

Māriya (One of Muhammad's Concubines)— Brill

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Māriya

, a Copt maiden, according to one statement, daughter of a man named Sham 'ūn, who was sent with her sister Sīrīn by the Muḳawḳis [*q.v.*] in the year 6 or 7/627-9 to Muḳammad as a gift of honour (according to another authority there were four of them). The Prophet made her his *concubine*, while he gave Sīrīn to Ḥassān b. Thābit [*q.v.*]. He was very devoted to her and gave her a house in the upper town of Medina, where he is said to have visited her by day and night; this house was called after her the *maṣhraba* of the mother of Ibrāhīm. To the great joy of the Prophet, she bore him a son whom he called Ibrāhīm, but he died in infancy. According to tradition, an eclipse of the sun took place on the day of his death, an interesting statement by which we can get the date exactly—if the story is true—as 27 January 632, that is, only a few months before Muḳammad's death. Māriya's beauty and Muḳammad's passionate love for her excited such jealousy among his other wives that, to pacify them, he promised to have nothing more to do with the Copt girl, a promise which he afterwards withdrew. Abū Bakr and 'Umar honoured her and gave her a pension which she enjoyed till her death in Muḳarram 16/February 637. There is no reason to doubt the essential correctness of this story, as there is no particular bias in it and it contains all sorts of details which do not look in the least like inventions, so that it is exaggerated scepticism when Lammens supposes that the “mother of

Ibrāhīm”, after whom the *mashraba* was called, was some Jewess. On the other hand, in view of the fact that all the marriages of Muḥammad after the *hidjra* were childless, it would have been surprising if evilminded people had not cast suspicions on the paternity of Ibrāhīm, and that this actually happened is evident from some traditions, the object of which is to defend Māriya from this suspicion.

On the other hand, it is not so easy to justify the part which Qur’ānic exegesis makes Māriya play in the exposition of sūra LXVI. In this sūra, the Prophet speaks in a very indignant tone against one of his wives, because she has betrayed a secret to another, which he had imparted to her under a promise of the strictest secrecy. At the same time, Allāh blames him, because, in order to please his wives, he had bound himself by oath to refrain from something which is not definitely stated and because he does not use the right granted him by Allāh to release himself from his oath. In addition, there is a word of warning to the two women who had disobeyed him and a threat to all his wives that he might divorce them in order to marry more pious ones (cf. XXXIII, 28-9). According to the usual explanation, the two wives are Ḥafṣa and ‘Ā’iṣha, and the revelation is said to have been provoked by the fact that Ḥafṣa, on returning unexpectedly to her house, found Māriya and the Prophet in an intimate tête-à-tête and that on a day which by rotation belonged to her (or ‘Ā’iṣha). In his embarrassment, he pledged himself by oath to have no more relations with the Copt girl. But after Ḥafṣa’s breach of faith, Allāh tells him to release himself from his oath. This explanation fits very well in some respects, and that the promise of continence is connected with marital complications is illuminating. That there are *ḥadīths*, which explain his quarrel with his wives quite differently, does not mean very much, for they are no doubt invented to drive out of currency the popular, less edifying version. But, on closer examination, there is one flaw which makes the latter uncertain, for it does not answer the question how Muḥammad could call the situation in which Ḥafṣa caught him and Māriya a secret that he is said to have entrusted to her.

[\(F. Buhl\).](#)

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