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Harry Munt

The Ka'ba in al-Fākihī's (d. c.279/892–893) History of Mecca: From Local Traditions to Universal History

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HARRY MUNT*

The Ka‘ba in al-Fākihī’s (d. c.279/892–893) *History of Mecca*

From Local Traditions to Universal History

♦ ABSTRACT

In the late 3rd/9th century, the Meccan scholar Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Fākihī (d. c.279/892–893) compiled a local history of Mecca, a large portion of which survives today. This local history offered an overview of Mecca’s history from Creation to al-Fākihī’s own day, focusing in particular on a number of key topographical sites in the town and surrounding region. This article looks in particular at the way that the Ka‘ba plays a central role in al-Fākihī’s topographically centred approach to relating the history of his hometown. This is evident from both discussions of the Ka‘ba itself in sections dedicated to that structure but also in the way that the Ka‘ba features heavily in many discussions of other sites and events in Mecca’s history. The article concludes with some thoughts about how historians of Mecca, like al-Fākihī, used that town’s local history to offer a universal history for Muslims in other regions as well.

Keywords: Mecca, Ka‘ba, al-Fākihī, local history, universal history, Arabic historiography

♦ RÉSUMÉ

La Ka‘ba dans l’*Histoire de La Mecque* d’al-Fākihī (m. v. 279/892-893) :
des traditions locales à l’histoire universelle

À la fin du III^e/IX^e siècle, le savant mecquois Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Fākihī (m. v. 279/892-893) compila une histoire locale de La Mecque, dont une grande partie a été conservée jusqu’à aujourd’hui. Cette histoire offre un aperçu de La Mecque depuis la Création

* Harry Munt, University of York, harry.munt@york.ac.uk

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jusqu'à l'époque d'al-Fākihī et met particulièrement l'accent sur un certain nombre de sites topographiques clés de la ville et de la région environnante. Cet article s'intéresse en particulier à la manière dont la Ka'ba joue un rôle central dans l'approche topographique adoptée par al-Fākihī pour raconter l'histoire de sa ville natale. Cela ressort clairement des discussions sur la Ka'ba elle-même dans les sections consacrées à cette structure, mais aussi de la place importante qu'elle occupe dans de nombreuses discussions sur d'autres sites et événements de l'histoire de La Mecque. L'article se termine par quelques réflexions sur la manière dont les historiens de La Mecque, comme al-Fākihī, ont utilisé l'histoire locale de cette ville pour offrir une histoire universelle aux musulmans d'autres régions.

Mots-clés : La Mecque, Ka'ba, al-Fākihī, histoire locale, histoire universelle, historiographie arabe

✦ ملخص

الكعبة في «تاريخ مكة» للفاكهي (ت. نحو ٢٧٩ هـ/٨٩٢-٨٩٣ م): من التقاليد المحلية إلى التاريخ الشامل في أواخر القرن الثالث الهجري/التاسع الميلادي، جمع العالم المكي محمد بن إسحاق الفاكهي (ت. نحو ٢٧٩ هـ/٨٩٢-٨٩٣ م) تاريخاً محلياً لمكة، وقد تم حفظ جزء كبير من هذا العمل حتى يومنا هذا. يُقدم هذا التاريخ المحلي لمحة عن تاريخ مكة منذ انخلاق وحتى عصر الفاكهي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على عددٍ من المواقع الطبوغرافية الأساسية في المدينة والمناطق المحيطة بها. يتناول هذا المقال الدور المركزي للكعبة في النهج الطبوغرافي الذي اعتمده الفاكهي في سرد تاريخ تلك المدينة مسقط رأسه. ويتضح ذلك من خلال المناقشات حول الكعبة نفسها في الأقسام المخصصة لهذا البناء، وأيضاً من خلال المكانة البارزة التي تحتلها في العديد من المناقشات حول مواقع وأحداث أخرى في تاريخ مكة. ويُختتم المقال ببعض الأفكار حول الطريقة التي استخدم بها مؤرخو مكة، مثل الفاكهي، التاريخ المحلي لتلك المدينة لتقديم تاريخ شامل للمسلمين في مناطق أخرى أيضاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مكة، الكعبة، الفاكهي، تاريخ محلي، تاريخ شامل، تأريخ عربي

SOMETIME in the mid- to late 4th/10th century, a story was circulating among the scholars of Qayrawān about one of the pilgrimages to Mecca led by the second Abbasid caliph, Abū Ġaʿfar al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775):¹

Al-Manṣūr performed the hajj and saw the small size of the Masġid al-Ḥarām, its dishevelled state and the general state of ignorance surrounding its sanctity. He also witnessed a Bedouin [*aʿrābī*] circumambulating the House on his camel and fine Bejan dromedary [*ʿalā baʿirihī wa-baġāwiyyihī*].² This upset him so he decided to buy the properties [*dūr*] that surrounded it and expand it and decorate it in a much more befitting state, including plastering it [*tafḥīmihī wa-taġṣīṣihī*]. He gathered [these properties'] owners and urged them to accept a large sum of money, but they refused to sell, tenaciously clinging to being neighbours of God's Sacred House. He thought very carefully about this, but would not allow [their properties] to be forcefully seized. He did not appear before anyone for three days and people were talking about this. That year, among the pilgrims was Abū Ḥanīfa, who did not yet have his later reputation nor had people yet become acquainted with his *fiqh* and the pertinence of his opinions.³ He set out for [al-Manṣūr's] tent, which was in al-Abraḥ,⁴ and asked after the commander of the faithful and what had caused his absence. He was told the story and replied: "This is nothing. Had I met with him, I would have explained everything to him." [Al-Manṣūr] was told of this so summoned him. When he asked him about this, Abū Ḥanīfa replied: "The commander of the faithful should summon them and ask them: 'Did this Kaʿba come to settle by you or did you come to settle by it?' If they say: 'It came to settle by us', they can be accused of lying because the whole earth was spread out from there. If they say: 'We came to settle by it', then the response to them is: 'Its visitors have increased in number and the space around it has shrunk; it is more deserving of the space so vacate it for this.'" When [al-Manṣūr] gathered them together, he asked them and their spokesman, a Hāšimī man,⁵ said: "We came to settle by it", so he replied: "Return its space. Its visitors have increased in number so it has come to need it." They were struck speechless and were content to sell.⁶

1. Al-Manṣūr led the hajj at least four times, in 140/758, 144/762, 147/765, and 152/769; it is possible, though disputed, that he led it a fifth time in 148/766. See Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt, *Taʿrīḥ*, pp. 418, 421, 424, 426; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 34–35; al-Fasawī, *Maʿrifā*, I, pp. 122–123, 128, 131–133, 138–139; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʿrīḥ*, II, pp. 469–470; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʿrīḥ*, III, pp. 129, 150, 152–154, 173, 353, 369; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūġ al-dāḥab*, V, pp. 291–292.

2. For this understanding of *baġāwiyyihī*, I have followed De Goeje 1879, p. 184; he did note in a footnote to his edition of this passage that his reading of this word was conjectural. I suppose it could also be *bi-ġāriya*, "with a slave girl".

3. Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) was a famous rationalist scholar and the eponym behind the classical Ḥanafī school of Sunni law.

4. An area formed by a wadi bed to the north of Mecca, on the route to Minā; see Yāqūt, *Muġam al-buldān*, I, pp. 92–93. For a more specific definition, see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, III, p. 79.

5. Hāšim is the broader family of the Prophet, which also included the Abbasids.

6. Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, p. 75.

