A great tragedy of the Islamic control of our universities and political correctness plus the fear of extreme violence if anyone dares question the roots and claims of Islam is ...that nobody dares question the roots and claims of Islam!!! I want to stimulate interest and offer this summary of information on Mecca from (LINK) which discusses some problems with Muslim claims in a comparison of evidence supporting Islam/Christianity.

Also try Ibn Warraq's ‘The Quest for the Historical Mohammad' or a light review in ‘Why I am not a Muslim.' Remember Islam’s sira (biographies of Mohammad) and sunnah/hadith were all written 150-200+ years AFTER Mohammad died, and the Koran????

Summary:

1) For Muslims "Mecca is the centre of Islam, and the centre of history." "The first sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah (or Mecca), a blessed place, a guidance for the peoples." (Koran Sura 3:96).

   Muslim tradition claims Adam placed the black stone in the original ka’ba and Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the Meccan ka’ba later (Koran sura 2:125-127). Mecca is central to Islam and Mohammad’s life.
2) There is no documentary or archaeological evidence that Abraham ever went to or lived in Mecca.

3) What Mecca - there is no sure evidence of Mecca pre-Islam. The Greco-Egyptian geographer Ptolemy in the mid-2nd century A.D. made a brief inference to a city called "Makoraba" 500 years pre-Islam (is this Mecca?). There is no other report of Mecca or its ka'ba in any authenticated ancient document until the early eighth century (Mohammad died in 632) where the earliest substantiated reference to Mecca occurs in the Continuatio Byzantia Arabica, which is a source dating from early in the reign of the caliph Hisham, who ruled between 724-743 A.D. ie 100 years AFTER Mohammad died!!

4) There is no evidence to support Muslim claims that Mecca was an ancient and great city, the centre of the trading routes for Arabia in the seventh century and before.

Mecca - early 20th Century photograph  In 1877 an Englishman John Keane reported from Mecca:

All, he said, were beggars: “Bakshish” roars the camel; “bakshish” brays the ass; “bakshish” yells the cur, till, after passing through a stage where you fancy you hear nothing else, you get so accustomed to it, that it costs you an effort of will to hear it.

5) There is ample documentation from that part of the world which FAILS to support Muslim claims-
a) Mecca NOT on major trade routes: Extensive research on the history of trade in the ancient Middle-East, shows Mecca was not on any major trading routes. “Mecca is tucked away at the edge of the peninsula. Only by the most tortured map reading can it be described as a natural crossroads between a north-south route and an east-west one.” (Bulliet 1975:105)

b) Mecca could not have been on the trading route, as it would have entailed a detour from the natural route along the western ridge. The trade route must have bypassed Mecca by some one-hundred miles (Groom 1981:193;).

c) Why go to the barren valley of Mecca down a steep descent when you could go to Ta’if which had a well, sanctuary and food supplies?

d) “what commodity was available in Arabia that could be transported such a distance, through such an inhospitable environment, and still be sold at a profit large enough to support the growth of a city in a peripheral site bereft of natural resources?” (Crone 1987:7) It wasn’t incense, spices, and other exotic goods, as many notoriously unreliable earlier writers have suggested but more recent, reliable research finds the Arabs engaged in a trade of leather and clothing; hardly items which could have founded a commercial empire of international dimensions.

e) Sloppy research is blamed for the wrong view re trade made by many orientalists eg Lammens, copied by others.

f) Maritime trade: Later Greek historians who were closer to the events (such as Cosmas, Procopius and Theodoretus) indicate that the Greek trade between India and the Mediterranean was entirely maritime after the first century A.D. (Crone 1987:29) (remember Islam didn’t start till the 7th century). One need only look at a map to understand why. It was cheaper, faster, and probably safer to ship goods than trek over land. Why would the traders ship their goods from India by sea, unload it at Aden onto much slower and more expensive camels to trudge 1,250 miles across the inhospitable Arabian desert to Gaza, when they could leave it on ships following the Red Sea route up the west coast of Arabia?

g) The Greco-Roman trade with India collapsed by the third century A.D. By Muhammad’s time there was no overland route, and no Roman market to which the trade was destined. Remaining trade was controlled by the Ethiopians, not the Arabs, and that Adulis, the port city on the Ethiopian coast of the Red Sea, and not Mecca was the trading centre of that
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region (Crone 1987).

h) The Greeks to whom the trade went had never even heard of a place called Mecca.

i) Greek trading documents refer to the towns of Ta'if (which is south-east of present-day Mecca), and to Yathrib (later Medina), as well as Kaybar in the north, but no mention is made of Mecca (Crone 1987).

j) Muslims confused about Mecca: Research carried out by J.van Ess, in both the first and second civil wars, notes accounts of people proceeding from Medina to Iraq via Mecca (van Ess 1971:16; see also Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Dhahabi 1369:343). Yet Mecca is south-west of Medina, and Iraq is north-east. Thus the sanctuary for Islam, according to these traditions was at one time north of Medina, which is the opposite direction from where Mecca is today!

k) The author concludes re Mecca---"We are left in a quandary. If, according to documentary evidence, in this case the ancient Greek historical and trading documents, Mecca was not the great commercial centre the later Muslim traditions would have us believe, if it was not known by the people who lived and wrote from that period, and if it could not even qualify as a viable city during the time of Muhammad, it certainly could not have been the centre of the Muslim world at that time. How then can we believe that the Qur'an is reliable?"...."the city it identifies as the birthplace and cornerstone for the nascent Islam cannot even be identified with any historical accuracy until at least a full century later?" ***Please refer to the full article and note that there is more evidence than presented in the article.

A quandary indeed and this quandary is increased by work examining the development of (Islam's) laws, which only seemed to be attached to 'scripture' in the 9th century (remember Mohammad died in 632); there is NO reference to the Koran in the mid 8th century statement of 'muslim' creed called the Fiqh Akbar 1 –surely it is unthinkable that had the Koran existed it would not have been mentioned; and further evidence that the term 'sunna of the prophet' is early Iraqian, not Medinese and that the legal doctrine of the Medinese lags behind and is dependent on that of the Iraqians.......the concept of Medina as the true home of the sunna is a fiction of the 3rd 'Islamic' century (J Schacht 'a Revaluation of Islamic traditions' in Ibn Warraq 'The quest for the historical Mohammad")....There are NO Korans from anywhere in the world from the 7th century....so how do Muslims know their text is unaltered??? Remember the Doctrina Iacobi, 642A.D. (Jews/Saracens allied) and the Armenian Chronicler 660 A.D.(Jews & Ishmaelites together) refer to a violent Arab prophet in the area of Syria/Palestine, NOT Mecca or Medina, preaching a Jewish messiah....and there is a huge array of other problems. ...But who can we trust to accurately research the truth?

Yes, it's time Islam was really subjected to some hard scrutiny but that won't happen in today's universities where an American study already shows the 'paint a rosy' picture, level of research.

Essential Readings:

Humphreys, R.S., Islamic History, a framework for Enquiry, Princeton, 1991
Van Ess, J., Fruhe Mu'tazilitische Haresiographie, Beirut, 1971