntary principle* surrounded by certain safeguards is the basis of our movement, the nation will remain in its childhood.

lished by you, presided over by you, encouraged by you, and supported and perfected under your sole care and responsibility.

There is no opportunity like the present for doing this. Under that best of men and scholars, our honored and beloved Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Donald McLeod, who loves the people, wishes to perpetuate its ancient sacred languages, to perfect its present vernaculars and to introduce new knowledge without detriment to old knowledge, we have an opportunity such as Providence only rarely gives to any people.

Nobles ! if under such a man you do not raise the condition of the inhabitants of this country, you may never have another such opportunity.

The Lieutenant-Governor's last Circular places beyond doubt what his intentions are. Allow me to read it. (Vide Lieutenant-Governor's Circular on the subject of promoting oriental learning). From this you will perceive that he has two great objects.

The revival of ancient oriental learning.

The perfection of the vernaculars of this country.

The first can only be done by encouraging in every way, excellence of every kind in the Arabic, Sanscrit and Persian languages, by bringing into one centre all their literary treasures, and by stimulating the production of books on their history, etc., etc.

The second by translating the best European works into the vernaculars and by encouraging again, through prizes and appointments, those who most distinguish themselves as authors, compilers or translators.

What is a people without its language, history, traditions and a present learning. A mere name which represents no reality.

But the Lieutenant-Governor wants to preserve the treasures of India, because he wants to preserve the people of India. He wants us to combine Eastern with Western knowledge.

We do not want people merely to know a little English, but to respect their parents, their Raieses, their priests and their elders, to be honest and to be able to manage the work that Government may entrust them with. Therefore, I again say the only thing that can be done is to establish:-

of England, the Government of India are anxious to admit *all* to the same privileges as all are interested by the same loyalty to the same Queen. Why is this? because among all the nations of the world, England has alone profited by the lessons of past history, and her greatness is due to understanding that the welfare of *every one* subject is necessary to the welfare of the whole country.

This is why *ability* is considered the first requisite for public employment. We endeavour to get the right man in the right place.

But the people of England do not attach less importance to *character*, and considerable importance also to *birth*.

Enlightenment is rapidly progressing all over the world. This is the century for an able man, whatever his birth, and often whatever his character. We must not and cannot shut the door to employment to an able man but it is very desirable that the most able men should be the men of the best character and if possible also of good birth. What did the aristocracy of England do when at the beginning of this century it saw all the other classes rise to its own level by the irresistible power of education? It placed itself at the head of the movement and the noblest and the wealthiest became the most educated and progressive. It is entirely due to this circumstance that the old aristocracy of England have continued and will continue the aristocracy of our beloved country.

II. If the same course is not adopted in this country, it is difficult to perceive how the same result can be obtained.

“Knowledge is power everywhere” but particularly in India. You are looked upon as the leaders of your several nations. It is therefore necessary that you should lead the van of education and progress.

The first and immediate thing therefore to be done is of course to promote education. Government can only show the way, but it is the people who are to walk in it. The object of Government instruction is to stimulate *private* educational competition.

Let me quote now from the enclosed despatch, (Vide Secretary of State for India, Educational despatch.) Is it not clear to you that we ought to establish what I hope *will* be established by this meeting. “The *people's* department of public instruction” which will be estab-

THE FIRST VOICE FOR THE Establishment of an University at Lahore

A MEMORABLE SPEECH BY DR. LEITNER

In quick response to a letter No. 296, dated 10th June, 1865, from the Secretary to Government, Punjab, [Sub : Extension of a Vernacular Literature], Dr. Leitner convened a special meeting of the Anjuman-i-Punjab in the first week of August, 1865, and addressed the following appeal to the Raieses of Lahore :

Oh Raieses, etc., etc.

The subject I have to bring to your notice to-day is of the greatest importance to yourselves, the Government and the people of this country.

It is a great honour to me that you have favored me with your presence at this meeting, which I hope will be in the annals of this country, an illustrious and noteworthy gathering. Give me your best attention and be sure that you are giving it to one who is not only a friend of the people of India, but who is also deeply anxious to be accepted into the friendship of every one of you.

Before we touch upon the main point which has brought us together, let me give a short statement of what I conceive to be—

1. The position of the Government towards yourselves.
2. Your position towards the people of this country.

1. Our Government is one which is founded on the most liberal principles. It not only tolerates every shade of opinion among its subjects, but it considers all its subjects equal. It will admit any one to the very highest employments if he be competent for them, without distinction of race and creed. The people of England, the Parliament

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**UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB, LAHORE
(PAKISTAN)**