

HAIRS OF THE PROPHET¹⁾

When we recall pre-Islamic life in Arabia, it is not surprising that a great deal of Animism persists in popular Islam even today.²⁾ Snouck Hurgronje, in his work on the *Achenese*, calls attention to the numerous animistic customs among the Sumatra Moslems and not condemned by their orthodox leaders because they find parallels in early Islam (pp. 287—288). While Johannes Warneck and Gottfried Simon go so far as to agree that "Islam is naturally inclined to Animism and easily entangled in its meshes" (Simon, *Islam in Sumatra*, pp. 157—159). "It would seem that Animism is the primitive form of paganism maintaining itself amid all the refinements of civilization. The study of Greek and old German religions exhibits the same animistic features as we find in Hinduism and in Islam" (Warneck, *Living Christ and Dying Heathenism*, p. 7).

And Frazer remarks: "Brahminism, Buddhism and Islam may come and go, but the belief in magic and demons remains unshaken through them all, and if we may judge of the future from the past is likely to survive the rise and fall of other historical religions." *Aberglaube* seems to have a vitality surpassing *Glaube* and *Unglaube* even in Christendom.

¹⁾ The title of this paper, to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Dr. Ignace Goldziher, is not intended as a pun on my recent study, *Heirs of the Prophets*. It is rather a footnote to the vast subject of the influence of Animism on Islam. Students of Dr. Goldziher's writings know that *his* footnotes were often gateways to wide areas of thought. I recall a postcard he wrote to me about 1906 on an obscure Arabian custom.

²⁾ Frazer's *The Scapegoat*, p. 89. Cf. Wensinck's *Animismus . . . im Untergrund . . . Islamischen-rituellen Gebets, Der Islam*, Band IV, pp. 220—235; Zwemer's *The Influence of Animism on Islam*, New York 1920; Zwemer's *Studies in Popular Islam*, London 1939.

In his large volume, *Het Animisme*, A. C. Kruijt, the Dutch missionary, analyzes the origin of animistic beliefs by showing that personal soul-stuff is regarded by all animists as residing in parts of the human body, especially blood, hair, teeth, saliva etc. This soul-stuff with its potency for good or evil can then be transferred or appropriated by others in various ways.

Among the interesting details recorded in Moslem tradition are those relating to the hair and beard of the Prophet Mohammed during his lifetime and after his death. Tradition is very specific regarding Mohammed's hair. It was neither curling nor smooth but had four curled locks. He used to clip his moustache and allow his beard to grow. He frequently oiled his hair and perfumed it and his beard. The Prophet is related to have said: "Do the opposite of the polytheists and let your beard grow long" (*Mishkāt* XX:4).³⁾ The sanctity of Mohammed's beard as token of manhood and dignity is recognized in common oaths. Even as the Arabs swear by their own lives or by their beards (*walāhyetī*), so more solemnly the Moslem community swears by the beard of their Prophet (*lāhyet al-nabī*). One hears this oath everywhere in the Near East. Westermarck tells of present day customs among Moslems in Morocco that relate to hair and its potency for good or ill. This applies equally to other lands. It is tied to sacred trees and shrines of saints, the hair of a seven-day old child is offered as sacrifice (*aqīqah*), shaving of hair is a religious rite, hair is used for amulets, the hair of "holy-men" is treasured for its efficacy to cure.⁴⁾ It is an interesting fact, as Wellhausen shows, that the origin of all these practices goes back to Mohammed himself. In ancient Arabia the *kāhin* would heal the sick by touch of his hand, by breathing on him and by the use of saliva etc. And he goes on to say that Mohammed did likewise. "*Die Muslime bestrichen sich die Haut mit dem Auswurf des Propheten und rissen sich um das Wasser, womit er die Waschung verrichtet hatte, um es zu trinken* (Wāqidi 252; Bukhārī I:31—37)." The hair of the Prophet

³⁾ Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*, pp. 40 and 389.