This tale, which al-Muqaddasī (d. after 381/991–992) heard in person, was clearly intended primarily either to emphasise the wisdom of the famous Iraqi jurist Abū Ḥanīfa, whose eponymous law school al-Muqaddasī admired and which was the principal rival to the alternative Mālikī school in Ifrīqiya, or to explain his position on one particular issue.⁷ As al-Muqaddasī actually went on to finish this narrative: “This narrative strengthens one of the two opinions recorded from Abū Ḥanīfa on the aversion to selling properties in Mecca and taking rent from them, although there is [another] interpretation.” It also, in a slightly confusing way, gives some indication of an apparently wide range of attitudes in the mid-2nd/8th century about the status of the Ka‘ba. Although some Meccans venerated the Ka‘ba and valued their properties’ proximity to it to such an extent that they would not sell them even for a large sum of money, others clearly did not recognise the Ka‘ba’s sanctity and venerate it in a way acceptable to the Iraqi caliph.

This narrative, therefore, brings to the fore important questions about the Ka‘ba’s—and, more broadly, the Masġid al-Ḥarām’s—roles as both a site of local importance and a site of universal importance; and this dichotomy makes studying the way the site is discussed in Meccan local histories particularly relevant. Local history writing flourished as an intellectual activity across the early Islamic world, from the 2nd/8th century and particularly the 3rd/9th century onwards.⁸ These histories could be written in a variety of different ways, although particularly common models include regional conquest narratives, local biographical/prosopographical dictionaries, annalistic surveys of events in a given region or town, and topographically organised histories of a town or, sometimes, wider region. This latter, topographical model was particularly common for local histories written about towns in the Ḥiġāz, principally of course Mecca and Medina, from the 3rd/9th century onwards. Two particularly important topographical local histories were written about Mecca in this century, by al-Azraqī (d. c.250/864–865) and al-Fākihī (d. c.279/892–893).⁹ Such works make for particularly interesting case studies for investigating the overlap and dialogue between the universal and local resonances of the Ka‘ba. Local histories are very often expressions of such dialogues between local and universal concerns, but this dialogue is perhaps at its most acute in Ḥiġāzī, and especially Meccan, works.¹⁰ Garth Fowden suggested that in late Antiquity, “Syria was, precisely, that

7. On al-Muqaddasī as an admirer of Abū Ḥanīfa and Hanafism, see Khan 2023, pp. 363–364. For a brief discussion of Hanafism in Aghlabid Ifrīqiya, see, for example, Hamdani 2000, esp. pp. 17–20.

8. For some of my thoughts on local history writing in the early Islamic world more broadly, see Munt 2012; 2018; forthcoming.

9. The death date estimate given for “al-Azraqī” is that for Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Azraqī, who is usually seen as the individual mostly responsible for the extant version of this *Aḥbār Makka*. It is worth remembering, however, that this work is also the result of efforts by the earlier Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Azraqī (d. 222/837) and the later redactors Ishāq al-Ḥuzā‘ī (d. 308/920) and Muḥammad al-Ḥuzā‘ī (d. after 350/961–962). For an overview of this transmission process, see Wüstenfeld (ed.) 1857–1861, I, pp. v–xviii. Al-Fākihī’s work will be discussed in much more detail in this article. For a still interesting study of al-Azraqī’s *Aḥbār Makka*, see Grabar 1985. For an overview of both works, see al-Hīla 1994, pp. 15–17, 21–23.

10. See further Munt, forthcoming. For some thoughts along these lines for pre-modern local histories that were either written or have survived in Persian, see Hanaoka 2016.

part of the world where the distance between local and universal history was the shortest”.¹¹ G. Fowden was driving at the fact that Syria was seen by a great many as the region of origin for at least two of the most widely spread monotheist communities of late Antiquity, Christians and Jews, which gave its local history a much broader universal significance. For similar reasons, in the early Islamic centuries the Ḥiǧāz’s local history could be read and understood as universal history just as straightforwardly.

Both al-Azraqī’s and al-Fākihī’s works would make an excellent basis for an investigation of ideas about the Ka‘ba’s local and universal significance in the 3rd/9th century. For this article I have chosen al-Fākihī’s work as the basis for my study. The two most important reasons for this can be summarised succinctly: it is less well known to and less commonly discussed by scholars today than al-Azraqī’s history;¹² and, as we will see, one 9th-/15th-century commentator thought that of the two works, al-Fākihī’s was the more significant. In what follows, there will be an introduction to al-Fākihī and his history of Mecca and then a more detailed analysis of the role the Ka‘ba plays in that history. This will then lead into a final discussion of what we can learn from this about Mecca and its place in history writing in the early Islamic period in general.

1. Al-Fākihī and his *Aḥbār Makka*

Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-‘Abbās al-Fākihī is not a particularly well-known figure.¹³ One of the earliest surviving discussions of his life and work, offered by Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429) in his biographical/prosopographical dictionary of notable Meccans, comments on this as well as his surprise that he was not better known.¹⁴ Since it summarises a great deal of what is known about al-Fākihī’s life, al-Fāsī’s account is worth citing in full:

Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-‘Abbās al-Fākihī al-Makkī. Author of *Aḥbār Makka*. In [this work], he narrates from Ibn Abī ‘Umar al-‘Adanī, Bakr b. Ḥalaf, Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan al-Marwazī, and a group of others.¹⁵ His book *Aḥbār Makka* is a really good book owing to the extremely useful

11. Fowden 1993, p. 64.

12. A very crude indication of this is that al-Fākihī does not appear in the index, while al-Azraqī does, in O’Meara 2020.

13. By far the most detailed study of al-Fākihī’s life to date is in ‘Abd al-Malik b. Duhayš’s introduction to his edition of al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* (I, pp. 9–77, esp. pp. 9–32), on which this discussion is largely based. See also al-Hīla 1994, pp. 21–23 (no. 3), which is itself mostly based (with due acknowledgement) on Ibn Duhayš’s study; al-Ṭāsān 1979, pp. 35–38. There is also the early study in Wüstenfeld (ed.) 1857–1861, I, pp. xxiv–xxix; and then the brief studies in al-Ziriklī 1954–1959, VI, p. 252; Kaḥḥāla 1957–1961, IX, pp. 40–41; Rosenthal, “al-Fākihī”, *EI*², 1965, p. 757; Sezgin 1967, p. 346.

14. On al-Fāsī’s various and important series of local histories of Mecca, see al-Hīla 1994, pp. 113–126; and also the comments in Meloy 2010 (ed. 2015), pp. 24–27.

15. These three figures, who were cited regularly by al-Fākihī in his history of Mecca, are all listed, and brief information about them is provided in Ibn Duhayš’s overview of al-Fākihī’s teachers; see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 14–29.

and precious material it contains. With it, al-Azraqī's book is dispensable [wa-fihī ḡinya 'an kitāb al-Azraqī], but al-Azraqī's book does not make this dispensable, because it mentions so many extremely useful things that al-Azraqī does not and he goes further in many ways into the essentials than al-Azraqī did.

I do not know when he died, although he was still alive in the year 272 [885–886] because he mentions in [that year] an event connected to the Sacred Mosque.¹⁶ But I know nothing else about him.

