This study 1) is confined to Hidjaz where the Prophet lived, propagated his religion, and practised his authority and administration. In Hidjaz also was the Capital of the Islamic Empire for the first three caliphs. It kept its importance and distinct position throughout the first century of Islam. In view of the difference about its boundaries, I shall conventionally confine my study to the territory from Aqabah Gulf to the Taif, and from the Red Sea to the desert west of Medina.

Lammens tackled some aspects of the economic conditions and life in Hidjaz in his books *La Cité de Taif; la Mosquée à la veille de l’Hégire* and *Le Berceau de l’Islam*. In spite of their right information, these studies have left many problems untouched. Other eminent Orientalists who studied economic life in Islam hardly touched on conditions in Hidjaz.

The neglect of the study of this important topic is due, in my belief, to the general tendency of the researches to use certain traditional sources, which deal with certain problems and present certain material. Had they looked for other sources, e.g. juridical and geographical, they would have found different problems and fresh material which would fill out many gaps in our knowledge.

Another difficulty comes from the vocabularies and institutions which were in use at that time, which have become deadly archaic, or have been modified and their meanings and significance changed. Many of the terms are rather vague.

On the eve of the rise of Islam, there were several agricultural centres in Hidjaz, the most important of which were the Jewish settlements in

1) Lecture delivered at the International Congress of Orientalists, München 1957.
Khaibar, Fadak, Wādi-al-Qura, as well as those in Medina. There must have been other Centres, but the information is too scanty to enable us to form a clear idea of them. We must remember institutions of property in the desert areas are neither so clear nor well defined as in cultivated areas.

Medina had a distinct position. It offered the prophet a favourable shelter to propagate his religion. It was his capital and the base for his expansion. Its population were the majority of the Muslims in earliest times, and were an important factor in moulding his administration. Therefore we are better informed on it.

Medina was a fertile oasis, irrigated by several wadis and torrents. Private ownership was well established, and the principle of inheritance existed. There was inequality of property. The small estate owner was probably working personally on his land, while the large estate owner employed agrarian labourers whose relations to the owner are not clearly known, but probably reflected in the early Medinas juridical books and decisions. Nevertheless Medina was not fully exploited, and there were large areas of uncultivated lands.

Mohammed did not attempt any sudden revision of the economic institutions that existed in Medina. He introduced a commercial community from Mecca where private ownership and individual enterprises were respected. Personally he had wider experience in commercial rather than agricultural affairs.1) His settlement in Medina did not create a crisis, since the immigrants were few, and had no experience in agriculture.

Nevertheless the arrival of the Prophet to Medina created certain circumstances and conditions which affected the ownership of lands e.g. the expulsion of the Nadhir, extermination of the Qariḍa, and the subduing of Khaibar, Fadak and Wādi al-Qura.2) The lands of B. al-Nadhir were considered Fay,3) the Prophet had the right to distribute them according to his own discretion regardless the traditional rules.

---

1) On the Commercial activities of the Meccans cf. Lammens, La Mecque à la Veille de l’Hégire; cf. also Torrey Commercial Terms in Coran.
3) Qorān LV 6-7.