⁴⁾ See Index: Hair, Beard, *Aqiqah*, Saints etc., in Westermarck's *Ritual & Belief in Morocco*, 2 vols.

was carefully collected after it was cut or shaved, and used as an amulet.⁵⁾

Moreover, these hairs of the Prophet were not only sacred from the outset but remained so down the centuries to our own day. In the spring of 1946 a Moslem *mēla* was held near Bandipur, India. The chief exhibit was "a hair from Mohammed's beard treasured in a glass jar before which thousands prostrated themselves."⁶⁾ Special chapters are found in all the popular lives of the Prophet on the virtues of his *fadhālāt*, saliva, blood, hair etc. etc. There are traditions in Bukhārī and Muslim so extravagant as to be incredible. Even his excreta were free from all defilement.⁷⁾

We read in Aḥmad Zainī Daḥlān's biography of Mohammed: "When the Prophet had his beard shaved and his companions surrounded him, they never suffered a single hair to fall to the ground but seized them as good omens or for a blessing. And since his Excellency had his hair cut only at the time of the pilgrimage, this had become *sunna*, so it is related in the *Mawāḥib*, and he who denies it should be severely punished."⁸⁾

We read that Muḥammad ibn Dārāin said: "I have a few hairs of the Prophet which I took from Anās and when I told it to 'Obeid al-Suleimāni he replied, 'if I had a single hair it would be more to me than all the world.' " There are many similar traditions telling how Mohammed's hairs were collected,⁹⁾ distributed among his followers after he was shaved at Mīna,¹⁰⁾ used against the evil eye¹¹⁾ and the value attached to a single hair from his head or beard.¹²⁾ Furthermore, we are told whether and how and when he dyed his hair and beard; also how he first dressed it like "the people of the Book" but afterwards gave this up. (For details see Wensinck, *Handbook of Early Muhamme-*

5) Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*, pp. 139, 140.

6) M. H. Mazzeni, *Daum in Central Asia*, Aug., 1946, p. 17.

7) Al-Ḥalabī, *Insān-al-'Ayūn*, Vol. 2: 222, Cairo.

8) Margin of *Sīrat-al-Ḥalabī*, Cairo, 1308 A. H., Vol. III, pp. 238, 239.

9) Bukhārī 79:41, Ibn Sa'ad I: 135—139; etc. (Wensinck).

10) Muslim 15:324, Al-Dārimī 2:78; Ibn Sa'ad 135.

11) Bukhārī 77:66.

12) Bukhārī 4:33; Ibn Māja 744 sq.

dan Tradition, pp. 35, 91, 160, 169.) The great number of references to this subject both in the standard traditions and in popular lives of Mohammed indicate its importance in early and later Islam. Ignace Goldziher touched the subject in writing on *Relic Worship in Islam* and pointed out that three particular relics of the Prophet lent themselves "to multiplication almost without limit — his shoes, his manuscripts, and his hair." But down the centuries the relic which was the object of the most diligent search is hair from Mohammed's head or beard. "The hair", said Dr. Goldziher, "was worn as an amulet, and men on their deathbed directed by will that the precious possession should go down with them and mingle with the earth. Ja'far ibn Khinzabu, the vizier of an Egyptian prince, had three such hairs which at his death were put into his mouth, and his remains, according to his last testament, were carried to Medina . . . It is a well-known fact that one of the arguments produced in favour and justification of the Khalifs of Constantinople (who being non-Koreshites are by some not considered eligible for the Caliphate,) is their possession of the sacred relics of Islam. Besides the *Khirqā-i-Sharīf*, the holy mantle, and 'Omar's sword preserved in the Ayyūb mosque, these relics include hairs of the Prophet's beard. The quantity of these latter does not seem to be insignificant judging from the circumstance that the Sultan bestows them on other cities. On the occasion of the construction of the Hamidiya mosque erected by the Sultan in Samsun in 1889, we learn from a Mohammedan journal that besides a number of copies of the Koran, the commander of the faithful ordered to be conveyed to Samsun some hair 'which belonged to the prince of both the existences and the asylum of the worlds'. They were received there as presents from the Khalīf with extraordinary veneration. Guns were fired from the citadel to do honour to the hair of the noble Prophet. The *Shurifā* and 'Ulemā bore the gift to the said mosque. A similar present was made through special envoys to the city of Aleppo".¹³⁾