I was actually astounded by otherwise excellent scholars' [*al-fuḍalā'*] neglect of his biography, especially since his book demonstrates that he was among those of distinction and thus deserving of commemoration and of being described as he deserves for distinction and uprightness, or reprehensibility, but [others' neglect of his biography] has prevented him from [having] that. In the neglect of his biography, he is very like al-Azraqī, the author of [another] *Aḥbār Makka*, to whom we will return. This is also astonishing because he is the equal of al-Fākihī in distinction. The two of them are not, in my estimation, lesser than al-Ġanadī,¹⁷ the author of *Faḍā'il Makka*, though he has a biographical entry in scholars' books. But God knows best the truth of the matter.¹⁸

Al-Fāsī was correct that earlier scholars had neglected to say much about al-Fākihī's biography, although a couple of well-known bibliographers—the Baḡdādī Ibn al-Nadīm (d. before 388/998) and the Andalusī Ibn Ḥayr (d. 575/1179)—did mention his history of Mecca.¹⁹ Al-Fāsī's younger contemporary Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) also knew of al-Fākihī, both as a transmitter of the famous traditionist al-Buḥārī (d. 256/870) and as the author of a history of Mecca.²⁰ Otherwise, information about his life is mostly taken from what little about it he has to say himself in his history of Mecca. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Duhayš has been over this evidence in as much detail as possible and determined that he was probably born c. 215–220/830–835 (mostly based on the death dates of his oldest teachers) and presumably grew up in Mecca.²¹ He travelled for his studies, at least to Baḡdād and Kūfa in Iraq, and to Ṣanʿā' and Ḥaraḍ in Yemen;²² and he seems to have been relatively closely involved with at least one of Mecca's governors during his lifetime.²³ Most modern scholars have followed

16. Al-Fāsī is here referring to al-Fākihī's discussion of work undertaken at the Masḡid al-Ḥarām at the command of the caliph al-Mu'tamid's (r. 256–279/870–892) brother, Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq (d. 278/891), commemorated in inscriptions dated to 272/885–886; see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 175–176.

17. Abū Sa'īd al-Mufaḍḍal b. Muḥammad al-Ġanadī (d. 308/920; for some entries on him in biographical works, see, with further references, al-Dahabī, *Siyar*, XIV, pp. 257–258). His *Faḍā'il al-Madīna* survives and has been edited; the editors note in their introduction (p. 8) that a part of his *Faḍā'il Makka* survives in the Zāhiriyya library collection in Damascus.

18. Al-Fāsī, *al-ʿIqd al-ṭamīn*, I, pp. 410–411.

19. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, I/2, p. 337; Ibn Ḥayr, *Fahrassa*, I, p. 279.

20. Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Mu'ḡam*, p. 177 (no. 707); Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taḡliq al-ta'liq*, V, pp. 439, 471.

21. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 11.

22. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 12.

23. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 12–13. This is a reference to the passage where al-Fākihī (I, pp. 477–479) reports an episode involving the Maqām Ibrāhīm at which he was present with the governor ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan in early 256/869–870. This episode is also discussed very briefly in Bursi 2024, pp. 64–65. Records of governors

al-Fāsī in assuming that al-Fākihī died after 272/885–886; some have also suggested he was probably no longer alive, or at the very least had finished the final edition of his *Aḥbār Makka*, by 279/892–893.²⁴

Although the work is only known today through one manuscript, which we will come to shortly, it was known in several versions in different regions throughout the pre-modern Islamic world. Alongside those such as al-Fāsī who mentioned and made use of al-Fākihī's history as a source for their own studies, three distinct chains of transmission are provided for the work, one by the Andalusī Ibn Ḥayr and two by the Egyptian Ibn Ḥaḡar.²⁵ Ibn Ḥayr's chain overlaps with one of Ibn Ḥaḡar's for three generations after al-Fākihī, before they go their separate ways. These three transmitters in common are an otherwise unidentifiable Abū al-Ḥasan al-Anṣārī;²⁶ then an Egyptian Abū al-Qāsim b. Abī Ḡālib al-Bazzār (d. 387/997);²⁷ and then an Andalusī who travelled westwards for the hajj in 381/992, Abū al-ʿĀṣ al-Ḥakam b. Muḥammad al-Ḡudāmī (d. 447/1055).²⁸ Ibn Ḥaḡar's second chain of transmission begins with al-Fākihī's son, ʿAbd Allāh, with the work eventually also passing through this route to Egypt where its transmission later involved the famous Iṣfahānī-then-Alexandrian scholar and enthusiastic transmitter of local histories, Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī (d. 576/1180).²⁹

Despite these multiple lines of pre-modern transmission of al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka*, the only manuscript of the work well known today, with the title *Taʿrīḥ Makka*, was copied in Mecca in 877/1473 and is held in Universiteit Leiden, MS 463.³⁰ There have been rumours of another manuscript in Naḡd, and Muḥammad al-Hīla knew of a fragment in "Riyadh University Library" (presumably King Saud University Library) with the catalogue number 225ṣ, but these are otherwise unknown to modern scholarship.³¹ The Leiden manuscript only preserves the second part or half of al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka*. We do not really know the full extent of what is missing from the first part of the work, although we have seen that al-Fāsī, who does seem to have had access to the complete work (or, at least, a fuller version than what has survived),

of Mecca and Medina are quite patchy for this period, but the Abbasid ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan (variant al-Ḥusayn) had perhaps already been governor for a couple of years by this point, since he led the hajj in 254/868 and 255/869; see, for example, al-Ṭabarī, *Taʿrīḥ*, III, pp. 1698, 1787; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūḡ al-ḏahab*, V, p. 298.

24. See al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 31–32; Wüstenfeld (ed.) 1857–1861, I, p. xxvi.

25. Ibn Ḥayr, *Fahrasa*, I, p. 279; Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Muʿḡam*, p. 177; Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taḡlīq al-taʿlīq*, V, p. 471. For some discussion of later scholars who used al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka* as a source before al-Fāsī, see al-Ṭāsān 1979, p. 38.

26. See Ibn Duhayṣ in al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 31; he was also unable to discern anything from this rather common *kunya* and *nisba*.

27. Al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, XVI, pp. 522–523.

28. Al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, XVII, pp. 659–660.

29. On Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī, see, for example, Zaman 1985; 1986a; 1986b. For some indication of al-Silafī's interest in transmitting local histories, see a number of the chains of transmission in Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Muʿḡam*, for example at pp. 177–178, 181–182.

30. See the discussion in al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 70–71. See also Voorhoeve 1957 (ed. 1980), p. 372; Witkam 2007, I, p. 205.

31. For the Naḡd manuscript rumours, see Ruṣḏī Malḡas's introduction in al-Azraqī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. ٣; see also Ibn Duhayṣ in al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 69. For the Riyadh fragment, see al-Hīla 1994, p. 23, who noted its existence but also admitted he had not consulted it.

thought it a more expansive work than al-Azraqī’s that covered some different topics. Al-Fāsī also mentioned this in another of his histories of Mecca, this one a topographical history, *Šifā’ al-ġarām bi-ahbār al-balad al-ḥarām*, where he noted that al-Fākihī’s work offered discussion of “various extremely useful matters that cover different topics to al-Azraqī’s work and to my own work”.³² The version of al-Fākihī’s work known to Ibn Ḥaḡar in 9th-/15th-century Cairo apparently comprised “five large volumes”.³³ Al-Fāsī cited quite often from al-Fākihī’s work in his *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, including from the now-lost first part, so some idea of this lost part’s contents can be gained.³⁴ Much of it may well have dealt with various aspects of Mecca’s pre-Islamic history and, for reasons soon to be discussed, it seems to have included much of al-Fākihī’s history of the Ka‘ba.³⁵

Al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* as a whole is clearly a work in the topographical model of local history writing. Much of it is organised primarily around the provision of narrative Hadiths and *ahbār*, although there are more extensive discussions, particularly on the history of developments at particular sites in and around Mecca, where al-Fākihī moves away from this format to summarise what he knew; and, as we have seen, he occasionally puts himself into the narrative in these places as well.³⁶ The second part as it survives begins with a chapter on “The distinction of the Black Stone and what has been transmitted about it and that it is a stone from Paradise”.³⁷ Other sections then follow on aspects of the Ka‘ba’s history and significance, including for example the other cornerstones of the Ka‘ba, the *multazam*,³⁸ the question of praying at the Ka‘ba (including where its *qibla* is specifically located), and the ritual circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) of the Ka‘ba. Then there are some assorted questions related to visiting the Ka‘ba before a fuller discussion of the Ka‘ba’s role in the hajj and the performance of those rites.³⁹ After this, discussion moves onto the Maqām Ibrāhīm,⁴⁰ the well of Zamzam,⁴¹ and then the Masġid al-Ḥarām which encompasses all these sites.⁴² The section on the Masġid al-Ḥarām

32. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, I, p. 14.

33. Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taġlīq al-ta‘līq*, V, p. 471.

34. For a brief discussion, see Ibn Duhayš in al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 55–58; al-Hila 1994, p. 22. Ibn Duhayš also included as an appendix to his edition of the surviving part of the work a selection of passages, many explicitly cited from al-Fākihī, through which he attempted to give some idea of the kind of material that has been lost with the first part of the work; see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, pp. 115–239.

35. For some discussion of al-Fākihī on pre-Islamic history in particular, see Muḥammad 2012.

36. See the examples *supra*, nn. 16, 23. For further discussion of this aspect of the work, see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 47–48.

37. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 81–97.

38. This is the short section of the Ka‘ba’s (north-)eastern wall between the Black Stone and the doorway, as explained by al-Fākihī (*Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 160–161). For some discussion of this feature of the Ka‘ba, see recently Bursi 2022, pp. 13–17.

39. For the sections on the Ka‘ba, see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 81–439. By Ibn Duhayš’s numbering, these sections include 959 narrative reports.

40. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 440–483. For a discussion of early Muslims’ ideas about this site, see now Bursi 2024, pp. 47–79.

41. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 5–86.

42. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 86–209.

ends with a discussion of the properties that were just outside it,⁴³ before al-Fākihī's overview turns to al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa, and the ritual of running between them (*al-sa'y*),⁴⁴ and then the wider *ḥaram* that extended several miles in all directions around Mecca.⁴⁵ Many other aspects of Mecca's particular distinctions (*faḍā'il*) and regulations are debated; perhaps of particular interest here is al-Fākihī's decision to follow a discussion of the debated prohibition on carrying weapons in Mecca with some chapters on 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr's (d. 73/692) opposition to the Umayyads which led to fighting inside Mecca.⁴⁶ This general section about merits and distinctions of, as well as sites in, Mecca also included some discussion of sermons delivered by certain well-known historical figures in the town and brief overviews of some of its important notables, including its governors and judges.⁴⁷ The sections on Mecca itself come to a conclusion with discussion of the various tribal quarters (*ribā'*) of the town as well as its other mosques, cemeteries, and noteworthy sites, particularly those associated with the Prophet, as well as some natural topographical features, such as mountains.⁴⁸ Attention then finally turns to sites outside of Mecca, such as Minā, al-Muzdalifa, 'Arafa, and the other locations of hajj rituals outside Mecca's *ḥaram*.⁴⁹ The very final section in the extant manuscript surveys the administrative districts overseen by Mecca's authorities, including in the south as far as Naḡrān.⁵⁰

We will come back later to the significance of this particular organisation of al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka*. For now, however, it is enough to note that this is clearly a history organised topographically. As mentioned earlier, the topographical model of local history writing was particularly commonly used for towns in the Ḥiḡāz, and al-Fākihī followed several preceding historians of Mecca and Medina in structuring his history this way. The earliest such work about the contents of which we know enough to be fairly confident of its primarily topographical focus is Ibn Zabāla's (d. after 199/814–815) history of Medina.⁵¹ As is well known, al-Fākihī's predecessor al-Azraqī had also already composed a topographical history for Mecca as well. So al-Fākihī's decision to structure his work topographically was presumably a deliberate choice on his part. He does seem to have known these earlier works at least to some extent.

There has been some debate among modern historians about the extent of al-Fākihī's reliance on al-Azraqī's earlier history of Mecca, a debate essentially complicated by the fact that although there is plenty of overlap in places between the two histories al-Fākihī nowhere mentions his predecessor. That said, he occasionally mentioned anonymous Meccan sources, and it is naturally possible that

43. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 206–209.

44. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 209–246.

45. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 246–277.

46. For these sections in particular, see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 349–382.

47. See, for example, al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, III, pp. 131–188.

48. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, III, pp. 259–399; IV, pp. 5–230.

49. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, IV, pp. 231–336; V, pp. 5–109.

50. For this section, see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, pp. 106–109.

51. Munt 2012.

al-Azraqī was among them.⁵² Al-Fākihī is more explicit about drawing upon some key earlier players in the formation of Medina’s emerging tradition of topographical local history writing. One of his most regular cited sources in the *Aḥbār Makka*, on one hundred and forty-three occasions according to Ibn Duhayš’s counting, is the well-known Medinan scholar and genealogist al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (d. 256/870), who was the principal transmitter of Ibn Zabāla’s *Aḥbār al-Madīna*.⁵³ Ibn Zabāla appears himself on a handful of occasions in *isnād*-s in al-Fākihī’s history, five times with al-Zubayr b. Bakkār as the intermediary authority.⁵⁴ Al-Zubayr was also listed by al-Saḥāwī (d. 902/1497) among the local historians of Mecca, but to my knowledge there are no other references to a work by him specifically on the history of Mecca.⁵⁵ If al-Fākihī knew of a Ḥiǧāzī local history attached to al-Zubayr’s name, it would almost certainly have been his recension of Ibn Zabāla’s *Aḥbār al-Madīna*. Al-Fākihī presumably met and studied with al-Zubayr while the latter served as judge in Mecca from c.241/855–856 to his death in 256/870.⁵⁶ Ḥiǧāzī local historians seem to have used the topographical model of local history writing as the most effective way of emphasising the importance of the role their towns played in Islam’s universal salvation history.⁵⁷ We now turn to how this helps us to understand the role the Ka‘ba in particular plays in al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka*.

2. The Ka‘ba in al-Fākihī’s history

As we have recently seen, the extant half of al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* begins with a discussion of the Black (corner) Stone (*al-rukn al-aswad*), an important and famous feature of the Ka‘ba’s structure. Most of the remainder of the first volume of Ibn Duhayš’s edition of that extant

52. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (ed., 1857–1861, I, pp. xxvi–xxvii) thought the link was clear: “Nun erkennt man aber auf den ersten Blick, das Fākihī das Werk des Azrakī benutzt, ja fast ganz in das seinige aufgenommen hat, ohne seinen Namen zu nennen... Es scheint vielmehr aus allen Umständen hervorzugehen, dass Fākihī ein Schüler des Azrakī war und bei ihm sein Werk nachschrieb... Was Fākihī mehr giebt als Azrakī, ist für uns von keiner grossen Bedeutung; meistens werden nur dieselben Nachrichten aus einer zweiten und dritten Quelle noch einmal wiederholt und daneben eine ziemlich bedeutende Anzahl von Gedichten eingeflochten.” Despite this, he later noted (ed., 1857–1861, II, pp. v–vi) that he provided an edition of some brief extracts from al-Fākihī’s work to show that it did differ from al-Azraqī’s in perhaps more significant ways than admitted in the quoted passages above (and that this may have also been the case in the lost first part), “dass er auch manches Eigene hat, und dies ist vielleicht in dem ersten uns nicht erhaltenen Theile seines Werkes noch mehr der Fall gewesen, wenn wir aus den Citaten, welche aus ihm bei el-Fāsī vorkommen, einen Schluss ziehen wollen”. Muḥammad al-Ṭāsān (1979, pp. 36–37) also made the case that al-Fākihī had directly quoted from al-Azraqī’s work without acknowledgement. Ibn Duhayš’s discussion (al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 46–54, esp. pp. 52–54), however, emphasises al-Fākihī’s independence from al-Azraqī much more than F. Wüstenfeld’s and M. al-Ṭāsān’s, and suggests that similar passages in the two works are likely due to their mutual reliance on a common source.

53. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 16. On al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s transmission of Ibn Zabāla’s work, see Munt 2012, pp. 14–15, 18, 24–25.

54. Munt 2012, p. 26, n. 125.

55. Al-Saḥāwī, *I‘lān*, p. 280. Muḥammad al-Hīla (1994, pp. 17–20) also noted that al-Saḥāwī included al-Zubayr among the historians of Mecca, but he did not include a history of that town in his catalogue of this scholar’s works.

56. Wakī‘, *Aḥbār al-quḍāt*, I, p. 269.

57. See, for example, my thoughts on this in Munt 2012, pp. 27–34.

half is concerned with other aspects of the Ka‘ba and its history.⁵⁸ Many of the passages cited by later historians such as al-Fāsī from the now-lost section of al-Fākihī’s work also deal with the Ka‘ba.⁵⁹ So it seems very likely that the extant half of this work picks up in the middle of a much larger discussion of the Ka‘ba. Al-Fākihī’s discussion of the Ka‘ba appears to have been wide-ranging, and there is not enough space in one article to go into detail about all the various aspects of that structure’s history that feature in this work, so the following can only give a broad overview of his coverage of this site. Given the fact that a large part of the *Aḥbār Makka* does not survive, it is also important that this discussion centres around what the extant section of the work, alongside surviving quotations from the lost part, do discuss rather than speculating on what al-Fākihī may have omitted from his discussion. Unless the rest of the work is found, we will never know for sure what he left out of his discussion.⁶⁰

Al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* covered fairly basic information about features of the Ka‘ba’s structure, as we saw earlier with the *multazam*.⁶¹ The original work seems to have contained, as would be expected, a considerable amount of information about the structural history of the Ka‘ba. Al-Fākihī provided a brief narrative overview of the building’s history: “The first to build the house was Abraham, but then it was destroyed. So Ğurhum rebuilt it, but then the house was destroyed. So the Amalekites rebuilt it, but then it was destroyed, so Qurayš rebuilt it.”⁶² Other reports offer a slightly different sequence: “Quṣayy b. Kilāb rebuilt the house after Abraham’s structure. Then Qurayš rebuilt it.”⁶³ Some of these rebuilders introduced new features: Ğurhum, for example, who apparently treated the Ka‘ba with disdain, provided it with two door panels and a lock after a flood caused considerable damage to the structure.⁶⁴ Others introduced idols such as Hubal.⁶⁵ Several anecdotes discuss Qurayš’s founder Quṣayy gaining control of the keys to the Ka‘ba from Ĥuzā‘a, often by purchasing them from one Abū Ğubšān.⁶⁶ There are some reports about Qurayš’s rebuilding of the Ka‘ba⁶⁷ and on the oft-discussed rebuilding works of both Ibn al-Zubayr and al-Ḥaġġāġ b. Yūsuf, the general of ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705) who defeated Ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca in 73/692.⁶⁸ Al-Fākihī

58. See *supra*, n. 39.

59. On these citations, see *supra*, n. 34.

60. In what follows, I incorporate discussion of material from the extant section of the work together with citations from the now-lost section. Those examples of the latter discussed here are all cited explicitly from al-Fākihī (often, but not always, specifically from his *Aḥbār Makka*) by the later scholars in whose works they appear.

61. See *supra*, n. 38.

62. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, I, pp. 152, 570 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 138).

63. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, I, p. 153 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 226). The question of the Ka‘ba’s/*bayt*’s history before Abraham in al-Fākihī’s work is taken up further below.

64. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, I, p. 170 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 225). Al-Fāsī notes here explicitly that al-Fākihī’s narrative is different from al-Azraqī’s on this point.

65. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, II, p. 82 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 155).

66. For example, al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, II, pp. 85–87, 115 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, pp. 158–160, 171–172).

67. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ġarām*, I, pp. 155–156 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 227).

68. Ibn Ḥaġġar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, III, pp. 521–522 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, pp. 229–230). For two recent discussions of these rebuilding efforts, see Hawting 2017; 2021.

also made some observations about the structure of the Ka‘ba in his own day. For example, he reported that in 263/876–877 he saw the blocked second door from the inside of the Ka‘ba opposite the main door and that it was to the same measurements as the other door and had three hooks overhanging it.⁶⁹ He also measured the area of the Ka‘ba as four hundred and eighteen square cubits.⁷⁰

Al-Fākihī discusses plenty of the distinctive merits (*faḍā’il*) attached to the Ka‘ba. Many of these emphasise its wider cosmological significance. There is, for example, a section on the distinction of those who perform the hajj to the Ka‘ba over all others come the Day of Resurrection.⁷¹ We are told that the Black Stone was brought down to earth by an angel from heaven and that seventy angels are over the Black Stone performing various rituals and seeking forgiveness for all Muslims and believers.⁷² This wider cosmological significance is also emphasised by the apocalyptic reports linked to the Ka‘ba that can be found in the work. This can be seen in the chapter “Recounting a description of the Ethiopian who will destroy the Ka‘ba and the armies that will come towards Mecca but be swallowed up by the earth before they get there”.⁷³ Some of the reports in this chapter linked such apocalyptic thinking to the Mecca-based caliphate of Ibn al-Zubayr during the second *fitna*. In one such example, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (d. 65/684–685) reported the Prophet’s well-known prediction: “An Ethiopian man with two short legs will demolish the Ka‘ba. He will deprive it of its ornaments and strip from it its *kiswa*. He appears to me as a small bald, distorted man smashing it with his shovel and pickaxe.” The famous scholar Muḡāhid b. Ḡabr (d. after 101/720) later added: “When Ibn al-Zubayr—may God be pleased with them both—destroyed the Ka‘ba, I went to inspect it and see if I could see what ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr had described. I could not.”⁷⁴ In another, the Prophet’s wife Umm Salama (d. 61/680–681) was asked during the early days of Ibn al-Zubayr’s opposition to the Umayyads about “the army that would be swallowed up by the earth” and she recounted the Prophet’s prophecy: “He who takes sanctuary at the house will do so [*ya‘ūdu ‘ā’id al-bayt*] and an army will be sent against them. When they come to one of the earth’s waterless deserts, they will be swallowed up.” Ibn al-Zubayr was widely known as “he who takes sanctuary at the house”.⁷⁵

The final type of material that appears at length in al-Fākihī’s discussion of the Ka‘ba is all the discussions surrounding the various rituals associated with the structure, especially of course

69. Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Faḥ al-bārī*, III, pp. 522–523 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 230). This refers to the second door introduced to the structure of the Ka‘ba by Ibn al-Zubayr that was then subsequently removed by al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ; for a brief discussion, see Hawting 2017, pp. 6–7. For a model (created by Joachim Backes) representing one understanding of what the Ka‘ba looked like following Ibn al-Zubayr’s rebuilding, see O’Meara 2020, p. 8.

70. *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, p. 497.

71. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 436–438.

72. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 83.

73. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 357–366.

74. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 357–358. For some discussion of these prophecies that a small-legged Ethiopian man would destroy the Ka‘ba, see O’Meara 2020, pp. 64–67.

75. See, for example, Shaddel 2017, esp. pp. 5, 17–18, n. 87.

during the hajj and ‘umra pilgrimages.⁷⁶ We find discussions of many rituals, recommended and mandatory, as well as some legal issues connected to the Ka‘ba and several of its features. To return to the aforementioned *multazam*, to give just one example, we learn that according to Muğāhid b. Ğabr, “what is between the [Black] corner [Stone] and the doorway is called the *multazam*. There is scarcely anyone who can ask something of God [there] or seek refuge for something, without Him granting it.”⁷⁷ One other such discussion centres around the question of where the precise *qibla* is in the Ka‘ba, with some answers giving a precise spot and others noting that the Ka‘ba as a whole is the *qibla*;⁷⁸ this discussion, of course, also affirms the significance of the Ka‘ba as the universal *qibla* for all Muslims across the world.⁷⁹ Other discussions focus on a range of issues, from the rituals that menstruating women could perform there or restrictions on erecting buildings near the Ka‘ba that were taller than it to the appropriateness of taking oaths on the name of the Ka‘ba.⁸⁰ Other material touched on the many debates surrounding the permissibility of entering the Ka‘ba and the aptness of various actions taken there.⁸¹ One report, preserved by al-Fāsī, for example, mentioned that:

One of the caliphs, Hišām b. ‘Abd al-Malik [*r.* 105–125/724–743] or someone else, entered the Ka‘ba while performing the hajj one year. No one was left in the Ka‘ba except Manşūr the custodian [*al-ḥağābī*]. Hišām said to him: “Ask for whatever you need.” Manşūr replied: “I can’t ask from anyone except God while I’m in His house”, so he did not ask him for anything.⁸²

Material about the Ka‘ba is by no means restricted to the opening section of the extant part of al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* and the citations from the lost part that between them presumably constituted a larger section dedicated to the Ka‘ba. Plenty of material in discussions of other sites in and around Mecca brings things back to the Ka‘ba and seems designed in part to emphasise the Ka‘ba’s centrality within Mecca and, thus, the centrality of both within the world and cosmos more broadly. The section that immediately follows that on the Ka‘ba is, as we have seen, on the Maqām Ibrāhīm, and the very first report (a prophetic Hadith) in this new section immediately links this site to the Ka‘ba: “The [Black] Stone and the Maqām are two rubies from Paradise. God the Sublime effaced their light. Had He not, their light would have illuminated everything from the east to the west.”⁸³ A narrative in a later section on Zamzam links that site back to the Maqām and the Ka‘ba, and gives all these sites a central role in salvation history more generally. In this narrative, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sābiṭ (d. 118/736–737) was circumambulating the Ka‘ba with his companion ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḍamra

76. For a recent discussion of some of these rituals, see Bursi 2022.

77. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 168.

78. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 184–186.

79. On the significance of the Ka‘ba as the *qibla*, see O’Meara 2020, pp. 19–39.

80. These examples are taken from al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 335–336, 338–340, 353–354.

81. On this debate more broadly, see Hawting 1984.

82. Al-Fāsī, *Šifā’ al-ğarām*, I, pp. 266–267 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 234).

83. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 440.

when the latter informed him that: “Beneath my foot, to the [Black] Stone, the Maqām and Zamzam are [the bodies of] ninety-nine prophets.”⁸⁴ We learn that on the day the Prophet entered Mecca to complete his community’s takeover of the town from Qurayš, Bilāl delivered the call to prayer from the top of the Ka‘ba.⁸⁵

Al-Fākihī also preserves a reasonably lengthy narrative of Ibn al-Zubayr’s Meccan caliphate and particularly about the two armies his Umayyad rivals sent from Syria to defeat him, one at the start of the second *fitna* and the other at its end.⁸⁶ It is well known across a wide range of sources that these Umayyad armies committed atrocities in the holy cities of the Ḥiğāz, including sacking and committing great violence in Medina and inflicting damage on the Ka‘ba in Mecca.⁸⁷ Al-Fākihī mentioned most of these atrocities. We saw earlier that this discussion in his *Aḥbār Makka* immediately follows a chapter on “Those who disapproved of entering Mecca with weapons”, and the narrative of the second *fitna* and the Umayyad armies’ invasions of the Ḥiğāz seems placed to emphasise the reprehensibility of their actions. The Ka‘ba, as is to be expected, features prominently in al-Fākihī’s overview of these events. We read about how, during the first Umayyad army’s siege of Mecca, the Ka‘ba was set on fire during the fighting⁸⁸ and how, during the second siege at the end of the second *fitna*, al-Ḥağğāğ’s army set up siege engines on Abū Qubays, a mountain overlooking Mecca, with which they bombarded the Masğid al-Ḥarām and the sites within it, including the Ka‘ba.⁸⁹ During the latter siege, we learn that Ibn al-Zubayr had sought refuge by the Ka‘ba, but when he heard the stones from al-Ḥağğāğ’s siege engines striking the Ka‘ba, he left his refuge there, declaring: “Me being killed is preferable to me than the Ka‘ba being destroyed on my account.”⁹⁰ Apparently, the Basran Abū Ḥamza Naşr b. ‘Imrān (d. before 126/744), upon hearing about the burning of the Ka‘ba during the first Umayyad siege of Mecca, was inspired to head there to join Ibn al-Zubayr, “wanting to fight the Syrians”.⁹¹ Al-Fākihī also goes into some detail on all the problems posed for the performance of the hajj rites, the season for which in 72/692 fell during the second Umayyad siege, by the fact that while Ibn al-Zubayr controlled the Masğid al-Ḥarām, and so the Ka‘ba as well as al-Şafā and al-Marwa, al-Ḥağğāğ controlled the relevant sites outside Mecca, such as ‘Arafa.⁹²

84. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, p. 34. No death date is known for Ibn Ḍamra, but he was obviously a contemporary of Ibn Sābiṭ and is also said to have studied with several companions of the Prophet; see al-Mizzī, *Tahḏīb al-Kamāl*, XV, pp. 129–130. For a general discussion of reports known to many sources of the number of prophets buried next to the Ka‘ba, and especially the prophet Ishmael, see Bursi 2024, pp. 105–111.

85. Al-Fāsī, *Şifā’ al-ğarām*, II, p. 244 (= al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, V, p. 222).

86. See, in general, al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 351–382.

87. For an overview of the wider context in which these clashes in the Ḥiğāz took place, see recently Marsham 2024, pp. 101–115.

88. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 354–355.

89. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 357, 360.

90. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, p. 360.

91. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 364–365.

92. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 367–369. For an important discussion of the implications of such discussions of the hajj rites of 72/692, see Hawting 1993.

Some later caliphs' work on the Masġid al-Ḥarām more broadly is also reported to have been directly intended to centre the Ka'ba in Mecca's sacred topography. Al-Fākihī tells us, for example, about some work on the Masġid al-Ḥarām ordered by the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158–169/775–785) that it was specifically undertaken to place the Ka'ba physically at the centre of the mosque:

The commander of the faithful al-Mahdī had given orders for construction work on the Masġid al-Ḥarām and its expansion when he first went there on the hajj. So the work was undertaken and it was expanded as we have described.⁹³ But it was crooked, so when he came in this year [166/783], he saw the Ka'ba to one side of the mosque and did not like that. He wanted it to be at the centre of the mosque. So he summoned engineers and consulted them on that.⁹⁴

With narratives such as this, al-Fākihī gave the Ka'ba a physical centrality in Mecca to match its cosmological one.

