
‘Arafāt

monuments

religion

pilgrimage

hajj

Arabia

Mecca

Mount ‘**Arafāt** (‘Arafa) is a venerated site in Islam that serves as one of the main stations of the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca.

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-Ṭā’if. The small mountain and the plain on which it is situated serve as one of the main stations of the pilgrimage (*hajj*) 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-Raḥma (“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 *hajj*, until they arrived at ‘Arafāt. There Gabriel asked Abraham: “Do you know (*hal ‘arafa*) 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 (*ta‘ārafā*) there. Another explanation for the name is that pilgrims confess

Comment [VJT1]: Au: okay to change to “mount” throughout, as it is not a mountain in the ordinary definition of the word.

Comment [VJT2]: Au: Is this change to “mount” okay?

(*ya'tarifūna*) their sins there. Still other explanations suggest that the name was derived from *'irf* ("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 Wahhābīs. The sources also mention a site called Jabal al-Du'ā' ("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 *ḥaram* of Mecca, but some of the sources read "Urana"; this mosque is also called Masjid Ibrāhīm, 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-mash'ar al-aqṣā*). This is usually explained as referring to 'Arafāt (Suhaylī, *Rawḍ*), as 'Arafāt is indeed situated outside the *ḥaram* 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-Ḥijja (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 (*khuṭba*) delivered by the leader of the *ḥajj*, followed by the noon prayer and afternoon prayer combined. During the *wuqūf*,

Comment [VJT3]: Au: Please provide a date.

Comment [VJT4]: Au: change from Hill okay?

Comment [VJT5]: Au: Is this the same Day of 'Arafāt mentioned below, as 9 Dhū l-Ḥijja? Was it thought that the prophets assembled there before Islam (more than once?), or after Islam?

Comment [VJT6]: Au: please provide page number for this citation.

individuals make supplications on the pattern of those in the traditions of the Prophet and his Companions. Formerly pilgrims climbed Mount ‘Arafāt, 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 ‘Arafāt 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 Qur’ān exegetes with the “day of the great pilgrimage” mentioned in the Qur’ān (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 ‘Arafāt when it falls on a Friday. On the Day of ‘Arafāt, 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-amṣār*. In general scholars have not objected to this practice, although some have considered it an undesirable innovation (*bid’a*).

It is related that pre-Islamic Arabs, unlike the Muslims, performed the *wuqūf* in ‘Arafāt and proceeded to al-Muzdalifa before (and not after) sunset, but the Quraysh never went to ‘Arafāt, claiming that since it was situated outside the *ḥaram*, 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 *ḥaram* during the period of sanctification. Qur’ān exegetes say that God decreed that everyone must go to ‘Arafāt; in Q 2:198, ‘Arafāt is declared a ritual site for all pilgrims. Muḥammad himself, although a member of the Ḥums, is said to have participated in the rites there already in pre-Islamic times.

[words 972 cevt]

Comment [VJT7]: Au: Is this still done, and if so, do scholars still generally not object? Consider the following change:
“On the Day of ‘Arafāt, Muslims outside Mecca and beyond Arabia still gather in mosques in observance of the day, usually with *dhikr* (remembrance of God through recitation); in Arabic this is referred to as *al-ta’rīf fī l-amṣār*. In general scholars have not objected to this practice, and most still accept it as a form of supplemental worship, although some have considered it an undesirable innovation (*bid’a*).”

Bibliography:

The *tafsīr* collections on Qurʾān 2:198; Abū I-Walīd al-Azraqī, *Akhhbār Makka*, in Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka* (Göttingen 1858, repr. Beirut n.d.), 1:412–5, 418–22; Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Fākihī, *Akhhbār Makka*, ed. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Duḥaysh (Mecca 1986–8), 5:5–44; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muthīr al-gharām al-sākin ilā ashraf al-amākin*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Dhahabī (Cairo 1995), 177–200; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut 1957), 4:104–6; Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, *al-Qirā li-qāṣid umm al-qurā*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā (Cairo 1970), 379–412; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raʿūf Saʿd (Cairo 1971), 2:25; Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī, *Shifāʾ al-gharām bi-akhhbār al-balad al-ḥarām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut 1985), 1:301–6; Julius Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidenthums*, Berlin 1897²; Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan festivals* (London 1976), 31–2, 35; A. J. Wensinck, ʿArafa, or ʿArafāt, *EI2*; Patricia Crone, *Meccan trade and the rise of Islam* (Princeton 1987), 170–6; Francis E. Peters, *The hajj. The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and the holy places* (Princeton 1994), 122–5 (report of Ibn Jubayr), 202–5 (report of ʿAlī Bey), 249–52 (report of Roches), 354–5 (report of Rutter); Maribel Fierro, The treatises against innovations (*kutub al-bidaʾ*), *Der Islam* 69 (1992), 204–46, 226–7; Uri Rubin, *The eye of the beholder. The life of Muḥammad as viewed by the early Muslims* (Princeton 1995), 88–90.

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 Khayyāt. But the Wüstenfeld 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 ʿArafāt?