The statements made in books of Moslem law leave no doubt that in a sense all human hair is considered

¹³⁾ *Relic Worship in Islam*. Translated from the German of Professor Goldziher. *The Moslem World*, Vol. I, pp. 306, 307,

sacred and may not, therefore, be sold or in any way dishonored. We read in the *Hedāya*, a standard commentary on Moslem law, — "The sale of human hair is unlawful, in the same manner as is the use of it, because, being a part of the human body, it is necessary to preserve it from the disgrace to which an exposure of it to sale necessarily subjects it. It is moreover recorded, in the *Hadith Sharif*, that God denounced a curse upon a *wāsila* and a *mustawāsila*.¹⁴⁾ (The first of these is a woman whose employment it is to unite the shorn hair of one woman to the head of another, to make her hair appear long; and the second means the woman to whose head such hair is united). Besides, as it has been allowed to women to increase their locks by means of the wool of a camel, it may thence be inferred that the use of human hair is unlawful".¹⁵⁾

It is recorded in Ibn Sa'ad that on his last pilgrimage, Mohammed after having saluted the Black Stone and performed the sacrifice, slaughtering sixty-two camels with his own hand to correspond to the years of his life, "had his head shaved and distributed his sacred hair, one-half of it to Abu Talha and the other half to his chaste wives; also one or two hairs to everyone of his friends according to his rank."¹⁶⁾

Khālid, the famous warrior, received some hairs "from Mohammed's forehead which he fixed in his skull-cap as a talisman" and was always victorious.¹⁷⁾

The reliques of the Prophet included more than the hairs of his head so carefully numbered. A list of those sent to Sultan Selim the First and preserved by him in the palace at Constantinople, included some of his hair, a tooth, a pair of shoes, his mantle, prayer-mat, a hilt of his sword, a stone bearing imprint of his foot, an arrow and the Prophet's flag.¹⁸⁾ Hairs of the Prophet are found as relics today at Constantinople, Aleppo, Aintab, Kashmir, Delhi, Cairo, Safed in Palestine and many other

¹⁴⁾ Hamilton's *Hedāya*, Vol. II, p. 439.

¹⁵⁾ Zwemer's *The Influence of Animism on Islam*, p. 76.

¹⁶⁾ S. W. Koelle's *Mohammed*, p. 355.

¹⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁸⁾ The list was given in *Wādy-al-Nīl*, Cairo, M. W., 1925, p. 75.

places. The one at Safed was a gift from the Sultan in 1911 and the Mosque of Bināt Ya‘qub was restored to receive it; twenty soldiers fully armed escorted the relic.¹⁹⁾

And to bring this cult of the Prophet up-to-date, we have the following from the press in New York City: „A shudder passed through the Moslem world last week: three sacred hairs from the beard of the Prophet Mohammed were missing from each of two Istanbul mosques. Carefully preserved in 40 bags, one within the other, and locked securely in jeweled boxes, the hairs have been preserved in the mosques for generations. Each year, on Kadir night, at the end of the feast of Ramadan, the bags are opened and the hairs displayed to the faithful. Last week when the muezzins went as usual to find the relics, they had disappeared. Disconsolate Istanbul Moslems could take some comfort in the knowledge that in countless other mosques identical hairs from the Prophet’s abundant beard still repose safely”.²⁰⁾

We see from these examples how in the history of Islam these relics of the Prophet, once objects of individual solicitude and piety and by which the early companions of Mohammed hoped for a blessing, became articles of public exhibition. They are now more than relics, and lodged in mosques or sacred tombs, are elevated to the status of objects of adoration and magical power.