There are three important broader points that are worth making about all this material on the Ka'ba included in al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka*. The first is to emphasise the value of local historians like al-Fākihī as eyewitnesses to at least some stages in the history of sites like the Ka'ba. In his recent book on the Ka'ba, Simon O'Meara has suggested that early Islamic sources that discuss the Ka'ba, by which he means those compiled before the 5th/11th century, relate “theology, not history” and that the earliest “incontestably eyewitness account” of the Ka'ba is that of the Transoxanian traveller Nāṣer-e Ḥosrow (d. c.470/1077–1078), who made four pilgrimages to Mecca.⁹⁵ S. O'Meara suggests that it is, therefore, only the 5th/11th century that “sees, in other words, the Ka'ba entering verifiable historical time”.⁹⁶ S. O'Meara is certainly correct that much of the material about the Ka'ba and its physical structure found in works from the early Islamic centuries, particularly when they are discussing the very early and pre-Islamic periods, is full of contradictory descriptions and varying interpretations. This is why later scholars like al-Fāsī and Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī cited many passages from the now-lost sections of al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka* as they used his work alongside other sources to piece together as consistent and well-evidenced an interpretation as they thought possible of the Ka'ba's earlier history; and it is why it does make sense to read so much of the material from early Islamic sources as theologically or doctrinally inspired. At the same time, however, al-Fākihī was clearly an eyewitness to the Ka'ba's structure in his own day. For one thing, we have seen him explicitly offer his own observations on the structure in his day, and it is unclear why we should

93. For this work on the Masġid al-Ḥarām ordered by al-Mahdī at the time of his hajj in 161/778, see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 165–171.

94. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, p. 172.

95. O'Meara 2020, pp. 8–11 (quotations from pp. 8 and 10 respectively). For Nāṣer-e Ḥosrow's trips to Mecca and descriptions of the town and its sites, see Hunsberger 2000 (ed. 2003), pp. 174–197.

96. O'Meara 2020, p. 8. Slightly later (p. 10), the author does suggest a couple of possible late 3rd- and 4th-/10th-century eyewitness descriptions, but questions whether either should really be seen as such.

consider these any less valid as eyewitness testimony than Nāṣer-e Ḥosrow's descriptions.⁹⁷ For another, even when discussing sites in what we might, for want of a better term, call the “legendary” past, it was common for local historians, of most regions but notably the Ḥiğāz, to draw links between those sites' past and the present.⁹⁸ In al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka*, this is most obvious when explicit contemporary observations are offered to support an interpretation of reports about the Ka'ba's structural history, such as we saw above with his description of the state of the second door in his own day.⁹⁹ But this effort to draw links should also be in our minds when we read other passages as well. For just one, arbitrarily drawn example: when we are told that the Prophet chose as his precise *qibla* the point between the *mizāb* and the northern cornerstone, that may or may not tell us anything about the Ka'ba in the Prophet's day, but it surely tells us something about the Ka'ba's later structure, that this particular point was locatable on the contemporary structure to al-Fākihī or his source.¹⁰⁰ So, in this sense, even when discussing the Ka'ba's earlier history, local historians like al-Fākihī are acting as eyewitness observers of its structure and of contemporary understandings of its significance.¹⁰¹

The second broader point to make is to emphasise the large proportion of al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka* that is taken up with discussion of the Ka'ba, its history, and its associated distinctions and rituals. We have seen that the Ka'ba takes up most of the first volume of the edition of the extant second half of the work and that there seems to have been considerably more material about it in the now-lost first half. Much more space was dedicated to the Ka'ba in al-Fākihī's work than to any other site in or around Mecca;¹⁰² and, as we have also seen, the discussions of many other sites sought to draw links in various ways between those places and the Ka'ba. This takes us to the third broader point: the centrality of the Ka'ba in the organisation of al-Fākihī's history as a whole.

To help us consider this third point, it is useful to turn to Zayde Antrim's ideas about what she has labelled the “discourse of place” in early Islamic-era texts.¹⁰³ With this concept, Z. Antrim has sought “to bring together a wide variety of formal texts committed to the representation of territory in and of itself, rather than as a setting or backdrop for something else”.¹⁰⁴ Among the texts Z. Antrim uses to show how various early Muslim scholars participated in this “discourse of place” is al-Azraqī's *Aḥbār Makka*, which is labelled “the landmark contribution to

97. See *supra*, nn. 69–70.

98. On Ibn Zabāla's history of Medina, see, for example, Munt 2012, p. 22.

99. See *supra*, n. 69.

100. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 184. The *mizāb* is a waterspout on the Ka'ba's northern wall; see O'Meara 2020, p. 14; Rubin 1986, p. 104 (who points out that this understanding makes sense, since it was this northern wall faced towards Medina, where the Prophet was based when the *qibla* was apparently changed from Jerusalem to Mecca).

101. A similar point has been made in Smail 2022, pp. 642–643.

102. This assumes that the discussion of the Masḡid al-Ḥarām can be separated from the discussion of all the sites within it, which would of course include the Ka'ba.

103. Zayde Antrim has discussed this in several publications, but see especially Antrim 2012. This book specifically focuses on texts from the 3rd/9th to the 5th/11th century.

104. Antrim 2012, p. 1.

the discourse of place on Mecca before the eleventh century”.¹⁰⁵ In a chapter on city foundation narratives, Z. Antrim demonstrates how central the Ka‘ba is to al-Azraqī’s overview of Mecca’s sacred history.¹⁰⁶ Al-Azraqī’s schema of Mecca’s history is summarised as follow: 1) the Ka‘ba existed prior to creation; 2) Adam built the Ka‘ba; 3) Abraham and his son Ishmael rebuilt the Ka‘ba; and 4) Qurayš rebuilt the Ka‘ba. There is a later fifth, “postscript” stage: Ibn al-Zubayr’s and al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s work on the Ka‘ba. As Z. Antrim notes, “this narrative conflates the foundation of the city of Mecca with the foundation of ‘al-Ka‘ba’ or ‘al-Bayt’”.¹⁰⁷

Al-Fākihī seems to have been participating in this “discourse of place” in a very similar way to al-Azraqī. Since the first part of the former’s work is not extant, we cannot be sure of its overview of Mecca’s foundation history, but the Ka‘ba certainly seems extremely prominent in citations from the lost section. This similarity may well be because al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* owed much to al-Azraqī’s as a source of inspiration, although there is considerable doubt over the extent of the debt the later historian owed to the earlier.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, on the particular question of the chronology of Mecca’s/the Ka‘ba’s foundation, al-Fākihī does seem to have offered a somewhat different narrative. We saw earlier that his overview of the Ka‘ba’s history had it built initially by Abraham—only the third phase of al-Azraqī’s narrative as identified by Z. Antrim—before being rebuilt by Ğurhum, the Amalekites, and then finally Qurayš. Al-Fākihī’s work also included plenty of material on the “postscript” stage as well.¹⁰⁹

The gap between the two historians’ approach to Mecca’s and the Ka‘ba’s history may not have been as wide as this brief report preserved from the lost section of al-Fākihī’s history suggests. The very first report in the extant section of the work does seem to acknowledge that Adam’s era saw some developments in the establishment of objects that went on later to become part of the Ka‘ba. Within this report, we are told that the Black Stone “is one of the gleaming, pure gemstones of paradise [*yāqūta bayḍā’ min yāqūt al-ǧanna*]. God—Mighty and Sublime—placed it down when he sent it down to Adam at the location of the Ka‘ba, before the Ka‘ba existed.”¹¹⁰ Other reports also note that Adam performed the *ṭawāf* around the Ka‘ba/*bayt* as had the angels before him. These reports do not explicitly say that the Ka‘ba/*bayt* was a physical structure at this time but that might have been assumed by some hearing and transmitting such reports.¹¹¹ Al-Fākihī also associated Adam with other sites and episodes in Mecca’s history. It was, for example, in Adam’s time that God set up ranks of angels around the borders of Mecca’s *ḥaram* to protect it from the jinn who in those days inhabited the earth outside it, although it was only in Abraham’s time that the *ḥaram*’s

105. Antrim 2012, p. 43.

106. Antrim 2012, pp. 43–48.

107. Antrim 2012, pp. 44, 47–48 (quotation from p. 44).

108. See *supra*, n. 52.

109. See *supra*, nn. 62, 68, 74, 86.

110. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, pp. 81–82.

