Etching Based on a Photograph by Mohammed Sadiq Bey

(see opposite page)

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The Kaaba stands on a base two feet high, which forms a steeply sloping flat area; its roof is flat, and seen from a distance, it has the appearance of a perfect cube. The black color of the kiswa (veil) covering a large cube in the center of a large square, lends the Kaaba, at first glance, a very striking and imposing appearance. As it is not tightly attached at the bottom, the slightest breeze causes slow, wave-like motions that are greeted with prayers by the people gathered around the building, inasmuch as they take this to be a sign of the presence of its guardian angel, the movement of whose wings gives rise to the billowing of the cover. The Kaaba is under the holy care of seventy thousand angels, who have been commissioned to carry it into Paradise at the sounding of the trumpets of the Last Judgment. (Reisen in Arabien [Travels in Arabia], Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, 1819)

The largest single area of the so-called Mosque of Mecca is taken up by a vast, rectangular, enclosed courtyard completely open to the elements about seven hundred feet long and not quite five hundred feet wide, in which are to be found the ten or twelve holy places of Islam that, along with the Kaaba, comprise the central points of Islam and which every pilgrim has to visit. (Meine Wallfahrt nach Mecca [My Pilgrimage to Mecca], Heinrich von Maltzan, 1865)
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(Meine Wallfahrt nach Mecca [My Pilgrimage to Mecca], Heinrich von Maltzan, 1865)
When entering under the colonnade, a few prayers are said upon seeing the Kaaba for the first time... Other prayers are spoken with a soft voice, and the visitor positions himself so that he is facing the black stone of the Kaaba and prays two riqâṣ (reqâṣ in Turkish or zâqa in Arabic). These are set prayers involving standing and recitation, bows of obeisance, prostration and sitting; after their completion, the stone is touched with the right hand or kissed, if the crush of people is not too great. The devout now begin the tawaf, or the procession around the Kaaba, always keeping this building on their left. The ceremony has to be repeated seven times...

With widely outstretched arms and with his breast pressed close to the wall, [the pilgrim begs] the Lord for the forgiveness of his sins. He then withdraws somewhat... and prays two riqâṣ there... after these he betakes himself to the nearby (holy) well, Zam-Zam, and after a short, pious exclamation in honor of the well, he drinks as much water as he wishes... and with this, the ceremonies that have to be performed in the Temple have been brought to completion. (Travels in Arabia, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, 1829)
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November 23, 1880
I succeeded in describing the inner courtyard of the Haram (in a written account) as well as, by means of a photographic camera, taking a picture of its outward appearance including all of the buildings that surround it. (Torch of the Adorned Camel-Litter, Mohammed Sadiq Bey, 1883)
Mecca - Pilgrims and Their Ceremonial Procession
Around the Kaaba (Tawaf) - Mohammed Sadiq Bey - 1880

The four sides of the Kaaba are covered with a black silken fabric hanging down, which leaves the roof uncovered. This curtain or veil is called the kiswa and is renewed every year during the hajj (pilgrimage). Inasmuch as it is brought from Cairo, where it is made at the cost of the Grand Seigneur. Various prayers are woven into it, which are very difficult to read because they are of the self-same color as the material itself.

A little more than halfway up, there is a line of similar writings sewn in gold thread, which runs all around the building. The section of the kiswa that covers the door is richly embroidered with silver. There are openings in it for the 'Black Stone' and the one at the south-eastern corner, both of which are left uncovered...

(Travels in Arabia, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, 1829)
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(Travels in Arabia, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, 1829)

Mecca - Pilgrims Within the Temple Courtyard - Mohammed Sadiq Bey - 1880

On the 15th of the month, Zu'l Kade, the old [black cloth] is taken away, and the Kaaba remains uncovered for fifteen days... The removal of the old kiswa occurs in a most unseemly manner, and disputes arise between the hadjis (pilgrims) and the inhabitants of Mecca about pieces of material from it. The hadjis even collect the dust that gathers on the walls of the Kaaba under the kiswa and, on returning home, sell it as holy relics...

(Travels in Arabia, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, 1829)