Of course, there have been protests against this species of *shirk* (associating in worship) on the part of austere, orthodox Moslems. We read that at the Sixth Congress of Orientalists „a theologian of Medina, Sheikh Amin, condemned this huckstery in the hair of the Prophet pursued in India and Turkey.“ He warned his hearers that Mohammed is reported to have said, ”He who lies with respect to myself shall find Hell his resting place.”²¹⁾ The Wahhābī sect destroyed many of such objects once considered sacred, and even tombs of saints, when they took Medina and more recently when they purged Mecca under Ibn Saud’s vigorous reforms. Even the grave of Mother Eve on the outskirts of Jiddah, long a place of prayer and pilgrimage, was destroyed.

¹⁹⁾ *Das Christliche Orient*, September, 1911.

²⁰⁾ ”*Time*“, New York, Sept. 14, 1946.

²¹⁾ *The Moslem World*, Vol. I, p. 307.

But superstition and relic-worship die hard. The Reformation under Luther and Calvin, for example, was not able to exterminate relic worship in Medieval Europe; nor did the Counter-Reformation and the enlightenment of modern education do away with all relics of the saints: hair, bones, garments etc., even in European churches.

Jean Calvin in 1543 wrote a remarkable treatise on the subject which betrays his sense of humor as well as his sarcasm and displeasure. In it he tells of hairs of the Virgin Mary and of saints, as well as of blood, bones, napkins, the wood of the Cross, its nails etc., preserved as objects of worship in churches.²²⁾ Perchance some Moslem Reformer with a sense of humor and indignation, will arise to write a treatise on *the traces of idolatry (shirk)* in modern relic worship, including the hairs of Mohammed.

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²²⁾ *Traité des Réliques*, by Jean Calvin, Paris, 1921, pp. 95, 101, 144. etc.

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FOREWORD

In honour of Ignace Goldziher, Professor of Semitic Philology in the University of Budapest (born on 22 June 1850 at Székesfehérvár, died on 13 November 1921 at Budapest), two memorial volumes appeared at his lifetime. The one was the Hungarian *Tanulmányok Goldziher Ignác hatvanadik születésnapjára. Írták tanítványai* (Essays on the Sixtieth Birthday of Ignace Goldziher, Written by His Pupils), Budapest 1910, and the other was the festival number of the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, comprising Vol. XXVI and Nos. 1—2 of Vol. XXVII, under the title *Festschrift Ignaz Goldziher. Von Freunden und Verehrern gewidmet und in ihrem Auftrag herausgegeben von Carl Bezold*, Strassburg 1911, and issued to celebrate the fortieth year of his academic career. As since his decease, apart from Bernard Heller's *Bibliographie des Oeuvres de Ignace Goldziher*, published by the École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes, Paris 1927, and numerous obituary notices, no tribute of consequence was paid to his name and work, at the end of the Second World War his last pupils conceived the idea of editing and publishing an *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume* in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his decease on 13 November 1946.

Postwar difficulties, however, prevented the editors from realizing their scheme at such an early date, and a considerable delay in publishing the *Volume* became unavoidable. Nevertheless, as it were in compensation for the difficulties so typical of a war-stricken country, most of the scholars who were invited for collaboration, sent in their contributions so promptly and readily that the original idea of issuing a medium-sized volume on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the decease of Ignace Goldziher has had to be abandoned in favour of a large two-volume work. Consequently, the *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume* is issued in two parts: Part I appears in 1948, and Part II is going to appear in 1949, on the eve of the forthcoming

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centenary of the birth of Ignace Goldziher. So the present *Memorial Volume* is a double reminder of his scientific grandeur.

The order of the contributions has been fixed by the dates of their mailing. The list of contributors contains both representatives of the older generation of Orientalists who were in touch with Ignace Goldziher or even studied under him, and the younger generation who know him from his literary work only. As a whole, the *Memorial Volume* testifies to the lasting influence of his pioneer genius on the development of Islamic and Semitic studies all over the world.

Ignace Goldziher's photograph as prefixed to Part I represents him in his intimate study, and was taken a short time before his death by his beloved daughter-in-law Elisabeth.

The editors reverently dedicate the *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume* to the memory of the unforgettable master of Islamology in the firm hope that it will contribute to promoting the much-needed postwar co-operation of Islamic and Semitic scholars of the East and the West.

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