111. For example, al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, I, p. 282; III, p. 219.

borders were demarcated by physical boundary stones.¹¹² The impression from al-Fākihī’s work is that Mecca’s sacred space and the Ka‘ba were very much conceived during Adam’s time but only brought into a clear physical reality in Abraham’s. So, just as for al-Azraqī albeit in slightly different ways, al-Fākihī’s sacred history used the Ka‘ba and objects associated with it to demonstrate Mecca’s association with the succession of God’s prophets all the way from the very first, Adam, through Abraham and down to Muḥammad.

Another point made by Z. Antrim about al-Azraqī’s history of Mecca can also help us to think about the centrality of the Ka‘ba in al-Fākihī’s. Z. Antrim notes that al-Azraqī’s work opens with discussion of the Ka‘ba before “radiating outward to describe the surrounding sanctuary and city”, with sites discussed “in order of decreasing proximity to the Ka‘ba at the centre”.¹¹³ We do not know how al-Fākihī’s work opened, and it is possible that there were sections on other topics before the topographically arranged material began, but it is clear that for the topographical material al-Fākihī also discussed the Ka‘ba first before moving onto other sites roughly in order of distance from the Ka‘ba. Many Muslims since the early Islamic centuries have considered the Ka‘ba to be the centre of the world, sometimes even of the entire cosmos.¹¹⁴ Al-Fākihī emphasised this as well, perhaps most obviously in the already discussed chapter on where the actual *qibla* is in the Ka‘ba’s structure. Reports in this section either note explicitly or take it for granted that the Ka‘ba as a whole is the *qibla* for Muslims around the world.¹¹⁵ So, by structuring his work around the Ka‘ba, al-Fākihī—just like al-Azraqī before him—was making Mecca’s local history a universal one.

3. The local as universal in al-Fākihī’s history

This conclusion about the centrality of the Ka‘ba in al-Fākihī’s conception of Mecca’s history and topography, combined with that monument’s centrality to many Muslims’ understandings of the world and cosmos, might lead us to question the extent to which a work like al-Fākihī’s *Aḥbār Makka* is really best understood as a specifically “local” history. As part of our answer to this question, it is important to consider briefly why al-Fākihī composed his *Aḥbār Makka*. Previous scholars discussing local history writing in the pre-modern Islamic world have given several reasons for the emergence and development of this approach to history, but two in particular are often emphasised: a strong sense of local identity, pride, or patriotism; and emerging political regionalism.¹¹⁶ Both these reasons no doubt had an important part to play, but we also might want to think about other dynamics at play as well. There is no space

112. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 274–275. Just as an interesting aside, Adam was also claimed to have been the first person to mint gold and silver coins after he fell to earth; see al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, III, p. 208.

113. Antrim 2012, pp. 62–63.

114. Recently discussed in O’Meara 2020, pp. 40–62.

115. See *supra*, n. 78.

116. For local pride/patriotism, see, for a few examples, Humphreys 1988 (ed. 1991), p. 132; Lambton 1991, pp. 228, 237; Bulliet 1994, p. 104; Bosworth 2010, p. 81. For political regionalism, see, for example, al-Qāḍī 1995, pp. 107–108, 113–114; Humphreys, “Ta’rīkh. II: Historical Writing. 1: In the Arab world. b: The Central

here to go fully into this, but a couple of reasons for this caution can be summarised briefly. Firstly, local pride and a strong sense of a local identity presumably existed for many authors and compilers of early Islamic local histories; such works often focused on the individuals and distinctive merits that made the history of their subject town or region an important contribution to the history of the Muslim community more broadly. Such pride and identity, however, need not be expressed through putting together a work of local history. There were plenty of other ways, including literary ones, to express such pride, and for those interested in using history writing to express local pride, there were a variety of forms that could take. So we still have to account further for the inspiration to produce local histories of particular models specifically. Secondly, while increasing political regionalism and the emergence of local regimes in regions previously provinces of the caliphal empire do clearly have some explanatory potential in the proliferation of local history writing, it cannot explain those works which were compiled before any clear evidence for such political regionalism was apparent. There is, particularly importantly for us, relatively little evidence of this in the Ḥiǧāz for much of the 3rd/9th century, when al-Fākihī was active and compiling his *Aḥbār Makka*. So for works like al-Fākihī's, local pride and political regionalism can only be part of the story.

This brings us back to the role that the works we tend to label “local history” could play in the dialogue between local and universal concerns in early Islamic societies and in conceptions of a Muslim community with a shared salvation history. For late Antiquity's non-Muslim communities it was, as we saw G. Fowden articulate earlier in this article, Syria “where the distance between local and universal history was the shortest”.¹¹⁷ The relative proximity of local and universal concerns is also evident in many early Muslim histories of Syria-Palestine as well, as it is across many local histories for towns and regions across the early Islamic world more broadly.¹¹⁸ For Muslims, however, it was the Ḥiǧāz that came to be the region the local history of which became a full part of the whole community's shared salvation history. Al-Fākihī, and other historians of the Ḥiǧāz, especially of Mecca, used local history to tell a story of universal history. The Ka'ba—at the centre of Mecca but also of the world and perhaps even the universe—was a key part of this local-universal history. Meccans like al-Fākihī could, no doubt, take considerable pride in their hometown's unique role in salvation history. There is little clearer evidence for this than the poem (labelled a *qaṣīda*) included in his *Aḥbār Makka*, by one otherwise unknown 'Īsā b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Sa'labūsī, singing Mecca's praises, which included making Mecca's salvation historical precedence over Medina clear: “My Lord spread the earth out from under it, and Yaṭrib is without doubt among that which spread out.”¹¹⁹

and Eastern Lands, 950–1500”, *EP*, 2000, p. 277; Hanaoka 2016, p. 69. See now further discussion in Munt, forthcoming.

117. Fowden 1993, p. 64.

118. For a couple of discussions of works on Syria-Palestine from the early Islamic centuries, see Cobb 2002; Mourad 2008.

119. Al-Fākihī, *Aḥbār Makka*, II, pp. 294–298 (quotation from p. 294). The poem was apparently recited as part of a poetic contest over the relative *faḍā'il* of Mecca and Medina during the governorship of Dāwūd b. 'Īsā, which ran from 193/809 to 199/815; see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, III, pp. 937, 981–984.

Yet they were also building a history not just for Meccans but for all Muslims. In the same way that prophetic biography made universal history out of a career that took place almost exclusively in one region of the Arabian Peninsula, local histories of Mecca like al-Fākihī's—centred around the Ka'ba—made universal history out of sites in one particular town.¹²⁰ Al-Fākihī's *Aḥbār Makka* is a local history and his Ka'ba is a local site, but they are also far more than that.

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120. For the universalising concern of prophetic biography, see, for example, Wansbrough 1978, pp. 1–49; Robinson 2015.

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