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The
Hidden Origins
of
ISLAM

NEW RESEARCH INTO ITS EARLY HISTORY

EDITED BY KARL-HEINZ OHLIG AND GERD-R. PUIN

 **Prometheus Books**

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FOREWORD

ISLAM'S "HIDDEN" ORIGINS

Karl-Heinz Ohlig

This volume of collected essays seeks to bring a bit of light into the hidden beginnings of a major world religion, namely, Islam.

This intention, as well as my calling Islam's beginnings "hidden," may well astound many, for the beginnings and later development of only a few religions seem to be as clearly known as those of Islam.

In the early sixth century, the prophet Muhammad (570–632) arose; he proclaimed the revelations of Allah in Mecca and Medina and eventually united all the tribes of the Arabian peninsula into one *umma* under his religious and political leadership. The life of the prophet, his upbringing and marriages, his work, the Hijra from Mecca to Medina in 622, and his battles are narrated in detail in Muslim publications as well as those concerning the academic discipline of Islamic studies.

After his death, the story continued with successes in war and in religion. This early period gave birth to large Islamic empires, beginning with the four "rightly guided" caliphs (632–661), continuing under the Umayyad caliphs, with their capital in Damascus (661–750), and culminating under the Abbasids (beginning in 749), who had their political seat in Baghdad beginning in 762. Why, then, "hidden" origins?

It is well known that there are only a few bits of information to be found